

Scripture: A Portrait of Jesus

Keep these ideas in mind as you study **Chapter 3**.

❖ The 27 books of the New Testament include the Gospels, the Acts of the Apostles, the epistles (or letters), and the Book of Revelation.

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❖ The first four books of the New Testament—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—tell us the Good News that Jesus’ life, death, and Resurrection have freed us from the power of sin and death.

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❖ Jesus told his apostles and all Christians to evangelize, or proclaim the Good News. The men who wrote the Gospels are called Evangelists.

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❖ The Gospel of Matthew quotes heavily from Hebrew Scriptures, showing Jesus to be the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament. This Gospel was written for the Jews who converted to Christianity. It portrays Jesus as a teacher and the New Moses.

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❖ The Gospel of Mark is the shortest and was probably the first one written. Matthew and Luke draw from Mark’s Gospel. This Gospel’s symbol is the lion, representing John’s voice in the wilderness. It is the second book of the New Testament.

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❖ The Gospel of Luke has the warmest portraits of Jesus and includes the infancy stories. Luke portrays Jesus as a Savior for all people. This Gospel’s symbol is the ox. It is the third book of the New Testament.

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❖ The Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell very similar stories, so they are called synoptic, which means “same view.”

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❖ John’s Gospel is very different from those of Matthew, Mark, and Luke. It is written like a religious poem with long speeches and different stories.

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❖ God inspired the Scripture writers to communicate what he wanted known using their own background, culture, language, and style. This is why the same truths are revealed in the Gospels, for example, but each Gospel is written differently.

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❖ Luke, whose Gospel was written for non-Jewish readers (Gentiles), also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. The Acts of the Apostles begins with the Ascension, in which Jesus promises to send the Spirit to strengthen the apostles as they carry the Good News to all people by founding the Christian Church. The book also tells of the arrival of the Spirit on Pentecost and how the Church was formed. An important part of the book is the story of how Saul converted to Christianity and became Paul.

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❖ The epistles are letters written about the issues the early Christians faced. Paul wrote most of the epistles. They appear after the Gospels in the Bible, but most epistles were written in the earliest days of the Church, before the Gospels were written.

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❖ The Book of Revelation is the last book of the Bible. It uses imagery of the Apocalypse to encourage Christians to hope for Jesus’ return.

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