

# Four Gospels: Four Beginnings

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### Explanation

Each Gospel delivers the message of Jesus Christ through its own distinctive style and approach. Significantly, each Gospel traces the origins of Jesus back to a different point. Read from the bottom up, chart 7-2 shows that Matthew takes the genealogy of Jesus only back to David and Abraham, reflecting Matthew's Jewish interests. Luke takes the genealogy back to Adam, reflecting his broader gentile interest in all humankind. Mark gives Jesus no mortal genealogy, for his declared purpose at the outset of his gospel is to emphasize Jesus as the Son of God, not of man. John begins even farther back, where "in the beginning" Jesus was with God and was a God. These points of reference reflect and influence in many ways the different purposes, styles, vocabularies, contents, and characteristics of each of the four Gospels.

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### References

- Philip A. Cunningham, *Jesus and the Evangelists: The Ministry of Jesus and its Portrayal in the Synoptic Gospels* (London: University Press of America, 1993).
- Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991).

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## John

*Begins with Christ as premortal God*

*No genealogy mentioned*

*"in the beginning was the Word,  
and the Word was with God, and  
the Word was [a] God" (Jn 1:1)*

## Mark

*Begins with Christ as Son of God*

*No genealogy mentioned*

*"the beginning of the gospel of Jesus  
Christ, the son of God" (Mk 1:1)*

## Luke

*Presents Christ as descendant of Adam*

*"which was [the son] of Seth, which was [the son]  
of Adam, which was [the son] of God" (Lk 3:38)*

## Matthew

*Begins with Christ as descendant of David and Abraham*

*"the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David,  
the son of Abraham" (Mt 1:1)*