*Background of the Gospels

A. What is a Gospel?

A **gospel** is a type of writing that tells the good news about Jesus Christ. It shares his life, teachings, death, and resurrection.

B. What are the Synoptic Gospels?

The **synoptic gospels** are the first three gospels in the New Testament: Matthew, Mark, and Luke. They are called "synoptic" because they tell similar stories about Jesus by each person who wrote the Gospel.

C. List of the Four Gospels

1. **Matthew**
2. **Mark**
3. **Luke**
4. **John**

D. What Does "Synoptic" Mean?

Synoptic means "seen together." It tells how Matthew, Mark, and Luke share many of the same stories and teachings about Jesus.

E. Why Were the Gospels Written?

1. **To Share the Good News**: The gospels were written to tell everyone about Jesus and his message of love and salvation.
2. **To Teach and Guide**: They were also written to teach people how to live by Jesus' teachings and to guide the early Christian community.

F. How Was the Gospel Tradition Formed?

The gospel tradition began with the life of Jesus. After Jesus died and rose again, his followers shared stories about him. These stories were passed down orally (by speaking) before they were written down in the gospels.

G. Comparing the Image of Jesus in the Four Gospels

1. **Matthew**: Writes about Jesus as a teacher and how he fullfilled (made come true) the Old Testament prophecies. He wrote about Jesus' role as the Messiah.
2. **Mark**: Shows Jesus as powerful and busy. It writes about his miracles and what he did. Mark talks about Jesus' humanity and suffering.
3. **Luke**: Shows how Jesus was compassionate and had great love for all people, especially the poor and outcasts (those hated).
4. **John**: Write about Jesus as the divine (Holy) Son of God. This gospel tells about Jesus' spiritual teachings and his relationship with God the Father.

H. Summary

The gospels are important writings that tell us about Jesus. The synoptic gospels—Matthew, Mark, and Luke—share similar stories, while John gives a different view. They were written to spread Jesus' message and help people learn how to live. Each gospel shows a special and different picture of Jesus, showing different parts of his life and what he preached.

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