

Story of the New Testament

Lesson 2 - The Gospel of the Kingdom (Part 1)

Thank you for continuing with the Story of the New Testament. This is Lesson 2 - The Gospel of the Kingdom. In our Introductory lessons, I provided an outline for the story of the New Testament in three parts.

Part 1 is The Gospel of the Kingdom. This lesson will focus on the coming of the Lord Jesus, the proclamation of who he is, the person and the work of the Lord Jesus. It covers the four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

Part 2 is The Mission of the Kingdom. We tell the story of the formation of Jesus' new community, called the church, and the mission that Jesus gave the church to go and make disciples of all nations. This includes the one book of history in the New Testament, the book of Acts, and the 21 letters or epistles that provide the teaching or doctrine of the church.

Part 3 is The Hope of the Kingdom. Jesus is coming back again to rule and to reign. Jesus is victorious. He defeats Satan, sin, and death, and establishes his Kingdom, the new heaven and new earth. This part of the story is told through the book of Revelation.

In this lesson we will tell the story of the Gospel of the Kingdom. It begins on page 21 in your handout.

What is the Gospel? The content of the gospel is summarized in 1 Corinthians 15:3-4 ... Christ died for our sins, he was buried. Christ rose from the dead on the third day and was seen by many. But what does the word "gospel" mean? Some will say it means "Good News". This is true, but we can be more specific.

The Gospel of the Kingdom is proclaimed in the four New Testament Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

These four gospel presentations tell the story of Jesus, but these presentations are much more than biographies of the life of Jesus. Through these presentations the gospel, or "Good News", is proclaimed for the world to hear. That is why I included the picture of an angel blowing a trumpet. The angel is making an announcement that the long-awaited Messiah, Jesus Christ, the promised King has come.

These four gospel presentations do not tell the entire story of Jesus' life. They announce significant truths about Jesus Christ and his purpose for coming. There is a focus on his birth, his life, crucifixion, and resurrection.

In the middle of page 21, you see the phrase, "Synoptic Gospels". There is also a picture of eye glasses. Let's read the two paragraphs and discuss what synoptic means and what the picture of the eye glasses represents.

"The four Gospels are not biographies of the life of Christ for the simple reason that almost 30 years of his life are really not discussed. The Gospels are four different views of Jesus Christ. Each author approached Christ's life from his own viewpoint and developed that viewpoint, selecting certain teachings and miracles under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are known as the Synoptic Gospels.

"Synoptic" is a Greek word that means "seeing together" or "having a common view". Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell their story of Jesus' life from the earth up, from his birth and growing up into the point of his public ministry. The Apostle John, tells his story from what I call heaven down. The gospel of John begins with, "in the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God and the Word was God". It starts with Jesus as the eternal Word of God in heaven from eternity past. This does not in any way diminish the gospel of John. It just highlights that John's gospel represents an entirely different approach intended by God to complement the synoptic gospels.

The word "synoptic" means to "see together" or "have a common view". This is why I included the picture of the eye glasses. When we consider the gospel presentations for Matthew, Mark and Luke, it is as if we are looking at the life of Jesus from a common point of reference or through the same lens. The apostle John writes his presentation from a different perspective. John tells his story of Jesus from heaven down instead of from the earth up.

There are two gospel themes to keep in mind in this lesson as we begin to tell the story of the New Testament.

We will focus on the coming of the king and the conquest or the victory of the king and the establishment of his kingdom. If you turn to page 22, you will recognize the chart that I shared in the Introduction.

You may use this chart to tell the story of the New Testament. It's about the kingdom of God, the storyline of the New Testament. We can see the Gospel of the kingdom, the Mission of the kingdom, the Hope of the kingdom.

The gospel of the kingdom focuses on Christ. It's told through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John up to the point of the cross, the crucifixion, and the resurrection.

The book of Acts begins with the ascension, Pentecost and the coming of the Holy Spirit, the birthing of the church, and the 30-year history of the early church. It's the mission of the kingdom. It covers from the book of Acts and the 21 letters or epistles through Jude.

Then at the end is the hope of the kingdom. When Jesus comes again, there'll be a new heaven and a new earth. Sin will be defeated and we will live in perfect relationship with God for eternity.

We begin lesson 2 focused on the Coming of the King. The Old Testament prophets repeatedly mentioned the promised redeemer, the Anointed One, the Son of Man to come. There are more than 350 prophecies in the Old Testament looking ahead to the promised King to come and rule and reign on David's Throne forever.

Isaiah spoke about how the virgin would give birth to a son and he would be given the name Immanuel, which means "God with us".

Daniel spoke about the Messiah to come as the eternal King in Daniel chapter 2 and the Son of Man in chapter 7.

In John chapter 1, Genesis 1 and Proverbs 8, we see that the Messiah was involved with creation. He is the creator.

Micah revealed the location of the Messiah's birth in Bethlehem.

Hosea told us that the Messiah would flee to Egypt after his birth.

Jeremiah tells us about the story of Rachel weeping over Jerusalem. We are reminded of the suffering and pain associated with Herod killing all the baby boys two years old or under following the birth of Jesus.

Malachi and Isaiah told us that God would send a messenger ahead of the Messiah to prepare the way for the Lord.

There are more than 350 prophecies of the coming Messiah. Let's look at Malachi 3:1 to see what was promised regarding the expectation of the King to come.

Malachi writes, "Behold, I send my messenger and he will prepare the way before me and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple and the messenger of the covenant whom you delight. Behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts."

At that time and throughout the 400 Silent Years, many wondered who the messenger would be and who would be this Messiah to come? We don't have to wonder about this because the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises.

Read Matthew 11:9-11.

Jesus says, "What then did you go out to see? A prophet? Yes, I tell you, and more than a prophet. This is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before you, before your face, who will prepare your way before you. Truly, I say to you, among those born of woman, there has arisen no one greater than John the Baptist, but the one who is least in the kingdom of heaven is even greater than he."

Jesus makes it clear, the one prophesied who would come to prepare the way of the Lord, the one who would break the 400 years of silence was John the Baptist.

God was preparing the world for Jesus to come at just the right time. It was just the right time culturally, politically, theologically for Jesus to come. And we see in Galatians chapter 4, at just the right time, in the fullness of time, God sent his Son.

John the Baptist was one prophesied to prepare the way for the promised King. People at that time were looking for a Messiah to set them free from Roman oppression. We know the Messiah is Jesus.

Who is this Jesus? What can we learn from these four gospel presentations of the person and work of the Lord Jesus? How did he fulfill the prophecies from the Old Testament? What was his purpose for coming?

So, we ask, what do the gospels say about the person of Jesus? These presentations are not complete biographies of the life of Jesus. 25 to 30 years are not even mentioned. 30 to 40 percent of what's in these gospel presentation just focuses on the final week of week of Jesus's life.

We will look at what Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, wrote in their gospel proclamations through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

I will read the paragraph at the bottom of page 22.

"The story of the New Testament begins with the four gospels, which tell of the coming of Jesus Christ into the world. The gospels record his life and his ministry, his sinless life, authoritative teaching, and the authenticating miracles prove that he was the Messiah, the Son of God. His life ended when he voluntarily gave up his life on the cross at Calvary. It was his sacrificial death on the cross that instituted God's new covenant, making it possible for people to be free of their sins and to live in a right relationship with God."

The prophet Jeremiah looked ahead to this future New Covenant that would be instituted through Jesus' death and resurrection.

When I teach this lesson in a group, I assign a different gospel presentation to each of four groups. Each group discusses what they know about their assigned gospel writer? When was it written? Who was the primary audience? Why was it written? What aspects of Jesus was each author communicating to each audience? What was the key verse? What phrases are repeated?

On page 23 is a chart for you to complete. There's an answer box at the bottom of the page. The different phrases and words are to be placed in each of the four gospel columns. Pause the recording now and take some time to complete the chart for Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. When you are done, re-start the recording, and we will continue the discussion.

Pause for Page 23 Activity

Okay, how did you do? Let's take some time to review this chart.

Here is something that may be helpful - turn to page 83 in your handout and you will find an answer sheet for the chart of page 23.

Before we start with Matthew's gospel, why do you think there were four gospel presentations? Why not just one, or two? Why four?

We are not told in the Scriptures but there may be some logical reasons. In the Old Testament, a matter could be settled on the witness or the testimony of two or

three witnesses. One witness would not be sufficient to reach a verdict. If there were two or three witnesses, the testimony could be trusted. If you had four testimonies, how much more reliable or believable would the testimony be? This is one thought.

If you were at an intersection, and there was a traffic accident, and there was a person standing on each of the four corners of that intersection, each of them saw the same accident, but they would be able to provide four different perspectives. These different perspectives would provide a better understanding of what actually took place.

There were different groups of people living at that time when the New Testament was written. There were Jews, Romans, Greeks, and slaves. They would all be considering the person and work of Jesus from different perspectives. The gospel writers might have written to specific audiences to help various groups better understand who Jesus was, why He came, what He accomplished, and how were they to respond to the gospel message?

Let's begin the review of the four gospel presentations with Matthew. You can review your responses on page 23 along with the answer sheet on page 83.

The gospel according to Matthew.

- Matthew was a tax collector. He was hated by the Jews because he sided with the Romans. His life was transformed when Jesus called Matthew to follow him.
- It is estimated that Matthew wrote his gospel between 58 to 68 AD.
- Matthew wrote to wrote to a Jewish audience.
- Matthew communicated that Jesus is the Messiah, the promised King, the King that would come, the one who would come and reign on David's throne, fulfilling the prophecy that was made to David in 2 Samuel chapter 7.
- A key verse for the gospel of Matthew is 21:4-5 in connection with the Triumphal Entry in Jerusalem. "This took place to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet, saying, say to the daughter of Zion, behold, your King is coming to you, humble and mounted on a donkey, on a coal, the foal of a beast of burden." So, that would be the key verse emphasizing the kingship of the Lord Jesus, the King of the Jews.
- Some phrases that are repeated throughout the gospel of Matthew:

- Kingdom of heaven – Often Jews would not even speak the name of Jehovah or Yahweh. They would not say the Kingdom of God. Instead, Matthew referenced the Kingdom of Heaven 33 times throughout the gospel of Matthew.
- Son of David - A messianic title, the fulfillment of the one who would come and reign on David's throne. This is repeated nine times throughout the gospel of Matthew.
- The word "fulfilled" - Matthew repeatedly noted that something was written to fulfill and Old Testament prophecy. We saw that in Matthew 21. Who would the Old Testament matter to most? It would matter to an audience of Jews.
- 42% of what Matthew wrote was unique to his gospel, and we'll see that varies across the four gospels.
- There are a few other distinguishing truths about the gospel of Matthew.
 - It's filled with rich teaching. 60% of the gospel is focused on teaching.
 - It has 20 of the 36 miracles that are recorded in the New Testament in the gospels.
 - Some of the greatest teachings are in Matthew the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew chapter 5-7. The Olivet teachings.
 - 53 Old Testament references. If you also consider allusions to the Old Testament, there are 76 additional references.
 - Jesus is referred to as the son of Abraham, the son of David. Looking back through the genealogies, Matthew was proving that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 12 and the Davidic Covenant in 2 Samuel 7.
 - Matthew 13 focuses on the kingdom parables. A kingdom requires a King!
 - There are different faces of a Living Creature referenced in Revelation 4:5-8 and Ezekiel 1:10. One was the face of a lion. Some think of that face of a lion may point to Jesus as the King. The lion is the king of the beasts.
 - Matthew is one of the three synoptic gospels.
 - The genealogies would be important to a Jewish audience.
 - Matthew was writing primarily to an audience of Jews proving that Jesus is the promised King/Messiah. He is the one who fulfilled the covenant promise made to David.

Let's continue with the Gospel of Mark.

- Mark was written between 55 and 65 AD.
- Mark wrote to a Roman audience.
- He communicated that Jesus was the suffering servant. There were many slaves and servants throughout the Roman Empire. People could connect to this concept of servanthood.
- A key verse is Mark 10:45, "The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many."
- Phrases that are repeated:
 - Authority! Jesus taught as one with authority. People could see that he carried authority. He was different than the Pharisees, different than the scribes and the teachers of the law. He came with authority.
 - Immediately! The Gospel of Mark is the shortest gospel. It is quick moving, a factual type of presentation without a lot of references to the Old Testament and Jewish customs and traditions.
- 59% of what Mark wrote was unique to his Gospel.
- Some other distinguishing things:
 - Shortest of the Gospels.
 - Again, we already talked about there are many servants in Rome. This would have connected to people who were serving and also facing persecution and suffering. The Messiah would come, glory would come, but suffering came first, and the glory would follow.
 - In the different faces of the Living Creatures, Matthew talked about Jesus being the king and the face of a lion. The face of the ox, a servant animal, may have connect more with the presentation of Mark with Jesus as the Suffering Servant.
 - Again, Mark was also one of the synoptic Gospels.

The Gospel of Luke

- Written between 60 and 68 AD.
- Luke wrote to a Greek audience. He was a Gentile as well.
- Luke was presenting Jesus as the Savior, also as the Son of Man. The humanity of Jesus was presented. Jesus was the perfect man. He was fully God, but fully man.

The Son of Man was a messianic title from Daniel 7. Jesus was also presented as the Savior, the one who would be our substitute.

- A key verse is Luke 19:10, coming out of the story of Jesus and Zacchaeus. "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost."
- This salvation theme is present even in the birth accounts of Jesus. "Today in the City of David is born to you a Savior, he is Christ the Lord". He is the Savior.
- The Son of Man is repeated 24 times through the Gospel of Luke.
- Only 7% of what's in Luke is unique to the Gospel of Luke. This is one of the synoptic Gospels. You would expect to see many similarities. The writers emphasized different things for the different audiences.
- Luke is the longest of the Gospels.
- 35 of the 51 parables that are recorded in the four gospels are in the gospel of Luke.
- Luke focused on the outcasts, whether they be the lepers, women, the outcasts of society. Again, instilling this sense of Jesus being our substitute, having a heart of compassion. He saw the crowds and had compassion on them.
- Jesus was man's substitute for sin.
- In the different faces of the Living Creatures, Luke may have connected with the face of a man. Jesus as the substitutionary atonement for mankind.
- Jesus is also presented as the son of Joseph but also an emphasis on Mary as his mother. This was not common. The sin nature of Joseph was not passed on to Jesus since he was born of Mary through the Holy Spirit.

The final Gospel, the Gospel of John.

- Written between 80 and 90 AD.
- The primary audience, was the world. "For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son."
- John communicated that Jesus is God, the Son of God.
- A key verse in John 20:31, He is references the phrase "I Am". There were 36 miracles recorded in the gospels but John included only seven miracles. John said, "these were written so you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in His name."
- "Believe" is a key word. The word "believe" is repeated almost 100 times in this gospel.

- 92% of what John wrote was unique to the Gospel of John. John's gospel was different than the synoptics. It was from heaven down. It had a different perspective. It was showing that Jesus is God. The deity of Christ was emphasized.
- There are seven signs, seven miracles, that the gospel of John chose to include showing that Jesus is the Great I Am. These signs are linked to the seven "I Am" statements. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I am the door. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the bread of life. Jesus is Jehovah. He is Yahweh. Going all the way back to the burning bush in Exodus chapter 3 when Moses said, who shall I say sent me? Tell them, I Am sent you. I Am that I Am. Jesus is said that even before Abraham was, I Am.
- The focus on this gospel was to tell the story of Jesus from heaven down.
- Some of the most intimate teaching of Jesus is found in the upper room discourse in John 13 through 17 just before Jesus was crucified.
- And of the faces of the living creatures, the face of an eagle is the fourth face. The other three faces were the face of a Lion (King), the face of an ox (servant), the face of a man (human/man's substitute). Many think that the fourth face may be connected to this gospel as an eagle would soar. The eagle could take the gospel, take the Word of God and spread it quickly and accurately and with great force and strength throughout the world.

So, you have the answers there on page 83. You can compare how you did with your chart on page 23.

The main point is that there are four gospel presentations and that each of them was there for a purpose. Let's stop here and we will continue with part 2 of Lesson 2 in the next audio. I like to keep each recording to about 30 minutes in length.

In part 2 we will discuss the significance of these four gospel presentations and focus on the Preaching/Teaching of the King and the Conquest of the King.

When we continue we will start on page 24.