

# **Scripture Consulting Essentials**

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**To Whom The Gospels Are Written**

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## **To Whom The Gospels Are Written**

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The books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all record the earthly life and ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ, and when they are considered carefully with reverence and respect for them as part of the all Scripture that was given by inspiration of God, they fit together with an exactness and a precision that only God could accomplish. These four books are all post-Pentecost writings, that is, they were written after the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. Thus, they were written after people had begun receiving the gift of holy spirit in manifestation and after the Church of God had begun. They were written after Jesus Christ had fulfilled the law by his accomplishments.

However, they were all written about a time before that gift of holy spirit was first made available, before the Church of God had begun, and before Jesus Christ had fulfilled every jot and tittle of the law. They record what Jesus did and taught, and how he consistently and faithfully walked with and for his heavenly Father. They show us what he accomplished on our behalf so that we could be saved and enter the kingdom of God. And they record how he preached the gospel (the joyful proclamation) of the kingdom of God.

There was something that changed between the time period that we read about in the Gospels and the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2, which is a relevant concern with regard to considering to whom the Gospels are written.

Matthew 16:13-20

- People were guessing about Jesus' identity.
- Jesus asked his disciples "But whom say ye that I am?"
- Peter responded, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."
- God had revealed to Peter that Jesus was the Christ.
- Jesus told Peter "upon this rock [referring to what the Father had revealed to Peter, namely, that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God] I will build my Church."
- Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ.

Acts 2:29-38

- The Christ was to die and be raised from the dead.
- Jesus died and was raised from the dead.
- Therefore, Jesus is the Christ.
- Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.
- Baptized in the name of Jesus Christ

Acts 4:8-10

- Peter proclaimed Jesus Christ with boldness.
- This was to be known to the rulers and elders of Israel to whom Peter was speaking.
- It was to be known to "all the people of Israel."

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Acts 5:42

- The apostles did not cease to teach and preach Jesus Christ.

Acts 17:2-3

- Paul was accustomed to preaching to people regarding the Christ, and to teaching them that Jesus was the Christ.

### Matthew

Matthew 1:1:

The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.

The book of Matthew is a post-Pentecost writing that reveals things that occurred and were fulfilled prior to Pentecost that led up to the bold declarations of Christ being the resurrected lord.

This opening verse of Matthew is not a complete sentence in Greek, and it is not grammatically connected with verse 2; thus it stands as a title for the book.

The Greek word that has been translated here as “generation” is *genesis*, which means, “genesis,” “origin,” “state of being,” or “existence.” It occurs five times in the Gospels and New Testament, and it has been translated in four different ways in the Authorized King James Version.

Matthew 1:18:

Now [But] the birth [Greek: *genesis* = genesis] of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.

The Greek word *genesis* could better be translated genesis in both Matthew 1:1 and 1:18. [*Genesis* also occurs in Luke 1:14; James 1:23; 3:6.]

In the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, *genesis* is at times used to refer to a list of descendants of a named progenitor, that is, to the origins of a family line. Genesis 5:1 says, “the book of the generations [Greek: *genesis* (plural)] of Adam.” Adam was the progenitor of body and soul man following the fall.

Matthew is “the book of the genesis [Greek: *genesis*] of Jesus Christ.” Jesus Christ is called “the last Adam” in I Corinthians 15:45. Jesus Christ, the last Adam, sheds forth the gift of holy spirit to those who believe regarding him.

The book of Genesis in the Old Testament provides a record of the geneses of Adam and his descendants following the fall of man. The book of Matthew provides a record of the genesis of Jesus Christ.

The book of Matthew is a post-Pentecost writing. On the day of Pentecost and following, people could confess with their mouths the lord Jesus and believe that God had raised him from the dead; thus they could be saved and be born of spirit. In order for that to happen, Jesus had to have come from the line of Abraham and David (Jesus Christ was the promised seed), he had to have been born, and he had to fulfill all that God had

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spoken regarding him including the prophecies regarding what he would do on earth. He had to go through his sufferings and death, and he had to be raised from the dead.

As one reads the book of Matthew with thoughtful consideration regarding to whom it was written, it becomes abundantly clear that it was written to people of Israel. The promises made to Abraham and David regarding the coming seed, the Christ (the anointed one), were well known to the people of Israel to whom this book was written, and it begins by telling them that those promises pertained to Jesus Christ, who was being boldly proclaimed by the apostles and others when this book was written.

The fact that Matthew was written to people of Israel must be gleaned from the overall content of the book.

### **Some examples from the first two chapters of Matthew:**

- The genealogy beginning in verse 2 starts with Abraham, which would have been particularly significant to the people of Israel, because Abraham was the first person in Scripture to be called a Hebrew, and he was the first man to receive the revelation that the Christ was to come through his family line.
- Fourteen generations later King David is recorded in the genealogy. Again this would be of great significance to the people of Israel because David also received revelation that the Christ would come through his family line and that the Christ would sit on his throne.
- Fourteen generations later we read about the Babylonian captivity. This period of time was very significant to the people of Israel, not only because they had been removed from the land that God had promised to Abraham, but also because God had given to various prophets a tremendous amount of revelation regarding the coming Christ around that time, some of which is recorded in the Old Testament books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.
- When Mary and Joseph named Jesus according to the angel's instructions, what God had told the prophet Isaiah was fulfilled.
- Jesus was born in Bethlehem just as the prophet Micah had declared and recorded.
- When Mary and Joseph fled to Egypt and then returned from Egypt a prophecy that had been spoken and written in Scripture by the prophet Hosea was fulfilled.
- Even Herod's evil attempt to kill Jesus fulfilled a prophecy recorded in Jeremiah.
- Jesus grew up in Nazareth just as the prophets had spoken.

All the things just mentioned are recorded in the first two chapters of Matthew, and as one continues to read Matthew, he or she will discover many more Old Testament prophecies fulfilled. This would have been very significant to the people of Israel, because it was to them that the promises were made. The book of Matthew systematically shows that Jesus fulfilled what was written about him in the law and the prophets.

## **Mark**

The book of Mark does not have a direct address, nor do we see anything definitive within it regarding to whom it was written, therefore, it may have been written for anyone

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and everyone: Jew and Gentile, those who had believed and those who had not yet believed.

Mark 1:1:

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

There are indications in Greek that this verse, like the first verse of Matthew, was intended to be a title for the book. The main purpose for this book is with regard to the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

The Greek word translated “beginning” is *archē*, which refers either to the “beginning,” “start,” or “commencement” of a thing; or it refers to the first place, the first position, or the primacy of a thing or person. In the Authorized King James Version it has been at times translated, “power,” “rule,” “ruler,” “magistrate,” or “principality.”

**A few examples of the second meaning of *archē* follow.**

Luke 12:11:

And when they bring you unto the synagogues, and *unto* magistrates [Greek: *archē* = ruler], and powers, take ye no thought how or what thing ye shall answer, or what ye shall say:

Luke 20:20:

And they watched *him*, and sent forth spies, which should feign themselves just men, that they might take hold of his words, that so they might deliver him unto the power [Greek: *archē* = rule] and authority of the governor.

Romans 8:38:

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities [Greek: *archē* = rules], nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come. [It is translated “principalities” three times in Ephesians, and three times in Colossians also once in Titus.]

I Corinthians 15:24:

Then *cometh* the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule [Greek: *archē* = rule] and all authority and power.

Understanding *archē* with this meaning, we could translate Mark 1:1 as “The rule of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” “The principality of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God,” or “The supremacy of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.”

- The book of Mark demonstrates the authority and power of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.
- It is fast paced and action packed.
- The Greek adverb *euthus* occurs over 40 times in Mark. It has been translated in the Authorized King James Version as “straightway,” “forthwith,” “immediately,” “anon,” and “by and by.” The Greek adverb *euthus*, like our English word “immediately,” at times carries not only the temporal idea of one thing happening after another, but it also carries the idea of urgency, perhaps even a determined urgency.

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- In Mark we see the frequent use of the historical present. The historical present is when verbs are used in the present tense to refer to a past action. This rhetorical device is used to put the reader in the action — to give the reader the feel of being in the moment described.

### Examples from Mark 1:9-45

- The Greek word *euthus* appears in verses 10, 12, 18, 20, 21, 23, 28, 29, 30, 31, 42, and 43.
- The historical present is used in verses 12, 37, 38, 41, and 44.
- The book moves very quickly from one event to the next.
- Jesus went to Galilee preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God and telling people to believe the gospel.
- He taught with authority (verse 22).
- He cast out spirits with authority (verse 27).

We see in Mark the importance and supremacy of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. He taught and preached the gospel with authority, he cast out spirits with authority, and he healed and delivered people and continued his preaching of the gospel of the kingdom. The use of the historical present puts the reader in the moment, and the repeated use of the word immediately gives the feel of urgency to the things that were taking place.

## Luke

Luke 1:1-4:

Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us,

Even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word;

It seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first [Greek: *anothen* = from above], to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus,

That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.

Luke was written to Theophilus. Theophilus means “Godloved,” or “beloved of God,” and this may have been an individual’s name, or it may have been a title for people who were beloved of God. The book of Acts was also addressed to Theophilus. Acts 1:1-2 say, “The former treatise have I made, O Theophilus, of all that Jesus began both to do and teach, Until the day in which he was taken up, after that he through the Holy Ghost had given commandments unto the apostles whom he had chosen.” Thus, Acts was written to the same person or group of people as the book of Luke, and Luke was written before Acts.

The beginning of Romans 1:7 says, “To all that be in Rome, beloved of God, called *to be* saints.” Although the Greek words translated “beloved of God” in Romans are not

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the same as the Greek title, or name, Theophilus, the same meaning is implied by both. Luke was written to Theophilus, which means beloved of God.

The words in Luke 1:1 that say, “which are most surely believed” are a translation of the Greek word *plērophoreō*, which means, “to be brought to fullness,” “to be accomplished,” “to be fully persuaded,” or “to be fully convinced.”<sup>1</sup> Luke and those to whom he was writing were people who were already fully persuaded. Verse 4 points out that Theophilus was “instructed.”

Luke had perfect understanding of all things from above, that is, from God, according to verse 3. Luke 1:3 also tells us that Luke was written in order when it says, “to write unto thee in order,” that is, it was written in sequential order.<sup>2</sup> Then verse 4 tells us why Luke was written, namely “That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”

Putting all this information together, we understand from Luke 1:1-4 that Luke was written to Theophilus, beloved of God, who was fully persuaded and instructed. Luke received this information from God, and it was written in sequential order. And it was given so that Theophilus, beloved of God “mightest know [or recognize] the certainty [or reliability] of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed.”

## John

John 20:30-31:

And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book:

But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.

The signs that were written in John were written so that the readers of John might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God and that they might have life through his name. Thus, we see that John was written to people who had not yet believed regarding Jesus Christ, and it was written so that they would believe and so that they would have life through his name.

### **In summary:**

MATTHEW was written to people of Israel, and it shows us how Jesus was the fulfillment of the promises and declarations that God had made to the people of Israel regarding the coming Christ. It is the book of the genesis of Jesus Christ.

MARK does not have a direct address, nor do we have any definitive proof from its content regarding to whom it was written. Therefore, it may have been written to everyone, Jew and Gentile, born again or not yet born again. The book of Mark is focused on the beginning or the supremacy of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

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<sup>1</sup> This Greek word is translated, “fully persuaded” in Romans 4:21 and 14:5.

<sup>2</sup> The Greek word translated “in order” in Luke 1:3 is *kathexes* which means, “in order,” “one after another,” “in sequential order.”

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It is fast paced, action-packed, and powerful. It shows an urgency to the work Jesus was doing. It records Jesus' deeds and actions and how he spoke and acted with authority as he went about his work of preaching the gospel.

LUKE was written to Theophilus, beloved of God, who was fully persuaded and instructed. It was written in sequential order, and it was written so that the beloved of God might recognize the reliability of those things with which they had been instructed.

JOHN was written to people who had not yet believed, so that they would believe and so that they would have life through the name of Jesus Christ.

The Apostles, who had previously been charged by Jesus near Caesarea Philippi not to tell anyone that he was the Christ, were boldly proclaiming this fact on and after the day of Pentecost recorded in Acts 2. The books that we call the Gospels also boldly proclaim Jesus as the Christ.

MATTHEW is the book of the genesis of Jesus Christ. It systematically proves from the Old Testament Scriptures that Jesus fulfilled what was written and spoken of the Christ, the Son of God.

MARK demonstrates the supremacy of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

LUKE gives Theophilus, beloved of God, information regarding the revelation that was received around the time of Jesus' birth. Revelation that contained the truth that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

JOHN was written so that its readers would believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God.

Jesus had said, **“upon this rock I will build my church.”**