

Christ in 03 in the Gospels

by Jim Flanigan

The four Gospels provide a full-orbed and universal view of the Lord Jesus, each offering a unique perspective and insights into His character and nature.

Duration: 56:55

Scripture: Matthew 1:1, Matthew 20:30, Matthew 21:1-2, Matthew 28:18, John 20:30

Topics: "Jesus Christ", "Gospel Accounts"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the greatness of the Lord Jesus and the need to understand Him from four different aspects. The four Gospels are seen as providing a full and balanced view of Jesus. The speaker compares this to viewing a building from different angles, where each angle reveals a different aspect of the building. The purpose of having four Gospels instead of one consecutive life of Christ is to allow readers to follow the literal footsteps of Jesus and to grasp the infinite nature of His being.

Transcript

I make you welcome this evening as we commence another week of meditation upon the Lord Jesus. We have been following a very beautiful pattern, I think, that the Lord Jesus is in all of the scriptures, and from different parts of our Bible we have been looking for him. Last week we were exclusively in the Old Testament, and this week we turn to the New.

And tomorrow evening we want to look for him in the Acts of the Apostles, and then on the following evening we'll see him in the Epistles of the Romans, then in the Epistles of the Hebrews, and then in the Book of the Revelation. We hope that you'll come back as often as you possibly can. There are so many aspects and different facets of the Lord Jesus, and I trust that you are finding it encouraging to know that he is indeed in all the scriptures, just like he said, and that the Lord will bless us this evening as we look for him in the Gospels.

So we make you very welcome and hope that you'll come back again if you can, in the will of the Lord. Now we want to look then tonight, please, at the four Gospels and their presentation of the Lord Jesus, and I'd like to read just from the end of the Gospels, the Gospel by John, and perhaps a verse or two from chapter 20, and then from chapter 21. Firstly from chapter 20, and at verse 30.

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. Now chapter 21, I'm reading just the last verse, 25. And there are also many other things which Jesus did, to which if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.

And the Lord will bless those short readings from his work. Now personally, I find the Gospels fascinating, and I constantly have to drag myself out of them as far as personal reading is concerned. And I trust that maybe after we have looked at them this evening, that some of you will have the same problem.

I trust that we'll be able to introduce you to this lovely problem of being completely intrigued by the Gospels. Now there is a kind of a little pattern, almost a principle among us, that when we are just saved, just newly brought to Christ, we somehow think that the Gospels are the simplest part of our Bible. And I suppose that if a young believer comes and says, I've just got saved, where will I start to read? Well I suppose that usually we would give that advice, that you begin to read in the Gospels.

And not only that, but if someone says, now there are four Gospels, which of them in particular should I study? We generally say, well now the simplest of them of course is the Gospel by John, and perhaps you ought to begin there. And indeed if someone comes to us who has not saved at all, and they want scriptures to read, we would feel very happy about giving to them a copy of the Gospel by John. And the Gospel by John has a very simple vocabulary, and somehow we imagine that even boys and girls can read it, and appreciate and in some measure understand that Gospel.

So our first reasoning then seems to be that the four Gospels are the simplest part, and of the four Gospels the simplest is the Gospel by John. Now we begin to read on a little bit, and some of us thought we had graduated when we left the Gospels, and we went to the Epistles and began to study there, and discover new things in the Epistles. But I want to promise you that eventually everybody comes back to the Gospels.

And then having read the Epistles for a while, when you come back to the Gospels, you begin to realize now that these four Gospels are not just the simple books that one time we thought they were. And when you study them a little bit more closely, you find then that the Gospel by John, far from being the simplest of the four, is perhaps the most profound of them all. So that in fact what might be perhaps the simplest book in all of our Bible has now taken the form of the most profound.

Now that's a strange pattern that seems to be consistent among us, that now we have come to realize that the real deep things of the New Testament are in the Gospels. Now there's a very simple reason for that, and the reason is that in these four Gospels we are actually following literally the footsteps of the Lord Jesus. And if He is all that we know Him to be, well then of course we are following the footprints of infinity here in these four Gospels.

And if that be so, and it is so, well then of course it's obvious that they cannot be the simple pamphlets that one time we thought they were. I want to try to show tonight something of the beauty and of comparing and contrasting these four lovely Gospels, and I hope that we'll be attracted to them in the way that they present the Lord Jesus. Now sometimes I think it is an amazing thing that such a small book, as for instance say the Gospel according to Mark, should have such profound things in so few pages.

Sometimes I think that if some of our brethren were to write a book like this today of this size, we would hardly say that he had written a book. We would call it a pamphlet. We would say he has written a booklet.

If you take the pages of Mark's Gospel sometime and put them between your finger and thumb, you'll find that it's not really a very big book after all, and yet you can spend a lifetime in the study of these four Gospels. Now when you come first of all to the Gospels, I think that the first question that needs to be asked and answered is, why four Gospels? Why did God give us four Gospels like this, and could he not have given to us? And if he could, why did he not give to us one consecutive life of Christ? That is an important question that needs to be asked and answered as to why we have four Gospels and not just one. You know that some dear brethren, some scholars, some students, they have gone to great trouble and they have produced for us what they call a harmony of the Gospels, and they have gone to very great pains to try to produce a life of Christ so that we can sit down and read right through and get all of these incidents in their proper setting and in chronological order, and I'm sure that that must be very interesting.

But I never sit down to read a life of Christ, but I think to myself, why did God not give it to us like this? It would have been as simple for him to have given us one life of Christ as to have given us the four Gospels that he has done, and therefore there must be a very important reason, and that question, I repeat, has got to be answered, why four Gospels? Well now again, the answer to that is fairly simple, that such is the greatness of the Lord Jesus that it really does take at least four aspects of him, four views of the Lord Jesus, to properly begin even to understand him. And so we have from four entirely different aspects, we have a look at the Lord Jesus, and this gives to us, as much as we can have it down here, it gives us a full-orbed and a universal fourfold view of the Saviour. And without any one of these views, we would be very poor indeed.

But with the four of them, we have a fairly balanced sight of this blessed one. And so four Gospels are given to us, and we have a full-orbed universal aspect of the Lord Jesus. Now someone has said that this is a little bit like viewing a building.

You come to see perhaps a historical or a beautiful building in some town or city that you're visiting, and your friend who's showing you around, he knows that you're interested in architecture and in buildings, and so he brings you to the front of the building, maybe naturally first of all, and you have a little look at the building, and maybe you take a picture or two, and you have a look at the building from the front. But then, if he knows your interest in the building and in architecture, he'd say, now, you must come around to the rear of the building, because there are things there, you know, that are peculiar and unique, and that you can't see, of course, from the front. And he takes you around to the back, and true enough, there are things there that are beautiful that you didn't see at the front at all, but it's the very same building.

And then he would say to you, now, we must go around to the eastern aspect, and then he'd take you to the west of the building, and from every side, true enough, you can see things that you didn't see from the other sides, from the other aspects, and you feel that perhaps you would have been the poorer if you had missed out on any one of those aspects of the building. Now, we must be very careful then that we don't get an imbalance as we come to view the blessed Lord. It might be a very easy thing for some of us to dwell a lot in John's Gospel, but we mustn't do that to the exclusion of looking at him from Matthew's point of view.

And again, we must not be in an imbalance and get occupied with the royalty and the dignity of Matthew, and forget the lowliness of what we have in the Gospel by Mark. And again, of course, there are beauties in the Gospel by Luke, and if you really do want this universal view of the Lord Jesus, you have got to apply yourself to each of these four Gospels. Now, the four portraits of the Lord, they are entirely different, as most of you will know.

And I speak tonight to the young believer who comes new, perhaps, to the Gospels and comes to study as a young Christian. And I remind you that each of these Gospels is very different, the one from the other. And really, to get this full view of the Lord Jesus, you'll have to read the four of them, and you'll have to compare them.

And if I could give you a little exhortation, and indeed to my older friends as well, my suggestion is that whatever you read at any time in any one of the Gospels, never study it as an island, never study it in isolation, but always go to the other Gospels and find if that incident is recorded there. And if it is, compare them. See what the differences are.

See how they compare and how they contrast. And you'll find that every incident, every parable, every miracle, every story will take on a new meaning when you compare the one Gospel with another. Sometimes, of course, you'll find a thing in only one Gospel.

Sometimes you'll find a thing in two, and sometimes in three. And there are not many things that you find in four Gospels, but there are a few incidents that are recorded in all of the four. And so you've got to compare and contrast and never study a thing in isolation.

And you'll find that each of the Gospels is completely different, the one from the other, and yet there is this lovely comparison in a sense between them, because each of them is speaking about the same Lord Jesus. Now, some time ago, I thought I saw this illustrated. A few years ago, my father died.

And when I went back home again, after a few weeks, I noticed one of these little boxes sitting on the mantelpiece, one of these little plastic boxes, a plastic cubical photo frame. You know where there's a little picture, a photo in each of the six sides. And I found when I went back again that in four of these sides, there was a picture of my father.

And I saw on the first side that here he was, and he was dressed, you know, and he had a Bible in his hand like this. And he was obviously leaving the home, leaving house to go to a meeting. And there are people who look at that, you know, and they say, that's just him.

That's just how I remember him. But when you turn that little box around, the very next picture, you know, it seems to be an entirely different man. He's dressed very casually.

I would assume that it was taken on holiday somewhere. And in some respects, it's a different person. And yet there are people who look at that, and they say, isn't that very good? That's just how I remember him.

And then you turn again, and you see him sitting, and he's at home. And again, perhaps he's dressed casually, and he's got a grandchild on his knee. And well, there are people who look at that and say, that's how I remember him.

And yet each of these pictures is different. But each time, it's the same man. But it's a different view of the same person.

And that is exactly so when we come to the Gospels. We have four entirely different views, and yet the person is always the same. Now someone has used another illustration.

If you go down to some of the booksellers, and you want to buy a biography, the story of some of the great men, even of our own day. For instance, if you went down to buy the story of Mr. Churchill, you're a

bookseller. If he knows his books, he might well ask you which particular aspect of the man you want to read about.

Because you see, you could buy a biography that might tell you all about him as a politician, but it might not mention anything about what he's like as a father in the home, or what he was to his near friends. But you can buy a biography that will tell you that, but it's a different story of the same man. And then of course, there's another book, and it will tell you about his early days, and it will tell you about his time as a correspondent during the war, and maybe give you a little idea, a little insight into his military activities.

And you might well think it's a different man, but it's the same man, but it's the story written from a different aspect. And so again, if you really want a full and complete view of the man, you would nearly have to read them all. And this is exactly so with the person of the Lord Jesus.

Now another thing, it's a wee bit like the veil you know that we were speaking of one evening, the veil in the old tabernacle. Here was a very beautiful veil, and it was actually draped over four pillars. And those four pillars were of chitin wood, and they were overlaid with gold as you know.

And here was this beautiful veil of blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine twined linen. And we talked about it one time at an earlier meeting, and it seems as if here are the four Gospels, and this lovely veil of the flesh of the Lord Jesus is being hung over these four pillars. Well this is what is happening now, and as we come in by the opening chapters of each of the Gospels, we are actually entering by the beautiful gate, and we come into the outer court, and we walk around, and we view all these things that bring Him to us, but each time we are seeing a different viewpoint, a different aspect, but it's always the same blessed Lord.

So I trust that you'll be attracted and drawn to a study of each of the Gospels, and a comparison of the Gospels, and that you'll see that you need all of them really to appreciate in fullness the person of the Lord Jesus. Now our brethren often tell us, quite rightly, that while there is a little bit of overlapping, generally speaking, the Gospel by Matthew is the story of the King. I'm sure we all agree with that.

It is the Messiah, the King. It is what we call His official glory, primarily, that we get in the first Gospel. In the second Gospel, that is of course the Gospel of the Servant.

I don't think there's any problem there, and we'll prove that in a moment or two, that Matthew is the Gospel of the Servant. These things are very well known. When you come to the Gospel by Luke, it is the story of a perfect man, a dependent man, and all those lovely moral features of the Lord Jesus are brought out in the Gospel by Luke.

But when you come to John, well, even a casual reader will observe that somehow there is something different about the Gospel by John. That if Matthew, Mark, and Luke are different the one from the other, nevertheless there is a kind of sameness there. But the Gospel by John is very different.

Now that explains a term that sometimes preachers use, and they talk about the first three as being the synoptic Gospels. Now that big word, synoptic, it simply means seeing together. You see the word optic in it there, and it means that we are seeing from the same point of view, seeing synonymously, or seeing together, and we say synoptic.

And while those three Gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, are different, nevertheless you can see that they do overlap quite a bit, and they talk about the same things, and so we call them the synoptic Gospels.

But when you come to John's Gospel, you find that he's speaking about the Son of God in a way that the others don't, and you find that his portrait of Christ is altogether different, and the things that he records are different, and you'll find that about maybe 95% of the Gospel by John you just can't read anywhere else. 95% of John is not to be found anywhere else in any of the other Gospels.

That makes it a very special and a very different Gospel. The Gospel by Mark is in reverse because 95% of Mark's Gospel you can read in the other three Gospels, only about 5% of Mark is peculiar to Mark. But how much we would lose if we hadn't the Gospel by John, because you see we never would have that great opening in chapter 1, that's all peculiar to John.

We wouldn't have the story of the turning of water to wine in Cana of Galilee, that's peculiar to John. We'd never have heard of Nicodemus. We'd never have heard of the woman at the well.

We'd never have heard of the man at the pool, or the blind man of chapter 9, or the woman taking an adultery in chapter 8. We'd never have had the shepherd discourse of chapter 10. We'd never have heard of Lazarus in chapter 11. We could go on and on, and 95% of John is peculiar to the Gospel by John.

Well, that means then that we have the Gospel of the King, the Gospel of the Servant. We have the Gospel of the perfect man, and the Gospel of the Son of God. Now, if you like alliteration, and if you find things easier to remember when we use alliteration, then what you say is this.

That in Matthew, we have the story of the Sovereign, and in Mark, we have the story of the Servant. In Luke, we have the story of the Savior, and in John, we have the story of the Son. Now, if you want to say all that in a different way, and still preserve the alliteration, you can say that in Matthew, it is a story of his lordliness.

In Mark, it is his lowliness. In Luke, it is his loveliness, and in John, it is his loftiness. And those are the four great themes of these Gospels.

Another thing, and still preserving alliteration in a sense, you can say that in the Gospel by Matthew, you have things prophetic. And no doubt, there are more Old Testament Scriptures quoted in Matthew than in any of the other Gospels. It is the prophetic Gospel, but when you come to Mark, it is the practical Gospel, and the Lord Jesus is very busy there as a Servant.

When you come to Luke's Gospel, it is the moral Gospel, and it is the moral features and character of the Lord that we get in Luke. That is why sometimes you get a little thing in Luke that seems to be out of order. Don't worry about that.

Luke is not interested in what we call chronology. He is not interested in maintaining chronological order. He is putting in moral features and moral order, and so you don't worry too much if you see Luke putting a little thing in a different place to the other Gospels.

It is in keeping with the theme of his Gospel. But when you come to John's Gospel, it has been called the spiritual Gospel. I don't misunderstand that word.

What we mean by it is this, that John is not just interested in telling us what has happened, but he is interested in explaining why things happen and what they mean, and giving us the spirit of them, and so we call his the spiritual Gospel. Again, of course, these Gospels have been written with different types of people in view, and again we must be careful that we don't put them into watertight compartments

because there is a certain overlapping, and we must be careful about that. But broadly speaking, you can say that Matthew has Jews in mind.

You can say that Mark has the Romans in mind. That could be proven from the text of his Gospel. You can say that Luke has Greeks in mind, and that John has Christians in mind.

And so again, you see the differences there. And if you want to say that same thing, again perhaps in an alliterated fashion, you can say that in Matthew, it's the nation in the singular. In Mark, it's the nations in the plural.

You can say that in Luke, it is the world, and in John, it is the church. And if you want one word to write right across each of these Gospels, then I suggest that across Matthew, you write the word majesty. Across Mark, you write the word ministry.

Across Luke, you write the word beauty, and across John, you write the word glory. And these are the great themes of the four Gospels, so all that I'm asking is that you remember that they are very different, and still remember that they are all about the same person. And remember that they must be contrasted, but don't forget that they must be compared.

You say it's getting very complicated. Very complicated. These are the deepest parts of our Bible, because we are actually following the footprints of God incarnate.

And why should books not be profound that are tracing the footsteps of God amongst men? So, four Gospels, we have them. And notice another very interesting thing, and maybe this is a little bit more practical, and it is that God, with these things in mind, has also divinely chosen the authors for these four Gospels. Now, it seems an Irish kind of thing to say, but God did not choose Matthew to write the Gospel by John.

He didn't choose Mark to write the Gospel by Luke. No, no, Matthew has written Matthew's Gospel, and John has painted his own portrait, and these men have been divinely chosen, and what wisdom there is in the choice of the men. Now, you remember Matthew.

Matthew, he sometimes called Levi. You don't worry about that either. All these little things that are sometimes pointed out as being discrepancies, there are no discrepancies in our Bible.

There are no mistakes or contradictions, and if there are little things that the world doesn't understand, don't you worry about it. There's an explanation somewhere, and this is one of the things they point out, Matthew and Levi, and little things like this, they get on to them as being somehow, no discrepancy here at all. You see, Matthew was a Galilean, but he also was a Jew, and because he was a Jew, he was Levi, and because he was a Galilean, he was Matthew.

You see, Galilee was largely the country of the Gentiles. Galilee of the nations, they called it. Galilee of the Gentiles, but when a Jew lived in Galilee, then he was sure that he had a Jewish name living in Galilee of the Gentiles, and so Matthew is Levi, and Levi is Matthew.

Matthew was the Galilean, and Levi is the Jew, but it's the Galilean Jew. It's the same thing. So we come to the Gospel by Matthew, and you remember who Matthew was.

Matthew was a publican. Matthew was a tax collector, and being that, he was actually an employee of the hated Roman Empire. Matthew was a man who worked for a kingdom that had suppressed and subjugated his own nation.

He was a traitor to his own nation. He was a man who had turned his back on his own kingdom and was working for another kingdom. He was working for another emperor.

He was in the employ of Caesar and the Roman Empire. What wondrous grace that one day the Lord Jesus met him, and from the side of the road from his receipt of custom, the Lord Jesus called him, and what a wondrous thing is this, that the man who was a traitor to his own kingdom and had turned his back upon his own nation, and was in the employ of a foreign power, has now been lifted to become the biographer of the king. I think that's wondrous grace.

Who better could God have chosen to write the story of the king than the man who had turned his back one day upon that kingdom? Well, that's wondrous grace, and we'll see how Matthew weaves that into his gospel in a moment or two. Now, John Mark, who wrote the second gospel, you know we remember bad things about people when we don't remember good things, and if we ask any of our brethren, what do you remember about John Mark? Oh, they say he was the servant who turned back. Nearly everybody says that.

That's the sort of instinctive, immediate reaction when we ask about John Mark. He was the servant who went so far, and then he turned back. Some know that, who don't know this, that afterwards he became very profitable, and Paul refers to him in one of his letters later on when he writes to Timothy, and he says, take Mark, he says he's profitable for the ministry, and that was after he had been recovered, but John Mark we usually remember as the servant who failed.

Who better to write the story of the servant who never failed than John Mark, the servant who did fail? And again, what wondrous grace of this, and John Mark is the one who writes the gospel of the servant. Now, what about Luke? Well, Luke is chosen. We don't know much about Luke, and in some respects we know a lot about him.

In another way, we don't really know very much about Luke, but we know this about him, that he was a physician. He never mentions his own name, not anywhere. He writes the Acts of the Apostles, and he writes the Gospel by Luke, but in all of those he never mentions his own name, but his name is mentioned three times in the New Testament, and we know this about him, that he was a physician, the beloved physician, and being a physician, I think we might all agree that Luke was very close to human nature.

Who better than a physician to study and understand human nature, and who better to write the story of a perfect man than the beloved physician, and so Luke is chosen, and you think of some of those details that we have in the early chapters of Luke's gospel. You know, humanly speaking, those details could only have come from Mary. There are things there at the beginning of Luke's gospel that only Mary herself could have revealed, and who better to confide in than the doctor, and isn't it lovely and very human that Luke should be the one in whom Mary confides, and to whom she gives these interesting details that are now involved in his gospel, and so the man who understands human nature is the man who writes the story of the perfect man.

Now you come to John's gospel, and of course if we ask what do you remember about John, I think most of us would immediately say he was the disciple that Jesus loved, and another thing we'd say about him,

you know, he was the disciple who leaned on the bosom of Jesus in the upper room on that night, and you remember too that he's the disciple who writes about the Lord Jesus in the bosom of the Father, and that in fact is the whole theme of John's gospel, that the Lord Jesus is the Son in the bosom of the Father. Who better to write the story of the Son in the bosom of the Father than that very disciple who lay on the bosom of the Son, and so you see that God has so wisely and sovereignly chosen the very pen men to write the gospels, and in every sense I think these are intriguing gospels of Matthew and Mark and Luke and John. Now Matthew's gospel, as we have said, is the gospel of the King.

Now the time runs out, and it wouldn't be possible to go all right through this gospel, but it would be interesting to look at the beginning for the King's person, that's how the gospel begins, and then to leave that and to see the King outlining his policies in what we call the Sermon on the Mount, and then immediately after he does that to see the King's power in the great big middle section of the gospel where he demonstrates his power, and we remember an Old Testament scripture which says where the word of the King is there is power, and we see that in evidence in the middle part of this gospel. In that great chapter 13 you have the King's program, he outlines his program and gives us the parables of the kingdom, then of course we have prophetic predictions in another sermon on another mount in chapter 24 and 25, and we have the King's passion at the end of the gospel, and before the gospel closes we hear the King saying, all power is given to me in heaven and on earth, and it really closes with the King's preeminence, and that is at the very end of the gospel. But what I want to point out just before we leave the gospel by Matthew is this interesting genealogy at the beginning in chapter 1. Now when I was a young believer, I'll make the confession for all of you tonight now, I tell you what I did.

I thought I must read this right through you see, and I began to read at verse 1, the book of the generation of Jesus the Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham. I think I read verse 2, Abraham begat Isaac, and Isaac begat Jacob, and Jacob begat Judas, and his brethren, and then the names became strange. I didn't know them anymore, and I confess that I thought, what's the point in it all? I couldn't understand it, so I went away down to verse 18, and I began there, now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise, and I could understand this now, and I must confess as many of us do, that for a long, long time I never, never, ever read these names and this genealogy.

I confess that I neglected a very interesting portion of the gospel by Matthew. You see, the problem, if it was a problem, was that I of course was not a Jew. I had a Gentile mind, and I didn't understand the reason for Matthew's genealogy, until of course, later on, we learn a little bit, and somebody points it out to you, and we can see how important is this genealogy, because Matthew's writing the biography of the King.

He's writing the story of the Messiah, and if our Lord Jesus really is the Messiah, if He really is the King, then the genealogy is of infinite importance, and to a Jew, this was a very special piece of Matthew's gospel, where Matthew was actually pressing, and proving the genealogy, proving the lineage of the Messiah. If Jesus is the Christ, as Matthew says, and if Jesus, the Son of Mary, is really entitled to the throne, then it must be proven beyond all doubt that He's got a royal connection, that He's linked with the tribe of Judah, that He has a link with David, and this is how Matthew begins, and he goes further back than that, and he goes right away back to Abraham, but then how interesting is this genealogy. We know now of course, that we can see the mind, the orderly mind, the intelligent and orderly mind of the accountant, the auditor, the tax collector coming out here, because this is not just a jumble of names that Matthew has given to us, he has actually given us 42 names, and he hasn't given us just 42 names just like that, he has divided them into three, and as someone has suggested, like the auditor, like the teller,

like the tax collector, he actually arranges them in three neat little piles of 14 in front of him, as perhaps he used to arrange the little piles of coins when he sat at the side of the road, and here he is, and he says now, from Abraham to David, 14 generations, and there they are, and they're very important, from David to the carrying away into Babylon, 14 generations, and there they are, and from the captivity, from the carrying away into Babylon until Jesus, until Christ, 14 generations again, and in a very beautiful and yet orderly way, he gives us 14, 14, and 14 generations, and in a very, very orderly way, Matthew has divided the story of Israel into three parts, he has given us the story of Israel's mourning, from Abraham to David, he has given us the story of Israel's high noon, from David to the carrying away into Babylon, and the story of Israel's evening, from the carrying away into Babylon until Christ comes, and then when the evening comes, and when the story of the nation has reached a sad and a low ebb, then of course the day spring from on high hath visited us, and he introduces the king, but you see how beautifully he introduces the rights, the legal rights of the Lord Jesus to the throne.

Now here's a very important thing, we have in black and white as we say, we have the established legal rights of Jesus of Nazareth to the throne of David. Now say someone argues that he is not after all the Messiah, and if someone eventually does come and claims that he is the Messiah, how can any future alleged or pretended Messiah prove his genealogy? Because you know all the records were destroyed in AD 70. When the city and the sanctuary was destroyed in AD 70 by the Romans, all the archives and all the registers and genealogy and all of those were destroyed.

There is no one today who could prove his genealogy, who could establish his rights and prove his lineage, but we have a savior and his lineage is established and his rights and his connections with Abraham and David are established here for us in writing, and how glad we are then that Matthew did begin like this and give us an orderly genealogy of the king. But now you study it a little bit more and you say Matthew is all right, but if you do have to give us a genealogy, if you must as a Jew give us all these names, you say Matthew you've done a strange thing, you've included the names of women in the genealogy, surely that was never done. And then you say if you do have to include the names of women, Matthew couldn't you have found different women to these? Couldn't you have found women say like like Miriam and Deborah and some of these great women of the Old Testament? But you have chosen four here apart from Mary, you have chosen four and you know it's questionable if any one of these women was even a Jewess.

Questionable. Here is Tamar and here is Rahab, spelt with a C here, but is Rahab all right? And Rahab is hardly ever mentioned, but she is Rahab the harlot. The story of Tamar, you could hardly read Tamar's story in public.

It's a story of shame and deceit and adultery, a terrible story. And Ruth, well Ruth was an idolatress and a Moabitess, and you know that old law would have excluded her for 10 generations from Judaism, and yet her name's in the genealogy. And though her name is not mentioned, yet she is referred to who was the wife of Uriah and that is Bathsheba, and we know the story of Bathsheba too.

You say, Matthew, why the names of women? Why the names of women like these who are Canaanites and Hittites and Moabites? Matthew never forgot the grace that lifted him. And the grace that lifted Matthew is the grace that reaches out to these. And someone has said about that grace, and here it is very interestingly put like this, that grace brings salvation to a sinner like Tamar.

On the ground of redemption, as seen in Ruth, on the principle of faith, as seen in Rahab, for a position of glory, as seen in Bathsheba. Wondrous grace. And the grace that reached out to these women is the very same grace that reached Matthew and lifted him and made him the biographer of the king, and the very same grace has reached us too.

Because the king of Matthew's gospel has reached right out to us by his death, and even in his ministry, and all flesh, all flesh, Jew and Gentile alike, eventually come under the sway of Matthew's king. How interesting to stay with Matthew, but the time is short, and one or two little things that I want to mention just about the others. Mark is a beautiful little gospel.

I have a problem with Mark's gospel, and it is that I can't remember it. I think I can get the story of Matthew into my mind, and I think that Luke's gospel is fairly easy, and we can remember the contents, and well, John's of course, I think we can fairly well remember the contents of John. But Mark's gospel I find very difficult to get the contents of Mark's gospel into my mind.

I've come to the conclusion that the reason is this, that it is such a busy little gospel. You know, the late Mr. Harold St. John, he wrote a lovely commentary on the gospel by Mark, and the pattern that he used was this. He divided it into 100 paragraphs.

Now, there's no stretching of the imagination there. There are very obviously 100 paragraphs in the gospel by Mark. Now, you can well imagine then that 100 paragraphs that almost seem to be disjointed.

The Lord is moving all the time, always busy, never resting, and it's very difficult to get 100 paragraphs of busy ministry into your mind. Well, that of course is because it's the gospel of the servant. Well, we spoke one evening before of the perfect servant, the Lord Jesus, and we saw how that even in the first chapter of the gospel by Mark, he is so busy from the river, to the desert, to the seashore, to the synagogue, into the home, out to the city, back to the desert again, and he moves from one place to another.

And that's even before you leave the opening chapter, how busy the Lord is. But one very human and very, very interesting thing that I must point out about Mark's gospel before we leave it, and it's this. There's a little word in Mark's gospel, tiny little word, and if I had used it as often as Mark used it when I was at school, well, I would literally have had my knuckles wrapped, I think of some of the teachers that I had, and they'd have literally wrapped my knuckles if I had used this word as often as Mark uses it.

And I would have been told, take the one half of those out, don't you know what a capital letter is for? Take those out and finish the sentence and start again. And I was warned never, ever, it was absolutely against the rules to start a sentence, to begin a paragraph with this little word. Yet Mark does it again and again and again, he does it.

Now sometime you have a little loop, you open any chapter of Mark's gospel at random, and you look down for the tiny little word and, and you find how many times Mark uses it, the little word and. Now you speak to a little boy and you say, this little word and, what kind of a word is it? And before a little fellow, before he can say conjunction, he'll tell you that and is the joining word. And that's exactly what and is in the gospel by Mark.

And Mark uses it over and over and over again, 11 chapters out of 16 begin with the word and. Oh find it especially in connection with the sufferings of Christ. Read down that chapter 15 and find how many times that word, I tell you you'll be amazed how many times you find this little word and.

Now here's the reason for it. Here is a busy servant, and it seems that when one thing is done, there's another thing to be done, and another thing, and another thing, and another thing, and still another thing. And the service of this servant is never finished.

Everything is joined to something else, and Mark deliberately defies the rules of grammar, and he uses the joining word just to show you that here is a servant who never rests. It's quoted strangely enough in Matthew's gospel. I think sometimes how fitting it would be to write across Mark's gospel, the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head, because he seems to be completely restless in this gospel.

It is the gospel of the servant. So you say Mark, that's why in what, 16 chapters? You have given us 18 miracles? 18 miracles in 16 chapters? How busy the Lord is, and all that ministry after that, and he's teaching, and preaching, and healing, and praying, and he never rests. It's the gospel of the servant with a super abundance of the joining word in all that he does.

So what a lovely gospel is the gospel by Mark. And if in John, if in Matthew's gospel, we have official and royal dignity and glory. In Mark's gospel, we have the lowliness of the servant, and that of course is why Mark does not give us a genealogy.

Brethren often point that out, and I leave it. You've got someone coming, and they're coming hoping to be your employee, and they're looking for service with you. You don't ask them, you don't say now tell me what's your pedigree.

You don't ask them for a genealogy. You might ask them for character references or something like that, but you're interested in what they are, and what they can do, not in who they are, and not in their pedigree. Oh no, that's not.

So Mark doesn't give us a genealogy. It's the gospel of the servant. Now the gospel by Luke.

I want to say one lovely thing about it, just and then leave it. The gospel by Luke is the gospel of the perfect man. The gospel of the absolutely perfect man.

Now you know that the ministry of the Lord Jesus, the story of each of these gospels, largely speaking, is taken up with miracles and parables. Miracles and parables. Now sometimes count them.

Parables are hard to count because it's sometimes hard to decide whether a thing is a parable proper or not, but if you can count them, you count about roughly 35 parables, and you'll find of course that there are a different, there's a different relation, a different proportion of parables and miracles in each of the gospels. You'll find more parables here than miracles or more miracles here than parables. You go to John's gospel, you get eight miracles, but you don't get any parables.

Not one parable in John's gospel, and where once you get the word in chapter 10, it's not the usual word for parable. So strictly there are no parables in John's gospel. But when you come to Luke's gospel, here's the lovely thing.

There are 20 miracles and 20 parables. An absolute balance. Now if I can say that the parables are what he taught and the miracles are what he did, and when Luke comes to write his second book, the book of the Acts of the Apostles, he says, you remember my earlier book in which he says we talked about the things that Jesus began both to do and to teach.

Perfect balance of what he did and what he taught. Here's a balanced man because here's a perfect man. Miracles and parables in equal numbers.

Now you remember we mentioned that in Matthew's gospel chapter 1, in that genealogy, there are 42 generations. 42. Now count them some time.

You find that to get 42, again there's no mistake, there's no discrepancy, but to get 42, you have to include the name of Joseph and then the name of Mary also. Now in a normal genealogy that would not be because that would be reckoned as one, you see. He would either be the son of Mary or the son of Joseph, but this is not ordinary.

It's not ordinary. So he's the son of Mary. He's the son of Mary.

He was born of Mary, born of Mary, but Mary was married of course to Joseph and so both of their names are included and that's, you must include those to get the 42. Now here's the interesting thing. The 42nd name in Matthew's genealogy is the name of the Lord Jesus.

He's called there Jesus the Christ. That's the 42nd name in Matthew's genealogy. Now did you ever notice that Luke's gospel is the 42nd book in our Bible? We have 39 in the Old Testament, then we have Matthew, Mark, and now Luke is the 42nd book and it makes it easy to remember that the 42nd book in our Bible is the story of the 42nd man of Matthew's genealogy.

Here is the story of that last name in the genealogy. Luke's is the story of a perfect man. Because of that, there is so much in Luke's gospel that you don't get anywhere else.

You know of course that it's only in the gospel by Luke that he raises the only son of a widow of name. It's only in Luke that he weeps over Jerusalem. It's only in Luke that he walks on wounded feet to Emmaus.

And I think there are seven instances of our Lord Jesus praying in the gospel by Luke that you don't get anywhere else. You see he's the dependent man in prayer in the gospel by Luke. And there are so many other things that mark it out as a very special gospel.

Now you come to John's gospel and John's is the story of the son. There's one lovely thing that must ever be remembered about John's gospel that is in perfect keeping with the theme of his gospel and it's this. The ordinary word for prayer or praying, whether it be noun form or verb form, the ordinary usual word for prayer is never found in John's gospel.

That's interesting, never found. In Luke's gospel they're in abundance but it's never in the gospel by John. And yet to someone I read of the Lord Jesus praying, what about that that we call the high priestly prayer of John 17? Ah well now, that might be a prayer all right using the word in a very broad sense.

But tell me, now you've listened to our brethren pray. You've heard, do you ever hear any of our brethren pray like this? Listen to the Lord now and here's what he says as he prays. He says, Father I will, I will, Father I will.

Oh no you say, brethren don't pray like that. What do they say? Oh the brethren say, if it be thy will, if it be thy will. That's the right way for us to pray.

But the man of John's gospel doesn't pray like that. The one of John's gospel says, Father I will, I will, I will. Why is that? The reason is very simple, yet very profound.

That in John's gospel it is a son on equal terms with the father. And he has a right to say, Father I will. Sonship is not inferiority.

Sonship implies equality as far as the Jew was concerned. They said he calls himself the son. He makes himself equal with God.

And that's exactly what that title meant. Equality with the father. That's the one that John writes about.

And everything in the gospel by John is just to prove to us that the man of Galilee was really the very God of the heavens come down amongst us. And that's the reason for the writing of the fourth gospel. So you remember then that these gospels are intriguing, fascinating, four different portraits of the same blessed and glorious person.

I hope you're attracted to them. And while we have a human natural weakness that might perhaps result in you being attracted to one and me being attracted to the other, nevertheless may the Lord help us to strive for balance and find this glorious person in each and all of the gospels. May our appreciation of him be increased, shall we pray.

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