

Series: Abide in Me – Part 4 of 12

Sub Series: The Bible Is God's Word of Truth – 4 of 5

The Four Gospels are Different!

Is that Good or Bad?

The Four Gospel Accounts

7th Sunday after Pentecost / 6th Sunday after Trinity – 2012

Sunday, July 15 → 8:00 & 10:45 ♦ Monday, July 16 → 7:00

Introduction: Dear friends in Christ, so far in this series our confidence in the Bible has been strengthened – *by prophecy* and *by exposing some false claims of evolutionists*.

Today we turn our attention to the four gospel accounts in the NT. Do those four accounts *strengthen* or *weaken* our confidence in the Bible? Let me explain what I mean:

1. **Two Potentially Conflicting Factors:**

- a. Multiple records of the same events – *Many of the same events are recorded in two or three different gospels; at least 14 of the same events are recorded in all four gospels.*¹
- b. Similar but not the same – The details of those same gospel events are similar, *but not the same – is that good or bad? That question will be answered in part 4 of this sermon!* Here is an example from *the charge against Jesus* that was

¹ Feeding of the 5,000; Triumphal Entry; Passover Celebration; Peter's Denial Predicted; Jesus in Gethsemane; Jesus' Betrayal and Arrest; Two False Witnesses; Three Denials of Peter; Jesus is Examined; Barabbas is Freed; Jesus is Scourged; Jesus is Led to Golgotha; Jesus is Crucified; Jesus Dies; Jesus is Buried.

♦ *written by Pilate* and ♦ *attached to Jesus' cross*;
each second line is the original Greek; you can
see that each gospel account is slightly different:

ESV **Matthew 27:37** ... "This is Jesus, the King of the Jews."

BGT **Matthew 27:37** ... οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

ESV **Mark 15:26** ... "The King of the Jews."

BGT **Mark 15:26** ... ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

ESV **Luke 23:38** ... "This is the King of the Jews."

BGT **Luke 23:38** ... ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων οὗτος.

ESV **John 19:19** ... "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

BGT **John 19:19** ... Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

So what were
the EXACT words
of Jesus' charge?

2. **The Time Between *the Gospel Events* AND *the Written Record* is SHORT:²**

- a. Sir Frederick G. Kenyon – At one time there was thought to be a gap of 250 to 300 years between ♦ *the writing of the gospels* and ♦ *their oldest surviving manuscripts*; however, Kenyon, formerly director and principal librarian of the British Museum, has seen that gap "**substantially filled in with numerous papyri portions of the New Testament documents** [*The NT was written on a paper-like material called papyrus*]. This led Kenyon ...to conclude that the interval, then, between the dates of original composition and the earliest [evidence in existence] **becomes so small as to be in fact negligible** [*insignificant*], and the last foundation for any doubt that the Scriptures have come down to us substantially as they were

²Craig A. Parton, The Defense Never Rests (St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House, 2003), 75-77 - the chapter entitled: A Lawyer's Case for Christianity.

written has now been removed.” (76-77)

- b. Bishop James A. T. Robinson – He “has concluded that all four of the New Testament Gospels were written before A.D. 70 [That was the same year that the Romans conquered Jerusalem and destroyed the temple].” (75-76) Therefore, the gospels were written ♦no later than **75 years** after Jesus was born and ♦within **45 years** of His ascension.

3. **A Comparison with Another Ancient Writing:**³ The **oldest manuscript** of “*Caesar’s Gallic Wars* (written in 58-50 B.C.)” is **dated about 900 years after the events** (76); nevertheless, “We believe that we have in all essentials an accurate text of the seven [existing] plays of Sophocles; yet the earliest *substantial manuscript* upon which it is based was written **more than 1400 years after the poet’s death.**” (77)

4. **Good Reasons to Believe the Gospels are True and Accurate:**⁴ Most of the information in this section comes from Craig Parton, who is a *Christian* and a *trial lawyer* in California; therefore, *he is giving us a legal perspective on the evidence FOR the gospels.*

- a. First, truthfulness: “...testimony is generally presumed to be truthful unless... successfully attacked on cross-examination.” (79)
- b. Second, the testimony itself: What is better, →four people saying EXACTLY the same words OR →four people giving different *but not inconsistent* testimony? Craig Parton answers: “...the presence of four different *but not*

³Ibid., 76-77.

⁴Ibid., 79-86.

inconsistent versions of events is one of the strongest evidentiary factors in favor of the integrity of the Gospel writers." (81) In other words, the four gospels are slightly different *because they come from each individual's own perspective; nevertheless, they are absolutely true and reliable!*

- c. **Third, history:** "...the New Testament Gospels... impregnate their writing with repeated, and detailed, historical references." (82) See Luke 2:1, 3:1-3 for some examples.
- d. **Fourth, archaeology:** "...discoveries of archaeology... have consistently supported the biblical accounts." (83)
- e. **Fifth, the Holy Spirit:** Jesus said to His disciples: "But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you." (John 14:26 ESV)

Conclusion: Craig Parton wrote: "**We may confidently conclude that the Gospel writers withstand the most rigorous cross-examination, not only as to their character but also as to the content of their testimony.**" (86) *Therefore, the Gospels and the other 62 books of the Bible can be trusted as God's Word to us for our temporal and eternal benefit!*

Now, aware that we have fallen short of God's demand for perfection, **let us know that we are perfect in God's sight through Jesus!** And all God's people said: *Amen!*

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