

A popular myth is spread that the gospels, and the New Testament historical accounts, are simply anonymous folklore, embellished oral traditions and legends about a man named Jesus, who was likely a real, historical figure. As other articles on this site have shown, the entire New Testament was written within the lifetime of the Apostle John, who apparently lived on about 60-70 years after Jesus' death. This is certainly believable since there are alive today a number of people who were living back during WWII, which ended in 1945.

Peter, one of Jesus' most intimate of his 12 apostles, besides writing 2 general letters to Christians, apparently shared with his younger associate in Christ, Mark, details that enabled Mark to accurately record his gospel (1 Peter 5:13). Mark did not simply write any so-called anonymous folklore about Jesus. In Peter's 2nd general letter to Christians, notice what he had to say:

“We have not depended on made-up stories in making known to you the mighty coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. With our own eyes we saw his greatness”—2 Peter 1:16 GNB

Although many were predictably beginning to **“turn away from the truth, and turn aside to myths”** (2 Timothy 4:4 NIV), because **“false teachers . . . will exploit you with fabricated words”** (2 Peter 2:1-3), this was not the case with true Christians who stuck with God's reliably revealed word, the Bible.

Luke, written by Luke, the meticulous researcher, was written to, and dedicated to, Theophilus, who was probably one of Luke's patrons.

“Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile an account of the things accomplished among us, just as they were handed down us by those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and servants of the word” (Luke 1:1,2 NLT)

“With this in mind, since I myself have **carefully investigated** everything from the beginning, I too decided to **write** an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus.”

(Luke 1:3 NIV)

A patron would obviously know who he was patronizing, so Luke couldn't have been anonymous! Furthermore, notice who Luke says he interviewed:

“Those who from the first were **eyewitnesses.**” (Luke 1:2 NIV).

Luke's gospel was written by Luke, who interviewed many people who were actual eyewitnesses to the events that Luke recorded in his book. Luke did not record animus folklore, but actual eyewitness accounts.

“Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, ‘If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?’ **This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down.** We know that his testimony is true.” (John 21:23,24 NIV)

The anonymous disciple mentioned in verse 23, and other places in the 4th gospel, was known early on to be the Apostle John. Verse 24 says that he wrote the book. So the gospel of John was written by Jesus' most intimate apostle, who was an eyewitness to many of the events recorded in the gospel of John.

“Matthew the tax collector”—(Matthew 10:3)

“Matthew”—(Mark 3:18)

“Matthew”—(Luke 6:15)

Notice how in Matthew's account of Jesus' selection of the 12 apostles, he is called “the tax collector”, whereas he's not in Mark's and Luke's accounts.

“As Jesus went on from there, he saw a man named **Matthew** sitting at the tax collector's

booth. 'Follow me', he told him, and **Matthew** got up and followed him." ([Matthew 9:9 NIV](#))

"As he walked along, he saw **Levi** son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. 'Follow me,' Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed him." ([Mark 2:14 NIV](#))

"After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of **Levi** sitting at his tax booth. 'Follow me,' Jesus said to him." ([Luke 5:27](#))

By comparing these accounts, we can see that Matthew is called "Matthew" in his account, but called "Levi" in Mark and Luke. These are strong clues that Matthew, who was one of Jesus' 12 apostles, wrote the gospel bearing his name.

"She who is in Babylon, chosen together with you, sends you her greetings, and so does my son **Mark.**" ([1 Peter 5:13](#))

Mark was obviously closely associated with the Apostle Peter.

"You know the message God sent to the the people of Israel, announcing the good news of peace through Jesus Christ, who is Lord of all. You know what has happened in the province of Judea, beginning in Galilee after the baptism that John preached—how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil, because God was with him." ([Acts 10:36-38 NIV](#))

Mark's gospel is similar to the outline of Peter's sermon in [Acts 10](#), which begins with John's baptism and continues to the resurrection of Jesus. The early church fathers, in their writings, indicate that Mark is the recorder and preserver of Peter's sermons, as written in the gospel of Mark.

All the extant Greek manuscripts, from around 200 CE onward, that have the beginnings of the four gospels, have titles that attribute writership to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. The formula "The Gospel according to . . . ", or "According to", presupposes the existence of

other Gospel writings.

Paul refers to the basics of the gospel by saying “I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you . . . By this gospel you are saved” (1 Corinthians 15:1,2 NIV). What exactly is “the”, or “this gospel”? Paul goes on to tell us:

“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance (Paul received this from Jesus himself, and first generation Christians—Acts 9:1-30): that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day, according to the Scriptures.” (1 Corinthians 15:3,4 NIV). Paul did not simply write anonymous folklore about Jesus.

The “gospel” Paul was preaching was foretold in the Hebrew Scriptures about Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection.

“He appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, **most of whom are still living**, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all, he appeared to me, as to one abnormally born.” (1 Cor 15:5-8)

Paul, in this passage about the death and resurrection of Jesus, makes it clear that most of the 500 plus eyewitnesses of the resurrected Jesus were still alive, more than 20 years later. Many of these eyewitnesses were accessible to the Christian community, or anyone else who wished to investigate. Having available literally hundreds of eyewitnesses of Jesus, both before his death and after his resurrection makes the fulfillment of prophecy certain, as Peter said:

“We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable.” (2 Peter 1:19 NIV).

There is no doubt that both Luke and Mark (Peter’s recorder) extensively used eyewitness

testimony in recording their gospels. Matthew and John, while being eyewitnesses to much of their gospels, would have likely used other eyewitnesses to events they were not privy to that they recorded. Paul's extensive preaching and travels in Palestine, Asia Minor, and Southern Europe brought him into contact with all sorts of people, some of whom were eyewitnesses of Jesus' resurrection.

But, overriding all of this is the fact that "All Scripture is inspired of God" (2 Timothy 3:16,17), and all Bible writers had "the Holy Spirit that moved them." (2 Peter 1:21 NJB). The information we have in the Bible about Jesus is not anonymous folklore, but is based on eyewitness testimony!