

The Four Gospels

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The four holy Gospels stand alone. They present Him who is the glorious Luminary to the whole moral universe, just as the sun is the light of the solar system. They shew us One who stands alone in His divine glory. They show us a life that could not have been imagined or invented by any man, and such is the glory of that life that no creature could have recorded it apart from the inspiration of the Holy Spirit of God.

We should not dare to speak of these Gospels if we did not know that the One who inspired them can give an understanding as to them. So we venture, as others have done, to dip our tiny vessel into this fathomless ocean of bliss, with fear and trembling and yet with holy delight, for it is a joy to speak of the wondrous Person who once lighted up this dark world with His presence and whose glory is destined to cover the whole creation of God.

The writers of the Gospels speak in the simplest way not appearing to say anything great or extraordinary. There is neither exclamation nor acclamation, no unnecessary stopping to comment on the great things they have to record. They take up the dealings of God in past times, going back to the beginning of time, and then on to its end; touching the great outstanding events in the world's history, and pass on to coming greater events. They tell out the grand facts of revelation, speaking of wonders, signs and miracles without comment. They show our Lord dealing with the present in relation to the past and future in the way that none but He could do it, combining all into one grand and glorious whole.

The Gospel of Matthew quotes more from the Old Testament than the others, and by the law of the relation of type to antitype is more closely related to it. It presents our Lord in relation to David and Abraham, to whom the land and the throne belonged. Refused by the Jews as the Fulfiller of promise, He turns to the Gentile, in view of the calling out of the world and the building of His Assembly, the Church. This transition underlies the greater part of His ministry as given there both in miracle and parable. It was historically accomplished in the Acts and witnessed to in the Jewish Epistles of the New Testament.

Mark begins with the Son of God. The Spirit presents our Lord as the Servant and it was necessary to give the descent from which He entered upon His work. The amazing thing is that this Servant is God. "Behold, My Servant shall deal prudently, He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high." Such a Servant goes to the highest place of all, even the right hand of God.

Luke goes back beyond Matthew to the beginning of man's history. He is not here viewed as the Son of David or Abraham as in Matthew's Gospel, but the Son of Man in relation to mankind. He appears as the One able to take up in His Person the whole of man's history from Eden onwards, to glorify God where everyone else failed and carry everything to the Kingdom and eternal glory. The Man Christ Jesus is seen here in every way fitted to take up and carry through every question, principle and obligation which stands between God and man. Here we see with deep delight that "The charm of a Man is His kindness" (Prov. 19: 22).

In these three Gospels what Christ is to God in relation to His time ways comes before us. There

had been a long line of faithful witnesses on earth which God in grace had secured for Himself. In them certain features of Christ had been portrayed. Ever since the fall God had been working in view of another order of man entirely. God had created man for His own pleasure, Christ alone can be that in perfection, but in spite of the fall God had so wrought that features of Christ could be seen in men who were subjects of mercy. In Adam *life*; in Abel, *righteousness*; in Noah, *rule*; in Abraham, *sovereignty, calling and election*; in Isaac, *Sonship*; in Jacob, *head of the earthly company in prophecy, blessing and worship*. The Lord Jesus Christ came to fulfil in His own Person every blessed divine trait which grace had produced in these and all others belonging to the family of faith.

But what of the Gospel of John? In Mark the designation Son of God was a necessity, because He had become a Servant. But in that Gospel there is no genealogy, no history of His birth, no great sermons: He is a Servant. In John there is no genealogy, no birth, no mount of transfiguration, no agony in the garden nor cry of abandonment upon the cross. In John we go beyond the prophets as in Mark, beyond David and Abraham as in Matthew and beyond Adam as in Luke. We begin with God and eternity. "In the beginning was the Word." If the others begin each at his respective point and go on to show our Lord in relation to the time ways of God, past, present and future, John goes beyond them to show our Lord, and indeed the Godhead, in relation to eternal purpose. This Gospel gives the activities of Godhead both before and after time began.

This is the distinguishing feature of the fourth Gospel. While all of them are divine and heavenly and above the creature there is that here which in measure leads us to the inner life of the Godhead. This last is touched both in Matthew 11 and Luke 10, but we are speaking of what characterises each. In John we have the Persons of the Godhead in relation to each other. In the others we see God in relation to time and the creation, taking in the whole arena of good and evil, but in John, Father, Son and Holy Spirit are seen in relation to each other in what is native and proper to Godhead in such a way as nowhere else. Certain statements in relation to time may touch this, as in the words "Let us make man," or "Let us go down," but while these speak of plurality in the Godhead they fall short of that which John gives, namely; the essential unity of the Godhead in the triune blessedness of holy love.

Here the adoring heart finds its deepest delight in contemplating that which stands out as the richest part of divine revelation. The eternal Word, the Logos, is seen as the Son of the Father's love in communion of nature, essence, being and counsel; co-equal and co-eternal, yet in perfect Manhood carrying out the Father's will. The holy intimacies which were there without beginning in virtue of the unity of the Godhead in essential Being, in the eternal reciprocation of what is native to Deity, in love and fulness of glory, could but give a matchless, heavenly grandeur to all that path of suffering, shame and woe.

This is JESUS, "Our Lord Jesus" (Heb. 13: 20). We dwell with holy adoration upon His beauties and perfections as with ever fresh and increasing joy we follow His holy footsteps in these Gospels. The charm of this blessed Man: His tenderness, sweetness, compassion and beauty bind our souls to Him in love which is eternal, and as we pillow our heads in the holy seclusion of love in His blessed bosom we ever remain conscious that He is "God over ALL, blessed for evermore. Amen."