

Introduction to New Testament I

A comprehensive academic study of the foundational books of the New Testament, exploring their authorship, historical context, and theological significance for students of theology and biblical scholarship.



Course Overview

Matthew

The Gospel of the King - exploring Jesus as the promised Messiah and the establishment of His Kingdom

Mark

The Gospel of the Servant - highlighting Jesus' active ministry and sacrificial service

Luke

The Gospel of the Son of Man - presenting Jesus' universal mission to all humanity

John

The Gospel of the Son of God - revealing Jesus' divine nature and eternal purpose



Course Structure

1

Matthew

Pages 3-19: Comprehensive analysis of authorship, date, purpose, and theological development of the first Gospel

2

Mark

Pages 20-33: Detailed study of the shortest Gospel's unique characteristics and historical context

3

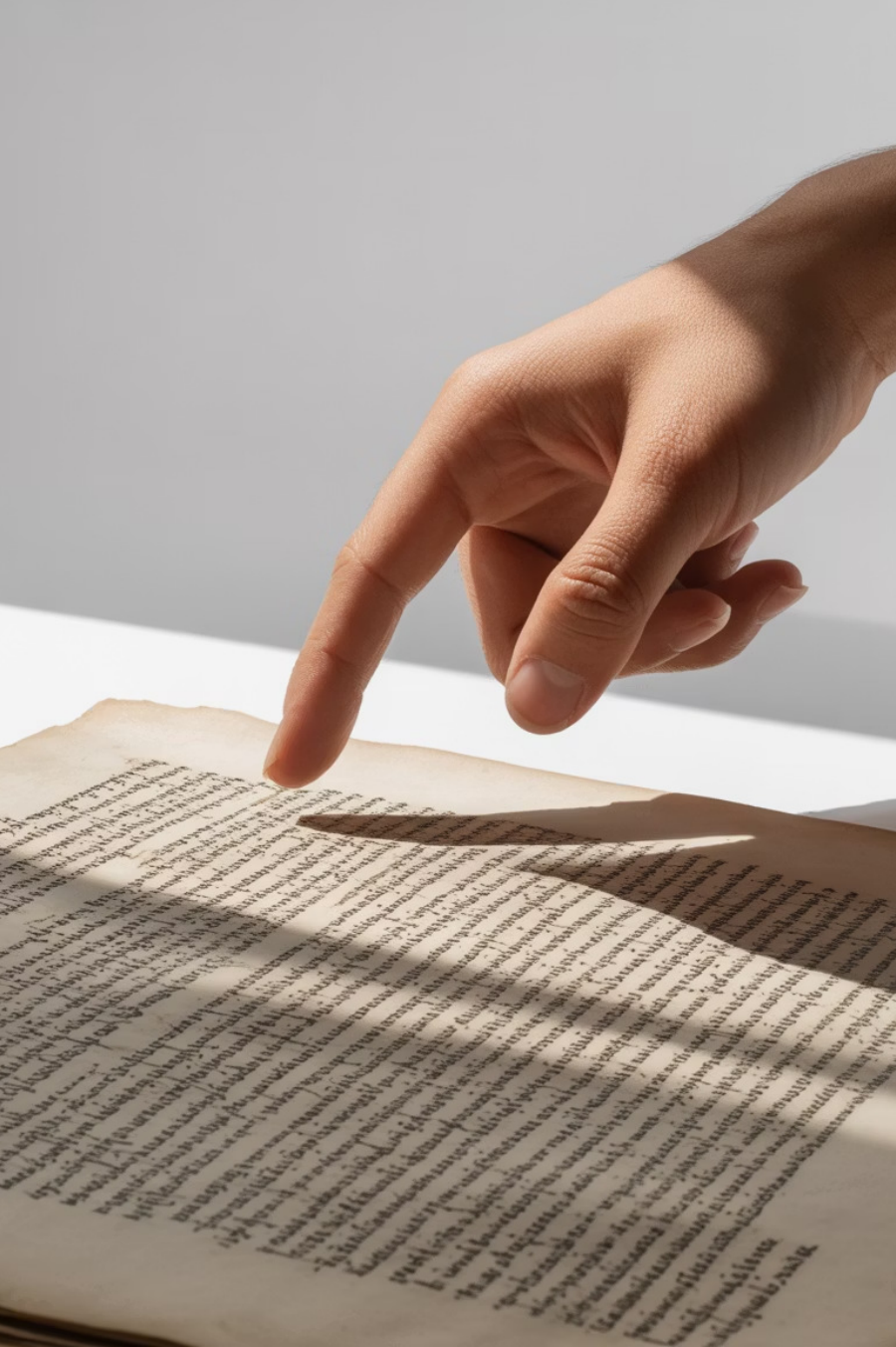
Luke

Pages 34-39: Examination of Luke's historical methodology and universal perspective

4

John

Pages 40-49: Deep dive into the theological richness of the fourth Gospel



Additional Books Covered

Acts

The continuation of Luke's narrative, documenting the early church's expansion from Jerusalem to Rome

Romans

Paul's theological masterpiece on justification by faith and Christian living

1 Corinthians

Practical guidance for church unity and spiritual maturity in a challenging cultural context

2 Corinthians

Paul's defense of his apostolic ministry and the nature of Christian leadership

THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

The first Gospel presents Jesus as the promised Messiah of Israel, carefully documenting how His life, teaching, death, and resurrection fulfilled Old Testament prophecies and established the foundation for God's Kingdom program.



Matthew: Title and Authorship

The earliest manuscript superscription reads **KATA MAΘΘΑΙΟΝ** ("According to Matthew"), pointing to the ancient Christian tradition that Matthew (or Levi), the tax collector disciple of Jesus, authored the first Gospel.

1 External Evidence

The Didache (c. 110 AD) quotes this Gospel more than any other. Church fathers including Pseudo-Barnabas, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr cite Matthew as the author.

2 Internal Evidence

The Gospel contains detailed references to money matters fitting a tax collector, uses the term "tax collector" consistently, and shows intimate knowledge of circumstances that would elevate publicans.



Dating and Historical Context

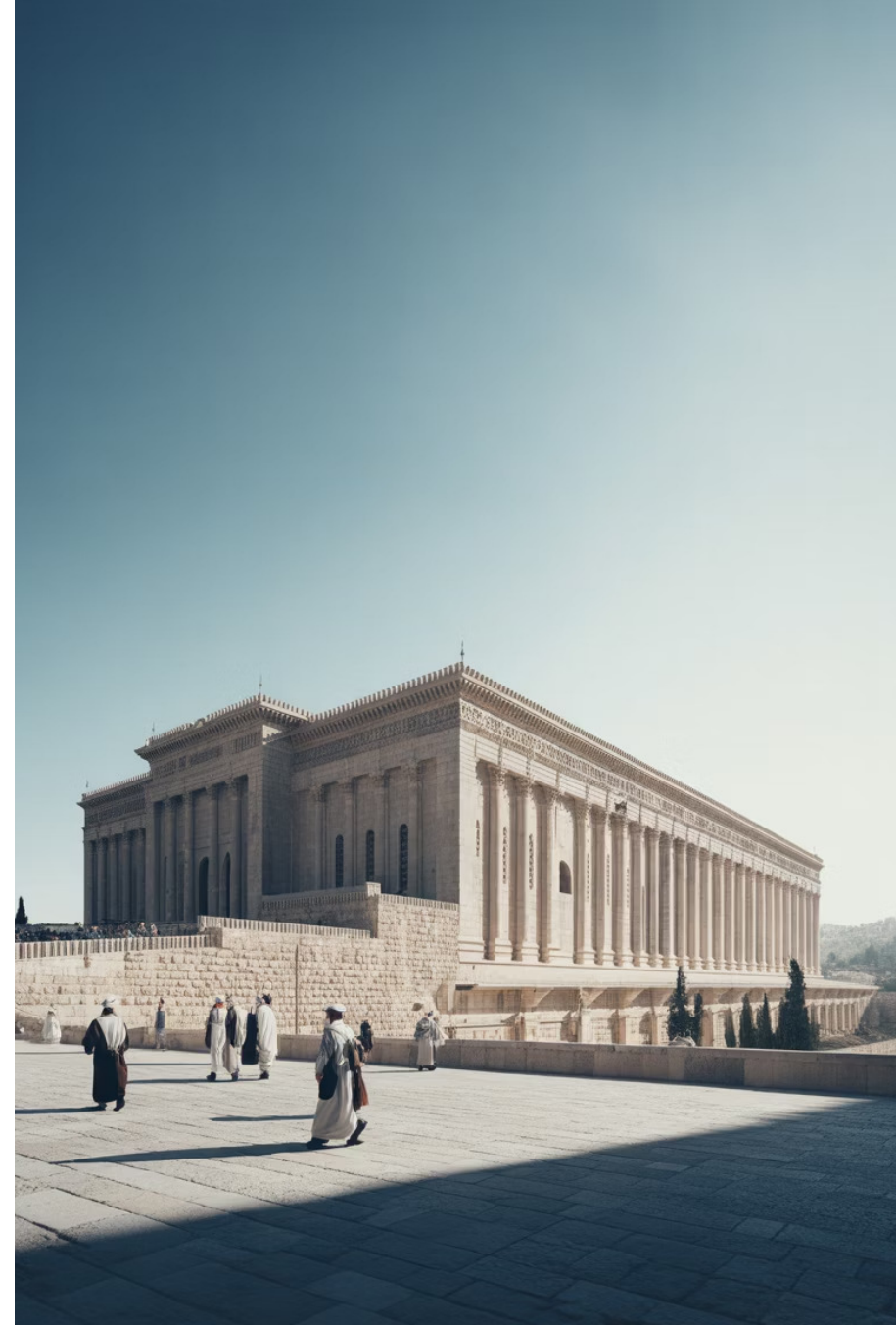
Matthew must be dated before 70 AD since it contains Jesus' prediction of Jerusalem's destruction. The Gospel contains more warnings against the Sadducees than any other New Testament book, and since the Sadducees ceased to be a living force in Judaism after 70 AD, this supports a pre-destruction date around 50 AD.

Historical Markers

- Written before Jerusalem's destruction (70 AD)
- Sadducees still active as opponents
- Temple worship system still functioning
- Jewish-Christian tensions increasing

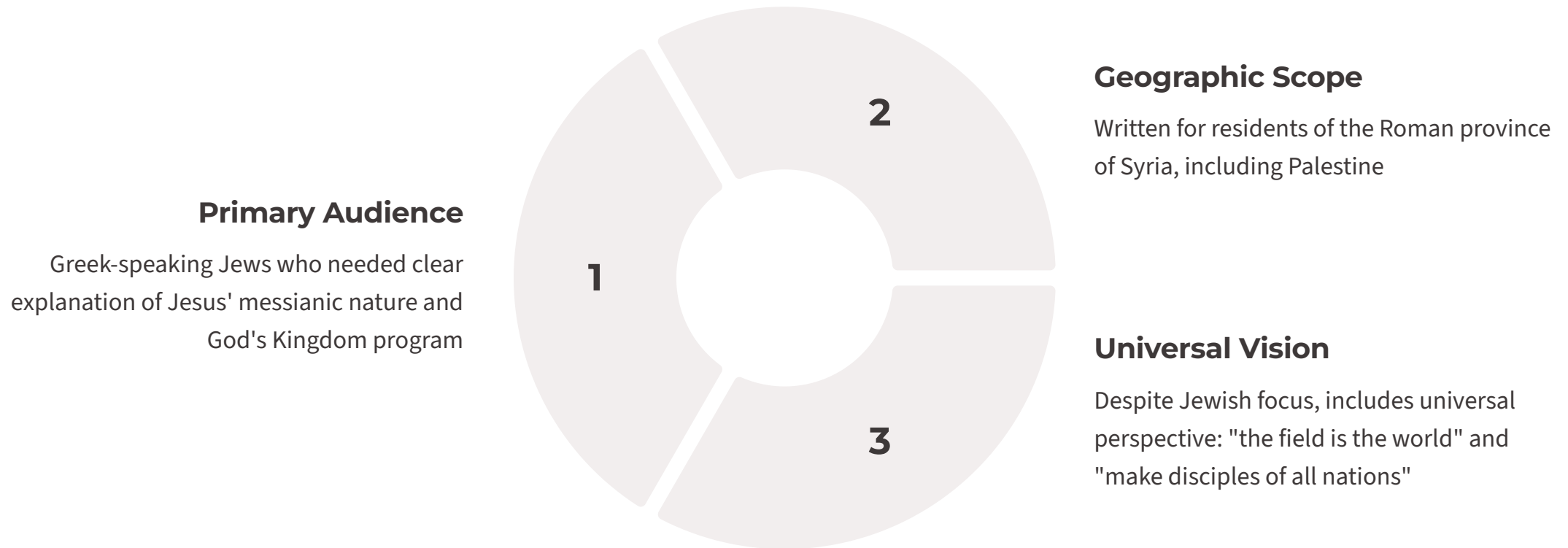
Proposed Date

Approximately **50 AD**, making it likely the first Gospel written. This early date explains its foundational role in establishing Jesus' messianic credentials for Jewish audiences.



Origin and Intended Audience

Antioch of Syria emerges as the favored location for Matthew's composition - a cosmopolitan Greek city with a large Jewish population. The first mention of Matthew's Gospel comes from Ignatius, bishop of Antioch.





Occasion and Purpose

Matthew wrote during a period when the division between the Church and established Judaism was becoming increasingly pronounced. Jewish believers needed assurance that they hadn't betrayed Israel's ideals by following the One whom the nation had officially rejected.

1

Apologetic Purpose

Defend Jesus' messiahship to Jews who might object to a crucified Messiah

2

Evidential Method

Demonstrate fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies through nine key proof texts

3

Miraculous Authentication

Present Jesus' miracles as proof of His messianic claims and divine nature

Matthew's Proof Texts

Matthew employs nine specific Old Testament texts to demonstrate Jesus' messianic credentials, showing how His life fulfilled ancient prophecies.

Matthew Reference	Fulfillment Event	Old Testament Source
1:22-23	Virgin Birth	Isaiah 7:14
2:15	Flight to Egypt	Hosea 11:1
2:17-18	Massacre of Innocents	Jeremiah 31:15
4:14-16	Ministry in Galilee	Isaiah 9:1-2
8:17	Healing Ministry	Isaiah 53:4

The Five Great Discourses

Matthew organizes Jesus' teaching into five major discourses, each addressing crucial aspects of Kingdom life and demonstrating Jesus' authority as the greater Moses.



Sermon on the Mount (5:1-7:27)

Kingdom principles for righteous living



Disciples' Duties (10:5-42)

Instructions for Kingdom messengers



Kingdom Parables (13:1-52)

Mysteries of the Kingdom revealed



Kingdom Relationships (18:1-35)

Principles for community life



Prophetic Discourse (24:3-25:46)

Future Kingdom establishment



Matthew's Historical Framework

Matthew records Jesus' entire earthly life from 5/4 BC to April 3, 33 AD, providing crucial historical context for understanding the political and religious tensions of first-century Palestine.

Political Climate

- Rising tension under Roman rule
- Jewish armed resistance groups emerging
- Pontius Pilate's brutal administration
- Rivalry between Herod Antipas and Pilate

Religious Parties

- Pharisees: Legal traditionalists
- Sadducees: Temple aristocracy
- Zealots: Revolutionary activists
- Herodians: Political pragmatists



Social Context of Jesus' Ministry

The social structure of first-century Palestine created the perfect storm for Jesus' message of Kingdom transformation, with extreme inequality and religious burdens crushing the common people.

1%

Elite Class

Small minority enjoying wealth and privilege

90%

Common People

Majority groaning under heavy taxation and religious burdens

15%

Tax Rate

Roman taxation plus temple taxes created crushing financial burden

Matthew's Dual Purpose

Matthew's Gospel serves both **didactic** and **apologetic** purposes, teaching about the Kingdom while defending Jesus' messianic credentials to a Jewish audience.

Didactic Purpose

Clarify God's Kingdom program for the present era in light of Israel's rejection of their Messiah-King

Apologetic Purpose

Prove to Jewish audiences that Jesus of Nazareth was indeed Israel's promised Messiah despite His crucifixion

Matthew accomplishes this by carefully documenting selected events and teachings from Jesus' ministry that demonstrate His messianic nature and explain God's unfolding plan for His Kingdom.



Matthew's Literary Structure

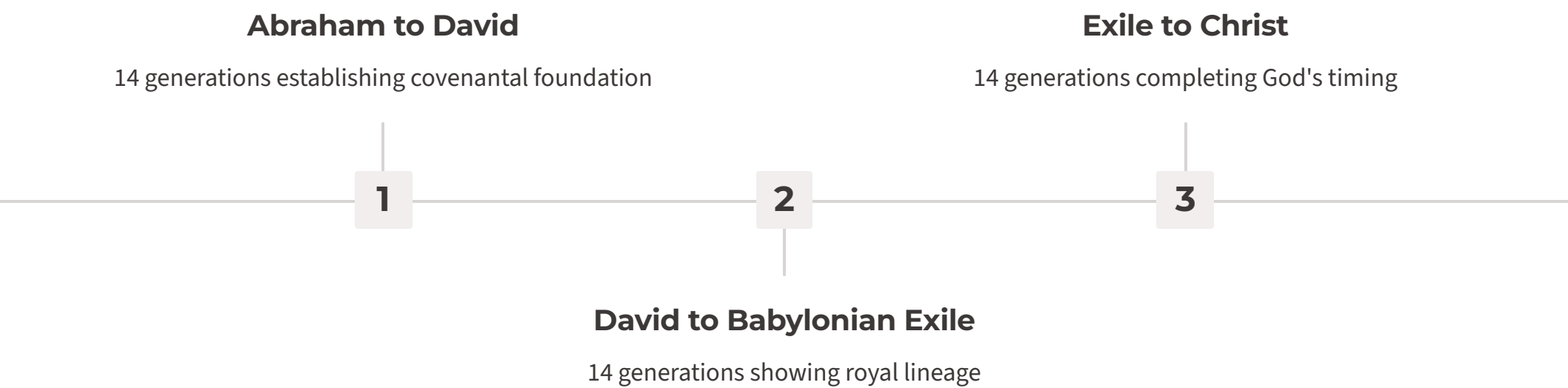
Matthew organizes his Gospel around five major discourses that provide climactic moments for the narrative blocks that precede them, creating a sophisticated literary architecture.





The King's Genealogy and Birth

Matthew begins with Jesus' legal genealogy, establishing His credentials as "Son of David" and "Son of Abraham," thus connecting Him to both the Davidic covenant and the Abrahamic promises.



The symmetrical arrangement of three sets of fourteen generations may connect Jesus to David through the numerical value of David's name in Hebrew (14 = דוד).

The Virgin Birth and Fulfillment

Matthew emphasizes the miraculous nature of Jesus' conception, fulfilling Isaiah 7:14 and establishing both His divine nature and His role as Immanuel - "God with us."

"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel' (which means 'God with us')." - Matthew 1:22-23

This fulfillment serves multiple purposes: authenticating Jesus' divine nature, countering accusations of illegitimacy, and demonstrating God's supernatural intervention in human history.



The Visit of the Magi

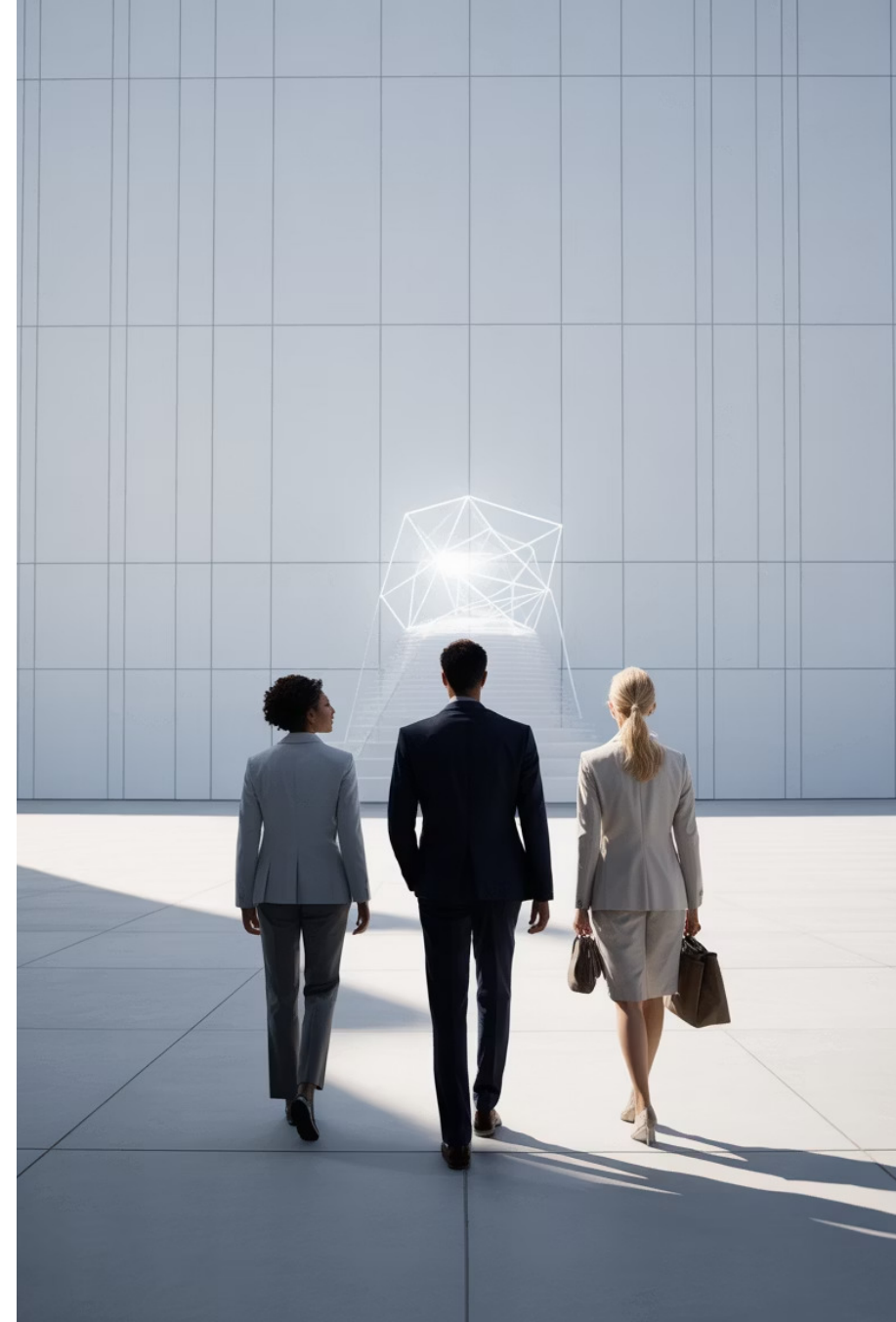
The magi's visit provides a dramatic contrast between Gentile recognition and Jewish indifference to the Messiah's birth, establishing an early theme of universal salvation.

Jewish Response

- Scribes knew the prophecy but showed no interest
- Herod plotted to eliminate the threat
- Jerusalem was troubled by the news
- Religious leaders remained indifferent

Gentile Response

- Magi recognized the King's birth from afar
- Made costly journey to worship Him
- Brought valuable gifts acknowledging His royalty
- Showed proper reverence and submission



Egypt and the New Exodus

The flight to Egypt and subsequent return fulfill Hosea 11:1 ("Out of Egypt I called my son"), presenting Jesus as the ideal Israel who perfectly recapitulates the nation's experience.

Matthew uses this geographical movement to demonstrate that Jesus' life mirrors and perfects Israel's history - called out of Egypt, tested in the wilderness, and prepared for His mission. Each Old Testament citation confirms Jesus' messianic credentials while showing God's sovereign orchestration of events.



THE GOSPEL OF MARK

Mark presents Jesus as the Servant of God, emphasizing His active ministry and sacrificial death. Written for a Roman audience facing persecution, this Gospel demonstrates that true greatness comes through service and suffering.





Mark: Authorship and Audience

Even the earliest manuscripts bear the superscription **KATA MAPKON** ("According to Mark"), pointing to John Mark as the author - the son of Mary, missionary companion of Paul, and spiritual son of Peter.

Ancient Testimony

Papias (c. 140 AD) indicates Mark was Peter's interpreter, carefully recording the apostle's preaching about Jesus' life and ministry.

Church Father Confirmation

Justin Martyr, Ireneu, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, and Origen all attest to Markan authorship.

Internal Evidence

Shows knowledge of Aramaic, familiarity with Palestinian geography, and intimate details of events like the Last Supper venue.

Mark's Roman Context

Multiple lines of evidence point to Roman recipients for Mark's Gospel, requiring explanation of Jewish customs and geography while emphasizing themes that would resonate with Roman values.



Language Adaptations

Translates Aramaic terms, explains Jewish customs, offers geographical details about Jerusalem, and uses Latin terms familiar to Romans



Roman Witnesses

Features a Roman centurion as key witness to Jesus' divine nature, and mentions Alexander and Rufus (connected to Roman church)



Minimal Old Testament

Only one formal Old Testament quotation, suggesting readers unfamiliar with Hebrew scriptures





Date and Occasion

Mark wrote around 65 AD in Rome, during a period of increasing persecution under Nero. The Gospel was composed at the request of Roman believers to preserve Peter's apostolic tradition as the aged apostle faced martyrdom.

Historical Context

- Growing persecution of Christians in Rome
- Peter's approaching death
- Need to preserve apostolic testimony
- Encouragement needed for suffering believers

Clement's Testimony

Clement of Alexandria reported that Roman believers requested Mark to write down Peter's preaching, preserving the apostolic tradition for future generations facing similar trials.



Mark's Gospel of Action

Mark creates a gospel of concentrated action, where crowds continuously surround Jesus and events occur with remarkable immediacy, emphasized by the frequent use of *εὐθὺς* ("immediately") - appearing 41 times.

41

Times "Immediately"

Mark's favorite transition word creating urgency and momentum

6

Chapters on Passion

One-third of the Gospel focuses on Jesus' final week

18

Miracle Accounts

Emphasizing Jesus' power and authority as God's Servant

The Messianic Secret Theme

Throughout the first half of Mark, Jesus repeatedly commands silence about His identity. This wasn't to hide His messiahship but to prevent misunderstanding of His mission and premature political reactions from the crowds.

1

Demons Silenced (1:25, 34)

Jesus refuses demonic testimony about His identity

2

Healings Kept Quiet (1:44; 5:43)

Recipients told not to spread news of miracles

3

Identity Concealed (8:30; 9:9)

Disciples instructed not to reveal His messiahship

4

Public Declaration (14:61-62)

Jesus openly affirms His identity at the proper time



Mark's Christology

Mark presents a remarkably high Christology, portraying Jesus as both fully divine and genuinely human. The Gospel balances divine power with human emotion, creating a compelling portrait of the incarnate Son of God.

Divine Qualities	Human Emotions
Son of God (1:1, 11)	Compassion (1:41)
Forgives sins (2:10)	Anger (3:5)
Controls nature (4:39)	Indignation (10:14)
Commands demons (5:13)	Amazement (6:6)
Supernatural knowledge (2:8)	Weariness (4:38)



The Suffering Servant

Mark's Gospel reaches its climax when a Roman centurion declares, "Truly this man was God's Son!" The very audience Mark addresses recognizes what Israel's leaders rejected - Jesus' true identity revealed through His sacrificial death.

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." - Mark 10:45

This verse encapsulates Mark's central theme: Jesus as the Servant whose authority is demonstrated through service, and whose greatest act is His substitutionary death for humanity.



Mark's Purpose and Message

Mark writes to produce faith commitment to Jesus Christ among readers facing persecution. His purpose combines evangelistic appeal with pastoral encouragement, showing that suffering and service authenticate rather than disqualify true discipleship.

Evangelistic Purpose

Demonstrate Jesus' identity as Son of God through His powerful works and sacrificial death

Pastoral Purpose

Encourage persecuted believers by showing Christ's own suffering and ultimate triumph

Discipleship Model

Present service and sacrifice as the authentic marks of following Jesus

THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

Luke, the beloved physician and careful historian, presents Jesus as the Son of Man whose universal mission extends salvation to all humanity. His Gospel demonstrates the legitimacy of the Gentile mission through meticulous historical documentation.



Luke: The Historian Evangelist

Luke's Gospel bears the marks of careful historical research, with precise chronological and geographical details. As the only Gentile New Testament author, Luke brings a unique perspective to documenting Jesus' universal significance.

Historical Precision

Links events to secular history, provides exact details about illnesses, and shows meticulous attention to chronological accuracy

Literary Excellence

Most polished Greek in the New Testament while preserving authentic Hebraic and Aramaic elements from eyewitness sources

Universal Perspective

Traces Jesus' genealogy to Adam, emphasizes ministry to outcasts, and documents the scope of His mission to all nations





Luke's Research Methodology

Luke's prologue (1:1-4) reveals his systematic approach: investigating eyewitness accounts, organizing material chronologically, and providing Theophilus with accurate historical foundation for his faith.

"Many have undertaken to draw up an account of the things that have been fulfilled among us, just as they were handed down to us by those who from the first were eyewitnesses and servants of the word. With this in mind, since I myself have carefully investigated everything from the beginning, I too decided to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus, so that you may know the certainty of the things you have been taught." - Luke 1:1-4



Date and Composition

Luke likely composed his Gospel around 58-59 AD in Caesarea during Paul's imprisonment. The abrupt ending of Acts suggests Luke completed both volumes shortly after Paul's release in 62 AD.

Evidence for Early Date

- Collection for Jerusalem saints completed
- Phoebe from Cenchreae recommended to Romans
- Greetings from Gaius and Erastus (Corinthian associates)
- Access to eyewitnesses during Paul's Caesarean imprisonment

Research Opportunities

During Paul's two-year imprisonment in Caesarea, Luke had unprecedented access to Jerusalem church leaders and potentially to Mary, the mother of Jesus, for the unique infancy narratives.



Theophilus and Luke's Audience

Theophilus, addressed as "most excellent," was likely a person of high social standing, possibly even within the imperial hierarchy. The formal dedication suggests he may have sponsored the work's publication.

1

Immediate Purpose

Provide Theophilus with accurate information about Jesus' person and work

2

Apologetic Function

Counter false reports or suspicious movements already circulating about Christianity

3

Publication Strategy

Enable wider distribution through Theophilus's resources and social connections



Luke's Gentile Perspective

Multiple indicators reveal Luke's Gentile audience: Greek terms replace Hebrew titles, genealogy extends to Adam rather than Abraham, and explanatory notes clarify Jewish customs for non-Jewish readers.

Linguistic Adaptations

Uses ἐπιστάτω instead of Rabbi, νομικός instead of γραμματεύς, explaining Jewish terms for Gentile understanding

Universal Genealogy

Traces Jesus' lineage to Adam, emphasizing His significance for all humanity, not just Israel

Cultural Explanations

Clarifies that Passover is "called the Feast of Unleavened Bread" and explains other Jewish customs



Luke's Theological Themes

Luke emphasizes distinctive theological concerns: the Holy Spirit's work, the universal scope of salvation, extensive angelic ministry, and Jesus' deliberate journey toward Jerusalem and the cross.



Holy Spirit Emphasis

More references to the Spirit than Matthew and Mark combined, showing the Spirit's crucial role in Jesus' mission



Universal Mission

Jesus as Son of Man (19:10) with salvation extending to "all nations" (24:47)



Angelic Ministry

Over twenty references to angels in relation to Jesus' person and mission

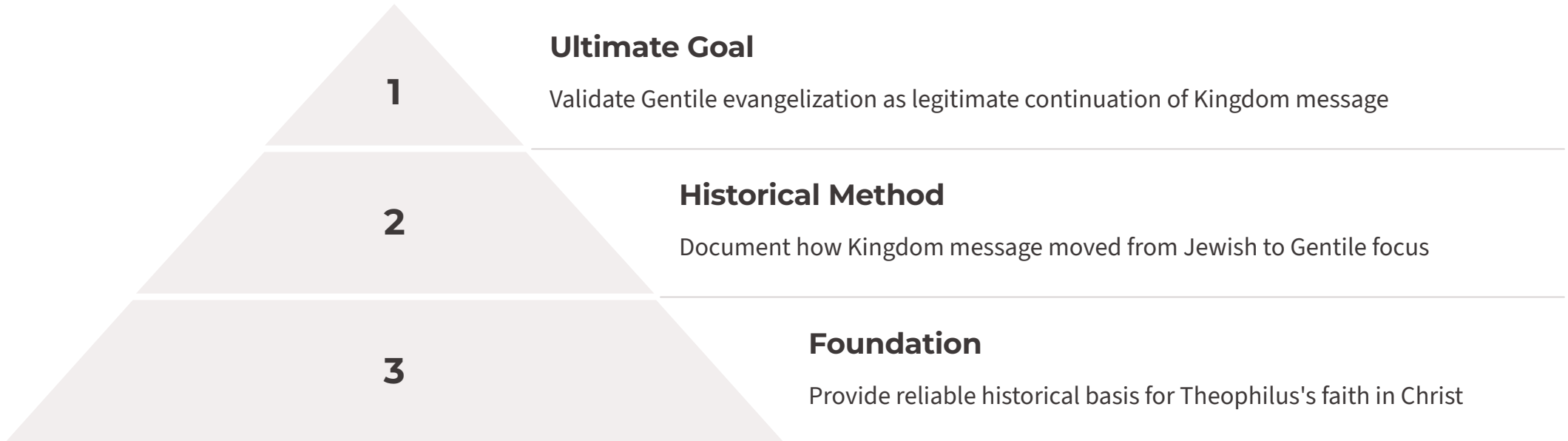


Jerusalem Journey

Twelve chapters dedicated to Jesus' deliberate movement toward His destiny in Jerusalem

Luke's Purpose Statement

Luke's Gospel serves both pastoral-apologetic and theological purposes: providing historical foundation for faith while demonstrating that the Gentile mission legitimately continues God's redemptive plan despite Israel's rejection.





THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

John's Gospel presents Jesus as the eternal Word made flesh, the Son of God whose divine nature and redemptive mission are revealed through carefully selected signs and extended discourses.



John: The Beloved Disciple

The fourth Gospel's author identifies himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved" - not from pride, but from amazement that despite his imperfections, Jesus Christ genuinely loved him. This became his cherished identity among early Christians.

Internal Evidence

Claims eyewitness status (1:14; 19:35; 21:24), shows intimate knowledge of Jewish customs and Palestinian geography, demonstrates familiarity with disciples' thoughts and reactions

External Testimony

Ireneus, disciple of Polycarp (who was John's disciple), testifies that John published this Gospel during his residence in Ephesus

Unique Perspective

Provides complementary material to the Synoptics, focusing on Judean ministry and extended theological discourses



Dating and Historical Context

John wrote likely before 70 AD, evidenced by present tense references to Jerusalem's temple and pool of Bethesda. The discovery of early papyrus fragments confirms circulation well before the second century, contradicting late dating theories.

Early Date Evidence

- Present tense: "there is in Jerusalem a pool" (5:2)
- Detailed knowledge of pre-70 AD Jerusalem
- P52 papyrus fragment dated c. 130 AD
- Time needed for circulation and copying

Qumran Impact

Dead Sea Scroll discoveries demolished theories of Hellenistic influence, showing that supposedly "Greek" concepts of light/darkness, truth/error were common in first-century Palestine Judaism.

A man with grey hair, wearing a dark suit and tie, is shown from the chest up. He is looking upwards and to the right with a thoughtful expression, his hand resting on his chin. The background consists of dark, angular geometric shapes, possibly architectural elements, with some light reflecting off the surfaces.

John's Unique Characteristics

John's Gospel stands apart through its sophisticated theological vocabulary, extended discourses, emphasis on Jesus' "I AM" statements, and vertical dualism contrasting heavenly and earthly realms.

Extended Discourses

Long theological conversations replacing the brief sayings and parables of the Synoptics

"I AM" Declarations

Seven absolute claims revealing Jesus' divine nature and mission

Vertical Dualism

Contrasts between "above/below," "light/darkness," "truth/error," emphasizing Jesus' heavenly origin

Realized Eschatology

Emphasis on present spiritual realities while maintaining future hope