

Lyceum 130 - January 22, 2026 – a forum to Think, Discuss, Share, and Learn from one another. Your input is welcomed - Iron sharpens iron.

Neighborhood “The 1826, in Connecticut, a farmer named Josiah Holbrook started a school for ‘the general diffusion of knowledge and raising the moral and intellectual taste’ of Americans. In those days, the opportunities for higher education were limited to those venerable old universities that had long served the upper crust. Holbrook’s vision was to make learning – practical, liberal, and humane – available to working people of all kinds. He named his school the Lyceum, after the garden where Aristotle once taught his students philosophy.... We need to go deeper than the superficial fights that characterize public life. We need to return to the first principles and meet each other there as human beings.” – Nathan Beacom, Plough Magazine, Autumn 2023, p. 9.

The four Gospels together provide a complete revelation of Jesus Christ, His humanity, divinity, kingship, and servanthood. Each Gospel is uniquely inspired to meet the needs of its original audience and reveal various aspects of Christ’s nature.

Let us treasure these accounts, as they reveal the heart of God and the truth of the Gospel message.

-Roger J. Vanden Busch—Blessings of Health, Happiness, and Holiness be upon you and your loved ones.

Concise Historical Facts About Jesus and the Bible.

1. Jesus Was a Real Person, Not Just a Religious Symbol.

Most historians and archaeologists, both religious and academic, agree on one common point: that Jesus of Nazareth was a real living figure. He lived in 1st-century Roman-occupied Judea and was known as a teacher, healer, and religious reformer.

2. The Bible Was Written Over a Period of 1,500 Years.

The Bible is not a single work, but a library of 66 books written over 15 centuries by more than 40 different authors. These writers are spread out all over the world and come from all occupations across centuries – kings, prophets, anglers, doctors, and shepherds.

3. The New Testament Was Written in Greek, Not Hebrew.

Even though Jesus most probably taught in Aramaic, the New Testament itself was composed in Koine Greek, the lingua franca of the Roman Empire at the time. This helped spread the teaching of Jesus everywhere into the Greco-Roman world.

4. Jesus Was Likely Born in the Spring, Not December 25.

We possess no Scriptural origin for a December 25th birth date. That day was most probably selected sometime in the 4th century to coincide with Roman paganism in their celebration of Saturnalia.

5. The Bible Is the Best-Selling Book in Human History.

The Bible has sold over 5 billion copies worldwide and is translated into more than 3,500 languages and is the most read and published book in history.

6. Archaeology Has Confirmed Many Biblical Locations.

Places such as Jericho, Capernaum, and Nazareth have been excavated and studied extensively. Artifacts from these sites confirm biblical accounts of architecture, culture, and daily life.

7. Jesus Had Biological Brothers and Sisters.

In contrast to some traditions, the Bible simply refers to Jesus' siblings.

8. The Old Testament Was Primarily Written in Hebrew.

The Tanakh or Hebrew Bible consists of Hebrew, with the chapters Daniel 2–7 in Aramaic.

9. The Dead Sea Scrolls Validate Old Testament Accuracy.

The Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1947 in Qumran caves and span the period of 300–100 BC. They contain all the books of the Old Testament except for Esther. They confirm the accuracy of recent translations.

10. Jesus Was Crucified Under Roman Law Around 30–33 AD.

Crucifixion was a Roman method of execution for criminals and rebels. Jesus' death under Pontius Pilate is one of the most attested events in ancient history.

11. Jesus' Tomb Was Found Empty.

The resurrection is still the foundation of Christianity. What is historically important is that even non-Christian historians mention the empty tomb but disagree about the explanation.

12. Nazareth Existed in the 1st Century.

Germans used to claim that Nazareth never existed. But archaeologists have unearthed houses, kitchen utensils, and a 1st-century synagogue in the area.

13. Paul's Letters Are Among the Earliest New Testament Writings.

Many of Paul's epistles, such as 1 Thessalonians and Galatians, were written before the Gospels and provide us with early details regarding Christian doctrines.

14. The Gospels Were Not Chosen at the Council of Nicaea.

The Council of Nicaea (325 AD) settled disputes of theology, not the creation of the Bible.

15. Jesus Was a Devout Jew.

Jesus celebrated Jewish holidays and practiced Jewish law. His teaching, while revolutionary, was firmly based on Jewish scripture and tradition.

16. Jesus' Trial Violated Jewish Legal Protocol.

Night trials or Passover trials were forbidden in Jewish law. Jesus' trial violated several legal conventions, implying political haste surrounding His condemnation.

17. The Bible Has Inspired Civil Rights and Humanitarian Movements.

The concept of inherent human dignity was formulated based on the Bible. The activists such as William Wilberforce, Martin Luther King Jr., and Desmond Tutu acted according to the Bible.

18. Rome persecuted Early Christians.

Before Constantine's Edict of Milan (313 AD) legalized Christianity, believers were tortured, imprisoned, and executed for refusing emperor worship.

19. Jesus Predicted the Destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.

In 70 AD, Roman General Titus toppled the Second Temple—just as Jesus had foretold half a century before. Not a single stone remained upon another.

Source: Catholicism, Richard McBrien, volumes 1 and 2. "Jesus." An Introduction to the New Testament, Raymond Brown. Internet.

20. The four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, present the life, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Each Gospel offers a unique perspective, and together they provide a complete and divinely inspired testimony of the Messiah.

The Synoptic Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke

The first three Gospels: Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are often referred to as the Synoptic Gospels because they share a similar structure, narrative flow, and content. The term “synoptic” comes from the Greek word *synopsis*, meaning “a seeing together,” as they often present parallel accounts of the same events.

1. Matthew

Date: Written around 60-70 AD.

Audience: Primarily Jewish believers.

Focus: Jesus as the promised Messianic King and the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

Key Themes: Fulfillment of prophecy, the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus as the Son of David.

Unique Features: Begins with the genealogy tracing Jesus’ lineage to Abraham, emphasizing His Jewish heritage. Frequently quotes the Old Testament, pointing to Jesus as the fulfillment of the Law and Prophets ([Matthew 5:17](#)). It is also the only gospel to use the term “Kingdom of Heaven.”

2. Mark

Date: Written around 55-65 AD (the earliest Gospel).

Audience: Roman believers, particularly Gentiles.

Focus: Jesus as the Suffering Servant who came with power and authority.

Key Themes: Action and immediacy, miracles, the cost of discipleship.

Unique Features: Mark is the shortest Gospel, focusing on Jesus’ deeds more than His teachings. It opens with John the Baptist and Jesus’ baptism rather than a birth narrative.

3. Luke

Date: Written around 60-70 AD.

Audience: Gentile believers, specifically addressed to Theophilus.

Focus: Jesus as the Son of Man, emphasizing His compassion and humanity.

Key Themes: Compassion for the marginalized, the role of the Holy Spirit, prayer, and Jesus' universal mission.

Unique Features: The most detailed birth narrative (Luke 1-2) includes the parables of the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. Luke also wrote Acts, forming a two-part work.

Common Features of the Synoptic Gospels:

Emphasis on the kingdom of God and Jesus' public ministry.

Parables are used extensively to teach spiritual truths.

Key events like Jesus' baptism, transfiguration, crucifixion, and resurrection are all present.

The Gospel of John: The Separate Witness

The Gospel of John stands distinct from the Synoptic Gospels, both in style and theological emphasis. While the Synoptics focus more on Jesus' human life and works, John emphasizes His divine nature and eternal identity as the Son of God.

4. John

Date: Written around 85-95 AD, the latest of the Gospels.

Audience: A universal audience, both Jew and Gentile, with a theological focus.

Focus: Jesus as the Eternal Son of God, emphasizing His divine nature and relationship with the Father.

Key Themes: Deity of Christ, eternal life, belief, the "I Am" statements.

Unique Features: Begins with a theological prologue: *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"* ([John 1:1](#)). Includes extended discourses rather than parables, such as Jesus' conversation with Nicodemus and the woman at the well.

Miracles as Signs: John calls miracles "signs" pointing to Jesus' divine identity ([John 20:31](#)).

Audience and Purpose

Each Gospel was inspired by the Holy Spirit but tailored for a specific audience with a unique emphasis:

Matthew: Jewish believers, emphasizing Jesus as the fulfillment of prophecy.

Mark: Roman believers, emphasizing Jesus as the powerful yet humble Servant.

Luke: Gentile believers, emphasizing Jesus' humanity and compassion.

John: Universal, emphasizing Jesus' divine nature and the need for belief in Him for eternal life.

Theological Emphases Across the Gospels

Matthew: The Kingdom of Heaven and Jesus' authority as the Jewish Messiah.

Mark: The Power and Servanthood of Christ, emphasizing His actions.

Luke: The Humanity of Jesus and His ministry to the outcast.

John: The Deity of Jesus and eternal life through faith.

Source: The Jerusalem Bible, Introduction to the Synoptic Gospels and footnotes. Introduction to the New Testament, Raymond Brown. Internet.