

I want to welcome you to this first session of the study of *The Life and Ministry of Christ*. During the next five days we will be exploring the impact of Jesus of Nazareth upon our lives and on our world. The focus will be on scripture analysis and application of scripture to our world.

**My objective** for the study is to help each person in the class rediscover Christ in new and more profound ways in their personal life experience. For Christians Jesus stands as the ultimate example of commitment to the will of the Heavenly Father. He sacrificed His life on a Roman cross in order to provide eternal salvation to every person who would surrender to Him in faith commitment. He is the founder and the foundation of Christianity around the world. As the resurrected, living Christ, He stands ready to come into your life and mine not only to bring eternal redemption, but to develop a spiritual relationship that nourishes and guides us through the ups and downs of daily living on this planet. Consequently, the better we know Him, the richer our religious experience with Him will be. The apostle Paul said it best in Philippians 3:10-11.

**10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.<sup>1</sup>**

Thus my prayer for you during this week is that Christ may become more alive in your life than ever before.

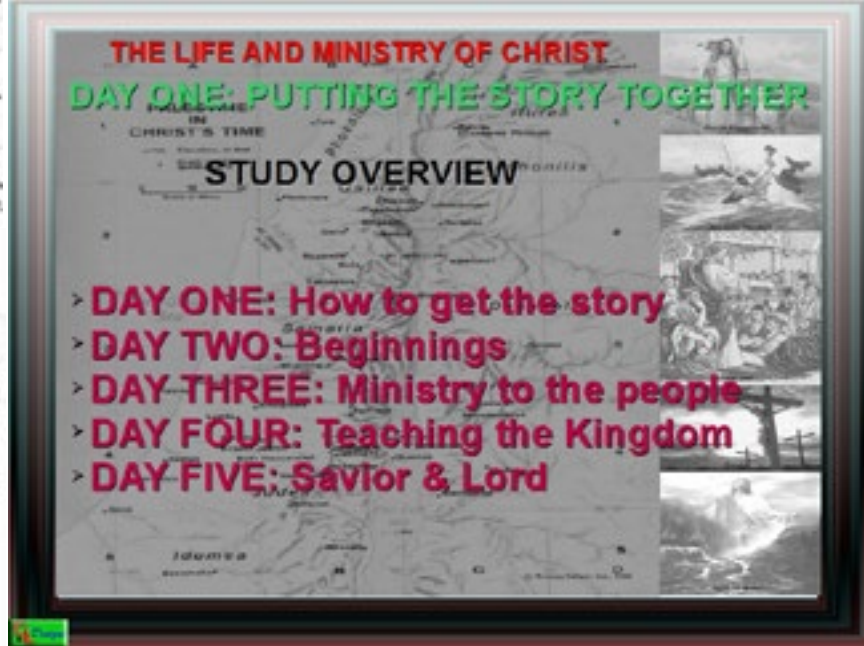
I come at this study out of a half a century of Christian ministry beginning with my first sermon in 1957. An important part of that ministry has been pastoring three churches over a twelve year period -- two at the beginning in 1964 to 1974 and one in 2008-2010 at the end. Tucked between has been a teaching ministry for 24 plus years at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas and an 11 year teaching career at Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, North Carolina. Along with way were guest professorships and lectureships in the German universities at Bonn, Heidelberg, Göttingen, and Hamburg based Baptist Preacher training school. A lot of the accumu-

<sup>1</sup>0 τοῦ γινῶναι αὐτὸν καὶ τὴν δύναμιν τῆς ἀναστάσεως αὐτοῦ καὶ [τὴν] κοινωνίαν [τῶν] παθημάτων αὐτοῦ, συμμορφιζόμενος τῷ θανάτῳ αὐτοῦ, 11 εἴ πως κατακτήσω εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν.



lated understanding from those years is found at my website, Cranfordville.com, in "The Life of Christ" section.

So welcome to the study. I want to go through the materials with you not in a lecture format so much as a discussion. Many of you are already very familiar with the life of Christ from your previous studies of the gospels in the New Testament. Our time together can thus be more profitably used in discussing the topics, especially in a question and answer form.



What I would like to do first is a quick overview of the entire study for the five days. Gaining the 'big picture' sketched out at the beginning will help us see better how the individual topics fit into a contextual picture. The study for each day is built around a common theme for that study.

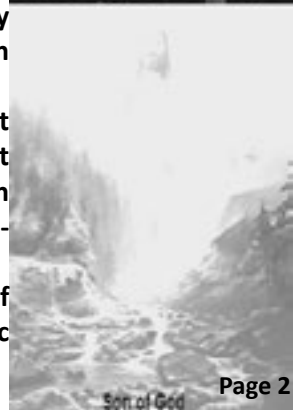
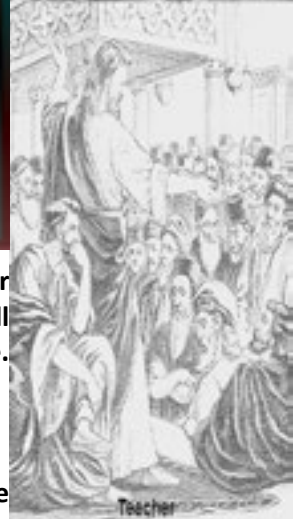
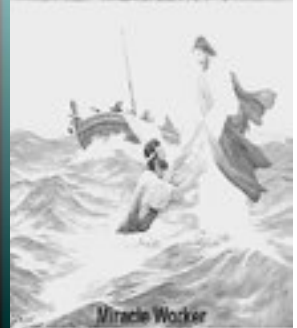
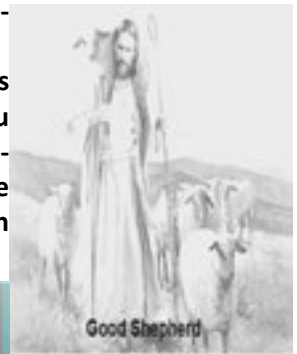
**Sunday, day 1: HOW TO GET THE STORY.**

Here we will explore how to put together the story of Jesus' life and ministry.

The primary sources, of course, are the canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But supplementary insights also come from the remainder of the New Testament in which the spiritual significance of Jesus is highlighted in a variety of ways. Although of very minimal help, the apocryphal gospels beginning in the second century need to be examined as reflecting developing perspectives about who Christ was on the fringes of Christianity. Additionally, the very minimal information about Christ in the Jewish, Greek, and Roman sources needs to be noted. This part also includes some issues of history and biography from both ancient and modern perspectives that become critical in compiling a story of the life of Christ.

In addition to considering sources, we will also take a look at the tools for building the story of Jesus. This includes taking a look at both Gospel Synopses and Gospel Harmonies, along with consideration of exegeting the scripture texts properly, especially inside the four gospels.

Finally, we will sketch out a four fold division of the story of Jesus from the canonical gospels in terms of 1) Beginnings, 2) Public Ministry, 3) Passion Week, and 4) Resurrection and Appearances.





**Monday, day 2: BEGINNINGS.**

In beginning our story we will look at first the infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke. These will be compared to infancy narratives and miraculous birth narratives common in the first century Greco-Roman world, along with the later Infancy Gospels in the apocalyptic gospel sources.

The second emphasis will focus on the launching of public ministry by Jesus as recorded in all four canonical gospels.

**Tuesday, day 3: MINISTRY TO THE PEOPLE.**

Here we will focus on the public ministry of Jesus to the masses of people. The emphasis will center on Galilee where Jesus spent most of his time, but also attention will be given to Judea and Jerusalem, along with the surrounding regions where Jesus ministered to the needs of people.

**Wednesday, day 4: TEACHING THE KINGDOM OF GOD.**

The emphasis of this study will be on what Jesus said. We will explore possible key themes of His teaching, along with gleanings from the preaching, especially the Sermon on the Mount, and the parables of Jesus.

The concept of the kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching will be examined in detail. Particular emphasis will be given to the tension between the present and the future aspects of this idea of the kingdom of God in Jesus' teaching.

**Thursday, day 5: CHRIST AS SAVIOR AND LORD.**

The final day of our study will be devoted to looking at the Passion Week and the Resurrection and Appearances of Jesus. Additionally, the theological aspects of this as reflected in the titles of Jesus found in the New Testament will be made: Son of Man / Son of God; the Messiah; and Savior and Lord.

Hopefully this study will both refresh your memory as well as add fresh new insight into the person Jesus of Nazareth.



**THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST**  
**DAY ONE: PUTTING THE STORY TOGETHER**  
**STUDY OVERVIEW**

- > **BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE STORY**
- > **CONSTRUCTION TOOLS**
- > **THE STORY SKETCHED OUT**

Now let's take a closer look at how to assemble the story of Jesus from the available sources while using the better tools for building the story. Then we will take a quick look at the story that emerges.

**BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE STORY.** When trying to understand



Good Shepherd



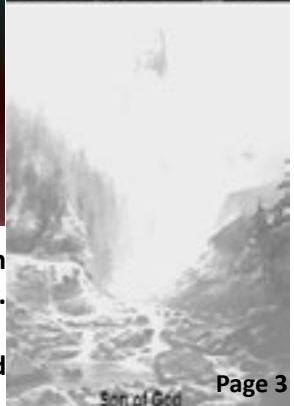
Miracle Worker



Teacher



Savior



Son of God

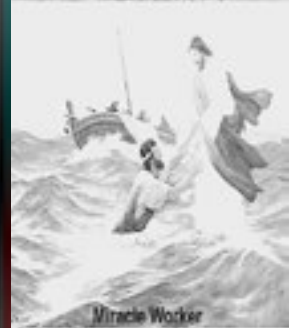
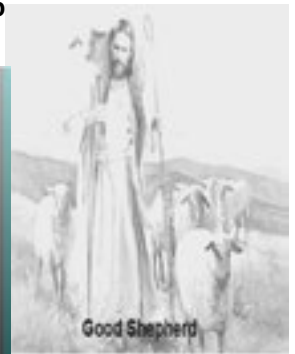
the significance of Jesus of Nazareth, where should one turn in order to find reliable information?



**THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST**  
**DAY ONE: PUTTING THE STORY TOGETHER**  
**PALESTINE**  
**BUILDING BLOCKS FOR THE STORY**

Sources for understanding the life of Christ:

- ✓ **The Gospel**  
 → εὐαγγέλιον  
 → **Canonical Gospels**  
 → **Remainder of the New Testament**
- ✓ **Apocryphal gospels**
- ✓ **Secular Ancient History**



For believing Christians, the beginning -- and most important -- source of information is the four canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. They are labeled gospels.

But what is the difference between 'gospel' and 'gospels'? Inside the pages of these documents, and especially elsewhere in the New Testament, the singular form 'gospel' will be universally used. This English word comes from the original Greek word εὐαγγέλιον with the basic meaning of 'good news.' Although this Greek word was used in the ancient non-Christian world, inside Christian tradition the word came to designate the preached message about Jesus Christ, that especially centered on the spiritual significance of His death and resurrection. Thus when used inside the New Testament, the word does not specify one of the four gospel documents contained in the New Testament.<sup>2</sup>



<sup>2</sup>εὐαγγέλιον, ου, τό (s. prec.1 entry; Hom. et al.; LXX, TestSol D 1:13; ApcSed 14:9; Joseph., Just., Mel.) orig. 'a reward for good news', then simply 'good news' (so Plut., Sertor. 573 [11, 8]; 582 [26, 6], Phoc. 749 [16, 8]; 752 [23, 6] al.; Appian, Bell. Civ. 3, 93 §384; 4, 20 §78; Ps.-Lucian, Asin. 26; Jos., Bell. 2, 420; 4, 618; 656; IG III, 10 = II2, 1077 [OWeinreich, ARW 18, 1915, p. 43, 3]; papyrus letter [after 238 a.d.] in Dssm., LO 313f [LAE 371]=Sb 421.—Also in sacral use: Diod S 15, 74, 2 Διονύσιος τοῖς θεοῖς εὐαγγέλια θύσας=offered a sacrifice for good news to the gods; OGI 458=IPriene 105, 40f ἤρξεν δὲ τῷ κόσμῳ τῶν δὲ αὐτὸν εὐαγγελίων ἢ γενέθλιος τοῦ θεοῦ [s. AHarnack, Red. u. Aufs. I2 1906, 310ff; PWendland, ZNW 5, 1904, 335ff, D. urchristl. Literaturformen 1912, 409f]; Philostrat., Vi. Apollon. 1, 28 of the appearing of Apollon.; Ael. Aristid. 53, 3 K.=55 p. 708 D.: Ζεὺς Εὐαγγέλιος) in our lit. only in the sense of good news relating to God's action in Jesus Christ.



① **God's good news to humans, good news** as proclamation  
 A. abs.

α. τὸ εὐαγγέλιον **Mk 1:15; 8:35; 10:29; Ro 1:16; 10:16; 11:28; 1 Cor 4:15; 9:18, 23; 2 Cor 8:18; Gal 2:2; Eph 3:6; Phil 1:5; 2:22; 4:3; 1 Th 2:4; 2 Ti 1:8, 10; IPhld 5:1, 2; 8:2; 9:2; ISm 5:1; 7:2; MPol 1:1; 22:1.**

β. in gen., dependent on another noun ὁ λόγος τοῦ εὐ. **Ac 15:7; τὸ μυστήριον τ. εὐ. Eph 6:19; cp. vs. 15; Phil 1:7, 12, 16; ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐ. Gal 2:5, 14; Col 1:5** (but the last passage can also be transl. the true message of the gospel). ἡ ἐλπίς τοῦ εὐ. the hope that is kindled by the gospel vs. **23; ἡ πίστις τοῦ εὐ. faith in the gospel Phil 1:27; ἐν τ. δεσμοῖς τοῦ εὐ. Phlm 13; ἡ ἐξουσία τοῦ εὐ. authority over (i.e. to proclaim) the gospel B 8:3; ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐ. beginning (of the proclaiming) of the gospel Phil 4:15; cp. 1 Cl 47:2 (s. on this WHartke, D. Sammlung u. d. ältesten Ausgaben der Paulusbriefe 1917, 55); Mk 1:1 (s. 3 below).**

γ. in certain combinations w. verbs τὸ εὐ. κηρύσσει Mt 26:13; Mk 13:10; 14:9



**Why? Several reasons make such an meaning impossible. First, the four canonical gospel documents were among the very last of the 27 documents of the New Testament to be written. Their composition dates from the late 60s to the mid 90s of the first Christian century. Thus the other writings of the NT were composed before the four gospels, making the word ‘gospel’ impossible to be referring to one of them. Second, the context where the Greek word εὐαγγέλιον is used makes it clear that the term is referring to an oral message rather than a written document. The closest any of these references come to defining a written account is in Mark 1:1 with the expression Ἀρχὴ τοῦ εὐαγγελίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ [υἱοῦ Θεοῦ], The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, Son of God. Although its precise function is debated among scholars, this non-sentence phrase as a heading most likely signals the early section of Mark’s gospel account with the label of εὐαγγέλιον intended as a marker for his entire writing. Third, only the singular form of εὐαγγέλιον is found inside the New Testament, rather than the plural form which begins to**

(Jeremias, ZNW 44, '53, 103–7: apocalyptic proclamation); 16:15; cp. Mt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mk 1:14; Ac 1:2 D; B 5:9; GMary 463, 29; 33. καταγγέλλειν 1 Cor 9:14. γνωρίζειν 15:1. εὐαγγελίζεσθαι Gal 1:11 (cp. 2 Cor 11:7).

B. in combination

α. w. adj. εὐ. αἰώνιον Rv 14:6. ἕτερον 2 Cor 11:4; Gal 1:6 (EGrässer, ZTK 66, '69, 306–44). ἅγιον AcPlCor 2:36.

β. w. gen. (s. OSchmitz, D. Christugemeinschaft des Pls im Lichte seines Genetivgebrauchs 1924, 45–88).

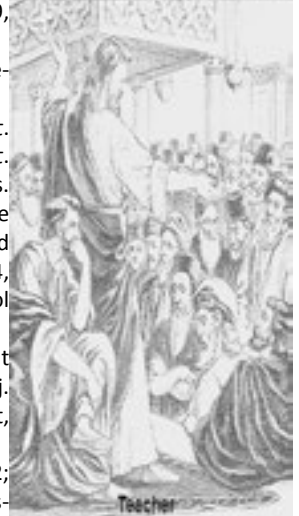
C. objective genitive εὐ. τῆς βασιλείας Mt 4:23; 9:35; 24:14. τ. Θεοῦ Mk 1:14. τ. χάριτος τ. Θεοῦ of God’s grace Ac 20:24. τ. εἰρήνης Eph 6:15. τ. σωτηρίας 1:13. τ. δόξης τ. Χριστοῦ of the glory of Christ 2 Cor 4:4; cp. 1 Ti 1:11 (τὸ Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ εὐ. Orig., C. Cels. 2, 13, 62). εὐ. τ. Χριστοῦ is usu. interpr. as the gospel (good news) about Christ (because of Ro 1:1–3; 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Th 3:2, cp. Ro 15:16) Ro 15:19; 1 Cor 9:12; 2 Cor 2:12 (here and Ro 1:1 εἰς εὐαγγέλιον=for the purpose of bringing the good news, as Appian, Bell. Civ. 4, 113 §474). 2 Cor 9:13; 10:14; Gal 1:7; Phil 1:27; 1 Th 3:2; cp. Ro 1:9; 2 Th 1:8; B 5:9; MPol 19:1. εὐ. τῆς ἀκροβυστίας the gospel for the uncircumcised Gal 2:7.

D. Subjective genitive (τοῦ) Θεοῦ Ro 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor 11:7; 1 Th 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Pt 4:17. The one who is commissioned to do the proclaiming can be mentioned in the subj. gen. εὐ. μου, ἡμῶν Ro 2:16; 16:25; 2 Cor 4:3; 1 Th 1:5; 2 Th 2:14; 2 Ti 2:8. S. LBaudiment, ‘L’Évangile’ de St. Paul 1925; Molland (3 below) 83–97.

② details relating to the life and ministry of Jesus, good news of Jesus D 8:2; 11:3; 15:3f; 2 Cl 8:5; MPol 4:1; perh. also Mk 1:1 (LKeck, The Introduction to Mark’s Gospel, NTS 12, '66, 352–70; DDormeyer, NTS 33, '87, 452–68); IPHld 8:2; ISm 7:2. This usage marks a transition to

③ a book dealing with the life and teaching of Jesus, a gospel account that deals w. the life and teaching of Jesus (Just., A I, 66, 3 al.) Dg 11:6 (ἐν τοῖς εὐ.; TestSol 1:13 D; Orig., C. Cels. 1:9, 19 [w. ἐν τοῖς προφήταις]) τὸ καθ’ Ἑβραίους εὐ.—Papias (2:17).—(Cp. ὁ τὸ εὐ. γράψας Ἰωάννης Orig., C. Cels. 5, 12, 13).—ASeeberg, D. Evangelium Christi 1905; Harnack, Entstehg. u. Entwickl. d. Kirchenverfassung 1910, 199–239; PZondervan, Het woord ‘Evangelium’: TT 48, 1914, 187–213; MBurrows, The Origin of the Word ‘Gospel’: JBL 44, 1925, 21–33; JSchniewind, Euangelion 1; 2; 1927, '31, Die Begriffe Wort u. Evglm. b. Pls, diss. Halle 1910; AFridrichsen, Tò εὐαγγέλιον hos Pls: NorTT 13, 1912, 153–70; 209–56, Der Begriff Evgl. b. Irenäus, Hippolyt, Novatian: ibid. 1917, 148–70; AOepke, D. Missionspredigt des Ap. Pls. 1920, 50ff; EBurton, ICC Gal 1921, 422f; EMolland, D. Paulin. Euangelion; D. Wort u. d. Sache '34; RAsing, D. Verkündigung im Urchristentum '39 (on Word of God, Gospel, Witness); GFriedrich, TW II 705–35; KRengstorf, ZNW 31, '32, 54–56; MAlbertz, D. Botschaft des NT, vols. I and II, '47–'57; JvDodewaard, Biblica 35, '54, 160–73; HKoester, TU 65, '57, 6–12; JBowman, ‘Gospel’ and Its Cognates in Palestinian Syriac, NT Essays (TManson memorial), ed. Higgins '59, 54–67; HFrankemölle, Evangelium '88; HKoester, From the Kerygma to the Written Gospels: NTS 35, '89, 361–81; RAC VI 1107–60.—DELG s.v. ἄγγελος. M-M. On εὐαγγελ- terms s. New Docs 3, 12–14. EDNT. TW. Spicq. Sv.2

[William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker and Walter Bauer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 3rd ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 402-03.]





surface in the second century writings of the church fathers when referring to a document labeled a gospel. Here both individual gospel writings are specified by the singular along with the plural form specifying the collection of the four documents.

To be sure, the four gospel documents are based on the preaching of the 'Gospel' message about Christ. But when εὐαγγέλιον surfaces inside the New Testament, the focus is on the cross and resurrection of Christ as the foundation for divine salvation of the sinner. From the materials outside the four gospels, the New Testament provides little information about aspects of Jesus' life other than His death and resurrection.

The four gospels -- Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John -- were written from the late 60s to the mid 90s of the first Christian century. This was over thirty years after Jesus' ascension back to Heaven in AD 30. During this period the early Christians developed memorized oral traditions about what Jesus said and did, as well as written excerpts of individual teachings and deeds. The four gospel writers utilized this material in composing their written documents, as Luke makes clear in Lk. 1:1-4. Additionally, they used these sources interpretatively, i.e., they adapted their sources to fit the distinctive needs of a targeted community of believers in the first century world. Further, the sequence of the writing of these documents was such that Mark's gospel being the first to be written was heavily utilized by both Matthew (2nd) and Luke (3rd) in the composition of their documents. From all appearances Luke had access to Matthew's gospel -- or at least a common set of written materials with Matthew -- that he used in writing his account. Thus were created the 'double' and 'triple' tradition materials found in these first three gospels where two or all three writers record the same event or saying of Jesus, usually with mostly the same wording in Greek. The over arching outlines of their stories follows a common structure, with Matthew and Luke adding their infancy narratives at the beginning and a series of resurrection appearances at the end neither of which are contained in the original writing of Mark. These three gospels form the Synoptic Gospels, meaning that they generally look at Jesus' life in a similar manner. John's gospel comes last in the 90s and reflects little dependence on the materials found in the Synoptic Gospel.

One should note that although Jesus spoke in Aramaic during His lifetime, the four gospels were written originally in Greek. This was because of the Pauline mission to the Gentiles in the middle of the century which transformed Christianity into a non-Jewish religious movement during the second half of the century. During this time, few Christians without a Jewish background could speak or read Aramaic. But all could speak and read Koine Greek which was spoken universally in the eastern Mediterranean world of the first century.

Beginning in the second Christian century, Christian groups whose beliefs and practices placed them on the fringe of Christianity began producing their own gospel accounts in order to justify their teachings which were labeled as heresy by orthodox Christian leaders. These documents often do not follow either the structure nor the contents of the canonical gospels. Although very diverse in their contents, they mostly center on things that Jesus supposedly said, much more than on what He did. The common belief that permeates the vast majority of these Apocryphal Gospels is Gnosticism. What they represent is a Gentile Christianity losing touch with the Jewish heritage of Jesus and



Good Shepherd



Miracle Worker



Teacher



St. Peter



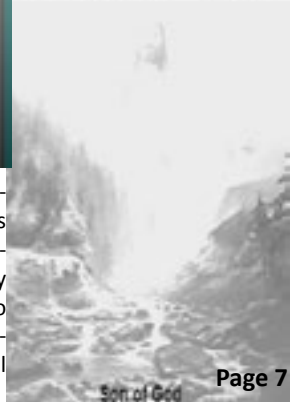
Son of God



the apostles. When combined with a rapidly developing antisemitism among Christians at this point, their often strange beliefs reflect efforts to re-interpret Jesus into the framework of the pagan Greco-Roman god-man image. This image was that of a wiz-bang sensationalist miracle worker who dazzled folks with his dramatic supernatural power and his profound wisdom into the secrets of human living. By creating such fictional fantasy pictures of Jesus Christ, they sought to give creditability to their belief systems in contradiction to orthodox Christian teaching.

Because the contents of these so-called gospels are based in romanticized fiction rather than in historical reality, they provide very little help in understanding the life of Jesus of Nazareth itself. But they are important to study largely because they provide glimpses into how Christian can go screwy when it allows prevailing religious attitudes in its own cultural world to shape its understanding of Christ rather than sacred scripture. Additionally, these documents give glimpses into the thinking of what was believed at times becoming a dominant segment of later Christianity. Finally, where the apocryphal gospel writers attempt to re-write content found in the four canonical gospels one can glean insights into how not to interpret the New Testament texts -- mistakes still often made by modern interpreters.

In western culture since the Enlightenment beginning in the 1300s in Europe, 'scientific history' must be based on sources representing a variety of viewpoints both positive and critical, if the history is to have credibility in the thinking of westerners. This presents some challenges for studying the life of Christ. The canonical gospels are presenting a religious interpretation of the spiritual significance of Christ. Even the apocryphal gospels are written from a sympathetic view of Jesus even though their perspective is drastically different from that found in the canonical gospels. In light of the world religion status of Christianity in our day, the tendency is to assume that the Greek and Roman writers in the ancient world would have devoted considerable space to Jesus of Nazareth. But just the opposite is the case, largely because in the first Christian century this new religious movement was considered nothing but a new sect inside Judaism, and thus of no real importance to the Roman empire. Consequently little information about Jesus can be gleaned from non-Christian ancient writers.<sup>3</sup> What is possible to conclude from these 'secular' sources is only the historical existence of Jesus, and nothing more.



**THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST**

DAY ONE: PUTTING THE STORY TOGETHER

PALESTINE

**TOOLS FOR ASSEMBLING THE STORY**

- ✓ Literary nature of the four gospels
- ✓ Method of compiling their story
- ✓ Modern biographical concerns & tools
- ✓ Interpreting pericopes

<sup>34</sup>Non-Christian sources used to establish the historical existence of Jesus include the works of first-century historians Josephus and Tacitus.[240][260] Josephus scholar Louis H. Feldman has stated that 'few have doubted the genuineness' of Josephus' reference to Jesus in book 20 of the *Antiquities of the Jews*, and it is disputed only by a small number of scholars.<sup>[241][261]</sup> The Roman historian and senator Tacitus referred to Christ and his execution by Pilate in book 15 of his work *Annals*. Scholars generally consider Tacitus's reference to the execution of Jesus to be both authentic, and of historical value as an independent Roman source.<sup>[262]</sup> ["Jesus," *wikipedia.org*]

**TOOLS FOR ASSEMBLING THE STORY.** In light of the available sources of information, how one uses the canonical gospels especially in compiling a life of Christ becomes very important.

**First,** the literary nature of the four gospel accounts should be carefully understood. None of them stand as 'scientific history' or biography in the modern definitions of these literary forms. The post Enlightenment mistakes in posing the quest for the historical Jesus over against the Christ of faith falsely imposed modern standards of historicity and biographical writing on the gospels. The consequence of this was disaster with the generation of skepticism about whether or not there ever was a Jesus of Nazareth, or whether He as a myth created in the imagination of early disciples. Most of the Christian world has recovered from this error today, but it still lingers among non-Christians hostile to Christianity.

The reality of the accumulative impact of modern scholarly analysis of literary forms ancient and modern has been to recognize that the gospel documents share many aspects in common with the writing of ancient history and biography, but not with the modern versions of these forms. Thus the study of the four gospels has taken directions in the past 150 years that give increasing value to these traits. Historical confidence in these accounts of the life of Jesus has come full circle in today's world from skepticism to deep confidence.

**Second,** the way in which the gospel writers compile their story of Jesus is important. The noticeable difference between the approaches of the Synoptic Gospels and of John are significant. The Synoptic Gospels concern themselves more with historical narrative and sayings of Jesus, while the fourth gospel is more thematic and theological in its approach. Especially in the Synoptic Gospels, the building blocks of the story are arranged in units of material, that are called pericopes, focusing on what Jesus did (narratives) and what Jesus said (sayings). Sometimes these are mixed together. The narrative units are two basic types: summary narratives and episodic narratives. The first summarizes periods of ministry activity normally by stating dominating themes or traits of activities by Jesus. The episodic narratives depict individual events that took place in Jesus' ministry. Sometimes this covered only an hour or so in one day, but the episodes may stretch out to cover up to a period of weeks or months. The sayings materials are made up mostly by the parables of Jesus, which stood as His primary teaching means. But a variety of additional kinds of sayings also surface in these gospels.

**Third,** modern biographical concerns wants to see the life story of an individual placed in chronological order. But the nature of the contents of the canonical gospels makes doing this in a precise way utterly impossible. In the modern era of Bible study, efforts were made at doing this and were called gospel harmonies. But contemporary scholarship recognizes the impossibility of doing this with any kind of certainty and instead has adopted an alternative tool called a gospel synopsis as a convenient way to line up the parallel passages between the Synoptic Gospels primarily, and then to list the passages unique to each writer separately. This allows for easier comparison of the parallel texts between the gospel accounts, as well as highlights the uniqueness of each account in telling its own story of Jesus. Both kinds of tools will typically sketch out the general contours of Jesus' public ministry in four to six common periods of ministry. This reflects the common overarching structure of the Synoptic Gospels especially.





**Fourth**, the approach to interpreting individual units of texts in the canonical gospels plays an important role as well. Not only should the standard principles of interpretation apply here, but some additional principles apply particularly when treating a passage in one gospel and parallel accounts of the same event are found in one or more other gospel documents. Here a gospel synopsis is especially helpful through its listing of these parallels in side-by-side columns. One should note the similarities and differences found in all the parallels. If one is working from the dominant source view of Mark first and then followed by Matthew, Luke, and finally John, then the question becomes how Matthew and Luke modified Mark's account to suit the needs of their targeted audiences. Of if only Matthew and Luke are parallel to one another, how do each vary from one another for their individual purposes. When the focus is on theological perspectives differing from one another, the methods of Redaction Criticism come into the picture for drawing religious belief conclusions about each gospel writer.

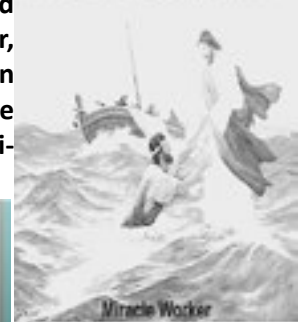


**THE LIFE AND MINISTRY OF CHRIST**  
**DAY ONE: PUTTING THE STORY TOGETHER**  
**PALESTINE**  
**SKETCHING OUT THE STORY**

- ✓ BEGINNINGS
- ✓ PUBLIC MINISTRY
- ✓ PASSION WEEK
- ✓ RESURRECTION & APPEARANCES

**SKETCHING OUT THE STORY.** When one begins pulling the pieces of text materials together into a coherent story of the life of Christ, what are the foundation contours that form the structural skeleton for the story? Although these can be sketched out either chronologically or thematically, we will adopt the chronological approach for our study.

The period of beginnings includes both the infancy narratives found in Matthew and Luke along with the formal launching of public ministry found also in Mark, and to a lesser extent in John. This leads us up to the year 27 AD when Christ launched His ministry through being baptized in the Jordan and then going immediately to Galilee where He had grown up. For the next two plus years Jesus will travel extensively through the northern province of Galilee preaching, teaching, and healing as He ministered to the spiritual needs of the people and began the process of pulling the twelve disciples around Himself as assistants. This public ministry on occasion included trips south into Samaria and especially into Judea and Jerusalem. But Galilee typically receives the greatest attention (51% of Matthew's gospel; 53% of Mark's; 24% of Luke's; and 15% of John's). The final week of Jesus' public ministry in Jerusalem leading up to His crucifixion on Friday (Matthew, 34%; Mark, 34%; Luke,





20%; John, 33%) and the resurrection along with the appearances (Matthew, 12%; Mark, 3%; Luke 5%; John, 6%) receive the next largest chunks of attention. These two central events become the core of the Gospel message preached by the early church as reflected in Acts and the letters of the New Testament. For Matthew and Mark the life of Jesus centered in Galilee and Jerusalem. For Luke and John activities by Jesus in the surrounding regions played an important role as well and thus receive some attention.

**HOW SHOULD THIS IMPACT YOU?** Although these concepts of the first study are rather basic, they are foundational for any serious study of Christ's life that is to be deeply grounded in scriptural principle. We dare not make the mistake of later Christian Gnostics who recreated Jesus into the images of super heroes popular in their day but completely detached from the reality of the historical Jesus. The world will never find salvation from an Americanized Jesus or a European Jesus! Only in the Jesus who lived twenty centuries ago in ancient Palestine did God work to bring about eternal redemption for all people of all times. It is this Jesus who now stands at the right hand of the Heavenly Father as the risen Christ who intercedes for us and stands with us daily through the presence of His Spirit. The better we come to know Him, the richer and more profound will be our relationship with Him in this life. Only by following sound tools of interpreting the biblical text can we develop this understanding!



Good Shepherd



Miracle Worker



Teacher



Savior



Son of God