

Theology on the Web.org.uk

Making Biblical Scholarship Accessible

This document was supplied for free educational purposes. Unless it is in the public domain, it may not be sold for profit or hosted on a webserver without the permission of the copyright holder.

If you find it of help to you and would like to support the ministry of Theology on the Web, please consider using the links below:



Buy me a coffee

<https://www.buymeacoffee.com/theology>



PATREON

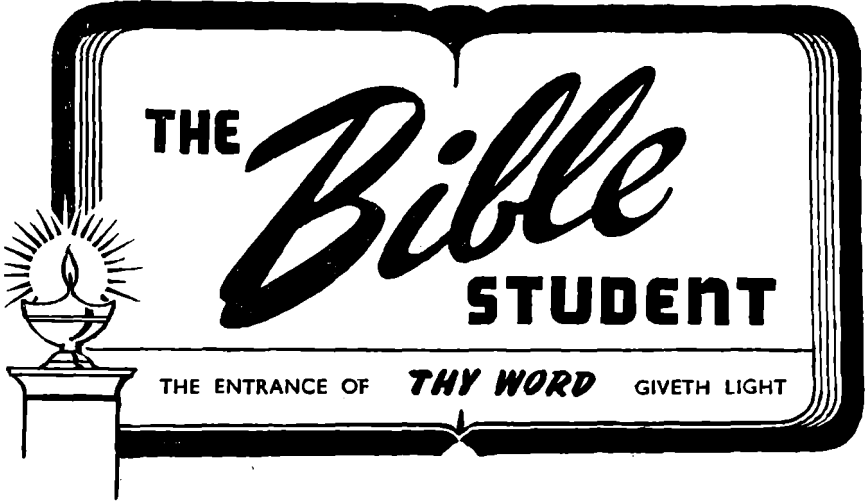
<https://patreon.com/theologyontheweb>

[PayPal](#)

<https://paypal.me/robbradshaw>

A table of contents for *The Bible Student* can be found here:

https://biblicalstudies.org.uk/articles_bible-student_01.php



New Series
Vol. XXIII. No. 3

JULY
1952

CONTENTS

THE EPISTLE OF JUDE	...	...	...	93
THE WISDOM LITERATURE OF THE BIBLE	...	...	...	99
THE THEOPHANIES OF THE OLD TESTAMENT	...	...	...	103
NOTES ON HEBREWS	...	...	...	109
JESUS IS THE CHRIST	...	...	...	114
SEVEN OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS	...	...	...	118
WORD STUDIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT	...	...	...	125
THE GOSPELS	...	...	...	129
THE HUMANITY OF THE LORD JESUS	...	...	...	136

Editor: A. McDONALD REDWOOD

as opposed to their best interests. Timothy is told 'to flee from these things'; Peter says 'abstain from them'.

(c) *Appearance*. In so doing they would manifest 'seemly behaviour among the Gentiles'; for to give way to such lusts was inconsistent with the profession of Christ. In the doing of good works which even their enemies would have to acknowledge were good, in spite of the slander they directed against them as evil-doers, they would glorify God 'in the day of visitation'.

5. *Carnal Things* (Rom. 15:27; 1 Cor. 9:11). The believers were to remember that they owed a debt to those who had ministered to them spiritual things—they were to discharge that debt by ministering to such in carnal things; a reminder as needful in our day as it was in the days of Paul. Happy are the saints who remember their obligations and happy is the servant of God who is not made to feel as one who is an object of charity but as one who benefits by this rule of reciprocity! Here the 'things' are spoken of as carnal because they belong to the realm which minister to the fleshly needs of men.

THE GOSPELS

By E. W. ROGERS

It is not possible in the scope of one article adequately to treat such a vast subject as a study of the four gospels. The *progress of doctrine* presented in them, following as they do, upon the Old Testament prophetic scriptures, can only be touched upon in the barest possible way. The *accuracy* of the four records and their *differences* in detail from each other can receive but the slightest notice. The fact of their *inspiration* will be assumed rather than considered: and the *external* and *internal evidences* of their authenticity must be left altogether alone in this survey.

Every student should make a thorough study of Bishop Westcott's study of the Four Gospels: it is a masterly work and can only be neglected at great loss. He should also study Kelly's 'Lectures on the Gospels', and Bellett's 'The Evangelists'. At this late date in Christian history none can expect to be original. We should thank God for such a vast amount of expository literature that is ready to our hand, and we should use it.

1. *The Gospels—why are they so called?* The word Gospel, *i.e.*, God's-spell, or word, is a sufficiently accurate translation of the Greek term, which signifies good tidings. Properly it means the substance of the message of salvation; but in time it came to be applied to the books in which especially the advent and 'ministry of the personal Saviour are described'. In these four books are furnished the basic facts and the explanation of the Gospel. The book of the Acts recounts its proclamation and effects, and the Epistles explain its doctrine and issues. The four Gospels show that the Gospel is based upon properly attested, historical facts, which centre around the advent, life, death and resurrection of One Person. That Person was the hoped-for Messiah of Israel. He was the promised Conqueror of the enemy of both God and Man (Gen. 3:15). The world had been providentially prepared for the advent of the Saviour, and His death at the hands of wicked men was not only within the divine plan but was the outcome of the final test of man by God, a test which demonstrated him to be utterly hopeless, for whom in the flesh there was no remedy. These four books, therefore, record historically the presence of Light in the midst of darkness: Goodness in the midst of evil: Right assailed by wrong: Truth put on the scaffold. Yet they record both the triumph of the resurrection, and the very actions of man which have demonstrated not only his innate wickedness but the love of God towards him. What better news is there than that? In these Gospels we find the sweetest texts coming to our aid when preaching to sinners. No circumstance of life is here left unprovided for; loneliness, hunger, bereavement, pain, storm, think of what you will, every circumstance finds its answer in the history of the four Gospels.

2. *Why should the number be four?* In the mouth of *two* witnesses shall every word be established, and a *three*-fold cord is not easily broken. But the matter of which the evangelists write is of supreme importance: none other equals it or can. It is no marvel then, that God has thought fit not to be contented with His own testimonial limit, but has added another thereto. For the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke were written long before John's. This latter Gospel is, like all his writings, supplementary in character: yea, and also complementary. Matthew and John were eye-witnesses of much of that which is recorded. Mark and Luke were companions of the apostles. 'The necessity

of such an authoritative record is obvious. Oral traditions, or written histories, professing to furnish the particulars of Christ's ministry on earth, would naturally be circulated among the first Christians, many of them defective, and many inaccurate; in order to supersede these, inspired men were commissioned to commit authentic accounts to writing'. The greatest care should be exercised when treating of Bible numerals, but 'four' seems to be a number denoting *universality*. There are the four winds of heaven, the four corners of the earth, and each of the Gospels draws to its close with an intimation of the fact that the Good News is to be proclaimed world-wide, wherever man is found.

3. *What is the distinctive characteristic of each?* While, on reading all four Gospels, one general impression is conveyed by the memoirs collectively, yet on closer examination it will be seen that the first three Gospels are somewhat similar in kind, while the fourth Gospel has an altogether distinctive character. Yet each of the first three is different from the others; they each present a peculiar side and aspect of Christianity and its Author. 'The first three Gospels belong substantially to one class, that of historical narrative, without comment; they describe the Man Christ Jesus: they resemble each other, too, in the circumstance of their confining themselves almost exclusively to our Lord's ministry in Galilee. The fourth Gospel enlarges upon the Divine attributes of the Son of God and supplies those particulars of His visits to Jerusalem, which are omitted by the others'.

The four living creatures referred to in Rev. 4 have respectively the appearances of the lion, the ox, the face of a man and the flying eagle, and the four Gospels present the Lord Jesus Christ in those characters and in that order. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the King, as presented by Matthew; Mark shows Him to be 'the Prophet, mighty in deed'—God's faithful and patient Servant. Luke shows Him to be the perfect sinless Man, born as all other men, though the origin of His humanity was of a different order. John presents Him as the flying eagle, whose ultimate origin and characteristic abiding place are in the heavens.

Whether Matthew or Mark was *written first* we cannot say; nor is it of great consequence. We have to do with the records and not with the priority of one over the other. But it is interesting to observe that Mark in opening his Gospel takes the reader back to Isaiah's prophecy. Matthew, goes farther back

to Abraham; Luke goes farther back still to Adam, and John goes yet farther back still to eternity; 'in the beginning was the WORD'.

Attempts have been made to *harmonise* the four Gospels. It is not God's intention that this should be done, and it may safely be said that as things stand, it is impossible to do so. We require further data for the purpose, but were such data forthcoming, doubtless perfect agreement between the four writers would at once be apparent. Let the fact of the divine inspiration of each writer be granted, their accuracy must of necessity be admitted.

On the surface, there is a beautiful unity in these four. Yet beneath it a wonderful variety, which gives richness and fulness. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark show the Lord Jesus in the extremes of office; the highest office being that of *King*, which is Matthew's view, and the lowest office that of *Servant*, which is Mark's view. In the Gospels of Luke and John the two natures of the Lord Jesus are respectively emphasized, *i.e.* His humanity and Deity, though, in the nature of things, each writer assumes the other, seeing that they are indissolubly united in Him.

4. *Their genuineness.* Spiritual judgment informs the born again reader that that which is found in the four Gospels is genuine. No such writings exist elsewhere and the pseudo-Gospels contain things which intuitively the mind rejects as unworthy of the greatness of Christ. Just as one knows the Apocryphal books are no part of the true canon of Holy Scripture, so the Gospels are approved because they bear the hall-mark of inspiration and genuineness. Admittedly, the names of the four evangelists are attached to these Gospels by tradition, but it is a tradition well-founded. For example Matthew in his Gospel alludes to himself as the publican and, while remarking on a feast immediately after his call, he does not inform his readers that he himself bore the costs thereof. Luke does that. How unseemly it would have been for Matthew to have recorded his own beneficence; yet what magnifying of divine grace which made him mention he was a publican.

Again, Luke tells us that the woman who had the issue of blood was suffering from an incurable malady; he was competent to speak thus for he was a physician. But Mark, whose material it is generally supposed was gleaned from Peter, says with the

candour of the man-in-the-street that she was impoverished by the doctors who, instead of healing, rather aggravated her trouble. The independence of the writers is further seen in the differences in their essays. Plainly there was no collusion between them. Matthew at times says there were two men: the others say one. Who is right? Both, for as Matthew Henry remarks quaintly, 'if there were two there certainly was one'. The profile photograph is not false because it only shows one eye: the full-face view shows the same person to have two. It all depends on the way he is photographed.

5. *The design and structure of Matthew's Gospel.* Matthew's chief aim is to present the royal claims of the Lord Jesus and to show their validity. His method is to demonstrate the agreement between the Old Testament prophecies and the events relating to the Man called Jesus. Seeing the Old Testament prophecies which he cites are admittedly Messianic, if he can show that in the Man Jesus they were fulfilled, the conclusion is inevitable that Jesus must be the Messiah. This he does. The reader should examine all the prophecies which he cites, studying carefully their Old Testament setting and the facts relating to Jesus: it will engender or confirm his faith. Matthew writes chiefly for the Jewish people. Not that he has them only in view: Even in the genealogical tree which he presents, he shows that the branches of divine grace go over the wall of national privilege and incorporate therein those who, either by birth or character, were not entitled to such an honour. He records the faith of the Canaanitish woman which secured such a 'crumb' in favour of her daughter. He shows the 'world' to be the place where the 'Sower' sows His seed. And, finally he shows the Risen Christ commissioning His apostles to take the Gospel to 'all nations'. But notwithstanding all this, Israel is chiefly before him and he shows how the Lord Jesus recapitulates their history, He being the true 'Servant of Jehovah', as Israel, His former servant, had failed sadly.

Matthew's Gospel may be summarized as follows:

PART I: CHAPTERS I-16.

Chapter 1. His genealogical tree is valid. It is a tree which by its inclusion of five women demonstrates God's *grace*. By its exclusion of four men it demonstrates God's *judgment*. By its unbroken chain, reaching the designed goal it demonstrates God's

providence. And by its setting aside the law of primogeniture it demonstrates God's *election*.

Chapter 2. The details relevant to His birth coincided with the prophetic foreshadowings. *Seven prophecies* are quoted in chs 2 and 3 which deal with the manner and place of His birth. His flight into Egypt, the sorrow in His native village and surroundings, His return to Nazareth, His forerunner, and His ministry. All fit as key fits lock.

Chapter 3. As a King he had the prescribed forerunner, John the Baptist whose ministry is here recorded.

Chapter 4. His competency to rule is shown by overcoming satan who has been responsible for all the misrule in the world.

Chapters 5-7 enumerate the Laws of His kingdom by which He will rule.

Chapters 8 and 9 show that He wrought the prescribed Messianic miracles: He stands as the last Adam, with the crown upon His head, in the creation of God, all things being subject to Him.

Chapter 10 records the offer of the Kingdom to the nation of Israel by the authorized messengers of the King.

Chapter 11 records the manner in which the people reacted to the offer. There were the (a) honestly perplexed as John, (b) the undecided who, like children in the market-place, did not know what they wanted, (c) the unbelieving as Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum, and (d) those who, in child-like simplicity, took Him at His word and came to Him.

Chapter 12, however, gives to us the final decision of the nation. It is a crisis chapter. The religious leaders of the people, the Pharisees, dominate their thoughts and decision. His miracles are attributed to the prince of demons, Beelzebub, which was sin against the Holy Ghost.

It would seem from this that the purpose of God had been frustrated, but all the failures of men furnish God with an opportunity to display His resources and wisdom. Accordingly *chapter 13* shows an unanticipated move on the part of God, and therein is recorded the mysteries of the Kingdom of the heaven. The King, being rejected and now absent, a kingdom exists which is characterized by an absent King, no earthly capital and no

geographical limits. It exists in the hearts of men. It would take us far beyond the limits of our time to examine this matter in detail. Suffice it to say that the Kingdom of the heaven as here presented is Christendom, in which there are true and false, and for which a dividing day is to come.

Chapter 14 furnishes us with pictorial views of paradoxical conditions consequent on the rejection of the King, namely unchecked persecution, prior Gentile blessing and international unrest.

Chapter 15 furnishes us, again pictorially, with those principles which should characterize all true subjects of the Kingdom, *viz.* sincerity, faith and compassion.

By the time we have reached *chapter 16* we are at the top of the mountain, for all three synoptic gospels are structurally the same. They ascend one side of the mountain, the apex being reached at the Caesarea Phillippi incident, and thereafter the descent to Calvary is made. The upward side is marked by miracles, but the downward side is marked by constant and increasing references to His inevitable death. This is the watershed of these three Gospels.

Instead of wearying you further with such close details, I will just mention that the second section of the Gospel is from ch. 17 to the end of ch. 25, in which are set out the moral and dispensational glories of the King, His decision on vital matters, and His words and deeds in the appointed centre of rule. The third section comprises chs 26 to 28 which records the condemnation and later the vindication of the King.

It will be seen from the foregoing that Matthew is logical and orderly in his writing. There is nothing haphazard. Plainly, seeing that he is writing of One Whose very Being is beyond rational explanation we find in his Gospel things which defy human elucidation. That is to be expected. To write of an infinite Person requires phraseology and presentation that is of a like quality.