



INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS

Key knowledge that paves the way to understanding the Bible



S M C O A

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We do not give a full explanation, but we provide the key to knowledge that paves the way for a comprehensive understanding of the Scriptures. St. Jerome says:

"Our ignorance of the Bible is our ignorance of Christ."

+ Christ did not incarnate to write the Bible:

- he was incarnated for the salvation of man. Salvation was proclaimed in two covenants:
 - » **The Old Testament:** a collection of books written before the Incarnation, aimed at preaching salvation.
 - » **New Testament:** Fulfillment of promises of the coming of the Lord God.

+ The Lord Jesus is the focus of the Bible:

- Christ is the grain of wheat that was sown in the Old Testament and bore fruit in the New Testament.
- St. Augustine says: **"The Bible is the mouth of Christ; the New Testament is hidden in the old, and the old is revealed in the new"**.





Question: Are the two Testaments equal in proclaiming the work of Christ?

+ **Answer: Yes and no**, based on the words of St. Paul the Apostle: “God who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by his son, whom he has appointed heir of all things” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

+ **Yes: They are equal in the subject of the declaration:**

- God who was revealed in the old is the one who was revealed in the new.
- The one who binds the two Testaments is neither prophecies nor promises, but God Himself.

+ **No: They differ in the way of revelation:**

- In old times, “Not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them” (Hebrews 11:13).
- Then came the full revelation in the son:
 - “To him all the prophets witness that, through his name, whoever believes in him will receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43).
 - “Who gave Himself for our sins, that He might deliver us from this present evil age, according to the will of our God and father” (Galatians 1:4).





The meaning of the word Gospel

- + That is, the joyful good news / good news, which is our Lord Jesus, the author of the good news.
- + Our Lord Jesus said, "Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial for her" (Matthew 26:13).
- + The first to mention it in writing is St. Mark: "the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mark 1:1).
- + This word appears 72 times in the New Testament, including 54 times in the epistles of our St Paul the apostle.

+ Question: Is there a necessity for the written gospel?

+ Answer: Yes, because:

- 1- The written gospel is a means of preserving the sacred tradition or the gospel of salvation from deviation.
- 2- A means of evangelism and testimony to the whole world from generation to generation and everywhere.
- 3- A means of worship to be used in worship inside the church.

Meaning of the Word of Revelation

- + St. Paul says that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God" (2 Timothy 3:16).
- + Revealed: in Greek (Theopnephytus), meaning the breath of God: "For Prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21).
- + The work of the Holy Spirit in the Bible is not textual or instrumental, but is to:
 - Choose a person that can be servant.
 - Providing the writer with facts, while leaving the freedom of linguistic style to the level of thought and culture of the writer.
 - The infallibility of the writer from error while writing.
 - Example: like the current of electricity in the power cord and lighting according to the shape of the lamp.



The meaning of the word Tradition

- + that is, delivery, which is the life of the Church.
- + “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers” (Acts 2:42). They interpreted the words and works of the Lord Jesus during the Eucharist.
- + The faith of the Church is the guardian of tradition: (collecting the texts of the books / confirming their legality / explaining them).

Covenant: Testament

- + God wants to lead all human beings towards a life of communion with Him, so He established a covenant with humanity that began with the history of mankind, whether individuals or peoples.
- + The meaning of the covenant was completed in the four Gospels in the establishment of the Eucharist.
- + Christ is the mediator of the New Testament.





The Roman Empire

- + It is the only power in the Mediterranean world during the first century AD: (wide borders / provided security / power ruled by emperors / Greek language is the language of culture and thought).

Palestine

Three regions or districts:

1- Galilee: (North Region) with an area of 18 km long x 53 km wide.

- The most famous mountains: Mount Tabor (Transfiguration).
- The most famous lakes: Lake Gennesart, Tiberias or the Sea of Galilee.
- The most famous cities: Nazareth / Capernaum / Korazin / Beit Saida / Nain / Qana.

2- Samaria: the meaning of the name is the place of observation.

- The inhabitants of Samaria have special ideas.
- Its most famous landmark: Jacob's Well, at the city of Sukhar.
- Months of cities: Shechem (currently Nablus).

3- Judaism:

- Its inhabitants are those who adhere to the Temple and adhere to Jewish traditions.
- Its most famous mountains: Mount of Olives (Ascension) / Mountain of Experience.
- The most famous cities: Jerusalem and its suburbs: (Beit Faji / Bethany).

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1- Temple:

- + For the Jews it is the center of all existence:
(A symbol of God's dwelling with His people / in which sacrifices are offered / In which God's promises to fathers and grandfathers are centered).

2- The Sanhedrin:

The governing body of the Jews:

- + He derived his idea from the elders who helped Moses.
- + Each member of it was called a marshal.
- + His work ceased after 70 AD (the incident of the destruction of Jerusalem).

3- The Synagogue:

A local school outside Jerusalem for worship, and it had three objectives:

- 1- Devotional purpose: often from the Psalms and prayers of the prophets.
- 2- Learning Objective: From the books of Moses and the Prophets + Sermon.
- 3- Ritual goal: circumcision.

+ + +

+ Jewish denominations:

Pharisees / Scribes / Sadducees / Herodians / Samaritans.

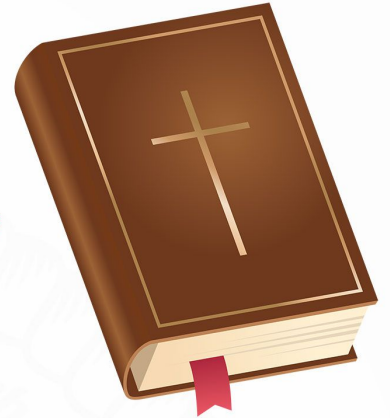
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+ **Question:** One gospel or four gospels?

+ **Answer:** We have one gospel, which has four aspects.
- And more precisely: the Gospel according to .. ΚΑΤΑ.



+ **Question:** Do we need more than one gospel about Christ?

+ **Answer:** Yes for integration, diversity and emphasis.
- Because the life of the Lord Jesus Christ is vast.

+ **Question:** Why four in particular?

+ **Answer:** Four disembodied beings / Four directions of the earth.
- These gospels are like four chords in one guitar, offering a harmonious symphony of colors.

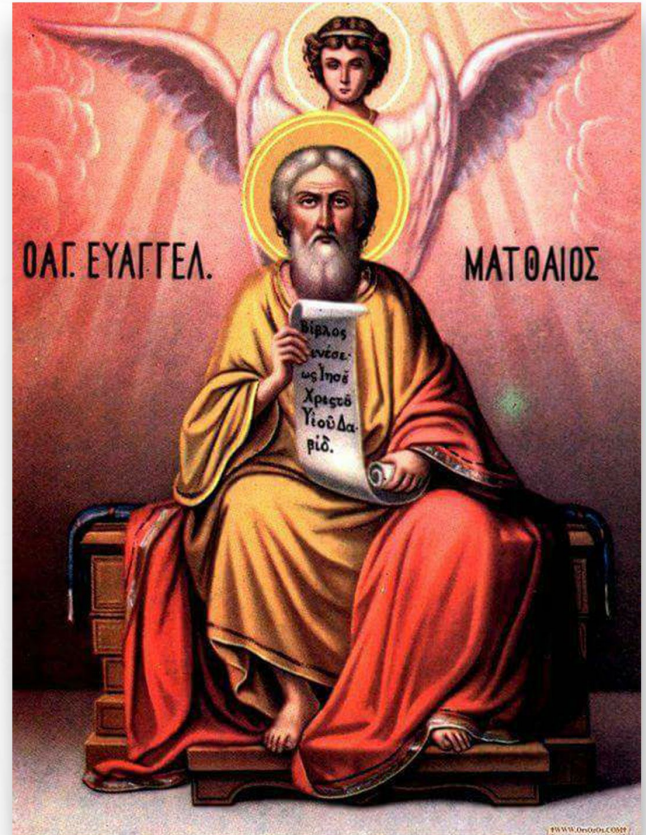
Faces of gospels:

St. Matthew	Symbol of Man	He wrote to the Jews	About the Messiah the King
St. Mark	Symbol of Lion	He wrote to the Romans	About the Messiah the humble servant
St. Luke	Symbol of Bull	He wrote to the Greeks	About the Messiah the friend of humanity
St. John	Symbol of Eagle	He wrote to the whole world	About the Messiah the Word Incarnate



THE WRITER

- + A converted Jew, used to work as a publican (tax collector).
- + His name was Levi, and his father was Alphaeus, and after his call, he became Matthew.
- + He mentioned his call in (Matthew 9:9):
And as Jesus was passing from there, he saw a man sitting at the tax office, whose name was Matthew. And he said to him, "Follow me." So he got up and followed him.
- + Matta, means: God's gift = Nathanael (Hebrew) = Theodos (Greek) = Tadros (Arabic) = Tawadros (Coptic).
- + He became one of the twelve.
- + He wrote his gospel in approximately 63 AD, before the Jerusalem war.
- + The Bible is symbolized by a symbol: (the human being), because it begins by mentioning the genealogy of the Lord and focuses on the title: "Son of David."



THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL

- + It consists of selections from the teachings of the Lord Jesus for the purpose of proving that in Jesus of Nazareth all the prophecies concerning the Messiah in the Old Testament are happened and fulfilled.
- + That is, it forms a bridge linking the Old and New Testaments, so we notice the repetition of the phrase: (As it was written / As it was told by the Prophet).



MAIN FEATURES OF THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW

1- Wonderfully organized and arranged:

- + It can be arranged objectively and not chronologically, and some believe that the Gospel of Saint Matthew came in 5 articles” corresponding to the five books of Moses the Prophet, on the basis that Christ is the new Moses:
 - The Sermon on the Mount. (Chapters 5-7).
 - Missionaries and their teaching. (Chapter 10).
 - Kingdom Proverbs (Chapter 13).
 - Various Teachings for Church Life (Chapter 18).
 - The talk of eschatology. (Chapters 24-25).

2- Frequent quotes from the Old Testament:

- + More than 100 quotes.

3- He was the only one to talk about the Church (Ecclesia):

- + He was the first to mention the name of the Church from the mouth of the Lord Himself:

- **The first time:** after St. Peter's confession in Caesarea Philippi: **You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell will not prevail against it. (Matthew 16:18).**

- **The second time:** He gave the church the judgment in disputes: **And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the church. But if he refuses even to hear the church, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. (Matthew 18:17).**

- + He also talked about the church work: Christ chose 12 apostles, gave them authority, and gave them the keys to loosening and binding. At the end of his gospel, he mentioned Christ's commandment to his disciples to preach to the whole world.



4- His interest in numbers beloved by the Jews: such as 2, 3, 5, 7.

+ Number (2) check in:

- The two titles (Ibn Dawood / Ibn Ibrahim).
- Two chapters: a chapter for the Beatitudes (Matthew 5) and another chapter for woes (Matthew 23).
- He mentioned that Jesus fed the crowd twice.
- He mentioned that Christ shouted twice on the cross.
- Comparisons.

+ Number (3) check in:

- Divide the human chain into three equal parts, each of which is 14 generations.
- Three gifts of the Magi.
- Three experiments of the Lord.
- He stated that the work of Christ was: (He preached, taught and healed).
- He mentioned three types of eunuchs.
- He said: Ask.. request.. knock.

+ Number (5) check in:

- The five wise virgins and the five foolish ones.

+ Number (7) check in:

- Seven brothers married one woman.
- Forgiveness seven times.
- The Lord's Prayer includes seven requests.

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5- The eschatological dimension:

- + He mentioned a group of proverbs about the second coming, judgment, and the need to prepare.
- + He is also unique in mentioning the proverb of the ten virgins (Matthew 25).

6- We owe him his assimilation of all the moral teachings of Christ, which he collected in three complete chapters (5, 6, 7):

- + In the Sermon on the Mount, and in his mind dictating the new law to complement the law of Moses, “You have heard that it was said to the ancients... As for me, I say to you. It is as though St. Matthew is referring to Christ that he is the new Moses.

7- He made it clear that Christ is: Lord of the Sabbath:

- + “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to fulfill” (Matthew 5:17).
- + This is the key verse of the Gospel of our teacher, Matthew the Apostle.

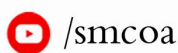


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THE WRITER

- + Mark is one of the seventy apostles.
- + He grew up in a religious family (his father is Aristobulus and his mother is Mary).
- + He bore two names: “John, who was called Mark”:
 - John: God of tenderness.
 - Mark: Greek name meaning hammer.
- + He is the young man who was carrying the jar when the two disciples met him to celebrate the Passover.
- + He is the young man who left his robe and fled naked, when the Lord was arrested.



THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL

- + It is the oldest of the Gospel texts.
- + It is symbolized by the lion.
- + Written for the Romans.





MAIN FEATURES OF THE GOSPEL OF MARK

1- Brief and quick in his biblical account:

- + It is the shortest of the Gospels (16 chapters).
- + Snapshots of the life of the Lord Jesus.
- + His most famous words (for time) are 42 times, compared to the Gospel of Matthew 7 times, and the Gospel of Luke once.

2- Addressed to the Romans (the Gentiles):

- + He presented Christ having a true authority, to the Romans the people of power and authority and the men of violence and pride, so showed Christ the true servant.
- + He did not quote from the Old Testament except only once in the introduction to his gospel.
- + Explains some Aramaic words: (Boanerges, which means “sons of thunder” / “Talitha”, which means “little girl” / “Corban” which means a gift / “Golgotha”, which is translated as “skull”).
- + Explains some Jewish customs and beliefs that the Romans did not understand: (The Sadducees' denial of the resurrection / The Jews washing their hands before eating / The custom of slaughtering the Passover on the first day of unleavened bread).

3- The gospel of our teacher Mark, is the gospel of the suffering Christ:

- + Where he was interested in highlighting the idea of the cross and pain throughout the entire book as follows:
 - The Lord's speech and His declaration of His suffering clearly three times.
 - The appearance of pain clearly in the example of the vineyard and the vinedressers.
 - He declared that he is the stone that the builders rejected.
 - Woman pouring perfume: **She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial.(Mark 14:8)**



4- He singled out a parable and a miracle alone:

+ The Parable:

- The field whose seed grows without the farmer knowing how it will grow (Mark 4).

+ The miracle:

- Lightening the eyes of a blind man in Bethsaida, whom Christ healed in stages (Mark 8: 22-26). The aim of mentioning this miracle is to confirm the concept of gradual spiritual growth. St. Mark himself, as an example, stumbled and gradually grew to become an Evangelist.

5- The accuracy of St. Mark the Apostle in several respects:

- + Despite the extreme brevity and fast pace, it was at the same time marked by scrutiny and clarification in three respects:

+ Accuracy in the names:

- Matthew the tax collector is the son of Alphaeus (2:14)
- Bartimaeus the blind son of Timaeus (10:46)
- Simon of Cyrene is the father of Alexandros and Rufus (5:21)

+ Accuracy in listing the events:

- In the feeding of the crowds: **They sat down in ranks, in hundreds and in fifties. (Chapter 6).**
- Purification of the Temple: He is the only one who clarified that the Temple was cleansed on Monday after the fig tree was cursed (Mark 11: 11, 15).
- In determining the date of the resurrection: He is the only one who accurately mentioned the date: **Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. (Mark 16:2).**

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+ **Accuracy in describing the feelings of Christ:**

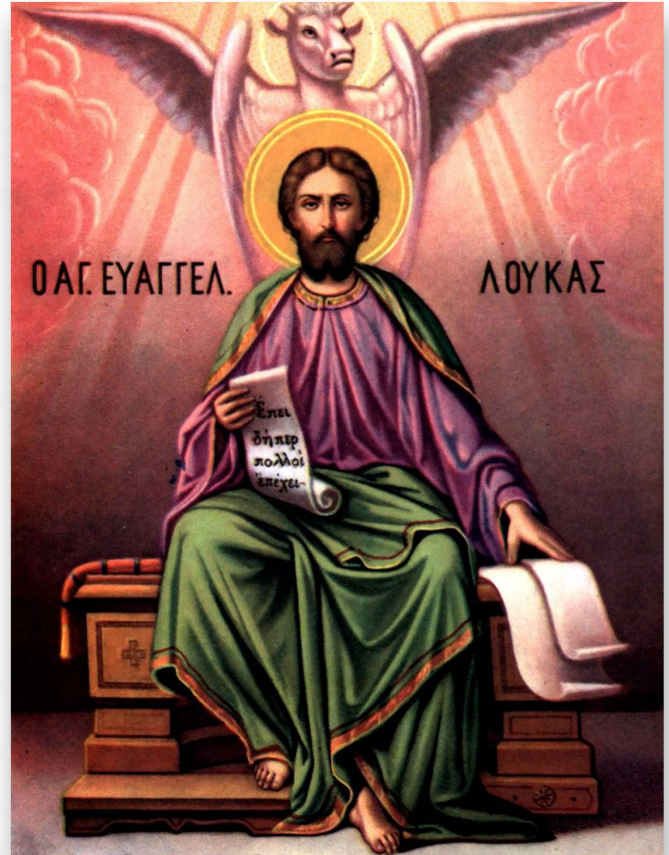
- He is the beholder of God, his eyes are on Christ and his feelings, realizing that He is the lover of mankind:
 - On the healing of the leper: Jesus' compassion.
 - Had pity on the combination.
 - Hugged the boys.
 - With the rich young man: **Jesus looked at him and loved him. (Mark 10: 21)**
 - Healing a deaf and had an impediment in his speech person: **He took him from the crowd on the one hand, put his fingers in his ears, spat and touched his tongue (Mark 7: 33).**
 - On healing the man who had the withered hand: the Jews looked at him with anger.





THE WRITER

- + Luke the physician, companion of St. Paul.
- + One of the Seventy apostles, the only Gentile in the writers of Revelation.
- + He also wrote the Book of Acts, and the two books he sent to most excellent Theophilus. And “most excellent” is a title given to a responsible person of a position such as (His Highness).
- + It is said that he was martyred at the age of 84 years.



THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL

- + The date of writing the Bible from the years 61-63 AD.
- + The Gospel began with the Annunciation and the birth of the Baptist and ended with the ascension of our Lord Jesus, and the historical period that St. Luke wrote about is 35 years.
- + He wrote his Bible for the Greeks / Language: Classical Greek.
- + The Greeks search for the meaning of life, i.e. the perfect life. Therefore, St. Luke provided the perfect human model. Therefore, the most common title given to Christ in the Gospel of St. Luke is: the Son of Man (26 times).
- + The key of the book: **For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.**(Luke 19:10)



MAIN FEATURES OF THE GOSPEL OF LUKE

- 1- He is the only one whose gospel began with the good news to the Virgin:** and reached the lineage of Christ our God to Adam. And Adam is the father of all humanity (including gentiles).
- 2- He is the only one who mentioned the details of the Annunciation of the Baptist:** as well as shed light on the early life of Christ (circumcision / entry into the temple...) and he drew this information from our Virgin Mother: “having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first” (Luke 1: 3).
- 3- Show the model (perfection) of man, Jesus Christ: He is a man of prayer (6 situations):**
 - Baptism (Luke 3).
 - Before the call of the Twelve (Luke 6).
 - On the cross (Luke 23).
 - After cleansing the leper (Luke 5).
 - Transfiguration (Luke 9).
 - Before Ascending. (Luke 24).
- 4- He has several solos:**
 - + **Miracles:** He mentioned five miracles that were not mentioned by the other three Evangelists:
 - Catching fishes in the fifth chapter.
 - Raising the son of the widow of Nain in the ninth chapter.
 - The woman who had a spirit of weakness for 18 years in the thirteenth chapter.
 - The ten lepers in the seventeenth chapter.
 - Healing Malchus ear in the twenty-second chapter, (some contemplatives consider it to be the first organ transplant!).
 - + **Situations:** Christ weeping over Jerusalem.
 - + **The salvation of persons:** the only one who mentioned the salvation of Zacchaeus / The right thief.
 - + **Conversations:** The conversation of the Lord with the disciples of Emmaus after the resurrection.
 - + **Stories:** The story of the rich man and Lazarus.
 - + **Miracles:** He mentioned five miracles that were not mentioned by the other three



+ **Parables:** There are ten parables that were not mentioned except in the Gospel of Luke:

- The Two Debtors (Chapter 7)
- The Good Samaritan (Chapter 10)
- Midnight Friend (Chapter 11)
- The rich fool (Chapter 12)
- The fruitless fig tree (Chapter 13)
- Injustice Judge (Chapter 18)
- The unjust steward (chapter 16)
- The faithful servants (Chapter 19)
- The Pharisee and the Publican (Chapter 18)
- The triple parable (the lost sheep / the lost dirham / the prodigal son) (Chapter 15)

5- Cared about the marginalized:

+ **Women:**

- Cared about serving women, like the service of the prophetess Hannah / Mary and Martha.
- He also mentioned the crying of the daughters of Jerusalem over Christ, and the women who were spending on Christ.

+ **The Poor:**

- The Poverty of the Virgin / The Poor Shepherds / The Story of the Rich and Poor Lazarus.

6- The figure of St. Luke appeared as a historian:

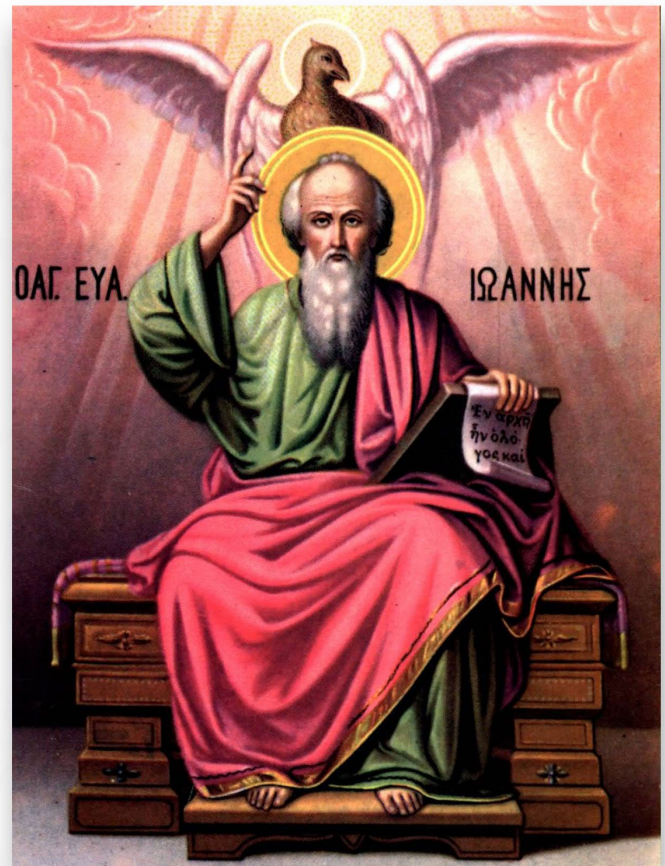
+ The historian writes the story and signs it on the map of time, and St. Luke has signed the life of Christ our God in human history.

+ **Example:** “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pointius Pilate being governor of Judea, Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias tetrarch of Abilene, while Annas and Caiaphas were high priests,...etc” (Luke 3)



- + He is John the messenger, brother of James, son of Zebedee. Simon's fishing partner.
- + Christ called him with Jacob his brother.
- + He is one of the disciples close to the Lord (Transfiguration / Residence of the daughter of Jairis / the garden).
- + He accompanied Jesus our God to the cross.
- + He was leaning on the chest of our Savior (attachment on the level of feelings).
- + Books: Gospel + 3 Epistles + Revelation.
- + He founded churches in Asia Minor and was exiled to Patmos.
- + The only one who was not martyred, returned to Ephesus and there he departed.
- + His titles: Beloved / Theologian / Seer / Virgin / Evangelist / Witness: **“He who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true” (John 19:35)** / The disciple whom Jesus loved.

THE WRITER



THE NATURE OF THE GOSPEL

- + St. John wrote his gospel in Greek, at the end of the 1st century AD, from Ephesus to the whole world.
- + He began it with the Baptist ministry and ended with the resurrection of Christ.
- + Symbolized by the eagle: the evangelists walked with Christ on earth (man - lion - ox), while St. John is like an eagle flying on high.
- + Some events are not mentioned: the founding of the Eucharist / the prophecy of the Mount of Olives.
- + If the ministry of the Lord Jesus on earth lasted about 1,000 days, St. John chose only 20 days during his Gospel: for example, the betrayal of the Master on the Day of the Cross (one day) was written by St. John in 7 complete chapters, about a third of the Gospel!



Background in writing the Gospel

- + 200 years BC, philosophers came up with the idea of the Logos in the universe.
- + At the beginning of Christianity, several heresies and currents appeared:
 - **Gnostics:** Gnus, i.e. knowledge: salvation by knowledge (including Nicholas).
 - **Dositians:** i.e. imaginary.
 - **The Ebionites:** that is, the poor, and considered Christ an ordinary prophet like Moses.
 - **Some of the Baptist disciples:** consider Jesus one of the disciples of John the Baptist.
- + Therefore, St. John wrote a preface in a wonderful form, speaking of the eternal Logos and humanity's need for it, and of the Baptist, the greatest but insufficient born of women, and Christ (the true light) came to humanity.

MAIN FEATURES OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

1- He didn't use the word (miracle / forces) but (verses) used this word 17 times.

2- There are 7 verses (miracles) that are mentioned only in the Gospel of John:

Each verse is preceded or followed by a theological statement that reveals the mystery and presence of God, and the verse itself explains the statement. as follows:

Turning water into wine (chapter two)	Creation	Talking with Nicodemus (chapter three)	The New Creation
The Healing of the King's Servant Son	Miracle at a Distance	Christ's Talk with the Samaritan	Springing Water
The sick of Bethesda pool (chapter 5)	The uselessness of an angel or human being	Christ's conversation with the Jews about the Saturday	Lord of the Saturday

JOHN THE APOSTLE



Feeding the crowds after walking on water (chapter 6)	Like Moses who parted the sea and satiated the people in the wilderness	Talk about the Bread of Life (chapter three)	Christ is the new Moses
Healing the blind man (chapter 9)	That is a creation for the light of his eyes	The talk "I am the light of the world"	He came to give the world spiritual insight
The resurrection of Lazarus (chapter 11)	Christ gives life	the talk of the good shepherd	who sacrifices himself for the sheep

3- It is characterized by (7) I am:

- I am the bread of life.
- I am the light of the world.
- I'm the door.
- I am the good shepherd.
- I am the resurrection and the life
- I am the way and the truth and the life.
- I am the true vine.

4- Mention (5) testimonies testifying to the divinity of Christ:

- Baptist testimony.
- The works testimony.
- Father's testimony.
- Books of the Prophets.
- The testimony of the prophet Moses.

5- Tends to be active with certain issues:

- The word (logos)
- The light
- The life
- The Truth.

6- Talked about the Holy Spirit:

- In chapters 15/16.



7- Mentioning (5) definitive verses that clearly prove the divinity of Christ:

- + In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (John 1:1)
- + Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM." (John 8:58)
- + I and My Father are one. (John 10:30)
- + He who has seen Me has seen the Father (John 14:9)
- + Thomas answered and said to Him, "My Lord and my God!" (John 20:28)

8- He mentioned (7) attempts to kill the lord:

- + Two times because of the Sabbath (chapters 5/7).
- + Five attempts due to his divinity, chapters (8/10 two times/11), and the last one ended with the cross.



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