



May Bible Tidbits— The Books of The Bible

A selection of facts and information to help you discover more of the riches about Sacred Scripture. We continue our journey through the books of the Bible, now into the Gospels of the New Testament.

Each month we'll offer you several new tidbits in print and on-line: In print on the reverse side of the OLV Activities Calendar; On-line on OLV's Home Page (ourladyofvictorytallmadge.parishesonline.com),—below the Question of the Week!

Jesus asked, “Who do you say that I am?” Each gospel writer presents an authentic but different portrayal of the life, death and message of Jesus. The gospel writers wrote for different audiences and within different historical contexts. You will discover these different portrayals of Jesus when you sit down and read each of the gospel in “one gulp”, ignoring the chapter numbers, verses and headings. Here is a brief overview of the FOUR FACES OF JESUS before you begin.

Mark was the earliest gospel (65-70AD) and was written for an audience of early Christians who were experiencing a great deal of persecution and suffering. If Mark's gospel was dramatized on a stage, Jesus would hit the stage running and never stop. Mark's Jesus is the most human Jesus of the four gospels, having many human feelings just like our own. Mark reveals Jesus gradually, for it is not until his resurrection that we fully understand who Jesus is. For Mark, Jesus is truly the Son of God, who suffered (as did his early followers) and in the end found glory (as they will through their suffering).

Matthew's Jesus is the Great Teacher, the new Moses. While Mark had much to show us, Matthew has much to teach us. Matthew's community of Christians is coming to birth, emerging from the synagogues. Matthew challenges them to make a choice. Matthew's Jesus taught with authority, challenging us to live the life to which we have been called. For Matthew, Jesus is the messiah foretold by the prophets. He is the fulfillment of God's promises to Israel. This was an important message for Matthew's audience who was largely Jewish Christians.

Luke portrays Jesus as a man of great compassion. As you can see immediately in the genealogy at the beginning of Luke (which begins with Adam, whereas Matthew's begins with Abraham), Luke wrote his gospel to proclaim salvation for everyone. Jesus is the friend and advocate for all—the poor, the lepers, the public sinners and even the Samaritans, considered unclean by the Jews. The parable of the Good Samaritan is only found in Luke. Only in Luke do we find Herod in the midst of the passion narrative, with Pilate and Herod reconciling after years of being arch-enemies. And only in Luke does Jesus say, “Father, forgive them; they know not what they do.”

John's Jesus is quite different. In John we have a noble, majestic and divine Jesus who came down from heaven (The Word) and is waiting for “his hour” when he will “be raised up on the cross” to return to his Father. John's gospel was the last gospel to be written—sometime around 90-110 AD. In John Jesus uses the divine title “I am” throughout: “I am the light of the world;” “I am the bread of life;” “I am the Good Shepherd;” “I am the way, the truth and the life.” But then it is only in John that we find the story of the washing of the feet. This divine Jesus takes off his outer cloak, puts a towel around his waist and kneels on the floor to wash the feet of his disciples. John's Jesus is truly the servant Son of God.

Although each gospel writer attempted to portray one aspect of Jesus for their immediate audience, no one portrait could possibly capture the fullness of who Jesus is. Pray with the Gospels and see the Jesus that emerges for you.