

THE GOSPEL RECORDS  
A FOURFOLD BIOGRAPHY OF OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST  
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THE RECORDS COMPARED

The Gospels are, no doubt, so called from the first verse of Mark's Record. This title fittingly expresses the facts with which they abound - the Good News concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. They depict Him in four different characters - life-size portraits of Him, we might call them, in four different views. His biography would not be complete if one of these pictures were missing, for in them are wrapped up all that the Gospel proclaims. We need all four of them, not that we might harmonize and make them into one as some ignorantly suggest; but that we may study the majestic glorious Personage whom they set forth from every point of view, and get a right conception - a full orb'd vision - of who He is and what He has accomplished for God and man. His Person and His work of redemption demand this fourfold revelation.

We see in the Levitical offerings that there were four animal offerings - Burnt, Peace, Sin, and Trespass Offerings - each typical of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary in its different aspects. He is seen in the Gospel of JOHN as the "Burnt Offering," wholly burnt to God, a sweet savor in His surrender to death - giving up His life, when the due time came, no man taking it from Him. LUKE gives us the "Peace Offering" aspect of the Cross. God and man are brought together in fellowship, because of the shed blood.

In MARK He is seen as the "Sin Offering" being made sin for us, and thereby atoning for sin; for which cause He was shut out of fellowship with God, so that He was made to cry out in agony, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?"

The remaining Gospel, that of MATTHEW, depicts Him as the "Trespass Offering" making amends for the disobedience of Adam by restoring man back to God; and, thereby, bearing our individual sins in His own body on the Tree. Here, too, He is shut out of fellowship with God; for He is making atonement for trespass against the government of God. Consequently, in this respect, His offering is not a sweet savor to God.

It was necessary that Christ meet all these different requirements of atonement. He could not possibly be excused from any part; therefore, we have four views of the Cross.

Then, as to His Person, it is also necessary that we view Him as King, Servant, Man, and God. All of this is contained in the Gospel Records, though we find the development and application of it afterward. That there would be such development, the Lord Himself assures His disciples - "I have yet many things to say unto you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit when He, the Spirit of Truth, is come, He will guide you into all Truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will shew you things to come. He shall glorify Me: for He shall receive of Mine, and shall shew it unto you" - John 16:12-14. We see, therefore, how unwise men are when they turn from the words of the apostles; and find, as some insist, all the Truth in the words of the Lord Himself. As was said, the Lord plainly stated that there would be truths spoken which He could not utter then, but that they would come from Him. Thus, the germinant Truth which we find in the Gospels was unfolded and developed by the apostles, who were thus qualified by the Holy Spirit for their special line. To the Apostle Paul was given the wonderful privilege of completing, or filling up, the Word of God - Colossians 1:25.

Therefore, we must not expect to find in these Gospel Records all the fullness of Christian doctrine; neither are we to limit them altogether to the expression of that which is distinctively Christian. Christ "was made of the seed of David according to the flesh" - Romans 1:3. This implies that He "was a minister of the circumcision for the Truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers" - Romans 15:8. Thus, we shall find in the study of the Gospels many Old Testament predictions of the nation of Israel and of Christ, in necessary association with this ancient people; for, though these predictions and promises are now delayed by their unbelief, they are not set aside. We cannot understand the Sermon on the Mount or the Olivet discourse, without this being clearly apprehended.

Many Christians have such a narrow and shortsighted view of all Scripture, that they continually apply everything to themselves and their interests. But, in order to understand and rightly divide the Word of God, we must bear in mind the Holy Spirit's threefold classification of the world - "the Jews ... the Gentiles ... the Church of God" - and apply the Truth to each in its right relation - I Corinthians 10:32. Furthermore, each book in the Bible as well as the Gospels has its own

dominant truth or truths, which give it force and individuality and with which all other truths connect and harmonize. The variety of the instruments, which the Lord has designed to use for this gladsome service, have hidden in some measure the True Author; and, despite the perfect unity of design manifested, we little realize the marvelous manner in which each one has filled the place assigned to him.

But, as to the Gospels themselves which are our special theme at this moment, there are four; not by accident, we are truly assured, but by Divine wisdom. "Four" is the number of the world as the place of trial, of the four corners of the earth, and of the four winds of heaven. The Lord is seen in the four records in the scene of His "temptation" as He designates it, facing the sins, the sorrows, and the needs of men. He was not only heard and seen, but gazed upon and handled; and He was found to be both God and Man. He was the perfect Human; therefore, He is at the service of the human. As a Living Person, He is revealed to us in the Gospels - made to walk and talk and live before us in an atmosphere of defilement, yet He Himself is untainted and untaintable. All other men upon the stage of the world are in contrast with Him - not excepting His disciples who followed Him, nor His forerunner John who preceded Him.

The divisions of these four Gospels, into three and one, are also plainly evident as we meditate upon them. The first three unite, regardless of their differences, in one common view of the Lord. They emphasize His humanity in more or less degree; therefore, they are more distinctly one.

John stands alone. He shows us Christ in His Divine glory - the unique Eternal One - emphasizing His Deity. Therefore, we have the Trinity - three in one - displayed in this setting forth of Christ in the Gospels. "For in Him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily" - Colossians 2:9.

In the fourth chapter of the book of Revelation, we have four "living creatures" in and round about the judgment throne which is there set up. They are given in order, and numbered; and the order agrees with the Gospels to which they apply - "The first beast (living creature) 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. Here at once we realize the distinction between the first three which are of the earth, and the fourth which is the bird of heaven and answers clearly to the Gospel of John. The kingly lion corresponds with Matthew, the laboring ox with Mark, and face of a man with Luke the Gospel of the Son of Man. The representation is most wonderful, and will bear the most critical analysis. The figures of the cherubim were embroidered upon the veil of the Holy of Holies; which, according to the Scriptures, was the "flesh" of Christ - Hebrews 10:20. In the tabernacle, they were "beaten out of one piece" with the mercy seat - Exodus 25:17-22; 37:6-9. In their different forms, they convey to us the characteristics of the government of God as administered by Christ and His people; for, the latter are viewed as joined to Him in the throne, as is plainly evident in these living ones. In these four Gospels, there is an unfolding of nearness to God and relationship to Christ, which we believe is not without significance. We would emphasize it, for we believe that it shadows the experience in different degrees of the individual believer as well as different ranks of the whole body of the redeemed.

In MATTHEW God appears as far off. The people are viewed, in some measure, as under law; therefore, are apparently at a distance from God. In the end, the commandment is - "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world" - 28:19, 20. Man is still under responsibility. All power is vested in Christ, and is at man's disposal; but it is not seen demonstrated. Herein is illustrated the experience of a great many of God's children. They have never gotten very far away from Sinai's Mount. They like its fiery law and the judgments which it features. They are occupied with the King and the government of God. They may go on to a deeper experience; and if not will, no doubt, come up in the resurrection in a lower rank than others.

MARK takes us further on. There is a greater degree of intimacy featured here. At the close, we see all the power of Satan as annulled by Christ's death and resurrection; for He is seated at the right hand of God, working with His people, and demonstrating His power in their behalf. Some saints have this victory in their experience. They work mighty miracles in demonstration of the Spirit and power; yet they have no deep intimate fellowship with the Lord. Later there will be a company of people - the firstfruits of Israel, servants of Jehovah, followers of the Lamb - who will

have the special characteristics that Mark sets forth. They have been occupied with Christ as the Servant of men.

LUKE features a greater unfolding. He shows us the prodigal son, brought home and reconciled to his father, loving much because much has been forgiven him. This is representative of a deeper experience than the former Gospels portray. Such have an abiding assurance as to salvation. Eternal life is their theme. They know the Lord's provision for rest and peace, and are partakers of His provisions. They are happy and blest. This, too, is illustrative of a rank of believers many of whom will be translated when the Lord comes. They will sing, "Salvation to our God which sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb" - Revelation 7:10. They know Him as the Good Shepherd.

JOHN gives us another phase of God's salvation - deeper, richer, higher, and fuller than those which the other Gospel writers unfold. He shows us what a great and glorious place the Son with the sons will occupy. Here are portrayed glorious Divine realities which it is our privilege to appropriate; therefore, some saints will have the experience given us in this record. Also, there will be a company of such, who will remain unto the coming of the Lord. These, no doubt, are representative of the Bride - those nearest His heart - who have not been satisfied with anything short of His love. They have purposed, as Paul, to "win Christ" as their Bridegroom. They have run after Him with all their ransomed powers, forgetting the things behind, and counting as "dung" all the glory and pomp of the world - religious or otherwise. They have sung in reality -

"My heart is aglow with a vehement flame,  
To win the Beloved as mine;  
All else I forego to be called by His Name,  
United in wedlock Divine."

#### A SYNOPSIS OF EACH RECORD MATTHEW

When the Lord called Matthew, he was sitting at the receipt of custom gathering in the taxes from the Jewish people; for he was a publican, one of the most despised and hated class in Israel. His name was "Levi (joined) the son of Alphaeus (the chief)"; but the Lord changed his name to Matthew - gift of Jehovah - which is deeply significant. This despised vessel of election, a taxgatherer of his own people who were under the rule of Rome, is chosen of Jehovah to write the story of the real Ruler - the Gift of Jehovah - to His people; and, thus, fulfill the meaning of his own name. But Israel refused the Gift and so, because of their unbelief, have remained under the dominion of the taxgatherer even unto this day. But the Gift Himself will not on that account lose His blessedness or be recalled by the Eternal, "the God of all grace," with whom there is no repentance - "neither shadow of turning" - I Peter 5:10; James 1:17. A King shall yet reign in righteousness, and Israel shall be His people. To Matthew has been committed this special phase of God's purposes.

This God-chosen vessel has given us one of the simplest and most systematic books in the Bible, when once its key is in our hands. It is peculiarly the Gospel for Israel; and, rejected by them, it is a Gospel for the world. It exhibits Jesus as the God-appointed Messiah and King of the Jews, coming in due time, in fulfillment of the Scriptures. It joins the Old and New Testaments together.

#### MATTHEW'S RECORD

Matthew has sketched for us a most remarkable Personage. He looms large upon the scene, as this chosen vessel depicts Him. All the other characters of the book, though identified with Him in some measure, recede into the background when He is upon the stage. He is the King in Matthew; therefore, He is to the front. The King and His Kingdom are the governing thoughts in this record. Its characteristic phrase, "the kingdom of heaven" (heavens, Greek), is found twenty-five times. Christ is here shown as having come "unto His own, and His own received Him not" - John 1:11. Consequently, the kingdom has been taken from them and has assumed the mystery form in which we find it today, though this was unknown to the prophets. It was hidden in God. But we are not left in uncertainty as to the final issue; for, when the Son of Man shall return from heaven, the "elect" nation will be gathered from the four winds of heaven to their ancient land again.

In the meantime, Christ is rejected as King, and His kingdom is in the hands of men on earth. Therefore, it assumes forms repugnant to His mind and foreign to His counsel, from which it must be purged at His coming again. This implies present discipline for His own people, and final

judgment for the earth; and these, which are the consequences of His rejection, pervade the book with an unmistakable shadow and a feeling of distance. The bounds set by Moses are still a reality. There is mention of a "Father" but He is "in Heaven," far off; and, though not a sparrow falls to the ground without His notice, yet there is no intimacy displayed. The work of salvation is intimated as to be accomplished; but, there is no joy of it as yet, such as we find in Luke.

Forgiveness of sins is mentioned, as in the parable of the kingdom (18:27); yet it is not absolute, but conditional and apparently revocable. Discipleship, with its responsibilities in walk and life, is emphasized; but man's heart is not yet seen as awakened in response to the outflow of the heart of God. There is a certain restraint and reserve over all, which we find giving way in the following records; until, in John, we are lifted to the bosom of the Father - the place of the Son Himself. This condition agrees with and illustrates the character of things that we call governmental which Moses on the mount, at the second giving of the law, pictures for us. This may and does go on apart from any legal covenant whatever, for it reveals the thoughts of men's hearts as to the salvation of God. Many of the Lord's people never get any farther in their experience than the disciples of Matthew. God is always far off on mountain tops, for His governmental ways are all they can see. His grace and love are hidden. Like Moses, they only gaze on the back parts - the lesser light of His glory - as they are safely covered with His hand in the cleft of the Rock. Law, in any measure, always hides the full revelation of the glory of God. We can only see God in Christ and live.

Therefore, the Kingdom with its King are the controlling thoughts of Matthew. We may not realize at first how the truth of atonement connects itself with these; but it does most wonderfully. For the Cross is not simply the sign of the rejection of the King; but, as in the other Gospels, it is distinctly atoning. The cry of desertion - "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" - expresses this fully. This has no reference to man's rejection, nor his persecution. It was the judgment of God upon sin, and the endurance of this judgment was the very essence of atonement. Christ was able to bear it. In this sense, it is as the King-Priest that He suffers at the hand of God. He shows Himself here the Ruler, even over death. The King represents the people, the Divine King much more so; therefore, even His Millennial reign is based upon sacrifice, for He will reign as the King of a new creation - "the Lamb of God," "the Lion of the tribe of Juda" - John 1:29; Revelation 5:5. The Gospels give us not only a fourfold view of the Person of the Lord, but also of His sacrificial work. This is borne out in a fourfold view, in the opening chapters of Leviticus - the typical book of atonement. Omitting the meat or meal offering, which is not sacrificial but merely an appendage to the others, we have four offerings in which life is taken and the blood of atonement offered to God: Burnt, Peace, Sin, and Trespass Offerings. This is all most beautifully unfolded in these Divine Records, as even a brief examination will prove. It is sweet and wonderful to find, as soon as we begin to look at details, that these pages of the Old and New Testaments correspond exactly with each other as type and anti-type - the offerings of Leviticus being but a picture of that which in these Gospel narratives is a living reality.

MATTHEW presents Christ as the TRESPASS OFFERING in which not only is atonement made for Adam's transgression, but recompense also for wrongdoing. "He shall make amends for the harm that he hath done" is its distinctive feature - Leviticus 5:16. In it, therefore, we see Christ as making up, and more than making up - "and shall add the fifth part thereto" - for all the injury that sin has caused to God and man: reparation, restitution, and in legal parlance the paying of damage. This is what Matthew presents. These are plainly governmental requirements.

Therefore, here, we find the double answer of God to the work of atonement. Christ having entered into the darkness of the Cross, the outer darkness which this symbolized is for us dispelled. God dwells no more in it. The veil of the temple is rent from the top, by the hand of God; the way to God has been opened. He has come out to man, and man may go in to Him. The Lord gave Himself also, for the double portion of man is death and judgment. He suffers the judgment of God first; and, having exhausted this, He dies. God's answer, therefore, to His death is not only Christ's resurrection but also that of many of the saints who sleep. God's government is satisfied, for death is the stamp of Divine judgment upon the fallen creature. All is perfect and divinely fitting, as Matthew shows.

#### MARK

This Gospel is the briefest of the four Good News Records. Its author was John Mark, a cousin to Barnabas. During the first missionary journey of Barnabas and Paul, John Mark departed from

them at Pamphylia and "returned to Jerusalem" - Acts 13:13. This defection was considered so serious by the Apostle Paul that he refused to allow him to accompany them on their second tour, which caused a breach between him and Barnabas. But later this was healed, and Mark also was reinstated in Paul's favor and service; for he is with him again when he writes to Colosse, and he is also mentioned approvingly in Paul's letter to Timothy - Colossians 4:10; II Timothy 4:11. This again proves how entirely in contrast are God's ways to ours. He chooses the unfaithful servant to portray the faithful Servant - the one who endeavored to get out of the yoke, though afterward restored and made serviceable through grace, to write of Him the "Laborer" who obediently followed His Master's bidding though the path led to humiliation and death. The vivid style of narration and the minuteness of his observations bespeak the testimony of an eye witness; therefore, it was the general opinion of the early fathers, that Mark was but the amanuensis of Peter who calls him his son - I Peter 5:13.

#### MARK'S RECORD

Mark's Gospel seems almost an abridgment of Matthew's; yet, as regards the Person of Christ, it is entirely in contrast with it. He is at the very outset declared to be "the Son of God"; but this is only to give special character to the lowly service in which He is continually engaged. We have "the Kingdom of God," or of "the special theme of Matthew, mentioned; but never "the Kingdom of Christ," or of "the Son of Man." Except for His accusation upon the Cross, He is never even hailed as "the King of the Jews." Also, His title of "Lord" is seldom noted

But He is "the Son of God" in service, with Divine power and riches in His hand, dispensing from His storehouse of love to the poor and needy. For a servant there need be and, therefore, is no genealogy. His earnest and incessant service is marked by the frequency of the word "immediately," which is the same word translated "anon, straightway, and forthwith." Half of all the occurrences of this word in the New Testament are found in this Gospel. The singleness of His service is noted by His knowing nothing of His Master's business except that which is given to Him to communicate - 13:32. The tenderness of His service is manifested in all the smaller features of His ministry: He "was moved with compassion," He was "grieved," He "touched" one, and "lifted" up another, "He marvelled because of their unbelief." The reality and weariness of His service are emphasized as when "they took Him even as He was in the ship" - 4:36. Here too, as in Luke, the ascension is given as the fitting close to His path of humiliation. The One who "descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that He might fill all things" - Ephesians 4:10. But even here, His service being as unceasing as His love, we read, "And they went forth, and preached every where, the Lord working with them, and confirming the Word with signs following" - 16:20.

Yet we do not find in Mark the nearness nor joy of Luke. The Father's house has not yet been reached. God is mentioned as "Father" but five times, and "your Father" only once 11:26. Not the children's place but the servant's is here pictured, although it is recognized that the servants are children. Governmental responsibilities and rewards are set before us, as in Matthew; but, in the latter, the individual disciple is in view - each one responsible for himself. In Mark, it is the laborers for the accomplishment of Divine purposes - they who minister after the pattern of Him who as "the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many" - 10:45.

There seems to be a shadow cast upon the records of both Matthew and Mark. Man is held at a distance. This is clearly revealed when we look at the Cross where in each the Lord's cry of agony, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" is repeated. But this is in harmony with the aspect in which Christ is presented - the Trespass and Sin Offerings. In these two, the judgment of sin is the side that is dwelt upon - the necessary result of holiness, but not that in which God finds delight. In the Trespass Offering, sin is viewed as injury against the government of God; while, in the Sin Offering, it is against the Divine Nature. The one has to be repaired - "amends" have to be made. The other has to be expiated. It is the latter phase of the atoning work of Christ that Mark shows forth, though Matthew seems closely related.

MARK presents Christ as the SIN OFFERING. The difference between them appears difficult to discern because, in the type, the Sin Offering alone displays the full judgment of sin; for the victim is burned outside the camp - "his hide, his flesh, and his dung" - Leviticus 8:17. This is said of no other sacrifice; yet both of these Gospel records show Christ in this outside place, for the cry of forsaken sorrow is in the one as much as in the other. But, when we know that the Trespass

Offering has to do with the question of government, we are at no loss to understand; for it is plainly manifest that Matthew's Gospel speaks of government. Therefore, it is clear why the Trespass Offering should put on, in this respect, the aspect of the Sin Offering; for sin against God's government requires the display of His wrath according to the holiness of His Nature. In Mark, the result of the Cross is fuller than in Matthew - "the Gospel to every creature" - preached with signs following, witnessing to the fact that the power of Satan has been annulled. Even the effects of man's judgment at Babel are seen overruled in the "new tongues" which were to follow and do follow all those who believe. Also, the result of the Cross in this Gospel is seen as unmixed grace; for there is no prophetic Aceldama, no "His blood be on us, and on our children," and no judgment of even the traitor mentioned here. For who is to be judged, after God has made His own Beloved Son a Sin Offering and so judged Him? In the government aspect, these have their proper and necessary place; and their omission would be as much a defect in Matthew as it is a perfection in this Gospel of the Sin Offering - the patient Laborer-Ox, ready for sacrifice or service.

Thus Mark closes with the end achieved, the shadow taken from the face of God, and the sanctuary opened to those believing in Him. The Servant-Son returns up to the place from whence He came; but He returns not as He was before. He returns with the humanity which He has taken on, and which He will never put off. He has changed the sphere of His service; but the service itself He has not given up. He takes humanity itself up to the throne of God. Man is exalted in Christ, from the lowest to the highest place. It is this Gospel of Mark which shows Him to us in both extremes. The blood of the Sin Offering opened the sanctuary, the holiest of all - but more. He who has shed it has entered Heaven in the power of that blood, and entered it as a Man - the Head and Representative of a new race of men for whom He is the Guarantee before God. But the consequence and joy of this are not entered into here. They are found in later communications of Divine grace. The place at the right hand of God, the place of power, is of course peculiar to Himself. But He is there in our behalf, and His power is at our disposal; for not only does His heart still abide with His people, but His hand works with them. Like the "Hebrew servant" He loves His Master, His wife, and His children; and He refuses to go out free. He has His ear nailed to the door of His Master's house - Exodus 21:2-6. His love has made Him a bond slave forever.

#### LUKE

The writer of the third Good News Record also wrote the Acts of the Apostles. He was a Gentile, as we learn from Paul's letter to the Colossians in chapter four. The apostle is there commending some worthy brethren which he separates into two classes, Jew and Gentile, as a study of the context shows. He names several, as "the circumcision"; that is, the Jew. But Luke is not among this number - Colossians 4:10, 11. The Apostle Paul mentions him among others, some of whom he plainly states are of Colosse which we know was a Gentile city - Col. 4:12-14. Luke is the only Gentile writer of the New Testament; and the fact that he wrote in both cases to a Gentile (Theophilus) is surely significant. It suggests that this is the Gentile Gospel; for, while the chosen nation Israel had rejected their Messiah, the Good News was going out to the other nations. It is often called "the Gospel of Paul," and not without reason; for Luke's close association with Paul in his travels and ministry (of which the history of the Acts and the Pauline Epistles give abundant evidence) warrant the assumption that his writings savor of Paul's teachings. We would be surprised if such were not the case; for it was not possible that one could come under the personal ministry of the great revelator of the grace of God and not be moved by his influence. But, the Holy Spirit was the mighty power and influence back of both of these chosen men, though He used the Truth which had been revealed to Paul to flow out in this record of free and full salvation. Luke especially occupies us with the Lord as a Man, the Good Shepherd going out after the sheep that was lost. This work of the Lord is portrayed in this Gospel as in neither of the former. It was left for "the beloved physician," the "light," to diagnose the case and show to us the perfect "Remedy" for sin-sick souls.

#### LUKE'S RECORD

In Luke, we find the manhood of Christ more particularly emphasized than in any of the other Records. Thus, His genealogy is traced - not merely from Abraham as in Matthew, but from Adam. Not only is His birth dwelt upon, but His childhood also. We view Him here growing in wisdom and stature. His times of prayer are also noticed and commented upon by Luke, while the

other writers omit them altogether; as, for instance, at His baptism and His transfiguration. So, too, His "being full of the Holy Ghost" is only told us by this historian. Seldom is He called "the Son of David"; and it is Mary His mother who is given the prominence in His early history, which Matthew gives to Joseph. But this is in perfect harmony; for here is the Seed of the woman who would bruise the serpent's head.

He takes His place as the Man among men, which marvelous fact calls forth the angelic host of heaven with their burst of melody - "On earth peace, good will toward men." This agrees with the Peace Offering aspect of the Cross, which Luke sets forth. "The winter is past, the rain is over and gone; the flowers appear on the earth; the time of the singing of birds is come" - Song of Solomon 2:11, 12. This aptly applies to this record in contrast with the two, Matthew and Mark, which precede it. Songs greet us everywhere. Like Israel's chorus on the banks of the Red Sea, when the returning waters had swept away the last trace of their enemies, every heart was full of joy and every mouth opened to witness to salvation. For this is the book of openings. Even Heaven itself opens to speak out and share its joy with men; and its carol is as sweet and heavenly as the eternal morning which it anticipates. "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord ... And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men" - Luke 2:10-14.

This laudation seals this Gospel with its own peculiar character. In neither Matthew nor Mark do we read such language as this. They emphasize the dire penalty of sin; though viewing it, in Divine grace, as put away forever. But Luke takes us farther on. Here we see the result of sin being put away. God and man are brought together. They are reconciled. There is an open house and a glad welcome for even the prodigal son; and that which brings glory to God brings peace to man. Both are here given their part. This is indeed the very essence of the Peace Offering: God and man feeding together upon the same Sacrifice. Thus, fellowship between God and man is established and maintained, upon the basis of the shed blood.

LUKE presents Christ as the PEACE OFFERING. Peace is the special theme of this Gospel - not the working out, but the bestowal of salvation; in other words, justification instead of sanctification. The latter we get rather in John, for he takes us still further on as to the results of Calvary. Therefore, we might call this the "Grace Gospel." It is grace that breaks every fetter, and sets men's tongues loose to praise God. Mary, Elizabeth, Zacharias, and Simeon are all full of what we hear the angels say - a Saviour and salvation.

"Oh! Hear the glad refrain, a wondrous glorious strain -

The goodness and the mercy of the Lord:

For there is no word of ill; it is all of peace - good will -

And it binds our hearts anew in love's strong cord."

In the beginning of the Lord's ministry in Nazareth, the striking character of this record is emphasized in these words which are found only in Luke - "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the Gospel to the poor; He hath sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" - 4:18, 19. He maintains this place throughout the book. He is continually going in the way of peace.

Everywhere, we see "God ... in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them" - II Cor. 5:19. We see men brought to God, and blessing Him with adoring thankfulness for trespasses not imputed

As, for instance, witness the woman at the close of Luke seven; who, taught of grace, is not afraid to seek Him - even in a Pharisee's house - loving much because much is forgiven her. She came in faith, and braved the scorn of the Pharisee; and she was not disappointed. "Thy sins are forgiven," she heard Him say. He never disappoints the largest expectations which faith may form of Him. "And He said to the woman, Thy faith hath saved thee; go in peace." Again, in the parable in the tenth chapter, we recognize in the person of the good Samaritan Him who ministers righteousness without works; though men impute it to Him as a disgrace, as they do now to those who preach this Grace Gospel.

Then, in the parable of the fifteenth chapter, we see all the mind of heaven united in finding that which is lost - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit engaged in the work of salvation. We see the Son as

the Good Shepherd bringing back His lost sheep, the Holy Spirit in the Church seeking for the lost piece of silver, and the Father welcoming the returning prodigal. The son who was lost was received with open arms, with putting on him the best robe (Divine righteousness), a ring on his finger (sealed with the Holy Spirit), and shoes on his feet (separation from the defilements of the world). This is all for the ears of those "publicans and sinners," to justify their drawing near to hear Him; and to assure them of the joy there is in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents.

Then there is the publican of the eighteenth chapter, and Zacchaeus of the nineteenth, each of which tells the same story - grace and peace for the chiefest sinner. The Cross has this peace offering character. There is no cry, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" But, instead, we hear Him twice say, "Father." Though the shadow hangs darkly over the Cross, yet He is in the light with God enjoying fellowship with the Father even midst the agony. For here we have no self-occupation, such as was necessarily the case as He was draining the cup of wrath and judgment. Instead, He is able to intercede for others. "Father, forgive them" is His prayer for His murderers. Yet more wonderful even, a little later, Paradise itself is opened to a poor sinner at His side; and a dying thief, who but a few moments before had been deriding Him, is caught away to peace and safety

How significant is all of this! How fragrant of the sweet savour of His perfect acceptance with the Father! What unmeasured depths of meaning is there in every word He utters, in every deed that is done. We can now understand the angels' words, for Christ's perfect Sacrifice on the Cross has brought glory to God and peace to man. Finally, we are given to see that as Elizabeth, Mary, and others began this Gospel with songs of gladness so the disciples close it in like manner. "And they worshipped Him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy: And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God" - 24:52, 53. They witnessed the Lord ascending to Heaven with hands uplifted in blessing upon them, and they were comforted with the revelation.

As was said, this is the Gospel of "openings." The grave was opened when Christ arose, and here we view an opened Heaven - the gates lifted up to let the Conqueror enter. He had come out alone, just thirty-three years previously; but now, as He goes back from whence He came, He leads a multitude of captives. That is, in His own perfect humanity He takes man back to God, into an eternal embrace never to be sundered. Thus, the fruits of atonement are emphasized in Luke's Gospel, rather than the work itself.

#### JOHN

The fourth and final Record was written by the disciple "whom Jesus loved," as he styles himself - 20:2. He took the place of intimacy and close association with the Lord, which He taught others. He leaned his head upon the bosom of Infinite Love; hence, was pervaded with His essence and influence. His Gospel breathes an atmosphere far removed from the sordid selfish reason of the old creation. He tells us of a heavenly tabernacle which has been opened to man - a glorious golden sanctuary where he may enter in and find rest and satisfaction for his soul.

His name, "Jehovah is a Gracious Giver," tells the story. He was the son of Zebedee - "abundant portion." These are names that are fragrant of Christ and salvation. He had, as an apostle, a most important and farreaching ministry. He is also a typical character, standing for the firstfruit of Israel in the last days - the 144,000 - who comprise the last rank of the Church to be translated. It was reported of John that he should tarry until Jesus would come, although he himself assures us that Jesus did not say this.

He was banished to the Isle of Patmos for his faithful testimony to the Word of God, where he was rewarded with a series of visions of the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ, and was told to "write in a book, and send it unto the seven churches which are in Asia" - Rev. 1:11. These churches are representative of the whole of Christendom. He also wrote the three epistles which are called by his name. He lived to a great age. History records that a Caesar of his day had him thrown into a vat of boiling oil, but could not kill him. Though we cannot say whether this is authentic or not, yet we do know that he is the earnest of a body of people - a wonderful people of faith of the last days - who will have such victory over death that the devil cannot destroy their lives. They will live until they too, like John, hear the Voice of Jesus as a trumpet saying, "Come up hither" - Revelation 4:1; 11:12.

#### JOHN'S RECORD

As was intimated, John's Gospel stands alone as preeminently the Record of the Deity of Christ.



It is therefore, as we might say, the second division of the Gospels. None of the other three have their characteristic features more marked and decided than that of John, as is readily seen. Coming in perfect order after the others it is based, so to speak, upon them. We have no repetition here of what they have said; but, taking for granted what they have proved, John proceeds to the development of higher and therefore more intimate truths for which they have prepared the way.

The first three records show us, in connection with other vital questions, man fully tried and tested by the Presence of Him who stood among them in the fullness of love and grace and unspotted holiness. He was come into the world the Friend and Servant of man's need, the perfect witness of His Father, whose compassion went forth into a scene of guilt and ruin with assurance of peace and good will. But what is the result? Alas. In whatever way the Lord is presented in these inspired Records, they bear a common testimony to His rejection. There is no mistake about it - they all agree in bearing witness to the Cross. "He was in the world, and the world was made by Him, and the world knew Him not. He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" - 1:10, 11. With the statement of this positive fact, the Gospel of John begins

We have, therefore, no fresh trial of man in John's Gospel; he has been abundantly tested already. The Light which has come into the world has shown him up perfectly. The whole truth about him is told. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh" - hopelessly bad and incurable - is the judgment of God upon all that comes of fallen man. If any receive Christ, it only proves that Divine power has been at work. They are then "born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." We have nothing of regeneration in the other Gospels. Here we begin with it. On the other hand, we have no repetition of the warnings already given, nor of the gracious invitation so uniformly rejected. Even John the Baptist utters no word of judgment in this Gospel. We hear no, "Repent ye: for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." There is no, "Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" - Matthew 3:2, 8. There is no requirement at all. This is now a thing of the past, according to John's record. God demanding righteousness of man, on the basis of natural responsibility, could only end in judgment. Yet, it is not judgment that we get here, but grace - God's unmeasured, unadulterated grace. For God is here viewed as the Quickener of the dead, that men may live and walk before Him in the light - maintained there by the precious blood upon the mercy seat

John holds ever before our gaze the "rent veil," opening a way into the holiest and the light streaming out from thence to man. The light is sufficient not only for Israel, but for the whole world - revealing the sin of man, and blood covering the sin. Such are some of the great unfoldings of the first chapter. It is the beloved disciple, who leaned his head upon the bosom of Divinity though clothed with humanity, who thus wrote. He entered into the meaning of Christ's Presence among men, as none of the other apostles; and was thus enabled to tell of "the only Begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth" - 1:14. Therefore, the glory which breaks out in transitory gleams in the other Records, here shines continually. We truly behold His glory, and might fittingly call John's - "the Gospel of the Glory." Therefore, for this very reason, these occasional gleams are not in John. There is no transfiguration scene; for the glory is not far off upon the mountain tops, but it dwells with us. In Christ we are familiar with it. The Word has been made flesh. Even upon the Cross, where one would least expect to find it, the Divine glory is revealed. We read of no horror of great darkness hanging over the Cross for three long hours. There is no cry of desertion. There is no agony. When He cries, "I thirst," it is added - "That the Scripture might be fulfilled" - 19:28.

JOHN presents Christ as the BURNT OFFERING. Christ is seen through this Gospel as the "Doer" of His Father's will, and Object of His Father's delight; just as in the Burnt Offering everything is for the eye and heart of God, and all ascends to Him a savor of a sweet smell. So here we view Jesus giving up His life in the calm and perfect assurance of acceptance - "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up the ghost" - 19:30.

This is a mighty witness, not only to the eternal security of the believer, but to the perfection of our acceptance in the Beloved. It so beautifully harmonizes with the particular aspect of the Truth which we have here: Communion in the light with God, in the power of the new life which we have in Christ; a life in One in whom the fire only served to bring out the sweet savor of perfect devotedness to God - One in whom the Father could ever find unchanging delight. This is our

perfect unchallengeable standing; and the knowledge of it gives character to our worship, and sustains us in unending communion with God.

Then, the voluntariness of Christ's sacrifice is emphasized in this Record, as in none of the other three. As in the tenth chapter - "Therefore doth My Father love Me, because 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" - 10:17, 18. As also, in the garden scene, we behold the perfect expression of the same free will where He gives up Himself to those who had just fallen to the ground before Him. "The cup which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" - 18:11. This is His answer to the hasty zeal of a disciple. It is the Son, as come to do His Father's will, who thus speaks; which "will" leads to a Cross of shame and a borrowed tomb.

We are touching sweet and heavenly harmonies here. May our ears be opened and our hearts be tuned to hear the music which, therefore, will be full of power to our souls. In John's Gospel we get the full revelation of the "Father." The other Gospels are more occupied with man and his need and trial. But here we have the end of man in the flesh; his trial is over. Jews and Gentiles are viewed, without distinction, shut up to the mercy of God. Both are dead in sins. Both alike need a new life. Therefore, in John, Jews and Gentiles are one. "Believe Me," He said to the woman at the well, "the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father" - 4:21. Light has come into the world; therefore, the sabbaths of the old creation, the law and all carnal ordinances are gone with Judaism. Man is out of the case; he is off the scene. God Himself has the stage.

It is "grace upon grace" only - 1:16 R.V. It is life for the dead, light for those in darkness, and purification for the defiled that they may walk in the light with God; and all are found in Christ. We are robed in Divine righteousness, and all is blessing for man in this Gospel. Thus, God manifests Himself, commending His love. It is the Son who has declared Him to the sons, that they may understand and enjoy the revelation of the Father. Here, too, is a marvelous fact. The word "believe" is emphasized by this apostle. It, or its equivalent, is said to be mentioned one hundred times; which is in perfect harmony with this Gospel account. It speaks of man's attitude toward all the glorious unfoldings of God's grace which are herein revealed.

One more feature, that is noticeable because of its contrast with the other Gospels, is the terms in which His death is related. The translation from the Greek, by Kenneth Wuest, gives us the following:

In Mark and Luke, the Gospels which emphasize His humiliation, His death is spoken of as that of any other man - "Jesus ... breathed out His life" - Mark 15:37; Luke 23:46.

In Matthew, where He is King, the language is different - "Jesus ... dismissed the spirit" - Matthew 27:50. He is Lord of Himself even in death, and none is able to take His life from Him.

But, in John, it is as the Son in relation to His Father that He dies - "He delivered up the spirit" - John 19:30. "He handed it over to Another" is the meaning of the words here.

Thus, again, all is in fullest accord with the place, purpose, scope, and view which John gives us of the Redeemer of men - the last Adam, the son of God.