

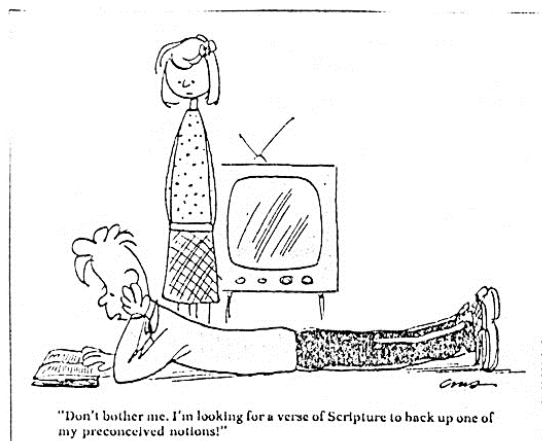
THE BIBLE as LITERATURE: THE NEW TESTAMENT

聖經文學：新約



"St John the Evangelist" by Domenichino 1620s

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MAJOR AND SECONDARY CHARACTERS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Andrew—*He was a former fisherman and one of the twelve apostles who brought his brother Peter to Christ (Mk. 1:16; Mt. 10:2; Jn. 1:40-42)*

Anna—*She was a prophetess and a widow from the tribe of Asher who, like Simeon, recognized the infant Jesus being dedicated in the temple as Israel's Messiah and praised God for this (Lk. 2:36-38)*

Annas—*He was the former and totally corrupt Jewish High Priest who, along with his son-in-law Caiaphas (current High Priest) treated Jesus in shameful fashion during the Savior's unfair trials (Jn. 18:12-13, 19-24)*

Barabbas—*He was the anarchist (Mk. 15:7; Lk. 23:19), murderer (Mk. 15:7; Lk. 23:19) and robber (Jn. 18:40), released by Pilate over Jesus who did so at the insistence of the Jewish leaders who preferred a convicted murderer over their own Messiah (Mt. 27:17, 20-21, 26)*

Barnabas—*Praised early in Acts for his generosity toward the church, Barnabas later becomes one of Paul's traveling companions and fellow missionaries, joining Paul in spreading the Gospel among the Gentiles.*

Bartimaeus—*This blind man, sitting and begging by the highway leading into Jericho, upon hearing that Jesus was passing by, cried out for healing and immediately received his sight (Mk. 10:46-52)*

Caiaphas—*He was the high priest who plots the death of Jesus, presides over Jesus's trial, and who later persecutes the leaders of the early church (Mt. 26:3-5, 62-65; Acts 4:6-7)*

Cleopas—*The resurrected Savior (at first unrecognized) appears to Cleopas and a fellow disciple en route to Emmaus. After realizing it was Jesus, he quickly returned to the Upper Room in Jerusalem to report the wonderful news to the frightened apostles. Even as he spoke, the Savior appeared in their presence (Lk. 24:13-35)*

Elisabeth—*She was the wife of Zacharias the Jewish High Priest who supernaturally gave birth to John the Baptist in her old age (Lk. 1:5-7, 57-60)*

Herod Antipas—*He was the ruling son of Herod the Great who beheaded John the Baptist and later ridiculed Jesus during one of the Savior's unfair trials (Mt. 14:10-11; Lk. 23:10-11)*

Herod the Great—*The King of Palestine from 37 to 4 b.c. According to Matthew, Herod hears of Jesus's birth and decides to kill the child, who is prophesied to become king of the Jews. To evade Herod's orders, Joseph takes Jesus and Mary to Egypt.*

Herodias—*This wicked and vindictive queen arranged for the beheading of John the Baptist who had fearlessly denounced her unlawful marriage to King Herod Antipas (Mk. 6:18-19; Mt. 14:3, 6-11)*

Jairus—*At the tearful request from this heartbroken and desperate father, Jesus accompanies him to heal his dying 12-year old daughter, only however to find the little girl dead upon their arrival. Jesus thereupon raises her from the dead (Mk. 5:22-24, 35-43; Lk. 8:41-42, 49-56)*

James the Apostle—*He was a former fisherman, the brother of John, and the first of the twelve apostles to be martyred for Christ (Mt. 4:21; 10:2; Acts 12:1-2)*

James the brother of Jesus—*He became pastor of the church in Jerusalem and authored the New Testament Book of James (Jn. 7:3-5; 1 Cor. 15:7; Acts 15:13-14, 19; 21:17-18; Jam. 1:1)*

Jesus of Nazareth—*The central figure of the New Testament, whose life, death, and resurrection are chronicled in the books. The four Gospels describe Jesus's life until his resurrection, and the remainder of the New Testament concerns itself with the community of followers of Jesus that steadily grows after his death.*

Joanna—*This godly wife, whose husband was King Herod Antipas' steward often helped Jesus financially. She was also present at the empty tomb on the first Easter Sunday (Lk. 8:3; 24:1-7, 10)*

John the Apostle—He was a former fisherman, the brother of James, the beloved disciple of Jesus and the author of five New Testament books (the Gospel of John, First, Second and Third John, the Book of Revelation)

John the Baptist—The forerunner to Jesus, spreading the word of Jesus’s imminent arrival. John the Baptist is an old ascetic who lives in the desert, wears a loincloth, and feeds on locusts and honey. He was the miracle baby of the barren Elisabeth, the Nazarite evangelist who both introduced the Messiah and baptized him, who would later be martyred for his fearless preaching (Lk. 1:5-17; Jn. 1:29; Mt. 3:16-17; 14:1-11)

Joseph of Arimathaea—*This wealthy disciple of Jesus, along with Nicodemus, requested and received from Pilate the lifeless body of Jesus and placed it in his own tomb (Mt. 27:57-60; Mk. 15:42-46; Lk. 23:50-54; Jn. 19:38-42)*

Joseph, husband of Mary—He was the husband of Mary and the godly, legal (but not physical) father of Jesus (Mt. 1:18-25)

Judas Iscariot—One of the Twelve Apostles, Judas betrays Jesus to the authorities in exchange for thirty pieces of silver. According to Matthew, Judas commits suicide out of remorse (Matthew 27:3–10).

Lazarus, the beggar—*He was the saved beggar carried by the angels into Abraham’s bosom (Lk. 16:19-23)*

Lazarus, the brother—He was the brother of Mary and Martha whom Christ raised from the dead at Bethany (Jn. 11)

Luke—A traveling companion of Paul. Christian tradition dating back to the second century a.d. claims that Luke is the author of the Gospel that bears his name and of Acts of the Apostles.

Malchus—*He was the servant of the Jewish High Priest whose ear was cut off by Simon Peter in Gethsemane and healed by Jesus (Jn. 18:10; Lk. 22:51)*

Martha—*She was the sister of Mary who reaffirmed her faith in Jesus during the funeral of her brother Lazarus and then witnessed him being raised from the dead by the Savior (Jn. 11)*

Mary Magdalene—A female follower of Jesus since the time of his Galilean ministry, when he exorcises her of seven demons (Luke 8:2). Mary Magdalene is a close friend of Jesus. She is one of the women who discover that Jesus’s body is not in his grave. Following this event, she witnesses the resurrected Jesus. She is also known as Mary of Magdala.

Mary, mother of James and Johns—*This mother helped Jesus financially and was present at His crucifixion and resurrection (Mt. 27:56; 28:5-10; Mk. 15:40-41, 47; 16:1-4; Lk. 24:6-11)*

Mary, Mother of Jesus—Luke’s narrative of Jesus’s infancy focuses heavily on the courage and faith of Mary, who becomes impregnated by the Holy Spirit. She is also one of the only people who remains with Jesus through the crucifixion. Gospel writers who have a high esteem for the female leaders in the early church community point to Mary as a model of discipleship.

Mary, sister of Martha—She worshipped at the feet of Jesus, witnessed Him raising her dead brother Lazarus (Lk. 10:39; Jn. 11:43; 12:1-3)

Matthew—He was a former tax collector, called by Jesus to become an apostle, who would later author the book of Matthew (Mt. 9:9; 10:3)

Nathanael—*He was also known as Bartholomew, introduced to Christ and later called to become one of the twelve apostles (Jn. 1:45-51; Mt. 10:3)*

Nicodemus—He was a well-known Pharisee and teacher, led to Christ during a midnight visit with the Savior and who would later help prepare His crucified body for burial (Jn. 3:1-15; 19:39)

Paul of Tarsus—More than half of the books in the New Testament have been attributed to Paul, the great missionary who directs the spread of Christianity after the death of Jesus. In his letters, Paul uses his keen mind and robust intellect to develop Christianity’s first sophisticated theology. In the period

immediately following Jesus's death, he is an active persecutor of Jesus's followers, but he later converts and becomes the most active proponent of Christ's disciples.

Peter—He was a former fisherman, brought to Christ by his brother Andrew, called to serve as one of the twelve, later denying his Savior on three occasions but after the resurrection becoming His chief spokesman at Pentecost, finally authoring two New Testament epistles (1 and 2 Peter) (Mt. 4:18-19; 10:2; Jn. 1:40-42; Lk. 22:54-62 Acts 2:14-40; 2 Peter 1:13-14)

Philip the Apostle—*He led his friend Nathanael to Christ shortly after his own conversion and later was called to serve as one of the twelve apostles (Jn. 1:43-46; Mt. 10:3)*

Pontius Pilate—As prefect, Pontius Pilate governs Judea by the authority of the Roman Empire during the time of Jesus's trial in Jerusalem. The Gospels differ on the extent of Pilate's responsibility for Jesus's crucifixion. What is clear, however, is that Pilate holds the ultimate authority to determine whether or not Jesus should be executed.

Salome—*She contributed financially to the needs of Jesus and was present during His crucifixion and resurrection (Lk. 8:2-3; Mk. 15:40-41; 16:1, 6)*

Simeon—*The Holy Spirit had promised this godly old man he would live to see the first coming of the Messiah, which promise was realized when Mary brought her infant son Jesus in the Jerusalem temple to be dedicated to the Lord (Lk. 2:25-35)*

Simon the Cyrenian—*This visiting pilgrim to Jerusalem was ordered by the Roman soldiers to carry the cross of the bruised and beaten Jesus to the hill of Golgotha (Mk. 15:21; Lk. 23:26)*

Simon the Leper—*This former leper whom Jesus had once healed hosted a supper in Bethany to celebrate the raising of Lazarus, during which meal Mary (sister of Lazarus) anointed the feet of the Savior with a costly ointment (Mt. 26:6-13; Mk. 14:3-9; Jn. 12:1-8)*

Simon the Pharisee—*During a meal in Simon's home, an immoral but heartbroken woman approached Jesus, who began washing His feet with her tears and drying them with her hair. Knowing her sinful background, Simon secretly condemned Jesus in his thoughts for allowing this but is suddenly rebuked publicly by the Savior for his hypocrisy (Lk. 7:36-50)*

Stephen—A leader of the Hellenists, a faction of the Jewish Christians, in Jerusalem during the years after Jesus's ascension. Stephen preaches against the temple (Acts 6–7). When brought for trial before the Jewish court, Stephen seals his fate by issuing a ringing condemnation of the Jewish leadership.

Theophilus—Luke addressed both of his New Testament books (Gospel of Luke; Acts of the Apostles) to this man (Lk. 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-5)

Thomas—He had an unnamed twin brother and was known as the doubting apostle as he initially could not believe the glorious reports of Christ's resurrection until the Savior appeared to him personally a week later (Jn. 20:19-29)

Timothy—The traveling companion and fellow missionary of Paul. Timothy coauthors letters with Paul—such as 1 Corinthians and Philippians—and serves as his emissary throughout the Christian communities of the Mediterranean.

Zachaeus—*This dishonest tax collector met Jesus while in a sycamore tree and immediately accepted Him as Savior (Lk. 19:1-10)*

Zacharias (Zechariah) —*He was a priest, visited by the angel Gabriel who predicted his barren wife would present him with a son, John the Baptist (Lk. 1:5-25, 57-80)*

Major Events in New Testament History

Approximate Date	Event	Biblical Source
332 BCE	Alexander the Great of Macedonia includes Palestine in his empire.	1 Mace. 1:1-5
323-197 BCE	The Ptolemy of Egypt rule Palestine (Hellenistic period).	1 Mace. 1:6-10
197-142 BCE	The Seleucid dynasty of Syria rules Palestine.	2 Mace. 4
167-164 BCE	Antiochus IV attempts to force Hellenistic religion on the Jews and pollutes the Temple.	1 Mace. 1:10-67
164 BCE	The Maccabean revolt is successful; the Temple is cleansed and rededicated.	1 Mace. 2-6; 2 Mace. 8-10; Dan. 7:25; 8:14; 9:27; 12:7
142-63 BCE	The Jews expel the Seleucids; Judea becomes an independent kingdom under the Hasmonean dynasty.	1 Macc.
63 BCE	General Pompey makes Palestine part of the Roman Empire and partitions Judea.	
40-4 BCE	Herod the Great rules as Roman-appointed king of Judea; he rebuilds the Temple.	
30 BCE-14 CE	Augustus Caesar rules as emperor of Rome.	
6-4 BCE	Birth of Jesus.	Matt. 2; Luke 2
4 BCE-39 CE	Herod Antipas rules as tetrarch of Galilee.	Luke 13:31-32; Mark 6:14-29
5-10 CE	Birth of Saul at Tarsus (the apostle Paul).	
14-37 CE	Tiberius Caesar rules as emperor of Rome.	Luke 3:1
26-36 CE	Pontius Pilate serves as procurator of Judea.	
27-29 CE (?)	The ministry of John the Baptist.	Mark 1:2-11; 6:17-29; John 1:19-36; 3:22-36
27-30 or 29-33 CE (?)	The ministry of Jesus.	Matt., Mark, Luke, John
30-33 CE	The crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus.	Matt., Mark, Luke, John
33-35 CE	The conversion of the apostle Paul.	Acts 9:1-19; 22:1-21; 26:1-23; Gal. 1:11-16
41-44 CE	Herod Agrippa I is king of Judea; he imprisons Peter and beheads James and possibly John as well (44 CE?)	Acts 12
41-54 CE	Claudius reigns as emperor of Rome; he banishes the Jews from Rome (49 CE?)	Acts 18:2
47-56 CE	Paul conducts missionary tours among the Gentiles.	
49 CE	Paul attends the first church council, held in Jerusalem.	Acts 15; Gal. 2
50 CE	Paul writes 1 and 2 Thessalonians; the "Sayings" of Jesus are compiled (?).	
54-62 CE	Paul writes a series of letters to various churches he has founded or visited.	1 Cor. (54-55 CE); 2 Cor. (55-56 CE); Gal. (56 CE); Rom. (56-57 CE); Col. (61 CE?); Philem. (61 CE); Phil. (62 CE)
54-68 CE	Nero reigns as emperor of Rome.	
60-62 or 63 CE	Paul under house arrest in Rome.	
62 CE	James, brother of Jesus, is martyred.	
64 CE	Rome is burned, and Christians are persecuted.	
66-70 CE	Gospel of Mark is written.	
66-73 CE	Jewish revolt against Rome; destruction of Jerusalem and Temple*	
69-79 CE	Vespasian reigns as emperor of Rome.	
79-81 CE	Titus, conqueror of Jerusalem, is emperor.	
80-85 CE	Gospel of Matthew is written.	
80-90 CE	Gospel of Luke and Acts are written.	
80-100 CE	Letter of James is written.	
81-96 CE	Domitian is emperor; Christians in Asia Minor experience general hostility.	
85-90 CE	Book of Hebrews is written.	
90 CE (?)	Letter to the Ephesians is written; Paul's letters are collected (?).	
90-91 CE	Rabbis hold council at Jamnia; rabbinic Judaism emerges from post-war reorganization.	
90-100 CE	Gospel of John is composed.	
95-100 CE	Various Jewish and Christian apocalypses are composed: 2 Esdras, Revelation, and 3 Baruch.	
98-117 CE	Trajan reigns as emperor and persecutes some Christians.	
100-110 CE	Letters of 1, 2, and 3 John are written.	
100-140 CE	Canonical New Testament books of 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, 1 Peter, and Jude appear.	
117-138 CE	Hadrian is emperor.	
132-135 CE	The Jews revolt against Rome for the last time.	
150 CE (?)	2 Peter is written.	

The revolt against Rome marks the end of both the Jewish state and beginning of the Church.

Literary genres in the Gospels

Literature is always a kind of something. Works belong to genres, to general categories. The genres of the literary materials used in the gospels are fairly easy to see because inside the gospels they retain the distinctive forms that they brought with them. They include the following:

1. *Sayings and sayings stories.* Sayings are abundant in all four gospels, reflecting the importance of Jesus as a teacher. Q was largely a collection of such sayings, some with associated narrative material. Matthew and Luke drew on Q for their respective “sermons” of Jesus, providing a context for the sayings that they did not have in the original document.

2. *Pronouncement stories.* Pronouncement stories are actually a subclass of sayings stories. We do not need to draw too fine a line between them, but the typical pronouncement story is distinctive. It is a brief episode or event that leads to and ends with a saying of Jesus. The story exists for the saying, rather than the other way round. For example, the saying, “I came to call not the upright, but sinners” (Mark 2:16-17, Matt. 9:10-13, Luke 5:29-32) belongs to an occasion when Jesus was supposedly eating in the company of tax gatherers and other outcasts. The circumstances of the meal are not specified, and it is clear that the writers had no more idea than we do when and where it took place—or even if it did. However, that is not the point: The meal anchors the saying within a stream of events and gives it a plausible reason for existing. Sometimes the attention given to the story can actually distort its meaning, as in a common interpretation of the famous pronouncement on little children (Mark 10:13-16). It is not an expression of Jesus’ love for little children; rather, the children are simply a pretext for having Jesus say something about the nature of the Kingdom of God. One might call the passage as a whole a kind of acted parable.

3. *Prophetic citations of the Jewish scriptures.* The gospel writers were certainly not the first Christians to search the Jewish scriptures for passages that seemed to foretell Jesus and help in the understanding of God’s will under the new covenant. It is likely that collections of such proof texts circulated in the early Church and thus found their way into the gospels. An excellent example would be Isaiah 6:9-10, which was used in all four gospels and in Acts.

⁹And he said, ‘Go and say to this people: “Keep listening, but do not comprehend; keep looking, but do not understand.” ¹⁰ Make the mind of this people dull, and stop their ears, and shut their eyes, so that they may not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and comprehend with their minds, and turn and be healed.’

4. *Passion Narratives.* Passion narratives cover the events between the Last Supper and the Crucifixion; they may have been the first units of material to achieve independent status. Certainly an understanding of Christianity would have been very difficult without a coherent account of this event toward which the entire mission of Jesus was pointed. These are the most complex units of gospel material, and they can be broken down into subunits if one wishes to pursue the analysis further.

5. *Miracle stories.* Miracle stories, too, can be broken down into subunits, such as miracles of healing, exorcisms, demonstrations of power, and so on. The only miracle that appears in all four gospels is the feeding of the five thousand, which strongly suggests that this story had a fully realized independent form before these writers took it up and was, no doubt, often cited and recited by members of the early Church.

6. Parables. The parable originally was a brief story that used details from ordinary life to illustrate a moral point, like the parable of the two house builders in Matthew 7:14-27. It was an effective teaching device because it put things in terms that people could understand and easily remember. But parables seem to have suffered more from outside intervention than most other materials. Somewhere early in the history of their transmission they began to be regarded as mysteries, with hidden meanings, or at least as allegories with two levels of meaning, and their use in the gospels reflects this change. They are sometimes provided with interpretations meant for the disciples alone, and in one case (Matt. 13:24-30) scholars suspect that a gospel writer made up his own parable and attributed it to Jesus.

7. Accounts of events in the public career of Jesus. Events in Jesus' public career would include such things as his baptism by John, the choosing of the disciples, the Transfiguration, the entry into Jerusalem, and the cleansing of the Temple.

The Pericope

The literary units just described are the major building blocks out of which the gospels were constructed. The technical term for such a unit of composition is "pericope" (from the Greek, meaning "cut around"): In its original sense the term referred to something separated from or extracted from a larger context (for example, in our day, a newspaper clipping); but as now used in biblical criticism, "pericope" refers to the independent units that when assembled constitute a total work. **Every student of the Bible should learn the use of this term** (it applies in the Old Testament, too), for it is enormously useful, not only in providing a label for units of biblical writing when they are found but also in finding them to begin with.

Much of what the gospel writers did, then, was to put pericopes together. The narrative cement that bound them was often of the flimsiest kind—partly because the writers had no specific data about times and places and occasions, partly because they did not care much about matters so dear to modern journalists and writers of realistic fiction. For example, as Mark's narrative picks up momentum in his second chapter, we find a string of pericopes introduced by such phrases as "He went out again" (2:13), "When Jesus was at dinner" (2:15), "It happened that one Sabbath day" (2:23), and "Another time he went into the synagogue" (3:1). This kind of vagueness is typical in the gospels.

Although much of their basic material was provided in traditional pericopes, the gospel writers were still authors in the full sense of the term. They did not mechanically paste pericopes together but exercised considerable freedom in arranging them, and they habitually modified them to suit their own purposes. An edition of the New Testament with cross-references is handy for tracing this process at work. **A good starting point would be to follow the set of pericopes that introduce John the Baptist and his baptism of Jesus through Mark 1:2-11, Luke 3:1-22, Matthew 3: 1-17, and John 1:15-34, noting both similarities and differences.** To see how freely pericopes could be moved around within the story, one could compare the placement of the "master even of the Sabbath" pericope (a pronouncement story): In Mark 2:23-28 and Luke 6:1-5 it follows the "old law and the new" pericope, whereas in Matthew two full chapters of other material intervene. In Matthew it comes after the Sermon on the Mount; in Luke it precedes the counterpart of that sermon. The "Jerusalem, Jerusalem" pericope, in which Jesus apparently foretells the destruction of the Temple, occurs in Luke in 13:34-35 *before* Jesus reaches Jerusalem; in Matthew 23:37-39 it occurs *during* his final visit to the city. The gospels, as we see both do and do not tell the same story.

Taken from: Gabel, John B, Wheeler, Charles B., York, Anthony D, and Citino, David. *The Bible as Literature: An Introduction*. New York: Oxford, 2006. 230-33

Topic Comparison in the Four Gospels

TOPIC/EPISODE	MARK	MATTHEW	LUKE	JOHN
Jesus as eternal Word	—	—	—	1:1-14
Word made "flesh"	—	—	—	1:14
Jesus' genealogy	—	1:1-17	3:23-38	—
Birth story	—	1:18-2:23	1:5-2:40	—
John's baptizing work	1:9-11	3:1-17	3:1-21	1:6, 15, 19-2~
Temptation by Satan	1:12-13	4:1-11	4:1-14	—
Teaching primarily or "only in parables"	4:1-24	13:3-35	8:4-18; 13:18-21	—
Teaching in long discourses				
Conversation with Nicodemus	—	—	—	3:1-21
Conversation with a Samaritan woman	—	—	—	4:1-42
"I am" speeches				
Bread of Life	—	—	—	6:26-66
Good Shepherd	—	—	—	10:1-21
True vine	—	—	—	15:1-17
Farewell discourses (divine nature and return to the Father)	—	—	—	14-17
Exorcisms (casting out demons)	1:23-28; 5:1-20, etc.	8:28-34	8:26-39	—
Feeding multitudes	6:32-44; 8:1-10	14:13-21	9:10-17	6:1-13
Stilling the storm/walking on water	6:45-52	14:22-33		6:15-21
Resuscitation of the dead				
Daughter of Jairus	5:35-43	9:18-27	8-56	—
Widow's son	—	—	7:11-17	—
Lazarus	—	—	—	11:1-46
Jerusalem saints	—	27:52-53	—	—
Return to Nazareth	6:1-6	13:54-58	4:16-30	—
Assault on Temple	11:15-19	21:12-17	19:45-48	2:13-27
Prediction of Jerusalem's fall	13	24-25	21	
Hearing before Jewish authorities	14:53-65	26:57-75	22:54-71	18:13-27
Hearing before Roman governor	15:1-20	27:1-31	23:1-25	18:28-19:16
Crucifixion	15:21-47	27:32-66	23:26-54	19:17-42
Empty tomb	16:1-8	28:1-8	24:1-9	20:1-3
Postresurrection appearances				
In Galilee	—	28:16-20	—	21
In Jerusalem	—	28:9-10	24:13-53	20:10-29

The Four Gospels: Comparative Overview

Historical Background Issues:

GOSPEL acc. to...	MARK	MATTHEW	LUKE	JOHN
WHO? traditionally attributed author?	"John Mark of Jerusalem" (Acts 12:12; 15:37; Col 4:10; Phlm 1:24; 1Pet 5:13)	tax collector & apostle (Mark 3:18; Matt 9:9; 10:3; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13)	physician & companion of Paul (Col 4:14; 2Tim 4:11; Phlm 1:24 only)	John, son of Zebedee; one of 12 apostles (Mark 1:19; 3:17; cf. John 21:2)
WHO? implied author?	bilingual (Aramaic & Greek) Christian of the 2nd generation; "young man" of 14:51-52?	multi-lingual (Aramaic & Greek) early Jewish Christian; trained "scribe" of 13:52?	Gentile Christian convert; well educated Greek "historian"; client of Theophilus (1:1-4)?	the "beloved disciple" and his Jewish Christian followers (19:35; 21:20-24)
TO WHOM? implied audience?	mostly Gentiles, fairly new in their faith, and facing persecutions	better educated Jews who believe in Jesus, but argue over the Law	wealthier Gentile Christians in an urban setting, becoming complacent/lazy	very mixed: mostly Jews, some Gentiles, Samaritans, etc.
WHEN? approximate date?	first written "Gospel"; +/-70 (Jewish War 66-70)	late 70's or 80's	mid to late	90's (early edition 50's? epilogue after 100?)
WHY? community circumstances & author's purpose?	to encourage a group undergoing difficult trials and persecutions	to teach a community with internal divisions and external enemies	to challenge believers to put their faith into practice more fully	to strengthen a group ostracized by other Jews for their faith

Literary, Stylistic and Thematic Comparisons:

Chs, verses, words	16 (678 / 11,304)	28 (1071 / 18,345)	24 (1,151 / 19,482)	21 (879 / 15,635)
Style of Greek	grammatically poor	Semitic influenced	good, elegant, literary	simple, but highly symbolic
Geographical Focus	Galilean towns & villages; some Gentile territory	Galilee, esp. mountains; mostly Jewish areas	one long journey to the goal: Jerusalem	multiple visits back & forth to Jerusalem
Literary Features	quick action ("immediately", "and then") loosely connected episodes,	five major discourses; well-organized sections of collected pericopes; poetic parallelism	story pairs with male/female characters focus on prayer; many extra parables	"Amen, Amen, I say to you."; irony; paradox; double-meanings
Major Themes	Suffering, Urgency, Secrecy	fulfillment of Scripture; Jesus follows and fulfills the law	Belief in Jesus is a universal faith. Social Justice; eschatological reversal	Jesus is God and has always existed and continues to exist spiritually
Literary Introduction	"Beginning of Good News" (1:1)	"Book of Genealogy" (1:1)	"Orderly Account" (1:1-4)	Cosmic Hymn (1:1-18)
Gospel Beginning	John the Baptist's preaching; Jesus' ministry begins (1:2-15)	Jesus' heritage: David (royal), Abraham (Jewish), Emmanuel (God with us) (1:2-2:23)	parallel birth stories: John the Baptist & Jesus (1:5-2:52)	J. B. points to "Lamb of God"; first disciples come (1:19-51)
First Words of Jesus	[to unspecified crowds]: "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news" (1:15)	[to John the Baptist, before his baptism]: "Let it be so now; for it is proper for us in this way to fulfill all righteousness" (3:15)	[12-year-old, to his parents in Jerusalem]: "Why were you searching for me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (2:49)	[to two disciples of John the Baptist]: "What are you looking for?" (1:38) and "Come and See" (1:39)
Birth of Jesus (narrative emphasis)	Jesus' birth is not narrated; but he's called "Son of Mary" (6:3) and "the Nazarene" (14:67)	focus on men: David, Joseph, Herod, Magi; power: King of Jews? murder of infants!	focus on women: Elizabeth, Mary, Anna; angels; shepherds; Holy Spirit	theology of incarnation: "Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (1:14)

GOSPEL acc. to...	MARK	MATTHEW	LUKE	JOHN
<i>Inaugural Event</i>	Exorcism in the Synagogue of Capernaum (1:21-28)	Sermon on the Mount: Fulfillment of Torah/Law (ch. 5-7)	Jubilee reading (from Isaiah 61) Rejection at Nazareth (4:14-30)	Wedding Feast at Cana: first of Jesus' "signs" (2:1-11)
<i>Jesus' Major Opponents</i>	1- Pharisees & Herodians; 2- chief priests, scribes & elders	"scribes & Pharisees"; "hypocrites & blind guides"	unjust authorities (civil & religious); rich & corrupt people	"the Jews" (esp. leaders in Jerusalem); Pharisees; High Priest Caiaphas
<i>Jesus' [Seven] Last Words on the Cross</i>	"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (15:34)	[same as in Mark] (Mt 27:46)	"Father, forgive them..." (23:34); "You will be with me in Paradise" (23:43); "Father, into your hands I commend my Spirit" (23:46)	"Woman, behold, your son"; "Behold, your mother" (19:26-27); "I am thirsty" (19:28); "It is finished" (19:30)
<i>Focus of Passion</i>	horrible suffering; tragic death (ch. 14-15)	authorities' plots & treachery (ch. 26-27)	Jesus' innocence; forgiveness (ch. 22-23)	Jesus' exaltation/glorification (ch. 18-19)
<i>Last Major Event</i>	Empty Tomb, outside of Jerusalem (16:1-8)	Great Commission, on Mountain in Galilee (28:16-20)	Ascension, from Bethany just East of Jerusalem (24:50-53)	1: disciples & Thomas (20:19-29); 2: [Peter & Beloved Disciple (21:1-23)]
<i>Final Literary Ending</i>	women leave tomb in fear & silence (16:8) [16:9-20 added only later]	Jesus tells the disciples, "I am with you always" (28:20)	disciples return to Jerusalem temple with joy praising God (24:53)	1: many more signs (20:30-31) 2: [many other books, 21:24-25]
<i>Main Titles for Jesus</i>	Son of Man ; Christ/Messiah & Son of God; Son of David; Eschatological Judge	Emmanuel ("God with us") Son of David; Son of Abraham; King of the Jews; New Lawgiver & Great Teacher (like Moses);	The Good Shepherd; Savior (of all, but esp. of the poor); great Prophet (in word & deed); Lord (of Israel, and of all nations)	Eternal Logos; Divine Word made Flesh; Only-begotten Son; Living Water; Bread of Life; Passover Lamb; "I Am" / "Equal to God"
<i>Jesus' Major Actions</i>	miracles; overcoming evil powers; arguing with religious authorities	teaching his disciples; decrying religious hypocrisy	healing sick & impaired people; forgiving sinners & debtors	Speaking & doing God's will; revealing intimate relationship with God
<i>Teachings about Discipleship</i>	persevere in faith despite suffering; follow Jesus "on the way" to the cross; be ready for his return	be righteous; forgive always; live ethically (Golden Rule); fulfill God's commands	leave everything to follow Jesus; share with poor; accept everyone, esp. outcasts, women, enemies	see, believe, know, remain in Jesus & God, despite hostility; love one another; be in unity; serve humbly
<i>Role Models</i>	women (5:25; 7:24; 12:41; 14:3); Jairus (5:21); Bartimaeus (10:46)	Peter (16:13-20); children (18:1-5); faithful servants (24:45-25:46)	Mary of Nazareth (1:26-2:51); Good Samaritan (10:25-37); Zacchaeus (19:1-10)	man born blind (ch. 9); Martha (11:27); Disciple Jesus loved (13:23ff); Mary Magdalene (20:1-18)
<i>Connection with spiritual world</i>	Spirit descends at Jesus' Baptism; conflict with unclean/demonic spirits	Mary with child from the H.S.; God's Spirit in Jesus' actions & speech	H.S. esp. active in Infancy Narrative; Jesus receives prophetic anointing	H.S. as Spirit of Truth; Paraclete/Advocate/Comforter
<i>End of world; Jesus' return (Eschatological Expectations)</i>	imminent and suddenly, but no one knows when; so "Keep awake!" (13:1-37)	false prophets will arise; many will fall away; Gospel must first be preached to all (24:10-14)	after Jerusalem is destroyed & Gentiles' time is fulfilled; not so soon; pray! (21:20-24, 28, 36)	realized eschatology; all who hear & believe have eternal life already now, are not judged (5:21-25)
<i>Basis for Final Judgment</i>	whether you persevere in faith despite persecutions (13:13)	what you do for "the least" people; Sheep & Goats parable (25:31-46)	how you use wealth / possessions; parables of Rich & Poor (16:1-31)	whether or not you believe in Jesus (3:16-18; 5:19-24; 12:44-50)
<i>Symbol (Rev 4:7)</i>	Lion	Human [or Angel]	Ox	Eagle
<i>Typical Portrait</i>	Jesus on the Cross (suffering)	Sermon on the Mount (teaching)	The good shepherd (caring)	Christ the Revealer (revealing)

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

Introduction to the New Testament, Introduction and The Setting

1. When was the New Testament Written?

2. What are the five sections of the New Testament and what is unique about each?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.

3. Who wrote the New Testament?

4. What is a “gospel” – a new literary genre?

5. Why is interpretation so important for understanding the New Testament? Name three levels of interpretation
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

6. What were the three centers of Judaism at the time of Jesus and what is unique about each (language, culture, etc.)?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

7. Name three significant ways Judaism had developed or changed at this time.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

8. What is messianism and why is it important?

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

Background and The Gospel According to Mark

1. Who was Herod the great? What did he do?
2. When were the Jewish wars? What were they about? When was the temple destroyed?
3. What was the relationship between Israel and Rome during Jesus' life?
4. Name three sets of leadership and something unique about each.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
5. What is Hellenism and how did it affect the New Testament?
6. Why is Mark thought to be the first Gospel written?
7. When was Mark Written? What was happening at the time? Why do scholars think it was written then?
8. What are three major themes of Mark?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
9. What are the two halves of Mark's structure?
 - a.
 - b.
10. What is a pericope?
11. What is Mark's favorite name for Jesus? How does this relate to Mark's themes and the roles Jesus plays in Mark?
12. How is Jesus shown to be an authority who teaches with power?
13. How do Jesus' friends and family relate to him in Mark?
14. How does chapter 8 work like a transition between the two halves of Mark? What does Peter do in this chapter?

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

The Gospel of Matthew

1. What is the most common explanation for the formation of the Synoptic Gospels?
2. What is meant by the two ways of reading the gospels: horizontally and vertically?
3. What is a pericope?
4. Who is the audience of Matthew?
5. What are the main themes of Matthews and how do they relate to its audience?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
6. Give an example of poetic parallelism in Matthew.
7. Give an example of a fulfillment quotation from Matthew.
8. The structure of Matthew is arranged around five major _____, the first of which is called:
9. In general, what is Jesus' attitude about the Law of Moses in the Sermon on the Mount?
10. Name a couple of Jesus' famous sayings from The Sermon on the Mount.
11. What are the Beatitudes and the Antitheses?

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

The Gospel of Luke

1. Which other New Testament book did the author of Luke write?
2. Why can we say that the author of Luke has the largest historical vision of any New Testament writer?
3. What does the author of Luke want the Romans to think about Jesus and those who follow him?
4. If Jesus is the center part of a three part drama, what are the other two parts?
5. Why does Luke not have an apocalyptic emphasis like Mark?
6. What stories about Jesus are in Luke that happen before his baptism by John?
7. How does this gospel portray Jesus?
8. Give an example of an unexpected reversal
9. What does Luke mean by portraying Jesus as the Good Shepherd?
10. Why is Luke sometimes called the social welfare gospel?
11. What is a parable?
12. What is special about the parable of the Good Samaritan?
13. What is special about the parable of the Prodigal son?

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

The Gospel of John

1. What is the most major theme of John?
2. About when was it written?
3. Who is “the disciple who Jesus loved” (The beloved disciple)?
4. How is the beginning of John different from the other gospels?
5. How many demons does Jesus cast out in John?
6. Name some of the symbolic imagery used in John.
7. How is faith and belief discussed in John?
8. What does John say about following the law?
9. Name three things that are in the other gospels but are not mentioned in John.
10. Name three things in John that are not in the other gospels.



The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

Jesus' Passion

1. Which five events are in all four gospel accounts of Jesus' death?
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.
2. Name one or two events in each narrative that support that gospel's theme?
 - Mark—Jesus' suffers and is misunderstood:

 - Matthew—Jesus is the Torah:

 - Luke—Jesus is innocent and good:

 - John—Jesus is God in the flesh:
3. What are Jesus' last words?
 - a. Mark 15.34, 
 - b. Matthew 27.46 
 - c. Luke 23.34
 - d. Luke 23.43
 - e. Luke 23.46
 - f. John 19.26-27
 - g. John 19.28
 - h. John 19.30
4. What is special about each resurrection narrative?
 - a. Mark:
 - b. Matthew:
 - c. Luke:
 - d. John:
5. What does each gospel imply about how to be a true disciple/follower of Jesus?
 - a. Mark:
 - b. Matthew:
 - c. Luke:
 - d. John:

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

Acts, Part 1. Chapters 1-12: The Church at Jerusalem

1. What other book did the writer of Acts write?
2. What other people besides Jews can become followers of Jesus?
3. According to Acts, how should the Roman government feel about the New Way?
4. What are four parts of becoming a follower of Jesus?
5. What are some signs that the Holy Spirit came to the disciples gathered at Pentecost?
6. What are the qualities of the "Church" in Acts 2?
7. What is so significant about Peter and John healing the crippled beggar in Acts 3?
8. When asked not to preach about Jesus, how does Peter respond?
9. What are some of the earliest problems in the church? (Ch 6)
10. How does Stephen's death mirror the death of Jesus?
11. Who is Saul and how is he converted?
12. Who is Cornelius and how is he converted?
13. How does the church start to become decentralized?

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

Acts, Part 2 (Chapters 13-28): Paul Spreads the Gospel to the Gentiles

1. From what two sources in the New Testament do we know about Paul? How are they different?
2. How many missionary journeys does Paul take?
3. During Paul's first missionary journey at the end of chapter 13 how and why does Paul change the audience he preaches to?
4. What is the topic of the first church council in Jerusalem?
5. What is Paul's position on this topic?
6. How does Galatians 2 present the same situation a little differently?
7. What is the result of the council?
8. Who accompanies Paul on his second journey? What happens when they are put in prison?
9. Why does Paul have the chance to speak in Athens at the Areopagus (17: 16+)?
10. During Paul's third journey, what causes the riot at Ephesus?
11. Why was Paul arrested in the temple (Ch 21)?
12. Acts 21-26: In general, how does Paul spend his time in Jerusalem?
13. How does the book of Acts end? Where is Paul and what is he doing?

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

Paul's Epistles

1. Paul taught that Jesus now exists in two separate but related dimensions. What does this mean?
2. Paul is not so interested in Jesus' _____. Rather, he is more interested in how God _____ the world through Jesus.
3. What or who is now Jesus' body on earth, according to Paul? The _____.
4. According to Paul, Jesus frees humans from the power of the _____, from s_____ and from d_____.
5. According to Paul, is the law good or bad? What is the purpose of the law?
6. If Jesus' death cancel's the authority of Moses' Law, then how can people take advantage of this?
7. Why did Paul write 1 Thessalonians? What is unique about this book?
8. According to Romans 6:1, why might some people think that sinning more might be a good thing?
9. At the end of Romans 7, why does Paul sometimes do things he doesn't want to do?
10. According to Romans 8:1-2, how are Christians set free from the law of sin and death?
11. 1 Corinthians 13. What are some significant qualities of love? Why does Paul talk about love here?
12. In 1 Corinthians 14, what are the Christians in Corinth arguing about?
13. According to 1 Corinthians 15. What is the most important event in which Christians should have hope?

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

The Pastoral Epistles and issues related to women in the Bible

1. Who is traditionally said to have written 1Timothy, 2Timothy, and Titus? What is their relationship?
2. Why were these letters written? What topics do they address?
3. What are some reasons many scholars think these letters were not written by Paul?
4. What do we know about Timothy by what was written in these letters?
5. How can we question what is written in the Bible from a feminist perspective?
6. What was The Women's Bible and how did it open the way for females to read the Bible with more interest?
7. How can women be placed in the center of one's Bible reading?
8. What does reading with suspicion mean?
9. What do you notice when you read Matthew 1:18-25 from a feminist perspective?
10. How can translation influence the way readers understand gender in the Bible?
11. Give an example of gender equality in the epistles?

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

Hebrews

1. How is Hebrews a very Greek book and a very Jewish book?
2. Why can we say pretty firmly that Hebrews was not written by Paul?
3. The two sides of the dualistic view of the world presented in Hebrews are the _____ and the _____?
4. These two sides are linked by Christ's _____ and _____.
5. The _____ side is called a reflection, sketch, or shadow of the _____ side.
6. According to Hebrews 8:5-7, what purpose does the sanctuary in the temple serve?
7. According to Hebrews 4: 14-16, how does Jesus continue to help people?
8. What story from the Hebrew Bible is talked about in Hebrews 3 and 4? What lesson does it teach?
9. Who is Melchizedek and how is Jesus like him?
10. According to Hebrews, faith means believing in _____, but according to Paul faith means believing in _____.

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

First John and the Johannine tradition

1. Which books are the “John” books (Written by John or his followers)? (The Johannine books)
2. What is unique about the Johannine tradition?
3. Name two ways the opening of 1 John is similar to the opening of the Gospel of John.
4. 1 John is an occasional document. What seems to be its main purpose?
5. Why should people “test the spirits” (4:1), and how can they do it?
6. What is the test of love?

The Bible as Literature: The New Testament

The Revelation

1. Which other New Testament books were probably written by the same group of people?

2. Name some features of apocalyptic literature.
 - a. written in the _____ person
 - b. It's a _____ or dream about the future or _____ realm.
 - c. There is a very clear distinction between _____ and _____.
 - d. After a period of great suffering, the _____ will be saved miraculously.
 - e. There is a lot of _____ symbolism.
 - f. The level of conflict is _____.
 - g. The focus is on the end of the _____.

3. Why is an apocalypse a hopeful kind of literature?

4. Which book in the Old Testament is half apocalyptic? _____.

5. What two threats does Revelation help encourage people to resist? _____ and _____

6. How is Daniel different from the prophetic books it is grouped with in the Old Testament?

7. What are the three phases of Satan's defeat?
 - a. In _____ by _____
 - b. On _____ by _____
 - c. In _____ by _____

8. How is Revelation like a lot of other literature?

9. How does the beginning of Revelation draw readers' attention?

10. How could the seven letters to seven churches relate to everyday people today?