

# The Gospels

## Part 2

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[00:00:00] The number of ways in which God could teach us about Jesus is infinite. When we think about the number of things that there are to learn, the number of aspects of the Lord's glory, but God has seen fit to condense into four major ways of teaching us and put it to us in the four Gospels. And as we turn to Mark this afternoon, we will find that this is true again. I want to pick up something that was said in the introduction, and I want to pick out from each of the summary scriptures something that will crystallize our thoughts about the Gospel by Mark. When we looked at [00:01:02] Ezekiel chapter 1, we noticed that when God was teaching Ezekiel about God's government, he said in a picture form by showing an ox, that God, when he does things, does things in a way that outlasts, which is enduring, which perseveres far better and far more lastingly than anything that man can do. And then when we looked at Luke 10 verse 27, we read that bit of the verse that says, thou shalt love the Lord thy God, among other things, with all thy mind. And we learn there that a life lived upon earth to perfection, where every attitude of mind [00:02:02] was in line with the will of God is seen perfectly in the Lord Jesus. Now that's another thing that we come to in the Gospel of Mark. Philippians 2 verse 7, and let us turn to it.

Jesus made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant.

So here we have again the microscope applied, and our studies will be looking at the Lord Jesus as the perfect servant. And when we come to what I described in the second bottom row as the attributes of God coming to light in various ways, I said that in looking at Revelation 4 verse 7, [00:03:03] looking at the attributes of God in glory, as it is in creation, as it is in the life of Jesus upon earth, so it is when God gives us a glimpse of his glory. It has a lasting, enduring quality about it that is incomparable. It far outshines what anyone else or anything else can show.

So if we look at Christ, whether in prophecy, in the Gospels, in the epistles, or in glory, one of the major facets that we have looked at in these summaries is to see this enduring character, this perfect quality about the service of the Lord Jesus Christ. Now I want to read a few more verses to bring to mind so that for the rest of our lives, if anyone reads from Mark's Gospel or [00:04:08] tells us about Mark's Gospel, it'll ring a bell and we'll say, ah yes, Mark's Gospel, and certain verses will come to mind. The first one, Isaiah 42.

Isaiah 42 and verse 1. Behold my servant whom I uphold, mine elect in whom my soul delighteth.

I have put my spirit upon him, he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. Those of you who make notes in your Bibles, not a bad thing if the heading of Mark's Gospel, [00:05:07] the Gospel according to

Mark, if you put somewhere about there, Isaiah 42 verse 1, it will remind you that God is saying to us, behold my servant, and this is the study that I want to bring you to now. Would you now turn please to Mark's Gospel itself and chapter 10. Verse 45. If you want a key verse within the text of the Gospel to give us the main drift of what God teaches us, chapter 10 verse 45.

The Son of Man came not to be ministered unto but to minister and to give his life a ransom [00:06:09] for many. Now, I suppose the ordinary word we would use now instead of minister would be serve or work. The Son of Man came not so that others could serve him or work for him, but he came to serve and to give his life a ransom for many. His life on earth was a life of service, a life of perfect service, and that's what we are going to look at in as brief a way as we did with Matthew last week. [00:07:12] We are, Mr. Davison is arranging that each of us will be presented with a full set of notes in reasonably good condition with all the words on them after the end of the series of talks, and with him I will try to ensure that they're all legible and have all the information on. Now, again, the best way is what you've done during the week. Make your own schedule [00:08:04] up, read the Gospel, look at the key word or verse and the key thought and fill it in, and then apply the test of the seven pillars of wisdom to the Gospel, which are included and why, which are excluded and why, and then come to your own conclusion. That will still be the best way, even though I have tried to save time this afternoon by giving you a copy of some of my thoughts. As I am aware, some of you have been doing this yourselves through the week. Compare my suggestions with your own, and in any case, let us all go back and do it again, because each time we do it, we notice something that we haven't noticed before. Now, the first one, at the top left-hand corner, it's the Gospel by Mark. The key word or verse [00:09:02] is the key verse we've read, chapter 10, verse 45. The key word or similar words, things like straightaway, immediately, forthwith, one of the first things we learn in Sunday school, isn't it, when the teacher says, we're going to do something in Mark, and bear in mind that we get on with the job in Mark, there's no delay, everything is done forthwith, immediately, straightaway. Jason undertook to read through Mark this afternoon, and come and tell us, this afternoon, now, how many examples there are. Perhaps he's still reading through it, he's still counting up, but I think when he comes, he will tell us that there are about 40 examples, about, don't pin me down to that, Diane, it's about 40 examples of immediately forthwith, straightaway. That is because, as you've noticed, it's the shortest Gospel. [00:10:04] It's the Gospel of actions rather than words. There are words, there are sermons, there are teaching episodes, but in the main, it concentrates on deeds rather than words. It's the life of the perfect service, and a servant, in the main, doesn't go around giving lectures all the time, he does things. Unless, of course, giving talks is his particular branch of service. We've looked at Isaiah 42 verse 1, I've recorded it there, and now we can, for 15 minutes, we can look at these seven examples, about two minutes a time, so there isn't a lot of time, but let me direct you to the first one, his birth, the birth of the Lord Jesus. If you were writing a history of a humble but very effective servant, it is unlikely that you would want to [00:11:12] consider his pedigree. It is most likely you would want to consider spending your time well in writing about the sort of servant that he or she is, how they do their work, and the results of that work. And we shouldn't be surprised that if there are two Gospels that do not include the genealogy of the Lord Jesus and his birth, one of those would be Mark. So, the comment I have made there is, the background, genealogy, and circumstances of birth are irrelevant in a servant. You may not agree with that. You may come to some other reason. I'd be delighted to [00:12:01] hear it. If you think there is some other reason, more important, why the birth of the Lord Jesus is not included in the Gospel by Mark, please tell me. I'm always anxious to learn. His baptism, it is recorded in chapter 1, verses 9 to 11. I suggest that in a Gospel telling us about his service, it was right that Jesus should identify himself with the preaching of the prophet. The forerunner was here, the voice crying in the wilderness, saying, Messiah, God's ideal servant, is about to show himself and be declared, and I want you to be watching out because his revelation is

almost here. You're going to see him very, very soon. Now I think I can see the wisdom of God in saying that the Gospel which tells us about the perfect servant will want to show us that [00:13:06] the Lord Jesus, when he came, the first thing that he did was not only agree, but that he was prepared to associate himself, identify himself with the preaching and the object of the preaching of John Baptist, and therefore it is included. The Temptations, chapter 1, verse 12. The true servant can be subjected to the closest scrutiny, the most severe test, and proved to be beyond reproach. One of the joys of reading the Gospels is that we say, now, here is God's servant. I know, because I'm a Christian, that Jesus is perfect in every way, so as I read the Gospel by Mark, let me see the sort of thing that God uses to confirm that God has made no mistake. [00:14:06] God's perfect servant is coming to light, and the perfect servant need not be afraid, and is not afraid, his disciples need not be afraid of their master, the perfect servant, being put to the severest test. And I think that in the Temptations being included in the Gospel by Mark, we see this, that tests, and it's true in all the Gospels, tests by God of what is real, is not to test if it's real, but so that what is real might come out. Now that's true of that which is of God. In a general way, it's true when Christians are put to the test, not that we might doubt whether we are Christians or not, but so that opportunity might be given for that which is real to shine out. [00:15:05] And so with the perfect servant, the severest test only brought to light, it proved that he was perfect in all that he did. A little note in the comments column, which some of you have in full, some of you have 90%. My apologies that I've chopped the right hand end off, but it's an opportunity to write something down for yourself. The Spirit driveth him into the wilderness, compare Matthew 4 and Luke 4 there. Notice the different words. Remember last time I suggested that the word in Matthew indicates that the Lord Jesus, as God's mighty King, was conducted in state into the wilderness. That's the bearing of the term, he was led into the wilderness. Here we can see the force, that with a servant he is directed what he has to do, [00:16:07] and we read that the Holy Spirit drives him into the wilderness. Look at the occasions in Matthew and Luke, and in anticipation of John, just query in your mind whether or not you would expect the temptations to be included. The transfiguration. Now here, if I was able to shut off your previous knowledge of the Gospels and say, now, would you expect the transfiguration scene to be included in the Gospel by Mark, I might, with my knowledge now that I've got from the introduction last week and this week, I might say, oh, I'm not sure, really. I can see it with the King, I can see it with the Son of God, I'm not quite sure whether or not I would expect to see the transfiguration scene, [00:17:02] the Lord's glory being manifested on the Mount of Transfiguration, I'm not sure whether or not I would expect to see it. But of course, having made that initial scab at it, I would then look at the Scriptures, which is the only way to find out, search the Scriptures daily to establish whether or not these things are so, then I would find it in chapter 9, verses 1 to 8, and I would say, of course, isn't it fitting that God pays this tribute to the perfect service of the Lord Jesus and demonstrates, manifests his approval? So I think that is why the transfiguration scene is included. God gives his manifest approval to the perfect servant. The death of the Lord Jesus is recorded, chapter 15, verses 22 to 37.

The main object, the climax of the service on earth of the perfect servant was the work of the [00:18:12] cross. The perfect servant was unswerving in his devotion, unflinching in his service, even unto death. And I think that's marvellous. What a picture of service we have in the Gospels, in all of them. The death of Christ is recorded in each of the Gospels for different reasons, reasons which supplement each other rather than conflict. And in Mark, it is because it is the climactic act of service, the climax of his service, that after a life of unswerving devotion, that that is seen in the ultimate, in that he went to the cross. His work upon the cross, [00:19:03] the basis of all our blessing, and we delight as Christians to look into Mark and find fresh opportunity for praising God as we see why his death was included. Resurrection, chapter 16, verses 1 to 9. At the cross, man gave his answer to Jesus, we don't want him. Cast him out, away with him, crucify him. In the resurrection, God has

given his answer to what man has said, in that he has raised him from the dead. We noticed it this morning, wasn't it lovely, that after thinking of the love of Christ and the love of God, shown in the cross, that there was the immediate evidence of God's approval, raised by the glory of the Father, we enjoyed it this morning. It was an opportunity for praise [00:20:06] this morning, and so it is when we read the Gospel by Mark, chapter 16, verses 1 to 9, we exult, we rejoice, we boast in the presence of God, in the proper sense of the term, when we see God's answer to that life of perfect service culminating in the cross. Ascension? Oh yes. The only proper terminus of the life of perfect service is not in the grave, not even on earth, even in resurrection, but at the right hand of God. I've made a note there in the remarks column, have a look at Psalm 16 verses 11. Now shall we do that, just to see how these things all fit together. [00:21:09] Psalm 16 verse 11. Thou wilt show me the path of life, in thy presence is fullness of joy, at thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore. Psalm 16 gives us the life of the perfect man. We'll come back to this perhaps when we look at Luke's Gospel. But the life of perfect service lay through death and terminated at the right hand of God. And I think the ascension of Christ is a fitting testimonial to the life of the perfect servant, in that it is seen to progress right through to the right hand of God on high. I've said here the terminus of the life of perfect service was not the tomb, but glory at the right hand of God in heaven. Now I've said here in the [00:22:08] comments column it's relative to what he did. Some of us have little stock phrases and I'm sure you've noticed that. One thing you might hear some of us say from time to time, it is right that Jesus is at the right hand of God. And we will say things like this, it is right that Jesus is in heaven, at the right hand of God on high, because of who he is. It is right that he should be at the right hand of God on high because of what he is. It is right that he should be where he is because of what he did. And it is right that he should be there because of where we are going. Now there are other more technical phrases that could be used, like because of his personal glory, because of his [00:23:04] moral worth, because of his life of perfect dependence, because he is the forerunner, that kind of expression which we get in the Bible. If you want to follow that through, have a look at Hebrews 1, 8, 10 and 12, because in those four chapters you get a reference to the Lord Jesus being consolidated, he has a consolidated position. He is there substantially because of these various reasons, and they are explained to us in a most edifying way in chapters 1, 8, 10 and 12 of Hebrews, where in each chapter we get a reference to him being at the right hand of God. But here it is fitting, because of what he did on earth, that he is at the right hand of [00:24:04] God on high. Now I think it would be true to say it's in chapter 10 that we get the scriptural statement that because of what he did on earth, it is fitting that he is now at the right hand of God on high. And because of that, it is seen as the climax of this Gospel, because he is the perfect servant, because the service wasn't left unfinished, because he did it thoroughly, perfectly, completely. God's testimony to that, God's witness to that, is that he has set him on high at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Now, that is the end of our look at Mark. If the Lord will, we have reserved the first weekend in April, March, for the next one. Today's is the February one.

[00:25:11] Mr. Davison may choose to put something else in February so that you don't feel deprived, but the next talk on the Gospels, I think, is the first Lord's Day in March, 4th of March, and then on John, if the Lord will, the same weekend in April. Ample time to do your homework, make your schedule out, read through the Gospel, but don't so get lost in the text that you forget to come. Two or three general things that I was intending to say by way of introduction. I'm particularly disappointed Mrs. Dixon's not here, and many others, but about 2.45 this afternoon, [00:26:03] June was reclining gracefully on the settee. I was sprawled most ungracefully on an easy chair, having 40 winks, wondering perhaps what I was going to say to you this afternoon, when suddenly the phone rang. Of course, not wanting June to be disturbed, I leaped into activity and landed in a crumpled heap, because I had been sitting with my legs crossed. One leg had gone dead, and that's the leg I put my

weight on, so as I fell, I went over like that and landed on my wrist, and I went over the wrong way, so that's why I'm in the unusual position of having a bandage, and I was hoping that Mrs. Dixie would be here, so that at least I could thank her, and that at least my first minute I was able to keep you awake by saying something interesting. Oh, someone can perhaps pass my gratitude on to her. The second thing is, general thing, I think I've mentioned before that in studying the Gospels, I have often found it very useful [00:27:06] to have what is called a harmony of the Gospels, which sags out in chronological sequence with the Lord's life as depicted in the Gospels, and in parallel columns where more than one Gospel speaks about the same event, or sermon, or whatever, and because of that, it's very useful in saying why does a certain Gospel include a certain event, why does the Gospel exclude an event, or if they're both included, the different emphasis in each. If as a result of these talks, or for any other reason, any of you are interested in procuring a copy, I can perhaps point you in the right direction. I don't know that there are any in print at the moment, perhaps Theo can help us on that, but I know one or two places, good second-hand bookshops, where they [00:28:05] will take your name and the title of a book and look out for one for you. The next time that one comes in, they will keep it for you and let you have it, and I certainly find it very useful indeed. And so to look, I want to read one verse, chapter 19, I know you've got your notebooks and your pens and pencils, and particularly your Bible. Just think of the very idea of presenting yourself for an exposition of any part of the Bible and not having your favourite Bible with you. However, since you all have it, turn please to chapter 19 and verse 10. The Son of Man is come to seek and to save that which was lost. I understood from Henry's announcement this morning we are going to be charmed, and I mean that, by hearing of incidents in the Gospel by [00:29:06] Luke during the month of...