



**M**atthew was a tax gatherer at Capernaum. He wrote that the Savior fulfilled prophecy.



# Who Are **MATTHEW, MARK, LUKE, and JOHN?**

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*A doctor, a fisherman, a tax collector, and another who was just a teenager when he heard the Savior speak, they wrote some of the most famous books in existence.*

**W**e recognize their names immediately. Their names are attached to the first four books of the New Testament. And most important of all, their writings are almost all we have describing the mortal life of Jesus Christ and the things He said.

The first four books of the New Testament are called the Gospels. It's easy to imagine why these books were written and why they have always been so important. Can you imagine how exciting it would have been for people who were just learning about the Savior to have someone read to them the things He said and did? These books have always been precious.

Matthew and John were two of the original Twelve Apostles. They were with the Savior often as He taught. But who were Mark and Luke, and how did they come to write about the Savior's life and ministry?

Here are a few things scholars know about the four men who wrote their testimonies of the Savior.<sup>1</sup>

## **Matthew**

Matthew was a publican, or tax collector, before he was called as one of the Lord's Apostles. Because of that profession, we can guess that he was well educated and knew how to read and write, probably in several languages, including Greek. He also knew arithmetic. He saw and heard many wonderful things while with the Savior, and it is likely he wrote down some of the sayings of the Savior as notes or in a journal. Later, these notes would have helped him when he wrote what he remembered about the teachings of Jesus.

In his book, Matthew often stresses that Jesus Christ is the Messiah and came to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies. Matthew wrote specifically to the Jews, who were familiar with those prophecies.

Matthew was a man who could have moved comfortably in political circles, and his book mentions things that someone in his position would know. For example, his account of the Resurrection tells that those assigned to guard the Savior's tomb saw two angels roll back the stone that covered the door of the tomb. They told their superiors what had happened, so the soldiers were offered large sums of money to say that the Lord's followers had crept in and carried His body away. This lie was then spread among the Jews. (See Matthew 28:2–15.)



**M**ark, also called John Mark, was the son of a woman named Mary, a devoted disciple of Jesus Christ who lived in Jerusalem.

Matthew must have been informed about the bribery. The book of Matthew is the only place this interesting bit of information is told.

### **Mark**

Mark was much younger than the other writers. His mother was a prominent follower of Jesus Christ. Acts 12:12 tells us that her house in Jerusalem was used as a meeting place for other disciples. From this verse we also learn that her son's full name is John Mark.

Mark was also a follower of Jesus Christ but would likely have been in his teens when the Lord was in Jerusalem. He may have seen and listened to the Savior on occasion. After the Resurrection, as the Savior's message was beginning to be spread, Mark traveled with the Apostle Paul. He then accompanied the Apostle Peter to Rome and stayed by him while he was in prison. Mark is known as Peter's interpreter, both in speech and in writing. As a fisherman from Galilee, Peter may not have spoken Greek fluently, so Mark interpreted for him.

In his book, Mark wrote down the observations and memories of Peter, one of the original Apostles. Mark's book reflects Peter's interest in spreading the gospel among the Gentiles.

### **Luke**

Luke is an interesting writer because he did not know Jesus Christ personally. He became a follower after the Lord's death, when Paul taught him the gospel. Luke had been a physician, but he left that profession to travel with Paul. He had the opportunity to talk with many of the Apostles as well as others who were eyewitnesses to special events or moments in the Lord's life. In the first few verses of his book, Luke says that he

is going to write the things that eyewitnesses and other teachers of the gospel had to say about the Savior. Apparently he had the opportunity to talk to many who were present when the Savior taught or performed miracles.

One of the most amazing stories Luke wrote about was the birth of the Savior. Elder Bruce R. McConkie (1915–85) of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles says that Luke probably got his information about Jesus’s birth from Mary herself.<sup>2</sup>

Who were the other people Luke interviewed about Jesus Christ? The list would have been long. Many of the people who knew the Savior would still have been alive and would have remembered such important times in their lives. Paul mentions that about 500 people saw the Savior after His Resurrection and that most of them were still alive when he was writing to the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 15:6).

### John

John, or John the Beloved as he was known, served as one of the Apostles. His book was probably written last, as John seems to have already read the other Gospels before he wrote his own book. Often, instead of telling his version of an event or parable the others had already written about, he writes about things the other writers did not include. Also, John’s Gospel includes the testimony of John the Baptist. It seems likely that he had some of the writings of John the Baptist.

John was writing to members of the Church, who already knew something of the Lord. John



### THE GOSPELS IN HARMONY

A wonderful help to use when studying the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is found in the Bible Dictionary, after “Gospels.” The Harmony of the Gospels is a chart that tells where in each book a teaching or an incident in the life of Jesus Christ is told. You get a more in-depth understanding of events or parables when you read about them everywhere they are written. Try looking up the baptism of Jesus. You will see that it is mentioned in all four Gospels. But Jesus’s appearance to Thomas, for instance, is found only in John.

John has the most unique material in his book. About 90 percent of the information in the book of John is not in the other three Gospels. Mark’s book has the least unique material: only 7 percent.

**L**uke practiced medicine until he joined Paul in his travels. In Luke 1:1, the Joseph Smith Translation calls Luke a messenger of Jesus Christ.



**J**ohn was a fisherman until Jesus called him as an Apostle. He was known as John the Beloved. John 21:22–23 and D&C 7 tell us that John did not die but remained on the earth.

emphasizes Jesus’s divine nature as the Son of God.

In the last five verses of his book, we find out what happened to John. Referring to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” John tells us that he would not die but would remain on earth until the Second Coming (see John 21:20–23; D&C 7).

#### **Four Separate Books**

Right after the Lord’s death and Resurrection and for many years afterward, each of the books written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John was a separate item, written on a separate scroll and copied over and over. The individual books weren’t put together into the New Testament until several hundred years after they were written. This explains John’s warning in Revelation 22:18: “If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book.” Some people have interpreted this to mean that no other scriptures could be revealed after the book of Revelation, which in modern times is the last book of the Bible. But John was most likely warning people not to add anything to his writing only in the book of Revelation.

Eventually the four Gospels were joined with other valuable writings such as the letters that Paul and others wrote. Other original Apostles also wrote things that were copied repeatedly. Remnants of these writings survive, but it is difficult to determine which are authentic. When the New Testament was gathered into a single book, these writings were not included.

#### **The Rest of the New Testament**

After the four Gospels, the book of Acts records the events following the Ascension of the Savior. Most scholars agree that Luke wrote the Acts of the Apostles. Nearly all the rest of the books in the New Testament are letters, or epistles. Paul wrote most of these, but also included are letters written by James, Peter, John, and Jude. The book of Revelation, written by John, concludes the collection we now call the New Testament. **NE**

#### **NOTES**

1. Information in this article came from Kent P. Jackson and Robert L. Millet, eds., *Studies in Scripture, Volume 5: The Gospels* (1986).
2. See *The Mortal Messiah: From Bethlehem to Calvary*, 4 vols. (1979–81), 1:324.