

# CLOSER WALK THEE: WITH GOSPEL READING PROJECT

## Project Plan & Notes

*A Look at the Four Gospels From Beginning To End*

We can hardly say we know Christ if we don't actually absorb his life through the only written source material we have.



For all the various views on who Jesus is, there is no more important view (outside of our own hearts) than the Gospels. In them we have our principle views about his life, his work, his death and resurrection. There are centuries of interpretations, commentaries and suppositions related to the life of Jesus Christ and there are many extra-canonical references (meaning outside of the Bible) that talk about him and his impact. But the Gospels—Matthew, Mark, Luke and John—are the foundation upon which our experience of Christ is built.

So, we should read them.

### Introduction

AT ITS HEART, the Gospel Reading Plan (GRP) is simple: read the Gospels from beginning to end. The plan provides daily readings of the four Gospels starting November 26, 2017 through May 20, 2018. Divided into six sections, each section provides a reading schedule, commentaries, artwork, maps, video links, spirituals practices, and space for reflection.



Growing our faith through study of the One we follow is just part of our whole commitment to Jesus Christ.

Each section will be published in turn, handed out in pages that are hole-punched to be easily collected into a ring binder. You will also have an opportunity to order our recommended study Bible\* and access to a closed Facebook group for questions, comments and sharing of ideas with the whole congregation. Additionally, all the study materials will be available on the app and on our website as a PDF document.

You can, of course, make use of the supplemental appendix pages, our church library, and our church staff, for digging deeper into what you're reading.

One central feature of the GRP is reading groups. Divided by what times prove convenient, Hosts will convene groups throughout our church for the task of gathering weekly to read, review, and share thoughts on the readings and on Christ himself.

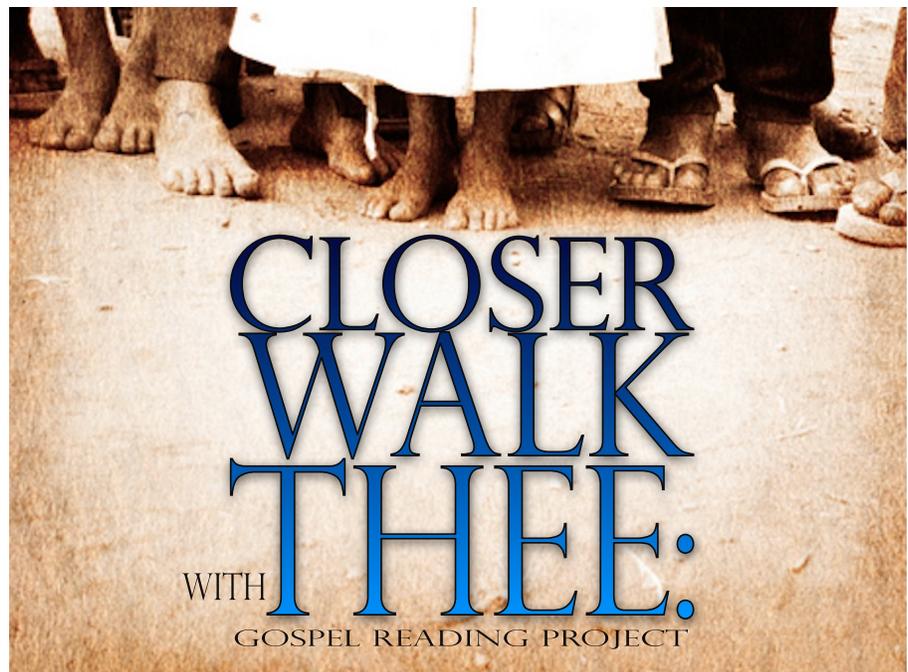
Sundays will begin each week's collection of readings, starting the reading task together as a whole church community.

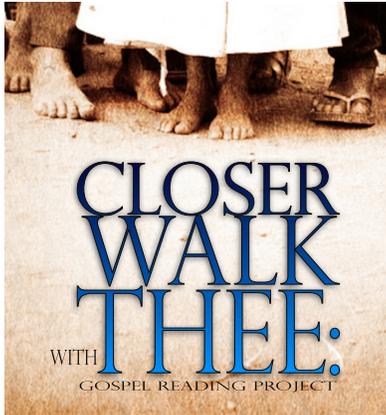
That's it. Read the Gospels. Get to know Jesus.

And walk a little closer.

*The Christian Education Teams*

\*Our recommended Bible for this study is the *Common English Study Bible*. This translation is very recent (2011) and is comprised of direct translation of the Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek and styled after reviews by church folks of all stripes: scholars, preachers, congregation members and more. You can order this from any bookseller but the best price we've found is with Amazon. Order it through the church and you can get free shipping!





## Section One: Advent

*November 26 - December 23*

ADVENT is a time when we expect the arrival of Jesus Christ. This has come to mean principally the birth of Jesus Christ, but it also refers to what is known as the Second Coming. Each inference pushes us toward preparation and expectation and hope.

### Reader's Notes:

The Gospels bear out differing priorities (see Appendix A). Because of this, none of them start the same way, has exactly the same timeline, nor has the same conclusion.

Don't get frustrated when you find the readings jumping around. First, you *will* read through *every* verse, we promise, if you follow the whole plan. Second, there are attempts throughout the plan to alert you to parallel instances of scripture between the Gospels. This is illustrated simply by multiple passages being listed together on the same date.

Nov 26	Matthew 1:1-17 Luke 3:23-38	Genealogy of Jesus
Nov 27	Luke 1:5-25	John the Baptist's birth Foretold
Nov 28	Luke 1:26-38	Jesus' birth foretold
Nov 29	Luke 1:39-56	Mary Visits Elizabeth
Nov 30	Luke 1:57-80	Birth of John the Baptist & Zechariah's prophecy
Dec 1	Mark 1:1 & Luke 1:1-4	Beginning of good news & Luke's Purpose
Dec 2	John 1:1-18	Story of the Word
Dec 3	Matthew 3:1-12	Ministry of John the Baptist
Dec 4	Mark 1:1-8	Ministry of John the Baptist
Dec 5	Luke 3:1-14	Ministry of John the Baptist
Dec 6	John 1:19-28	Ministry of John the Baptist
Dec 7	Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 3:15-20, 9:7-9	Imprisonment & Death of John
Dec 8	Matthew 11:1-19	Ministry to the people; Question from John the Baptist; Appeal of John's Ministry; Significance of John's Ministry; & This Generation

**Reader's Notes:**

A "Catch Up Day" is positioned in several places of the reading plan in order to help facilitate reviewing something again or reading a day you might have missed. however you use the day, be reading!

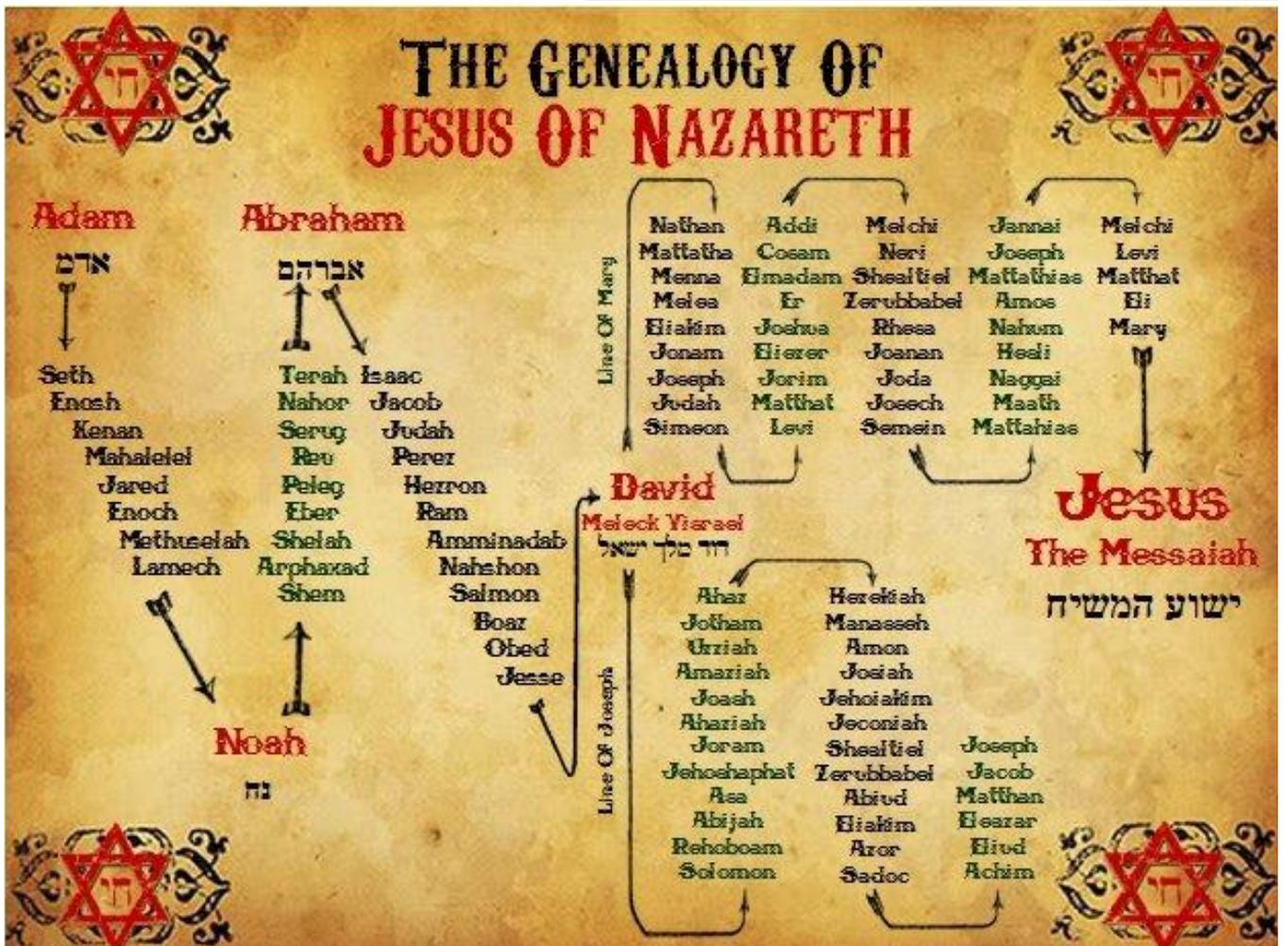
There are many Old Testament references thought to foretell or foreshadow the Messiah. Several of them are included during these two weeks.

Some readings, especially the ones for December 19 and following are thought to relate Jesus directly to the Exodus story, the central narrative of the Jewish people, and to the line of King David.

Dec 9	Luke 7:18-35	John the Baptist and Jesus
Dec 10	Luke 1:46-55 & 1 Samuel 2:1-10	Magnificat
Dec 11	Catch Up Day	
Dec 12	Micah 5:2, 2 Samuel 5:2, Hosea 11:1	Passages associated with the Messianic Promise
Dec 13	Isaiah 40:1-5; Malachi 3:1-6	Passages associated with the Messianic Promise
Dec 14	Isaiah 53:1-12	Passage associated with the Messianic Promise
Dec 15	Psalms 24:7-10	Passage associated with the Messianic Promise
Dec 16	Isaiah 49:5-13	Passage associated with the Messianic Promise
Dec 17	Revelation 15:3-4	Cantata
Dec 18	Isaiah 7:13-17	Passage associated with the Messianic Promise
Dec 19	Jeremiah 31:10-20	Passage associated with the Messianic Promise
Dec 20	Genesis 37:5-11; 45:1-5	Parallel salvation story
Dec 21	Exodus 1:8-22; Exodus 12:23-29	The establishment of Passover
Dec 22	Micah 5:1-4; 2 Samuel 5:1-5	Passages associated with the Messianic Promise
Dec 23	Hosea 11	Passage associated with the Messianic Promise



The Visitation is a pivotal moment in the life of Mary. How do you imagine this encounter really took place?



**Video Links:**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GkHNNPM7pJA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VLcTLCCpI5A>



# Spiritual Practice in Worship

THE ADVENT WREATH is a special way we mark time during this time of year. Each Sunday in Advent represents a mini-‘season’ represented by the colors of each candle in the wreath: the first purple candle of Hope, the second purple candle of Love, the third pink candle of Joy, and the fourth purple candle of Peace. The center white candle stands for the Christ-child, arrived in the world, and is used on Christmas Eve.

# Spiritual Practice at Home

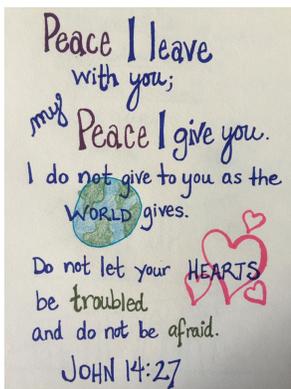
Our Jewish brothers and sisters use a mezuzah to help them remember that they are in a covenant with God and the important place scripture holds in that covenant. A mezuzah hangs just inside the doorway and holds inside it a scroll on which Deuteronomy 6:4-9 is written:

- 4 Israel, listen! Our God is the Lord! Only the Lord! [a] Love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your being, and all your strength.
- 6 These words that I am commanding you today must always be on your minds.
- 7 Recite them to your children. Talk about them when you are sitting around your house and when you are out and about, when you are lying down and when you are getting up.
- 8 Tie them on your hand as a sign. They should be on your forehead as a symbol. [b]
- 9 Write them on your house’s doorframes and on your city’s gates.

This idea of writing down scripture in places that you can be reminded of God’s words is the basis for this spiritual practice. This can happen in many ways:

- post-it notes with a word or phrase, stuck to your mirror or car steering wheel
- framed images of whole verses of scripture
- pictures downloaded from the internet as the wallpaper on your computer or phone
- a coloring sheet completed by a child
- doodlings of your own making
- journals of carefully scribed scripture passages
- passages that bring you inspiration stenciled on your walls

This practice should serve as a regular reminder of the presence of God in your daily life.

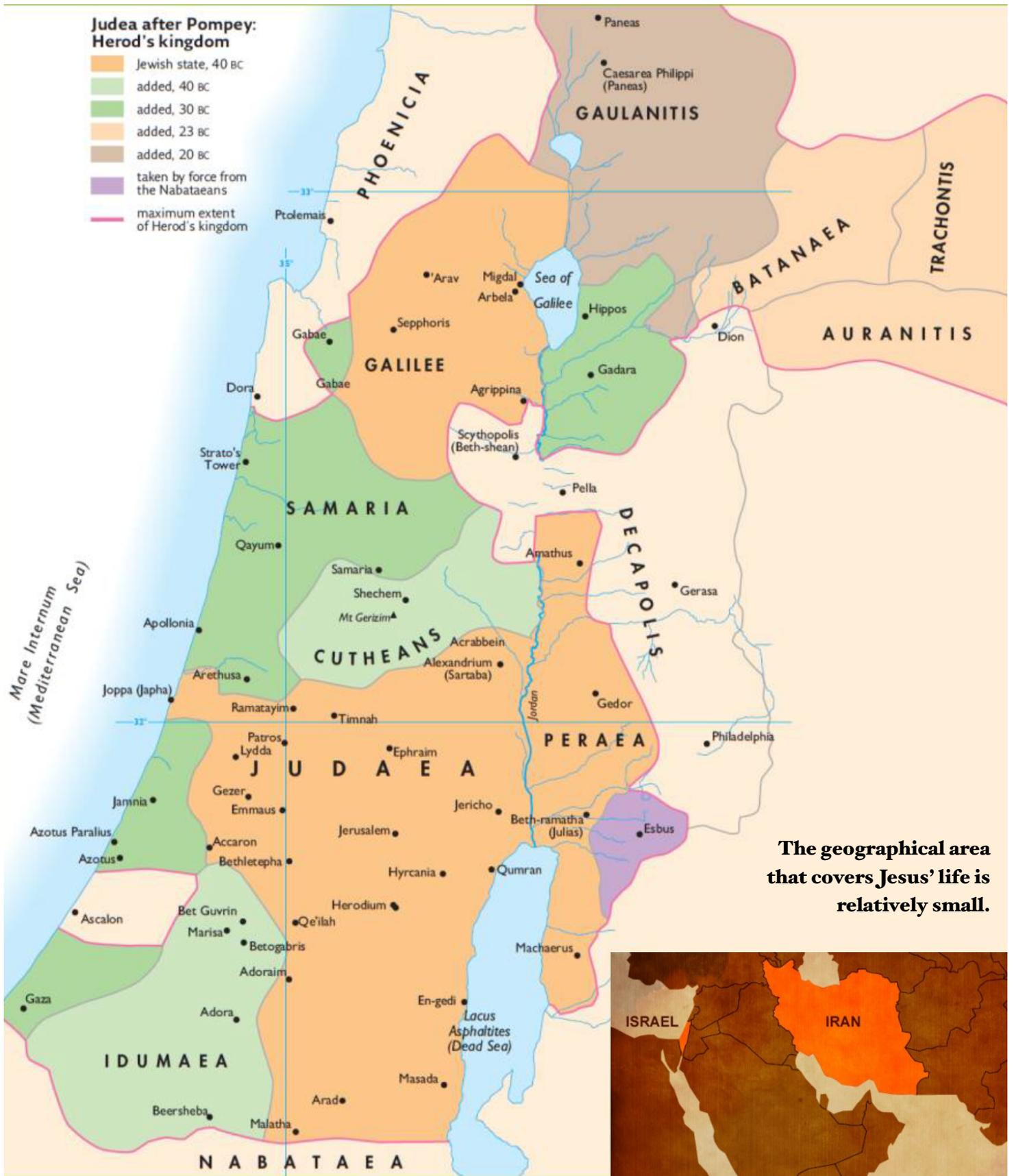


## Reflections from Reading Group

USE THIS SPACE to reflect on what you've read. Add pages to your binder if needed.



A large, empty rectangular box with a red border, intended for reflections on the Gospel readings.





### Links:

[https://www.bc.edu/schools/stm/crossroads/resources/birthofjesus/intro/the\\_dating\\_of\\_thegospels.html](https://www.bc.edu/schools/stm/crossroads/resources/birthofjesus/intro/the_dating_of_thegospels.html)

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four\\_Evangelists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Four_Evangelists)

## Appendix A: Distinct Approaches

EACH GOSPEL EMPLOYS it's own overall theme, audience and historical situation. They were each written at different times, well after the life of Christ (Mark, 70CE; Matthew and Luke, 80-90CE; and John, 100CE. There is an excellent summary of this writing history on Boston College's website at the link listed to the left.

“Matthew is often cited as the ‘first Gospel account,’ not only owing to its place in the canon, but also in view of the patristic witness to this effect. Most biblical scholars however, see the gospel account of Mark as having been written first...and John's gospel account as having been written last.

It has become customary to speak of ‘the Gospel of Matthew’ ... ‘the Gospel of John’, not least because it is shorter and rolls much more smoothly off the tongue; but it is worth noting that the ancient titles do not use the genitive of possession, but the preposition ‘according to’, signifying that each evangelist sets forth the one ‘Gospel of God’ according to his own capacity, but not in the sense of creating his own story.”—*Wikipedia*

Matthew is believed to be writing to a largely Jewish audience, largely because of the frequent references to fulfillment of Hebrew scripture and the attention paid in particular to Jewish culture. It's an extended argument meant to convince of Jesus' being the long-awaited, Jewish Messiah.

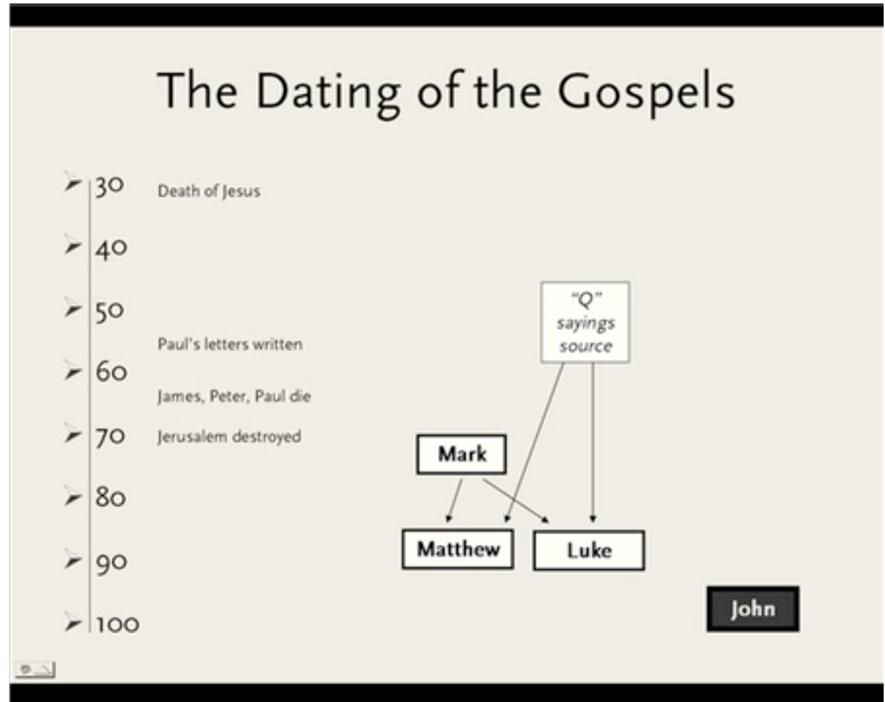
Mark is thought to be the most raw of the Gospels in that, Mark is trying to simply convey the story with a sense of urgency (the action moves along a lot with the word “immediately”).

Luke is actually part one of an extended letter that ends with Acts (part two). It is both introduction and an extended argument to a person who may not necessarily be Jewish that Jesus is worth following.

John is in one sense a reaction to a major religious movement known as the Gnostics. Their central tenet was that all things flesh and material are “bad”, evil even, and that only the spirit is pure and good. There is lots of visceral, material interactions of Jesus and others in addition to the notions of chapter one that demonstrate that God is a fan of the creation God made. Also, the entire Gospel is one big pep talk for a Jewish Christian community that is under great duress and persecution. The main message being, “Don't give up on Christ.” and “Don't let go of your faith.”

**Reader's Notes:**

Matthew, Mark and Luke are also known together as the Synoptic Gospels. "Syn" meaning "together" and "optic" meaning "see" are describing the fact that these three so closely share the same material.



These are traditional images representing the Gospels. Matthew...is symbolized by a winged man, or angel. Matthew's gospel starts with Joseph's genealogy from Abraham; it represents Jesus' Incarnation, and so Christ's human nature....Mark ...is symbolized by a winged lion - a figure of courage and monarchy. The lion also represents Jesus' resurrection (because lions were believed to sleep with open eyes, a comparison with Christ in the tomb), and Christ as king....Luke...is symbolized by a winged ox or bull - a figure of sacrifice, service and strength. Luke's account begins with the duties of Zacharias in the temple; it represents Jesus' sacrifice in His Passion and Crucifixion, as well as Christ being High priest (this also represents Mary's obedience)....John...is symbolized by an eagle - a figure of the sky, and believed by Christian scholars to be able to look straight into the sun. John starts with an eternal overview of Jesus the Logos and goes on to describe many things with a "higher" christology than the other three (synoptic) gospels; it represents Jesus' Ascension, and Christ's divine nature.