

The four Gospels

Part 1

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[00:00:01] Now, I just have one or two passages I would like to read to you, and the first one is to be found in John's Gospel again. And the 20th chapter.

And at the end of this chapter, just the last two verses of the chapter, many other signs of true independence 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 you might have life through his name.

Now, perhaps you'll turn back to Luke's Gospel again, please, the first chapter of Luke's Gospel. And here I'll read the opening verses of this chapter.

[00:01:09] For as much 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.

And that's all I want to read to you. Perhaps we can sing another hymn in number 230.

O Lord, when we that that which thou on earth hast taught, demand thy wondrous love and [00:02:01] grace, thy faithfulness to God, we wonder at thy lowly mind, and then would like thee to know our rest, pleasure, fineness, and learning goals of thee.

In number 230.

O Lord, when we that that which thou on earth hast taught, demand thy wondrous love and grace, thy faithfulness to God.

I love thy hands, good for each one, good for all that thou hast made.

[00:03:08] Love that is pure, love that is kind, true for all that thou hast made.

Faithful love is love, faithfulness is love, and holy life.

Love is thy father, dearest of friends, love is his will be done.

[00:04:02] I love thy faithful love, full of faith and love.

I love you, I every time, yet only you alone.

We wonder at thy lowly mind, and then would like thee to know our rest, pleasure, fineness, [00:05:07] and learning goals of thee.

We finish off this afternoon thinking about that marvelous scene at Bethany where Martha, Mary, Lazarus, each occupied their own part in that incident where, for the Lord Jesus Christ was honoured and where he was made mature, where they responded to him in a way that was right in response to all that he had done for them.

[00:06:02] And of course what we were seeing was that Martha fit into her place, Mary fit into her place, Lazarus occupied his place.

They all were doing different things in one sense, and yet they all were doing the same thing in another sense.

They all were honouring the Lord Jesus Christ, and there was a combined action there, each playing their own part, each fitting in in its own way to make a perfect, complete picture, honouring and making much of the one who so much deserved that response that day.

Well now, of course, there are other instances of this kind of thing in the Scriptures. If we were to read, for instance, the twelfth chapter of 1 Corinthians, we find that the Christian company, and the local Christian company I suppose, is likened to a body, and there are gifts and there are differences and there are endowments of the Holy Spirit [00:07:07] imparted to each of the individuals, and each is expected to play their own part by the Spirit in response to the one law, the common law of all those individuals.

And the thing is an integrated whole in one sense, it's a perfect thing in one sense, and the contributions of the individuals each fit in, and the whole works as a whole, like the human body, there's many parts and yet one body. Well now, I thought I'd like to talk to you about something of a rather similar kind in one sense, and yet a rather different kind in another sense. I don't know if I've ever had anybody give you an address on all four Gospels at once, but that's what I'm going to try to do here tonight, rather needless to say we'll leave it at that for now, but that needs to be said. But at the same time I'm sure you'll agree with me that the four writers of the four [00:08:06] Gospels are talking about the same thing in one sense, they share a subject matter in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, which is of supreme worth and of supreme quality.

The intrinsic value of their theme and the excellence of their theme is something that cannot be disputed I suppose, and yet in each of them, the four Gospel writers, looks at their theme from a different angle, and we have as it were a multiple view of the Lord Jesus Christ from four different angles, so to speak. They're not all saying the same thing, identically the same, they're saying something about the Saviour as they were directed by the Holy Spirit of God, we may be sure, to say.

[00:09:01] And what we have is not one account of the life and of the death of the Lord Jesus Christ and the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, but four accounts of that wonderful subject matter, and

that there is a sort of unity in the very diversity of these approaches to this wonderful excellent theme, something that is contributed to by all four individuals and yet it all dip dovetails together to make a unity which transcends the individual contributions so to speak, and makes a whole, what a wonderful whole the story of the Lord Jesus Christ as presented in the four Gospels is, and you know that's something that is quite incomparable and something that is magnificent indeed about this story that we have presented in these [00:10:01] four Gospels.

It's interesting to me to see that while John tells you later on towards the end he gets round to saying what he hopes to be the outcome of the presentation that he gives of the story of the Lord Jesus Christ. He doesn't seem to think about his readers at the beginning, but he certainly remembers to think about his readers at the end, and he says there are lots of other things that I might have included in my Gospels, many other things did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, but he says they're not written in this book, but these that I have written about 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. So that John is presenting his story, what a wonderful story it is, the story of the Lord Jesus Christ, he's presenting it in such a way that it might evoke a faith in [00:11:04] the reader, an appreciation of the person that he writes about amongst the readers of his Gospels.

One's faith is looking for belief, it's looking for appreciation of the greatness of the person, the Son of God that he has written about. And believing is going to bring life through his name to those that receive him.

Luke, of course, on the other hand, in the passage, the other passage that I read to you, he doesn't forget about his reader either. In fact, he seems to have his reader pretty prominent in his mind, right from the word go, so to speak, and he addresses his Gospel to the person who he expects to be reading it. And he says, I've attempted to do this, other people have been doing it, and he said, I too, having had a good knowledge of these things and having searched out these things, [00:12:01] I'm going to write this to you, Theophilus, so that I'm going to write it in order, in a methodical sort of way, that you might know the certainty of those things in which thou hast been instructed. So that you can see that Luke is expecting that reading this Gospel will produce effect in the reader. And he says, I want you to be sure of these wonderful things that I have searched out and that I have got written down under the power of the Holy Spirit. It's happened, of course, we must be aware of that. Luke did it, he did it methodically, he did it carefully, with his end in view, that the readers might know the certainty of those things that were being presented to them. So that these two Gospels, Luke and John, have an objective in mind, the writers have certain aims in mind, and they tell us what they were. If you look in Matthew, if you look in Mark, you will not find anything about the reasons [00:13:04] why they were written. It's completely blank. So from beginning to end of Matthew's Gospel, beginning to end of Mark's Gospel, you will get a clue why they wrote their Gospels. There's not a suggestion there, what they intended the Gospel to achieve. And you know, it seems, it appeals to me this, that half of the Gospel writers know what they're doing, and their aims are clearly in their minds before they start, so to speak. The other two Gospel writers, I'm sure they knew what they were doing, I'm sure they knew why they were writing their Gospels, but they never said, in their own Gospels, what they were hoping to achieve by writing the Gospels. And you know, the story of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Gospel story enshrined in the Gospels, worth writing about, even if it achieves nothing amongst readers. Even if nobody reads it, it's worth talking about, it's worth writing about. Half of the Gospel writers don't seem to mind what the effects are going to be, at least [00:14:04] they say nothing about that. But the other half of the Gospel writers, Luke and John, they know what they're after and they know what they hope to achieve. And you know, the theme of the Gospels is

incomparable, it's magnificent, it shines, so to speak, it's worth talking about, it's worth writing about. Whether or not anybody appreciates it is another matter. Whether anybody comes into the group of it doesn't matter. It's a story that's worth writing about, that's worth talking about. Whether or not people appreciate it, whether or not people receive it, it's something that is of value and something which is praised beyond compare.

And the preaching of the Gospel, in one sense, and the telling of the story of the Lord Jesus Christ is something that is valuable in its own right, but thank God, too, it has its effects, and does have its effects, among those that listen to it and those that read [00:15:02] it. And these two things don't exclude one another. Something that's worth talking about, something that's worth writing about, apart from its effects, something that has marvelous effects, too, in the hearts and in the consciences and in the experience of those that read it and those that listen to it. And here is the part where Gospel writers say what they want it to do, and the other half don't even mention what they're after in writing it.

Now, of course, if we are going to talk about what the Gospels are intended to do, and if we're not going to speculate either, we'd better stick to Luke and John for the time being, it seems to me, because we don't have to speculate as to what they were intending to do by writing their Gospels, because they tell us very plainly what the intention of the writing of their Gospels is.

And if we limit this, first of all, to Luke and John, who I hope to have a little bit [00:16:01] of time towards the end to say a little bit about Matthew and Mark as well, it seems to me that you can think about the differences as well as the common elements in these Gospels, and that we could talk about the differences between the authors. We could talk about the differences between their aims. We could talk about the differences in their contents. The material that's in the Gospels of Luke and John, the material, as you know, is selective. John says it's selective, what he has written, out of many other things that he might have written.

The differences in the material, and perhaps also the differences in the methods that they use in order to present their material. I'd like to spend a little while talking about these kinds of things. You will notice that as I read those verses, that it is quite plain that one of the differences between the authors, John and Luke, is that one was an eyewitness of the things that he [00:17:05] had seen, and the other was not an eyewitness of the things that he had seen. John writes as an eyewitness, always in the Gospels. He's there before what's taking place, and he's writing about it because he saw it. So that the readers might be in the same position as he was, though they would never be standing in his shoes, actually viewing these things.

John is writing, John is reporting things that he has seen, so that others that have never seen it might be in exactly the same position of opportunity and of blessing as he had been.

He writes as an eyewitness. You know, when a soldier with a spear pierced the side of the Lord Jesus Christ, and John seems to stop for a moment, and he says, he that saw it bears witness.

And his witness is true.

And we know it that he said true, that you, he, might believe. [00:18:05] And here he stops, so to speak, to say, I saw it, and I'm telling you the truth. And I know that I'm telling you the truth. And my aim is that you, too, might believe that that wonderful person died on the cross and his precious blood was

shed.

And repeatedly, through the Gospels, you'll find that he's watching, and he's reporting, he has in mind, though, that there aren't in his favourite position, so that there, too, might believe.

John writes as an eyewitness. John writes as a person who was in a special position in relation to the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a companion of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was a disciple, here on earth, of the Lord Jesus Christ. And he acts in the role of an observer and a recorder of all the things that he writes down, things that he saw, things that he observed.

In the epistle of John, he says, That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, [00:19:05] that you, too, may have fellowship with us, and truly our fellowship is with the Son and with the Father.

And so John, you see, was the one that was in close visual contact with the things that he reports.

Luke, of course, as you can see in that opening sentence of Luke's Gospel, he wasn't in that same position in any sense. He had access to the facts, the true facts about the Lord Jesus Christ, in a much less direct way.

He had had to search out all the information that he reports, off his own initiative, so to speak.

He'd had to do a fair bit of seeking. He'd had to do a fair bit of sorting out the information to make sure that what he was telling was right.

And he, in fact, seems to have gone out of his way to make a better report, by far, than [00:20:01] all these others that were around. Many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us. He says, It seems good to me. It seemed good to me, too. A perfect understanding, or a closer awareness, a closer search, so to speak, into all the things from the very first to right into the end. In all that, thou mightest know the certainty of those things wherein thou hast been instructed. So Luke was one of many, in one sense, and yet he was a rather special one of the many who were searching out these things. He searched it out himself. What he had found, he knew by faith.

He hadn't seen it by sight. He hadn't been there, as John had been, to witness these things. He wasn't the witness of the things that he reported. He was one that had it by faith, by, in a sense, he had it set in hand. Or in another sense, he had it by the Holy Spirit of God. And that was more important than being a witness of the very thing, that he should have the [00:21:05] Holy Spirit prompting him to write what he wrote, and directing him in his search for the truth about these things. That was the most important aspect of Luke writing these things. He found these things for himself in faith, and he was communicating these things, passing them on in faith, so that certainty and faith might be gained by the man that was the reader of his gospel.

I think it's probably right that Luke was a Gentile. I suppose it's just possible that he was the only Gentile writer of any of the books in the Bible.

Luke was a Gentile, and it's often being said that Luke's gospel is particularly pointing out the broad aspects of the gospel message, the fact that Jesus was a man who came down to show grace, the

grace of God, to men.

[00:22:04] And the universal aspect of the gospel is something that's pretty common in Luke's gospel. Here is a Gentile talking about the Lord Jesus Christ, reporting the story of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He got it himself in faith, and he was passing it on to this man so that his faith may grasp the person of the Lord Jesus Christ too.

So he's a communicator of the gospel without having been a witness of the things. The Holy Spirit puts him in the front lines still, of course, as an author, if not an eyewitness of the things that he is reporting.

Well, now, that's the difference between the authors. The difference between the agents is also fairly prominent when you consider these two passages side by side.

Luke seems to be, after helping that reader of his, perhaps it's not at all clear, it [00:23:01] seems to me not at all clear that he had in mind anyone else reading his gospel other than this one man, Theophilus. He saw a need, he saw a man who would be helped by his writing a gospel, and so he directs it to this man, Theophilus. He writes it all out, spends a lot of time doing it too, you can be pretty sure, so that that man's need might be met, and that that man might gain certainty about the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ. Luke saw the need of this reader, and Luke, in wonderful address and effort on the part of that man, he sets out for fulfilling the need of that reader that he addresses his gospel to.

He's met the need of many another reader since as well. Thank goodness we have the gospel of Luke, thank goodness Theophilus didn't put it in his pocket, and thank goodness it's available in our holy scriptures today, and what a marvelous gospel the gospel of Luke is. [00:24:01] But that man wrote in faith that the Lord Jesus Christ hadn't seen the things that he yet was reporting, but he searched them out for himself, and what he'd gained for himself he wanted to pass on to Theophilus.

That's the way the gospel propagates itself, isn't it? The man that comes into the good of the saving grace of the Lord Jesus doesn't want to keep it to himself, he wants to pass it on to others. Here we read of Luke doing that very thing in the interests of Theophilus in the first place, in the interests of all of us in another sense. Luke has the need of his reader in mind, and he sets out purposefully and methodically to meet it.

John too had something in mind, though it's questionable, at least I think it's questionable, whether he had it so prominently in mind as Luke did. John seems to have forgotten about his reader at the beginning, it seems to me. He's taken up with the greatness of the thing that he's occupied with, and as he plunges [00:25:05] into the gospel, as he writes that prologue to the gospel. I doubt very much whether he had the reader's in mind very much, you know. I think he was taken up with the glory of the person that he was speaking about more than anything else. And it seems to me that one isn't receiving the message from man to man quite so much in John as in Luke.

Luke is writing for the person that's reading, and Luke is directing it towards the reader. It seems to me that John thinks about his reader as standing alongside him and looking away at something else, and then both of them, John certainly is, and the reader alongside him, he hopes, both of them looking in another direction, looking away at the Savior, looking away at the glorious person that he's

writing about. John, it seems to me, is questionable whether his reader is totally in his mind at the start [00:26:02] anyway.

It's the greatness of his theme that dominates John's attention.

He's preoccupied with the glory of the person of Christ. And it seems to me that he wants his readers not to be engaged with the writer, but to be engaged with the material that he's writing about. He wants them to stand alongside him and be preoccupied and be attracted by the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ. He's full of wonder, John is, with the vision of the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, which he recollects. I suppose he wrote it a long time after he actually witnessed these things. He's full of wonder, and that wonder fills his vision from the very start. And as he goes through the gospel, as we were saying this afternoon, he passes from one demonstration of the glory of the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of God, to the next one, and then from the next one to the next one, and from the next one to [00:27:03] the next one, right through, one by one, these signs that he speaks about in those closing verses.

He says, many other signs did Jesus in the presence of his disciples. But I'm glad to note that these ones that I've picked out have written specially, and picked out specially, that you might believe that Jesus is the Son of God and that believing he might come to life through his name. So he tells us pretty firmly that he has selected miracles, or signs, as I suppose we often think about them, signs which draw our attention to the glorious person of the Lord Jesus Christ that was there.

And he says, I'm presenting this thing, selecting my material so that you might be impressed by the greatness and the glory of this wonderful person that I've been preoccupied with, and I want you to join me and to be attracted by his glory.

[00:28:03] And so he seems to see, he says so, in fact, that faith in this person will be awakened by a sight of his glory, so to speak, and of his greatness, and to have a faith in this person, to believe in him, is to have life through his name.

Life comes by faith, and it consists in being absorbed with the glories and the graces of this great person that John is talking about.

Well, I want to pass on from the ends, then, of these two gospel writers to their material. Well, I feel my shortcomings very much in talking about the content of Luke's gospel and in talking about the content of John's gospel, but it's clear when you think about it that they're not identical by any means. There are differences between these gospels, and Luke, in his great interest in the need [00:29:03] of that human being, Theophilus, having the needs of humanity in his mind, he presents the Lord Jesus Christ in a way that presents his humanity as well.

And nobody can dispute, I don't think, that the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ is in the foreground in Luke's gospel.

All the gospels have common material, needless to say, and you can find the glory and the deity of the Lord Jesus Christ in every gospel, and you can find the humanity of the Lord Jesus Christ in all the gospels. But the common thing, the thing that is pushed to the front, so to speak, in Luke's gospel is his manhood, his perfect manhood.

And we see this wonderful human being, the one whose God becomes man, portrayed in Luke's gospel.

And one sort of characteristic of this wonderful person that Luke brings to the fore again [00:30:04] talks about his closeness to human beings, talks about his approachability, so to speak, his readiness to draw near to all kinds of human circumstances, situations, his grace and his close contact with men, needy men.

He speaks about his tenderness. He speaks about his compassion. He speaks about his interest in humankind. He speaks about his humanity, how the Lord Jesus Christ was the perfect man, and how he became man because of his great concern for men. He came right down where human beings were, so to speak. He came into humanity.

He came to show that kind heart of his to all kinds of persons in need.

What a marvellous story it is. Among other things, we read about the grace and the free-flowing nature of that grace [00:31:05] that the Lord Jesus bestowed on human beings.

The wise folk of God's approach to men is, I suppose, more prominent in Luke's gospel than anywhere else in the gospels.

To just underline this a little bit, let me mention just three things that you'll find in Luke's gospel that you'll not find in any of the other gospels. The story of the ten lepers, for instance, is something that you'll find in Luke's gospel. You won't find it in Matthew or Mark or John.

The ten that were healed were wretched men, lepers.

And the one that returned, that was a Samaritan, surprisingly enough, came and he gave his thanks to the Lord Jesus to give glory to God as well. Well, there's a sample of the kind of thing that's prominent in Luke's gospel. The blessing for the Jews and also for the Samaritans. [00:32:01] Surprisingly enough, a better reaction from the Samaritans than from the Jews. That's one of the things that is only to be found in Luke's gospel. The story of the prayer on the cross for his enemies. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. You'll not find that in Matthew. You'll not find it in Mark. You'll not find it in John. And you will find it in Luke's gospel. And that grace, which was still there, despite the abuse, despite the hatred, despite the animosity, all the upheaval, all the wretched things that men did to this wonderful person, his answer to that sort of approach to him was to pray for them. Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do. The full content of the wonderful grace of God, demonstrated at that uttermost limit so to speak, when he might very well have had some hard thoughts, had he been a different [00:33:01] person, about those that were around him. His only concern was for them and for their forgiveness. I'll pass on a few verses in that same chapter in Luke's gospel. You'll read the story of the repentant thief, the two thieves that were crucified alongside the Lord Jesus Christ.

One of them persisted in his unbelief and in his doubt. The other one, the very last moment, when all were bailed up on the crosses and removed at last in one sense, at that moment when the Lord Jesus Christ suffered, as you know, Luke doesn't make a very great deal of the most profound sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ.

He treats it as a moment when the grace of the heart of the Lord Jesus Christ got its opportunity at the very crucial last moment of all, so to speak. Right in the presence of men, daily, death to the Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to it, you find the free grace of God flowing out to an undeserving person, crucified alongside [00:34:07] him, deservedly crucified alongside him. And there was that man, a hopeless character, helpless, and malefactor, probably never done anything decent in his life. And that man recognized his need, recognized a person who could meet his need, and the full grace of God was demonstrated that that could go on. And you read about that in Luke's gospel. You won't read about it in any of the other gospels. I haven't time to stop, needless to say, to dwell on the individual points that might be made.

But the wide scope of God's approach to men, the universal nature of the grace of God to men certainly is demonstrated in this gospel.

The uncontainable grace of God, and yet it had its purity as well, you know. Let us not say that the grace of God is indiscriminate in one sense. [00:35:01] There's a purity about it that's very much to the fore in the same gospel, you know, the purity and the holiness of this wonderful man, the Lord Jesus Christ, very much on the line, very much to the fore in this same gospel that talks about the breadth of his love and the breadth of his heart towards men. And Luke made a thorough search to find out the facts, and he's pretty confident that he's got them. And more than that, he has the Holy Spirit behind him to make sure that what he is recording is as God would have it recorded.

And a thorough search into the truths of these things, this is what's discovered when a person really goes into it and finds the truth of the matter about the grace of God as it was manifested in Christ.

And, you know, it's a small wonder that he thinks that Theophilus, when he reads about this, would be pretty certain of what he finds.

[00:36:02] There's great assurance, isn't there, in the fact that the more thorough research is made to find the facts, that these are the kind of facts that come out. And God had his man in Luke, the beloved physician, to make a thorough search by the Holy Spirit to record the true facts that were manifest when the person, the Lord Jesus Christ, that marvelous man was here on earth.

And these are the facts, and these are the things that are presented to us in Luke's gospel.

And these are the things that convey certainty to the person that's in need. And so Luke goes this kind of way in writing his gospel. John, of course, goes in a different direction. We've spoken about that almost already. And John Maynard did a deliberate selection, and he built his gospel around the signs, the seven signs, which are pointers, so to speak, signposts to the glory of Christ. [00:37:03] These are the things that convey certainty to the person that's in need. And so Luke goes this kind of way in writing his gospel.

John, of course, goes in a different direction. We've spoken about that almost already. John Maynard did a deliberate selection, and he built his gospel around the signs, the seven signs, which are pointers, so to speak, signposts to the glory of Christ.

And at the same time, these signs as he writes about them are, as it were, invitations to fit in him.

And he begins at Cana of Galilee, this beginning of silence in Jesus in the presence of his disciples,

manifested for his glory, and his disciples believe on him.

And that's the kind of thing that John is anxious to recall, things which are manifestations of the glory of the person of Christ. [00:38:03] And you know them probably as well as I do, and I might forget some if I try to make a list of them here tonight. But it starts at Cana in Galilee.

We will survive at the pleasure of being in Cana of Galilee not many months ago. Not a very spectacular place to go to in some ways, but a very spectacular thing happened. More than superficially spectacular, something that had an inner meaning in it, the glory of the person who was there to change the water into the wine.

That was the first of these signs that John built his gospel around. And the last one is the one we were talking about this afternoon. When human efforts were of no avail, and when those sisters were in the deepest sorrow and bereavement, when nothing could be done to rectify the situation, the man was not only dead, but he was buried, and he'd been buried four days. And then the greatness of the glory of God was manifested, the glory of the person who [00:39:04] was the resurrection, is the resurrection, and the life was demonstrated. And his disciples believed on him.

Mary and Martha had a deeper sense of his greatness after that. Other people didn't believe, didn't convince everyone. Surprising, the glory of this world can darken the minds of people even when the most glorious things are on show, so to speak.

But those that believe have life through his name. John goes through these incidents, and there are many things that might be said. A lot that happens awakes controversy and a lot of animosity on the part of some, a lot of disputation with those that are unbelievers, which is profitable to read about, that arises out of these miracles that are recorded.

Things are going on not only in the physical sense. The man didn't only receive his sight physically, but things are going on on the spiritual plane [00:40:05] as well.

Apart from the outer miraculous thing, something's going on inwardly as well on many of these occasions.

Lazarus is raised from the dead, but remarkably enough, people are hearing the words of the Lord Jesus Christ and are living internally with eternal life when they hear his word. The most important aspect of the situation is not the outward one, but the grace of the person that is there, hearing his word, receiving it, brings eternal life. So that things are going on under the surface as well as on the surface in many of these chapters in John's gospel.

Things are being enacted on the spiritual level as well as on the physical. Blind people are receiving their sight. Life is being received from the dead. Thirst is being satisfied. Food is being offered to the soul as well as to the hungry.

[00:41:05] And these things are happening, and these things are happening because of the greatness of the person who is down here amongst men. If his word is received, there's life and there's heaven and death received at the same time. The words and the works of the Lord Jesus Christ produce these kinds of things still. The miracles are in the past, of course. The things that are recorded in the gospels, the marvelous things that are there for you and I to read, these things belong to the past.

But for the same person, it is to be believed on. His glory is to engage our attention still today. And the spiritual aspect of these things goes on still today if we come into the presence and into the faith that rests on this great person who is no less than the Son of God. If I were to choose one word to describe Luke's gospel, the feature of the Lord Jesus Christ [00:42:02] that is most prominent of all in Luke's gospel seems to me to be grace. But the feature of the Lord Jesus Christ which is most prominent in John's gospel seems to me to be glory.

I'm sure you would agree with that. It's an oversimplification, of course. We read about the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ, the glory of his manhood in Luke's gospel. But grace might be the less word to describe. In one word, the character of Luke's gospel, the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is to the fore. In John's gospel, the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ seems to me to be to the fore. I've only left myself ten minutes to talk about Mark and Matthew, and ten minutes for Mark and Matthew brought together is a tall order for anybody, but perhaps I can go on just for those ten minutes and say that, as I've said, Mark and Matthew never speak about what they're hoping to achieve by writing their gospels. [00:43:03] They never even mention it. But if we look at the gospels and just ask ourselves what are their prominent characteristics and in what sense are they different from these other two gospels that we've been talking about, I don't think you will dispute very much with me that when I talk about one or two of the special contributions which these two gospel writers make to the total picture. Certainly their contributions are different again, different from one another. They're all four fit together to make a marvellous whole, as I've said already. But if we pick out their special contributions in a brief way, it's obvious really, isn't it, when you start to read Matthew's gospel that Matthew is linking things with the past more than the other two gospel writers are. The special feature of Matthew's gospel seems to be the way in which things that were foreseen beforehand, written about beforehand, are now coming to pass. [00:44:03] The continuity of the new story that's related in the New Testament with the Old Testament is something that Matthew makes a big feature of. And Matthew is speaking about the one who was said to be coming, king, that was to come to his earthly people, and the claims of the Lord Jesus Christ and his credentials to be accepted and to become king of that earthly people of his are things which Matthew certainly has in mind right from the very word go. The thought that scripture is being fulfilled in Matthew's gospel is a very prominent thing. It's an interesting exercise. He uses it on the line every time when he says, That plan was fulfilled, that which was spoken by the prophet, so and so. That plan was fulfilled, that which was spoken by the prophet. [00:45:03] The very first verse of the gospel says, The Son of David, the Son of Abraham. So it takes things back to much earlier things that were now coming to pass.

Matthew presents these things, but nevertheless, sat to say before Matthew has gotten very far, he's talking about a king that's not welcomed, a king that's not received, a king that his people have no information to accept, and his credentials might be there, but they will not have been, and that's a very prominent feature very soon in Matthew's gospel. He's talking about a king who certainly was their king, but who was rejected.

And things in a sense went wrong, though in another sense they never went wrong at all. He's soon talking about deeper things which are being fulfilled, not unexpected things that he should have been rejected, [00:46:03] but deeper things are going ahead, deeper purposes are going ahead. And his rule, while it might be refused by those that should have accepted it, is to be recognized in a different way. And so we read about the principles of his kingdom and so on before we've got very far into Matthew's gospel.

And it says very plainly that his rights are certainly firmly there, and his rights are going to be insisted

on fairly soon.

It's not that those rights of his are going to be closed forever, they're going to be insisted on all right. But other things are going to take place in the meanwhile. There's instruction for those intervening days, the subjects of the kingdom in the day when the king is rejected. And there are words from the Lord Jesus Christ at that time in Matthew's gospel. And I think, you know, if I were asked to find a word which describes the character of the Lord Jesus Christ presented in Matthew's gospel, [00:47:06] though it's an oversimplification again, I think the word the authority of this person wouldn't be a bad word to describe something that is pretty prominent in Matthew's gospel. He had the authority, he had the rights, his credentials were all right, but he was refused.

Nevertheless, the dignity and the authority of that person that went on saying words to those people who were refusing him, the authority of those words, his words had authority and not as described.

He spoke with authority, not as described. If you look at the words of the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew's gospel, you'll find that they have a ring of dignity, a ring of authority every time. He might be rejected, but he hasn't given up his authority.

And he speaks as one that has authority in this gospel, as instructions, as guidance, as heartening instruction [00:48:04] for those who are willing to be his subjects.

But there are strong words that are just as authoritative for those that are rejected of himself.

And there are scary words about some of these kinds of people, hypocrisy that he saw in the hearts of the leaders, how strong he was about that kind of thing, and how authoritative were those words that he spoke about those that were rejecting him.

Unexpected words, astonishing words for those that were questioning him, insincere questioning very often, but he always answers in a way that confuses them, in a way that ensures that he has the answer and he has the authority.

And once he has silenced their questioning, he's got questions to ask them, that are searching, that are challenging, words in return from him that expose those that are against him. [00:49:04] All the power is in his hands, and all the authority rests on his shoulders, and the clause of the gospel says, all power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. And you know, that gospel, if you ask yourself the question, who might benefit from reading a gospel like that, you might get a clue as to whom it was intended for. Certainly we can benefit by reading this gospel as well as the others, there's no question about that, it's intended for us all. But you can see how much this gospel would suit the Jew, and certainly would expose the Jew in all his unbelief.

The quality of this person that the Jew has rejected, something that ought to conform to those Jewish readers of this gospel, in a special, forceful way. And it might be, though we can't know for certain, that Matthew, in writing this gospel, had in mind the Hebrew reader of the gospel message.

[00:50:03] The gospel was always directed to the Jew first, wasn't it? Perhaps it's not unsuitable, but the very first of the four gospels is one that is planted towards the Jew in a rather special way. And what shall we say about Mark? Well, Mark, of course, is the shortest gospel. Mark compresses his words fairly effectively, doesn't he?

He's forthright, he's straight into the business in hand, doesn't waste time about irrelevancies as far as he is concerned. He's right into the thick of it within one chapter, and the Lord Jesus Christ is active right from the word go in Mark's gospel. And the emphasis is on the activity of the Lord Jesus Christ, it seems to me. It's not so much his words, but it's his actions. And he's getting on with the business always, immediately, straightway. He's on with the job.

From one thing to the next, you get a sense of the way in which [00:51:04] events were packed into the life of the Lord Jesus Christ. Little in the way of spare time, no time at all for other things. On he's going, serving the one who sent him in this area and in that area, amidst all the needs that are around him. The Lord Jesus Christ is busy from morning till night, has to find time in order to go aside to pray. He never gets much sleep, it seems to me. The only time you read about the Lord Jesus Christ sleeping is when they're all trying to wake him up to get him to act, because with all their hope was sinking, he was asleep in the tender part of the ship, when the waves were mounting up. And they said, Master, carest thou not that we pray? The only time you read about the Lord Jesus having a little quiet time, having a rest, so to speak, having a sleep, was when all the waves were mounting up and the boat was about to sink. Certainly you can get a sense, as we read Mark's gospel, [00:52:02] that he has the power to cope with everything that comes along, the demons upon him in Mark's gospel. He has the power to cast the demons out. He has the power to deal with this and deal with that, individuals with all their different needs, masses of people needing the compassion of the Savior, needing the power of the Lord Jesus Christ. One might think he would get exhausted almost, but the scale of the demands on him, and yet surprisingly, Mark gives this marvellous account of the continuous busy activity, the power of the Lord Jesus Christ that was present amongst men to heal and to deal with their needs.

The deaf and the fainted and the dumb and the blind and the diseased, the paralysed, the lepers, all of these are coped with by the Lord Jesus Christ. The multitudes feel his kindness and they feel his healing power. [00:53:03] It wasn't naked power, you know, easy power, nothing like that, you know, to cost him a great deal. Let us never think that the Lord Jesus Christ acted easily in all this service that he did for God. It was nothing like easy power.

It was power that came at his expense and that cost him a very great deal.

He coped with everything, coped with all the needs. He went down into death to deal with that utmost fault of man, and the adversary, and death itself, were not beyond the power of the Lord Jesus Christ to cope with them. We read about him at the end of the Gospel going down into death to show his power over death itself.

He showed his power over the demons. He showed his power over the diseases. He showed his power over death by going down and wresting the power from the adversary and defeating the utmost fault, so to speak, [00:54:02] so that you will gather from what I'm saying that if we want the single word, and the single word is not enough really, but the power of the Lord Jesus Christ might be a little bit better to describe what we find in Mark's Gospel.

Well now, from all this, of course, we will see that different individuals have different senses of appreciation of the same person, the Lord Jesus Christ. These four particular individuals, specially chosen and brought to fulfil the function that they did, to write these parts of Holy Scripture, each of them had their own angle, and one Gospel writer was not the same in his appreciation of the Lord Jesus Christ as another. All had the common subject matter, so to speak, the common theme, and all

had their different angle on this common theme. We're not expected to be all the same, you know, as far as our responses to the Lord Jesus Christ is the same. Your sense of his worth and your sense of his greatness, [00:55:03] your appreciation of him might be very different from mine. It might be much more substantial as well. But whether we have a big appreciation or whether we have a small appreciation of him, it's well to have our own angle on the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ, and our own, hardly one in one sense, appreciation of what he means to us, and to spend time learning about the Lord Jesus Christ and making something of him, so to speak, which these Gospel writers certainly did. They made a marvellous account of what they found in the Lord Jesus Christ. To spend time making our own little appreciation of the Savior, to be making something, touching the King, as the psalm says. I speak of the things that I have made, touching the King. What you may find may be something altogether different from what I may find.

Without your contribution, how short we would be, and how right it is that there should be all kinds of contributions, [00:56:02] all kinds of ways of being aware of the greatness of the Lord Jesus Christ. And what a wonderful thing it is when all these things fuse together in a way that is controlled by the Holy Spirit of God. Your contribution comes in. My little contribution comes in. Other people know more about the Lord Jesus that we have never appreciated before. It all can be the same thing. There are different things all about him. What a marvellous thing this Christian unity is, and this unitedness in saying what we know about the Lord Jesus Christ. All these four Gospel writers did it. They were different persons from we are to what we are. They've never been called to be writers of Gospels, nor ever will be when we can appreciate this great person and each have our own individual appreciation of him. What a wonderful thing it is to know that in heaven we're all going to cooperate in this integrated way. Everybody is going to make his contribution to the eternal theme, [00:57:01] to the eternal song, of which he is the center, and of which he is the worthy one. May we close then by singing the hymn of God. Here he is.

Lord, blessed Savior, it is thy love, thy breath, thy womb, so free.

Then will we have our thoughts, our hearts, our lives engaged with thee.