

The Fourfold Gospel Portrait of, and Witness To Jesus Christ

Read this chart before you read any of the gospel accounts, of Matthew, mark, Luke and John, to gain a better perspective.

	Matthew	Mark	Luke	John
Jesus:	Son of David / Messiah	Servant	Son of Man / Adam	Son of God
Presents Him as:	Before man (relatively) – highest earthly position: a King	As what He is before God (relatively) – the lowest earthly position , the ideal servant	As what He is before man (intrinsically) – the ideal Man	As what He is before God (intrinsically) – Divine
Subject matter:	The King raised up to rule in righteousness	Jehovah's servant entering at once on His ministerial work without preliminary words	Jehovah's Man growing up without imperfections – the perfect Man	Jehovah as Himself – in all His intrinsic beauty and glory
Shows Him to:	Reign & rule	To serve & suffer; strong but lowly servant who became greatest ruler	To share & sympathize	To reveal & redeem
Dominant "Son" Title Emphasis	Son of David (royal-messianic frame)	Son of God (power/authority; also "Son of Man" in suffering)	Son of Man (humanity + mission)	Son of God / Word (pre-existence + identity claims)
Genealogy:	Abraham (legal)	— (Pedigree unimportant to a Roman)	Adam	Eternal (pre-existence)
What Jesus:	Said	Did	Felt	Was
1st Miracle:	Leper cleansed (Jew = sin)	Demon expelled (power of God)	Demon expelled	Water to wine
Written by a:	Jew	Jew with a Roman name & Audience	Greek	Jew
Written to:	Jews	Romans	Greeks & Hellenistic (Greek philosophical) world	Jews / church / world
Key word:	Fulfil	Immediately	Son of Man	Believe
Famous for:	Sermons	Miracles	Parables	Doctrine
Big stress:	Law – God's grace	Power	Grace	Glory
Author wrote as:	Preacher/teacher; long discourses; written as a teacher	Chronicler/preacher; news reporter; events as they occurred	Historian/doctor; tells what happened and interprets it; arranges incidents with reference to relations	Theologian; selects facts & discourses to prove a given truth
Writing style:	Methodical & massive	Conversational, colloquial, graphic, abrupt, vigorous, forceful & realistic	Artistic & graceful	Abstract & profound
Writing structure:	Groupings	Snapshots	Narrative	Mystical
1st miracle:	Leper healed (Jew = sin)	Demon cast out (power)	Demon cast out	Water to wine
Ends with:	Resurrection	Ascension	Promise of the Spirit (Acts)	Promise of Return (Revelation)
Summary notes:	OT prophecies quoted often; genealogy back to Abraham only; Messiahship & deity of Christ accented; meanings & significance explained	Meanings not explained; long miracles; short parables; immediately/straightway; action-heavy; God by power	Many parables for Greek mind; clarifies customs; physician's accuracy; genealogy to Adam; shows compassion for poor	No childhood; no parables; eternal focus; miracles as "signs"; stresses deity with real humanity
Regional focus:	Particularly Galilean ministry	Particularly Galilean ministry	Particularly Galilean ministry	Particularly Jerusalem ministry
Targets:	Emphasis on His public life	Emphasis on His public life	Emphasis on His public life	Emphasis on His private life
Number of chapters:	28	16	24	21
Unique material:	42%	7%	59%	92%
OT quotations:	53	36	25	20
Theologically Inferred				
Cherubim (Ezek 1:10; Rev 4):	Lion – King of beasts	Ox – King of domestic animals	Man – supreme intelligence of creation	Eagle – chief of birds of the air
Branch prophecy:	Branch reigns as King (Jer 23:5–6; Zech 9:9)	Branch as Servant (Zech 3:8; Isa 42:1)	Branch as Man (Zech 6:12)	Branch as Messiah/God (Isa 40:9)
"Behold" emphasis:	"Behold your King" (Zech 9:9)	"Behold My Servant" (Isa 42:1)	"Behold the Man" (Zech 6:12)	"Behold your God" (Isa 40:9)
Israel camped by 4 standards (Num 2; 10):	East – Lion (Judah)	West – Ox (Ephraim)	South – Man (Reuben)	North – Eagle (Dan)
Tabernacle gate (4 colours) Exo 25–39:	Purple – royalty, kingly	Scarlet – lowly servant suffering for sins	White – the Perfect Man	Blue – the Heavenly One

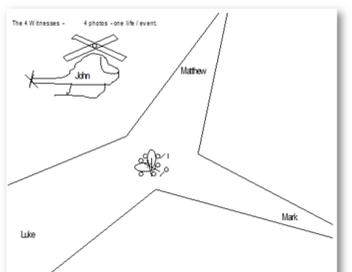
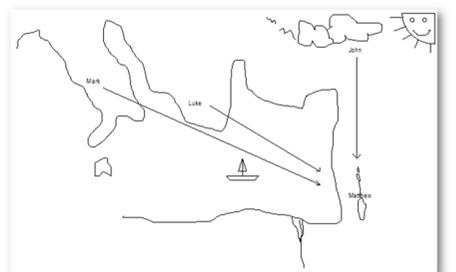


Synoptic Gospels

Notes on The Theologicly Inferred:

- In the biblical text, **Israel camps in four ordered divisions around the tabernacle**, each under a "banner/standard" (Hebrew degel), but Scripture does not tell us what pictures were on those banners.
- **Ezekiel and Revelation explicitly present a fourfold living-creature imagery** (lion, ox, man, eagle) associated with the divine throne-chariot, which is textually solid.
- The linkage of (a) the four camp standards, (b) Ezekiel's cherubim, and (c) **the four Gospels is largely a later synthesis**: Jewish tradition supplies the banner images; early Christian writers relate the four living creatures to the fourfold Gospel, but the exact evangelist-to-creature mapping varies.
- The **"four Branches" and "four Beholds"** are coherent canonical-theological constructions when handled as **typology**: each has real textual anchors, but the fourfold harmonization is an interpretive grid, not an explicit biblical claim.

"**Synoptic**" comes from Greek syn ("together") + opsia ("seeing/view"), so it means "seeing together" or "viewed side-by-side." The term is used for Matthew, Mark, and Luke because they share a broadly similar outline, many of the same events, and often similar wording, so they can be compared in parallel columns. They differ in emphasis and arrangement, but they "look at" Jesus' ministry in a more closely overlapping way than John, which is more selective and theologically discursive.



Why this study matters
Studying the **fourfold Gospel portrait** forces you to read Jesus the way God gave Him: **one Christ, testified by four Spirit-inspired witnesses**. It protects you from two common errors:
Flattening Jesus into a single emphasis you prefer (only "teacher," only "miracle-worker," only "moral example," only "mystic").
Fragmenting the Gospels as though differences are contradictions rather than **complementary angles**.
Overall, it trains you to honor Scripture's design: **unity without uniformity**.

What it tells us overall
It tells us that the person and work of Christ are so rich that no single narrative angle can exhaust Him. The four portraits together say:
Jesus is the **promised King** (Matthew): covenant fulfillment, rightful authority, the kingdom's ethics.
Jesus is the **Servant who acts and suffers** (Mark): urgent mission, power under obedience, the cross-shaped life.
Jesus is the **true Man who sympathizes** (Luke): compassion, the outsider welcomed, salvation entering real human history.
Jesus is the **eternal Son who reveals God** (John): deity, glory, signs that demand faith, abiding life.
Taken together: **He fulfills the promises, conquers by suffering, saves by identifying with us, and reveals God as God**.

The purpose of it
This study exists to help you:
Read each Gospel on its own terms (not forcing them into the same outline).
See the full Christ: office (King), function (Servant), nature (Man), essence (God).
Teach and preach with balance: kingdom + cross, compassion + truth, history + theology, mission + abiding.
Form disciples who don't merely "know facts," but are shaped by Christ's total reality.
In short: it is a **Christological calibration tool**.

What it demands of us spiritually
1) Worship, not just information
If the Gospels are true, Jesus is not merely interesting—He is **Lord**. The fourfold witness presses you toward adoration, awe, and surrender.
2) Repentance and trust
Each Gospel confronts a different kind of unbelief: the religious confidence that rejects the King, the fear that won't follow the suffering Servant, the self-righteous distance from the poor/outcast Jesus receives, the intellectual refusal to bow before the divine Son.
The spiritual demand is the same: **turn, believe, follow**—but it exposes different heart idols.
3) A cross-shaped life
Especially through Mark (and the whole NT logic), Christ's greatness comes through **servicing and suffering**. You cannot honestly receive Him while refusing His way.

What it demands of us practically
1) Whole-Bible reading
Matthew roots Jesus in promise/fulfillment; Luke roots Him in history; John roots Him in eternity. Practically, it pushes you to read **OT + Gospels + Acts + Epistles** as one coherent storyline.
2) Balanced discipleship
Truth + holiness (Matthew)
Obedient action + courage (Mark)
Compassion + inclusion of the vulnerable (Luke)
Abiding, love, and witness (John)
A church (or believer) that majors on only one will become distorted: harsh, shallow, sentimental, or abstract.
3) Better evangelism
Different people need different doors:
"Is Jesus the promised Messiah?" (Matthew)
"Does Jesus have authority over evil and death?" (Mark)
"Does Jesus care about my suffering and my story?" (Luke)
"Who is Jesus, really—God or not?" (John)

The deepest philosophical meaning
At the deepest level, this fourfold study is about **how reality is known** and what God says is finally real.
1) Reality is personal before it is conceptual
Christianity does not begin with an idea but with a **Person**. The Gospels insist that truth is not merely *propositions*—it is the **self-disclosure of God in Christ**.
2) Unity can exist without reduction
Modern thinking often assumes: if something is true, it must be captured by **one single frame**. The four Gospels deny that. They present a unified reality that requires **multiple faithful perspectives**. That is a profound claim about truth: **truth is coherent, but not always compressible**.
3) The "center" of being is revealed in the cross
Philosophically, the cross is a scandal: power perfected in weakness, victory through surrender, glory through suffering. Yet the Gospels (especially Mark and John) insist this is not an accident; it's the revelation of God's character.
So the deepest meaning is this:
The structure of ultimate reality is cruciform love—holy, self-giving, truth-speaking love—revealed in Jesus Christ.
That is what the four portraits, taken together, finally declare and demand.