My first idea for this was to compare some story or parable from each of the four gospels. I looked up a list of stories that were in all four gospels, and decided to look at the resurrection of Jesus. While looking at the four different texts for this, I ended up noticing that in Mark, there was no mention of an angel, but there was mention of a young man in a white robe, so I decided to switch the scope of my examination to all of the four gospels, and I wrote up a program that goes through a text and prints out every instance of the words angel and angels. I ran each of the gospels through this program, and looked at the output. It was in this that I noticed something interesting about Matthew’s usage of angels.

Matthew has a decent amount of talking about the end of days and various apocalyptic stuff. A lot of the places where angels appear is in these apocalyptic parts. For example, there are passages like “The harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are angels” (13:39) and “The angels will come forth and separate the wicked from among the righteous” (13:49). This association between angels and end-of-days ideas is shown in the resurrection story, as it tells of an angel who comes down to roll away the stone in front of the tomb. When the angel arrives, there is a great earthquake, and the guards at the tomb are terrified. This earthquake is symbolic of the apocalyptic background that Matthew gave the angels in his book.

Mark, unlike Matthew, doesn’t talk that much about angels. But when he does, they still show up in apocalyptic ideas. Four of the five uses of the word ‘angels’ are in reference to the end days, or at least to when Jesus will return to being with his father. The one use of angel not in reference to that is in the brief touch upon the 40 days Jesus spent in the wilderness, where Mark says the “angels were serving him.”

Luke uses angels the most out of the four gospels. There was a lot of mentions of angels in the birth narrative from Luke. Luke also has no real reference to the apocalyptic ideas that both Matthew and Mark share, at least in reference to angels. John references angels the least out of the four, and like Luke, none of the references are for apocalyptic ideas.