WHY FOUR GOSPELS?
THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

in

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John

A Series of Radio Messages

By

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"**Buy the truth, and sell it not; also wisdom, and instruction, and understanding**" (Pro 23:23)

Preface

As an e-Sword user, and a resource creator, I always try to find quality works I believe will be beneficial to others in their studies. I hope this fits that description, and that all who use this module will find it to be a blessing.

To Dr. David S. Thomason, Ed Sandlin, and Pamela Marshall, Thank You for all of your help in proofscanning, I couldn't do it without you all.

A special thanks to Virgil Butts from Baptist Bible Believers for providing the text. To see this book and many other wonderful Fundamental Christian works, check out his website. http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/

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Your Brother In Christ, Jason L. Briggs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

01. WHY FOUR GOSPELS? THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST
02. CHRIST-THE KING OF ISRAEL AS PORTRAYED IN The Gospel According to Matthew
03. THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AS "AT HAND" Mat 3:1-17; Mat 4:1-25
04. THE LAWS OF THE KINGDOM Matthew 5:1-7:29
05. THE CREDENTIALS OF THE KING Mat 8:1-34; Mat 9:1-38
06. THE MESSENGERS OF THE KING Mat 10:1-42
07. ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF HER KING Mat 11:1-30; Mat 12:1-50
08. PROFESSING CHRISTENDOM DURING THE ABSENCE OF THE KING Mat 13:1-58
09. SHADOWS OF "THE LAST DAYS" Mat 14:1-36; Mat 15:1-39
10. IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS Matthew 16:1-20:34
11. THE OFFICIAL REJECTION OF THE KING BY THE NATION OF ISRAEL Matthew 21:1-23:39
12. THE LAST GREAT PROPHETIC UTTERANCE OF THE KING Mat 24:1-51; Mat 25:1-46
13.THE SUFFERING, DEATH, AND BURIAL OF THE KING Mat 26:1-75; Mat 27:1-66
14. THE RESURRECTION OF THE KING Mat 28:1-20
15. CHRIST-THE SERVANT OF JEHOVAH AS PORTRAYED IN The Gospel According to Mark
16. CHRIST-THE SON OF MAN AS PORTRAYED IN The Gospel According to Luke
17. LUKE - THE HUMAN AUTHOR - AND HIS PURPOSE
18. LUKE - THE GOSPEL OF THE HOME
19. CHRIST-THE SON OF GOD AS PORTRAYED IN The Gospel According to John
20. THE PROLOGUE OF JOHN: AN AWE-INSPIRING FOREVIEW OF THE BOOK
21. JOHN'S PRESENTATION OF THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST
22. THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST IN RETROSPECT

FOREWORD

When Luke, "**the beloved physician**," addressed his Gospel record to his friend, Theophilus, he said that many had "**taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us**." (See Luk 1:1-4)

By this he meant that many had written stories of the earthly life of the Lord Jesus, of His death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven. We can well imagine that scores of human authors would want to write of such a life! But God selected only four men to put on record the sacred story, men inspired by the Holy Spirit to write these four Gospels, which form the very heart of the written Word of God.

If we are to understand the purpose of the Holy Spirit in recording these first four books of the New Testament, we must seek to find from the records themselves just what that purpose is. Why are there four of these inspired stories-no more, no less? Why not only one? Why not a dozen or a score?

In the series of radio Bible lessons before us, we want to try to answer these questions. We shall not attempt a harmony of the Gospels. We shall not attempt a verse-by-verse exposition of these first four books of the New Testament.

We shall, rather, try to get a comprehensive view of the fourfold portrait of our Lord Jesus, as the Holy Spirit presents Him in the Gospel story, as recorded by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

In so doing, we shall see something of His majesty and glory, something of His love and grace.

Above all, it is our prayer that we shall come to know and love Him better; and knowing and loving Him, to make Him known, ever more zealously, to a Christless world.

-Louis T. Talbot

DEDICATION

To the
memory of my mother,
Elizabeth Ann Talbot, whose love
for the Gospel story, whose instruction
in the things of Christ, and whose godly life greatly influenced
her son to become a minister of the Gospel, this book is prayerfully dedicated.

CHAPTER ONE

WHY FOUR GOSPELS? THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

As we enter upon the study of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry, immediately the question arises in our minds, "Why four Gospels?"

Why did the Holy Spirit guide four men to record this story - from the appearance of the angels to Mary and Joseph, even unto our Lord's death, resurrection, and ascension into heaven? If one Gospel story did not suffice, why were two not enough? If more than two, why not a dozen or a score? Why has the Holy Spirit given to us these four records of the sayings and doings of Christ on earth, no more and no less? There must be some reason for this, a reason that has a vital bearing upon the Person and work of our Lord.

Again, as we read Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, we wonder why practically all of Christ's life on earth, from His infancy to the beginning of His public ministry at the age of thirty, is passed over by the Spirit of God? Only Luke tells us a single incident of this period, that of the Boy Jesus in the temple at the age of twelve, "**sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions**" (Luk 2:46).

Then, following this story, Luke adds that ". . . **he went down with them, and came to Nazareth, and was subject unto them** . . . **And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and man**" (Luk 2:51-52).

This is the only glimpse we have of the childhood of our Lord on earth, after His return from Egypt with Joseph and Mary.

- We know that He worked with Joseph in the carpenter's shop.
- We know that, after Jesus was born, Mary and Joseph had four sons and some daughters. (See Mat 13:55-56; Mar 6:3).

We like to think of what a wonderful Child the Boy Jesus was in that humble home - never a cross word, never a selfish deed, never a disobedient act! He was without sin; and therefore, He could do no wrong! But why did the Holy Spirit not tell us of these things? Why do we not have a complete biography of Christ's life on earth, not even in all four of the Gospels put together? That we have only a few of the many words and deeds of the Lord, John states definitely in the closing verse of his record:

"**And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written**" (Joh 21:25).

Why do we not have a complete biography of Christ's life on earth? The answer is that the Holy Spirit had a purpose in what He omitted, as well as in what He recorded. If man had written the story of such a life, he would have done it differently. Thus the very nature of the four Gospels, presents one of the clear marks of inspiration by the Holy Spirit of God. The Divine Author had a special purpose, a definite design, in each of these inspired records - a purpose and a design that become clear as noonday, once we let Him teach us this sacred story.

THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

No painting, no canvas, no word of tongue or pen could fully paint the portrait of the Lord Jesus Christ; yet the four Gospels give us glimpses of that portrait from four different angles, as it were.

When a man has his photograph taken, he has a front view, possibly a profile, any number of different poses. All present a picture of the same person; yet no one is exactly like the other view. This but faintly illustrates how the four Gospels give us a four-fold portrait of the "**Man, Christ Jesus**." Each has a different purpose and design; yet all tell of the matchless Person and mighty work of the Saviour of sinners.

This four-fold picture of our Lord is the unveiling of a four-fold prophetic portrait of Him who was to come, as set forth in the Old Testament.

We are told that more than three hundred definite prophecies of His first coming into the world are to be found in the Hebrew Old Testament; and these may well be grouped under four official titles for the Son of God who came to redeem lost humanity. And let us never forget that all these minute prophecies were written in God's Word hundreds of years before Christ was born in Bethlehem, in order that the world might recognize in Jesus of Nazareth the eternal Son of the eternal God.

Now these are the four official titles, found in the Old Testament concerning the promised Redeemer, of whom the four Gospels speak:

1. "**A righteous Branch** . . . **A KING**" (Jer 23:5).
2. "**MY SERVANT the Branch**" (Zec 3:8).
3. "**THE MAN whose name is the Branch**" (Zec 6:12).
4. "**The Branch of THE LORD** . . . **beautiful and glorious**" (Isa 4:2).

These four official titles of our Lord might well be written over each of the four Gospels, respectively:

- Matthew presents Him as the King of Israel;
- Mark, as the faithful Servant of the Lord;
- Luke, as the perfect Son of Man;
- John, as the eternal Son of God.

Of course, each of the four evangelists tells us all this and more about Christ; but each emphasizes particularly the one aspect of His Person and work.

In other words, Matthew most assuredly tells us that He was the faithful Servant of God, the sinless Son of Man, and the eternal God, as well as King of Israel; and in like manner the other three writers tell all these things and more.

But the Holy Spirit's special purpose for each of the four records becomes unmistakably clear as we faithfully and prayerfully examine the Gospels themselves. And, to repeat for emphasis, the four-fold portrait presents our Lord particularly as King of Israel, Servant of the Lord, Son of Man, and Son of God.

Now let us read the four Old Testament passages from which we quoted a moment ago, to see that there can be no mistake about their prophetic reference to the promised Messiah of Israel and Saviour of the world. The word "**Branch**" means "*Shoot*," or "*Bud*," or "*Sprout*." A similar use of the term is found in the prophecy concerning Christ in Isa 11:1 :

"**And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots shall bear fruit**."

*1. "**Behold . . . A KING!**"*

"**Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch** (or Shoot, or Bud)**, and a KING shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**" (Jer 23:5-6).

In these words Jeremiah was speaking directly to his own people, Israel.

And our study of Matthew will show us that through that disciple, the Holy Spirit was proving to Israel that Jesus of Nazareth was her long-promised Messiah and King, the One of whom Jeremiah had written centuries previously.

*2. "**Behold** . . . **MY SERVANT!**"*

"**Behold, I will bring forth MY SERVANT the Branch** (or Shoot, or Sprout)" (Zec 3:8).

It is Mark who pictures the Lord primarily as the One who "**came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many**" (Mar 10:45). He describes the ceaseless deeds of mercy and the mighty miracles of grace of the faithful Servant of the Lord.

*3. "**Behold THE MAN!**"*

"**Behold THE MAN whose name is the Branch** (or Shoot, or Sprout)**; and he shall grow up out of his place** . . . **and he shall be a priest upon his throne**" (Zec 6:12-13).

Luke dwells especially upon the perfect humanity of the "**Man, Christ Jesus**." And is it not a marvelous token of divine inspiration that Zechariah should call Him "**the man whose name is the Branch** . . . **a priest upon his throne**"?

Our study of the book of Hebrews tells us plainly that the priestly work of Christ began with His death upon the cross, when He shed His precious blood as an atonement for the soul. Hebrews tells us that, in order to become a Priest, He had to become a Man, identifying Himself with His "**brethren**"; for every priest in Israel had to be "**taken from among men**" (Heb 5:1).

No angel was ever a priest. Aaron and his sons were priests in Israel, types of our Great High Priest and His believer-priests who are members of His body, the blood-bought church.

Moreover, Zechariah looked down the centuries and saw that the Lord should be "**a priest upon his throne**," as the "**Man, Christ Jesus**." What a wonderful portrait of Jesus, who will one day take His rightful throne, to rule and reign over a purified earth! Until that day comes, He is, indeed, seated "**on the right hand of the Majesty on high**," as the New Testament repeatedly states. Yes; Luke pictures to us the sinless Son of Man.

*4. "**THE LORD** . . . **Beautiful and Glorious!**"*

"**In that day shall the Branch of THE LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel**" (Isa 4:2).

When Isaiah wrote of "**the Branch of the LORD** . . . **beautiful and glorious**," he was thinking of the kingdom of Christ on earth, when He shall reign in righteousness and peace. "**The Branch of the LORD** . . . **beautiful and glorious**" is none other than the eternal Son of God, portrayed by the Holy Spirit in John's Gospel.

What beauty and glory shine from every page of this most loved of all books of the Bible!

And why do Christians love it so? Because it exalts the crucified and risen Lord to His rightful position as God, equal with the Father and with the Spirit; the Creator, Redeemer, Lord, and King.

"THE LAMB . . . IN THE MIDST OF THE THRONE"

In the fourth chapter of Revelation, where the throne of God is pictured in heaven, we get a glimpse of this four-fold portrait of our Lord. "**In the midst of the throne**," where only Deity can dwell, John saw four "**beasts**," or "*living ones*" (Rev 4:6). These "*living ones*" are designated by the Prophet Ezekiel as cherubim, and have to do with vindicating the holiness of God. In the vision which John saw ". . . **the first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle**" (Rev 4:7).

It is significant that this symbolism suggests the four-fold portrait of Christ - and in the very same order as that set forth in the four Gospels!

Thus the Holy Spirit guided, even in the sequence of these four records of the life of our Lord!

For example, the first beast which John saw was "**like a lion**." In Rev 5:5 Jesus Himself is called "**the Lion of the tribe of Judah**." Even as the lion is the king of the forest, so this figurative expression answers to Matthew's description of the Person and work of Israel's King.

The second "**beast**" was "**like a calf**"; and the calf or ox is a beast of burden, an animal of service. Thus the Holy Spirit gives us the analogy to Mark's presentation of our Lord as the faithful Servant of the Lord.

The third "**beast**" had "**a face as a man**," speaking to us of Luke's portrayal of the "**Man, Christ Jesus**," in His perfect humanity.

And the fourth "**beast**" was like a "**flying eagle**." The eagle soars into the heavens; and here we have a suggestion of the heaven-sent Son of God, forcefully and beautifully depicted by John in his Gospel.

We do not want to take time here to discuss fully the cherubim and their relationship to the throne of God; yet a brief word may add light to the symbolism of the fourth chapter of Revelation concerning the "**beasts**," which Ezekiel identifies as the cherubim. (See Eze 1:5; Eze 10:8-22). These angelic beings are first mentioned in Gen 3:24, where we are told that God placed them "**at the east of the garden of Eden** . . . **to keep the way of the tree of life**."

The "**flaming sword**," a manifestation of the Shekinah Glory, and these angelic creatures saw to it that sinful man did not partake of the tree of life, forever to live in sin and shame! It was judgment that drove Adam and Eve out of the Garden of Eden; but it was also grace, the grace of God, that did not permit them to live forever in a fallen state. And it was the cherubim who guarded the holiness of God, vindicating it before sinful humanity.

Again, when God told Moses to build the tabernacle for a "**sanctuary**," in which He might dwell "**in the midst**" of His people, Israel, He told His servant to make a golden-covered chest, called the Ark of the Covenant. This was placed in the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest could enter, just one day a year - not without blood from off the altar of sacrifice.

Above that ark, hiding from view the broken law - the Ten Commandments were inside the ark - were two cherubim of gold, with outstretched wings, looking down upon the sprinkled blood, looking down upon the mercy seat. It was a picture of God's judgment throne turned into a "**throne of grace**" for all who will enter into His presence by faith in the sprinkled blood of the Son of God. And it was the cherubim who symbolized the vindication of God's holiness. He is both "**just, and the justifier**" of them that believe in the only Saviour of sinners. (Cf. Rom 3:26.)

Once again, the cherubim, embroidered upon the beautiful veil that separated the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies, were constant reminders to Aaron and his sons of the holiness of God. They were embroidered in blue, purple, and scarlet, upon fine, white linen - all of which speaks to us of the beauty and the glory of our crucified and risen Lord. When Jesus died on Calvary, "**the veil of the temple was rent in twain, from top to bottom**," opening the "**way into the Holiest of all**," even the very presence of God. Hebrews tells us plainly that the veil was a type of "**his flesh**," which was broken for us (Heb 10:20).

It has been suggested that, as the beautiful veil of the tabernacle was displayed upon four pillars of shittim wood, covered over with pure gold; so also the four Gospels display the glory and the beauty of the Christ of God.

Not only were the cherubim embroidered upon the veil; but, in the same beautiful colors, upon fine, white linen, the cherubim were embroidered upon the hanging over the door of the Holy Place, and upon the covering above the whole tabernacle.

The priests within that sanctuary could never forget the lessons taught by the cherubim, which protect the holiness of God. That is why, when John wrote in Revelation of these "**beasts**," identifying them with the very throne of God, where only Deity dwells, he symbolically set forth the four-fold portrait of our Lord. The Saviour is King of Israel, Servant of the Lord, Son of Man, Son of God - absolutely holy and just, yet "**altogether lovely**" in His mercy and grace!

How unfathomable are the depths of the written Word of our living Lord! The more we study the sacred pages, the more their hidden treasures are unfolded before our eager eyes! None but God could have written such a Book! And the Person it portrays is none other than "**God manifest in the flesh**," "**Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us**"!

THE FOUR EVANGELISTS

A glimpse at the four men, chosen of God to write these Gospels, will show us that divine wisdom is manifested in the human instruments selected to paint this four-fold portrait of our Lord.

Matthew was an official connected with the Roman Empire; he was, therefore, God's choice of one to write of Christ in His official connection with the rule of the heavens over this world in that day when His dominion shall be "**from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth**" (Psa 72:8). Matthew was the only one of the four who occupied anything like an official position. He was a publican; that is, a tax-collector for Rome. He was despised by his fellow-Jews, because the nation of Israel hated the Roman who served Rome as unfaithful to Israel. Being a despised yoke; and they looked upon any member of their nation publican, Matthew could write, from a heart filled with bitter experience, of the One who was "**despised and rejected of men**."

Mark was not an apostle, but he was a servant of an apostle, one who ministered to the needs of others. He is known to us in Acts as John Mark, who served Paul and Barnabas. And in 2Ti 4:11 we read, from the words of Paul to Timothy,

"**Take Mark, and bring him with thee: for he is profitable to me for the ministry**."

It is fitting that Mark, one who served, should be selected to present Christ as the faithful Servant of the Lord.

Luke was "**the beloved physician**" (Col 4:14), a student of human nature and of the human body. Therefore, he could write with understanding about the human perfections and the sinless character of the Son of Man. He tells more about the beautiful, sacred story of our Lord's virgin birth than does Matthew; Mark and John do not record the story of His birth, for very significant reasons. And Luke portrays the Lord as the sinless Saviour of a fallen race.

John, who seems to have lived nearest the Lord, who leaned "**on Jesus' bosom**" (Joh 13:23; Joh 21:20), was the Holy Spirit's choice for putting on record the story of Him who, "**in the bosom of the Father**" (Joh 1:18), is the eternal Son of the eternal God. John was the disciple "**whom Jesus loved**." And his portrayal of the Lord is beloved by all whose sins have been washed in the blood of Calvary's Lamb.

It was not by chance that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John were chosen by the Holy Spirit for their God-given privilege and task of portraying the Person and work of the Lord!

It has been suggested that each of these four evangelists had in mind a certain people or class, who, in turn, were representative of the human race.

Accordingly,

- Matthew wrote particularly for the Jew; certainly there can be no doubt of that.
- Mark, presenting Christ as the Servant of God, made a special appeal to the Roman type of mind, the people who exacted strict obedience to law and government.
- Luke, an educated man, with a world-wide vision, possibly had in mind the learned Greeks, Gentiles of every nation, the whole race of man, rather than the nation of Israel, to whom Matthew most assuredly wrote in particular.
- John, writing a generation after the other three, in order to disprove the heresy that had crept into the professing church, which taught that Christ was not God - John, thinking of Christians everywhere in every generation, made an appeal that strikes at the heart of every true child of God.

He proved beyond controversy that Jesus of Nazareth ever was and ever shall be the eternal God "**manifest in the flesh**." His message is to the church, composed of Jew and Gentile, bond and free.

THE PURPOSE OF THE FOUR GOSPELS ILLUSTRATED

Before we consider, in some detail, each of the four Gospels separately, in their God-given order, let us think for a little while of a few selected illustrations of the Holy Spirit's purpose in each of the four.

Let us remember that it is not our plan to attempt a detailed exposition of these four records - not at all. Rather, in all this series of studies concerning the life of Christ on earth, we seek only to present a bird's-eye-view of the writings of the four evangelists, not only to make plain the way of salvation, not only to exalt the Lord Jesus, but also to show the divine perfections of these inspired records, in that each portrays Christ in a manner in keeping with the purpose of the book. In other words, we want to keep ever before us in these lessons the question with which we entered upon this study, "Why four Gospels?" Why only four?

As we compare the writings of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, we are impressed with the significant omissions, as well as with the content of each Gospel. To some of these omissions and contents, we would call attention briefly before we look at each Gospel separately; for they illustrate the purpose of the Holy Spirit in each of these inspired records.

For example, Matthew quotes more frequently from the Old Testament than do the other three evangelists, some sixty or more references being found in this first Gospel alone, references which take us back to the Hebrew Scriptures. Moreover, Matthew did not find it necessary to explain his many illusions to Jewish customs and practices and laws. He was writing particularly to Hebrews who knew the Old Testament. He was seeking to show Israel that Jesus of Nazareth was the long-promised Messiah, of whom the Old Testament spoke.

In the first two chapters of Matthew alone, there are five quotations from the Old Testament concerning the birth and early years of Christ on earth: The prophecies of the virgin birth, Bethlehem as the place of His birth, God's Son "called out of Egypt," the "slaughter of the innocents" and the mourning of their mothers as foretold by Jeremiah; these are direct quotations of prophecy fulfilled. (See Isa 7:14; Mic 5:2; Hos 11:1; Jer 31:15.) And the quotation, "He shall be called a Nazarene," Matthew says plainly, was in fulfillment of the prophets - probably from Isa 11:1, "where Christ is spoken of as 'a netzer' (or 'a rod') out of the stem of Jesse." (See Scofield marginal note, Mat 2:23.)

While Mark, Luke and John also quote from the Old Testament, yet they do not quote it nearly so often as does Matthew, whose special thought was for the Jew.

Matthew has more to say of the King and His kingdom than do the others. He tells us of the birth of the King, the herald of the King, the laws of the kingdom; and in like manner, throughout the book he speaks to us of the King of the Jews.

Luke tells us more of the story of the virgin birth of Christ than Matthew does; "**the beloved physician**" was presenting this sacred record from an entirely different view. He was picturing the sinless humanity of our Lord!

Neither Mark nor John tells the story of our Lord's genealogy or birth, for highly significant reasons. Matthew gives us Jesus' legal right to the throne of David through Joseph; Luke presents His natural right to David's throne through Mary; but both Mark and John are silent upon this vital theme. Why? Because Mark is portraying the faithful Servant of the Lord; and who asks for the genealogy of a servant? John is presenting the eternal Son of God, who has neither beginning nor end, who "**in the beginning**" was the Word, even very "God."

All John tells us about Bethlehem's manger is that the eternal Word of God "**was made flesh, and dwelt among us**" (Joh 1:14).

It was not by accident that Mark and John omitted the record of the genealogy and birth of Christ. To have included these would have been contrary to the Holy Spirit's purpose for the books. And whether Mark and John themselves realized it or not, they were being guided by the infallible Spirit of God, even to the very letter!

Mark opens his record with the beginning of our Lord's public ministry; his key words are "**straightway**," or "**immediately**," or "**forthwith**," words that speak of work promptly done, service faithfully rendered.

Mark tells us about more of Christ's miracles than do the others; indeed, his record leaves us almost breathless - from the very swiftness of movement, as the untiring Servant of God went forth "**to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many**."

Luke tells us most about our Lord's prayer-life; for as a Man, He was subject unto His Father, and needed to pray - for fellowship and strength for His labor of love. Luke tells us the only incident from our Lord's Childhood, as a Boy in the Nazareth home. He has much to say about man's frailty and the need of a Saviour; much to say about the ministry of women in the Lord's work. His is the Gospel of the home; setting forth the perfect humanity of the Son of Man.

- Luke tells us that, in His agony, angels ministered unto our Lord;
- Matthew tells us that, when He comes as King, He will command angels!

Whereas Matthew, Mark and Luke tell the story of Jesus' temptation in the wilderness, John makes no reference to it. Why? Do we need to explain so marvelous a fact? John was presenting the portrait of the eternal God, who was ever holy! James tells us that "**God cannot be tempted with evil**" (Jam 1:13).

Let us not forget that Matthew, Mark and Luke, just as emphatically as John, tell us that our Lord was absolutely holy, that He withstood every temptation of Satan, that He could not be tempted to sin! (Cf. Heb 4:15.) But they were portraying Christ as Israel's coming King, to rule over the earth; as the Servant of God; and as the "**Man, Christ Jesus**."

Their purpose was quite different from that of John. And the Holy Spirit included only such matters as pertained to each separate Gospel. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us how the sinless Saviour met and overcame the devil. John is telling us of the eternal God, whose power over Satan and all his hosts is absolute and unquestioned; therefore, why should he mention the temptation?

John gives us many divine titles for our Lord, which none of the others tell - not that the other evangelists did not recognize His right to them; it simply was not in keeping with their purpose to include them.

For example, the Prologue of John plainly states or definitely implies that Jesus is the eternal

- "Word of God,"
- The "Creator,"
- "The true Light,"
- "God,"
- The only begotten of the Father."

And later portions of this wonderful Gospel proclaim him as

- "The Lamb of God,"
- "The Son of God,"
- "The Bread of Life,"
- "The Christ,"
- "The Light of the world,"
- The eternal "I AM,"
- "Lord,"
- "The Good Shepherd,"
- "The Resurrection and the Life"

These and many more names applied to Christ by John tell us that He ever was and always shall be the eternal Son of the eternal God!

We might go on and on, continuing this comparison between the four Gospels, to show the distinct purpose of each. But this we hope to do, with even greater blessing to our souls, as we study each book separately, in some detail.

However, before we enter upon the study of Matthew, we would compare the first two chapters of Matthew with the first two chapters of Luke. We have observed already that these two give us our only record of the genealogy and birth of our Lord.

A careful reading of these four chapters will unfold veritable marvels of the wonders of this portion of God's Word. As we read, we shall note that the facts recorded in the first two chapters of Matthew are given nowhere else in the Bible; and the facts recorded in the first two chapters of Luke are found nowhere else in the Bible. Yet the two genealogies (Luke's is recorded in chapter three) and the two stories of the nativity of our Lord dovetail into the most perfect, the most sublime, picture the world has ever seen - that of the eternal God's coming down to be born among men - in a manger! Perhaps a brief outline will best show the striking contrast set forth in these two records of the genealogy and the birth of Christ:

THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST

Matthew 1. Genealogy of Joseph. 2. Begins with Abraham, the father of the nation of Israel, and traces the genealogy forward to Christ. 3. Presents Christ's legal right to David's throne, through Joseph. 4. Refers to David, the king; and to Solomon, descended from the kingly tribe of Judah. 5. Uses the word "begat" until Mat 1:16; but there carefully guarding the doctrine of the virgin birth, the Holy Spirit says, "**Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ**." The Holy Spirit does NOT say, "Joseph begat Jesus," for this was not true! 6. "Jacob begat Joseph" (Mat 1:16).	*Luke* 1. Genealogy of Mary. 2. Begins with Jesus, and traces His genealogy back to Adam, the father of the human race. 3. Presents Christ's natural right to David's throne, through Mary. 4. Tells that Mary came through the family of Nathan, another son of David. 5. Uses the words, "the son," which are in italics in our English Bible. This means that these two words were not in the Greek, but were added by the translators, to make the meaning clear. Again, the doctrine of the virgin birth is safeguarded in Luk 3:23, "**Jesus . . . being (as was supposed) the son of Joseph, which was (the son) of Heli**." 6. "Joseph was" son-in-law "of Heli" (Luk 3:23).

THE BIRTH OF CHRIST

Matthew 1. The appearance of "the an-gel of the Lord" to Joseph. 2. The Christ Child was born of the Holy Ghost. 3. "Thou shalt call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins." 4. The virgin birth of Christ was in fulfillment of Isa 7:14; cf. Mat 1:22; Mat 23:5. The wise men went to Jerusalem, and from there to Bethlehem, to present gifts to the King. 6. The wise men followed the star. 7. The flight into Egypt. Herod's slaughter of the innocents. The return to Nazareth. Four times God spoke to Joseph "in a dream" concerning the birth and infancy of the Christ-Child. (See Mat 1:20; Mat 2:13; Mat 2:19; Mat 2:22.)

Luke 1. The appearance of the Angel Gabriel to Mary, six months after he had appeared to Zacharias, to tell him that he and Elizabeth were to be the parents of John the Baptist. 2. The Virgin Mary became the mother of the Saviour, who was born of the Holy Ghost. 3. Thou "**shalt call his name Jesus**." ("**Jesus**" means "*Saviour*.") 4. "**And the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever**" (Luk 1:32-33). 5. The shepherds saw the angels, found the Christ Child in a manger, and worshipped Him. 6. The shepherds followed the bidding of "the angel of the Lord." 7. Mary's visit with Elizabeth. Mary's song of praise - "The Magnificat." The birth of John the Baptist. Zacharias' prophetic blessing - "The Benedictus." The decree of Caesar Augustus which led Joseph and Mary to Bethlehem, in order that the Scriptures could be fulfilled! Otherwise, humanly speaking, Jesus would have been born in Nazareth. The circumcision of Jesus, in fulfillment of the Law of Moses. The adoration and prophecy of Simeon. The adoration of Anna. The silent years at Nazareth. The Boy Jesus in the temple at the age of twelve.

What an array of beautiful stories; yet all one sacred story of the coming into the world of Israel's King and the world's Saviour! Nothing in all history can compare with it for majesty and beauty - nothing save the story of the cross and the empty tomb!

As we compare these two records of the genealogy and the birth of Christ, one may ask: Why did Matthew begin his record of the genealogy with Abraham? Why did he not go back to Adam as Luke did? Because he was writing to Jews, who already knew the Genesis record of Abraham's descent from Adam.

Why did the Holy Spirit deem it necessary to give us Joseph's genealogy, since he was not Jesus' father? Simply because, as the oldest Child in that royal family, Jesus inherited the legal right to the throne of David, through Joseph, the legal father of Christ, not His natural father!

If there had been a king upon Israel's throne in his day, Joseph would have been that king; but the Jews were a subject nation, ruled over by the Romans. The Jews knew that Jesus had every legal and natural right to the throne of David; that is why they "**killed the Prince of life**," saying, "**We will not have this man to rule over us**." Had they not known that He had every legal and natural right to the throne, they would have ignored Him as an impostor!

Why was Mary's genealogy not given in her own name? Because it was the Jewish custom to keep the family records in the name of the man. Joseph was son-in-law of Heli; and Heli, too, was of David's line.

Now the Jewish espousal, or betrothal, was as binding as our marriage law, we are told. About a year before the Jewish marriage, the bride-to-be was "**espoused to**," or engaged to be married to, the bride-groom-to-be. That meant also that Joseph was responsible for Mary's legal affairs, from the date of the espousal. This fact and his obedience to the direct command of "**the angel of the Lord**," accounted for Joseph's faithful care of Mary.

How wonderful that a heathen Caesar in Rome should issue the decree for all the world to be taxed "*enrolled*", just at the time when Jesus should be born in Bethlehem, the city of David, and the city of Joseph and Mary!

This was God's way of fulfilling the prophecy of Micah, written seven hundred years previously, declaring that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem! "**The Scriptures can not be broken!**" And God always works out His own, eternal purpose!

THE CROSS - IN ALL THE GOSPEL RECORDS!

We have seen something of the purpose of the Holy Spirit in presenting certain details of the Saviour's genealogy and nativity in Matthew, and certain other of these details in Luke. We have seen also that the very omission of this story from Mark and John is in accordance with the special design of those Gospels. There are not many incidents in the life of Christ on earth which are recorded by all four evangelists. The feeding of the five thousand seems to be the only miracle performed before His death, and given by all four; and all of the evangelists tell of the ministry of John the Baptist and of his baptism of Jesus.

But, in this connection, one thing is both significant and fundamental: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John - all four tell the story of the cross and the bodily resurrection of our Lord! All four explain repeatedly and in no uncertain terms:

- That He came into the world to die for sinners;
- That He came and died and rose again in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy;
- That He received worship as very God, as in the case of Peter's great confession;
- That He rode into Jerusalem to offer Himself officially to Israel as her Messiah and King;
- That He was betrayed by His "**own familiar friend**";
- That He was crucified on the Jewish Passover, because He Himself was the Paschal Lamb;
- That He suffered in Gethsemane's Garden and on the cross for a guilty world.

All four of the Gospel writers dwell much upon these facts, devoting whole chapters to the crucifixion and the bodily resurrection of our Lord. Then all four tell us that we are to be His witnesses, going into all the world to preach the Gospel to every creature, even as the Father sent His Son to die for us.

Why do all four of the evangelists record these matters in great detail, when other portions of Christ's life on earth are passed over by one or more, or even all four writers? There is only one answer: The cross and the empty tomb are central, fundamental, indispensable to the Gospel story!

Everything in our Lord's life led to His cross; and had He stayed in the tomb, we should have no Saviour. No matter from what angle the portrait of the Son of God should be painted, no picture would be perfect or complete without the portrayal of the very purpose for which He came into the world. And if His redeemed do not go into all the world with this message, how shall the lost know that He died for them?

Do you see, my friend, something of the special design of the Holy Spirit shining from these sacred pages? And we have touched only their fringes!

In our next study we hope to enter upon a more careful view of The Gospel According to Matthew. The Holy Spirit, who wrote it through that disciple, will teach us the things of Christ, if we open our hearts to His guidance. Not until we get to heaven shall we fully know the wonders of His Person and work. Even throughout all the endless ages, we shall still be finding out the indescribable beauty and the fathomless love of Him who died that we might live. Meanwhile, during our earthly pilgrimage, may we let the Spirit of God teach us more and more to love and worship and honor Him.

My unsaved friend, do you want to share with us in the wonders set before us in these sacred pages? Then look to Him for everlasting life. He died for you; He ever lives; and He longs to be your Saviour and Friend. Let Him into your heart; then you will have "**peace with God**" by faith in His shed blood; then you will know "**the peace of God, which passeth all understanding**"; for "**the God of peace**" will be your Redeemer and Lord.

"**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**" (Joh 1:29).

~ end of chapter 1 ~

CHAPTER TWO

CHRIST - THE KING OF ISRAEL
As Portrayed in
The Gospel According to Matthew

THE FIRST COMING OF THE KING
Mat 1:1-25; Mat 2:1-23

1. Matthew - The Link between the Old Testament and the New.

For four hundred years God had sent neither angel nor prophet to speak to His chosen people, Israel. From the time of Malachi to the birth of Christ in Bethlehem, "*four hundred silent years*" had passed over the Jew. Even during the bitter persecution of those centuries, God gave no visible manifestation of Himself to the Israelites who trusted in Him. Yet He had not left Himself without a witness in the world; nor had He left His people without guidance; for the faithful remnant in Israel were, unquestionably, searching the pages of the Old Testament for the Messianic prophecies.

Peter tells us plainly that, concerning salvation in Christ Jesus,

". . . **the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come . . . searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven**" (1Pe 1:10-12).

For hundreds of years believing Jews had looked forward to the coming into the world of the long-promised Messiah. Then,

". . . **when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons**" (Gal 4:4-5).

When God's hour struck, "**when the fulness of the time was come**," the Messiah of Israel and Saviour of the world was born in Bethlehem, even as the prophet had spoken seven hundred years previously. And to Matthew was given the privilege of showing that Jesus was born to be the King of the Jews.

Repeatedly he took the Old Testament prophecies, and quoted them to show that, in Christ Jesus, the Scriptures were being fulfilled. The Lord Himself said, in Mat 5:17-18 :

"**Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled**."

There are more Old Testament quotations recorded in Matthew than in Mark, Luke and John put together, because - let us never forget it - Matthew was writing particularly for the Jew, who accepted the Old Testament as the inspired Word of God. Any honest seeker after truth, among the chosen people, Israel, seeing how marvelously Christ fulfilled the Messianic prophecies, would accept Him as Lord and King.

Only in Matthew do we read Christ's words to the Gentile woman who addressed Him as "**Son of David**,"

"**I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel**" (Mat 15:24).

He had not yet offered Himself officially to Israel as her rightful King, in His triumphal entry into Jerusalem, there to be rejected by the nation. God's order is, "**To the Jew first, and also to the Greek**" (Rom 1:16); that is, the Gospel of the kingdom was offered to the Jew first; then, Christ and His kingdom having been rejected by Israel, He gave the Gospel of the grace of God to the Gentiles, as well as to any individual Jews who would believe.

It is noteworthy that, when the Syrophenician (Gentile) woman addressed Christ as "**Lord**," He honored her faith and answered her prayer (Mat 15:25-28). As a Gentile, she had no claim upon Him as "**Son of David**," Israel's Messiah; but as a believer in His power to save, as one who called Him "**Lord**," she had a right to claim the answer to her prayer.

In order that we may realize the deep significance of the many fulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament, quoted in Matthew, let us turn to those concerning His birth, to which we referred in our last lesson.

A comparison of the prophecy with the fulfillment presents a challenge to faith that only a skeptic would dare deny:

Old Testament Prophecy (1) *Christ's Virgin Birth:* "**The Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel**" (Isa 7:14, written 742 B.C).. (2) *Bethlehem, the Place of His Birth*: "**Thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting**" (Mic 5:2, written 710 B.C).. (3) *Called Out of Egypt*: "**When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt**" (Hos 11:1, written 740 B.C).. (4) *The Slaughter of the Innocents*: "**Thus saith the Lord; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not**" (Jer 31:1 S, written 606 B.C).. (5) Called a Nazarene: Probably referring to Isa 11:1, as explained in our last lesson.	Quotation in Matthew "**Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us**" (Mat 1:22-23). "**Thus it is written by the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel**" (Mat 2:5-6). ". . . **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son**" (Mat 2:15). "**Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not**" (Mat 2:17-18). "**And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene**" (Mat 2:23).

My friend, do you not see how marvelously Matthew links the Old Testament with the New? The above quotations are taken from only the first two chapters of this first Gospel. What a long list we should have, if we wrote down every Old Testament reference, together with Matthew's quotation from it! This would be a very inspiring and helpful exercise for a careful Bible student; and it is to be hoped that many will take time to do it, using any good marginal reference Bible to locate the Old Testament quotations. Such a comparison will prove, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that Matthew, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, was proving to Israel that Jesus of Nazareth was her long-promised Messiah and Saviour and King.

It is hardly necessary to explain that the difference in spelling of proper names, and in the translation of the passages compared, is due to the fact that our English Old Testament was translated from the Hebrew language; our English New Testament, from the Greek. To illustrate, the Hebrew name "**Judah**" is spelled "**Juda**" in the Greek. We mention this well-known fact here only because some have asked for such an explanation.

2. The Earthly Lineage of the King
Mat 1:1-17.

This second lesson in our present series is the logical place to consider the earthly lineage and birth of Israel's king; but, for two reasons, we studied both of these in some detail in our opening lesson:

(1) A clear-cut comparison of the two genealogies best explains the purpose of the Holy Spirit in both;
(2) a comparison of these, and of the two records of the birth of Christ, presents one of the clearest illustrations of the separate purpose of each Gospel record.

Upon one occasion a would-be "intellectual" challenged me with the statement that the two genealogies, found in Matthew and Luke, were contradictory. Then he proceeded to say that Matthew said "**Jacob begat Joseph**," whereas Luke said Heli was Joseph's father.

Now, my friend, if you have studied the Bible text carefully, as we tried to explain in our last lesson just what the Holy Spirit did say, then we need not repeat here that the man who challenged the accuracy of the Bible text only showed his gross ignorance of its plain statement.

To his credit, let it be said that he did accept the true meaning of the Scripture in question, once it was explained to him. He had simply reiterated what he had heard some skeptical person say before him; and his experience but illustrates the never-failing truth that men who are honest and fair must accept the whole Bible as the inspired Word of God, if they but give it a chance to find lodgment in their hearts. All so-called contradictions disappear before the honest seeker after truth!

Having compared the two genealogies of Christ in our last lesson, we shall add just here only a few related facts concerning it. One truth which we want to emphasize is set forth in the opening verse of The Gospel According to Matthew. This passage has well been called the key to this record:

"**The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham**."

How like Gen 5:1 the phraseology is!

". . . **the book of the generations of Adam**."

Moreover, this expression is found nowhere else in the New Testament!

What is it but a link between the Old Testament and the New? We have already stated that it was unnecessary for Matthew to go back beyond Abraham, in giving our Lord's genealogy; for the Jews knew the genealogies of Genesis!

But let us look further at Mat 1:1. Why did the Holy Spirit mention David before He mentioned Abraham, when the latter lived about a thousand years before the shepherd boy who became Israel's king?

This fact becomes the more striking when we read on, to note that, from verse two of this genealogy, the family names are listed in their historical order. Why, then, is our Lord called "**the Son of David**" first; and afterwards, "**the Son of Abraham**"?

We believe this reversed order of these names gives us the key to the book; for as David's Son, Christ had the undisputed right to Israel's throne, and Matthew was proving that He was Israel's rightful King!

The title "**Son of David**" is applied to Christ some ten times in Matthew; whereas "**Son of Abraham**" does not appear in the Gospel again. Why? The answer is significant:

- As David's Son, our Lord possesses the right to David's throne;
- As the Son of Abraham, He is the covenant Heir to Abraham's land; and Israel must accept Him as King before she will inherit the land!

Moreover, it was of Israel's King that Matthew was writing!

With both Abraham and David God had made covenants.

- In Gen 15:18 we read the extent of the land of Palestine which God promised to Abraham;
- In 2Sa 7:4-17 we read of God's covenant with David for a King to sit upon the throne of David - forever!

Israel's covenant-keeping God will surely give her the Promised Land, but not until Israel accepts David's Son as her rightful King! This she will do when she sees Him coming in power and great glory to take His long-empty throne.

Some years ago a cartoon from the pen of E. J. Pace, D.D., appeared in "*The Sunday School Times*." It was entitled "*The Empty Throne*."

We shall see in our study of Matthew that the Heir to that empty throne was rejected by the nation of Israel nearly two thousand years ago. When He came to be their King, they cried out, saying, "**We will not have this man to rule over us**." And they thrust him out of the world at the point of a spear. That is why the throne of David is empty now.

The rightful King is seated at God's right hand, from whence He will return one day to sit upon David's throne; for He is the legal Heir.

It is of interest to note that, of all the kings listed in the genealogy of Christ, according to Matthew, only David is called "**king**." (See Mat 1:6). Moreover, twice in this verse he is spoken of as "**David the king**." Thus the theme of the book is once more emphasized - it is of Israel's King, even Jesus, "**the Son of David**," that the Holy Spirit was writing!

Again, we ask why the Holy Spirit wrote of "**Judas and his brethren**" (the Hebrew form is "**Judah**"), when Judah was the fourth son of Jacob, not the firstborn? And, again, our answer is that David came from the kingly family of Judah; and Matthew was not attempting to tell about the twelve sons of the patriarch, Jacob; he was giving only the genealogy of Jesus, the King of the Jews!

Before we leave this important subject, let us recall what we considered in our last lesson, lest we forget that Joseph was the one through whom our Lord received His legal right to David's throne, as the records in the Jewish temple at that time bore witness. Christ's blood-right to the throne was through Mary, also of David's family.

And let us not overlook the reassuring truth that, although many of us are Gentiles, and as such, have no right to inherit Abraham's land, in that day when David's Son shall sit upon His throne; yet, as blood-bought members of His church, we are the spiritual children of Abraham, the man of faith. (See Rom 4:11; Rom 4:16-17; Gal 3:14). And who can foresee all the glory and the beauty of our heavenly inheritance - who save God?

There is another beautiful lesson that we must not pass by in these opening verses of Matthew.

It has to do with verse five, where we read that Rahab, the harlot of Joshua's day, was the mother of Boaz, the husband of Ruth. Thus this sinful woman, because of her great faith in the God of Israel, became the great-great-grandmother of David, the king; and one of the ancestors of the royal family, through whom Christ came, "**according to the flesh**."

It is an object lesson to us in the grace of God. How great is His forgiving love! He takes the vilest sinner, cleanses him from every crimson stain, and exalts him to "**heavenly places in Christ Jesus**" - if only that sinner will believe in His atoning work on Calvary's Cross. "**All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God**." Rahab's gross sin was also David's sin, and Solomon's, and Judah's! Yes; "**all have sinned!**"

But God loves the sinner; and He wants him to be forgiven. Do you know Him as your personal Saviour and Lord, my friend?

3. The Heavenly Descent of the King
Mat 1:18-25.

Before we read again the sacred story of the virgin birth of Israel's King, as recorded in the chapter before us, let us turn once more to the parallel passage in Luk 1:26-38; for, in point of time, the visit of the Angel Gabriel to Mary preceded that of "**the angel of the Lord**" to Joseph.

To Mary the angel had said,

"**Behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end**" (Luk 1:31-33).

In answer to Mary's question of Luk 1:34, the Angel Gabriel told her the miraculous words of Luk 1:35, words which establish the doctrine of the virgin birth of Jesus, the eternal God who became Man, in order to die for sinners:

"**And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God**."

"**And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her**" (Luk 1:38).

It was some time after this strangely wonderful scene, how long we do not know that "**the angel of the Lord**" appeared to Joseph. Just here let us turn back to Mat 1:18-25, to read again the sequel to Luke's record. Joseph was "**espoused**" to, or engaged to be married to, Mary. He evidently did not understand about the miracle of the virgin birth that was soon to come to pass. But he was "**a just man**," a godly Jew; and because he loved Mary, he "**was minded to put her away privily**"; that is, break the engagement quietly.

"**But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins**" (Mat 1:20-21).

Then follows the quotation from Isaiah concerning the virgin birth of Christ which we have already considered. It is not without significance that, in this wonderful dream, "**the angel of the Lord**" addressed Joseph as "**son of David**"; for this is but another proof of the fact that God was establishing Jesus' legal right to David's throne.

It was the highest privilege and the most sacred duty that ever fell to humankind, that the Saviour should be born into that humble home! To be the mother of the Son of God, to be the legal father - not the natural father - of Israel's King - can we even begin to comprehend all that this involved? Yet, before the unbelieving, skeptical, mocking world, it meant also the unjust accusations of wicked men.

Nothing is told us in the Bible of Joseph's and Mary's replies to their false and wicked claims, that Jesus was the illegitimate son of Joseph. But we may well believe that they were called upon to bear such insults - for Jesus' sake.

That they were glad to suffer reproach for Him, seems evident, judging from their ready responses to the messages of the angels; for Mary said to the Angel Gabriel,

"**Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word**."

And, once "**the angel of the Lord**" explained the miracle to him, Joseph

". . . **being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: and knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS**" (Mat 1:24-25).

That little word, "**till**," establishes two fundamental truths:

(1) Mary was still a virgin when Jesus was born;
(2) after Jesus was born, she and Joseph had sons and daughters, despite what the Roman Catholic Church says regarding her never having married.

How many daughters they had, we do not know; but the Holy Spirit names their four sons and refers to daughters in Mat 13:55-56; Mar 6:3.

The Catholics teach that Mary was born without sin, as Christ was; that she was always the Virgin Mary; that prayers offered to her have more weight with her Son than if presented to the Father directly in His name. The Bible teaches no such doctrine! Without any question, Mary was a devout woman, one who loved God and lived a beautiful life for His glory. But Mary herself sang her song of praise to God for her own personal Saviour, when she said, in Luk 1:46-47,

"**My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour**."

Moreover, she was one of the early believers in "**the upper room**," waiting for the promise of the Spirit, even as her Son and her risen Lord had bidden His disciples. (See Act 1:14). And that is the last time her name appears in the New Testament! Does it not stand to reason that, if God had intended her to receive worship and the prayers of saints, He would have mentioned her name again, in all the pages that follow Act 1:14?

Neither the Lord Jesus nor Mary made a single statement that could be so construed; on the contrary, all Scripture teaching proves that Mary's Son was her Lord and Saviour.

Seven hundred years before the virgin-born Son of God and King of Israel lay in Bethlehem's manger, the prophet had written that He should be both human and divine. "**A Child**" was to be "**born**," in human flesh; "**a Son**" was to be "**given**"; that is, sent down from heaven:

"**For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace**" (Isa 9:6).

My friend, God does not ask us to understand the mystery of the virgin birth of Christ; He asks us to believe it.

We do not try to understand the supernatural; we accept it in simple faith. In the passage which we have just read from Isaiah, God was telling His people that their Messiah would be both God and Man. As God, He can never die; therefore, He had to become a Man, in order to bear the sins of Israel and of all the Gentile world "**in his own body on the tree**" (1Pe 2:24). But, even as He became Man, He also had to be eternal God, in order to be the sinless, all-powerful Saviour.

Upon this foundation truth, our Christian faith stands or falls. Either Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, as Isaiah and Matthew and Luke and Paul and all the sacred writers state; or we have no Saviour and Israel has no Messiah. To say that Jesus was only a good Man, a good Example, is to deny His eternal deity, His power to save from sin. To deny that He was born of the Holy Spirit, is to rob Him of that eternal deity - yea, to make Him a false witness; for repeatedly He claimed to be "**God manifest in the flesh**."

Let us hold to this fundamental teaching; and never tire in making it known!

4. The Search of the Wise Men for the King
Mat 2:1-12.

The question of the wise men, upon their arrival in Jerusalem, indicates why it was Matthew who was led by the Holy Spirit to record the story of their search; for they were looking for "**the King of the Jews**."

It is significant that they did not ask for the Saviour; they asked, rather, "**Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him**."

Their question lets us know why Mark, Luke and John did not include the incident in their Gospels; they were not emphasizing the coming of Israel's King; they were presenting yet other phases of Christ's Person and work.

The wise men went to the royal city, seeking the King, taking to Him their gifts, offering to Him their worship. But they did not find Him in Jerusalem; He was outside the royal city - suggestive of the fact that later on the nation of Israel was to cast Him out of their midst, and crucify Him outside the city wall.

The scribes and the chief priests were without excuse; they knew the Scriptures, for they told the wise men where the King should be born.

- Why did they not accompany the wise men to Bethlehem?
- Why did they not go with their gifts and their worship?

Because they were indifferent to His coming and indifferent to His rightful claims to the throne of David.

The wise men were Gentiles, from the east; and again there is the suggestion of the fact that Israel's rejection of her King would be followed by the Gentiles' receiving Him as a Saviour. Yet the sins of Jew and Gentile were to send Him to the cross; and Herod, the Roman ruler, as well as the leaders of the nation of Israel, sought to slay Him.

There may have been a great company of wise men from the east; we do not know. Certainly there is nothing to prove the tradition that there were only three. They did present to the Christ-Child three kinds of gifts - gold and frankincense and myrrh.

-The gold speaks to us of the deity of Israel's King;
- The frankincense, of the fragrance of His sinless life on earth;
- The myrrh, of His approaching death.

John tells us that Nicodemus "**brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes**" to prepare the Lord's body for burial (Joh 19:39). And we know that myrrh was used for this purpose.

Again, the supernatural warning of God to the wise men, not to return unto Herod, reminds us of His supernatural coming into the world.

Think of it! The appearance of "**the angel of the Lord**" to Joseph, of the Angel Gabriel to Mary, of "**the angel of the Lord**" and "a multitude of the heavenly host" to the shepherds, of the star in the east guiding the wise men, of the warning of God in a dream that they should not return unto Herod - these were some of the miracles attending the first coming of the King of Israel into the world! And yet His own people were indifferent or openly hostile to Him!

5. The Flight into Egypt - The Birthplace of Israel
Mat 2:13-16

It was Satan who prompted Herod to seek the life of the new-born King. Satan did not want Him to come into the world, to die for sinners, or to return as "**King of kings and Lord of lords**." But again God overruled Satan's wiles; and a second time "**the angel of the Lord**" appeared unto Joseph in a dream, saying,

"**Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him**" (Mat 2:13).

Thus another Old Testament Scripture was fulfilled; for, as we have seen, God had said that His Son should be "**called out of Egypt**."

It was in Egypt that the nation of Israel was born, on that first Passover night; and it was "**out of Egypt**" that Israel's King was called to return to the land of promise.

- "**Out of Egypt**" the nation was called to serve God in their own land;
- "**Out of Egypt**" the King was called to die for His people, Israel, and for the whole world.

6. The Attempt of Herod against the King's Life
Mat 2:16-18

It was a cruel, despicable and cowardly act of Herod that demanded the slaughter of the little children in Israel; but Herod was prompted by Satan again. God foreknew that he would commit this awful crime; and foreknowing it, He wrote it in the book of Jeremiah, that all Israel might know that another Scripture was being fulfilled concerning the coming of their King. But Israel was as spiritually blind as Herod was coldly cruel. The human heart, out of Christ, does not change; and the world's history is filled with the wicked devices of unregenerate men!

7. The Return to Nazareth - That Despised City
Mat 2:19-23

A third time "**the angel of the Lord**" appeared in a dream to Joseph, this time in the land of Egypt. Herod was dead; and God was telling Joseph to take the young Child and Mary back "**into the land of Israel**." Note the words, "**into the land of Israel**." And note also that Joseph obeyed the command of the Lord, "**and came into the land of Israel**" (Mat 2:20-21). Does it seem an accident that twice in this passage the Holy Spirit spoke of "**the land of Israel**" - here and nowhere else in the New Testament? No; it is not strange; for He was writing of Israel's King, who had promised His people a land, the land of Palestine. Thank God! Israel will one day receive her King and inherit her land. Then she will no longer be the "*people of the wandering feet*," weary, despised, hated, and persecuted. If only she had received her King when He came to present Himself to His people! How much heartache and suffering might have been saved! Yet, knowing He would be rejected, He came to die - for Israel and for the Gentile world!

Not only was the message of the prophets fulfilled when Joseph turned aside into Nazareth, and Jesus was "**called a Nazarene**"; but there is also a suggestion of the shame and reproach He was to bear as the lowly Nazarene. The city of Nazareth, we are told, was "the most despised place in that despised province of Galilee." And it was the scene of the early years of the One who came to be "**despised and rejected of men**," in order that He might redeem them from sin and death.

For a fourth time God had warned Joseph "**in a dream**," this time telling him to turn aside "**into the parts of Galilee**." With what infinite care God guarded and protected the Christ-Child! With what faithful love Joseph and Mary must have held in trust this sacred responsibility and joy! Satan might attempt the Child's life; but God protected Him; indeed, God Himself had come into the world to rob Satan of his power; and God is all-wise, as well as all-powerful. It is a beautiful story - the story of the birth of the King of Israel. It is the story of the love of God made known to sinful man. And throughout eternity the redeemed shall praise Him for such love!

~ end of chapter 2 ~

CHAPTER THREE

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN AS "AT HAND"
Mat 3:1-17; Mat 4:1-25

The Herald of the King and His Message
Mat 3:1-12.

1. In the ministry of John the Baptist, another Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled:

"**The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God**" (Isa 40:3, written 712 B.C)..	"**This is he** (John) **that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight**" (Mat 3:3).

A careful reading of the passage in Isaiah, from which this quotation was taken, reveals that the prophet was writing of the coming of Israel's King, in that day when "**the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it**" (Isa 40:5). The herald of the King was to go before Him. He came in the person of John the Baptist; and his message was,

"**Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**" (Mat 3:2).

As John preached, saying to Israel that her King and His kingdom were "**at hand**," he was preparing "**the way of the Lord**," teaching that, insofar as God had then revealed, nothing intervened before the King of Israel was to be established on His throne; no prophecy remained to be fulfilled. Accordingly, the King Himself did come, preaching the same message, and saying,

"**Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**" (Mat 4:17).

He went about "**all Galilee . . . preaching the gospel of the kingdom**" (Mat 4:23); and shortly afterwards He sent forth the twelve disciples, saying:

"**Go . . . to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand**" (Mat 10:6-7).

While all four of the evangelists tell of the ministry of John the Baptist, only Matthew mentions these two passages:

"**Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**."

"**Go . . . to the lost sheep of the house of Israel** . . ." The reason is plain, if we remember that Matthew was writing particularly for the Jews. Their King and His kingdom were "**at hand**." God knew, from all eternity, that Israel would reject her King, and that this church age would run its course; nevertheless, He offered Himself to His chosen people; and while He was in their midst, until He was officially rejected by the nation, His kingdom was "**at hand**."

"**The wilderness**," where John preached, was in Judea; and his message was to God's covenant people; but he did not identify himself with the degenerate system of Judaism that prevailed in Jerusalem.

"**The wilderness**" reminds us of the barrenness of Israel's spiritual life, and John was faithful in warning the false leaders of the nation to "**flee from the wrath to come**." John's baptism confirmed his preaching; for it was "**unto repentance**" in the River Jordan, the place that speaks of death. The repentant Jews, who composed the faithful remnant in Israel, thus confessed their sins, and acknowledged that they deserved the penalty of death. They put their faith in Israel's coming King!

2. "The Gospel of the Kingdom" and "The Gospel of the Grace of God."

We can best understand what John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus and the twelve disciples meant by "**the gospel of the kingdom**" as we compare it with "**the gospel of the grace of God**" (Act 20:24). What did the Jews who listened to John and Christ and His disciples understand them to mean by "**the gospel of the kingdom**"? Without question, they knew that "**the gospel of the kingdom**" referred to the Messiah's kingdom, the rule of the heavens over the earth. They knew that John and Jesus and the twelve were pointing them to that day when David's greater Son, the Lord from heaven, would sit upon David's throne, and rule not only over the house of Jacob, but also over the whole earth.

This kingdom, or rule of the heavens over the earth, is described throughout the Old Testament. It forms the burden of the message of all the prophets; and the Jews knew their Old Testament.

"**The gospel of the grace of God**," of which Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders in Act 20:24, began with Calvary's Cross, and will continue to be preached throughout this church age.

Israel had rejected her King; after that rejection, not once did our Lord tell His disciples to continue to preach "**the gospel of the kingdom**." He told them rather, to "**tarry in Jerusalem**" for the promise of the Father, even the Holy Spirit, in whose power they should go forth into "**all the world**," preaching the Gospel of His cross.

This is our message today; and it will be our message until Jesus comes to take the church home to be with Himself.

After the rapture of the church, the 144,000 Jews of "**the great tribulation**" period will once more take up the message which John the Baptist preached; for they, too, will herald "**the gospel of the kingdom**" (Mat 24:14; Rev 7:1-17; Rev 14:1-5). The King will then be verily "**at hand**," at the very door! For He Himself will suddenly appear to end that "**time of Jacob's trouble**." Then the day, of which Isaiah prophesied, and of which John spoke, will literally be fulfilled.

"**The glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it**" (Isa 40:5).

"**The gospel of the kingdom**" heralds a coming King who will rule over a literal kingdom upon this earth. It offers to men citizenship in that kingdom, upon the basis of repentance of sin and faith toward God. "**The gospel of the grace of God**" offers to men citizenship in that heavenly inheritance. It makes the repentant sinner a member of the body of Christ, which is His church. It makes the sinner saved by grace an heir of God, and a joint-heir with Christ.

In other words, "**the gospel of the kingdom**" has to do with the earth, and offers citizenship in the millennial kingdom; whereas "**the gospel of the grace of God**" has to do with heaven and the church.

Therefore, it is in keeping with the Jewish character of the book of Matthew that it should be the only one of the four Gospels to mention the preaching of John and Jesus and the twelve concerning these significant words:

"**Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**."

"**Go . . . to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand**."

John the Baptist, like all the faithful remnant in Israel, was looking for the Lord Jesus to establish His earthly kingdom at once; and John died a martyr's death, not living long enough to see the beginning of the church in the world. John was thinking of the righteous judgment of God upon the wicked and the unbelieving at the time when the King will purge the world with His purifying judgments when he warned the hypocritical Pharisees and Sadducees to "**flee from the wrath to come**." Among other things, John said that the righteous King would baptize "**with the Holy Ghost and with fire**" (Mat 3:11). Now, it is very significant that when the risen Lord told His disciples to tarry in Jerusalem for the coming of the Holy Spirit, He said nothing about their being baptized "**with fire**."

He did say,

"**John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence**" (Act 1:5).

Our Lord omitted the baptism "**with fire**" here because He knew that, before the fires of judgment should sweep over this world in purifying power, this whole church age had to intervene; and the baptism with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost was the empowering experience to which He referred. The baptism "**with fire**," of which John spoke, will yet come to pass, just prior to the time when Israel's righteous King will sit upon the throne of His father David. He it is

". . **. whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire**" (Mat 3:12).

3. The Anointing of the King by the Holy Spirit at His Baptism by John, Mat 3:13-17.

Matthew is the only one of the four Gospel writers who tells us of John's hesitancy in baptizing Jesus. Could it be another glimpse of the majesty and royal dignity of Israel's King? But a more searching question, and one more often asked, is this: Why should the Lord Jesus, who had no sin, ask John to baptize Him, when baptism, to the sinner, indicates confession and repentance of sin?

The Bible does not answer the question directly. One thing it does tell us, beyond controversy; and that is the absolute sinlessness, the unswerving holiness of the Lord Jesus Christ. The footnote of the Scofield Reference Bible offers two suggestions, which are so clearly stated that we quote them here:

"It may be suggested: (1) That Jesus was now to receive His anointing with the Holy Spirit (Mat 3:16) unto His threefold office of Prophet, Priest, and King. In the Levitical order (Exo 29:4-7) the high priest was first washed, then anointed. While Christ's priestly work did not begin till He '**offered himself without spot to God**' (Heb 9:14), and His full manifestation as the King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek awaits the kingdom . . . yet He was then anointed, once for all. (2) But John's baptism was the voice of God to Israel, and the believing remnant responded (Mat 3:5). It was an act of righteousness on the part of Him who had become, as to the flesh, an Israelite, to take His place with this believing remnant."

Thus the King of Israel identified Himself with His people in that which spoke of death. This seems to be the meaning of His reply to John's question, when He said, "**Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness**" (Mat 3:15).

It was a wonderful sight that John saw - the very first visible manifestation of the Holy Trinity at one time to the view of man: The Father's voice; the Son's bodily presence; the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove!

John, the evangelist, explains that God had told John the Baptist that he would recognize the Son of God, even Israel's Messiah and King, by the descent of the Spirit upon Him (Joh 1:33). Then the Father's voice bore testimony to His Son's perfections and fitness for the work He had come into the world to do. It was a testimony to Jesus' deity, a testimony to His sinlessness, a testimony to the Father's love for the Son, "**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**."

4. Satan's Effort to Rob the King of His Kingdom, Mat 4:1-11.

The temptation of Jesus by Satan, as well as His anointing by the Holy Spirit, seems to have been a part of His preparation for His public ministry. Of one thing we can be certain: Christ was tempted, not to see whether or not He would sin; but to prove to men, angels, Satan, and demons that He could never, never sin! He also "**suffered being tempted**," in order to be able to sympathize with us in all our temptations and trials. (See Heb 2:18; Heb 4:15). But let us never for one moment lose sight of the fact that Jesus was "**God manifest in the flesh**"; and

"**God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man**" (Jam 1:13).

Satan knew that Christ always was and ever shall be the rightful King of this earth; but Satan is the usurping "**prince of this world**"; and he offered the kingdoms of this earth to the Lord Jesus on his own wicked world-principles - the worship of Satan himself. What audacity!

To each of Satan's three attacks, our Lord answered with Scripture; and thus He set an example for the humblest child of God. Whole sermons could be preached upon these texts, our Lord's use of the written Word. Whole sermons could be preached upon the subtlety of the enemy of our souls, who even dared to tempt the Lord God, Israel's King, and our Saviour! But the heart of the message, we believe, is this: That our Lord Jesus and Israel's Messiah could not sin because He was our holy God. He met and resisted the devil for us; and, by His grace, we can let Him fight this enemy for us by His own Holy Spirit. Yes; Israel's King proved His absolute righteousness by meeting and overcoming the devil! He alone has the authority and the power and the right to sit upon David's throne!

5. The King "Teaching . . . Preaching . . . and Healing"Mat 4:12-25

The story of John's imprisonment by the wicked Herod is told in the opening verses of chapter fourteen. But in chapter four we read:

"**Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up**" (Mat 4:12-16).

A godly Jew, guided by the Holy Spirit, reading this quotation from the Old Testament, would turn to Isa 9:1-2; there he would see that the prophet was writing about the promised Messiah; and seeing, he would believe that Jesus of Nazareth had come to fulfill the prophecy! He would be convinced that Jesus was the King of Israel!

It was "**from that time**"; evidently from the time of the imprisonment of John, that Christ began to preach repentance that "**the kingdom of heaven**" was "**at hand**."

As He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He called four of His twelve disciples to follow Him: Peter and Andrew, James and John. It is beautiful to note that "**straightway**," "**immediately**," they left their fishing nets, and followed Jesus. James and John also left their father - all for Jesus, their Messiah and Lord. It is a lesson we need to keep ever before us, that of giving Christ the first place in our lives, that He may teach us to become "**fishers of men**."

The last three verses of chapter four tell us something of the ceaseless activity of the Lord as He went about "**all Galilee, teaching** . . . **preaching** . . . **and healing**."

- What was He teaching? That He had come to be Israel's King.
- What was He preaching? "**The gospel of the kingdom**."
- What did He heal? "**all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people**"

All of this bore witness to His right to be the King of the Jews. These miracles and His profound teachings were the credentials which proved His right to David's throne.

Of course, they are that - and more! They are the evidence that He loves lost and suffering humanity; that He came to heal the broken-hearted and to bind up the wounded. They open up to our view glimpses of the compassion and sympathy and love of the heart of the eternal God. All Israel should have known, by these things, that their King was in their midst, that "the **kingdom of heaven**" was verily "**at hand**."

~ end of chapter 3 ~

CHAPTER FOUR

THE LAWS OF THE KINGDOM

Matthew 5:1-7:29

In chapters five, six and seven Matthew records that wonderful message of our Lord, which is generally known as "*The Sermon on the Mount*."

Perhaps more sermons have been preached from these three chapters than from any other portions of the Word of God, especially in the past generation. And yet many seem to fail to get its significance in relation to the entire Gospel According to Matthew.

Many apply the spiritual and moral teachings of Christ, set forth in this sermon, missing the dispensational character of the whole message. There is, indeed, unlimited opportunity to draw spiritual and moral truths from these pages, truths which the believer in every age needs to know; yet we must not miss the Holy Spirit's purpose in this much-loved sermon that fell from the lips of the King of Israel.

Therefore, before we consider it briefly for its many beautiful lessons for our own spiritual growth, let us seek God's purpose in placing "*The Sermon on the Mount*" just here in the book of Matthew.

In the first place, this complete sermon is found nowhere else in the Bible. Many truths stated in it are given elsewhere; but the entire message is found only in the fifth, sixth and seventh chapters of this first Gospel. The passage which is very much like it, in part, is recorded in Luk 6:20-49. It has been called "*The Sermon on the Plain*" (See Luk 6:17). However, it may well be that Luke simply omitted to mention Christ's having gone into the mountain with His disciples before speaking these searching words, and that the occasion for both sermons was the same. Both Matthew and Luke tell us that, just before He uttered this message, the multitudes had been following Him, to see His miracles, and to be healed.

But the point we want to emphasize here is that the Holy Spirit, in Matthew, sets forth in these chapters the laws of the King; the constitution, as it were, that is to govern His earthly kingdom, when He rules through Israel over the whole earth.

In the preceding chapters we have read of the genealogy and birth of the King; of His forerunner, predicted in the Old Testament and sent to Israel in the person of John the Baptist; of the preparation of the King for His public ministry, including His baptism, His anointing by the Holy Spirit, and His temptation in the wilderness; and of the beginning of His mighty works among men. And now, before He offered Himself officially to the nation of Israel as their rightful King. He set forth the laws that were to govern His kingdom.

Christ's very act of going up into the mountain to teach His disciples was significant; for a mountain in Scripture is often used to represent the Messiah's kingdom. It is the place of elevation, suggestive of His exaltation to the position of power and glory that He will one day take before the eyes of men and angels, Satan and demons.

It was Nebuchadnezzar who saw the "**stone cut out without hands, which smote the image upon his feet**." Our study of the second chapter of Daniel has shown us that God plainly says there that the image represents the four, great, Gentile world empires; and that "**the stone that smote the image became a great mountain, and filled the whole earth**" (Dan 2:34-35).

The Holy Spirit's explanation of this prophecy teaches us that the smiting Stone is none other than Christ Jesus, Israel's Messiah and the Saviour of the world. He will smite the blasphemous Gentile world powers when He comes in glory to establish His millennial kingdom. The smiting Stone will become a mountain, as it were, even Messiah's kingdom, extending "**from sea to sea, and from the river unto the ends of the earth**" (Psa 72:8).

Moreover, the mountain has a prominent place in The Gospel According to Matthew - the portrait of Israel's King.

- It was on a mountain that the Lord Jesus was transfigured.
- It was on a mountain that He gave the Olivet discourse, also found in its entirety only in Matthew.

When we come to the study of it, in chapters twenty-four and twenty-five, we shall see how clearly it fits the prophetic picture of the end of this age, the great tribulation, and the return of Christ in glory. These prophecies are given in more detail in Daniel, Revelation, and related portions of the Scriptures.

- It was on a mountain that the King of the Jews was crucified.

Although Matthew does not mention His ascension into heaven, because the omission of this event is in keeping with the purpose of his Gospel; yet it was from the Mount of Olives that Christ went into the presence of the Father (Act 1:12).

The reason it is in keeping with the purpose of the book of Matthew that there should be no reference to Christ's ascension into heaven, is that Matthew was emphasizing His Kingly character; and as King of Israel, He will reign over the earth.

- The closing scene of Matthew is that of the Lord Jesus on a mountain with His disciples.
- Upon the Mount of Olives His feet shall stand in that coming day when He returns to take the throne of David, and to be honored by all the world (See Zec 14:1). It was to this glorious appearing of the Lord Jesus that the Psalmist referred when, speaking for the Lord God, he said,

"**Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion**" (Psa 2:6).

Yes; the mountain, in these and other Scriptures, refers to the Messiah's kingdom upon earth. And in the Sermon on the Mount we have a prophetic picture of the King, elevated to the place of power, enumerating the laws which are to govern the citizens of His kingdom. Again and again He refers to the Old Testament, in some such words as these, "**Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time** . . ." Then he adds His own Word of authority - the authority of the King, ". . . **but I say unto you** . . ."

Fourteen times in this sermon He said to His disciples, "**I say unto you** . . ." In plain speech He told them He had come to "**fulfill the law and the prophets**." That the disciples recognized His claim to authority, is clear from what we read in the verses immediately following this sermon:

"**And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes**" (Mat 7:28-29).

Here was the Heir to David's throne and to Abraham's land, speaking as the rightful and righteous King of Israel!

In that coming day the Word of the King will rule the nations; and it will be a reign of righteousness. Four times in "*The Sermon on the Mount*" the Holy Spirit uses the term "**righteousness**" - four times, not counting the instance when the word, in italics, was added by the translators to make the meaning clear. These laws have to do with the character of those who will enjoy the blessings of the millennial kingdom, the experiences they will pass through while being fitted for that kingdom, and the laws which will govern their conduct during the King's reign.

For example, the beatitudes refer primarily to the Jewish remnant after the translation of the church, during the great tribulation period.

Then Israel will face such bitter persecution as she has never seen! But the faithful and the humble and the meek and the merciful, all who suffer for their King's sake, will "**inherit the earth**," entering into "**the kingdom of heaven**." Believing Israel will then be persecuted "**for righteousness' sake**." The Antichrist will endeavor to blot out all those who give allegiance to Christ. But "**great will be the reward**" of those who are true to their Messiah and King.

Of course, it is always true that, in every age, those who "**hunger and thirst after righteousness** . . . **shall be filled**." It is always true that "**the pure in heart shall see God**," and that many spiritual blessings promised here to the faithful are the portion of every child of God in every age. Yet it remains true that "*The Sermon on the Mount*," as a whole, is applicable only to the tribulation and kingdom periods.

For example, such a statement as, "**Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth**," certainly does not apply to this age or to any past dispensation. Some of the meekest of God's children do not own a foot of land, and have little prospect of ever possessing temporal things. They have heavenly riches, indeed, but very little of that which pertains to the earth. The faithful remnant in Israel however, "**will inherit the earth**" in a literal sense, when Jesus reigns as their Messiah and King.

We see the same truth illustrated in the Lord's Prayer, of Mat 6:9-13. It is the prayer for Christ's "**kingdom**" to come upon earth, for His will to be done "**in earth, as it is in heaven**."

To the King are ascribed "**the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever**."

Now the Christian in this church age can pray this beautiful prayer - from an honest heart of worship and praise and longing for Israel's King to come to sit upon His throne. But there is one verse in this prayer that, strictly speaking, is upon legal ground - not grace. It is this, "**And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors**."

"Under law forgiveness is conditioned upon a like spirit in us; under grace we are forgiven for Christ's sake, and exhorted to forgive because we have been forgiven" (*Scofield Reference Bible*, footnote).

This does not minimize the related truth, that, as Christians, we must assuredly pray for forgiveness from daily sins, as well as forgive those who wrong us. But what we are trying to show is that "*The Sermon on the Mount*" is, in a very definite sense, dispensational, and sets forth the laws of Israel's King, laws which will govern His millennial kingdom upon earth. And these laws will be obeyed! For He will rule with "**a rod of iron**." Sin will be judged and put down. Christ's will be a glorious, a peaceful, a righteous reign! How this war-torn, war-weary world needs the King of David's line to sit upon David's throne!

And now, having seen something of the Holy Spirit's purpose in placing "*The Sermon on the Mount*" just here in Matthew, the Gospel of the King and His kingdom, we would not leave this portion of the book without at least a brief thanksgiving for the many beautiful promises it contains, promises and encouragements which have given hope and comfort and increased faith to millions of God's children throughout this church age.

To say that we may not find blessing in these words from the lips of our Lord, to say that they belong only to Israel, is to rob ourselves of some of the most sublime assurances that ever fell from His lips. And "**all Scripture is** . . . **profitable** . . ." to the child of God in every age (See 2Ti 3:16).

Let us read the sermon again to receive the blessing it holds for our hearts:

- Blessing and reward for patiently enduring persecution for Christ's sake;
- The exhortation to faithfulness in giving a testimony for Christ before a darkened world;
- Assurance as set forth in the eternal Word of God - assurance that His Word will be literally and entirely fulfilled;
- Warning against hypocrisy and bitterness and impurity of life;
- Christ's teaching concerning marriage and divorce;
- Exhortation concerning love, stewardship of possessions, prayer, consecration, faith in God, sincerity of profession, the Golden Rule, eternal security against Satan and all His hosts when the floods "**beat upon**" the house established on the rock.

These are some of the profound and searching and comforting teachings spoken by Christ in this wonderful "*Sermon on the Mount*."

In our limited time, we cannot enter upon a detailed discussion of the deep and spiritual truths they set forth. But today and tomorrow and until Jesus comes, or until He takes us home to heaven by death, we may read and read and read again this message spoken to the disciples on the mount, many centuries ago. The Holy Spirit will write the lessons on our hearts; and we shall be better Christians for having meditated upon them, more intelligent Christians, even as we pray to Israel's King and our Saviour, saying,

"**Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven** . . . **For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen**."

~ end of chapter 4 ~

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CREDENTIALS OF THE KING

Mat 8:1-34; Mat 9:1-38

In the eighth and ninth chapters of Matthew the Holy Spirit has grouped the stories of many miracles of Israel's Messiah, supernatural signs which prove that He had the power to be the King of the Jews because He ever was and ever shall be the almighty God.

In other words, these and many other miracles of the Lord Jesus have been called the credentials of the King. They prove that He was not only the Son of David and the Son of Abraham, but that He was always "**The mighty God**," "**The everlasting Father**," "**Immanuel**," "**God with us**."

These many miracles of the Lord establish the fact that He was always the One, of whom the Prophet Micah wrote, saying that His "**goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting**" (Mic 5:2).

These credentials of the King prove His power over the heavens, over the earth, over the sea, and over Satan's emissaries, the demons. They show His power over nature, sickness, death, sin, and the hosts of evil.

- Who but God can still the tempest?
- Who but the Great Physician can heal the palsied and the blind and the fever-racked body?
- Who but "**The mighty God**" can raise the dead?
- Who but the God of forgiving love can pardon sin?
- Who but the omnipotent Lord God can cast out demons and rob Satan of his power?

And these two chapters of Matthew tell of Christ's power over all of these! If we had no other miracles recorded - and we do have very many more - these alone would be conclusive proof of the right of Jesus of Nazareth to sit upon David's throne and to be the Saviour of the world.

They establish, beyond all controversy, that the Lord of the Old Testament was the Jesus of the New.

Besides the "**many**," out of whom He cast demons; and besides "**all that were sick**," who were brought to Jesus, and were healed; these chapters tell of a group of remarkable miracles, any one of which should have convinced Israel of Jesus' deity and authority and power.

God forbid that we, today, should become casual or indifferent about these startling deeds of our eternal God!

They include:

- The healing of the leper,
- The centurion's servant,
- Peter's wife's mother,
- The woman who had suffered for twelve years,
- The two blind men.

They include also:

- The stilling of the tempest,
- The casting out of demons,
- The raising of the daughter of Jairus from the dead.

No wonder Matthew, writing to Jews who knew the message of the prophets, said concerning Christ that these things were done,

". . . **that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses**" (Mat 8:17; cf. Isa 53:4).

But there are also other tokens of Christ's Messiahship in these two chapters.

- With the voice of authority He called "**a certain scribe**" and Matthew, the publican, to follow Him.
- With the voice of authority He answered the murmuring Pharisees, and taught of the futility of self-reformation (Mat 9:10-17).
- Affirming His right to call sinners to repentance, He rebuked the hypocritical rulers in Israel
- With a heart of compassion for the multitudes, He bade His disciples to pray for "**labourers**" for His harvest.
- With the foreknowledge that belongs to God alone, He looked forward to the day when "**the children of the bridegroom**" should mourn because "**the bridegroom**" should be "**taken from them**."

He foresaw His rejection by the nation of Israel and the calling out of His blood-bought church, which is His bride.

In these two chapters He is pictured as having received worship; and worship is rightly attributed only to God. He is called "**Lord**," "**Son of Man**," "**Son of God**," "**Son of David**." Thus the Holy Spirit was proving to Israel that the eternal God had become Man, in order to manifest Himself as Israel's King and the world's Saviour. Both the humanity and the deity of Christ are set forth in the stilling of the tempest. As a Man, He was asleep, doubtless weary; but as the omnipotent Lord, He arose, "**rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm**."

Matthew, writing particularly to Jews, did not need to explain to the leper who had been cleansed about "**the gift that Moses commanded**" to be presented to the priest. That leper, like others in Israel, knew what the fourteenth chapter of Leviticus taught.

Matthew did not need to explain who Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were (Mat 8:11); they were the patriarchs of the Hebrews, and every Jewish boy knew their stories. Matthew, ever bearing in mind Christ's mission to His own nation, the Jews, recorded the Lord's statement to the Roman centurion, whose servant was healed by the spoken word of Christ,

"**Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel**" (Mat 8:10).

And Matthew, true to the purpose of the Holy Spirit in writing this Gospel, spoke of the Lord's "**preaching the gospel of the kingdom**" as He went about "**all the cities and villages** . . . **teaching** . . . **preaching** . . . **and healing**."

Matthew, writing to Israelites, quoted again from their Old Testament, with which they were familiar, saying in Mat 9:13,

"**I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance**."

The Pharisees offered the sacrifices in the temple, according to the Mosaic Law; they were very strict in their formalism and ritualism; but their hearts were far from God.

When they found fault with the Lord Jesus for eating with publicans and sinners, boasting in their own self-righteousness, the Lord told them plainly that He would have "**mercy**," love and compassion for men's souls, not sacrifices on the altar when their hearts were not right with God.

In this, as in all His teachings, Christ spoke with authority, probing into the secret thoughts of men, showing them their need of the salvation He came to offer to repentant hearts. None but God could speak as He spoke! Thus His words, as well as His deeds, proved His right to the throne of Israel. What more authentic credentials could be asked?

~ end of chapter 5 ~

CHAPTER SIX

THE MESSENGERS OF THE KING

Mat 10:1-42

Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell the story of our Lord's sending out the twelve disciples to preach and teach and work miracles in His name; but Matthew's record is much more detailed than the other two are, and has a dispensational character not found in Mark and Luke.

For example, only Matthew mentions the words of Christ, recorded in Mat 10:5-7 :

"**Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand**."

This statement of the Lord illustrates what Matthew is setting forth: That first the kingdom had to be offered to the nation of Israel; then when the Jews refused their King, He turned to the Gentiles. Moreover, the earthly kingdom was offered to Israel, not to Gentiles; whereas salvation from sin is offered to all men of every nation, Jew and Gentile.

Again, Mark and Luke do not record the words of Christ in connection with His sending forth the twelve, as recorded by Matthew in Mat 10:16-42. And while verses 16-23 (Mat 10:16-23) have to do with the experiences the twelve disciples were to meet on their journey; yet they cover a wider scope also, and look forward to the yet future experiences of the faithful remnant in Israel during the great tribulation period, after the true church has been translated, and just prior to the return of Christ in glory to establish His millennial kingdom.

All this is in keeping with the purpose of Mathew's Gospel.

Take, for example, Mat 10:22-23 :

"**And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come**."

The last part of this prophecy was certainly not fulfilled in the experiences of the twelve disciples. But they were Jews, representative of the faithful remnant in their nation who will not worship the Antichrist during "**the time of Jacob's trouble**." That faithful remnant will preach "**the gospel of the kingdom**," and lead many of their fellow-Jews to Christ in that coming day. They shall "**not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come**"; for all the world will see Israel's King returning in power and great glory to reign.

Now it is significant that only Matthew records this passage; for he is the one who presents Christ to his nation as the King of Israel.

The dispensational character of this passage explains also the latter part of Mat 10:22,

". . . **he that endureth to the end shall be saved**."

These words are almost identical with those of Mat 24:13, also definitely dispensational in character. They do not refer to the believer's eternal security of salvation; or to the lack of it, dependent upon his "*holding out faithful*," as some teach. They were addressed to Jesus, and concern Jews, as the whole context makes clear; and cannot be interpreted apart from their scriptural setting. To take them out of their context, and to teach that one has to work in order to keep on being saved, is to deny the whole body of Scripture, the express Word of the Lord Himself and of His divinely inspired apostles - not just once or twice, but in hundreds of definite statements.

The passage beginning with Mat 10:34 can also be interpreted accurately only when considered in the light of its dispensational character; that is why it has bothered many Christians, who have little understanding of prophecy.

Many of these have asked, "Why should the Prince of Peace say, '**Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword**'?" There is but one answer: Our Lord was saying that the preaching of the Gospel during this church age would not "*bring in the kingdom*," as many teach today; but that it would divide families over the issue of the claims of Christ.

Only the personal, visible, bodily return of the King of Israel to earth will usher in His millennial kingdom, with its peace.

Meanwhile, during this age of grace, through the preaching of the Gospel of grace, He is calling out His bride, the true church, composed of Jew and Gentile.

The God-given purpose of this age and the kingdom to follow is outlined in the words of Act 15:14-18 :

"**God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world** (or 'ages')."

What the Lord Jesus was saying in Mat 10:34, He explained in the words which follow, that the preaching of the Gospel would bring "**the sword**," as it were, into families, dividing them asunder according to the individual's acceptance or rejection of Him as his Lord and Saviour. And this is exactly what has happened in Gentile homes, but more especially in Hebrew homes.

Nowhere has fanatical persecution been more bitter than in the Jewish homes where individuals have become Christian. Even today, when the nation of Israel, still out of Christ, is becoming more tolerant of the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was one of their great prophets - to quote them; yet for an orthodox Jew to accept Christ as his Messiah, often means that he is disowned by his family, pronounced as one dead, or even persecuted to the point of having to flee for his very life. Then "**a man's foes**" verily are "**they of his own household**" (Mat 10:36).

Christ's own interpretation of these words makes even more forceful His appeal to His ancient people to put Him first - before father or mother or son or daughter, if they would be "**worthy**" of Him. Even though becoming a Christian means cross-bearing, separation from loved ones and home; yet Christ must come first, for salvation and for God-honoring service. And His reward is bountiful, even for the giving of "**a cup of cold water**" in His name!

We would not leave this chapter without calling attention to some of the other spiritual lessons to be found here.

In this outline study of the four Gospels, we cannot pause for many details; yet we shall do well to consider long and prayerfully such lessons as these:

Only by the "**power**" of the Spirit of the risen Christ shall our service for Him avail, Mat 10:1.

"**The workman is worthy of his meat**," Mat 10:10.

This teaches the servant of Christ to trust Him for every temporal blessing; and it places a responsibility upon Christians to provide for the ministers and missionaries of the Gospel.

Certain judgment awaits the city, the nation, or the individual that rejects the Christ of God, Mat 10:15.

Persecution will be the lot of those who are faithful to Christ in a wicked world, which crucified the Lord of glory, Mat 10:16-25.

There is a personal devil and there is a literal hell, whether men like to hear the truth preached or not, Mat 10:28.

Our Father in heaven watches over His own, Mat 10:29-30.

Public confession of Christ must come from him who has been born again, Mat 10:32-33.

These are only a few of the many, searching and reassuring teachings of the Lord Jesus, recorded in the tenth chapter of Matthew, as He commissioned His messengers to go out to proclaim the King of Israel and His kingdom as "**at hand**."

We shall do well to meditate long and prayerfully over their meaning.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

CHAPTER SEVEN

ISRAEL'S REJECTION OF HER KING

Mat 11:1-30; Mat 12:1-50

In chapters eleven and twelve numerous proofs of Israel's rejection of her Messiah and King are set forth; and we hear the Lord Jesus openly denouncing the religious leaders of the nation. Their eyes were blinded; their hearts were closed to Him and to the kingdom which He had offered them. John the Baptist, the herald of the King, was imprisoned; the King Himself, rejected.

Therefore, Israel's Messiah foretold His coming death and resurrection, and His turning to the Gentiles. The official and final rejection of Christ by the nation of Israel came at His public entry into Jerusalem and His crucifixion soon afterward.

Having sent His disciples into their cities, where mighty works had been done; having even raised the dead; and having found no response from the people, except one of opposition and definite refusal of Him as King, the Lord began to upbraid His rebellious nation and to foretell coming judgment.

First He rebuked them because they had not heeded the preaching of John the Baptist; and because they had falsely accused the Lord Himself in that He was "**a friend of publicans and sinners**."

Then He "**began to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not**." He pronounced woe and certain judgment upon Chorazin and Bethsaida and Capernaum, comparing their judgment to the mere moderate judgment of Tyre and Sidon and Sodom.

Then it was that the Lord Jesus turned to individuals, bidding them look to Him for personal salvation and discipleship, saying:

"**Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light**" (Mat 11:28-30).

It was no longer the "**kingdom**" which He was offering to the nation of Israel, or to individuals in that nation; it was rest of heart from sin and rest in His appointed place of service that He offered to all who would go to Him for salvation and for consecration to His work. This is one of the numerous indications in these two chapters of a turning point in His ministry.

Following this call, there is recorded the controversy with the Jewish leaders concerning the use of the Sabbath Day, as He plucked ears of corn and as He healed the man with the withered hand on that seventh day of the week. This controversy was followed by the Pharisees' council to kill Him (Mat 12:14), signifying an open break between the rulers of the Jews and the Lord Jesus.

We cannot here discuss in detail the difference between the Jewish Sabbath and the Christian Lord's Day; but let us pause long enough to see why the Lord ministered as He did on that day.

- The Jewish Sabbath was the seventh day of the week; the Lord's Day is the first.
- The Jewish Sabbath commemorated God's finished creation; the Christian Lord's Day commemorates Christ's finished redemption, in that He rose from the dead on the first day of the week.
- The Jewish Sabbath demanded rest; the Christian Lord's Day speaks of voluntary worship and service.
- The Jewish Sabbath represented the old covenant of the Law of Moses; the Christian Lord's Day represents the new covenant of the grace of God, sealed by the shed blood of Christ.

It seems as though the Lord Jesus deliberately ministered on the Sabbath Day, in order to show, not only that He is "**Lord even of the sabbath day**" (Mat 12:8); but in order to show also that He had come to fulfill the Law of Moses and to set it aside forever, as He ushered in the age of grace at Calvary's Cross.

Having been rejected by His nation, Israel's King quoted one of their own prophets to prove that He foreknew this rejection, and His consequent turning to the Gentiles; for Mat 12:18-21 is a quotation from Isa 42:1-4 :

"**Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles** . . . **And in his name shall the Gentiles trust**."

Further token of Israel's rejection of her King is found in the blasphemous accusation the Pharisees made, saying that He cast out demons by Satan, the prince of demons, called here Beelzebub. Again, the Lord openly denounced them for their hypocrisy, and warned against the "**unpardonable sin**" of attributing to Satan the mighty works of the Holy Spirit of God. (See Mat 12:22-32). He called those "**blind leaders of the blind**" a "**generation of vipers**" (Mat 12:34). They were without excuse, for still they refused to heed His warning.

When they asked for "**a sign**," He warned them again, calling them "**an evil and adulterous generation**," unfaithful to God. And then it was that He foretold His coming death and resurrection, as prophesied by "**the sign of the prophet Jonas**" (Mat 12:39-40), once more pronouncing judgment upon them because of their unbelief.

We cannot pass by this remarkable prophecy without observing that here Christ stated definitely that Jonah was a real person, and that the much-ridiculed story concerning him is a fact of history. The literal Greek word translated "**whale**" in our English Bible is "*sea-monster*." And Jonah himself told us that it was "**a great fish**," "**prepared**" by the Lord to swallow His disobedient servant.

The Hebrew and Greek language do not use the word "**whale**," although God could have "**prepared**" such a whale if He had seen fit. "**With God all things are possible!**" And we believe His Word! Moreover, Jonah's three days and three nights in the place of death fore-shadowed Christ's three days and three nights in "**the heart of the earth**"; whereas Jonah's being cast out of the great fish was typical of Christ's resurrection from the dead. Our Lord Himself gave us this interpretation in Matthew.

Christ's final denunciation of Israel in these two chapters is that wherein He likened the Pharisees to a man out of whom a demon had been cast, later to return with seven other demons "**more wicked than himself**." No self-righteousness of the Pharisee, no self-reformation, no ceremonial observance of religious rites, could save the soul. It is an indictment against the "self-cleansed moralist."

As if He would leave no doubt about His purpose to turn to the Gentiles, setting His face steadfastly toward Jerusalem and the cross, the Lord then began to speak of the new relationship in the household of faith.

His own Jewish "**brethren**" had rejected Him, as a nation; now "**whosoever**" would do the will of His Father in heaven, He said would be included in the family of God - His "**brother, and sister and mother**" (Mat 12:46-50). He was thinking in terms of believers in this age of grace, Jew or Gentile, who would accept Him as Saviour and Lord.

In passing, we might note that there is nothing here to indicate that our Lord would have Mary set apart from other believers, as the Roman Catholic Church does in praying to her, in claiming that she was born without sin, or that she always remained a virgin. Indeed, this is but one of other passages which prove that she did marry Joseph and had other sons, as the words of our text prove, referring to ". . . **his mother and his brethren**" (Mat 12:46).

The Jewish character of the book is seen in the many quotations from and references to the Old Testament, often with no explanation of names or places because none was needed.

Matthew was writing particularly to Jews, to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was their Messiah and King. They were familiar with their Old Testament Scriptures, and needed not that historical references be explained.

In these two chapters alone we find recorded the two-fold quotation concerning John the Baptist (Mat 11:10; Mat 11:14; cf. Isa 40:3; Mal 3:1; Mal 4:5); and Isaiah's prophecy of Christ's turning to the Gentiles (Mat 12:17-21; cf. Isa 42:1-4).

Then in these two chapters we read John's reference to Him who according to the Hebrew prophets "**should come**" into the world. We read of references to Tyre and Sidon and Sodom and Nineveh; to David, the priests, Jonah, Solomon, and the queen of Sheba. Matthew tells us that "**the people**" asked concerning Christ, "**Is not this the Son of David?**" (Mat 12:23). But Mark and Luke, referring to the same incident, do not use this typically Jewish name.

There is at least one more illustration of the Jewish character of the book, which we must not pass over; it has to do with our Lord's statement concerning John the Baptist; recorded in Mat 11:11, "**Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of woman there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he**."

By "**the kingdom of heaven**" Christ referred to the rule of the heavens over the earth in the Person of God's appointed King, even Jesus, the Son of David. In that day of His millennial glory He will sit upon David's throne; but more than that, He will rule over the whole earth as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Now John the Baptist was morally "**great**," even as Christ said in the words just quoted; but John's position in that coming day of Christ's earthly kingdom will not be as great as "**the least in the kingdom of heaven**." John did not live to see Christ's earthly kingdom established. Luke is the only other evangelist who tells this story; and it is significant that he omits this reference to "**the kingdom of heaven**," as well as the commendation of John, and the two Old Testament quotations concerning the coming of John into the world. Luke was writing to Gentiles; Matthew, to Jews!

At the same time we need to remember that, while Matthew proves that Jesus is Israel's promised Messiah and King, he also proves that He is the faithful Servant of the Lord, the sinless Son of Man, and the eternal Son of God. In this connection, the eleventh and twelfth chapters of Matthew abundantly prove our Lord's deity.

Here we read His declaration to the disciples of John that He was Israel's promised King; His words of authority in denouncing the Christ-rejecting nation of Israel; His prayer to the Father, recorded in Mat 11:25-27, the last verse of which is a striking assertion of His deity:

"**All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him**."

Again, we see His claim to be the Saviour in His call to personal discipleship and rest of heart and entrance into the household of faith.

We hear His voice of authority in applying Old Testament prophecies to Himself; in declaring that His miracles were wrought in the power of His own Holy Spirit; in His foreknowledge of His approaching death and of judgment to come upon the wicked.

The very forcefulness with which He taught these things but emphasized the awful responsibility of the Jewish leaders who turned from Him in bitter hatred.

And it is highly significant that, from this time on, we read no reference in Matthew's Gospel concerning the preaching of "**the gospel of the kingdom**," except in the Lord's Olivet discourse, recorded in chapters twenty-four and twenty-five; and there He plainly states that, during the "**time of Jacob's trouble**," "**the gospel of the kingdom**" will be preached once more.

Meanwhile, this entire church age intervenes.

~ end of chapter 7 ~

CHAPTER EIGHT

PROFESSING CHRISTENDOM DURING THE ABSENCE OF THE KING

Mat 13:1-58

When the nation of Israel rejected her King, then He began to teach "**the multitudes**" seven parables which present a prophetic, comprehensive outline of the true condition of professing Christendom during this church age.

These seven parables are recorded in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, and are called by our Lord "**the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**" (Mat 13:11).

Christ knew that He would soon go to the cross; that, between His death and resurrection and His return to earth in glory as Israel's Messiah, this age of grace would intervene; and that in professing Christendom there would be true believers and false teachers with their following of hypocrites and scoffers and deluded, darkened souls.

Therefore, He taught, in these seven parables, the course of this church age; so that those who really wanted to know the truth might understand, but that those who would not love Him might not understand "**the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**." That is what He meant when He answered the disciples' question,

"**Why speakest thou unto them in parables?**" (Mat 13:10).

And in His reply He quoted yet another prophecy from Isaiah concerning His coming into the world and Israel's rejection of her King:

"**He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath**.

"**Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.**

"**But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye sec, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them**" (Mat 13:11-17; cf. Isa 6:9-10).

Surely the prophets would have rejoiced to see and hear their King! But during their earthly service they saw Him only by faith. And what was true of the Christ-rejecting nation of Israel when their King was in their midst - spiritual blindness and dullness of hearing - is always true of those who refuse to believe in the deity and atoning work of the Lord Jesus Christ. To such as these the Bible is a closed Book; for they repudiate the teaching of the Holy Spirit who wrote it, and who alone can interpret it.

The thirteenth chapter of Matthew clearly outlines the course of this church age, proving that the church will not convert the world, but that, when Israel's King returns to reign, He will find both the true believers and the false professors.

Yet those who hold that the church will convert the world and "*bring in the kingdom*" pervert the actual teaching of this marvelous chapter, and try to make it conform to their interpretation of prophecy.

From our study of these seven parables, we shall see that they all present the same message - that the true and the false will both be found in professing Christendom, even until the King Himself sends His holy angels to separate the born-again souls from those who do not really love Him.

From all eternity the Son of God knew that Israel would reject Him as a nation, and that professing Christendom would include the true and the false; but He did not see fit to reveal the "**mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**" until He spoke these seven parables unto the multitude "**by the sea side**" some nineteen hundred years ago and more.

That is why we read in Mat 13:34-35 of this chapter these significant words,

". . . **without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world**."

The Holy Spirit, through Paul in Ephesians, spoke of this same church age in these words:

". . . **by revelation he made known unto me the mystery** . . . **which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel** . . . **the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: to the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God**" (Eph 3:3-10).

Now a "**mystery**" in Scripture is not something mysterious, but something "*not hitherto revealed*." And the "**mystery**" concerning the church, which is being called out during this age of grace, while Israel's King is away, was first foretold by our Lord in the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, and later and more fully revealed to Paul.

"**The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**" - to repeat for emphasis - outline the true character of professing Christendom while Israel's King is away, just waiting for His bride to be called out before He returns with her in glory to rule over Israel and all the earth as the King of kings and Lord of lords.

In our consideration of Mat 11:11, where the Lord said that "**the least in the kingdom of heaven**" is greater than the truly "**great**" John the Baptist, we spoke briefly of the meaning of the phrase, "**the kingdom of heaven**." We need to remind ourselves of the significance of this expression, if we are to understand our Lord's teaching through the seven parables of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew.

We saw that "**the kingdom of heaven**," a term used only in Matthew, in accordance with the purpose of the book, refers to the rule of the heavens over this earth in the Person of God's appointed King, the Son of David.

We have seen that the preaching of "**the gospel of the kingdom**" announced the "**kingdom of heaven**" as at hand - until Israel rejected her King. And now, "**the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**," not hitherto revealed, are being fulfilled in this church age. Moreover, we have seen that, during the reign of the Antichrist, the faithful Jewish remnant will preach once more "**the gospel of the kingdom**," announcing the soon coming of Israel's once-rejected King.

Perhaps we shall better understand the meaning of this all-important truth if we pause for a moment to explain a more inclusive term, used by our Lord when He talked to Nicodemus; we refer to the expression, "**the kingdom of God**."

In Joh 3:3; Joh 3:5 Christ said to Nicodemus,

"**Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God** . . . **Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God**."

Here our Lord explained that "**the kingdom of God**" can be entered by man only on the basis of the new birth.

The holy angels and all unfallen beings, including the cherubim and the seraphim, are in "**the kingdom of God**." Wherever the authority of God is recognized, there is "**the kingdom of God**."

"**The kingdom of heaven**," Christ's personal rule over this earth, will be in "**the kingdom of God**," just as the state of California is in the United States of America. But it would be erroneous to speak of California and the United States synonymously. In like manner, the church will be in "**the kingdom of God**," even as "**the kingdom of heaven**" will be in "**the kingdom of God**."

But, to repeat, "**the kingdom of heaven**" is synonymous with Messiah's kingdom over this earth. That is why the use of the expression is most significant in the book of Matthew, whereas the other evangelists do not mention it at all.

Therefore, the seven parables, which present in outline the course of events between the setting aside of Israel as a nation and God's dealing with them once more as a nation, are called "**the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**."

The first two verses of chapter thirteen of Matthew are also significant, for the actions of our Lord are important, as well as His words:

"**The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore**."

Then it was that He "**spake unto them in parables**." "**The same day**"; that is, the day when He pronounced judgment upon Israel, Jesus went out of "**the house**" and sat "**by the sea side**."

From the seventeenth chapter of Revelation we learn that the sea is a type of the Gentile nations.

Therefore, Christ's going out of the house to the sea side was prophetic of His leaving the house of Israel and going to the Gentiles during the setting aside of His ancient people.

And now let us read these seven parables before we look at each one briefly: The parable of the sower, of the wheat and the tares, of the mustard tree, of the leaven, of the hidden treasure, of the pearl of great price, and of the dragnet.

1. The Parable of the Sower
Mat 13:3-9, Mat 13:18-23.

"**Behold, a sower went forth to sow** . . ."

The story is familiar to all of us; and the Lord Himself gave us the interpretation thereof.

Moreover, His explanation of the very similar parable of the wheat and the tares adds more light to this first parable; for in that interpretation He said, in Mat 13:37-39,

"**He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; the field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; the enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the consummation of the age (R. V.); and the reapers are the angels**."

In the parable of the sower, as also in the parable of the wheat and the tares, "**the field is the world**." Here, however, the good seed is the Word of God, which falls upon four kinds of soil, only one of which brings forth fruit. Hindering the growth of the seed sown are the birds, the stony ground, and the thorns, representing the Christless world, the flesh, and the devil.

Thus the Lord made the meaning very plain. During His absence there is this period of sowing the seed. Some ground yields an abundant harvest; other ground is stony. Some who hear the Gospel message heed it, while others turn a deaf ear to its appeal. During the absence of the King the sowing of the seed continues, but nothing in the parable indicates that all who hear will accept the offer of salvation. Nothing indicates that the church will convert the world. On the contrary, this parable explains what the book of Acts and the later epistles teach, that in this age God is calling out "**a people for his name**" from among a "**crooked and perverse generation**" (Act 15:14; Php 2:15).

2. The Parable of the Wheat and the Tares
Mat 13:24-30, Mat 13:36-43.

As we have just read from Christ's own words, the second parable makes clear that during this age there is to be a mixture of the false and the true in professing Christendom. A tare is a weed greatly resembling wheat. It represents a spurious Christianity that will grow side by side with the true, and will continue until the end of the age. At that time there will be a great separation, when the reapers, God's holy angels, shall glean the harvest, even as the Lord said:

". . . **the harvest is the end of the world** [consummation of the age]**; and the reapers are the angels. As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; and shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father**" (Mat 13:39-42).

The apostasy in professing Christendom is very clearly foretold here.

Moreover, even as it is difficult to distinguish between wheat and tares, so also many who profess the name of Christ, at the same time denying His deity, His atoning work on Calvary, His bodily resurrection and His coming glory - many of these appear to be what they are not, parading a righteousness of their own, even as they reject the righteousness of God which is in Christ Jesus, the Lord. And it shall be so until the end of the age, for the Lord Himself has declared it.

3. The Parable of the Mustard Tree
Mat 13:31-32.

"**Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof**."

This parable speaks of the fact that in the early church a small number made a profession of faith in Christ; then this body grew until today professing Christians are found in every part of the habitable globe. The birds of the air, coming in and lodging in the branches of the mustard tree, are not sinners entering the church to find rest, but are representatives of demons, who are working in the church to mar the testimony of God's people, and to deceive the untaught, undermining "**the faith** . . . **once for all delivered unto the saints**" (Jud 1:3).

This is not mere supposition or fanciful interpretation; for Christ tells us in the explanation of the parable of the sower that "**the birds came and snatched away the seed**." The parable of the mustard tree is prophetic of professing Christendom, with a great body of adherents, but sheltering a brood of darkness, as well as true believers in the Christ of God.

When we think of all the Unitarians, Christian Scientists, Mormons, Russellites, and a host of adherents to other false systems, to say nothing of the many rationalists in so-called evangelical churches who take the name of Christ and yet deny the efficacy of His blood, we see how literally this parable has come to pass. There is nothing here to indicate that, when the Lord comes, He will find a converted world; just the opposite is clearly foretold.

4. The Parable of the Leaven
Mat 13:33.

"**Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened**."

This parable gives us an insight into the inward corruption of professing Christendom. Leaven is always a type of sin in the Scriptures; the meal here typifies the Word of God, the children's bread. As the woman takes the leaven and hides it in the meal, "**till the whole**" is leavened; so the forces of Satan seek to hinder the teaching of the Word of God by their subtle, wicked devices, permeating "**the whole**" of professing Christendom with their evil influence.

Those who interpret the leaven to be the Gospel not only make this parable contradict all the other six; but they make leaven what the Bible never signifies it to mean. In the Old Testament ritual it always typified evil (See Exo 12:15; Exo 34:25). Our Lord used leaven as a symbol of false doctrine, as in Mar 8:15 He warned against the "**leaven of the Pharisees and** . . . **of Herod**." In 1Co 5:6-8 Paul used leaven to represent "**malice and wickedness**." Always in Scripture it typifies sin.

While the parable of the mustard tree speaks of the outward expansion of professing Christendom, the parable of the leaven represents the inward corruption of the same. If we, with our finite minds, can see flagrant tokens of this corruption, what must the all-seeing eye of a holy God behold as He looks into the hearts of those who falsely bear His name, "**wolves in sheep's clothing**"!

5. The Parable of the Hidden Treasure
Mat 13:44.

"**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field**."

The treasure represents Israel, now hid in the field, which typifies the world, as in the other parables in this chapter. Israel as a nation is now buried among the Gentile nations.

She is, as it were, in a national cemetery. But the day will come when she shall be as one alive from the dead. The Old Testament refers to Israel as a treasure, as the two quotations which follow state:

"**Now therefore, if ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then ye shall be a peculiar treasure unto me above all people**" (Exo 19:5).

"**For the Lord hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar treasure**" (Psa 135:4).

The man in the parable, who in his joy goes and sells all that he has and buys the field, is the Lord Jesus Christ, who on the cross of Calvary paid the price for the redemption of a world lost in sin. He set aside His glory, not His deity, to redeem the world, which is His by right of creation and His by right of redemption. The treasure, Israel, during this age is hidden in the field; but it will not always be so. After the true church has been caught away, Israel's Messiah and King, even Jesus, will bring the dispersed of the nation of Israel out from among the Gentiles and put them in their own land.

"**And in that day there shall be a root of Jesse, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and his rest shall be glorious. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord shall set his hand again the second time to recover the remnant of his people** . . . **And he shall set up an ensign for the nations, and shall assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth**" (Isa 11:10-12).

This parable can not mean that the sinner "**buyeth**" the "**treasure**," meaning Christ; for the sinner is bankrupt! And salvation is the free gift of God's grace. Man cannot do one thing to earn it; he must accept it by faith in the finished work of Christ.

6. The Parable of the Pearl of Great Price
Mat 13:45-46.

"**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it**."

This parable refers to the church, the body of Christ, the blood-bought company; and the merchant seeking goodly pearls is Christ, for He came "**to seek and to save that which was lost**" (Luk 19:10). The pearl of great price is the one body, the church; and the price that He paid for her was His own life's blood on Calvary. "**Christ loved the church, and gave himself for it**" (Eph 5:25).

How wonderfully the pearl represents the mystical body of Christ!

This precious gem is found at the bottom of the sea. Now in the Scriptures the sea represents the Gentile nations. The church is being called out from among all the nations, and to Christ she is precious. Moreover, the pearl is produced through suffering. A grain of sand enters the oyster and causes irritation. The oyster seals the grain with a substance, layer upon layer, until the pearl is produced, fit to occupy a place in a king's crown. Likewise, through the sufferings of Christ, believers are being baptized into the one body, which one day will shine in the Redeemer's crown.

The difference between the hidden treasure and the pearl is significant; for the treasure is hidden in the field, which is the world; whereas the pearl is taken from the sea, a symbol of the Gentile nations.

7. The Parable of the Dragnet
Mat 13:47-50.

"**Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. So shall it be at the end of the world** [age]**: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, and shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth**."

Again, the good fish and the bad picture the true and the false in professing Christendom; and this parable, in particular, points on to the end of the age. The faithful remnant in Israel will preach once more "**the gospel of the kingdom**." As a great net, this message will be cast into the sea of the nations, culminating in a final separation by the holy angels of the good from the bad, the true from the false.

How wonderfully these seven parables set forth in outline the history of this age, while the King is away! They show us what we may expect during His absence, and they point toward the day of reckoning that is to come upon the world when He returns in power and great glory.

They tell us not to be discouraged by the fact that the church has not led the whole world to Christ; for they tell us that it is God's purpose and plan that He shall bring the world to Himself - perhaps very soon! They encourage us to go on sowing the seed, which is the Word of God, trusting Him to give the increase, and leaving the issue with Him.

The closing verses of the chapter present the sad picture of our Lord's own acquaintances in Nazareth calling the virgin-born Son of God "**the carpenter's son**"! But Jesus said unto them,

"**A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief**" (Mat 13:57-58).

An interesting fact of history is found in Mat 13:55-56, giving us the names of the half-brothers of our Lord, born to Joseph and Mary after Jesus was born of the virgin. They were James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas. We wonder how many half-sisters He had, and what their names were; but the Holy Spirit only mentions the fact that He did have "**sisters**."

~ end of chapter 8 ~

CHAPTER NINE

SHADOWS OF "THE LAST DAYS"

Mat 14:1-36; Mat 15:1-39

In chapters fourteen and fifteen the Holy Spirit has recorded through Matthew a number of experiences in the life of the Lord which are suggestive of events to take place in the end of this age. They are not designated as dispensational. They present Christ's love for His own, His power to work miracles which only God can perform, His compassion upon the multitudes, His knowledge of the very thoughts of men - all of this and very much more.

Yet the events recorded here present also an analogy to the course of prophecy to be fulfilled in the end of this age and in the age to come. Therefore, in this book which very definitely outlines God's plan for His people, Israel, it seems fitting to make this comparison between these deeds and teachings of Christ and His definite statements found elsewhere in this book and throughout His Word concerning things to come.

Persecution Foretold.

The martyrdom of John the Baptist not only indicates that the godless world hates and persecutes those who love the truth, but it may well represent also the bitter persecution of the faithful remnant in Israel during the reign of the Antichrist. It is difficult for us to conceive of more cruel treatment than the Jews of Europe have suffered at the hand of Hitler in this second World War, or at the hands of Christ-hating peoples for nearly two thousand years; and yet our Lord told His disciples in His Olivet discourse that, during the great tribulation, there would be such suffering as never was hitherto; no, nor ever should be.

Miraculous Preservation Promised.

When the Lord Jesus heard of the death of John, He "**departed thence by ship into a desert place apart**."

This speaks of Him as the rejected One. But during the time of His rejection, those who sought Him found Him and were miraculously fed, even in the desert. Even so, those who receive "**the gospel of the kingdom**" during the reign of the Antichrist will not be able "**to buy or sell**" because they will not have received "**the mark of the beast**." Yet even in their time of great tribulation, many of these will flee to a place of safety where they will be preserved by their Messiah and soon-coming King. The Lord Jesus who fed the five thousand by His divine power is the same Lord who has promised to preserve His ancient people, Israel, in their time of greatest sorrow and affliction.

Peace and Blessing Assured.

Following this miracle Christ was on a mountain, alone with His Father; while His disciples were "**in the midst** of the sea," in a terrible storm.

"**And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid**" (Mat 14:25-27).

This is a picture of the Jewish remnant in the end of this age; they will be in the grip of a storm, when the fury of the nations will be like a raging sea. But in their darkest hour, "**at the fourth watch of the night**," as it were, their Messiah and King will appear with the assurance, "**Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid**." In that solemn hour He will speak peace to His people; He will speak peace to the nations; and the sea will cease from raging; for He is "**The mighty God**."

Not only was the Lord worshipped by those Jewish disciples in the ship, but when they "**came into the land of Genesaret**," multitudes of Gentiles also were blessed. The sick were healed; and "**as many as touched** . . . **the hem of his garment** . . . **were made perfectly whole**." And so it will be at the close of the Great Tribulation period, after the Lord speaks peace to the nations. Not only will the faithful remnant in Israel enter into His millennial kingdom, but all the earth will be "**full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea**" (Isa 11:9).

Israel Blinded Now.

In the first twenty verses of chapter fifteen we read of still further criticism of the Lord by the rulers of the Jews, as they sought to ensnare Him in His doctrine. They were quibbling over traditions of the elders, at the same time perverting their own Old Testament Scriptures. Christ called them what they were, "**hypocrite**s" and "**blind leaders of the blind**."

Just as blind spiritually are His ancient people today. For nearly two thousand years the nation of Israel has rejected her King. Meanwhile, He has been leading multitudes of Gentiles to know and love Him as the only Saviour, even as He answered the prayer of the Gentile woman, following the criticism of those rulers of the Jews many centuries ago.

Blessing to the Gentiles Foreshadowed.

It would be a strange story; this record of Christ's dealing with the Syrophenician woman, if we did not consider it in its dispensational character. The Lord was not unconcerned about her need. He was teaching her - and all His followers - an important lesson. When she addressed Him as "**Son of David**," He "**answered her not a word**." As a Gentile, she had no right to claim the earthly inheritance of Israel; and "**Son of David**" is one of His names which show His relation to the Jewish nation. Finally, after the disciples besought Him to send her away, He once more stated that He came to present Himself to Israel as a nation - before He was to turn to the Gentiles, saying,

"**I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel**" (Mat 15:24).

It is significant that Matthew is the only evangelist to record these words, although Mark also tells this story. Then when the Gentile woman continued to beg for deliverance for her demon-possessed daughter, when she addressed Him as "**Lord**," worshipping Him, then He answered her prayer, saying unto her,

"**O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour**" (Mat 15:28).

During this church age, when the nation of Israel is rejecting her Messiah, He is calling out Gentiles to be members of His body, His blood-bought church. Thank God! There are also many individual Jews in that company! But the nation as such is still spiritually blinded during the absence of her King.

A Millennial Picture.

The scene which followed the healing of the daughter of the Gentile woman is a remarkable picture of our Lord's millennial blessing upon all the earth. He "**went up into a mountain, and sat down there**." And "**great multitudes**" of the lame and blind and dumb and maimed were brought to Jesus' feet; "**and he healed them**." "**The multitude wondered** . . . **and glorified the God of Israel**."

Then it was that He fed the four thousand miraculously, suggestive of yet further blessing during His earthly kingdom.

It is only in Matthew that we read that they "**glorified the God of Israel**," for Mark's record has a different purpose from that of Matthew. Matthew was writing especially for the Jew; and here we are reminded once more that, in our Lord's millennial kingdom, all the Gentile nations will glorify "**the God of Israel**."

"**In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you**" (Zec 8:23).

~ end of chapter 9 ~

CHAPTER TEN

IN THE SHADOW OF THE CROSS

Mat 16:1 - Mat 20:34

With the increasing opposition to Christ as Israel's King, we find our Lord unfolding to His disciples ever more plainly the purpose for which He came into the world.

As Israel's King He offered Himself to the nation; but as Israel's Saviour, knowing the end from the beginning, He came to die. He knew that He would be rejected by His ancient people; and knowing all things, He told His disciples of His approaching death as the Saviour of both Jew and Gentile. That is why, in chapters sixteen to twenty of Matthew, we read of His first definite prophecy concerning the church, of His three-fold prophecy of His coming death and resurrection - all spoken to His disciples, not to the nation which had already rejected Him in their hearts.

At the same time, as if to reassure His disciples that His future kingdom would surely be brought into being, He was transfigured before three of them; and He told the twelve that, in His millennial kingdom they should "**sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel**."

These are a few of the outline truths set forth in the five chapters immediately before us. Let us examine them for some of our Lord's clearest teaching concerning His plan - from Calvary even to His earthly kingdom, and to all eternity.

The sixteenth chapter opens with another subtle attempt of the Pharisees and the Sadducees to ensnare Christ in His teachings, as they demanded "**a sign from heaven**." He had already given them "**the sign of the prophet Jonas**"; He had already proved by His miracles and profound teachings and sinless life that He was their righteous King. And now He warned them that, although they could "**discern the face of the sky**," yet they could not discern "**the signs of the times**."

It is significant that this expression, "**the signs of the times**," occurs only in Matthew - the Gospel narrative with a special emphasis upon the dispensational character of our Lord's teachings and actions. Here He was once more reminding the unbelieving rulers of the Jews that He came to fulfill the Old Testament prophecies; yet they would not read these "**signs of the times**" concerning Him.

Following this interview with the religious leaders of the nation, the Lord warned His disciples against the "**leaven**" or "**doctrine**" of the Pharisees and Sadducees.

Christ's First Prophecy concerning the Church
Mat 16:13-20.

Peter's confession of Jesus as "**the Christ, the Son of the living God**" (Mat 16:16), led our Lord to utter His great prophecy concerning His church, which was to have her beginning on the Day of Pentecost. Peter's name means "*a little rock*." And Christ, in a play upon the words, said to Peter, "**Upon this rock** (i.e., this confession**) I will build my church**." In the Greek He used two different words: the one meaning "**a little rock**"; the other, "**rock**."

But the important thing to note, of a dispensational nature, is the fact that Christ said, "**I will build** . . ." He did not say, "I have built . . . ," or "I am building . . ." The birthday of the church was still in the future when He spoke this significant prophecy. Moreover, the church did not have her beginning until the Lord was crucified, risen, and ascended into heaven, and until He sent His Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost to call out, indwell, and empower believers in His finished work on Calvary. This prophecy of Christ was His first to explain to His disciples His plan for this age, during Israel's national rejection of her King.

Christ's Three-Fold Prophecy of His Approaching Death and Resurrection.

As if to explain further to His disciples His purpose in coming into the world, the Lord began to tell them plainly that soon afterwards He "**must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day**" (Mat 16:21). Later He told them also that He was to be "**betrayed into the hands of men**" to die and to be raised again on the third day (Mat 17:22-23). And still later, He foretold His being delivered "**to the Gentiles**" to be mocked and scourged and crucified, and to rise again on the third day (Mat 20:17-19).

In these three statements Christ prophesied His death at the hands of the rulers of the Jews, at the hands of the nation, and at the hands of Gentiles; and each time He foretold also His resurrection on the third day after His crucifixion. He died no martyr's death! He planned, from all eternity, to die for the sins of all the world.

A Portrait of the King in His Glory
Mat 16:28; Mat 17:1-13.

The disciples were sad when their Lord foretold His approaching death.

Why they were so slow to understand His plan for redeeming the world, we cannot understand - doubtless for the same reason that Christians today are slow to comprehend God's great plan for mankind!

But as if to reassure His disciples that He would, indeed, return in power and great glory to establish His millennial kingdom upon earth, He took Peter, James, and John "**up into an high mountain apart, and was transfigured before them**."

Now, as we have already seen, a mountain in Scripture typifies a kingdom.

The transfigured Lord gave to the three disciples just a foregleam of His glory, which will shine forth at His coming to be recognized by all the world as King of kings and Lord of lords.

His was not an outward glory shining upon Him, but an inward glory shining out from within His very Being. "**His face did shine as the sun**." And when Christ, the Lord, appears in glory, He will be the "**Sun of righteousness**," arising "**with healing in his wings**" (Mal 4:2).

In His transfiguration Moses and Elijah appeared with Him, representing the law and the prophets.

Moses also represents those who will have a part in the first resurrection, when all those who "**sleep in Jesus**," even the dead in Christ, shall rise. God put Moses to sleep on Mount Nebo, and he aptly represents all the dead in Christ.

Elijah, who went to heaven without seeing death, represents the company who will be living when Christ calls the church home. "**The dead in Christ shall rise first**"; then the living saints shall be "**changed**" and "**caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air**" (1Th 4:16; 1Th 4:1").

It was to this glorious translation of the church that Paul referred when he wrote to the Corinthian Christians, saying,

"**Behold, I shew you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump**" (1Co 15:51-52).

Peter, James, and John, looking on in wonder at the transfiguration scene, represent the faithful Jewish remnant who will see the Lord, and will behold in wonder and awe as He returns in glory with His blood-bought church to sit upon the throne of His father, David.

Immediately after the transfiguration, at the foot of the mountain, a father brought His demon-possessed boy to the Lord.

In His compassion Christ broke Satan's power, and set the captive free. So it will be in the millennial reign of Christ; Satan will be bound, and his captives shall know the liberty that only the Lord of glory can give.

Further Teachings for the Redeemed - Jew or Gentile
Mat 17:24-27; Mat 18:1-35; Mat 19:1-26; Mat 20:20-28

Knowing the problem to be faced by His church, which was to be composed of individual Jews and a great number of individual Gentiles, the Lord taught some searching and comforting lessons for those who would heed His message. He was nearing the last days of His life on earth; the shadow of the cross was looming before Him; and He knew how much His redeemed would stand in need of these teachings in regard to godly living.

We cannot pause here to discuss these truths - important though they are; for we are not making an analytical study of the four Gospels. But let us read these chapters prayerfully, repeatedly, for their lessons in humility, faith, soul-winning, forgiveness, prayer, divorce, law and grace.

Matthew is the only evangelist to record the miracle of the tribute money (Mat 17:24-27), proving as it does Christ's Lordship over His created beings, as well as His example to His disciples in rendering "**unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's**."

The Apostles' Place in Christ's Earthly Kingdom
Mat 19:27-30

It is fitting that Matthew should be the only one to record the highly significant words of Mat 19:28, spoken to the twelve,

"**Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration** (i.e., 're-creation,' or 'making new') **when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel**."

Of course, we know that Matthias was chosen by the Lord to take the place of Judas, who was not a true disciple. (See Act 1:15-26).

Dr. C. I. Scofield points out the following significant truth:

Referring to the twelve disciples' sitting "**upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel**," he adds that "the kingdom will be administered over Israel through the apostles, according to the ancient theocratic judgeship."

"**When the Lord raised them up judges, then the Lord was with the judge, and delivered them out of the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge**" (Jdg 2:18).

In that day the prophecy of Isaiah will be fulfilled, in which God said,

"**And I will restore thy judges as at the first, and thy counsellors as at the beginning: afterward thou shalt be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city**" (Isa 1:26).

God knows where every one of the twelve tribes of Israel is today, scattered throughout the world; and this is but one of many promises He has made to restore them to their own land for His covenant blessing, to be realized in the day of their acceptance of Him as their promised Messiah and glorious King.

The Sovereignty of the King
Mat 20:1-16

Matthew is the only one to record the Lord's parable of the householder, seeking laborers for his vineyard. It seems to have been spoken in answer to Peter's question concerning the disciples' reward for service (Mat 19:27), and more especially following the Lord's promised reward for all who have put Him first in their lives (Mat 19:29-30).

Certainly it sets forth His sovereign right to bestow His rewards according to His sovereign will; and is, therefore, but another proof of Matthew's purpose in presenting Christ as the rightful King.

Although the rulers of the nation of Israel had already rejected their King in their hearts; although they were soon to reject Him publicly and officially; yet Christ still offered individual salvation to any in the nation who would accept Him, as illustrated by the healing of the two blind men (Mat 20:29-34).

Twice it is written here that they addressed Him as "**Lord** . . . **son of David**," a title appropriately used by an Israelite.

~ end of chapter 10 ~

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE OFFICIAL REJECTION OF THE KING BY THE NATION OF ISRAEL
Mat 21:1-23:39

The King's Public Entry into Jerusalem, and His Rejection by the Rulers of the Jews
Mat 21:1-17

The many Old Testament prophecies of the first coming of Christ into the world were written, in order that we might know Him as the Lord and Saviour and King who came to fulfill these inspired predictions. Accordingly, when He rode into Jerusalem; the city of the King, in exact fulfillment of the detailed prophecy of Zec 9:9, all Israel should have received Him as their Messiah. It was Christ's official presentation of Himself to His nation; and it resulted in Israel's official rejection of Him as her Messiah and King.

Even when the multitudes quoted Psa 118:26 concerning Him, they were fulfilling another prophecy concerning this very occasion,

"**Hosanna to the son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest**" (Mat 21:9).

Again asserting His right to cleanse the temple of ungodly practices, the Lord quoted still another prophecy from Isa 56:7, saying,

"**My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves**" (Mat 21:13).

And yet again, when the chief priests and scribes objected to the praises the children were ascribing to the Lord, He quoted another Old Testament prophecy from Psa 8:2 concerning His coming into the world,

"**Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise**" (Mat 21:16).

The second chapter of Hebrews proves that the eighth Psalm is Messianic; and our Lord's testimony here but adds to the awful responsibility of the Jews who rejected His interpretation of that inspired Psalm. They knew their Old Testament; they were without excuse; their knowledge was of the head, but not of the heart. How significantly this scene closes!

Israel had officially rejected her King; therefore, He "**left them**," and went out of the city of Jerusalem to Bethany, and "**lodged there**." Bethany was the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus; they loved and worshipped the Lord; He was welcome there - but not in the hearts of the rulers of the nation!

Having been rejected by them as their King, He was soon to die for the sins of the world - for all who would believe.

2. The Barren Fig Tree Cursed - Symbolic of Barrenness in Israel during the Absence of the King
Mat 21:18-22; cf. Mat 24:32-33

Sometimes, in both the Old and New Testaments, Israel is likened unto a vineyard, from which her Lord expects fruit. Here and in Mat 24:32-33 the fig tree is a symbol of the nation of Israel. The Lord looked for fruit, but found nothing other than leaves; therefore, He pronounced the curse upon it, and "**it withered away**."

Later, in His Olivet discourse, He compared the tokens of the restoration of Israel to the budding of the fig tree. The typical lesson is plain: during this church age, while Israel's King is away, the nation is in spiritual blindness. She rejected her King; now she is suffering from the curse of her own barrenness and unbelief. But one day the fig tree will begin to bud, as it were; and Israel's coming restoration and glory will be at hand. May God hasten the day!

Then His suffering people will receive Him who died for her as her only righteous Messiah and King!

3. The King's Authority Questioned
Mat 21:23-27

Returning to the temple, the Lord met the subtlety of the rulers of the Jews by propounding to them a questioning which they dared not answer. Thus He illustrated yet again His knowledge of the very hearts of men, manifesting His all-wise, divine Being. They dared not say that John the Baptist was not "**from heaven**" for fear of the people; yet they dared not say he was "**from heaven**," lest their own confession condemn them for not having received him and his message.

They evaded the issue; and once more the Lord began to teach in parables - three parables which plainly foretold His rejection by the nation of Israel and His calling out "**a people for his name**" from among the Gentiles - whosoever would heed His invitation to be saved.

4. The King's Rejection and His Turning to the Gentiles Told in Three Parables
Mat 21:28-46; Mat 22:1-14

These three parables are those of the two sons, of the householder demanding fruit from his vineyard, and of the king who made a marriage for his son. They all tell the same story - that, having been rejected by Israel; the King would turn to the Gentiles, offering salvation to every individual who would receive Him. The following quotations give us the key to these parables:

To the unbelieving Jews who had questioned His authority, the Lord said,

"**Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you** . . ." (Mat 21:31).

To those same unbelieving Jews He quoted another Messianic prophecy, applying it to Himself, and saying,

"**Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof**" (Mat 21:42-43; cf. Psa 118:22-23).

Christ Himself, the Rock of Ages, is the Stone rejected by Israel. He has become the "**chief corner-stone**" of the church. And one day He will come as the "**smiting stone**" upon the godless nations, even as Daniel foretold in the second chapter of his inspired prophecy.

The king, whose invited guests would not go to the wedding, sent out into the highways to bid all who would to attend the wedding feast; "**and the wedding was furnished with guests**." The man who went without "**a wedding garment**" is a picture of the sinner who would seek to enter the presence of God without the robe of righteousness provided by the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, through faith in His shed blood. The Pharisees were like unto that man; they sought to establish their own righteousness, rejecting the only One who could make them fit for heaven and the presence of God.

5. The King's Answer to the Three Leading Groups of the Day
Mat 22:15-46

By His divine wisdom our Lord silenced all His critics; all who sought to ensnare Him in His teaching. To the Herodians, who questioned Him concerning paying tribute to Caesar; to the Sadducees, who did not even believe in the resurrection from the dead; and to the Pharisees, who questioned Him concerning the Law of Moses - to all He uttered such words of wisdom that "**no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions**" (Mat 22:46). Not only so; but He also questioned the Pharisees concerning Psa 110:1, which proves beyond controversy that "**David's Son is David's Lord**," even Jesus. That was the very truth which the hypocritical Pharisees vehemently denied - the Lordship of Christ.

All of this teaching doubtless made a marked impression upon the Jews, to whom Matthew addressed his Gospel in particular. If they truly sought the light concerning the Person of the Lord Jesus, they were convinced of His right to the Messianic claim, of His right to David's throne. But the nation of Israel was not seeking the truth; and because they rejected their King, He had to pronounce woe upon them, eternal condemnation and separation from God.

6. The King's Warning of "Woe" to Come upon the Hypocritical Pharisees
Mat 23:1-36

All of chapter twenty-three is the record of our Lord's condemnation of the rulers of the Jews - hypocrites; spiritually proud, self-righteous seekers after vainglory. With the voice of authority that was ever His by right, He uttered grave and terrible warnings of judgment to come upon those whom He called "**hypocrites** . . . **blind guides** . . . **fools and blind** . . . **serpents** . . . **generation of vipers**."

Because Matthew was writing particularly for Jews, he did not need to explain the reference in Mat 23:35 to "**all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias** . . ." And Matthew is the only one who mentions these Old Testament characters. The Jews were familiar with their own Old Testament.

7. The Rejected King's Lament over Jerusalem
Mat 23:37-39

If our Lord's denunciation of the hypocritical Pharisees was justly bitter - for He is the holy God, and cannot tolerate sin unconfessed and unforgiven; yet His lament over His beloved Jerusalem was filled with tenderness and yearning and sorrow.

It was the city of David's choice for his throne; it was the city outside of whose walls the King of the Jews was soon to be crucified; it is the city over which He will one day rule in power and great glory. It will be the metropolis of the world in that coming day. The Lord loved Jerusalem and His ancient people identified with that royal city. As He thought of all the prophets Jerusalem had stoned; as He thought of His own rejection by those He came to redeem, He mourned for His beloved city. And then He uttered a solemn and significant statement:

"**Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord**" (Mat 23:38-39).

8. The House of Israel to Be "Desolate" during the Absence of the King
Mat 23:38-39

How desolate has the house of Israel been for nearly two thousand years! How persecuted, betrayed, down-trodden, massacred, tortured! Little wonder the Lord who loved Israel yearned over His rebellious city! He could look down the centuries and see the tears, the agony, the sorrow of His "**people of the wandering feet**"! But they made their own choice; they would not have their King to rule over them.

And because He was eternal God, and knew all that the future held for them, He foretold the desolation of their house - until they should fulfill Psa 118:26, saying,

"**Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord**."

The Jews, far better than Gentiles of their day, should have known the significance of this, another application of the Messianic prophecies to Himself! And again, Matthew was faithful to his God-given task, as he let the Holy Spirit guide him to pen these lines.

Psa 118:26 will be literally fulfilled in that yet future day when Israel's King shall stand once more upon the Mount of Olives; when His people, Israel, will worship Him and honor Him as their Messiah and Lord.

~ end of chapter 11 ~

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE LAST GREAT PROPHETIC UTTERANCE OF THE KING
Mat 24:1-51; Mat 25:1-46

Between His official rejection by the nation of Israel and His cross, the Lord Jesus gave His disciples a comprehensive prophetic outline of events to take place as this age draws to a close and at His return in glory to take His rightful throne.

We call it the Olivet discourse, the last great prophetic utterance of Israel's rejected Messiah and King. It is recorded in the twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth chapters. While Mark and Luke give part of this message, yet they do not go into as much detail as Matthew does; and all of the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew is found nowhere else in the Scriptures. The presentation of this Olivet discourse according to Matthew is particularly Jewish; and is, therefore, in keeping with the Holy Spirit's purpose for the book.

The Lord had just foretold the destruction of the temple; and as He sat upon the Mount of Olives, where His feet shall stand in that day when He returns in glory, His disciples asked Him, saying,

"**Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?**" (Mat 24:3).

The "**coming**" that the disciples had in mind was the manifestation of Christ as King of kings and Lord of lords. They did not have in mind the translation of the church; for, as we have already seen, that was a "**mystery**" revealed later through the Apostle Paul.

These disciples were Jews well versed in the Old Testament, the pages of which are filled with the prophecy of "**the day of the Lord**" and the coming of the King to take the reins of government.

That is the "**coming**" which the disciples had in mind.

The Olivet discourse, therefore, is largely a description of "**the seventieth week**" of Daniel, that short period which will run its course between the rapture, or translation, of the church and the manifestation of Christ as King.

The disciples, to whom these words were spoken, represent the faithful remnant in Israel at the time of the end of this age. They occupied the same relationship to Christ as will the Jewish remnant in that coming day. Because the church was at that time still in the future, they were not members of the church when the Lord gave them this great prophecy, but they were individual Jewish believers. It was not until the Day of Pentecost that they became members of the church, which is the body of Christ.

Therefore, in the Olivet discourse they aptly represent the faithful Jewish remnant during the tribulation period, that company who will occupy the same relationship to the Lord as did the disciples before Pentecost.

In answer to their question, the Lord cast His all-seeing eye down the age, and gave them a detailed description of its closing hours. His words, as recorded in Mat 24:6-14, are descriptive of the first three and one-half years of "**the seventieth week**" of Daniel, and are called by the Lord "**the beginning of sorrows**."

The last three and one-half years, described from verse fifteen to the end of the chapter, form the period of the tribulation, the greatest of all sorrows, called in Jeremiah "the time of Jacob's trouble."

*1. "**The Beginning of Sorrows**."*

Let us look first at the words descriptive of the first three and one-half years. The Lord emphasizes seven conditions which will prevail in that day

(1) False Christs;
(2) "**wars and rumours of wars**";
(3) famine;
(4) pestilence;
(5) many hated and killed as martyrs;
(6) earthquakes;
(7) the preaching of "**the gospel of the kingdom**."

These seven conditions harmonize minutely with the seven seals of Revelation, which are also descriptive of the first three and one-half years of Daniel's prophecy. When the first seal is broken, a white horse appears. The rider is the Antichrist who will go forth "**conquering, and to conquer**" (Rev 6:2). The breaking of the second seal brings into view a red horse, symbolic of war.

"**And power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword**" (Rev 6:4).

The breaking of the third seal brings into view the black horse of famine. (See Rev 6:5-6). The breaking of the fourth seal reveals the pale horse of pestilence and death. "**And his name that sat on him was Death**" (Rev 6:8). With the breaking of the fifth seal there is a martyred company; with the sixth, a great earthquake; and with the seventh, a silence in heaven, during which the 144,000 Jews - 12,000 from each tribe - are called out to preach "**the gospel of the kingdom**."

Of course, all of the conditions, with the exception of the last, have been characteristic of the age ever since the Lord went away. There have been false Christs and false prophets. There have been wars, famines, pestilences, earthquakes, martyrs. But these things are only shadows of the same disorders which will be greatly intensified during "**the seventieth week**" of Daniel.

As we have seen, the preaching of "**the gospel of the kingdom**" will be the revival of the message preached by John the Baptist and the Lord Jesus and His disciples at the beginning of His public ministry. We have already pointed out the difference between "**the gospel of the kingdom**" and "**the gospel of the grace of God**." "**The gospel of the grace of God**" is the message being preached today; and through it the church, which is the bride of Christ, is being formed. "**The gospel of the kingdom**," however, has to do with the earthly kingdom of Jesus, "**the Son of David**" and Heir to David's throne. It will be preached again after the translation of the church and at the beginning of "**the seventieth week**" of Daniel.

This preaching is to be done by the 144,000 sealed ones of the seventh chapter of Revelation, 12,000 Jews from each tribe of Israel. The veil of blindness will be lifted from their eyes, and they will begin their preaching immediately after the church has been translated. "**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**" will be their message as they herald the coming King, and set His claims over against the claims of the Antichrist. A great multitude will hear and receive this truth. They will be the nations whom the Lord compares to "**sheep**" in Mat 25:31-46. And they will enter the earthly kingdom when it is established by the returning King.

*2. "**The Time of Jacob's Trouble**." The prophecy of the second half of Daniel's "seventieth week" begins with Mat 24:15 :*

"**When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:) then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains** . . . **For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be**" (Mat 24:15-22).

From the ninth chapter of Daniel we learn that in the midst of "**the seventieth week**" the Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel, and the "**abomination of desolation**" will be set up. An "**abomination**" to a godly Israelite was an idol of some sort; and the setting up of the "**abomination of desolation**" refers to the erection of an image of the Antichrist, who will require that divine honors be paid him.

A mark on the forehead and on the right hand will be a token of allegiance to this "beast," without which no man shall be able to buy or sell. In other words, the ultimatum will be, "Worship me, or starve." This will be the signal for the beginning of "**the great tribulation**."

And in Mat 24:16-26 of this chapter the Lord Jesus has given instruction to the faithful Israelite of that day, who refuses to worship a false Christ, telling him how to escape from the terrible persecution that will follow his refusal to worship the Antichrist:

"**Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains: let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days! But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: for then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened**."

Doubtless the place to which this faithful remnant in Israel will flee is the land of Moab, on the east of Jordan, where there are cities that have been preserved for thousands of years. Why is it that other cities have passed away, while the cities of Petra remain? They stand just as they did thousands of years ago, marvelously preserved, almost inaccessible; and yet during these thousands of years no one has lived in them. We have reason to believe that the persecuted Jewish remnant will take refuge in these cities; for Dan 11:41 tells us that Moab is one of the countries that will escape out of the hands of the Antichrist.

Following the description of the persecution of those coming days, the Lord again warns against false Christs, because the delusions in that time of trouble will be powerful. The satanic cults of today, such as Christian Science, Mormonism, Theosophy, Spiritism, and Russellism, are only a shadow of what will be prevalent in that day. Many of the delusions of that hour will distort the truth of the Lord's return, even as many do today; for in connection with this warning, Christ makes clear the manner of His appearance, saying,

"**For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be**" (Mat 24:27). What a marvelous sight that will present!

The whole universe, radiant with His glory, will see the King coming with power and great glory!

3. The Parable of the Fig Tree.

The reference to the fig tree and the putting forth of its leaves, in connection with these events, is very significant.

The fig tree is a type of the Jewish nation, and the putting forth of its leaves is understood when connected with the cursing of the fig tree that had taken place previously in our Lord's ministry, even as we have already stated. The fig tree covered with leaves but destitute of fruit was a picture of the state of Israel at the time the Lord came to present Himself as Israel's King. The leaves of profession were there, but there was no fruit of holiness in reality. The cursing and the withering of the fig tree foreshadowed what was to follow Calvary - the scattering of Israel through the nations.

This dispersion has already lasted nearly two thousand years, and Israel is still the barren fig tree. But the putting forth of her leaves once more speaks of the resurrection of the national idea of the return of the Jews to Palestine. Surely the Zionist Movement of our own generation is a shadow of the fig tree's beginning to bud! How solemn are these days! And how serious people should be, in the light of this and other events that seem to indicate that "the seventieth week" of Daniel may soon begin to run its course!

4. The Characteristics of the End of This Age.

The reference to the days of Noah is also significant (Mat 24:36-42). And what were the characteristics of Noah's day? It was a time of great apostasy. It was a time of violence. The thoughts of men were "**only evil continually**." And so shall the closing hours of this age be - eating, drinking, thoughts for everything but God. The storm will break suddenly, just as it did in Noah's day, sweeping away the ungodly.

"**Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left. Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left**" (Mat 24:40-41).

These verses do not refer to the rapture of the church, but to the tribulation period.

The two that are to be "**taken**" means that they will be taken away in judgment; whereas the two that are "**left**" shall remain upon earth to enter into the millennial reign of Christ. The reference to the flood in this connection makes this interpretation clear; for concerning the "**ungodly**" in Noah's day, our Lord says, "**The flood came, and took them all away**" (Mat 24:39).

5. The Exhortation to Watchfulness.

The verses with which the chapter closes are an exhortation to watchfulness and godly living:

"**Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come** . . . **Therefore be ye also ready; for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh** . . . **If that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming, and shall begin to smite his fellow-servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken; the lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of, and shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth**" (Mat 24:42-51).

6. The Parable of the Virgins
Mat 25:1-13.

Chapter twenty-five, recorded only by Matthew, falls logically into three divisions:

- The parable of the virgins,
- The parable of the talents,
- The judgment of the living nations at the return of Christ.

While chapter twenty-four of the Olivet discourse has to do with "**the seventieth week**" of Daniel, the opening verses of the parable of the virgins make clear that it is descriptive of the sphere of profession during the Lord's absence in this age. The language of the opening lines is the same as that of the thirteenth chapter,

"**Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto** . . ."

The parable emphasizes again the warning that, during the absence of the King, there will be a great body of mere professors in Christendom who will be doomed to a sad disappointment when the Lord comes because they will not have been born again by faith in His atoning work accomplished on the cross.

The foolish virgins are like the wise in their profession, but not in their possession.

The difference is the oil which the wise have and the foolish lack. Oil in the Word of God is a type of the Holy Spirit. The foolish virgins, lacking oil in their vessels, represent that great mass of nominal (*in name only*) Christians who are strict observers of forms and ceremonies, but who have never been born again. The Lord's answer to their cry, "**I know you not**," should be a warning to all those who have only a dead profession.

The foolish virgins do not represent immature believers, as some hold, thus teaching a divided rapture; for what the Lord says to the unwise virgins could never be said to any child of God, however immature he might be. These had "**no oil**." And since oil symbolizes the Holy Spirit, there is only one conclusion to draw.

"**If any man hath not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his**" (Rom 8:9).

7. The Parable of the Talents
Mat 25:14-30

The parable of the talents emphasizes the same thing. The man with the one talent, who charges the Lord with being harsh and unjust, and whose portion is outer darkness, represents the unconverted man who is occupied with service, but who does not know the Lord Himself. No one but an unconverted man could address the Lord as this man does, and only the unconverted will experience the destiny of this man.

8. The Judgment of the Living Nations at the Return of the King
Mat 25:31-46

The judgment of the living nations at the return of Christ in glory will close "**the seventieth week**" of Daniel. Christ will come in power, and sit upon the throne of His glory. Before Him shall be gathered all nations. This is not a description of individuals to be judged. Christ is called "**the King**" in this passage; and His "**kingdom**" is in view - particularly appropriate to this Gospel record.

Three classes are mentioned here:

- The nations compared to "**sheep**";
- Those likened unto "**goats**";
- Those people whom the Lord calls "**my brethren**."

The "**sheep**" nations are those who will heed the preaching of "**the gospel of the kingdom**" by the faithful remnant in Israel; the "**goat**" nations are those who will line up with the Antichrist; and the "**brethren**" are the Jewish remnant who will preach the kingdom message, Christ's "**brethren** . . . **according to the flesh**."

They will go forth as did the disciples of old, carrying no purse, no gold, no scrip of any kind (See Mat 10:9-10).

The giving of food and drink to these will be the outward expression on the part of the nations who will heed their message, even as it was when "**the gospel of the kingdom**" was preached at Christ's first coming. The "**sheep**" nations will inherit "**the kingdom**." This is not heaven, but the earthly kingdom which Christ will establish, and over which He will reign. The portion of the "**goat**" nations will be everlasting punishment.

"**And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal**" (Mat 25:46).

The words of the text clearly indicate that this passage does not refer to individual salvation or condemnation, but to "**nations**" which will be living on the earth when "**the King**" returns to establish His "**kingdom**."

Moreover it but completes the Lord's description of the events which will transpire as this age comes to a close. Any other interpretation takes the passage entirely out of its context; and the Holy Spirit put it here for a purpose!

~ end of chapter 12 ~

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE SUFFERING, DEATH, AND BURIAL OF THE KING

Mat 26:1-75; Mat 27:1-66

In the beginning of these studies we called attention to the fact that all four of the evangelists tell in much detail the story of the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ.

We would remind ourselves again of this all-important truth; for the cross and the resurrection of our Lord are central and fundamental to all the Gospel message. And now as we read the story according to Matthew, we want to compare it with the record of the other three evangelists.

No two tell it in exactly the same way, for each writer had a different purpose in view; yet there are no contradictions. The Holy Spirit guided all four of the human authors; and their four narratives, when taken together, complete the most sacred history in all the Word of God - how Christ, "**who knew no sin**," was "**made sin for us**," "**that we might be made the righteousness of God in him**" (2Co 5:21).

While the four evangelists do not always tell the same details; yet all four do tell us that our Lord was crucified on the Jewish Passover. That fact surely must have borne weight with the Hebrews; for they knew the meaning of the shedding of the blood of the paschal lamb. Christ Jesus was the "**Lamb of God** . . . **without blemish and without spot**," sacrificed for the sins of the world.

As the blood applied to the lintel and door posts in Egypt meant the safety of the firstborn from death, even so the blood of Christ applied to the sinner's heart by the Holy Spirit means safety from all condemnation and guilt of sin.

While all four of the evangelists quote Old Testament prophecies which were fulfilled in the suffering and death of Christ, Matthew quotes more and refers to more than do the other three.

This is in keeping with the main purpose of the book, to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel's promised Messiah and King, foretold in their own Old Testament Scriptures. Our souls will be blessed if we take a good reference Bible, read the twenty-sixth and twenty-seventh chapters of Matthew, and look up each Old Testament quotation concerning our Lord's suffering and death. This will reveal to us how faithfully the Holy Spirit has set forth Christ's right to His Messianic claim; for only the all-wise God could have written these minute details concerning His death, many centuries before He was born in the world.

For our lesson today, we have outlined some of the most prominent of these fulfilled prophecies:

Old Testament Prophecy	Quotation in Matthew
1. Sold for thirty pieces of silver: "**So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver**," Zec 11:12. Mark and Luke simply say that the Lord was betrayed for "money"; John does not mention the money. *2. Betrayed by His "own familiar friend"*: "**Yea, mine own familiar friend in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me**," Psa 41:9. Joh 13:18 is an even clearer quotation of this prophecy. *3. "This is my blood of the new covenant"*: "**I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah**," Jer 31:31:4. *The Shepherd smitten; the sheep scattered*: "**Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered**," Zec 13:7. Mar 14:27 also quotes this prophecy. *5. Alone in His sorrow*: "**I looked for some to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none**," Psa 69:20:6. *"Brought as a lamb to the slaughter"*: "**He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth** . . . ," Isa 53:7:7. *The risen Lord exalted and coming again in glory*: "**The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool**," Psa 110:1. "**The Lord shall be king over all the earth**," Zec 14:9. Mar 14:62 and Luk 22:69 also quote this prophecy. *8. Shamefully Treated*: "**I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting**," Isa 50:6. "**They shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod upon the cheek**," Mic 5:1. The other evangelists also record these indignities heaped upon the Lord. *9. The thirty pieces of silver cast to the potter*: "**And I took the thirty**	"**And they covenanted with him (Judas) for thirty pieces of silver**," Mat 26:15. "**He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me**," Mat 26:23. "**This is my blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins**," Mat 26:28. "**All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad**," Mat 26:31. "**And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?**" Mat 26:40-46. "**Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled**," Mat 26:56. "**Jesus held his peace**," Mat 26:63; Mat 27:12. "**Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven**," Mat 26:64. "**Then they did spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands**," Mat 26:67; Mat 27:30. "**And when he** (Pilate) **had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified**," Mat 27:26. "**Then Judas** . . . **brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders** . . . **and they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in**," Mat 27:3-10. "**Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers**," Mat 27:27. "**And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe** . . . **a crown of thorns** . . . **and a reed in his right hand** . . . **and mocked him**," Mat 27:28-30; cf. the other evangelists. "**They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink**," Mat 27:34; Mat 27:48. "**And they crucified him**," Mat 27:35 and the other

pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord," Zec 11:12-13; cf. Jer 18:1-4; Jer 19:1-3. Only Matthew records this incident. Compare Act 1:16-20:10. *Imprisoned*: "**He was taken from prison and from judgment**," Isa 53:8. This "hall," called in Mark the "Praetorium," was "the court which is the judgment hall." The other evangelists record this fact. 11. Further indignities: "**Thou hast known my reproach, and my shame, and my dishonour: mine adversaries are all before thee**," Psa 69:19:12. *Vinegar . . . mingled with gall."* "**They gave me also gall for my meat; and in my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink**," Psa 69:21. The other three evangelists tell of this also. *13. Crucified*: Psa 22:1-21 is a graphic prophecy of the crucifixion of Christ. We quote just one statement here: "**They pierced my hands and my feet**," verse 16. *14. The casting of lots for His garments*: "**They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture**," Psa 22:18:15. *A spectacle to godless men*: "**They gaped upon me with their mouths . . . they look and stare upon me**," Psa 22:13; Psa 17:16. *Crucified between two thieves*: "**He was numbered with the transgressors**," Isa 53:12:17. *The taunting mob*: "**All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him**," Psa 22:6-8; Psa 22:15; Psa 17:18. *The forsaken cry*: "**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**" Psa 22:1. Our Lord's forsaken cry on the cross gives us just a glimpse of His real agony, in that for the first time in all eternity He had to be forsaken by His holy Father when He Himself, the holy Son of God, "became sin for us." *19. "Buried with the rich"*: "**He made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth**," Isa 53:9. The other evangelists tell us that Joseph buried the Lord, but only Matthew tells us that he was "rich," quoting Isa 53:9.

Gospels. This prophecy from the Psalm is wonderful, in that it was written by David centuries before the Romans instituted crucifixion. The Jews put people to death by stoning, as in the case of Stephen. "**They . . . parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots**," Mat 27:35; Mar 15:24; Luk 23:34; Joh 19:23-24. "**And sitting down they watched him there**," Mat 27:36. "**Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left**," Mat 27:38; Mar 15:27-28; Luk 23:33; Joh 19:18. "**And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, and saying . . . If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross**," Mat 27:39-44; Mar 15:29-32; Luk 23:35-37. "**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**" Mat 27:46; Mar 15:34. "**When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph . . . and begged the body of Jesus . . . and laid it in his own new tomb**," Mat 27:57-60.

As we look back over the minute prophecies concerning Christ's first coming into the world, literally fulfilled in His birth, life, suffering, death, and burial; as we shall yet consider further the prophecies fulfilled in His resurrection, His ascension into heaven, His exaltation at the right hand of the Father; as we think of all the many hundreds of prophecies yet to be fulfilled in His second coming in power and great glory - as we think of the miracle of all this, we can only thank Him for such assurance of His deity and power and wisdom and love.

Such things could be written only of God Himself, written centuries before they came to pass, that we might know that "**Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God**."

And surely any honest Hebrew, having read Matthew's record with an open mind and heart, could only acknowledge Jesus, the Lord, as King of the Jews.

We have only touched the fringes of the crucifixion story. We would not forget the significance of the inscription above the cross, "**THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS**" (Mat 27:37), mentioned also by the other three evangelists;

- The supernatural darkness at noon-day, recorded by the first three Gospel writers,
- God's silent testimony to the deity of Christ;
- The awful crime of humanity in nailing His body to the accursed tree;
- The rent veil, spoken of by Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and symbolic of "**the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth**" (Rom 10:4);
- The Roman centurion's testimony of faith in the Christ whom he saw crucified, also mentioned by Matthew, Mark, and Luke.

The Jews especially should have known the significance of the rent veil; for it was a supernatural act of God which rent the veil of the temple "**in twain from the top to the bottom**" (Mat 27:51).

Every Hebrew knew that, from the days of Moses, the veil had closed the way into the Holy of Holies. Only the high priest could enter there, where God dwelt in the Shekinah Glory, above the mercy seat which hid from view the broken commandments. And even the high priest could thus enter the presence of God only once a year, on the Day of Atonement, not without blood. When Christ died, He forever opened the way into heaven itself, of which the Holy of Holies was a type.

By His own shed blood, Christ changed God's judgment throne into a mercy seat, a throne of grace, for the repentant sinner. That is why He bids us go directly to Him in prayer, with boldness, without fear.

He is our Great High Priest. His sacrifice on Calvary atoned for our guilt. And He ever lives at the right hand of the Father to make intercession for us. That is the meaning of the rent veil!

And then, there are several other important facts, recorded by Matthew only, in connection with the suffering and death and burial of Christ; we can mention them here just briefly:

1. The Creator of Angels.

It was when Peter cut off the ear of the high priest's servant that the Lord told him to put up his sword, adding the significant words about His power to call to His side "**twelve legions of angels**" (Mat 26:53-54).

Now the Jews had a reverent attitude toward the holy angels, through whom God had often spoken to their fathers. But here was the Creator of angels declaring His power to call 72,000 angels to His side; for one legion in the Roman army was composed of 6,000 soldiers. We are told in Heb 12:22 that there is in heaven "**an innumerable company of angels**"; and in Rev 5:11 that they number "**ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands**."

All of this "**innumerable company**" of God's servants were at His command; but if the Lord had called upon them to save Him from the cross, "**how then**" should "**the scriptures**" have been fulfilled? (Mat 26:54). We should have no Saviour! It was His love for sinners that sent Him to the cross!

*2. "**Two False Witnesses**"*
Mat 26:60.

Mark, Luke and John tell of false accusations made by false witnesses against the Lord; but only Matthew mentions the fact that "**at the last came two false witnesses**" (Mat 26:60). This was understood by every Jew to meet the requirement of the Law of Moses, demanding "**two or three witnesses**" to establish a fact in court. Thus we have in this brief reference one of the many Jewish characteristics of the book.

*3. "**His Blood Be on Us**"*
Mat 27:25.

Only Matthew records the startling statement of the Jewish people, who said to Pilate,

"**His blood be on us, and on our children**."

Little did the Jews of that day realize the tragedy involved in those awful words! The blood of their rejected Messiah and King has literally been upon their children for almost two thousand years. They have suffered as no other nation has suffered - persecuted, robbed, pillaged, tormented, massacred - all because they crucified their Lord and King.

They asked for "**His blood**"; and only the grace of God has preserved them through their great afflictions. Only by the grace of God will their once-rejected Messiah and King bring them unto Himself when He returns in glory

It is especially significant that Matthew should record their own words, which laid the responsibility for their wicked deed at their own door.

*4. The Earthquake and the Resurrection of "**Many Saints**" at the Death of Christ*
Mat 27:51-54.

Only Matthew tells of two more supernatural events at the time of our Lord's death - the rending of the rocks, and the resurrection of "**many**" Old Testament "**saints**."

It seems as though he were adding proof upon proof, to convince his Jewish people that Jesus was, indeed, very God. Now a "**saint**" is a believer in the Lord Jesus. Just who or how many of these Old Testament "**saints**" arose, and "**went into the holy city**" of Jerusalem, "**and appeared unto many**," we do not know. But certainly they were one more proof of the supernatural work accomplished by the Lord on the cross.

5. The Roman Guard at the Lord's Tomb
Mat 27:62-65; Mat 28:11-15.

Only Matthew tells the story of the Roman soldiers stationed at the Lord's tomb to keep His disciples from stealing His body away, as the Pharisees feared they would do. This is important. By their very act, they made it humanly impossible for the disciples to steal the Lord's body; and, therefore, were defeated at their own game, as it were.

True enough, when Christ did arise, they bribed the soldiers with "**large money**" to tell the world that they went to sleep at their posts; and that, while they slept, the disciples stole the Lord's body. But those Jews knew, and the Roman soldiers knew, and every intelligent person living in that day knew that no Roman soldier would dare go to sleep at his post of duty. To do so would have meant forfeiting life itself; so stern was the Roman law! And that is why the Jews assured the bribed soldiers, saying,

"**If this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you**" (Mat 28:14).

It was all a hoax, framed by satanic men who knew not God and were used by Satan himself to deceive many in Israel. And Matthew, inspired by the Holy Spirit, tells the whole story to add to the weighty evidence of the bodily resurrection of Christ.

The Seven Sayings of Christ from the Cross.

In any study of the cross of our Lord it is difficult to hurry over this very heart of the Gospel. But we are seeking, in these lessons, not to study the text too analytically, but to get a bird's-eye-view of the four Gospels, to see why there are four and only four.

In our consideration of Mark, Luke and John, we shall find many blessed truths concerning Christ's suffering, death, and burial, not mentioned in Matthew; but for our purpose just here let us close this section of our study with an outline view of our Lord's seven sayings from Calvary's Cross.

Matthew and Mark record only the forsaken cry. Luke tells of three sayings mentioned by none of the others; and John tells of three not given by any of the other evangelists. The Holy Spirit had a purpose in everything He recorded and in everything He omitted, whether we grasp all the truth He had in mind or not.

We list them here in what seems to be their chronological order, together with the references:

1. "**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do**," Luk 23:34.
2. "**Today shalt thou be with me in paradise**," Luk 23:43.
3. "**Woman, behold thy son!** . . . **Behold thy mother!**" Joh 19:26-27.
4. "**My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**" Mat 27:46; Mar 15:34.
5. "**I thirst**," Joh 19:28.
6. "**It is finished**," Joh 19:30.
7. "**Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit**," Luk 23:46.

It is beautiful to know that, even in His death, our Lord's first thoughts were for others; for His first three utterances from the cross were for those He came to redeem.

It seems fitting that Luke, who emphasized the sinless humanity of our Lord, should be the evangelist to tell us of His prayer for His enemies and His promise of salvation to the repentant thief. What an example in forgiveness! Both the thieves had railed on Him; then one asked for salvation; and the forgiving Lord answered his petition. Christ's prayer for those who crucified Him must have had a large part in converting the Roman centurion, who bore witness to the fact that Jesus was, indeed, the Son of God.

It seems fitting also that John, the beloved disciple, should be the one to record his Lord's having given His mother into his keeping. Indeed, so far as we know, John was the only one of the twelve who went all the way to the cross. Early in His trial "**the disciples forsook him, and fled**"; while Peter followed "**afar off**," then denied his Lord.

Matthew, we have seen, wrote of the forsaken cry, knowing without doubt that the believing Jews would find in it the fulfillment of their Old Testament prophecy of Psa 22:1. Both Matthew and Mark, in quoting this heart-searching cry of the Lord, must have realized that it gave us possibly the clearest insight into the real agony of the cross to be found in all the Word of God. That the sinless God-Man should become our Sin-Bearer - that is the meaning of Calvary. And it breaks the hardened sinner's heart. In our human frailty and sin, we cannot enter fully into the depths of its meaning; but we can thank Him for such fathomless love!

The words, "**I thirst**," remind us of the excruciating pain of crucifixion, also foretold in Psa 22:15, in the prophecy, "**My tongue cleaveth to my jaws**."

It seems especially in keeping with the purpose of his Gospel record that John should be the one chosen by the Holy Spirit to give us our Lord's triumphant words, "**It is finished**." Over and over again John had been quoting the Lord's often repeated statement that He came to do the Father's will, the work which the Father had given Him to do.

And now that work of redeeming lost sinners was accomplished. That is why He triumphantly declared, "**It is finished**." Nothing could be added to His redeeming work, fully accomplished when He died to atone for the sins of the world.

And it seems appropriate that Luke, presenting the Lord Jesus particularly as the Son of Man, should record His prayer of trust in His Heavenly Father, committing His Spirit into the Father's hands. It was as a Man that He prayed; and as a Man He died, knowing that His Father would raise Him bodily from the dead, following die three days and three nights when His Spirit would be in paradise.

It was a prayer of trust; and it was more - it was the deliberate laying down of His life, even as He said in Joh 10:17-18. No man could take His life from Him; but when His hour came to die vicariously, He voluntarily yielded up His Spirit to the Father, His body going into the grave to await His resurrection on the third day.

~ end of chapter 13 ~

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE RESURRECTION OF THE KING
Mat 28:1-20

If the cross were the end of the story, then we should have no Saviour; Israel would have no Messiah and King. But following the cross is the empty tomb - upon which fact our Christian faith stands or falls.

Each of the Gospel writers devotes an entire chapter to the bodily resurrection of our Lord from the dead; John gives two chapters to this and His post-resurrection ministry.

Let us see now what Matthew tells us about the resurrection of the King of Israel.

1. The Resurrection of the King - A Fulfillment of Prophecy.

The disciples should have known that Christ would rise from the dead on the third day; for, as we have seen in our study, He told them repeatedly to expect just that. Moreover, their own Old Testament foretold in no uncertain terms His bodily resurrection from the dead, especially in Psa 16:8-11, where the Holy Spirit said plainly,

". . . **my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell** [Sheol]**; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption**."

But the disciples were slow to believe "**all that the prophets had spoken**." They were even slow to believe what the Lord Himself had said unto them before He went to the cross.

2. Proofs of the Resurrection of the King as Recorded by Matthew.

There are "**many infallible proofs**" of our Lord's resurrection; but let us read the closing chapter of Matthew to see only those given there. They alone are overwhelming and convincing:

(1) There was the Roman guard, watching over the tomb sealed with the Roman seal.

In our last lesson we saw that, humanly speaking, no one could break that seal; it was a matter of life and death for the tomb to be guarded and the seal kept unbroken. But the Roman soldiers and the unbelieving Pharisees failed to take God into account.

(2) There was the testimony of the angel from heaven.
(3) There was the earthquake, a supernatural phenomenon.
(4) There was the silent witness of the empty tomb.
(5) There was the appearance of the risen Lord to the women, who knew Him and worshipped Him.
(6) There was the testimony of the women to the disciples.
(7) And there was the appearance of the risen Lord to the eleven, as He gave them His great commission, on a mountain in Galilee.

Add to these the other facts recorded by Mark, Luke and John in their Gospels and in Acts; add to these the evidence given in the epistles and in Revelation; and what have you? One of the most authentic, irrefutable facts of history.

- Our risen Lord's appearances over a period of forty days;
- The fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and of His own words;
- His appearance to "**above five hundred**" believers at one time;
- His real body of "**flesh and bones**";
- His power to transform human life.

These are just some of the additional "**infallible proofs**" that Christ is risen indeed!

3. The Great Commission of the King.

All the Gospel writers tell us how the Lord sent the eleven disciples out to preach the Gospel, witnessing to His redemptive work; but it is in keeping with the purpose of each one that this message is stated as it is.

For example, Matthew portrays the Lord on a "**mountain**," symbol of His earthly kingdom, giving kingly directions for the carrying out of His purpose and will. He speaks of "**all power in heaven and in earth**," which, as their King, He had the right to exercise on their behalf and through them. Thus Matthew's description is prophetic, not only of this age, but of the age to come, when Israel's King will reign in glory - "**in earth**," as well as "**in heaven**."

The absence of the ascension story in Matthew is significant; for Israel's King belongs to the earth; the covenant which He made with Israel has to do with the land of Palestine.

Thus Matthew closes his Gospel record with the King upon a mountain, issuing commands to His disciples, promising His power and presence and blessing even as they go out to obey His will.

Mark closes his record with the faithful Servant of the Lord, His work on Calvary accomplished, seated on the right hand of God, still "**working with**" the disciples, "**confirming the word with signs following**" (Mar 16:19-20).

Luke closes with Christ's promise of the Holy Spirit and the ascension of the Lord into heaven, even "**while he lifted up his hands, and blessed them**" (Luk 24:49-51). Luke also gives one of the most beautiful pictures of the ascension in Act 1:9-11, promising also the return of Christ in power and glory.

John does not record the ascension into heaven, but speaks of Christ's second coming; and then suggests in the closing verse the human impossibility to record all the wonders of the eternal Son of God, saying:

"**And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written**" (Joh 21:25).

Thus we find, in the facts recorded by the four evangelists at the close of their Gospels, a climactic order that is impressive: Matthew tells the resurrection story, as do the others. Mark portrays the ascended Lord, "**working with**" His disciples. Luke promises the coming of the Holy Spirit. And John speaks of Christ's return to earth. Of course, all the evangelists tell all of these things and very much more! And throughout the endless ages we shall be finding out new and precious truths concerning our crucified, risen, exalted, and coming Lord!

Meanwhile, as we come to the close of our very brief study of Matthew, we hear Israel's King and our Saviour bidding us go to "**all nations**," in the name of the Triune God, winning the lost to Him who came to die for them.

We hear His reassuring promise to be with us "**alway, even unto the end of the age**." In His power and by His grace we would obey His command, telling sinners of the Saviour, concerning whom David wrote some three thousand years ago, saying, as God spoke through the shepherd-king:

"**I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion** . . . **Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way**" (Psa 2:6; Psa 2:12).

Israel's King is the eternal God and the only Saviour of all mankind. One day He will be recognized by all the world as King of kings and Lord of lords. But now, in His long-suffering and by His grace, He is calling out "**a people for his name**." With all His blood-bought bride, we would pray in the words of the closing petition of the Bible, "**Even so, come, Lord Jesus!**" (Rev 22:20).

~ end of chapter 14 ~

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

CHRIST - THE SERVANT OF THE LORD
As Portrayed in
The Gospel According to Mark

In our introductory lesson we sought to outline the central purpose of each of the four Gospel records, stating that Mark's portrait of the Lord Jesus presents Him as the faithful Servant of the Lord.

We need to remember that each of the evangelists, guided by the Holy Spirit, repeatedly and emphatically proves that our Lord was always eternal God, that He is Israel's Messiah and King, that He is the faithful Servant of the Lord, the sinless Son of Man, "**God manifest in the flesh**." Therefore, in presenting, in these studies, the special emphasis of each Gospel record, we do not want to exclude the other all-important and related aspects of our Lord's Person and work, set forth plainly in all the narratives.

We do want to show why the Holy Spirit has recorded these four accounts, and what the central purpose of each Gospel story is. And without question, Mark's record emphasizes that phase of Christ's Person and work foretold by the Prophet Zechariah, when he wrote, saying,

"**Behold, I will bring forth my Servant the Branch**" (Zec 3:8).

Two other quotations just here will suffice to show that the Christ of the New Testament is the God of the Old Testament; that, from all eternity, He planned to take the lowly place of a Servant, in order to redeem fallen humanity:

"**Behold my Servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles** . . . **to open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house**" (Isa 42:1-7).

"**Behold, my Servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high. As many were astonied at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men: so shall he sprinkle many nations; the kings shall shut their mouths at him: for that which had not been told them shall they see; and that which they had not heard shall they consider**" (Isa 52:13-15).

From the many New Testament passages which speak to us of the fulfillment of these prophecies, we select that one in Php 2:5-8, which tells us why the eternal God became the faithful Servant of the Lord when He was born in Bethlehem nearly two thousand years ago:

"**Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**" (Php 2:5-8).

The eternal Son of God did not need to grasp after equality with the Father and with the Holy Spirit; He was always One with the Father and One with the Spirit. "**He emptied himself**," not of His deity, when He became the Servant of the Lord; He "**emptied himself**" of His glory, in order to die for sinners.

As the obedient Servant of the Lord, He died; and more than that, He died the shameful death of the cross, becoming a curse for us.

We stress these truths just here because rationalistic, scoffing teachers have perverted the true meaning of this wonderful passage, trying to make men believe that the text says that our Lord emptied Himself of His deity when He "**was made flesh**." That is Satan's falsehood; the text plainly states Christ's eternal deity in His being One with the Father and with the Spirit from all eternity; and the passage makes it very clear that, in becoming an obedient Servant, He did not lay aside His deity; He laid aside only His glory, in order to die for sinners.

Then, as if to leave no room for doubt regarding the matter, the Holy Spirit continues with one of the most remarkable of all passages, setting forth the eternal Lordship of Christ, saying in Php 2:9-11 that He is exalted to the place of all authority and all power and all worship in all of God's universe!

THE SERVANT OF THE LORD - "OBEDIENT UNTO DEATH"

The key verse of The Gospel According to Mark summarizes the message of these Old Testament prophecies and Php 2:5-8, which we have just quoted. It is found in Mar 10:45, and reads as follows,

"**For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life** (or 'soul') **a ransom for many**."

It was in His suffering and death that our Lord's "**visage was marred more than any man**," as Isa 52:14 states. We are told that the literal Hebrew is "*terrible*": "So marred from the form of man was His aspect that His appearance was not that of a son of man"; "i.e., not human." (See footnote, *Scofield Reference Bible*).

From the very beginning of the book of Mark, even unto the closing words, we see the Son of Man ministering, serving ceaselessly, working for those He came to redeem. And all the while, even as He worked mighty miracles, healing the sick and speaking peace to troubled hearts, He was steadfastly facing the cross, "**to give his life a ransom for many**."

The purpose of the Holy Spirit in this second Gospel record is illustrated in Christ's much discussed statement of Mar 13:32 concerning the time of His return to earth,

"**But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father**."

Those who would rob our Lord of His eternal deity quote this text in a vain attempt to prove their point; for omniscience is an attribute of deity. However, "**the Christ of God**" is not disclaiming omniscience here; this fact is plain as we bear in mind the purpose of Mark; for in Joh 15:15 the Lord Jesus said also,

". . . **the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth**."

Thus the very passage which scoffers pervert to prove their satanic falsehood becomes a clear mark of divine inspiration!

For it is significant that Mark, which presents Christ as the perfect Servant, records this statement about the hour of the Lord's return. In His ministry as a Servant, He made a voluntary surrender of certain knowledge, in order that He might walk the path of faith, thus becoming an object lesson to all believers. While He ever remained the eternal Son of God, co-equal and co-eternal with the Father and with the Holy Spirit; yet as a Servant He chose a limitation of His knowledge, bounded by the Father's will.

Our Lord's obedience as the faithful Servant of the Lord is emphasized by the frequent use of the Greek word, variously translated: "**straightway**," "**forthwith**," "**immediately**," "**anon**," "**as soon as**."

This same Greek word appears more than forty times in the sixteen chapters that comprise the book of Mark. Without hesitancy or delay, the Lord Jesus went about doing His Father's will; so that those who witnessed His mighty works were "beyond measure astonished, saying, He hath done all things well" (Mar 7:37).

This second Gospel record is the story of deeds more than of words.

Let us observe the forcefulness of this often repeated key word, suggestive of a continuing ministry:

"**Jesus** . . . **was baptized of John in Jordan. And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened** . . ." (Mar 1:9-10).

"**And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan**" (Mar 1:12-13).

"**And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him**" (Mar 1:17-18).

"**And straightway he called them** . . ." (Mar 1:20).

". . . **and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught**" (Mar 1:21).

"**And immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee**" (Mar 1:28).

"**And forthwith**, (i.e., 'straightway') **when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew** . . ." (Mar 1:29).

"**But Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever, and anon** (i.e., 'straightway') **they tell him of her**" (Mar 1:30).

"**And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her** . . ." (Mar 1:31).

"**And as soon as** (i.e., 'straightway') **he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him**" (Mar 1:42).

"**And he straitly charged him, and forthwith** (i.e., 'straightway') **sent him away**" (Mar 1:43).

"**And straightway many were gathered together, insomuch that there was no room to receive them** . . ." (Mar 2:2).

"**And immediately when Jesus perceived in his spirit that they so reasoned within themselves, he said unto them** . . ." (Mar 2:8).

"**And immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went forth before them all** . . . **" (**Mar 2:12).

"**And the Pharisees went forth, and straightway took counsel with the Herodians against him, how they might destroy him**" (Mar 3:6).

"**And some fell on stony ground** . . . **and immediately it sprang up, because it had no depth of earth**" (Mar 4:5).

". . . **but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts**" (Mar 4:15).

". . . **when they have heard the word, immediately receive it with gladness**" (Mar 4:16).

". . . **when affliction or persecution ariseth for the word's sake, immediately they are offended**" (Mar 4:17).

"**But when the fruit is brought forth, immediately he putteth in the sickle, because the harvest is come**" (Mar 4:29).

"**And when he was come out of the ship, immediately there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit**" (Mar 5:2).

"**And forthwith Jesus gave them leave**" (Mar 5:13).

"**And straightway the fountain of her blood was dried up**" (Mar 5:29).

"**And Jesus immediately knowing in himself that virtue had gone out of him** . . ." (Mar 5:30).

"**And straightway the damsel arose, and walked**..." (Mar 5:42).

"**And she came in straightway with haste unto the king** . . ." (Mar 6:25).

"**And immediately the king sent an executioner** . . ." (Mar 6:27).

"**And straightway he constrained his disciples to get into the ship** . . ." (Mar 6:45).

"**And immediately he talked with them** . . ." (Mar 6:50).

"**And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him**" (Mar 6:54).

"**And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed** . . . **" (**Mar 7:35).

"**And straightway he entered into a ship with his disciples** . . ." (Mar 8:10).

"**And straightway all the people, when they beheld him, were greatly amazed** . . ." (Mar 9:15).

". . . **and when he saw him, straightway the spirit tare him** . . ." (Mar 9:20).

"**And straightway the father of the child cried out, and said with tears, Lord, I believe; help thou mine unbelief**" (Mar 9:24).

"**And immediately he received his sight, and followed Jesus in the way**" (Mar 10:52).

". . . **Go your way into the village over against you: and as soon as** (i.e., 'straightway') **ye be entered into it, ye shall find a colt tied** . . ." (Mar 11:2).

". . . **and straightway he will send him hither**" (Mar 11:3).

"**And immediately, while he yet spake, cometh Judas** . . ." (Mar 14:43).

"**And as soon as he was come, he goeth straightway to him, and saith, Master, master; and kissed him**" (Mar 14:45).

"**And straightway in the morning the chief priests held a consultation** . . . **and bound Jesus, and carried him away, and delivered him to Pilate**" (Mar 15:1).

The never ceasing activity of the Servant of God, as He went about ministering to others, is also suggested by the frequent use of the word "**and**." This little conjunction seems to link one deed of mercy and power with another and yet another, without pause or even much time for rest. It occurs eighty-four times in the first chapter alone.

It is the first word of twelve of the sixteen chapters; and when we remember that the Greek language was not divided into chapters and verses; when we count the numerous times this little word occurs throughout the narrative, we begin to realize the fact that our Lord's work was one complete and perfect whole; that He never grew **"weary in well doing"**; that the very urgency of His mission kept Him continually serving, serving, serving those whose souls He came to ransom. More miracles, therefore, are recorded in this than in any of the other three Gospel records. It is the account of the service of "**The mighty God**" during His life on earth.

SIGNIFICANT OMISSIONS FROM MARK

In our first lesson of this series on the four Gospels we tried to show that the very facts in our Lord's life omitted from the different records evidence the inspiration by the Holy Spirit.

We mentioned, in this connection, Mark's omission of the genealogy and birth of Christ. This is so important to the understanding of the purpose of the book that we emphasize it again just here.

No one asks for the story of the lineage and birth of a servant; and the faithful Servant of the Lord came "**to minister**" - not to establish His right to David's throne; not to trace His genealogy, through Mary, back to Adam, in this particular book which portrays His Servant-work. Accordingly, we do not read in Mark of David's royal line, through which Israel's Messiah was born into the world; or of the wise men, seeking the King of the Jews; or of the shepherds and the angels. We do not read of the angelic messengers to Mary and Joseph and the shepherds of Judea. Instead, the opening verse touches the very heart of the purpose of Mark, as he was guided by the Spirit of God,

"**The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God** . . . "

The "**Gospel**" is the "*good news*" of salvation by faith in the Son of God, who, according to Mark, "**came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many**." And this second Gospel record opens with the beginning of the public ministry of the faithful Servant of the Lord - witnessed to by John the Baptist; baptized by the Holy Spirit, anointed for service; tempted by Satan - all this crowded into thirteen brief verses.

Then "**immediately**" He was preaching, calling His disciples, casting out demons, healing the sick, "**rising up a great while before day**" to pray - all of this recorded in the very first chapter! It is a breath-taking record; so swiftly, so continuously did the Lord enter upon His ministry as the faithful Servant of God.

- In Matthew we read much about "**the gospel of the kingdom**"; in Mark that expression does not occur, but rather, it is "**the gospel of Jesus Christ**."
- Matthew writes much of "**the kingdom of heaven**"; Mark speaks of "**the kingdom of God**" (Mar 1:14-15), the more inclusive term.
- Matthew devotes three chapters to "*The Sermon on the Mount*"; Mark omits most of that message, except for scattered portions of its teaching. He is not proclaiming the laws of the kingdom; he is witnessing to the faithful ministry of the Servant of the Lord.
- Matthew records many parables of the Lord; Mark, only a few, all of which have to do with service.
- Matthew tells of the King's command over angels; Mark writes of how "**the angels ministered unto him**" following His temptation by Satan (Mar 1:13).
- In Matthew we read the King's pronouncement of "**woe**" upon rebellious Israel; in Mark the Servant of God does not arraign Israel in judgment.
- In Matthew the Lord quotes Old Testament Scripture in answer to every temptation of Satan; in Mark we read only this, for the most part, found nowhere else in the Gospels:

"**And immediately the Spirit driveth him into the wilderness. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him**" (Mar 1:12-13).

His holy soul shrank from the meeting with the devil, even as His own Holy Spirit literally drove Him to meet the archenemy of man, in order that He might faithfully serve those He came to redeem!

He served us in defeating Satan by His sinless life, by His vicarious death, by His triumphant resurrection! He serves us now all the more sympathetically, in that He Himself "**was tempted**" - sin apart! "He knows; He loves; He cares!"

We might go on endlessly with striking contrasts between Mark and the other three Gospels; these illustrations should suffice to prove the purpose of the Holy Spirit in causing Mark to omit many details, yet include others, in his record of the life of the Lord.

As we shall see when we study Luke and John, "**the beloved physician**" records very many incidents and teachings from the life of Christ that none of the other evangelists tell; and most of the narrative of the "**beloved disciple**" is found nowhere else in the Scriptures. Why? Because their purpose is different from that of Matthew and that of Mark; because the Holy Spirit painted a particular portrait of Christ in each of the four Gospels.

Attention has been called to the fact that, as Matthew portrays Israel's King, so Mark pictures Him in His ministering on behalf of His ancient people, Israel; and is, therefore, like Matthew more than Luke and John in its appeal to those who were familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures. Possibly that is why these first two Gospels are placed nearest the Old Testament. In other words, Luke's vision is world-wide; his message, particularly for Gentiles; whereas John, writing a generation after the first three evangelists, gave a special message to the church, which is the bride of Christ, composed of Jew and Gentile.

Mark is the most brief of all the Gospels; and yet, as we have seen, it records more of our Lord's miracles. The outline of its message is simple and comprehensive. While we shall not attempt an analytical outline; yet as we read this second Gospel, we cannot help observing that it falls logically into four parts:

THE PORTRAIT OF THE FAITHFUL SERVANT OF THE LORD

I. "**The Beginning of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God**," Mar 1:1-13.

- His messenger;
- His baptism;
- His temptation.

II. The Public Ministry of the Servant of the Lord, 1:14 - 13:37.

- His preaching;
- His calling disciples;
- His working miracles;
- His praying;
- His teaching.

III. The Vicarious Suffering of the Servant of God, Mar 14:1-72; Mar 15:1-47.

IV. The Risen and Ascended Lord - Ministering Still as Our Great High Priest, Mar 16:1-20.

THE FAITHFUL SERVANT WAS THE GOD-MAN AND KING OF ISRAEL

Several times in this series of studies we have emphasized the fact that each of the evangelists portrays the eternal deity, the sinless humanity, the faithful service, and the coming glory of Israel's King and the Saviour and Lord of all the redeemed. In our consideration of the special purpose of each Gospel writer, we must not forget this all-important fact.

Accordingly, we take time just here to prove that the very titles ascribed to the Lord Jesus in Mark establish the truth that He is the only true God, Creator, Lord, and King, as well as the faithful Servant of the Lord.

As we have read the book of Mark, we have made a list of some of the names by which Christ is called; we give here only a few of the many references.

For example, in the first chapter alone, He is spoken of as "**Jesus Christ, the Son of God**," "**The Lord**," "**One mightier**" than John the Baptist, "**My beloved Son**," "**The Holy One of God**." In these names, which can be applied only to deity, we see something of our Lord's glory, which even His humiliation as a Servant could not conceal!

Then He is called:

- "**Son of man**" (Mar 2:10; Mar 2:28);
- "**Lord**" (Mar 2:28; Mar 7:28; Mar 9:24; Mar 12:36-37; Mar 16:19-20);
- "**The Son of God**" (Mar 3:12; Mar 15:39);
- "**Jesus**" and "**Master**" very many times, both names of lowly and meek humanity;
- "**Jesus, Son of the most high God**" (Mar 5:7);
- "**The Christ**" (Mar 8:29);
- "**Son of David**" (Mar 10:47-48; Mar 12:35);
- "**Jesus of Nazareth**" several times;
- "**Christ the King of Israel**" (Mar 15:32);
- "**King of the Jews**" (Mar 15:2; Mar 15:9; Mar 15:12; Mar 15:18);
- "**Christ, the Son of the Blessed**" (Mar 14:61).

These names portray the many-sided picture of our wonderful Lord!

Not only so, but His deity is asserted:

- By His foreknowledge of His death and resurrection, as told by Mark;
- By His power to work miracles;
- By His forgiveness of sin;
- By His transfiguration, resurrection, and ascension into heaven.

His humanity is established:

- By His weariness;
- By His prayers;
- By His sympathy,
- As a Man, for the suffering and sorrowing.
- His right to David's throne is established by His teachings.

And yet the central fact remains that Mark is emphasizing the Servant-work of our Lord.

And now let us read this second Gospel again.

Let us see yet more clearly the beautiful portrait it gives us of the faithful Servant of God, who "**came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many**."

There is a deeply spiritual message for every Christian worker in our Lord's every act and word.

CHRIST - THE HUMBLE SERVANT

The eternal God "**humbled himself**" to serve! He served with such humility as is not common to man, not even to those who minister in the name of the Lord! Like the Jews of old, we all too often seek the chief seats in public worship, the applause of men. Not so the meek and lowly Jesus. And Mark portrays His humility, in keeping with his purpose. Here are a few incidents, selected from many of like nature, to illustrate the lowliness of the Servant of the Lord:

When "**Simon and they that were with him followed after him**," and "**found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee. And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns** . . ." (Mar 1:36-38). He was not seeking publicity!

After He had opened the blind man's eyes outside the city of Bethsaida - a miracle recorded only by Mark - He sent the man away, saying, "**Neither go into the town, nor tell it to any in the town**" (Mar 8:26).

As we think of the humility of the eternal God who "**was made flesh**," in order to redeem us, we are reminded once more of the admonition of His Holy Spirit when He said to us,

"**Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus**" (Php 2:5).

Then follow the marvelous words which we read at the beginning of this lesson today, stating that the eternal God "**humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**." God forbid that we, poor, miserable sinners, should become puffed up, especially in the service of the lowly Man of Galilee!

CHRIST - THE COMPASSIONATE SERVANT

Mark portrays Christ as the tender-hearted, compassionate Servant of God.

His kindness is emphasized by the touch of His hand upon the sick and suffering, even upon the untouchable leper!

When He healed Peter's wife's mother, He "**took her by the hand, and lifted her up**" (Mar 1:31).

When a leper begged for cleansing, "**Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean**" (Mar 1:41).

He took the twelve-year-old daughter of Jairus "**by the hand**," and raised her from the dead (Mar 5:41).

When a deaf man was brought unto Him for healing, a man who also had "**an impediment in his speech**," they begged Him "**to put his hand upon him**." The Lord "**put his fingers into his ears** . . . **and touched his tongue**" - a beautiful act of grace, recorded only by Mark. But as we look further at this story, we note that "**looking up to heaven**," the Lord "**sighed**."

What compassion! What sympathy! Little wonder the people said of Him, "**He hath done all things well**" (Mar 7:31-37)!

Again, the people brought the blind man of Bethsaida to Him, "**and besought him to touch him**" (Mar 8:22). "**And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town**"; and twice thereafter we read that "**he put his hands upon him**" (Mar 8:22-26).

When the father brought his demon-possessed boy to the Lord, following His transfiguration, He "**took him by the hand, and lifted him up**" (Mar 9:27).

Twice we read in Mark that the Lord took little children up "**in his arms**" and "**put his hands upon them, and blessed them**" (Mar 9:36; Mar 10:16).

Twice we read in Mark that He was "**moved with compassion**" for the multitudes who were hungry; and He miraculously fed them (Mar 6:34; Mar 8:2).

Although Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell the story of the rich young ruler, yet Mark is the only one to tell us that "**beholding him**," the Lord "**loved him**" (Mar 10:21).

We who bear the name of Christ need to learn well this lesson in loving-kindness; yet often we are slow to learn.

Mr. Moody once said,

"A man may be a successful physician and not love his patients; a successful lawyer and not love his clients; a successful merchant and not love his customers; but he cannot be a successful worker for the Lord and not love humanity."

The ultimate purpose of all Christian service is to reach the hearts of men with the Gospel, and love is the only means by which that Gospel of grace may enter the human heart.

The story is told of the love of Robert Murray McCheyne for lost souls, and how he led a boy to Christ. Following his death, even after many years, an American minister of the Gospel preached in the pulpit of the Scotch man of God, who was mourned by all his countrymen, even though he had died at the early age of twenty-nine.

Upon inquiring for any parishioners who had known the beloved man of God, the American minister was introduced to an old man, of whom he asked, "Did you know Robert Murray McCheyne?"

"Yes," the man replied.

"Can you remember any of his sermons, any of the Bible texts from which he preached?"

"No," was the response; but then the old man said: "One thing I shall never forget. I was just a boy on the road-side when Robert Murray McCheyne passed one day. He came over to where I stood and said, 'Jamie, I am going to your home to see your wee sister. She is dying, and I want to point her to Christ. And, Jamie, I want you to know Christ, too. I cannot allow you to go on outside of the kingdom.' He put his hand on my head, and I have never forgotten the trembling of his fingers in my hair."

My friend, men and women, boys and girls are still waiting at the road-side for the human touch of compassion that will point them to the divine Lord and Saviour!

CHRIST - THE RESOLUTE SERVANT - IN SPITE OF OPPOSITION

As in all the Gospel narratives, Mark shows the opposition the Lord Jesus faced from His enemies, as well as the resolute determination with which He faced His cross.

- He tells us of how the rulers of the Jews accused Him of speaking "**blasphemies**" (Mar 2:6-7);
- He tells of eating with "**publicans and sinners**" (Mar 2:16) - as if that were wrong!
- He tells of how His enemies "**watched him, whether he would heal on the sabbath day; that they might accuse him**" (Mar 3:2);
- He tells of how they "**took counsel** . . . **how they might destroy him**" (Mar 3:6);
- He tells of how they accused Him of casting out demons by the power of Beelzebub, "**the prince of devils**" (Mar 3:22);
- He tells of how they "**began to pray him to depart out of their coasts**" (Mar 5:17);
- He tells of how "**they laughed him to scorn**" (Mar 5:40);
- He tells of how they "**found fault**" with Him (Mar 7:1-2).

These are only a few of the recorded instances when the enemies of the Lord Jesus persecuted, ridiculed, criticized, and opposed His ministry in every conceivable manner. Yet He went on "**doing good**," serving, preaching, teaching; fulfilling the work which His Father in heaven had sent Him to do; finally laying down His life as the only atonement for sin, "**obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**."

As we think of the patient endurance and the steadfast purpose with which the sinless Son of God suffered for us, we are ashamed of our impatience and wavering in the face of little, irritating hindrances to our Christian walk. May the Holy Spirit give us the wisdom to wrestle with the powers of darkness, not in our own strength, but by His unfailing power.

CHRIST - THE SELF-SACRIFICING SERVANT

Repeatedly, in the book of Mark, we get glimpses of the untiring, self-sacrificing ministry of the faithful Servant of the Lord. Throughout whole days, even at the close of the long, busy hours,

"**they brought unto him all that were diseased, and them that were possessed with demons**," and He healed them.

On one occasion, "**all the city was gathered together at the door**" where the Son of God ministered to the needy and the suffering. He had to rise up "**a great while before day**" and go out into "**a solitary place**" to pray. (See Mar 1:32-35). And even there they sought Him out; and on He went, from city to city, always faithful in His ceaseless ministry to sin-sick and physically sick souls.

At least twice we read that the multitudes pressed upon Him and His disciples so that "**they could not so much as eat bread**" (Mar 3:20; Mar 6:31). Little wonder He said unto them,

"**Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat**."

On another occasion, after a full day, "**when the even was come**," they sent the multitude away and "**took him even they led and lifted Him into the vessel. And He was so as he was in the ship**" - apparently so weary and worn that tired that even the storm at sea did not awaken Him from sleep! (See Mar 4:35-38). Yet this self-sacrificing Servant of the Lord was Himself very God! That is the wonder of it! That He should love fallen, wretched humanity enough to suffer so! And then there was the agony of Calvary which we cannot fathom. We only know that it cost the Son of God dearly to become our Saviour!

Shall we falter and grow discouraged when the going is hard, since He suffered for us far more than we could ever suffer? When He offers His strength for the battle? It costs something to be a consecrated Christian; but nothing compared with what it cost our Lord to be faithful "**unto death, even the death of the cross**."

CHRIST - THE PRAYERFUL SERVANT

Luke has more to say about the Lord's prayer-life than any of the other evangelists; for he is presenting Him as the Son of Man.

As the "**Man Christ Jesus**," He prayed to His Father in heaven. But Mark is the only one to tell us of the time when, after a crowded day of service,

". . . **in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed**" (Mar 1:35).

Thus, at the very beginning of His public ministry, the Servant of God prayed. Surely we, His servants, know that we should follow His example! Surely we know the importance of prayer in our ministry for Him! And yet how slow we are to pray! The reason there is so little burden for souls, so little conviction of sin, so little response to appeals made for workers in the Lord's harvest field - the reason for our indifference to the things of Christ is our lack of prayer, persistent, persevering, intercessory prayer!

We sing about prayer; we preach about prayer; we talk-about prayer; but do we pray? Like the disciples of old, let us follow Christ's example, saying, "**Lord, teach us to pray**"!

OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST - MINISTERING STILL!

In our last lesson we tried to show that the cross and the empty tomb of our Lord are the very heart of all four of the Gospels.

Today we have tried to show that the faithful Servant of the Lord came into the world, in order to die, "**even the death of the cross**."

But Mark is the only one of the four evangelists to tell us that our risen, ascended Lord is seated on the right hand of the Father, ministering still for His servants who have gone forth in His name, "**working with them**" by His mighty power, "**confirming the word**" of God as they proclaim it by His grace.

It is true that Matthew, Luke and John also record the Lord's promise of His presence and power - "**alway**," even unto "**the end of the age**." But only Mark puts into words the clear picture of our risen, ascended Great High Priest, seated at the throne of God, ministering still! It is the truth which Paul later enlarged upon, especially in his epistles to the Colossians and to the Hebrews. Let us read the closing verses of Mark, for the marvelous picture:

"And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature . . . So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God. And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen." (Mar 16:15-20).

It is in keeping with the central purpose of Mark that he should close his Gospel story with the picture of the faithful Servant of God still ministering on behalf of those He came to redeem! His work on the cross was forever finished; therefore, He "**sat down**" in the place of all power and all authority, there to "**work with**" His blood-bought messengers of His cross.

I wonder if I am talking this morning to discouraged pastors and Sunday School teachers?

I wonder if anxious mothers and fathers are "listening in" to this Bible lesson?

I wonder if Christians who have prayed long years for the salvation of loved ones are reading these closing verses of Mark's Gospel with me just now?

Dear Christian friend, let us not be discouraged; the Lord Jesus is "**working with**" us! He who came "**not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many**," is still laboring together with us for the "**furtherance of the gospel**."

It is His work; and He is God - all-powerful, all-wise, all-loving! Let us hear the Father's voice, saying, "**Behold my Servant!**"

And beholding Him, let us work with Him, trusting Him for the "**increase**," seeking to pattern our ministry according to His perfect service, praising Him that He loved us enough to call us into a work with Him who is "**The mighty God**." And His promises will never fail:

"**Be instant in season, out of season**," not "**weary in well doing**" (2Ti 4:2; Gal 6:9).

"**They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. He that goeth forth and weepcth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him**" (Psa 126:5-6).

~ end of chapter 15 ~

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

CHRIST - THE SON OF MAN
As Portrayed in
The Gospel According to Luke
"BEHOLD, THE MAN!"

"**Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD: Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both**" (Zec 6:12-13).

Already in this series of studies we have quoted the prophecy from Zechariah which we have just read; we quoted it together with three related prophecies, all of which taken together present an Old Testament foreview of the Lord Jesus Christ as He is portrayed in the four Gospel records.

We have seen that, even as Matthew emphasizes the truth that our Lord came to be the King of Israel, and as Mark dwells particularly upon His faithful ministry as the Servant of the Lord, so Luke places the emphasis upon His perfect, sinless humanity as the Son of Man, and John pictures Him as the eternal Son of God.

We must never forget that all four of the evangelists tell us all this and very much more about our Lord's Person and work. We have repeatedly called attention to this vital truth, and shall do so again. Yet the fact remains that each Gospel writer, inspired by the Holy Spirit of God, portrayed the Lord Jesus in a particular phase of His Person and work.

Accordingly, the message of this third Gospel might be briefly stated in the words of the prophet which we have just read, "**Behold, the man whose name is the Branch: and he shall grow up out of his place** . . . **a priest upon his throne**."

It is the "**Man Christ Jesus**" of whom Luke is writing. It is of His sinless Person, His fragrant life, His human sympathy, His loving-kindness, that "**the beloved physician**" is speaking. It was of the God-Man that Zechariah wrote hundreds of years earlier when he said, by the power of the Holy Spirit, that this coming "**Man whose name is the Branch**" should be "**a priest upon his throne**."

Now in our studies of The Epistle to the Hebrews we have seen with crystal clearness that our Lord could not become our Priest until He offered His body upon the altar of Calvary's Cross; and He could not die for our sins until He became a Man - the God-Man.

In view of this, the prophecy of Zechariah appears wonderful, indeed; only God Himself could have written it more than five hundred years before Christ was born in Bethlehem!

The Lord Jesus began His Great High Priestly work for sinners when He died on the accursed tree. He ever lives to continue that ministry as our never-dying, unchangeable Intercessor before the "**throne of grace**" at the "**right hand of the Majesty on high**." And concerning this ministry the prophet wrote when he portrayed Him as "**a priest upon his throne**."

This is the heart of the message of Luke - that the virgin-born Son of Man was without sin, "**holy, guileless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens**" (Heb 7:26); that He was full of compassion for lost sinners because His humanity was real; that in His humanity, as in His deity, He is "**altogether lovely**."

It has often been pointed out that there were four representative peoples living on the earth when the four Gospels were written: Jews; Romans; Greeks; and the Christian Church, composed of individuals from all three classes. Without question Matthew wrote especially for Israel; for more than any of the other three evangelists he quoted the Hebrew Old Testament to prove that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel's long promised Messiah and King. His key word is "**fulfilled**"; his key phrase, "**It is written**."

In our last lesson we saw the faithful Servant of the Lord, portrayed by Mark, going "**straightway**" about His public ministry for those whose souls He came to ransom. We saw that this portrait of the Lord must have made a special appeal to the Roman type of mind, desiring as it does activity and power.

Now the Greeks were people of culture; they admired the beautiful, sought after wisdom. In their search for the human ideal - the ideal man - they found Luke's description of the sinless Son of Man without flaw. This third record of the life of Christ has been called the Gentile Gospel because of its universal appeal, its wide scope of human interest. Of this we shall have more to say later in this lesson.

When we come to the study of John, we shall find out why Christians love it - perhaps best of all; for it exalts the Lord Jesus in all His glory and deity; it lets the born-again child of God into the very Holy of Holies, as it were, to hear the matchless words of his Great High Priest and the eternal Son of God. Therefore, key words of John are "**believe**," "**everlasting life**," "**love**," "**light**," and "**sent from heaven**."

Now let us consider for a little while the key phrase of Luke, "**The Son of Man**"; and then look at the key verse,

"**For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost**" (Luk 19:10).

*1. "**The Son of Man**."*

It is fitting that, from among all the hundreds of names and descriptive terms applied to our Lord in the Scriptures, the book of Luke should use the title, "**Son of Man**," at least twenty-four times; for this name links the eternal God with this earth. Someone has said that it is the title by which Christ most frequently referred to Himself, and that no one else ever addressed Him by this name. The key verse of the book uses this title, as we saw a moment ago.

The frequent use of this key phrase is but one of countless illustrations of the verbal inspiration of the Holy Scriptures by the Spirit of God. The wonderful plan of the Book, even to the most minute detail, causes our finite minds to marvel at the infinite wisdom of our all-wise God!

We said that the term "**Son of Man**" links the Lord with this earth. As Adam is the federal head of the human race, the representative of sinful man, needing a Saviour; so the Lord Jesus Christ is the "**second Adam**," our Representative before the Father in heaven, because, by faith, we are identified with Him in His death and resurrection.

"**And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit** . . . **The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven**" (1Co 15:45; 1Co 15:47).

We are told that the name, "**Son of Man**," occurs eighty-eight times in the New Testament, most of which are in the four Gospels. We read this title in the Old Testament for the first time in the eighth Psalm, which is a prophecy of the coming of the Lord Jesus into the world as the God-Man, even as the second chapter of Hebrews plainly states.

A comparison of this Messianic Psalm with Heb 2:5-9 shows that the prophecy written by David there has a double reference - first to Adam's dominion over the earth when he was in his unfallen state; then to our Lord's dominion over that same creation in His coming kingdom, when it shall be purified from the ravages made by sin.

The first Adam lost his full dominion over this world when he fell. Then the "**second Adam**," the "**Lord from heaven**," in His Incarnation, death, and resurrection, redeemed what the first Adam lost, and more!

He redeemed the sinner's soul; and he redeemed the "**creation itself**," which "**also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God**" when Jesus comes in glory to reign. (See Rom 8:21). That is why "**the lion shall lie down with the lamb**"; that is why "**the desert shall blossom as the rose**" when Jesus reigns in glory. He has bought back all that Adam lost through sin, with a plus!

Therefore, the title, "**Son of Man**," first applied to our Lord in the eighth Psalm, and explained in Heb 2:5-9, becomes meaningful, indeed. It is the name which definitely links Him with the earth, i name which speaks to us both of His humiliation and of His coming glory. And it is the key phrase of The Gospel According to Luke.

To illustrate, let us compare the first and last times the expression occurs in Matthew. There we see the title, "**Son of Man**," linked with Christ's humiliation and with His glory: "**And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head**" (Mat 8:20; cf. Luk 9:58).

"**Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven**" (Mat 26:64).

As the suffering Saviour He came in humiliation; but as the earth's rightful King He will reign in glory! And as both He is the "**Son of Man**"!

That the Son of Man is also the eternal Son of God is plainly taught in all Scripture, and tersely stated in Joh 3:13, where our Lord said to Nicodemus,

"**And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven**."

This statement clearly expresses the deity of Jesus, the Son of Man. It reminds us of what Paul wrote to Timothy,

"**And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness : God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory**" (1Ti 3:16).

We cannot explain the Incarnation; we accept it by faith. Indeed, we dare not speculate or attempt to reason about how the eternal God could become "**Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us**." We have the witness of the Holy Spirit in our hearts to assure us that this is true.

Again, we are told that nowhere in the epistles, except in Heb 2:5-9, which quotes and explains the Messianic Psalm, is the title, "**Son of Man**," used. The reason is very plain. The epistles were written to the church; the church is a heavenly body, with a heavenly calling; and, therefore, linked with the Heavenly Bridegroom, not to the "**Son of Man**" in His earthly reign - except as the bride of Christ shall rule with Him in glory over the purified earth. Again, the marks of divine inspiration of the Word of God are wonderful!

The last time the title, "**Son of Man**," occurs in the Bible is in Rev 14:14; and once more it is significantly descriptive of the glorified Lord Jesus, returning to this earth to rid it of sin and wickedness.

It is a vision of the awful day of judgment upon the rebellious nations, when "**Armageddon**" will plunge the world in unspeakable battle:

"**And I looked, and behold a white cloud, and upon the cloud one sat like unto the Son of man, having on his head a golden crown, and in his hand a sharp sickle**."

As the "**Man Christ Jesus**," our Lord will use the "**sharp sickle**" to rid the earth of sin. Then He will reign in power and great glory. Thus the "**Son of Man**," who upon earth had nowhere to lay His head, will be the "**same Jesus**" who, as the "**Son of Man**," will return to have dominion over the works of His hands!

"**We see not yet all things put under him. But we see Jesus, who was made** (for a little time) **lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour** . . ." (Heb 2:8-9).

The title, "**Son of Man**," therefore belongs primarily to the four Gospels for the significant reason that they record the story of the Incarnation of our Lord. It belongs particularly to Luke, because therein the Holy Spirit tells us that Christ's humanity was real. He tells us that, in His earthly life, the eternal God identified Himself with us, His "**brethren**," that He might "**lead many sons unto glory**." This beautiful name of humiliation and power holds, in brief, the Gospel message!

Once more we would remind ourselves, however, that Luke also uses many other names for our Lord - names of deity and authority. Very often he speaks of Christ as "**The Lord**," or "**The Lord Jesus**," or "**The Lord's Christ**"; and no one can call Him "**Lord**" save by the Holy Spirit! He calls Him "**The Son of the Highest**," "**Son of God**," "**The Holy One of God**," "**The Son of David**," and "**Jesus**." These are just some of the names by which "**the beloved physician**" referred to the King of Israel, Servant of the Lord, Son of Man, and Son of God. He portrayed the Lord Jesus in all His power and majesty, but especially in His compassion and sympathy and love as the sinless "**Son of Man**."

2. The Seeking Saviour.

The key verse, which we quoted from Luk 19:10 a few moments ago, summarizes the message of the book:

"**For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost**."

We shall consider this further as we continue our study of this Gospel; but just here suffice it to say that only in Luke do we read of the lost sheep, the lost coin, the lost son, the Good Samaritan, the Saviour's weeping over Jerusalem. His reassuring words to the repentant thief on the cross. A little later in this lesson we shall list the passages recorded only by Luke, many of which reveal to us the heart of compassion of the "**Man Christ Jesus**," who, though He was rich, yet for our sakes became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich - throughout the endless ages! (See 2Co 8:9).

As we "**behold the Man Christ Jesus**," portrayed by Luke in all His perfection and beauty, we are reminded of the contrasting sin of those whom He came to redeem.

He is the holy Son of Man; those He came seeking and to save are the sons of men. And His peerless humanity stands in sharp contrast with the selfish, degraded, perverse, unrighteousness of the sinful sons of men. From the first Adam we inherited the old, sinful nature; in Christ, the "**second Adam**," we receive the new nature, being born again by the Holy Spirit of God. And it was to "**seek and to save that which was lost**" that God came down to become the holy Son of Man, that by faith in Him we might be conformed to His image.

That is the message of the book of Luke.

~ end of chapter 16 ~

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

LUKE - THE HUMAN AUTHOR - AND HIS PURPOSE

Some think Luke was a Jew; others, that he was a Gentile. In either case, he was a Christian physician, a man of culture, a careful historian, and a faithful friend. From the opening verses of the book of Luke and the opening verses of the book of Acts, we learn that he was used by the Holy Spirit to be the human author of both these portions of the Word of God; for he addressed both books to his friend, Theophilus.

With true humility, he kept himself in the background in both records. Yet from *The Acts of the Apostles* we can trace his close companionship with Paul by the use of the pronouns, "**we**" and "**us**." He went with the great apostle on some of his missionary journeys, and was with him during his long imprisonments in Caesarea and Rome.

- It was Paul who called him "**the beloved physician**" (Col 4:14).
- It was Paul who wrote of him, saying that he was his "**fellow-laborer**" (Phm 1:24).
- It was the aged Paul who, knowing that his own martyrdom was at hand, wrote the touching words, "**Only Luke is with me**" (2Ti 4:11).

Evidently "**the beloved physician**" stayed with the great apostle even until he was beheaded by the wicked Nero. Little wonder Bible students have believed that Luke's Gospel story reflects the influence of Paul, even as Mark's narrative shows the influence of Peter.

The book of Luke is written in classic Greek, and is the most beautiful in style of all the New Testament books, the most finished in form. It sets forth the most orderly arrangement of the life of Christ on earth, of any of the four Gospels. It is written in the style of the Greek historians. For poetry and song it is unsurpassed. And for historical accuracy we need only compare Luke's stated purpose, in the preface to the narrative, with the many definite dates and historical incidents mentioned in the first three chapters of the Gospel.

Let us read what he wrote to Theophilus about his purpose and plan - to present an orderly, authentic history of the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus:

"**Forasmuch as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, even as they delivered them unto us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word; it seemed good to me also, having had perfect understanding of all things from the very first** (or 'from above')**, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, that thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed**" (Luk 1:1-4).

Then follows a chain of definite dates and facts which only the careful historian would be likely to give; here are some of these, found only in Luke:

". . . **in the days of Herod** . . ." (Luk 1:5).
". . . **in the sixth month** . . ." (Luk 1:26).
". . . **about three months** . . ." (Luk 1:56)

"**And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed** (or 'enrolled')**. (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria)**. (Luk 2:1-2).

"**And when eight days were accomplished** . . ." (Luk 2:21).
"**Anna** . . . **seven years** . . . **a widow of about fourscore and four years**" (Luk 2:36-37).
"**And when he** (Jesus) **was twelve years old** . . ." (Luk 2:42).

"**Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Iturea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests** . . ." (Luk 3:1-2).

"**And Jesus himself began to be about thirty years of age . . .**" (Luk 3:23).

Only the careful historian would pause to give such details of lasting value to a permanent record. And as we follow through the narrative, we see how accurately Luke recorded the facts, faithfully preserving one of the most important narratives in all the Word of God.

Of course, he was guided by the Holy Spirit, as were all the inspired writers; but the fact remains that God chose a scholarly master of classic Greek to pen this portrait of the sinless Son of Man.

In this connection, it is of interest to remember that Luke is the only one to tell us that the risen Lord "**showed Himself alive after his passion** . . . **forty days**" before he ascended into heaven (Act 1:3). He was a historian, true to his task.

AN OUTLINE OF LUKE

While we are not attempting, in these lessons, to make an analytical study of the four Gospels; yet we do believe that a brief outline of the content of each book will help us to understand the purpose of the Holy Spirit in recording each Gospel narrative.

A very broad outline of Luke, therefore, might be as follows:

I. Introduction, Luk 1:1-4.
II. The Birth and Boyhood of Jesus, Luk 1:5-80; Luk 2:1-52.
III. The Preparation for His Public Ministry, Luk 3:1-38; Luk 4:1-13.
IV. The Galilean Ministry of the Son of Man, 4:14-9:50.
V. The Journey of the Son of Man from Galilee to Jerusalem, 9:51 - 19:28.
VI. The Official Presentation of the Son of Man as Israel's King, and His Rejection, 19:29-21:38.
VII. The Suffering and Death of the Saviour of the World, Luk 22:1-71; Luk 23:1-56.
VIII. The Resurrection; the Resurrection Ministry; and the Ascension of the Son of Man, Luk 24:1-53.

From this outline, we note that the major portion of the book is devoted to our Lord's ministry in Galilee and on the way to Jerusalem as He "**set his face steadfastly toward**'' His cross. Here again we see the wide scope of the purpose of Luke, to present the Son of Man as the Saviour of the world, laboring in "**Galilee of the Gentiles**." It is Matthew who emphasized His ministry to the Jews.

PASSAGES RECORDED ONLY BY LUKE

The purpose of the book of Luke is abundantly evidenced by the many incidents and teachings recorded by the Holy Spirit in this third Gospel alone.

Luke has more to say about the birth, infancy, and boyhood of the Christ Child than do the other three evangelists. He alone tells of the seventy disciples sent out by the Son of Man to minister to Gentiles, as well as to Jews.

The many parables of our Lord, recorded by Luke alone, have "a distinctively human and seeking note." Here only do we read of the Good Samaritan, despised by the Jews. Here alone do we find the story of the repentant thief, as well as three of our Lord's sayings from the cross, all in keeping with the plan and purpose of the book.

Let us make a list of the most striking of these facts and teachings recorded by Luke only, taking them in order as they are written on the sacred pages. We shall not attempt a discussion of them, although we shall pause for passing comments on some of them, which particularly illustrate the purpose of the Holy Spirit in writing this account of the earthly life and ministry of the Son of Man, who came "**to seek and to save that which was lost**." And, of course, it goes without saying that these passages are recorded nowhere else in the Scriptures, since they are omitted by the other three evangelists.

Perhaps it will help us to remember the facts which Luke alone tells us of the birth, infancy, and boyhood of Jesus if we bear in mind that all of chapters one and two are recorded by no one else in all the Word of God, even as the first two chapters of Matthew are found there and there alone.

We might list the different incidents as follows:

- The preface to the Gospel, Luk 1:1-4. In this we note that the book is addressed to a Gentile, as the name, "**Theophilus**," indicates.
- The appearance of the Angel Gabriel to Zacharias, prophesying the birth of John the Baptist, Luk 1:1-20, and the following verses, Luk 1:21-25.
- The appearance of the Angel Gabriel to Mary, and the annunciation, Luk 1:26-38.
- Mary's visit with Elizabeth, Luk 1:39-56. This includes Mary's song of praise, known as "*The Magnificat*."
- The birth of John the Baptist and "*The Benedictus*," Zacharias' song and prophecy, Luk 1:57-80.
- The decree of Caesar Augustus, and Joseph's and Mary's journey to Bethlehem, Luk 2:1-5.
- The birth of Jesus; the manger; the shepherds; the angels with their message of "**a Saviour** . . . **to all people**," Gentiles, as well as Jews, Luk 2:6-20.

The circumcision of Jesus,
Luk 2:21-24.

It is significant that, even in His infancy, all the demands of the Law of Moses were fulfilled concerning the Lord; because He came, "**not to destroy, but to fulfill**" it; because He was the absolutely holy Son of Man and could not break His own holy law; and because He came to fulfill it for us who could never keep it for ourselves.

It is also noteworthy that the offering presented by Mary, according to the Law, evidenced the lowly position of Joseph and Mary; it was "**a pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons**." Had they been other than poor, they would have presented a lamb also. (See Lev 12:1-8).

Because He was born into the humble home, the Son of Man knew the experiences of the poor; and knowing them, He can "**succour them that are tempted**" and tried by the privations of poverty.

The adoration of Simeon and Anna, and their testimony to the advent of the Saviour, Luk 2:25-38. Simeon's prophecy is significant; for it foretells salvation for "**all people**," describing the Lord Jesus as,

"**A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel**," Luk 2:32.

The silent years of the Child Jesus in Nazareth, Luk 2:39-40.

The Boy Jesus in the temple at the age of twelve, Luk 2:41-52.

Many have commented upon the beautiful songs of the book of Luke; and in these two opening chapters we have some of the most wonderful. For their beauty of style, for their praise and adoration of the Saviour of "**all people**," they are unsurpassed:

Mary's song of praise; the prophecy and song of Zacharias; the angels' song; Simeon's song and prophecy. (See Luk 1:46-55; Luk 1:68-79; Luk 2:14; Luk 2:29-32). (Then there are the poetic quotations from the Old Testament, found in Luk 3:4-6; Luk 4:10-11; Luk 4:18-19; Luk 7:27; Luk 20:42-44). The genealogy of Mary, as well as the historical facts recorded in Luk 3:1-2, we find only in this third Gospel.

In the opening lesson of this series of studies we compared in some detail the two genealogies of Christ, in Matthew and in Luke. It would be well for us to turn back to those pages, unless we are well established in the teaching they present. Just here we shall only remind ourselves that Matthew, writing to the Jews, traced our Lord's genealogy from Abraham to Joseph, the legal head of the Nazareth home, through whom Christ received the legal right to David's throne; whereas Luke traced Christ's genealogy back to Adam, the federal head of the race, giving us Mary's lineage and Christ's natural right to the throne of David.

Herein, we recall, is a remarkable illustration of the separate purposes of the Holy Spirit in inspiring the two accounts, thus giving the complete portrait of the King of Israel who is also the Son of Man and Saviour of the world.

Christ's reading from Isaiah in the synagogue at Nazareth is found only in Luke. The entire passage is recorded in Luk 4:16-30, and is so remarkable that we pause for a brief comment on the wonder of it. Taking the book of the Prophet Isaiah in His hands, the Lord "**found the place where it was written**," in Isa 61:1-2, foretelling His first and second comings into the world.

And the significant fact is that, having read about His first coming "**to preach the gospel to the poor** . . . **to heal the broken-hearted** . . . **to preach the acceptable year of the Lord**,"

He "**closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down**," saying also, "**This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears**."

He purposely stopped reading, breaking off at the comma, in the middle of a sentence of the prophet; for the following words foretell Christ's second coming into the world to execute judgment "**in the day of vengeance of our God**."

Moreover, it is in keeping with the purpose of Luke that he should be the one used by the Holy Spirit to tell of the desire of the Son of Man to preach the Gospel to the poor, to minister to the broken-hearted, the captives, the blind and bruised.

The verses which immediately follow this incident are also peculiar to Luke, and significantly so; for in them our Lord reminds the Jews of the Nazareth synagogue that in the days of Elijah and Elisha blessing had come upon the widow of Sarepta and Naaman the Syrian - Gentiles - rather than upon unbelieving Israelites.

Luke has in mind the whole world, which Christ came to redeem! Luke is the only one to tell us that the wicked men of that synagogue tried to cast the Lord down from the brow of the hill outside the city of Nazareth, but could not because "**he passing through the midst of them went his way**" (Luk 4:29-30).

- The miraculous draught of fishes is recorded only by Luke, in Luk 5:1-11, although in Joh 21:6-8 we read of a similar occurrence after the Lord had risen from the dead.
- The raising of the son of the widow of Nain from the dead (Luk 7:11-17) is found only in this third Gospel. So also are the following passages:
- The Lord Jesus in the house of Simon, the Pharisee, anointed by the sinful woman whose sins had been pardoned, Luk 7:36-40.
- The parable of the creditor and the two debtors, addressed to Simon, the Pharisee, Luk 7:41-50.
- Christ and the twelve in Galilee, ministered unto by the women, Luk 8:1-3.
- Christ's final departure from Galilee, and His rebuke to James and Joh 9:51-56.

The seventy disciples sent forth "**into every city** . . . **whither he himself would come**," not to the house of Israel only, as the twelve were sent first, recorded by Matthew. This is another striking illustration of the purpose of Luke. The Lord's mild rebuke to the seventy upon their return, when they evidently were boasting that even the demons were subject unto them, led Him to utter a very important statement concerning His eternal deity, for He said unto them, "**I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven**." Only the eternal God could have spoken such words - and Luke alone records them.

The Good Samaritan is peculiar to Luke, and again it fits this particular Gospel.

The Jews despised the Samaritans; but the "**Son of man came to seek and to save that which was lost**" - Gentile, as well as Jew. Indeed, He is Himself the One of whom the Good Samaritan speaks; for He came down where we are to lift us up out of the pit, where Satan had left us robbed and wounded by sin.

Martha serving; Mary worshipping, Luk 9:38-42, we find only in Luke.

Two parables on prayer, Luk 9:5-13, are recorded only by Luke; they are: the parable of the importunate friend, and the parable of fatherhood. Then, too, Luke is the only evangelist to tell us that it was "**as he was praying**" that one of His disciples said unto Him, "**Lord, teach us to pray**."

And following that petition, He gave them what is commonly called "**The Lord's Prayer**."

As the Son of Man, Christ depended upon His Father in heaven for strength and fellowship; therefore, Luke has more to say about His prayer-life - a human experience - than do any of the other Gospel writers.

Christ's denunciation of the lawyers, Luk 11:45-54, is found only in Luke. So are the following:

- The parable of the rich fool, Luk 12:16-21.
- The parable of the steward and his servants, Luk 12:42-48.
- "Christ a divider of men," Luk 12:49-59.
- Jesus' warning concerning repentance, Luk 13:1-5.
- The parable of the barren fig tree, Luk 13:6-9.
- The woman loosed from "**a spirit of infirmity**," Luk 13:10-17.
- Jesus teaching on the way to Jerusalem, Luk 13:22-23.
- His healing the man with dropsy on the Sabbath, Luk 14:1-6.
- The parable of the ambitious guest, Luk 14:7-15.

Two parables regarding the test of discipleship:

- The parable of the tower,
- The parable of the king going to war, Luk 14:28-33.

The three parables concerning the lost, in chapter fifteen:

- The lost sheep,
- The lost coin,
- The lost - or prodigal - son.

Twice in this chapter we are told that "**there is joy in the presence of the angels over one sinner that repenteth**" (Luk 15:10).

- The parable of the unjust steward, Luk 16:1-8.
- The rich man and Lazarus, Luk 16:19-31.
- A parable of service, Luk 17:7-10.
- Ten lepers healed, Luk 17:11-19.

Luke is careful to tell us that the only one who "**returned to give glory to God**" was a despised Samaritan - in this "Gentile Gospel."

- The reference to Lot and Sodom, Luk 17:28-32.
- The parable of the unjust judge, Luk 18:1-8.
- The parable of the Pharisee and the publican, Luk 18:9-14.
- The story about Zacchaeus, ending with the key verse of the book, Luk 19:1-10.
- The parable of the ten pounds, Luk 19:11-27.
- The Lord's weeping over Jerusalem - Luke is the only one to mention His tears in this lament, Luk 19:41-44.

The destruction of Jerusalem foretold in a way different from the kindred passage in Matthew 24.

According to his purpose, in writing to Jews, Matthew prophesied concerning the coming Antichrist and his "**abomination of desolation**"; Luke, according to his purpose, tells how "**Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled**" (Luk 21:24).

The "**times of the Gentiles**" began with Nebuchadnezzar, and will end with the return of Christ in glory as the "**smiting stone**" which Daniel saw. Then "**the times of the Jews**" will once more continue their course, with Christ as their reigning King. Here is another highly significant illustration of how the Holy Spirit guided the pen of each writer, according to His divine purpose, even to the most minute details.

Peter and John were the two sent to prepare the Passover feast; Luke only mentions their names, Luk 22:8.

The strife among the disciples at that feast is recorded only by Luk 22:24-30.

The Lord's warning to Peter, with His assurance that He had prayed for him, Luk 22:31-32. How much Luke tells us about prayer! Our Lord's praying and our own need for prayer!

"**An angel** . . . **from heaven**" strengthened the Lord in Gethsemane, Luk 22:43. Here His humanity is emphasized, in that our Lord was the Son of Man.

"**In an agony he prayed** . . . **and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood**," Luk 22:44. Again, Luke only gives us this glimpse of His suffering - as the sinless Son of Man.

"Sleeping for sorrow" are the words of the Lord, used only by Luke, to describe Peter, James, and John in their weakness, as they slept throughout His agony in the garden, Luk 22:45. It was the sympathetic Saviour who looked upon them in compassion!

"**Betrayest thou the Son of man with a kiss?**" the Lord asked Judas, Luk 22:48. Only Luke tells us this - doubtless an expression of yearning over the hardened traitor.

The healing of Malchus' ear, Luk 22:51, is recorded only by Luke, the physician. (Joh 18:10 tells us the name of this servant of the high priest).

"**The Lord turned, and looked upon Peter**" following that disciple's denial, Luk 22:61. Only Luke tells us of that look which broke Peter's heart.

Jesus before Herod, Luk 23:6-12, is described only by Luke.

The Lord's warning to the "**daughters of Jerusalem**" who lamented Him is mentioned in Luke only, Luk 23:27-31.

"**Calvary**," the Gentile name, is used by Luke alone, Luk 23:33. It is the Latin form for the Aramaic word, "**Golgotha**," meaning "*The skull*." John tells us it "**is called in the Hebrew Golgotha**" (Joh 19:17).

Three of Christ's sayings from the cross are found only in Luke; none of the other four are mentioned by this third Gospel. These three express His compassion and human sympathy, His power to forgive sins, and His trust in His Father - as a Man.

Needless to add, they also set forth a perfect example in forgiveness, in love for the souls of men, and in faith in the Father in heaven. We quote them here:

- "**Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do**," Luk 23:34.
- "**Verily I say unto thee, today shalt thou be with me in paradise**," Luk 23:43.
- "**Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit**," Luk 23:46.

The conversation between the two thieves, as well as the Lord's promise of salvation to the one who repented, Luke only tells. This is but another illustration of the compassion of the Lord Jesus, so beautifully portrayed by "**the beloved physician**."

The testimony of the Roman centurion is in keeping with the purpose of Luke. Matthew and Mark tell us that this soldier, witnessing the crucifixion, said,

"**Truly this man was the Son of God**," Mat 27:54; Mar 15:39.

Luke, however, emphasizing His humanity, expressed it like this,

"**Certainly this was a righteous man**," Luk 23:47.

The reference to the women who "**beheld the sepulchre, and how his body was laid**," their return to prepare the "**spices and ointments**," and their resting on the "**sabbath day according to the commandment**" - all this detail is given us only by Luke, whose record has been called "*The Gospel of womanhood*," with its emphasis upon the ministry of women to our Lord.

The walk to Emmaus with the two disciples, filled as it is with His wonderful teaching and glory, is found only in Luke.

This last chapter of the book has been called by some the most human of our Lord's post-resurrection ministry - His eating before them, His showing the disciples His hands and feet, to prove that His risen body was real; His opening to them the Old Testament Scriptures concerning Himself; His breaking bread in their presence. As another has expressed it,

"He brought them to the written Word and left them there, with no fresh revelation." None other was needed!

The risen Lord's appearance to Simon, Luk 24:34; cf. 1Co 15:5, is found in Luke and I Corinthians only.

"**A spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have**," the risen Lord said to His disciples, as only Luke tells us, Luk 24:39. Here again we see a glimpse of the reality of Christ's resurrection body. He did not say, ". . . **flesh and blood**"; for His blood had been shed on the cross; and He had a new body, a spiritual, resurrection body, yet a very real body. "**The life of the flesh**" of this earthly existence "**is in the blood**" (Lev 17:11). But in His glorified body the disciples saw "**flesh and bones**" - immortal, glorious, and real.

The promise of the Holy Spirit, spoken after He arose, and the command to "**tarry at Jerusalem**" until He should come in power - these words are given only by Luke. However, John has very much to say about the promise of the Holy Spirit in our Lord's farewell discourse, uttered shortly before He went to the cross to those eleven who loved Him.

The closing words of Luke greatly resemble some of the opening words of Acts, which book is but the sequel to the Gospel story as recorded by "**the beloved physician**," and tells us what Jesus continued "to do and to teach" through His own Holy Spirit in the early church.

The Lord's ascension from Bethany on the slope of the Mount of Olives is mentioned only in Luk 24:50 and by the same evangelist in Act 1:12. While Mark tells us of His ascension into heaven, yet he does not mention the place from which Christ left the earth.

In our former lessons we saw that Matthew does not record this event because He is emphasizing the Lord's relationship to this earth, as King over His earthly people, Israel. We saw that Mark pictures the risen Lord still **"working with**" His own in His intercessory ministry at the right hand of God. John gives no account of the ascension, evidently because he is writing particularly about our Lord's eternal deity and omnipresence.

It was the "**Man Christ Jesus**" who was "**carried up into heaven**" (Luk 24:51). Some have seen in the word "**carried**" the thought of the humanity of the Lord Jesus.

The note of joy and praise and worship, with which Luke closes, is peculiar to this third Gospel:

"**And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: and were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen**."

It has been pointed out that Luke's Gospel story is the most complete of the four, in that it opens with the prophecy of the birth of John the Baptist, and closes with our Lord's ascension and His disciples' obedience in returning to Jerusalem, there to wait for the descent of the Holy Spirit.

Here again we see that Luke was writing after the manner of the historian, guided always by the Spirit of God. Accordingly, His narrative is doubtless more in chronological order than are the others, even as he said to Theophilus that it was his purpose to "**write** . . . **in order** . . . **a declaration of those things which are most surely believed**" among those who love the Lord. (See Luk 1:1-4).

These passages recorded by Luke alone are not only abundant proof that the four Gospels are not mere reiterations of the same truths - although all four tell the story of the cross and the empty tomb; but these passages found in Luke only are also a remarkable key to the understanding of the purpose of the Holy Spirit in writing this book of Luke.

They aptly illustrate what we stated in the beginning of this lesson, that this third Gospel emphasizes the sinless humanity, the sympathetic love, and the world-wide scope of the compassion of the Son of Man and Saviour of Gentile, as well as Jew.

This is, indeed, the Gospel message "**to all people**," even as the angel of the Lord said unto the shepherds on the night of the Saviour's birth, and even as Simeon testified to the Jews when he held in his arms "**the Lord's Christ**" in the Person of the Baby Jesus. (See Luk 2:10; Luk 2:31).

Let us consider the contents of this list of passages, recorded by Luke only, long and prayerfully, that we may remember where to find them, and how to use them in telling lost men and women and boys and girls of the compassion and love of the sinless Son of Man.

~ end of chapter 17 ~

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

LUKE - THE GOSPEL OF THE HOME

The book of Luke has been called the Gospel of the home, of childhood, of womanhood, and of the poor and lowly. It is filled with human interest - with songs and tears, with praise and prayer, with sorrows and rejoicings. Here we see depicted the beautiful picture of the birth of John and the Lord Jesus, the three months' visit of their mothers, the prophecy and rejoicing at the birth of the forerunner of the Lord, and at His birth who came "**to seek and to save that which was lost**." Here we see the Nazareth home life, the obedience of the Child Jesus to Joseph and Mary. What a Child He was! Never a cross word, never a disobedient act; never a shirking of duty; never an evil thought! For He was absolutely holy, without the slightest taint of sin; "**yea, altogether lovely**"!

We are told that in every chapter but five there is mention of women, with much space given to the things concerning Elizabeth, Mary, Anna, Mary and Martha, the widow of Nain, the woman with an infirmity eighteen years, the weeping "**daughters of Jerusalem**," the sinful woman who washed the Lord's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, the widow with her two mites, Mary Magdalene, and all that group of women who ministered unto the Lord before and after His death on the cross.

This is, indeed, the Gospel of womanhood.

Again, the many parables of Luke - more than in the other Gospels - have to do with human relationships.

Go back over the list of passages recorded by Luke alone, and find how very many parables there are in that category - the prodigal son, the Good Samaritan, and many others that have to do with the home. Here we see the Lord in the homes of Simon the Pharisee, of Mary and Martha, of Zacchaeus, and of the Emmaus disciple. Would God that every home on earth today would open its doors to the compassionate Saviour of men!

THE REALITY OF THE SINLESS HUMANITY OF THE SON OF MAN

The humanity of our Lord was as real as His deity. As we have often tried to show, our eternal God planned to die for sinners. But God could not die until He became a Man. "**The Man Christ Jesus**," therefore, was "**God manifest in the flesh**," "**Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us**."

Because He was God still, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, He lived a holy, sinless life on earth. Satan was permitted to tempt Him, not to see whether or not He would sin, but in order to prove to men, angels, and demons that He could not sin because He was the holy God. He was also "**tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin**," in order that, as the sympathetic Saviour, He might "**succour them that are tempted**." But the point we would make here is that, although tempted, He did not sin. He always was and ever shall be "**holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens**."

Long before He came into the world, the Old Testament types and shadows foretold His perfections, through the emblems which presented in prophetic picture His sinless humanity.

For example, the Passover lamb had to be without spot and without blemish. The manna which fell in the wilderness, a beautiful picture of Jesus, the Bread of Life was white, suggestive of His purity of life. The meal offering was made of "**fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil**," and frankincense was put upon it. How significant these instructions were!

The fine flour speaks to us of the fact that there was no coarseness, no unevenness, in the perfect humanity of our Lord. In the Bible, leaven is always a type of sin, and the absence of leaven emphasizes the fact that there was no sin in the "**Man Christ Jesus**." Oil is a type of the Holy Spirit. Frankincense is a gum which, when pulverized, yields a sweet-smelling savour. All of these God-given instructions pointed on to the perfections of the promised Son of Man, whose earthly life was "**a sweet-smelling savour**" to His Father in heaven. They tell us in prophetic type what the Father spoke when He said from heaven,

"**This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**."

Other prophecies of the Old Testament had foretold this message, reiterated by evangelists and apostles:

- "**Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips**" (Psa 45:2).
- "**Neither was any deceit in his mouth**" (Isa 53:9).
- ". . . **the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me**" (Joh 14:30).
- "**He** . . . **knew no sin**" (2Co 5:21).
- "**Christ** . . . **did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth**" (1Pe 2:21-22).

Such passages as these could be multiplied manifold - all from Holy Writ. But surely these more than establish the truth of the sinlessness of Jesus, the Son of Man!

Now we need to remember that our Lord's humanity was just as real as it was sinless; to prove this fact Luke wrote this third Gospel. There was a heathen philosophy, held by many in the days of the early Christians, which was similar to many false cults of our own time, teaching that God is impersonal, that matter is unreal, and that the human body is a phantom. Such a view was held by some who claimed to be Christians; hence the warning given in 1Jn 4:3,

"**Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God**."

The denial of the reality of Christ's humanity is what Christian Science teaches today; so also do such cults as Theosophy, New Thought, and other pagan doctrines. Yet they call themselves Christian! The heart of the teaching of such false systems is this: That God is impersonal mind, that Christ is an idea conceived in the mind of men, and that the body of Jesus was just a phantom - or, in the language of Christian Science, "a corporeal concept."

Such satanic doctrine cannot stand, in the light of Gospel truth, especially such as Luke presents, proving irrefutably that our Lord's body was material, actual, real.

The illustrations of this fact are too numerous for us to attempt even a passing reference to them all. We mention just a few:

- The actual birth of a real Child; in a manger, a literal place; the swaddling clothes;
- The Boy Jesus' growth in wisdom and stature, in a physical body;
- His asking and answering questions;
- His genealogy through Mary;
- His walking among men,
- Touching the eyes of the blind,
- Laying His hands upon the leper,
- Eating before men,
- Allowing the cruel nails to be driven through His hands and feet,
- Showing the nail prints to His own after He arose from the dead.

These are the actions of One who was real, in a human body which was yet without sin! They are tokens of the fulfillment of the prophetic words of the Son of Man to His Father in heaven, quoted by Paul in Heb 10:5,

"**A body hast thou prepared me**" (cf. Psa 40:6). There are a few characteristics of the Lord Jesus which we would consider, at least briefly, in this connection, characteristics peculiar to Luke. Let us look at them for a little while:

*1. The Prayer Life of "**The Man Christ Jesus**."*

Now prayer is a human experience; and Luke tells us more about our Lord's prayers than do any of the other evangelists. Thus Christ manifested His dependence, as a Man, upon His heavenly Father. Here are the references to His prayers, recorded only by Luke:

- He was baptized as He was "**praying**," Luk 3:21.
- After He had healed "**a man full of leprosy**," He "**withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed**," Luk 5:16.
- On the night before He chose the twelve, He "**went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God**," Luk 6:12.
- Before Peter's great confession that Jesus was "**The Christ of God**," the Lord had been "**alone praying**," Luk 9:18.
- "**As he prayed**," he was transfigured, Luk 9:29. What a glorious view Peter, James, and John had - the Lord Jesus praying - transfigured!
- "**As he was praying**," one of His disciples said unto Him, "**Lord, teach us to pray**"; and He did teach them, saying, "**Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name** . . ." Luk 11:1-2.
- When He told Simon Peter that Satan had desired him, to sift him as wheat, He added, ". . . **but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not**," Luk 22:32.
- The Lord's "**intercession for the transgressors**" who crucified Him, as we have already seen, is recorded only in Luke,

"**Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do**," Luk 23:34.

- And his prayer of trust in committing His spirit unto the Father, we have also observed, is mentioned only by Luke,

"**Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit**," Luk 23:46.

There are two other references to the prayers of the Son of Man mentioned by Luke, both of which are spoken of by one or all of the evangelists :

The first is the prayer of thanksgiving, also found in Mat 11:25-27, cf. Luk 10:21-22.

Moreover, it is a proclamation of His equality with the Father.

The other reference, mentioned by all the evangelists except John, is that of the Lord's "**strong crying and tears**," in Gethsemane (cf. Heb 5:7). But Luke only mentions two facts which emphasize the humanity of the Lord Jesus:

(1) That "**there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him**"; and
(2) that "**his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground**," Luk 22:43-44.

Not only does Luke emphasize Jesus' humanity in His prayer-life, but he also has much to say about how He taught His disciples to pray; as another has expressed it:

(1) with importunity, Luk 11:5-10;
(2) with perseverance, Luk 18:1-7;
(3) with penitence, Luk 18:9-14.

If He who was sinless needed to pray, how much more do we who are "sinners saved by His grace" need to "pray without ceasing"!

2. The Dependence of the Son of Man upon the Holy Spirit.

While we must ever remember that the Lord Jesus was One with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, yet as a Man - the God-Man - He was subject unto the Father and Empowered by His own Holy Spirit. Luke speaks often of this Divine-human relationship, for he is emphasizing the reality of our Lord's humanity.

At the beginning of His public ministry He was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Luk 3:22). Later, "**being full of the Holy Ghost**," He was "**led by the Spirit into the wilderness**" to be tempted by the devil (Luk 4:1). And following His temptation, "**Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee**" (Luk 4:14). In the synagogue at Nazareth He read the passage from Isaiah to which we have already referred. On that occasion the Son of Man applied the significant words of the prophet to Himself, saying, "**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me** . . ." (Luk 4:18).

In the parable of fatherhood, illustrating His teaching concerning prayer, the Lord said to His disciples,

"**If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?**" (Luk 11:13).

In the similar passage recorded in Mat 7:11, we read "**good gifts**" instead of the "**Holy Spirit**."

Knowing that His disciples could do nothing for "**the furtherance of the Gospel**" without His indwelling Holy Spirit, the risen Lord told them to "**tarry** . . . **in the city of Jerusalem**" until they should be "**endued with power from on high**" (Luk 24:49).

If the sinless Son of Man spent His days on earth in conscious fellowship with His own Holy Spirit, depending upon Him for strength and power, shall we who are sinners saved by His grace do less?

We dare not forget the words of the prophet,

"**Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts**" (Zec 4:6).

*3. The "**Altogether Lovely**" Son of Man.*

We might continue, in endless discussion, the facts concerning the perfections of "**the Man Christ Jesus**." But surely our study of the book of Luke, brief as it has been, has given us overwhelming evidence of the beauty and holiness of Him who was "**made flesh, and dwelt among us**."

We have seen:

- His faith and obedience,
- His utter trust in the will of His Father in heaven;
- His courage and strength as He set His face "**steadfastly** . . . **to go to Jerusalem**";
- His prayer-life,
- His compassion,
- His love.

Little wonder He was called the "**Friend of sinners**"! The poor, the lowly, the down-trodden, and broken-hearted knew the tender sympathy and undying love of the "**Son of Man**," who came "**to seek and to save that which was lost**."

Luke's emphasis upon the compassion of the Lord is seen in the many details of human sympathy omitted by the other evangelists.

We mention only three here:

The widow of Nain was accompanying the body of her "**only son**" to the burial when "**the Lord saw her**" and "**had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not**" (Luk 7:12-13). Then He raised the young man from the dead. Every detail of this story speaks to us of the sympathy of Christ for the sorrowing, as well as of His divine power.

Again, Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell the story of the raising of Jairus' daughter from the dead; but only Luke tells us that this ruler of the Jews had "**one only daughter**" (Luk 8:42).

And yet again, Matthew, Mark and Luke tell of the father who took his demon-possessed son to the disciples while Christ was on the mount of transfiguration; and because they could not cast out the evil spirit, the father took his son to Jesus. But Luke alone adds the significant words of the distressed parent, ". . **. he is mine only child**."

THE SONS OF MEN CONTRASTED WITH THE SON OF MAN

In striking contrast with the sinlessness of the Son of Man, we see portrayed in Luke the guilt and sin of the sons of men.

We see on every page man's need of a Saviour. From the opening chapter, we see the barrenness and unbelief of Elizabeth and Zacharias - eloquent picture of the spiritual condition of all the sons of Adam. Just as a miracle was required in the birth of John, so also every child of Adam must experience the miracle of the new birth, in order to bring forth fruit unto God.

The depravity of the human heart is seen in the vain effort of the men of Nazareth, who, "**filled with wrath**," tried to cast the sinless Son of Man headlong off the brow of the hill. Filled with hatred, malice, murder, they were seeking to kill Him who was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Still later we see the man "**full of leprosy**" healed by the Lord Jesus.

Leprosy, in the Bible, is a type of sin. He who "**knew no sin**" in contrast with the man "**full of leprosy**" - what a picture!

Let us turn back to the list of experiences in the life of our Lord recorded only by Luke to see these contrasts multiplied manifold:

- The religious hypocrites in the presence of the Good Samaritan;
- The poor woman bowed down by Satan's power for eighteen years set free from sin by the Great Physician;
- The lost sheep and the seeking Shepherd;
- The prodigal son and the forgiving father.

Nowhere in all of God's Word do we get a more searching glimpse into the sinful, human heart, a more forceful picture of man's depravity, impotency, and degradation, than in the book of Luke. And nowhere do we get a more beautiful portrait of the seeking Saviour than in this masterful presentation of the Son of Man, as He was seen and worshipped by the "**beloved physician**," who in turn was guided by the Holy Spirit to pen these lines.

"THE MAN CHRIST JESUS" -
RISEN - ASCENDED - INTERCEDING FOR HIS OWN!

As we come to the close of this lesson, we wonder if some discouraged child of God has been beholding "**the Man Christ Jesus**" through tears that blind the eyes?

In a world at war, in a world of sin and godlessness and unbelief, are you going through deep sorrow, my Christian friend? Then look up by faith to the right hand of the Majesty on high. There, at "**the throne of grace**" sits the crucified, risen, ascended, interceding, and soon-coming Lord, who is the Son of Man.

- Because He was the "**Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief**," He can sympathize with you in your trials.
- Because He "**suffered being tempted**," He is able to "**succour them that are tempted**."
-Because He was "**touched with the feeling of our infirmities**," He knows and understands our deepest sorrow.

"He knows; He loves; He cares!"

And at the throne of God He is the representative Man, pleading the cause of His redeemed, His own, bought with His precious blood. As our Forerunner, He is the guarantee that we, too, shall one day pass "**within the veil**," into the "**holiest of all**," even heaven itself.

In His unchanging, eternal priesthood, He ministers for us according to our needs and His perfect will. What more could we ask? Heaven and His presence for all the endless ages are ours because He was willing to become the Son of Man, suffering, seeking, dying, that we might have everlasting life.

When He came into the world:

- He was born in a manger;
- He had "**not where to lay his head**";
- He died on the accursed tree;
- He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

But now, our ever-living Priest - "**a priest upon his throne**" - He appears in the presence of the Father on our behalf.

The aged John saw Him in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, symbol of the blood-bought church. He saw Him who is the "**Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle**" (Rev 1:13). These are garments of our Great High Priest.

We who love Him shall one day behold and share His glory. With John and all the redeemed of all the ages, we shall look upon His face which shines like the sun. We, too, shall hear His voice, which is "**as the sound of many waters**." We shall "**behold the man**" - the "**Man Christ Jesus**" - in all His uncreated glory - "**a priest upon his throne!**"

Then let us look up - through our tears; beyond the bloodshed and cruelty of a world which thrust Him out at the point of a spear; in spite of burdens and sorrows and heartaches - let us keep "**looking unto Jesus**," the "**Son of Man**," who came to "**seek and to save that which was lost**," who now lives forever to intercede for us, and who will one day take us to be with Himself, to behold and to share His glory.

Dear unsaved friend, having beheld Luke's portrait of the seeking Saviour, can you turn from Him still?

"**Behold the Man**" who died for you; let Him into your heart; and He will "**save that which was lost**."

The Son of God who became the Son of Man, in order to die for you, loves you with an undying love!

~ end of chapter 18 ~

CHAPTER NINETEEN

CHRIST - THE SON OF GOD
As Portrayed in
The Gospel According to John
"BEHOLD THE LAMB OF GOD!"
"THE LORD . . . BEAUTIFUL AND GLORIOUS"

When John the Baptist saw Jesus coming unto him and proclaimed Him as "**the Lamb of God**, **which taketh away the sin of the world**," he was led by the Holy Spirit to announce the beginning of the public ministry of the eternal Son of God, whom the Prophet Isaiah had described some seven-hundred years previously as "**the branch of the LORD** . . . **beautiful and glorious**." (See Joh 1:29; Isa 4:2).

And thus we see beginning to unfold the last book of the four-fold Gospel portrait of Him who was to come - Israel's Messiah and King, the faithful Servant of the Lord, the sinless Son of Man, the eternal Son of God. And again we are reminded of the four "**beasts** [living ones]" whom John saw "**in the midst of the throne**" of God - the place where Deity alone can dwell:

"**The first beast was like a lion, and the second beast like a calf, and the third beast had a face as a man, and the fourth beast was like a flying eagle**" (Rev 4:7).

In our former studies we have seen that these four creatures "**in the midst of the throne**" represent our Lord Jesus in His kingly character, in His humble service, in His perfect humanity, and in His heavenly Being. We have seen that these are the four characteristics of His Person and work emphasized by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John respectively.

And now we begin today the study of John's portrait of the "**Lord from heaven**." Just as the "**flying eagle**" soars into the clouds, so also our Lord is the heaven-sent One, whose deity the "**beloved disciple**" dwells upon particularly in His inspired record.

Because this fourth Gospel story emphasizes the eternal deity of Jesus, the Son of God, it is the most profound, the most exalted, the most loved by the redeemed of the Lord.

It has to do with spiritual relationships, whereas the other Gospels dwell much upon human ties. Accordingly, Matthew wrote particularly for Israel, to present her Messiah and King; Mark wrote especially for God's servants, portraying the faithful Servant of God; Luke wrote to men as men - Jew and Gentile - to portray the perfect "**Man, Christ Jesus**"; John wrote to prove that this King and Servant and God-Man was eternal in His Being, omnipotent in His works, Himself the everlasting God!

Throughout the centuries of Old Testament times the Holy Spirit had promised the coming into the world of "**Jesus, the Son of God**." This One who is "**The LORD** . . . **beautiful and glorious**" was foretold by Isaiah when he prophesied that a "**Child**" was to be "**born**," but that a "**Son**" was to be "**given**." God could not die for sinners until He was "**born**" as the Child of the virgin; but as the "**Son**" He is eternal; as the Son He could not be "**born**"!

Moreover, Isaiah carefully guarded the deity of the promised Redeemer, saying also that He is "**The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace**" (Isa 9:6).

In another place the same prophet wrote, saying that this coming Messiah would be born of the virgin, and that His name should be called "**Immanuel**," which "**being interpreted is, God with us**" (Isa 7:14; Mat 1:23).

Micah also, foretelling the place of His birth, spoke of Him as the eternal One, "**whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting**" (Mic 5:2).

Repeatedly in the Psalms God, the Father, addressed God, the Son, as His equal; here are just a few of the passages which might be quoted :

- "**The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool**" (Psa 110:1).
- "**Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee**" (Psa 2:7).
- "**Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever** . . ." (Psa 45:6).
- "**Thy years are throughout all generations**" (Psa 102:24).

The foregoing are quoted in the New Testament, some of them several times, forever to prove that they were written of Christ before He came into the world, forever to establish His eternal deity. And they could be multiplied manifold!

Thus they become one of "**many infallible proofs**" that the Lord Jesus Christ is the central theme of the entire written Word of God.

May the Holy Spirit who inspired John to write this fourth Gospel prepare our hearts to worship Him of whom these pages speak - Him whose name is "**The Lamb of God** . . . **The LORD** . . . **beautiful and glorious**"!

JOHN - THE HUMAN AUTHOR - AND HIS PURPOSE

Even in our finite wisdom we can see in part why the Holy Spirit selected John to pen the lines of this fourth Gospel.

Together with James and Peter, John saw the Lord transfigured, witnessed the raising of the little daughter of Jairus from the dead, and went with the suffering Saviour to Gethsemane. Of John alone it is written that he followed Christ all the way to the cross, and received from Him the care of Mary. John is called "**the beloved disciple**"; he "**leaned on his breast at supper**."

Surely he understood as few others did something of the deeper truths concerning the Person and work of his Lord!

He was also chosen of God to write three wonderful letters to the church; and to record the vision he saw on the Isle of Patmos concerning "**The Revelation of Jesus Christ**" in all His great power and coming glory. John must have understood the deeper things of Christ as no other human being, unless it was the Apostle Paul, who also was given special revelations from God.

"**The beloved disciple**" was an old man when he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to write the Gospel which bears his name; for the date of this record falls between 85 A.D. and 90 A.D., "probably the latter."

The Synoptic Gospels, so-called because as the Greek word, "*Synoptic*," suggests, they present "*the same general view*" of the Lord Jesus; that is, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, had been written some thirty years previously. They had been in circulation within twenty-five or thirty years after Christ's ascension into heaven. Then a quarter of a century - more or less - had elapsed.

During those years false teachers had crept into the church, denying the eternal deity of "**Jesus, the Son of God**." Like the Unitarians of our own day, like the false cults and religious systems which seek to rob our Lord of His rightful place as the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, these false teachers claimed that He was only a good man, a way-shower, a perfect example.

Such false teachers are sometimes called "modernists" today; but they are not "modern." All of their kind date back to the day when sin entered the world; when Satan first turned men's hearts from the promised Saviour, seeking to rob the coming Messiah and Redeemer of the world of His eternal deity and Lordship.

To off-set this false teaching which had crept into early Christendom, John wrote his story of the life of Christ. There can be no question about his purpose; for in Joh 20:30-31 he plainly expresses it in unmistakable terms:

"**And many other signs** (or 'miracles') **truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name**."

According to this stated purpose, there were really two motives in the mind of the Holy Spirit as He led John to write this Gospel, the second growing out of the first; for to believe that "**Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**," is to be saved, to have everlasting "**life through his name**." Thus the ultimate purpose of the book is to win never-dying souls to the only Saviour of sinners. And to be saved, one must believe that the Man of Galilee is the eternal God!

It has been pointed out that proof of the later date of this fourth Gospel is evidenced by the fact that a previous knowledge of the contents of the Synoptics is assumed, as illustrated by the references to John the Baptist in Joh 1:32; Joh 3:24, as well as in other details of the narrative.

Again, that a previous knowledge of the content of the Synoptic Gospels was assumed by John, is evidenced by the fact that he omitted practically all the facts which the first three evangelists had written, until he reached the story of the Lord's suffering and death. Only two of the seven miracles recorded by John are told by one or more of the other writers - the feeding of the five thousand and the Lord's walking on the water. Then John presents a strikingly different record of the witness of John the Baptist from that of the other three, one which presupposes a knowledge of the events themselves.

Like them, he records the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the Lord's prophecy of the betrayal and Peter's denial. All else in the first seventeen chapters is found in John alone. The explanation of this seems to be that the Holy Spirit purposely saved this fresh evidence of the Lord's eternal Being and mighty work, in order to meet the need which He knew would arise, the need to prove the deity of Jesus, the Son of God.

"**Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world**" (Act 15:18).

Yet other proofs of the later date of John's record are seen in the frequent use of words which describe the deeper Christian experience; such as, "**believe**," "**love**," "**truth**," "**eternal life**," "**God, the Father**."

And, as we shall see in this study, the Lord's most profound teachings to His own concerning the Holy Spirit, prayer, His Father's love for His own, the "**many mansions**" for the redeemed - these are some of the deeper things of Christ recorded by John, yet not found in the first three Gospels.

We mentioned a few minutes ago the fact that the Synoptic Gospels dwell much upon human relationships, whereas John dwells most upon divine relationships.

The Synoptics tell of an earthly people; John describes a heavenly people - although the deeper church truth was not revealed until God gave it to Paul. John has to do, rather, with "**the family of God**." Paul wrote of the church, which is Christ's bride. Matthew, Mark, and Luke wrote of the proclamation of Messiah's kingdom before they told of the rejection of the King; John opened his Gospel with the announcement of His rejection, saying, "**He came unto his own** (things)**, and his own** (people, Israel) **received him not**" (Joh 1:11). The fact is that John wrote his record after Titus had destroyed the temple, 70 A.D., after Israel had been scattered throughout the Roman Empire.

The Synoptic Gospels speak of the Son of David, the Servant among men, the Son of Man, linking Him with the earth; John wrote of the Son of God, linking Him with heaven itself. The first three evangelists wrote of an earthly kingdom; John, of a heavenly kingdom, and of "**other sheep**," which are not of "**this fold**," Israel. The "**other sheep**," of course, are Gentiles.

The very nature of the miracles found only in John, the profound discourses of the Lord recorded here only, and the doctrines they set forth, add yet further evidence of the purpose of the Holy Spirit in writing these much loved pages. Nothing like this is found in Matthew, Mark, or Luke; for, as we have seen, they had their chief purpose also. Thus we are again impressed with the fact that these four Gospels are not mere repetitions of the same incidents; they are the work of the Master-Mind of the Holy Spirit of God, who not only inspired them, but who alone can teach us their meaning.

Someone has said that Christ speaks of God as His own "**Father**" thirty-five times in John; and that twenty-five times He says, with the voice of authority, "**Verily, verily, I say unto you** . . ."

It is John who emphasizes the truth, later enlarged upon by Paul, that it is "**Jesus, the Son of God**," who will raise the dead - an act of Deity!

Several times in John we read of Jesus' omniscience, for "**He knew all men** . . . **He knew what was in man**" (Joh 2:24-25). Many times in this fourth Gospel the Lord said plainly that He came down from heaven, having been "**sent**" by His Father - "**sent**," used in this connection, is one of the key words of the book. And Christ declared His omnipresence in Joh 3:13, saying,

"**No man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven**."

Such evidence of the deity of Christ is overwhelming and irrefutable.

~ end of chapter 19 ~

CHAPTER TWENTY

THE PROLOGUE OF JOHN: AN AWE-INSPIRING FOREVIEW OF THE BOOK

The very first line of The Gospel According to John states the purpose of the inspired writer in recording this story of "Jesus, the Son of God"; and the entire Prologue (Joh 1:1-14) forms one of the most majestic, awe-inspiring, comprehensive passages to be found in all the Holy Scriptures. It takes us back to the first line of the book of Genesis - "**In the beginning God** . . ." and tells us that the God who was "**in the beginning**" is none other than the Lord Jesus, the Living Word, who was "**made flesh, and dwelt among us**."

1. His Names of Deity.

The very titles here ascribed to Christ speak to us of Deity: "**The Word**," "**God**," "**Creator**," "**Life**," "**Light**," "**The only begotten of the Father**." He is here set forth as the One who came to reveal God to man, to show forth His uncreated glory, to bestow eternal life and light upon all who would believe that He was "**God manifest in the flesh**."

"**In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God**."

The Greek term for "**Word**" is "*Logos*," meaning "*a thought*" or "*a concept*." Just as words express thoughts, so the Lord Jesus speaks to us the thought of God toward sinful man - and that thought is love! Kindred passages only emphasize the meaning here:

- "**God** . . . **hath** . . . **spoken unto us by his Son**" (Heb 1:1-2).
- "**Christ** . . . **the wisdom of God**" (1Co 1:24).
- "**In whom** (Christ) **are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge**" (Col 2:3).
- "**For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily**" (Col 2:9).
- "**No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him** (i.e., 'revealed') **him**" (Joh 1:18).

Such passages as these literally fill the pages of the book of John, as they are stated and explained by the Lord Himself. As the eternal Word, He came to make known to man who God is and why He came into the world - to redeem "**as many as received him**."

2. The Eternity of the Second Person of the Godhead.

Twice in these opening lines we are told that "**the Word was with God**," thus signifying that the Lord Jesus is a separate Personality, the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, yet equal with the Father and with the Spirit; for in the same breath, as it were, the inspired writer adds, ". . . **and the Word was God**." And twice in these opening lines we are told that the Word was "**in the beginning**." That is, He is eternal! The God who came down to reveal His heart of love to sinful man is everlasting!

3. The Living Word - The Creator of All Things.

Twice in this Prologue we read that Jesus, the Living Word, is the Creator of all things:

- "**All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made**" (Joh 1:3).
- ". . . **the world was made by him** . . ." (Joh 1:10).

And again we are reminded of similar passages in other portions of the Scriptures:

". . . **by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers; all things were created by him, and for him: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist**" (Col 1:16-17).

"**God** . . . **hath** . . . **spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds** (i.e. 'framed the ages')" (Heb 1:1-2).

"**Who** . . . **upholding all things by the word of his power** . . ." (Heb 1:3).

"**Unto the Son he** (the Father) **saith** . . . **Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands**" (Heb 1:8; Heb 1:10).

"**Him** . . . **for whom are all things, and by whom are all things** . . ." (Heb 2:10).

4. The Living Word - The Life-Giver.

"**In him was life; and the life was the light of men**" (Joh 1:4).

"**As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name**" (Joh 1:12).

This self-existent One, "**in whom was life**," is the only One who can bestow eternal life.

*5. The Living Word - "**The Light of Men**."*

"**And the light shineth in darkness**" (Joh 1:5).

John the Baptist was sent from God to be a witness of the "**true Light**"; but "**the darkness comprehended it not**."

"**He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not**" (Joh 1:10).

When He came "**unto his own**" things, His own people "**received him not**." Yet "**Jesus, the Son of God**," is the Light of the world still. Later in this Gospel He Himself said so more than once.

*6. One "**Only Begotten Son**" - Many "**Sons of God**."*

The comprehensive scope of the Prologue of John is found, not only in its marvelous declaration of the deity of Christ, but also in its presentation of the real purpose for which He came into the world - that believing in His deity, we might "**have life through his name**." Thus the New Birth, so clearly taught in chapter three, is summarized briefly in these wonderful words:

"**As many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God**" (Joh 1:12-13).

It is not the physical birthday of which we read here; it is the spiritual birthday, when the sinner is born again by faith in the Living Word of God. And to be born again is to become a "**son of God**," a child in the family of God.

7. The Incarnation.

"**And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth**" (Joh 1:14).

When Jesus was born in Bethlehem; "**the Word was made flesh**", the eternal God came down and "tabernacled" among men. Just as the Shekinah Glory dwelt in the Holy of Holies in the Jewish tabernacle, so also the Lord of Glory tabernacled in human flesh - "**Immanuel, God with us**."

Just as the Pillar of Cloud and Fire dwelt "**in the midst**" of Israel's camp, so also the God of Glory walked among men, "**in the likeness**" of human flesh.

Why? To reveal God to man!

The inspired writer "**beheld his glory**" more than once during his earthly pilgrimage. Upon the mount of transfiguration and in the appearances of the risen Lord John "**beheld his glory**." Later he saw the glorified Lord Jesus on the Isle of Patmos. He knew whereof he spoke, even as he expressed this same truth in his letter to the church, saying,

"**That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life . . .**" (1Jn 1:1; cf. Joh 1:2).

John knew that Jesus was the virgin-born Son of God; therefore, he could say that He was "**the only begotten of the Father**." He knew that He was holy, sinless, "**undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens**." Therefore, he could say of Him that He was "**full of grace and truth**." Grace - unmerited favor; truth - absolute holiness - these are the attributes of God alone!

What a marvelous beginning to a marvelous book this Prologue is!

In it we read of the eternal Lord, the Living Word, the Creator, the Self-existent One, the Life-Giver, the Light of the world, unknown by the world He made, rejected by the nation from whence He came, yet received by born-again sons of God, because He humbled Himself to tabernacle among men, reveal His glory, and show forth His matchless grace and truth! And this Prologue gives us just a glimpse of the blessings in store for us as we read on in this God-inspired record of the earthly life of "**Jesus, the Son of God**."

PASSAGES RECORDED ONLY BY JOHN

Without going into too much detail just here, let us try to get a bird's-eye-view of some of the passages which only John records. We shall consider these further later on in this lesson, as we see how they prove the deity of Christ.

1. Five of the Seven Miracles.

Of the seven miracles performed by Christ before He went to the cross, recorded by John, only two are found in one or more of the other Gospel stories; they are the feeding of the five thousand, told by all four evangelists; and the Lord's walking on the water, told also by Matthew and Mark.

Only John tells of Jesus' turning the water into wine, a creative act which only God could do; healing the nobleman's son by His spoken word; healing the impotent man, also by His spoken word; healing the man born blind; and raising Lazarus from the dead.

While all of Christ's miracles were the work of "**The mighty God**," yet humanly speaking His raising Lazarus from the dead appeared the most wonderful. Twice on other occasions He raised the dead: Jairus' daughter had just died; and the son of the widow of Nain was being taken to the sepulchre. But Lazarus had been "**in the grave four days**."

It seems, therefore, that the Holy Spirit reserved this fresh and striking evidence of our Lord's deity for the express purpose of including it in the fourth Gospel record, to meet its special purpose.

2. Christ's Seven Discourses. Seven of the most wonderful messages that ever fell from the lips of the Lord Jesus during His earthly ministry are written only in John:

(1) *The New Birth*, chapter 3.
(2) *The Living Water*, chapter 4.
(3) *Christ's Equality with the Father*, chapter 5.
(4) *The Bread of Life*, chapter 6.
(5) *The Light of the World* - The Eternal "**I AM**," chapter 8. Really chapters seven and eight have to do with the deity of Christ as proclaimed by Him during the controversy in the temple.
(6) *The Good Shepherd*, chapter 10.
(7) *Christ's Farewell Discourse to the Eleven*, chapters 14-16.

These seven discourses of the Lord Jesus hold some of the most profound and precious truths in all the Word of God. Later in this lesson we want to look at them more closely to see how they prove beyond controversy that "**Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**."

*3. The Seven-Fold "**I AM**.*

Only John quotes the Lord as having taken the name which God gave to Moses for Himself from the burning bush, and as having applied it to Himself while He was on earth. Seven times in the fourth Gospel the Holy Spirit describes that name for the Lord God in terms descriptive of things which our finite minds can comprehend, each time stating expressly through the lips of Christ that He is the very God who talked to Moses in the wilderness from the burning bush.

None other than God could have made that stupendous claim! But Jesus was God - "**God manifest in the flesh**"!

Not only does the Lord Jesus use seven descriptive terms or figures to explain the meaning of His name "**I AM THAT I AM**"; but on several other occasions in this fourth Gospel He says plainly, "**I AM**." Our English Bible adds in italics the word "*he*"; but we know that all italicized words in our English Bible were added by the translators to make the meaning clear. In these instances it would be better to omit the word "*he*." Then the force of the Lord's statement is brought home to us. We shall note these passages as we come to them in the text.

The closing verses of chapter eight give us the key to these titles used by Christ to describe Himself. The controversy in the temple at the feast of tabernacles was drawing to a close. Repeatedly the unbelieving Jews had questioned Christ as to who He was and whence He came; and repeatedly He had told them that He "**proceeded forth and came from God**" (Joh 8:42). Yet again they asked him, saying, "**Whom makest thou thyself?**" And His answer, in part, was the remarkable statement,

"**Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad. Then said the Jews unto him, Thou art not yet fifty years old, and hast thou seen Abraham?** (Abraham had lived some two thousand years before Christ was born in Bethlehem)**. Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am**" (Joh 8:56-58).

The Jews knew what the Lord meant by these words; they knew that He was claiming to be the very same God who had said to Moses from the burning bush, "**I AM THAT I AM**" (Exo 3:14). That is why they "**took up stones to cast at him**." They accused Him of blasphemy because of His claim to eternal deity. But the miracle of it was that they could not touch Him until His "**hour had fully come**."

This expression, too, is often repeated in John, reminding us again and again that no man could take the life of the Son of God from Him; He laid it down of Himself. Therefore, on this occasion, as on many others, He "hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by" (Joh 8:59).

Now the name "I AM THAT I AM," recorded in Exo 3:14, all in capital letters, expresses at least two significant truths about the Person of God:

(1) His self-existence; and
(2) His eternity.

It might be paraphrased in some such words as these, "I AM JUST BECAUSE I AM"; that is, no one created God - no one created Jesus; He is self-existent! Moreover, He is the One who "**was, and is, and is to come**," as the name implies - "**The everlasting Father**," the One "**whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting**."

With the authority that was His from all eternity, therefore, "**Jesus, the Son of God**," took this wonderful name and applied it to Himself in the seven-fold description that our human minds and hearts can comprehend - all recorded in the book of John only:

(1) "**I am the bread of life**," Joh 6:35.
(2) "**I am the light of the world**," Joh 8:12.
(3) "**I am the door**," Joh 10:7.
(4) "**I am the good shepherd**," Joh 10:11.
(5) "**I am the resurrection, and the life**," Joh 11:25.
(6) "**I am the way, the truth, and the life**," Joh 14:6.
(7) "**I am the true vine**," Joh 15:1.

In the face of all this overwhelming evidence, anyone who thinks for one moment that Jesus did not claim to be God is described by John in his epistle in these plain words,

"**Who is a liar but he that denieth that Jesus is the Christ?**" (1Jn 2:22).

To deny His claim to be the eternal God is to make Him a liar and a blasphemer!

The unbelieving Jews made these accusations against Him; so do multitudes of professing Christians today, unregenerate "**wolves in sheep's clothing**." But Spirit-taught, born-again souls know, and are glad to bear testimony before men, angels, and demons, that "**Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**"; for believing this, they "**have life through his name**." And today, in this lesson, our hearts will be warmed as we consider these seven "**I AM**'s" in their right places in the text; for we hope to scan the sacred pages to place them in their proper setting.

4. Other Passages Found Only in John:

Practically all of the first seventeen chapters are recorded only by John. These include:

- The remarkable conversation between the Lord and Nathanael at the close of chapter one, in which He receives worship, and plainly states that He Himself is Jacob's Ladder;
- The first purification of the temple, recorded in chapter two - the similar experience told by the other three evangelists occurred near the close of Christ's public ministry;
- Jesus at the feast of tabernacles, chapters seven and eight;
- His forgiving the sinful woman on that occasion;
- The significant prophecy of Caiaphas, Joh 11:47-57;
- The Greeks' desire to "**see Jesus**," and His answer, Joh 12:20-50;
- Jesus' washing the disciples' feet, Joh 13:2-20;
- His Great High Priestly Prayer, chapter 17; and many details connected with His suffering, death, resurrection, and post-resurrection ministry, 18-21.

We shall not even attempt a discussion of these just here; but a glance at this summary gives us some insight into the fathomless content of the pages before us - found nowhere else in all the Word of God!

SIGNIFICANT OMISSIONS FROM JOHN

As in the Synoptic Gospels, so also in John the Holy Spirit's omission of certain facts and teachings is highly significant, establishing conclusively His predetermined purpose in each of the four narratives. Let us list a few of the striking omissions from John:

1. There Is No Reference to the Lord's Genealogy or Birth; for, as God, He has neither beginning nor end!

We have seen that Matthew gives us His legal right to David's throne through Joseph, His legal father - not His human father, for He had none! We have seen that Luke gives us His natural right to David's throne through Mary. But John opens his record with the majestic words that proclaim the eternity of Jesus, the Living Word of God.

All John says of the Incarnation is that "**the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth**" (Joh 1:14).

Of course, the whole Gospel unfolds the deeper meaning of how the Son of God came to reveal the Father - yea; the Triune God, as plainly stated in 1:18. But the fact remains that there is no reference in John to the appearances of the angels to Mary and Joseph, to the manger or the star, to the shepherds or the wise men, to Herod or the flight into Egypt, to Simeon and Anna. These things tell the story of the Son of David and the Son of Man in His relationship to the earth.

It is John's purpose to show forth the eternal glories of the eternal God!

2. There Is No Detailed Description of the Lord's Baptism by John.

Rather, there is the declaration that He is the "**Lamb of God**" - a title used in the Gospel record only by John. There is the entirely different testimony of John the Baptist to the fact that Jesus is "**the Son of God**.

In the other Gospels we see the Lord, in condescending grace, identifying Himself with His people. Here we see "**the Lamb**," of whom the prophets had written - and the Jews knew full well what John meant when he pointed them to "**the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**." They knew full well the significance of the Passover Lamb; but their unbelieving hearts were hardened.

3. There Is No Reference to the Temptation of Jesus in John.

It would be entirely out of keeping with the purpose of the Holy Spirit to include in John the Lord's temptation in the wilderness; for James tells us plainly,

"**God cannot be tempted with evil**" (Jam 1:13).

The human authors of the Synoptic Gospels also knew that they were writing of their holy God! And yet they recorded the story of His temptation. Why? Because they were proving that, as a Man, He could not sin; and they were showing our troubled hearts that "**we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin**" (Heb 4:15).

They were guided by the same Holy Spirit who inspired John to omit the temptation; for they were presenting different portraits of the same Jesus! Herein is but one of the many wonderful reasons why there are four Gospels!

4. There Is No Record of the Transfiguration of Christ in John.

At first we may wonder why John did not tell of how he and Peter and James saw the glorified Lord on the mountain, talking with Moses and Elijah of His approaching death. Surely that scene presents His uncreated glory and deity! And yet, as we think again, we realize that the chief purpose of that scene was to give the three disciples a little glimpse of the Messiah's coming kingdom on earth; it was a miniature representation of the "**Son of man coming in his kingdom**" (Mat 16:28).

Since John was telling of heavenly ties, the Holy Spirit led him to omit this remarkable story.

5. There Is No Appointing of the Disciples in John.

The Son of God fills the scene! Besides, the apostles had already been witnessing to Him for some thirty years; there was no need to tell of their appointment!

*6. There Is No Reference in John to the Prayers of the "**Man Christ Jesus**."*

Prayer is a human experience; and John is portraying Deity! Even in the seventeenth chapter, where He is interceding for His own, He is speaking to His Father as an Equal! There we read that "**he lifted up his eyes to heaven and said** . . ." The use of the word, "**said**," is significant! Again, in Joh 17:24 He "**said**" to His Father, as an Equal, "**Father, I will** . . ." With the authority that was His, He stated His own will!

The Gethsemane scene is omitted entirely by John; for it tells of the "**strong crying and tears**" of the "**Man, Christ Jesus**"; whereas John is depicting the eternal God. It is significant that, while all four of the evangelists tell of the feeding of the five thousand, John only omits to say that afterwards Jesus prayed! Rather, John alone uses that miracle to introduce the Lord's discourse upon Himself as the Bread of Life.

6. There Is No Reference to the Coming of the Son of David and Son of Man to an Earthly Kingdom.

There is no Olivet Discourse, outlining the course of this age and the return of the King in glory. Rather, there is the promise of "**many mansions**" in the "**Father's house**," and the Lord's pledge to return to take His own unto "**Himself**."

*7. There Is No Use of the Words "**Repent**" and "**Forgive**" as in the Synoptics*.

There man is declared guilty, needing to repent and turn to the Saviour and King. In John the sinner is seen to be spiritually dead, needing to be born again; and the new birth is the gift of the Son of God. Only He can give life. As the Son of Man He forgives; as God He bestows everlasting life, not condemning, but regenerating!

8. There Are No Parables in John.

The word translated "**parable**" in Joh 10:6 is really "*proverb*."

In our study of the thirteenth chapter of Matthew, we saw that the Lord Himself gave us the key to His parables, saying that only the spiritually minded could discern their true meaning; whereas those who would not believe in Him as Lord were blinded to their teaching.

Now in the fourth Gospel He is revealing God, not concealing the "**mysteries of the kingdom of heaven**."

9. There Is No Reference to Demons in John.

In the Synoptics, where the demons are said to have cried out, bearing witness to His holiness and deity, the Lord always "**suffered them not to speak**." Why? Because He needed not the testimony of demons!

True, the "**demons believe**" that "**God is**," "**and tremble**" at the thought of judgment to come. (See Jam 2:19). They recognized Him as the "**Holy One of God**" during His earthly ministry, and knew His omnipotent power when He cast them out of suffering people. But John is giving the testimony to the deity of Christ which honors Him - that of John the Baptist, of redeemed men and women, of the Son of God Himself. Possibly that is why the Holy Spirit guided him to omit all reference to demons.

Satan is called by the Lord Himself in this fourth Gospel "**a murderer**," "**a liar**," and "**the prince of this world**." Christ used these terms to describe the devil, who had hardened the hearts of His enemies; and to warn His redeemed ones of this enemy of their souls. (See Joh 8:44; Joh 14:30; Joh 16:11).

10. There Is No Reference to the Ascension in John.

As the Son of God, the Lord Jesus is everywhere!

"**O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!**" (Rom 11:33).

Only God could have written such a Book!

~ end of chapter 20 ~

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

JOHN'S PRESENTATION OF THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

We have often stated, throughout this series of studies, that all four of the evangelists tell all of the Gospel story; for we want no one to miss the truth that Matthew, Mark, Luke and John not only realized, but plainly said that Jesus of Nazareth was Israel's Messiah, the faithful Servant of the Lord, the sinless Son of Man, and the eternal Son of God.

We have sought to make very clear that, in emphasizing one particular phase of the Lord's Person and work, each evangelist included also the whole purpose for which He came into the world.

Accordingly, let us see how, from the very titles applied to Him by John, this four-fold portrait is presented in his record. And this is but one of many illustrations of this truth.

In the Prologue, as we have observed, His titles emphasize the Lord's eternal deity. Some of these names are found throughout the book; for example, "**the only begotten Son**" (Joh 1:18; Joh 3:16; Joh 3:18); "**the Lord**" (Joh 1:23; Joh 6:68; Joh 8:11); "**the Son of the living God**" (Joh 6:69); "**God**" (Joh 10:33); "**the Son of God**" (Joh 1:34). And then there are the repeated uses of "**I AM**."

John refers to the Lord as Israel's Messiah by calling Him: "**The Christ**" (Joh 1:20); "**the Messias**" (Joh 1:41; Joh 4:25); "**that prophet**," of whom Moses had written (Joh 1:21; Joh 6:14; Joh 7:40); "**the Lamb of God**," of whom the Old Testament offerings and sacrifices were prophetic (Joh 1:29; Joh 1:36); "**King of Israel**" (Joh 1:49). And identifying Christ with His earthly people, John wrote of Him as "**Rabbi**" (Joh 1:38; Joh 1:49; Joh 3:2); "**a Jew**" (Joh 4:9).

Portraying Him as the faithful Servant, John described the scene when the Lord washed His disciples' feet, teaching them, among other things, that "**the servant is not greater than his Lord**" (Joh 13:2-17).

The sinless humanity of Christ is seen in the often repeated name, "**Jesus**," which means "**Saviour**." It is one of His beautiful names of humiliation and suffering. Then He is called "**Jesus of Nazareth**" (Joh 1:45); "**the Saviour of the world**" (Joh 4:42); "**the Son of Man**" (Joh 3:13-14; Joh 6:27; Joh 6:53; Joh 6:62; Joh 8:28; Joh 12:34).

Another clear glimpse of the Lord's humanity is seen in His weariness as He sat on Jacob's well (Joh 4:6); and yet another, in His tears of compassion for Mary and Martha before He raised their brother from the dead (Joh 11:35).

These are only a few of the many instances which we might quote; but they suffice to illustrate the fact that John, as well as the other evangelists, gave us the four-fold portrait of the eternal God who became Man, in order to redeem a sinful world.

AN OUTLINE OF THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN

This fourth Gospel falls into several logical divisions, which we have outlined as follows:

I. The Prologue - The Eternal Word Incarnate, Joh 1:1-14.
II. The Witness of John the Baptist to the Deity of Christ, Joh 1:15-34; Joh 3:22-36.
III. Christ's Own Proof before the World concerning His Deity, 1:35-3:21; 4:1-12:50.
IV. Christ's Deeper Teaching before His Disciples concerning His Deity, 13:1-17:26.
V. The Suffering and Death of "Jesus, the Son of God," Joh 18:1-40; Joh 19:1-42.
VI. The Resurrection of "Jesus, the Son of God" Joh 20:1-31.
VII. The Epilogue - The Post-Resurrection Ministry of "Jesus, the Son of God," (Joh 21:1-25).

These divisions also fall logically into an orderly arrangement of separate details; but we are not attempting, in these studies, to make an analysis of the book.

This broad outline is suggested here, that we may the better comprehend the Holy Spirit's central purpose and plan in presenting to us, in these pages, overwhelming proof that "**Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**."

"MANY INFALLIBLE PROOFS" OF THE DEITY OF CHRIST

And now let us turn to the chapters in their order to select a few of the "**many infallible proofs**" of the deity of Christ, as presented in John.

To list all of these would require very much more space than is allowed to us in this volume; but a careful reading of the book, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will reveal many precious truths concerning the deity and majesty and glory of our Lord Jesus.

Chapter One:

1. The Prologue.

We have already considered briefly; therefore we shall not repeat here the profound proofs of Christ's deity as set forth in the first fourteen verses of the book.

2. The Witness of John the Baptist,
Joh 1:15-34; Joh 3:22-36 :

The testimony of John the Baptist to the deity of Christ is the central theme of John (Joh 1:15-34; Joh 3:22-36); whereas in the Synoptic Gospels it is the baptism of Jesus that takes preeminence. In John there is not even a direct statement that "**Jesus, the Son of God**" was baptized; instead, the circumstances which accompanied His baptism and manifested His deity are set forth in bold relief. The Synoptics show that, in His baptism, Christ was identifying Himself with His people, fulfilling "**all righteousness**"; John presents the Eternal One who came to reveal the Triune God.

There is no reference in John to the message of the forerunner of the King, recorded by Matthew in his portrait of Israel's Messiah, and saying,

"**Repent ye, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand**."

Instead, there is John's emphatic and oft-repeated witness to the eternal deity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The following recorded facts speak for themselves:

(a) *The Preeminence of Christ*:

"**He is preferred before me** . . . **whose shoe's latchet I am unworthy to unloose**," Joh 1:15; Joh 1:27; Joh 1:30.

(b) *The Preexistence of Christ*, who was not born in Bethlehem until John the Baptist was six months old:

"**He was before me**," Joh 1:15; Joh 1:30.

(c) *The "**Altogether Lovely**" Christ*: "**Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ**," Joh 1:17.
(d) *The Revelation of God in Christ*:

"**No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him** (i.e., 'led him forth into full revelation')," Joh 1:18.

(e) *The Christ of Prophecy*:

"**He** (John) **said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias**," Joh 1:23; cf. Isa 40:3.

(f) *The Sacrificial Work of Christ*, in fulfillment of all the Old Testament shedding of blood by faith in the promised Redeemer:

"**Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world**," Joh 1:29; Joh 1:36.

(g) *Heaven's Testimony to the Deity of Christ*: "**The Spirit**.. . **abode upon him**," Joh 1:32-33.
(h) *John's Added Testimony*:

"**And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God**," Joh 1:34.

(i) *The Preeminence of Christ Again Proclaimed by John*, Joh 3:29-36 :

It seems that "**some of John's disciples**" were wondering if John was jealous because the multitudes were following Jesus (3:25, 26); whereupon John took advantage of the occasion to proclaim once more the preeminence of Christ. Far from seeking the glory and honor due the Lord Jesus, John said,

"**He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled. He must increase, but I must decrease**," Joh 3:29-30.

While the church truth, represented by Paul in Ephesians by the bridegroom and the bride, was not revealed to John the Baptist - it was given first to Paul by special revelation; yet, guided by the Holy Spirit, John was led to proclaim Christ as the Heavenly Bridegroom, calling himself the "**friend of the bridegroom**."

This is another clear mark of inspiration; for John the Baptist was martyred before God made known to Paul the course of this church age, even long before the Holy Spirit came on the Day of Pentecost, marking the birthday of the church. Like the twelve apostles during the Lord's life on earth, John evidently believed that Christ would "**restore the kingdom to Israel**" at His first coming into the world.

(j) *The Heaven-Sent Christ*:

"**He that cometh from above . . . from heaven**," Joh 3:31; Joh 3:34.

(k) *The Spirit-Filled Christ*:

"**God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him**," Joh 3:34.

Indeed, the Holy Trinity, mentioned in this verse, are one God; and during His earthly life Christ was ever "**filled with the Holy Spirit**," One with the Spirit!

(1) ***"The Heir of All Things"***:

"**The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand**," Joh 3:35.

(m) *The Son of God - The Giver of Eternal Life*:

"**He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him**," Joh 3:36.

3. The Testimony of Andrew, Philip, and Nathanael to the Deity of Christ,
Joh 1:35-51

This is one of the many portions of this fourth Gospel recorded only by John. As another has said, "It records the personal call of the first disciples, not the ministerial call, as in the Synoptics." Here we can only mention the witness of three of these followers of the Lord to His deity and Lordship and Messiahship:

(a) *Andrew's Witness*:

"**We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ**," Joh 1:41.

(b) *Philip's Witness*:

"**We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph**," Joh 1:45.

(c) *Nathanael's Witness*:

The Lord Jesus had proved His omniscience by telling Nathanael about his character, and where he had been sitting, "**under the fig tree**," when Philip had called him. Moreover, He received worship from Nathanael, a clear mark of His claim to Deity; for He accepted these unmistakable words of praise due to God alone, "**Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel**," Joh 1:49.

*4. Christ's Claim That He Is "**Jacob's Ladder**,"*
Joh 1:50-51 :

Not only did the Lord prove His omniscience in this remarkable scene; not only did He receive worship from Nathanael; but He added yet further proof of His deity by stating plainly that He Himself is "**Jacob's Ladder**" - the only "**Way unto the Father**" and heaven and eternal life!

Nathanael well knew the story of the twenty-eighth chapter of Genesis; of how his forefather, Jacob, had stolen his brother's blessing and had fled from the face of Esau, who had threatened to kill him.

Every godly Israelite knew that, on that night, Jacob saw a ladder touching earth and touching heaven, above which stood "**the LORD**," and upon which "**the angels of God**" were "**ascending and descending**."

Whether Jacob and his children's children throughout succeeding generations realized it or not, that ladder was a type of Christ; for He Himself said so to Nathanael in the text before us.

He touched heaven because He was the eternal God; He touched earth because He "**was made flesh, and dwelt among us**." And He is the only Way to eternal life and God's presence forever-more! What a stupendous claim to deity the Lord Jesus made when He spoke those words to Nathanael!

"**Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these . . . Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man**," Joh 1:50-51.

Chapter Two:

1. Jesus' First Miracle - A Creative Act,
Joh 2:1-12 :

Only John tells of Christ's turning the water into wine at the marriage in Cana of Galilee; and only the Lord God could perform that miracle, showing His power over nature when He "**manifested forth his glory**," Joh 2:11. "**This beginning of miracles**" gives us a glimpse of the majesty of the Living Word, commanding His servants to do His will.

2. The First Cleansing of the Temple,
Joh 2:13-25.

Three highlights of the latter part of chapter two prove yet again Christ's deity:

(a) *His Application of the Old Testament Prophecy to Himself*:

"**The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up**," Joh 2:17; cf. Psa 69:9.

This was one way of His saying that He was the One of whom the prophets had written. Let us note also His use of the term, "**My Father**," Joh 2:16. And what shall we say of His majesty and authority, as He - alone - drove out the whole group of corrupt men who were desecrating His Father's house?

(b) *His Prophecy of His Death and Resurrection*:

"**Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up**," Joh 2:19-22.

Not only did the Lord Jesus foreknow all things, including the purpose for which He came into the world - to die and rise again; but He said here that He Himself would raise again the temple of His body. Only God could do that!

(c) *His Omniscience*:

"**But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men, and needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man**," Joh 2:24-25.

Chapter Three:

We have already observed that, in the comprehensive Prologue to this Gospel, the Lord Jesus is seen as the Life-Giver. Here, in chapter three, He goes to the very heart of the matter of the New Birth, and shows how the sinner must be "**born again**" by the "**washing of water by the word**" (Eph 5:26), as it is applied to the heart by the Holy Spirit.

Then, having declared His own omnipresence - an attribute of God alone - when He said that He "**came down from heaven**" and was "**in heaven**" (Joh 3:13), He once more foretold His approaching death by the reference to "**the serpent in the wilderness**" (Joh 3:14); and declared that faith in Him, and faith only, would give "**everlasting life**" to the guilty sinner. What a claim to Deity! Volumes have been written upon this chapter; yea, upon Joh 3:16 alone. Martin Luther aptly called it, "The Gospel in Miniature."

We cannot pause here for the many beautiful lessons this chapter brings to our hearts; but, if there is one who does not know the story of "**the serpent in the wilderness**," then let him turn to Num 21:5-9 to see why the Lord used that passage to explain the New Birth.

The serpent is the symbol of sin; for the serpent tempted Eve in the Garden of Eden. Brass speaks to us of judgment, as in all the Jewish Tabernacle in the wilderness. When the sinful, murmuring Israelites looked at the serpent of brass lifted up in the wilderness, and were healed, they were just a picture or figure or type of sinners of all ages who look to Him "**who knew no sin . . . who became sin for us . . . that we might be made the righteousness of God in him**" (2Co 5:21).

"There's life in a look at the Crucified One!" There is not one thing the sinner can do to earn his salvation; he can only look to Calvary by faith, and let the Holy Spirit regenerate his soul. That is what Christ meant when He foretold His being "**lifted up**" on the cross, "**that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life**."

Before we leave this chapter, let us note our Lord's reference to His virgin birth when He said that He is the Father's "**only begotten Son**"; and applied to Himself the prophecy of Psa 2:7, which is also definitely linked with His resurrection in Act 13:33. These are unmistakable proofs of His deity.

We have already considered briefly the latter part of chapter three in connection with the witness of John the Baptist; therefore, we go on to the next chapter, all of which is recorded only in John.

Chapter Four:

1. Christ's Claim That He Is the Giver of Living Water - Eternal Life,
Joh 4:10; Joh 4:13-14.

Later, in Joh 7:37-39, the Lord explained that "**the living water**" is none other than His own Holy Spirit.

2. Christ's Omniscience:

The Lord, in telling the sinful woman at Jacob's well all about her wicked life, surprised her, that He should know these things; and thus He revealed to all the world, through this record, His knowledge of the innermost heart of man.

3. Christ's Declarative Statement That He Is Israel's Messiah,
Joh 4:25-26 :

"**The woman saith unto him, I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he**."

4. The Testimony of the Woman of Samaria,
Joh 4:28-29 :

"**Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?**"

5. The Testimony of the Samaritans,
Joh 4:39-42 :

"**Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world**."

Let us not overlook, in passing, that in Joh 4:31-38, the Lord again referred to His Father as the One who had "**sent**" Him to do His will.

6. The Healing of the Nobleman's Son,
Joh 4:46-54,

Illustrates the power of the spoken word of the Living Word of God.

Chapter Five:

If we had only the fifth chapter of John to prove the deity of Christ, it alone is conclusive, and far more than measures up to the requirement of the Law of Moses; for that law demanded "**two or three witnesses**" to establish a fact in court. Here we have a startling array of irrefutable facts which cannot be denied, all declaring that Jesus of Nazareth is eternal God.

1. Christ's Healing the Impotent Man,
Joh 5:1-15 :

The heart of the chapter is contained in the discourse of our Lord concerning His equality with the Father; and this sermon was spoken in answer to the Jews who accused Him for having healed the impotent man "**on the sabbath day**."

The miracle proves that the spoken word of the Son of God was all that was needed to make an impotent man whole. Yet important as the miracle is in establishing the deity of Christ, we shall not dwell upon it here. It speaks for itself.

Following it, the Jews' accusation of Jesus led Him to make a significant statement, another definite claim to deity, "**My Father worketh hitherto, and I work**," Joh 5:17.

The next verse not only shows that the Jews knew Christ was calling God His Father, but it also states the theme of the Lord's discourse which follows,

"**Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God**," Joh 5:18.

2. Christ's Discourse on His Equality with the Father:

We can only list in outline the main arguments here; but they are so wonderful that volumes could be written on this sermon alone!

(a) *The Son Does the Works of the Father*,
Joh 5:19-20

That is, He cannot act independently of His Father because they are one God - co-equal, co-existent, co-eternal! Skeptics have tried to pervert the true meaning here, implying that the Son is subservient to the Father; but they cannot alter the infallible Word of God, which means exactly what it says, that the Father and the Son are One, that they work toward the same purposes, that they cannot act independently of each other.

To illustrate His remark, the Lord cites two works committed unto Him by the Father, works which only God can do:

(1) *The Son raises the dead*, Joh 5:21; Joh 5:25; Joh 5:28-29;
(2*) the Son has authority to execute judgment*, Joh 5:22; Joh 5:27; Joh 5:30.

When the dead are raised, they will come from their tombs at the voice of Jesus, the Son of God! And "**at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow**" when He acts as the righteous "**Judge of all the earth**"! (Php 2:10-11).

(b) *The Son Is Worthy of Equal Honor with the Father*, Joh 5:23.
(c) *The Son Is the Giver of Eternal Life*, Joh 5:24.
(d) *The Son Is Self-Existent*, Joh 5:26.
(e) *The Four-Fold Witness to the Deity of Christ*, Joh 5:31-47 :

We said a moment ago that the Law of Moses demanded "**two or three witnesses**" to establish a fact. That is why the Lord said, in Joh 5:31, that the Jews would say that His own word was not sufficient to prove His deity - according to Jewish law.

Therefore, He went far beyond the law's requirement, and gave them four indisputable witnesses; He could have given very many more!

These four witnesses are wonderful:

(1) *John the Baptist proclaimed Christ's deity*, Joh 5:33-35;
(2) *The Lord's own works, His mighty miracles, proved His deity*, Joh 5:36;
(3) *The Father, at Jesus' baptism and at His transfiguration, said that He is His "**beloved Son**,"* Joh 5:37-38;
(4) *The Old Testament Scriptures foretold Christ's coming into the world*, Joh 5:39-47.

"**Search the scriptures, for in them ye think that ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify** [bear witness] **of me**."

And Joh 5:46 is very forceful,

"**Had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me**."

The Jews boasted that they obeyed Moses; but Christ told them the truth, that Moses had written of His coming into the world; yet that they rejected Him of whom Moses wrote! Many teachings of Genesis, of the Jewish Tabernacle, of the Levitical offerings, of the feasts of Jehovah, of the smitten Rock in the wilderness, of the brazen serpent - these are just a few of the countless lessons Moses wrote, setting forth in prophecy and in type the coming into the world of Israel's Messiah and the Saviour of the world! It was Moses who said that He would be the "**Seed of woman**," from the family of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah!

The heart is hard, indeed, that can spurn the fifth chapter of John!

Chapter Six:

Although chapter six falls logically into four parts, yet it is all related to Christ's feeding the five thousand, and to the events growing out of that miracle.

Following this mighty work, the Lord left the multitudes who were seeking "**the loaves, and were filled**" (Joh 6:26), and crossed over the Sea of Galilee, walking upon the water. The next day the wondering crowd followed him to "**the other side of the sea**" (Joh 6:25), and asked Him, saying, "**Rabbi, when camest thou thither?**" They had not witnessed His walking upon the water; they knew He did not enter the ship when the disciples did; they knew also that there had been "**no other boat there, save that one whereinto his disciples were entered**" (Joh 6:22). Little wonder they marveled at His presence across the lake! It had been their purpose to "**take him by force, to make him a king**" (Joh 6:15). But the omniscient Lord knew their hearts; He knew they were seeking the loaves and fishes - not His free salvation. And this led Him to utter another of His great discourses, this one on Himself, the Bread of Life.

Let us take a glimpse at these four portions of the chapter, all woven into the one story:

1. The Feeding of the Five Thousand,
Joh 6:1-14.

Three facts emphasize the Lord's deity in John's record of this miracle:

(a) *Christ's Foreknowledge*, Joh 6:6. He was questioning Philip "**to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do**."
(b) *The Miracle Itself could have been performed by none other than "**The mighty God**."*
(c) *Moses' Prophecy Fulfilled in Christ*:

"**This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world**," Joh 6:14; cf. Deu 18:15; Deu 18:18. (John is the only one to tell us that Andrew brought the lad with the loaves and fishes to Jesus).

2. *Christ's Walking upon the Water*,
Joh 6:15-21.

Only the Creator of the universe could walk upon the sea which He had made! It is true that, as long as Peter kept his eye upon the Lord, he also walked upon the water to go to Jesus, as Matthew tells us; but Peter's walking upon the sea was only by the power of Christ; and when his faith wavered, he began to sink. Christ Jesus, the Lord, walked upon the Sea of Galilee which He had created, giving us just a little glimpse of His deity and power.

3. Christ's Discourse on the Bread of Life,
Joh 6:26-59.

This message of the Lord is recorded only by John, although the other three evangelists tell of Peter's great confession, which shows his response to the discourse and the truth it proclaims.

We suggest here just a few of the most striking proofs of Christ's deity established by this sermon:

(a) *The Lord Jesus' Repeated Call to Personal Faith in Him for Salvation*.

Here are some of His words :

- ". . . **everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give you**," Joh 6:27.
- "**This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent**," Joh 6:29.
- "**The bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world**," Joh 6:33; cf. Joh 6:32 b.
- "**I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst**," Joh 6:35; cf. Joh 6:41; Joh 6:48; Joh 6:50-51; Joh 6:53-58.
- "**All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out**," Joh 6:37. (See also Joh 6:40; Joh 6:45; Joh 6:47).

(b) *The Lord's Repeated Statement That He Came Down from Heaven*, as in Joh 6:38,

"**I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me**."

(c) *The Lord Jesus' Declaration That He Will Raise the Dead*.

". . . **everyone which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day**," Joh 6:40; cf. Joh 6:39; Joh 6:44.

Throughout all of this sermon Christ repeatedly refers to the Father, saying, "**My Father**," or "**the Father**," in such a way that the multitudes who heard Him and all who read might understand that He was claiming equality with the Father in heaven. Moreover, Christ plainly stated that He had "**seen the Father**," Joh 6:46.

4. *The Response of the Multitude to This Discourse*,
Joh 6:60-71.

Several statements growing out of this discourse also speak plainly of the deity of "**Jesus, the Son of God**":

(a) *Jesus' Omniscience*.

When some murmured at His teaching, He "**knew in himself that his disciples murmured at**" this truth, Joh 6:61. Again, He said,

"**There are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him**," Joh 6:64; cf. Joh 6:70-71.

(b) *Christ's Prophecy of His Ascension into Heaven*, Joh 6:62.

(c) *The Eternal Value He Placed upon His Words*, Joh 6:63.

When the "**Jews** . . . **strove among themselves, saying, How can this man give us his flesh to eat?**" (Joh 6:52; cf. Joh 6:51-58), Christ answered their unbelief, explaining this whole passage, in unmistakable terms:

"**It is the Spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life**," Joh 6:63.

And what were His words? The whole sermon which He had just preached tells us that He is the Bread of Life, the Saviour of the world! To believe His Word, to feed our souls upon Him who is the Living Bread - that is to "**eat His flesh and drink His blood**."

None but God could make that claim!

(d) *Peter's Great Confession and the Lord's Acceptance of Worship*, Joh 6:67-69.

Testing the faith of the twelve, yet letting them know that He Himself foreknew Judas' betrayal, Christ asked them the straight question, "**Will ye also go away?**"

The fact that "**many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him**" (Joh 6:66) must have saddened His heart; for they would not let Him give them eternal life. They were seeking the loaves and fishes. There must have been sadness in His voice as He turned to the twelve for an expression of their faith. If so, Peter's response must also have brought joy to His heart of compassion,

"**Lord, to whom shall we go? thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God**," Joh 6:68-69.

If Christ had not been "**God manifest in the flesh**," then He could not have received worship from His own, and at the same time have been honest and true! The fact that He did receive worship - not a few times, but often - establishes His deity; for He is "**full of grace and truth**"!

Chapters Seven and Eight

The Controversy in the Temple over the Person of Christ: Chapters seven and eight, recorded only by John, tell of the controversy in the temple at the Jewish feast of tabernacles concerning His deity. Therefore, they form a unit in themselves; yet chapter seven tells of one day's argument on the part of the unbelieving Jews and the Lord's teaching in reply; chapter eight, of a continuance of the same discussion on the following day. The feast of tabernacles lasted one week, according to the Law of Moses; and Christ went up to the temple and taught "**about the midst of the feast**" (Joh 7:14).

The controversy in the two chapters might be summarized in the questions and answers of Joh 8:25; Joh 8:42; Joh 8:53; Joh 8:58 : "**Who art thou?**"

- "**I proceeded forth and came from God**."
- "**Whom makest thou thyself?**"
- "**Before Abraham was, I am**."

As we examine these chapters carefully, we are forcefully impressed with the infinite patience of the Son of God, that He kept on answering the malicious questions of the Jews, faithfully telling them over and over who He was and whence He came. We are impressed with the infinite patience of the Holy Spirit in recording these same truths repeatedly - for emphasis upon the deity of our Lord, that none need miss the plain teaching concerning the eternity of "**Jesus, the Son of God**," His power, and His matchless love. As we try to set in array the arguments He gives to prove Christ's deity, we are impressed also with the fact that these same arguments have been given repeatedly in the chapters which have gone before.

But our God is patient and faithful, and it is like Him to make His teaching very, very plain, that "**the wayfaring man may not err therein**."

For our convenience, we shall look at these chapters separately:

Chapter Seven:

1. *Christ's Testimony to "His Brethren*,"
Joh 7:6-8.

The half-brothers of the Lord, sons of Joseph and Mary, did not "**believe in him**" at that time, apparently not until after His suffering and death and resurrection. When they rebuked Him about His not going up to the feast of tabernacles at the beginning of the week, He answered them with the often-repeated statement written in John,

"**My time is not yet come**," Joh 7:6; Joh 7:8; cf. Joh 7:30.

2. Christ's Teaching in the Temple,
Joh 7:16-39.

(a) *The Heaven-Sent One*, Joh 7:16; Joh 7:18; Joh 7:28-29; Joh 7:33.
(b) *The Sinless One*, Joh 7:18.
(c) *His Prophecy of His Return to the Father*, Joh 7:33.
(d) *His Prophecy concerning the Coming of the Holy Spirit*, Joh 7:37-39.

No one but God Himself would dare to make such claims as these! That is, no one who is righteous and true, as Jesus was! And His prophecy concerning the coming of the Holy Spirit is wonderful! It is yet another call to personal faith in Christ for salvation; and it looked forward to the coming of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, as recorded in the second chapter of Acts. The Apostle John, writing many years after that Day of Pentecost, looked back to the fulfillment of the Lord's prophecy; and guided by the Holy Spirit, added the parenthesis of Joh 7:39.

3. *The Vain Attempts of the Jews to Take Him*,
Joh 7:30; Joh 7:44-46.

Knowing full well that Christ was telling of His deity, the Jews "**sought to take him: but no man laid hands on him, because his hour was not yet come**," Joh 7:30. They "**sent officers to take him**," Joh 7:32; but those officers returned to the chief priests and Pharisees with the strangest answer officers of the law ever gave to their superiors.

"**Never man spake like this man**," Joh 7:46.

They must have been Roman soldiers; they had the swords and the authority of the civil powers; yet they could not touch the Son of God until His "**hour**" struck, until He voluntarily laid down His own life as an atonement for the sins of the world. What a mark of Deity! The Living Word "**spake**" such words that His bitterest enemies stood in awe of His majestic Presence!

*4. The Testimony of "**Many of the People**,*"
Joh 7:40.

Again we hear quoted that famous prophecy of Moses concerning the Messiah who was to come, this time from the lips of "**many of the people**,"

"**Of a truth this is the Prophet**," Joh 7:40; cf. Deu 18:15; Deu 18:18.

It is significant that they did not say, "*a prophet*"; for there were many human prophets given to Israel in Old Testament times. They said, "**The Prophet**." They knew of Moses' promise of the Saviour to come, and recognized Him in Jesus!

Nicodemus also, though a ruler of the Jews, was bold enough to take Christ's part and insist upon a fair trial before condemning Him. Whether he was a secret believer at that time, we do not know; but we do know, from the fact that he helped Joseph of Arimathea to bury Jesus, that he did come to believe in Him as his Messiah and Lord.

John is the only inspired writer to mention Nicodemus; but his three references to him make us know that he was saved. (See Joh 3:1-21; Joh 7:50-52; Joh 19:39-40).

Earlier in this lesson we showed, by the names of Christ used in John, that this fourth Gospel presents also the fourfold portrait of the Lord. The last verse of chapter seven and the first of chapter eight give us another glimpse of the humility of the "**Mighty God**."

At the close of the first day of the controversy in the temple "**every man went unto his own house**."

But "**Jesus went unto the mount of Olives**." He had nowhere to lay His head! Possibly, as the Son of Man, He spent the night in prayer to His Heavenly Father. Certainly He was in perfect fellowship with Him at all times! But such love is beyond human comprehension - that the eternal God should so humble Himself - for unworthy sinners!

Chapter Eight:

"**And early in the morning he came again into the temple and all the people came unto him; and he sat down, and taught them**," Joh 8:2.

Then it was that the wicked, hypocritical Jews brought the sinful woman to Jesus, "**that they might have to accuse him**."

Again, the Lord's majestic Person must have towered above the miserable, cunning men He faced. And with what wisdom He silenced them!

The Law of Moses demanded two witnesses; there were none! But possibly the most significant fact about this scene is:

1. His Power to Forgive Sin,
Joh 8:11.

Only God can do that! Then there is His manifestation of His love for sinners.

There is His knowledge of the wicked hearts of the woman's accusers - all manifesting infinite wisdom and infinite love.

2. *Christ's Teaching in the Temple Continued - His Discourse on the Light of the World - The Eternal "**I AM**,*"
Joh 8:12-58.

(a) *His Claim: "**I Am the Light of the World**,*" Joh 8:12.
(b) *His Claim to Be the Life-Giver*, Joh 8:12; Joh 8:31-36; Joh 8:51.
(c) *His Claim to Be the Heaven-Sent One*, Joh 8:14; Joh 8:16; Joh 8:23; Joh 8:25-27; Joh 8:29; Joh 8:42.
(d) *His Equality with the Father*, Joh 8:16; Joh 8:19; Joh 8:28-29; Joh 8:38; Joh 8:40.
(e) *His Fulfillment of the Law of Moses in Giving Two Witnesses to His Deity - The Son and the Father*, Joh 8:17-18.
(f) *His Pronouncement of Eternal Judgment upon the Unbelieving Jews*, Joh 8:21-24; Joh 8:34-35.
(g) *His Prophecy of His Cross*, Joh 8:28.
(h) *His Claim to Be Sinless*, Joh 8:29; Joh 8:46; Joh 8:55.
(i) *His Claim to Be Very God, Speaking the Word of God*, Joh 8:31; Joh 8:37; Joh 8:40; Joh 8:45; Joh 8:47; Joh 8:51.
(j) *His Claim to Equal Honor with the Father - even as He honored the Father, and even as the Father honored the Son*, Joh 8:49-50; Joh 8:54.
(k) *His Claim to Be the Eternal "**I AM**,*" Joh 8:56-58.

We have already mentioned the startling significance of this claim to deity, recalling that Abraham lived two thousand years before Christ was born in Bethlehem, and remembering that the Jews knew that the Lord Jesus was telling them that He was the same Lord God who had talked to Moses from the burning bush, saying, "**I AM THAT I AM**."

Because they knew that He claimed to be God, by applying this name to Himself,

"**Then took they up stones to cast at him: but Jesus hid himself, and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by**," Joh 8:59. "**His hour was not yet come!**"

Chapter Nine:

Only John records the story of Christ's healing the man born blind, furnishing yet further proof of His deity. The miracle itself could have been wrought by God alone; and besides, there are connected with it significant words of the Lord which prove who He was:

1. His Foreknowledge,
Joh 9:3.

He said to the Jews that the man had been allowed to suffer blindness "**that the works of God should be made manifest in him**." He knew that He would give sight to the life-long sufferer. And what comfort is added to any sorrow or trouble, when God is honored thereby!

2. The Heaven-Sent One - The Light of the World,
Joh 9:4-5.

"**I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day** . . . **As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world**."

3. Christ's Claim to Be the Son of God,
Joh 9:35-37.

To the man whose blindness He had healed the Lord said,

"**Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him? And Jesus said unto him, Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee**."

4. Christ's Acceptance of Worship,
Joh 9:38.

"**And he said, Lord, I believe. And he worshipped him**."

There is a beautiful lesson here, which we pause a moment to mention; it is the man's "**growth in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ**."

- At first he recognized Jesus only as "**a man that is called Jesus**";
- Later, as "**a prophet**";
- Still later, as "**of God**";

And when Jesus "**had found him**," reviled and cast out of the synagogue because of his confession, the compassionate Saviour who "**found him**" revealed Himself to him as "**Lord** . . . **the Son of God**."

How despicable, by way of contrast, are the ingratitude and cowardice of the man's parents! But it is ever thus. "**Many are called, but few are chosen**."

Chapter Ten:

Christ - The Good Shepherd is the theme of the Lord's discourse, recorded only by John, in chapter ten. From beginning to end, it is filled with His declaration of His deity:

1. Christ - The Way to Heaven,
Joh 10:7; Joh 10:9-10.

"**Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep** . . . **I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture** . . . **I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly**."

2. Christ - The Suffering Saviour,
Joh 10:11; Joh 10:14-15.

"**I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep** . . . **I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine** . . . **And I lay down my life for the sheep**."

3. The Fellowship between the Father and the Son,
Joh 10:15.

"**As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father**."

*4. Christ's Prophecy concerning His "**Other Sheep**"*
Gentiles, Joh 10:16.

"**And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd**."

5. Christ's Prophecy of His Voluntary Sacrifice and of His Bodily Resurrection,
Joh 10:17-18.

"**Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father**."

Our Lord's death was not that of a helpless victim, nor that of a martyr; it was voluntary; it was planned from all eternity; for He is "**the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world**" (Rev 13:8). These words spoken by Christ Himself in Joh 10:17-18 forever establish that fact, as well as His foreknowledge of all things.

6. Christ's Answer to the Unbelieving Jews,
Joh 10:24-30.

The Lord's accusers here were not even honest, for He had told them repeatedly who He was, whence He came, and for what purpose. Yet they dared to say unto Him,

"**How long dost thou make us to doubt? If thou be the Christ, tell us plainly**," Joh 10:24.

Christ's answer is wonderful! Let us meditate long upon it, even though we can only outline it here:

(a) *Christ's Words and His Works Bore Witness to His Messiahship and Deity*, Joh 10:25; cf. Joh 10:34-38.
(b) *The Jews' Unbelief Proved the Unregenerate State of Their Hearts*, Joh 10:26.
(c) *The "**Sheep**" of the Good Shepherd*:

(1) *Hear His voice*;
(2) *are known of Him*;
(3) *follow Him*;
(4) *receive from Him eternal life*;
(5) *are the Father's gift to the Son*;
(6) *are eternally secure in Him*, Joh 10:27-29.

(d) *The Father and the Son Are One God*, Joh 10:30!

Every Christian should memorize this passage - for its assurance of salvation, and for its use in winning souls to the Saviour.

How can a mere man contradict it? And yet there are thousands in professing Christendom today who teach that it is presumptuous to rest in the assurance of eternal salvation by faith through grace alone.

These words of Joh 10:27-30 are the voice of the eternal God! We dare not doubt Him! We dare not accuse Him of falsehood!

We dare not limit His grace by seeking to add to His free gift our own miserable, paltry works as a means of salvation!

Once more the Jews "**took up stones to stone him**," and accused Him of blasphemy, admitting that Jesus said He was "**God**," Joh 10:31-33. Their own admission indicted them; they were without excuse, for they knew what His words meant!

Again the Lord faithfully answered their questions, practically in the same words He had used before - not once or twice, but very many times. And again, in unmistakable terms, He said,

"**I am the Son of God**," Joh 10:36.

"**Therefore they sought again to take him: but he escaped out of their hand**," Joh 10:39. His hour had not yet come!

(In the quotation, "**Ye are gods**," Joh 10:34; cf. Psa 82:6, the word "**gods**" is used in the sense of "*rulers*," not of "*deity*," as the context of the Psalm indicates).

The chapter closes with the reassuring knowledge that "**many believed on him**," Joh 10:42. Thus the testimony of the "**many**" who had faith in Him bore witness to the deity of "**Jesus, the Son of God**."

Chapter Eleven:

Christ's Raising Lazarus from the Dead is recorded by John alone; and, as we have seen, this fresh evidence of the deity of Christ seems to have been saved by the Holy Spirit for its special use here - to off-set the unbelief which had crept into Christendom when John wrote his Gospel.

It has been pointed out by many that, to human eyes, this seems to be the Lord's greatest miracle. Of course, all of His miracles established His deity; and "**with God all things are possible**." But to raise from the dead a man who had been in the grave four days appears to man as possibly the greatest of the Lord's mighty works.

Once more we shall only mention briefly the highlights of this remarkable evidence of Christ's deity:

1. *Christ's Foreknowledge of the death of Lazarus, and of the miracle which He was later to perform*, Joh 11:4; Joh 11:11-14.

2. *His Claim to Deity - "**I Am the Resurrection and the Life**."*

"**I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: and whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die**," Joh 11:25-26.

3. His Acceptance of Worship from Mary and Martha.

Both called Him "**Lord**," saying unto Him,

"**Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world** . . . **Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died**," Joh 11:27; Joh 11:32.

4. Christ's Words to the Father,
Joh 11:41-42.

"**Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me. And I knew that thou hearest me always; but because of the people which stand by I said it, that they may believe that thou hast sent me**."

5. The Spoken Word of the Living Word Raised the Dead!

When Christ raised the little daughter of Jairus, who had just died, He "**took her by the hand**" (Luk 8:54). When He raised the son of the widow of Nain, whose body was on the way to the tomb, He "**touched the bier**" (Luk 7:14). But when He raised Lazarus, who had been "**in the grave four days already**," He merely spoke the words, "**Lazarus, come forth**," Joh 11:43.

"**And he that was dead came forth, bound hand and foot with graveclothes: and his face was bound about with a napkin. Jesus saith unto them, Loose him, and let him go**," Joh 11:44.

Here we see the Lord of heaven commanding, by His Word; and He is obeyed. So it will be when "**all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth**" in bodily resurrection. (See Joh 5:28-29).

6. The Significant Prophecy of Caiaphas,
Joh 11:49-52.

"**And one of them, named Caiaphas, being the high priest that same year, said unto them, Ye know nothing at all, nor consider that it is expedient for us, that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation perish not. And this spake he not of himself: but being high priest that year, he prophesied that Jesus should die for that nation; and not for that nation only, but that also he should gather together in one the children of God that were scattered abroad**."

Caiaphas had in mind earthly power, under the Roman Empire; but, because of his sacred office, God prophesied through him - in spite of his unbelief - to foretell the vicarious nature of the atoning death of Christ, for Gentile, as well as for Jew!

We would not leave this remarkable chapter without at least a word concerning the compassion and love of the Lord of Glory. His tears of sympathy speak for themselves!

The late Dr. F. B. Meyer calls His waiting "**two days**" after He received the message from the sisters concerning the illness of Lazarus, before He started on His journey to them, one of "love's delays." Because He loved them He waited. And because He waited, "**many of the Jews** . . . **believed on him**" when they saw the miracle. (See Joh 11:6; Joh 11:45; Joh 12:11; Joh 12:17-18). Because He waited, "**that the Son of God might be glorified thereby**," "**many Jews**" have been in heaven nearly two thousand years already - and will be for all eternity! May our own sorrows and tears be "**for the glory of God**"!

Chapter Twelve:

1. Christ's Foreknowledge of His Approaching Death - A Proof of Deity.

When Judas, the thief and traitor, objected to Mary's anointing the Lord's feet with "**a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly**," worth "between nine and ten pounds sterling," Christ once more announced His foreknowledge of His approaching death, saying,

"**Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this**," Joh 12:7.

Only the omniscient Lord could have made that statement.

2. *The Fulfillment of Two Old Testament Prophecies in Christ's "**Triumphal Entry**" into Jerusalem*,
Joh 12:12-16 :

(a) *The Worship of "**Much People**"*:

"**Hosanna: Blessed is the King of Israel that cometh in the name of the Lord**," Joh 12:13; cf. Psa 118:26.

(b) *The Manner of His Official Presentation of Himself as King of Israel*:

"**And Jesus, when he had found a young ass, sat thereon; as it is written, Fear not, daughter of Sion: behold, thy King cometh, sitting on an ass's colt**," Joh 12:14-15; cf. Zec 9:9.

The many fulfilled prophecies concerning our Lord's coming into the world as "**God with us**" are an irrefutable proof of His deity. Such things were never written of mere men; but they were written concerning the Lord, centuries before they came to pass, that we might know Him when He did come - the promised Messiah and Redeemer and Lord God!

*3. The Lord's Answer to "**Certain Greeks**" Who "**Would See Jesus**"*
Joh 12:23-36.

Only John records this remarkable passage; we select only a few excerpts from it which emphasize Christ's deity, evidenced by His foreknowledge of His vicarious death:

"**And Jesus answered them, saying, The hour is come, that the Son of man should be glorified. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit**," Joh 12:23-24.

The significance of this statement is overwhelming!

Just as the grain of wheat must "**fall into the ground and die**" before it can bring forth the harvest, even so the Son of Man had to shed His blood on Calvary's Cross before He could "**lead many sons unto glory**" with Him.

It is a solemn thought: Christ could have gone back to heaven alone, without dying as the sinner's Substitute; but He wanted His redeemed with Him in glory; therefore, He chose "**the way of the cross**."

Surely He could see nothing lovely or worthy in us! Yet because of His great compassion, because of His limitless grace, He loved us enough to die for us! And heaven will be filled with a great harvest of never-dying souls throughout eternity because the Lord Jesus was willing to die!

Not only so; but He told His disciples these things before they came to pass, that they might know Him as the eternal, all-wise God.

Here are a few more of these prophecies, recorded in the passage before us:

"**Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name**," Joh 12:27-28.

"**Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth** (i.e., on the cross)**, will draw all men unto me. This he said, signifying what death he should die**," Joh 12:31-33.

4. The Father's Voice,
Joh 12:28-30.

Yet another wonderful proof of the deity of Christ is seen in the Father's answer to the Son's troubled words, which we have just read. The sinless Son of Man was facing the agony of separation from His Father for the first time in all eternity, to be experienced when His holy Father had to turn His face away from His beloved Son when the Son "**became sin for us**" (2Co 5:21).

"**He who knew no sin**" in Himself was to become a curse for us; and His own holy soul shrank from that "**cup of suffering**." Only John records this conversation between the Father and the Son, which we read a moment ago. Then the evangelist tells us the Lord's own explanation of why the Father spoke from heaven, that we might know that Jesus is God! When He said, "**Father, glorify thy name**," then the Father answered, saying,

"**I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again**."

"**The people therefore, that stood by, and heard it, said that it thundered: others said, An angel spake to him. Jesus answered and said, This voice came not because of me, but for your sakes**."

How faithfully God, the Father, has made known to us the eternal glories of His Son, our Saviour!

5. Isaiah's Prophecy of Israel's Rejection of Christ Fulfilled,
Joh 12:37-40.

Two prophecies from Isaiah foretelling Israel's rejection of her Messiah are quoted by John in Joh 12:38 and Joh 12:40. The first of these introduces the wonderful fifty-third chapter of Isaiah, which graphically portrays the suffering of the Lord Jesus for sinners. It is the voice of the discouraged prophet, discouraged because his people would not put their faith in the promised Redeemer,

"**Lord, who hath believed our report? and to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?**"

And being a prophet, looking down the ages, inspired by the Holy Spirit, Isaiah saw that Israel would still be unbelieving when the Lord Jesus was upon earth, for,

"**though he had done so many miracles before them**," John explains, "**yet they believed not on him: that the saying of Esaias the prophet**" which we have just quoted "**might be fulfilled**."

Then John adds the second of these two prophecies, showing that, because of Israel's hardness of heart and rejection of her Messiah and Lord, their darkened hearts were yet further blinded. It is ever so; when man deliberately turns his back upon God, his spiritual darkness deepens.

"**Therefore they could not believe, because that Esaias said again, He hath blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; that they should not see with their eyes, nor understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them**" (Joh 12:39-40; Isa 6:10).

*6. Isaiah's Vision of "**His** (Jesus') **Glory**"*
Joh 12:41; cf. Isa 6:1-8.

John's comment in Joh 12:41 is startling!

Having quoted the prophecy from Isa 6:10 concerning Israel's unbelief, he adds the explanation that the prophet had written those words after having seen "**his glory**." Whose glory? The glory of the Lord Jesus! And we need only turn to Isa 6:1-10 to read one of the most remarkable of all the Old Testament descriptions of the glory of God. Then what is John Saying here? Simply this: That Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus, who is God! And He saw "**His glory**" some seven hundred years before Bethlehem's manger!

When Isaiah had this vision of the Lord, he said plainly, "**I saw also the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and his train filled the temple** . . . **And one** (of the seraphim**) cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory**" (Isa 6:1-3).

Seven hundred years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, Isaiah saw the thrice-holy God - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and John said that the God whom the prophet saw was the Lord Jesus! How could the Holy Spirit make more plain the eternal deity of Christ?

7. Christ's Last Public Claim to Deity, as Recorded by John,
Joh 12:44-50.

In the closing words of this twelfth chapter of John we read the Lord's last public declaration of His deity, as told by "**the beloved disciple**." And in these words He said again that He was the One "**sent**" by the Father to give light and life everlasting to sinners.

Chapter Thirteen:

With chapter thirteen we enter upon the Lord's deeper teaching for His own, spoken only to His disciples. The scene opens with the last Passover, but the details recorded in the Synoptic Gospels are omitted here.

John does not even tell of the institution of the Lord's Supper, to take the place of the Passover feast; but he does record yet other details omitted by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. For example, only John describes the scene wherein Christ washed the disciples' feet; and only he tells us of the "**new commandment**," that we "**love one another**," Joh 13:34.

After the supper, Judas "**went immediately out: and it was night**," Joh 13:30. Surely it was night in his sin-darkened soul! And as he went to lead the Lord's enemies to the scene of the betrayal, Christ gave His farewell discourse to the eleven who loved Him. (See chapters fourteen, fifteen and sixteen).

Chapter fourteen seems to have been spoken in the room where the Passover supper had been eaten. It closes with the words, "**Arise, let us go hence**."

And on the way to the Garden of Gethsemane the beautiful farewell message was continued. This scene is climaxed by the Great High Priestly Prayer of the Lord, recorded in chapter seventeen. And in these four chapters - fourteen to seventeen - we have some of the most precious truths that ever fell from the lips of our Lord and Saviour.

As we remember that only John records them, we realize something of their significance, placed as they are by the Holy Spirit in this Gospel which lays emphasis upon the exaltation of the Lord Jesus to His rightful place as the eternal God. That He should manifest such love, as that evidenced in these four chapters - such love for us, whom He calls "**his own**," unlovely and unworthy though we are - that He should manifest such love, warms our hearts and fills our souls with worship for such a Saviour!

Before we consider the farewell discourse, let us scan the pages of chapter thirteen for proofs of Christ's deity. We can only mention them in passing:

1. His Foreknowledge:

(a) "***That His Hour Was Come that he should depart out of this world unto the Father***," Joh 13:1; Joh 13:31-33.
(b) "***That the Father Had Given All Things into His Hands***," Joh 13:3.
(c) "***That He Was Come from God, and Went to God***," Joh 13:3.
(d) *That Judas Would Betray Him*, Joh 13:10-11; Joh 13:18; Joh 13:21-27.
(e) *That Peter Would Deny Him*, Joh 13:38.

2. His Acceptance of Worship.

Seven times in this chapter the title "**Lord**" is applied to Christ; and always He accepts it as His by right of His deity (See Joh 13:6; Joh 13:9; Joh 13:13-14; Joh 13:25; Joh 13:36-37).

3. His Claim to Power to Cleanse from Sin.

His words in Joh 13:10 and Joh 13:11 are significant:

"**He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, hut is clean every whit: and ye are clean, but not all. For he knew who should betray him; therefore said he, Ye are not all clean**." Having been cleansed "**once for all**" from the penalty of sin by faith in the shed blood of Christ, the redeemed child of God yet needs the daily cleansing from the defilement of sin, foreshadowed in the Jewish tabernacle by the washing of hands and feet at the brazen laver.

"**If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness**," (1Jn 1:9).

It is the Lord Jesus Christ who cleanses us from the penalty of our sin "**once for all**" when His own Holy Spirit regenerates our souls, and we are born again. And it is Christ who cleanses us from the defilement of daily sins "**with the washing of water by the word**," Eph 5:26. And because only God can forgive sin, therefore Christ is God!

4. His Application of Old Testament Prophecy to Himself,
Joh 13:18.

A thousand years before Jesus was born in Bethlehem, David wrote in Psa 41:9 the words quoted by the Lord in Joh 13:18 and applied to Himself, concerning the betrayal by Judas,

"**He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me**."

Then the Lord added the significant words:

"**Now I tell you before it come, that, when it is come to pass, ye may know that I am** . . ."

(The word "*he*" is in italics; and is, therefore, not in the Greek language but is supplied by the translators to add clarity to the verse).

5. His Claim to Be One with the Father, Joh 13:20; Joh 13:31-32.
6. His Divine Authority in Teaching, Joh 13:34-35.

"**Love is the fulfilling of the law**." And the "**new commandment**" was given in the voice of authority by the Son of God Himself. He taught not "**as one of the scribes**," but as the One whose right it is to give commandments, as very God!

Chapters Fourteen, Fifteen, Sixteen:

Since chapters fourteen, fifteen, and sixteen form one continuous discourse, let us consider them as a unit. It is difficult not to dwell at length upon these familiar, much loved words that are our Lord's farewell message to the eleven disciples who loved Him, as well as to us today.

But we must pause only long enough to call attention to some of the striking points of emphasis upon His deity:

1. Christ's Gift of the Peace of God, Spoken to Troubled Hearts,
Joh 14:1; Joh 14:27; Joh 16:33.

Only His loved ones can know what the Lord meant by these wonderful words! And only eternity will reveal the comfort they have given to troubled hearts for many centuries! They carry with them the authority of the everlasting God, as well as the comfort of the sympathetic Saviour!

2. His Claim to Be One with God, the Father,
Joh 14:1; Joh 14:7-12; Joh 14:20; Joh 14:24; Joh 15:1-2; Joh 15:8; Joh 15:15; Joh 15:21; Joh 15:23-24; Joh 16:3; Joh 16:5; Joh 16:10; Joh 16:15-16; Joh 16:25-28; Joh 16:32.

We quote just one of these often-repeated truths:

"**He that hath seen me hath seen the Father**," Joh 14:9.

3. His Prophecy of His Ministry on Behalf of His Own during This Church Age:

"**In my Father's house are many mansions** . . . **I go to prepare a place for you** . . . **He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing**," Joh 14:2; Joh 15:5.

Later, in the seventeenth chapter, we learn the kind of intercession our Great High Priest is making even now for us at the "**throne of grace**."

4. His Prophecy of His Death, Resurrection, Ascension, and Return for His Own,
Joh 14:1-6; Joh 14:12; Joh 14:18; Joh 14:28; Joh 16:16-33.

Again, this foreknowledge manifests His deity.

5. His Claim to Be the Way, the Truth, and the Life, as Well as the True Vine,
Joh 14:6; Joh 14:19; Joh 15:1; Joh 15:5.

Again we are reminded of Joh 1:51, where the Lord told Nathanael that He Himself is "Jacob's Ladder," the Way to heaven and God. In Joh 14:6; Joh 15:1; Joh 15:5 we have two of the seven uses by the Lord of the great "**I AM**," wherein He applied this name to Himself.

6. His Promise to Answer the Believer's Prayer:

(a) *To the Father*, Joh 15:16; Joh 16:23.
(b) *In Jesus' Name*, Joh 14:13-14; Joh 15:16; Joh 16:23-24; Joh 16:26.
(c) *For God's Glory*, Joh 14:13.
(d) *If the Believer Abides in Christ, and His Words Abide in the Believer*, Joh 15:7.

7. The Divine Authority of His Teachings throughout the entire discourse.
8. Christ's Promise of the Holy Spirit:

(a) *To Be Sent by the Father*:

(1) In answer to the Son's prayer, Joh 14:16;
(2) in the name of the Son, Joh 14:26.

(b) *To Be Sent by the Son from the Father*, Joh 15:26; Joh 16:7. Therefore, Father and Son are One!
(c) *To Be "**Another Comforter**,"* Joh 14:16; Joh 14:18; Joh 14:26; Joh 15:26; Joh 16:7.
(d) *To Abide with Believers and in Them Forever*, Joh 14:16-17.
(e) *To Be Recognized as the Spirit of Truth*, Joh 14:17; Joh 15:26; Joh 16:13 :

(1) Unknown to the Christ-rejecting world.
(2) Known by believers in Jesus.

(f) *To Teach Believers the Word of the Lord Jesus*, Joh 14:26; Joh 15:26; Joh 16:13-15.
(g) *To Reprove the World of Sin, of Righteousness, and of Judgment*, Joh 16:8-11.

9. Old Testament Prophecy Fulfilled in Christ:

"**They hated me without a cause**," Joh 15:25; cf. Psa 35:19; Psa 69:4.

10. The Testimony of the Disciples to Christ's Deity Accepted by Him, Joh 16:30-31.

(a) *That He knew all things*.
(b) *That He came "**forth from God**."*

Chapter Seventeen:

Earlier in these studies we called attention to the fact that in our Lord's intercessory prayer for His own, recorded in the seventeenth chapter of John, He addresses the Father as an Equal. It would seem impossible to express the co-equality, co-eternity, and co-existence of the Father and the Son in more forceful language than that before us in this wonderful chapter.

It has been suggested that here, as it were, our Great High Priest is in the Holy of Holies, interceding for His blood-bought children. He is doing that and more; for the passage opens with a group of declarative statements concerning the eternal relationship between the Father and the Son, and their eternal purpose to redeem the lost.

Let us select some of the most striking of these proofs of the deity of the Lord Jesus:

1. The Frequent Use of the Term "Father" in the Unique Sense Which Only the Son Could Claim, Joh 17:1; Joh 17:5; Joh 17:11; Joh 17:21; Joh 17:24-25.

2. The Lord's Petition That He Might Be Glorified as the Son Who Had Glorified the Father, Joh 17:1; Joh 17:4-5.

3. The Son's Statement of the Purpose, for Which the Father Sent Him into the World - to give eternal life to those the Father had given Him, Joh 17:2-4.

4. The Statement That to Have Eternal Life Is to Know the Father and the Son - two Persons of the one Triune God! Joh 17:3.

*5. The Lord's Petition for Restoration to His Eternal Glory, which He had with the Father "**before the world was**,"* Joh 17:5; Joh 17:24.

Not only do we find these irrefutable claims of the Lord Jesus to eternal deity, but throughout this prayer for His redeemed He is talking to His Father as an Equal. One with the Father from all eternity, He was sent by the Father, and was now returning to the Father, taking with Him "**many sons unto glory**" (Heb 2:10).

The wonder of it is that this is the kind of prayer our Lord Jesus is praying for us even now at "**the throne of grace**"; and that Joh 17:20 includes every saved soul throughout this church age:

"**Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word**."

Our Great High Priest "**ever liveth to make intercession**" for us who love Him! (See Heb 7:25).

(For a beautiful analysis of the chapter, we suggest the footnotes of the *Scofield Reference Bible*).

Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen:

John's record of the suffering and death of Christ gives undeniable proof of His deity, providing fresh evidence that the suffering Saviour was none other than the eternal God:

1. Christ's Foreknowledge Again Revealed.

"**Jesus** . . . **knowing all things that should come upon him** . . . **went forth**" to meet Judas and his wicked companions. (See Joh 18:4; cf. Joh 19:28). Not waiting to be taken prisoner, He voluntarily allowed His enemies to lead Him away to be crucified.

2. His Majesty and Power in the Presence of His Cowering Enemies.

As the Lord "**went forth**" to meet His enemies, a miraculous thing happened, mentioned only by John. After He had three times said to them, "**I am**" - the word "*he*" is in italics; and, therefore, is not in the Greek - then "**they went backward, and fell to the ground**" (Joh 18:6). Some supernatural manifestation of His glory and majesty overpowered them, not only proving His deity, but also proving that He had the power to save Himself from the cross, had He so willed it.

3. The Fulfillment of Old Testament Prophecy in Christ's Suffering and Death.

(a) *Crucified - Not Stoned!*

While there is no direct quotation from the Old Testament prophecy in Joh 18:31-32; yet the statement here illustrates how God wrought, that the prophecies might be fulfilled. Moreover, the passage shows the fulfillment of the prediction of the Lord Jesus.

If the Roman government had not forbidden by law the Jews' execution of their accused, they would have stoned Christ to death, rather than crucify Him. They later stoned Stephen; and that was according to Jewish custom in executions. But God had said through David in the twenty-second Psalm, to say nothing of other prophecies, that Christ was to be crucified.

That Psalm was written a thousand years B.C. At that time crucifixion was not even known.

But God knows all that the future holds; and He wrote the manner of Christ's death in the Old Testament, in order that, when the Lord Jesus was crucified, we might know that He was the promised Redeemer. Such things were not written of a mere man!

(b) *"**No Fault in Him!**"*

Three times Pilate told the Jews that Christ was guiltless; and in His sinlessness, acknowledged by the Roman governor, Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled, in which he said, "**He had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth**," Isa 53:9; Joh 18:38; Joh 19:4; Joh 19:6.

(c) *The Unresisting Lamb of God!*

When "**Jesus gave him** (Pilate) **no answer**," Joh 19:9, another prophecy from Isa 53:7 was fulfilled,

"**He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth : he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth**."

(d) *"**Numbered with the Transgressors**,"*
Isa 53:12,

Our Lord was crucified between two thieves, Joh 19:18.

(e) *"**For My Vesture They Did Cast Lots**"*
Joh 19:24; Psa 22:18.

Thus the Roman soldiers, pagan and cruel, were fulfilling prophecy, of which they doubtless knew nothing!

(f) *"**They Gave Me Also** . . . **Vinegar to Drink**"*
Psa 69:21; Joh 19:29.

(g) *"**A Bone of Him Shall Not Be Broken**"*
Joh 19:36; Exo 12:46; Num 9:12; Psa 34:20.

The fulfillment of this prophecy is wonderful, indeed!

"**The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the sabbath day, (for that sabbath day was an high day), besought Pilate that their legs might be broken, and that they might be taken away**," Joh 19:31; cf. Deu 21:23.

In other words the Jews got permission from Pilate to break the legs of the three on the crosses, so they would die quickly; for death by crucifixion was a slow torture. The soldiers did break the legs of the two thieves; but not those of Christ; for already He had voluntarily given His Spirit into the Father's keeping. Had He not said, "**No man taketh my life from me, but I lay it down of myself**"? And "**these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled. A bone of him shall not be broken**," Joh 19:36. There is no explanation of such a supernatural circumstance, other than that it was so ordered by God to prove that "**Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God**."

(h) *"**Pierced!**"*

"**One of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side . . .**" Joh 19:34.

"**And again another scripture saith, They shall look on him whom they pierced**," Joh 19:37; Zec 12:10; Rev 1:7; cf. Psa 22:16.

(i) *"**Buried with the Rich**."*

It is in Mat 27:57 that we read that Joseph of Arimathea was "**rich**." But all the evangelists tell of his going to Pilate to beg the body of Jesus, and of his burying it in his own new tomb. In this act he was fulfilling yet another prophecy from Isa 53:9, which tells us that the Lord was to be buried "**with the rich in his death**."

We rejoice to know that Nicodemus loved the Lord, for he brought sweet spices with which to prepare the body of Jesus for burial. Only John mentions this ruler of the Jews, but in his second reference to him, "**the beloved disciple**" tells us that Nicodemus took the Lord's part in the Jewish council. And here he came out boldly for Him, to prepare His body for burial. (See Joh 3:1-21; Joh 7:50-52; Joh 19:39-40).

4. Christ's Authoritative Answers to His Accusers. From Joh 18:20-23; Joh 18:33-38; Joh 19:11 we quote here just a brief excerpt from our Lord's plain statements to His accusers, words in which He asserted His deity:

"**My kingdom is not of this world** . . . **Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice**."

5. The Jews' Own Admission That Jesus Claimed to Be God,
Joh 19:7,

"**We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God**." Therefore, they were without excuse!

6. Significant Omissions from John's Gospel.

The details omitted from this fourth Gospel, in connection with the suffering and death of Christ are significant. To include them would have been contrary to the purpose of the Holy Spirit in John's record. For example, there is no description of the Gethsemane experience, with the thrice-repeated prayer to the Father. There is nothing about the "**sweat as it were great drops of blood**," the "**strong crying and tears**," the ministering angel, the Lord's seeking the human companionship of Peter, James, and John. All of these details emphasize the humanity of the suffering Saviour; whereas John is portraying the Lord of glory! Instead of Christ's seeking human companionship, He is seen protecting His own from the Jews who were about to crucify Him (Joh 18:8).

Likewise, John omits the compelling of Simon to bear Jesus' cross "**after him**," the mocking taunts of the angry mob, the supernatural darkness, the forsaken cry, the rending of the veil of the temple. Each of these details has its place in the other Gospels, but in John we behold the unveiling of "**The mighty God**"!

7. The Voice of Triumph.

When the Lord Jesus cried out, saying, "**It is finished**," He was proclaiming to all His universe, doubtless with a shout of victory, that His redemptive work was accomplished. With the authority of the God He was, He declared that Satan was forever vanquished. All who would believe in Him for salvation from sin were forever set free from Satan and sin and death!

It is in keeping with the purpose of this fourth Gospel that this shout of triumph should be recorded here. (See Joh 19:30). Only John records it.

The only other sayings of Christ from the cross, quoted by John, are found only here: The Lord's loving provision for Mary; and the words, "**I thirst**." (See Joh 19:26-28). We are told that extreme thirst is one of the agonies of the physical suffering of crucifixion; and this, too, was prophesied in Psa 22:15.

Surely an honest seeker after truth must admit that, even in His passion, the Lord Jesus is portrayed in John as the eternal Son of the eternal God!

Chapters Twenty and Twenty-One:

Much of the material of the last two chapters of John is not found elsewhere in the Word of God; for example, the details of the visit of Peter and John to the empty tomb; the risen Lord's appearance first to Mary Magdalene; the story of "doubting Thomas," following the Lord's appearance to some of the disciples; His appearance eight days later, Thomas being present; and the stated purpose of John's Gospel, Joh 20:30-31.

Then all of chapter twenty-one, which is an epilogue to the whole book, is recorded only in John. It includes: The risen Lord's appearance to the seven by the Sea of Tiberias, also called the Sea of Galilee, and the miraculous draught of fishes; His three-fold question to Peter, saying, "**Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me?**" His prophecy of Peter's crucifixion in his old age; His answer concerning Peter's query about how John should die; and a final verse suggestive of the infinite scope of Christ's Person and work.

All of these events bear testimony to the deity and power and glory of the risen Lord Jesus! Let us look briefly at some of these "**many infallible proofs**" that "**Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God**":

1. The Empty Tomb bore silent witness to the bodily resurrection of the Lord Jesus; and His resurrection was the climax of all the proofs of His deity.

2. The Linen Clothes lying in order in the empty tomb, with the "**napkin that was about his head, not lying with the linen clothes, but wrapped together in a place by itself**" - such order refutes the false story of the Jews that His body was stolen away by His disciples. The grave clothes were still there! They were there in order, just like an empty shell, as it were; the Lord had risen! He had no further need of grave clothes!

3. The Appearance of the Angels added yet further proof of the supernatural character of Christ's bodily resurrection.

4. The Lord's Appearance to Mary Magdalene, and her testimony to His resurrection before the disciples, furnishes additional evidence of His resurrection from the dead.

5. The Lord's Appearance to the Disciples, Thomas Being Absent is convincing. On this occasion He "**shewed them his hands, and his side**," Joh 20:20. The nail prints and the wounded side proved the reality of His resurrection body. Here also John called Him "**the Lord**," Joh 20:20; and once more the risen Christ spoke of His having been "**sent by the Father**," Joh 20:21.

6. His Appearance to the Disciples, Thomas Being "**with Them**," is wonderful. Again He showed the wounds in his hands and side.

7. The Testimony of Thomas, Joh 20:28, is overwhelming.

"**My Lord and my God!**"

The Lord accepted these titles of deity - a proof that He was God!

8. The Purpose of John's Gospel, Joh 20:30-31. We spoke of the stated purpose of John early in our study of this fourth Gospel; but it is so important and so basic that we quote it again here in full. It speaks for itself:

"**And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name**."

9. His Appearance to the Seven Disciples by the Sea of Galilee. Here He manifested His power to withhold His identity, as also He had done when He appeared to Mary Magdalene; and His power to work a mighty miracle. Again, John called Him "**the Lord**," Joh 21:12.

10. Peter's Testimony to the Omniscience of Christ, Joh 21:17,

"**Lord, thou knowest all things**."

11. The Lord's Prophecy of Peter's Crucifixion, Joh 21:18-19. In other words, He foretold that Peter's hands would be stretched forth on a cross for Jesus' sake.

12. The Divine Authority of the Lord's Answer to Peter concerning John, Joh 21:20-23. In this connection we observe that the Lord's closing words in this Gospel have to do with His promise to return for His own. There is no record here of His ascension; for, as the omnipresent Lord, He is still "**in the midst**" of those who love Him.

13. The Infinite Scope of the Person and Work of Christ, Joh 21:25 :

"**And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen**."

With these closing words the Holy Spirit leaves us with a feeling of awe as we continue to ponder over the matchless portrait of "**Jesus, the Son of God**," which we have been beholding throughout these sacred pages. No words can fully describe Him; no book can tell all about Him. We shall have to wait until we see Him in His uncreated glory before we can fully know the wonder of His Person and the marvel of His grace! Yea, doubtless throughout eternity we shall still be ever learning more and more about the "**power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing**" of our wonderful Lord! (See Rev 5:12).

~ end of chapter 21 ~

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

In Retrospect

As we look back over the four Gospels, viewing them as a whole, we are forcefully impressed with their perfect harmony, magnifying as they do the Christ of God. Placed by the Holy Spirit immediately after the Old Testament and at the beginning of the New, they form the very heart of the entire Scriptures. Their many quotations from the Old Testament, in fulfillment of prophecy, prove that the Lord Jesus is, indeed, the central theme of the entire Bible. For "in the Old Testament we see portrayed the Christ of prophecy; in the Gospels, the Christ of history; in The Acts and the epistles, the Christ of experience; and in The Revelation, the Christ of glory." (Quoted from Dr. Graham W. Scroggie).

And why are there four Gospels? The Holy Spirit has given us the answer on the pages of these four inspired records:

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, rejected by His ancient people, Israel, when He walked among them, will one day return in glory to be honored, not only by His chosen people, but also by His vast universe, as King of kings, and Lord of lords.

The faithful Servant of the Lord, who "**humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross**" (Php 2:8), is ministering still with His faithful servants. Seated "**on the right hand of God**," He is "**working with them, and confirming the word**" as they make it known to fallen humanity. (See Mar 16:19-20).

The sinless Son of Man, who came "**to seek and to save that which was lost**" (Luk 19:10), understands our sorrows, sympathizes with us in our trials; for He "**suffered being tempted**" and is "**touched with the feeling of our infirmities**" (Heb 2:18; Heb 4:15).

The eternal Son of God, who came to reveal to sinful man the Holy Trinity, has gone back to the Father, to "**prepare a place**" in His "**many mansions**" for those who love Him.

And if we love Him, shall we not re-dedicate our lives to making Him known in all the world? In the throes of a global war, in the presence of famine, earthquake, and pestilence, we behold literally millions of never-dying souls going into eternity before our very eyes, unsaved, forever lost, without Christ! And still His voice echoes down the ages, saying unto us.

"**Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature**" (Mar 16:15).

"**There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved**" (Act 4:12).

~ end of book ~