

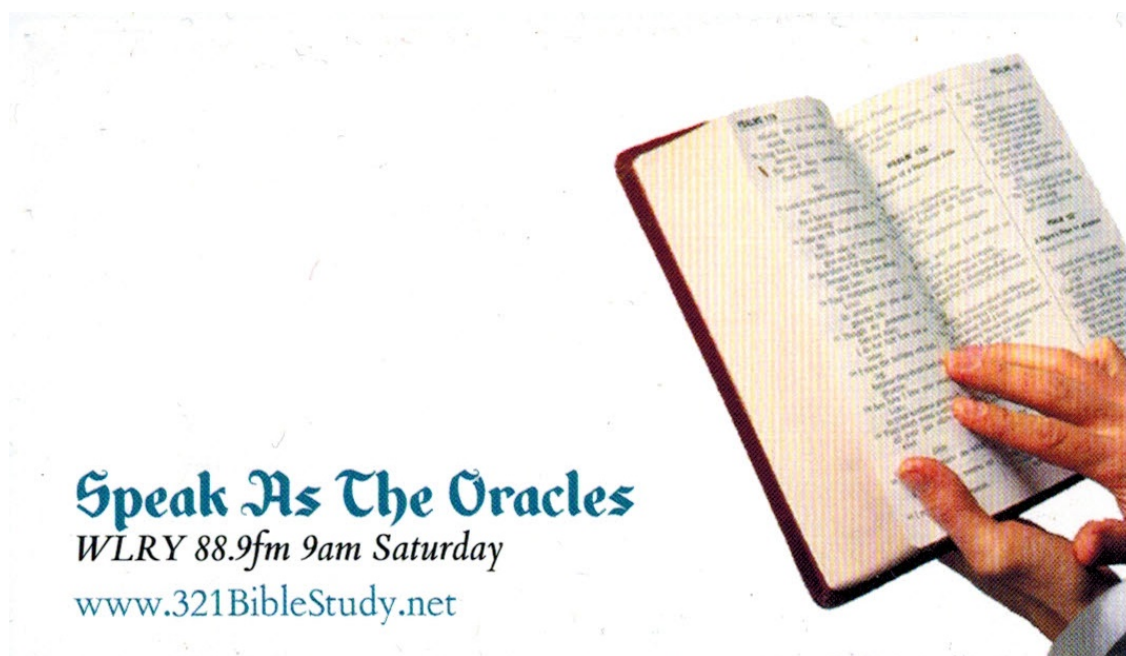
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Subject : Harmony of the Gospels 1

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Speak As The Oracles Radio

January 7, 2019

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HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS (1) INTRODUCTION

Of the 27 books of the New Testament, four of these are known as Gospels, or Biographies. They are the first four books in the New Testament as found in most Bibles: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. They contain the narrative of the life of Jesus as we know it. Necessarily, as in all biographies, there is only a small portion of His life chronicled in these books. However, these four books speak of the birth, boyhood, baptism, temptation, teaching ministry, trials, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension of the Christ.

“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 would not contain the books that should be written. Amen” [John 21:25].

“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” [John 20:3].

Why are there four different gospels?

The first three Gospels are very similar in content, with the fourth (John)

containing more unique material. Each Gospel, however, has its own emphasis; or, has its own viewpoint from which it records the life of Christ. Each completes the picture that is drawn by the other three of the character and actions of the Savior of the world. It is much like looking at a book: only by looking at the front cover, the back cover, the sides and the inside may one really know what the book looks like. In the same way, by looking at Jesus from the viewpoints of four different biographers, one may really know what Jesus was like.

Matthew

The first of these four books of biography is that of the apostle Matthew, who is also known as Levi.

“Matthew, formerly called Levi, one of the twelve apostles, was originally a publican or taxgatherer at Capernaum, and hence well acquainted with Greek and Hebrew in bilingual Galilee, and accustomed to keeping accounts. This occupation prepared him for writing a Gospel in topical order ... In the three Synoptic lists of the apostles he is associated with Thomas, and forms with him the fourth pair; in Mark and Luke he precedes Thomas, in his own Gospel he is placed after him (perhaps from modesty). Hence the conjecture that he was a twin brother of Thomas (Didymus, i.e. twin), or associated with him in work. Thomas was an honest and earnest doubter, of a melancholy disposition, yet fully convinced at last when he saw the risen Lord; Matthew was a strong and resolute believer.

“Of his apostolic labors we have no certain information. Palestine, Ethiopia, Macedonia, the country of the Euphrates, Persia and Media are variously assigned to him as missionary fields. He died a natural death according to the oldest tradition, while later accounts make him a martyr” (Ibid, Philip Schaff; p. 613).

He presents Jesus as the son of David, the fulfillment of the law and prophets for the Jew. Those elements contained in the record of Matthew are those which would convince the Jewish mind that Jesus of Nazareth was the Messiah, the Christ, the only begotten Son of God, born of a virgin.

“Whatever be the view we take of the precise origin of the first canonical Gospel, it was universally received in the ancient church as the work of Matthew” (History of the Christian Church, Vol. I; Phillip Schaff; p. 627).

Matthew introduces his record with the genealogy of Jesus through his adoptive father, Joseph, the legal line of inheritance to establish His right as the son of David, the son of Abraham, to be the fulfillment of the promises to these great men of faith of the Old Testament.

Time and time again Matthew makes reference to the fulfillment of prophecy in the life of Christ from His birth to the events of His crucifixion.

He alone refers to the church.

He alone makes the extensive record of the speeches or sermons of Jesus.

Jesus is shown to be both the Lawgiver and the fulfillment of the law, both Prophet and the fulfillment of prophecy.

Mark

The second book of biography is Mark, referred to by some early writers as the Memoirs of Peter because Mark was to have written his record of the life of Christ under the direction of Peter.

Preface Commentary on Matthew: "The second is Mark, interpreter of the apostle Peter, and first bishop of the Alexandrian church; who did not himself see the Lord Jesus, but accurately, rather than in order, narrated those of His deeds, which he had heard his teacher preaching."

Mark is written for the Roman. It is similar in literary style to Julius Caesar's immortal Gaulic Wars. Mark records the action of Jesus, while keeping to a minimum his words. The Roman was a man of action, not words. It was the graphic description of action found in Mark's record that would convince him that Jesus was the Son of God. Thus, Mark is the shortest of the Gospels.

Luke

The third book of the biographies is Luke. This Gospel is written for the Greek. It portrays Jesus as the perfect man, thus the Son of the perfect God. The Greeks had a greater concern for humanity; thus, within his record Luke records more detail of the birth and boyhood of Jesus than all the other Gospels combined. Especially does Luke describe the human compassion of Jesus. The genealogy of Jesus within this biography rather than establishing the legal inheritance

through his adoptive parent, depicts the physical or human line of birthright through His mother to the promises made.

Luke's Gospel has been called "the Gospel of the nations, full of mercy and hope, assured to the world by the love of a suffering Savior;" "the Gospel of the saintly life;" "the Gospel for the Greeks; the Gospel of the future; the Gospel of progressive Christianity, of the universality and gratuitousness of the gospel; the historic Gospel; the Gospel of Jesus as the good Physician and the Savior of mankind;" the "Gospel of the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man;" "the Gospel of womanhood;" "the Gospel of the outcast, of the Samaritan, the publican, the harlot, and the prodigal;" "the Gospel of tolerance." The main characteristic of this Gospel, as Farrar (Cambridge Bible, Luke, Introd.) remarks, is fitly expressed in the motto, "Who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38; compare Luke 4:18). Luke wrote for the "Hellenic world." This Gospel is indeed "rich and precious."

<http://www.christiananswers.net/dictionary/lukegospelaccordingto.html>

Luke consistently writes in such a way as to appeal to the logical, educated, cosmopolitan Greek mind. Educated Greeks were humanists trained in logic. Luke presents Jesus as the Son of man. He, more than any other writer, emphasizes the human nature of the Lord. Luke records more than any other writer about the childhood of Jesus, describing his natural growth as a normal, albeit perfect, child (2:40,51-52). Luke records more about Jesus praying than any other gospel writer, writing eleven of the fifteen recorded instances of Jesus in prayer. He emphasizes the place of women and children in Jesus' life. Luke emphasizes the Lord's compassion for the poor, downtrodden and sinners (cf. chapter 15). He also stressed the dependence of Jesus on the Holy Spirit (1:35; 3:22; 4:1,18; 10:21; cf. Acts 10:38).

Luke also places greater emphasis on Jesus the Teacher. He records twenty-three parables of Jesus, eighteen of which are nowhere else revealed.

Luke's gospel account introduces in the New Testament the concept of Jesus as man's Redeemer (1:68; 2:38; 21:28; 24:21). Jesus is our near Kinsman (Hebrews 2:11), "in all things ... made like His brethren" (Hebrews 2:17), Who purchases us for the Lord (cf. Leviticus 25:23-55; Ruth 2:1; 3:12).

Luke comes closest of the gospel writers to penning a formal biography of Jesus. His is a formal history, with several references to events and persons prominent in Syria and Rome at the time. Luke gives the fullest account of the

life of Christ, revealing a number of events not elsewhere recorded.

The beloved physician reveals a world wide view. He traces the lineage of Jesus back, not just to Abraham, but all the way to Adam (3:23-38). Luke alone records several events that demonstrate the Master's interest in Gentiles (2:10,32; 3:6; 4:25-27; 10:25-37; 17:16; 21:28; 24:21). Luke's is the gospel of the universal grace of God. – *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*

John

The apostle John was the son of Zebedee and Salome. His brother, James, was also a disciple and apostle of Jesus Christ. From John 19:25 and Mark 15:40-41 some have surmised John to be the cousin of Jesus and John the Baptist (his mother, Salome, being the sister of Mary); but, this is uncertain.

Although noted in later life as “the apostle of love,” John – along with his brother James – are surnamed by Jesus “Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder” (Mark 3:16). This undoubtedly referring to their love of the pre-eminence and quick temper (Luke 9:51-56; Mark 10:35-40).

The fourth Gospel humbly refers to John as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He was a part of what some have referred to as the “inner council” in being present at the chamber of death (Mark 5:35-43), at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9), at the conversation foretelling the destruction of Jerusalem (Mark 13:1-31), and at the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 25:36-46). He also is the first to the empty grave following the resurrection (John 20:1-10).

He is spoken in connection with Peter in the book of Acts, being present in Jerusalem and in Samaria.

Later, in the book of Revelation, we find John exiled on the isle of Patmos for preaching Christ.

For what else is told concerning the life of John, the uncertainty of tradition becomes the source. It is said that prior to the destruction of Jerusalem he went to Ephesus, and from there to Rome. At Rome, John is said to have been placed in boiling oil from which he is miraculously preserved unhurt. He then returned to Ephesus where he wrote I, II, & III John to meet the rising heresies in the church. He is said to die somewhere between 89 and 120 a.d. The later date seems to be more likely.

The last record of biography is John. Although there are great areas of similarity between and among the first three Gospels, in the majority of material covered John stands alone. He supplements the narratives of the other Gospels by supplying material not found in them. Especially does John emphasize the personal touch in conveying conversations Jesus had with individuals. John emphasizes the Deity of Jesus beyond a shadow of a doubt.

Conclusion

Each of the four Gospels has its own emphasis. They were written with different groups of people in mind to convince them that Jesus is the Christ, the only begotten Son of the living God. Matthew was written to the Jew. Mark was written to the Roman. Luke was written to the Greek. John was written to the Agnostic. Each, therefore, emphasizes those aspects of the life and character of Jesus which would convince his audience that Jesus of Nazareth was the Savior of the world.

This explains the differences in approach to the life of Christ that makes each Gospel peculiar in its own right. It also affords for us a more complete picture of the life and character of the most important man in history. Without any one of the Gospels our picture would be less complete and our knowledge of the Lord would be marred.

INTRODUCTION

Luke 1.1-4

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, to write unto thee in order, most excellent Theophilus, That thou mightest know the certainty of those things, wherein thou hast been instructed. (Luke 1:1-4) KJV

Introduction

The Gospel of Luke, the first volume of two written by the apostle (Acts of the Apostles being the second), is the only Gospel with an introduction. The first four verses form the introduction which is somewhat similar to classical works like Thucydides, Herodotus, and Livy. Luke's style is more classical Greek than

the other Gospels. He thus presents a summary of what and why he writes his story of the Christ.

Luke 1:1-4

Inasmuch as many have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things that have been accomplished among us,

There were compilations of the actions and teachings of Jesus which circulated. These may have been a combination of both written and oral sources. However, these stories were either incomplete or faulty.

Luke seeks to record the things which have been done. No conjecture, no imagination. Only those things which are true are to be recorded. The truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth will be recorded.

(2) just as those who from the beginning were eyewitnesses and ministers of the word have delivered them to us,

Those who had been with Jesus from the beginning of His ministry were eyewitnesses to everything which He did and said. They were the primary source for the life of Jesus. From the time Jesus called them until He ascended into the heavens, the apostles were with Jesus day in and day out. They would know the truth of what Jesus did. They would know the truth of Jesus said. This is what they have taught and preached concerning the Christ.

Early commentary on the Gospel of Luke linked it especially to the teaching and preaching of the apostle Paul since Luke was associated with the apostle to the Gentiles.

(3) it seemed good to me also, having followed all things closely for some time past, to write an orderly account for you, most excellent Theophilus,

Luke had taken it upon himself, as had others, to write about the life of Christ. Unlike the others, however, this compulsion was not only internally originated, but directed by the Holy Spirit and the inspiration of God. He has not come to the study of the life of Christ lately, but for some time he has been carefully studying. He is making his case so that Theophilus, to whom he addresses the Gospel (as he also does the Acts of the Apostles), would have confidence in the accuracy of what he is presenting him.

Whether Theophilus is a person, or a representation of those who would read his Gospel we do not know. Theophilus means “lover of God.” So whether it is addressing those “lovers of God” who would read his narrative, or if it is a real individual named Theophilus, it does affect the appeal that Luke makes.

(4) that you may have certainty concerning the things you have been taught.

The accuracy and veracity of the Gospel were of utmost importance to Luke, and it was important to him that Theophilus have confidence in what he reads and is taught.

Every person, especially every “lover of God” can take heart in the truthfulness of Luke’s words. They can have complete confidence because these are not only the words of Luke – they are the words of God.

CONCLUSION

(John 20:26-31) And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: then came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace be unto you.

Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side: and be not faithless, but believing.

And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God.

Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.

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. (KJV)

As we look at the Gospels and the story they tell of Jesus of Nazareth, what response do they demand from us? What response do they demand from you? Do you believe as Thomas did that Jesus is “My Lord and my God?”

These accounts are written that we might believe. But more important, they are written that we might have eternal life. Won’t you have eternal life? Won’t you

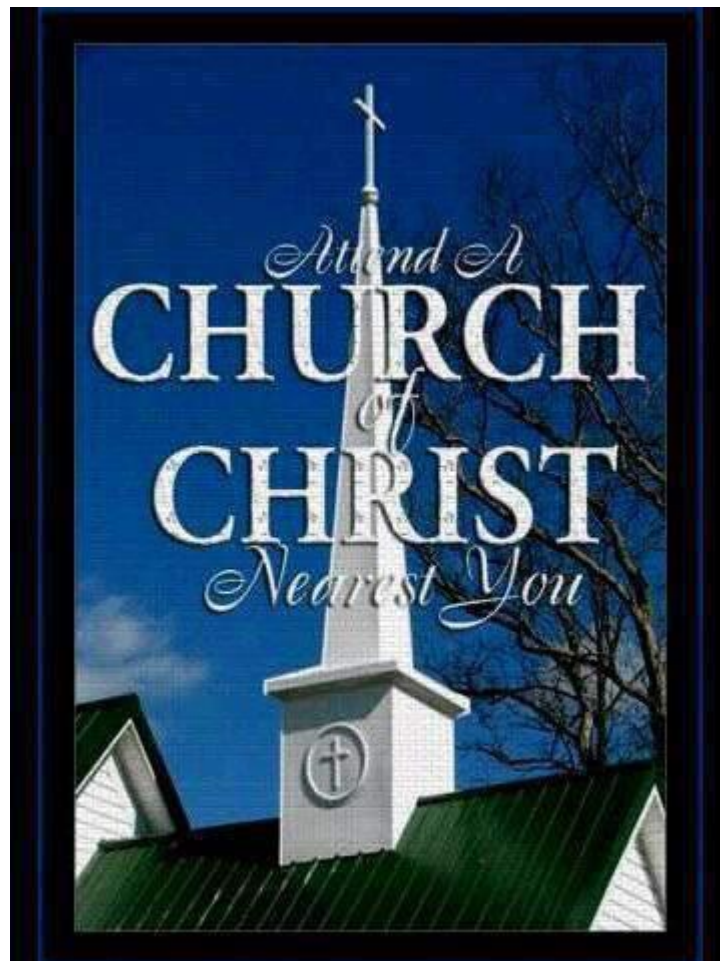
believe?

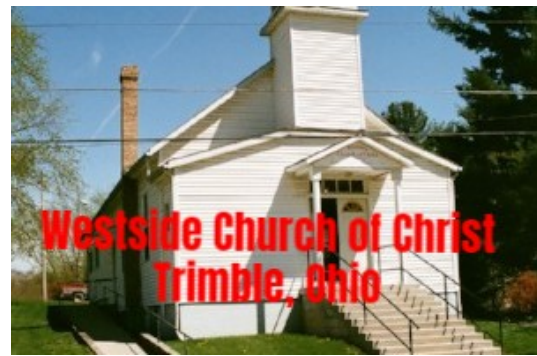
Upon hearing of Jesus, the Ethiopian Eunuch asked what kept him from being baptized (immersed in water). For he wished eternal life.

(Acts 8:37) And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. (KJV)

Won't you make the same statement of faith?

(Acts 22:16) And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord. (KJV)





Rod Ross' Speaking Schedule

WESTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST, TRIMBLE OHIO
Sundays, Bible Study 9:30 am, Worship 10:30 am

EASTSIDE CHURCH OF CHRIST, 131 SELLS RD., LANCASTER OHIO
Sundays, Worship 6:30 pm

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