

The Gospels

Part 3

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[00:00:01] Would you turn, please, just read one verse.

Gospel by John.

It's good, if you can, to appeal to internal evidence.

John's Gospel, chapter 21.

In verse 7.

That disciple whom Jesus loved said unto Peter, It is the Lord.

It is the Lord.

And really, fundamentally, that's the golden message that John, by the Holy Spirit, has to give us.

It is the Lord.

He's directing us to the glory of the person, of the Son of God.

[00:01:04] Now, there's Mark.

Mark, you should have been out here two seconds ago, with these sheets, to give out. You're failing me, trust me.

It's not his fault, it's mine, because it's so long since we've had a session, isn't it? He's forgotten about most other people to do the work, and I should be doing it. Therefore, I'm delegated to the next one, please.

Is there sufficient for your own work? Is there enough for your own work? One for everybody? Now then, as a refresher, for those who haven't been with us on previous occasions, and as a reminder for those who have, we had an introductory session where certain propositions were made.

[00:02:03] The first proposition was, and I want to come back to it, if any of us have any doubt at all about the inspiration of Holy Scripture, one excellent way of getting rid of any doubts once and for all

is to read the Gospels and to see the happy, the marvellous blend of the four Gospels in giving us different aspects of the glories and offices of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And once our eyes have been opened to that, we realise that the Holy Spirit has given us such a solid, dependable Word of God in the Bible that we can go anywhere else with confidence knowing that when God gives us the answer, that we'll be able to see that the Scriptures are the fully endowed, inspired Word of God.

[00:03:04] I still find things in the Bible that I don't understand.

That's not surprising. But I got past the point where in my folly I might say, I don't understand it, therefore it must be wrong. All the folly of the human mind. I suppose there's few of us, you know, who haven't gone through that at some time, where we say, if I don't understand it, it can't be. We learn, perhaps, to say, I don't understand it yet, but my confidence in what I do understand about the Bible gives me to be patient.

And then I can say, well, when God gives me light and I understand it, I'll see the point of what he has to say. Now, one of the main motives, apart from the detail itself, in looking at the Gospels, is to be set on fire forever [00:04:03] with the realisation that here we have the Word of God and nothing less.

And we handle it with dignity, with delicacy, and with respect.

Now, taking that approach, we looked at in deletion various Scriptures which show that God is absolutely consistent with himself.

And we learned, once and for all, I hope, that God shows certain things about himself from time to time, the emphasis being different from time to time, because he has some other immediate objective in view.

And when, eventually, we turn to the detail of the Gospels, we learn that in Matthew, God was presenting the Lord Jesus Christ as the perfect King.

When we went to Mark's Gospel, we learned that God is presenting him [00:05:02] for the meditation of our souls as God's perfect servant.

In Luke, we soon recognise that God was showing us Jesus as God's perfect man.

And when we come to John, we are to learn.

If we've considered it before, we will be delighted to have another opportunity. If we haven't, let us get the key to the Gospel, and then every time we go up the Gospel, we say, ah yes, John's Gospel tells us about Jesus as the Son of God, emphasises his deity, his Godhood, that he is God, and that puts everything into perspective.

Now, if you look at the top left-hand corner, you will see that we have the name of the Gospel, it's the Gospel by John.

We have a key verse suggested, which I read, It is the Lord.

[00:06:01] And the key thought, quoting from Isaiah 40, Behold your God.

So when we open the pages, not a bad thing every time you open John's Gospel to read it by yourself, that you hear in your minds, God's saying to you, when you read John's Gospel, Behold your God.

Now, in order to give point to our studies, and because we haven't time in about 25 minutes to read through all the Gospel, I have suggested certain touchstones that we can look at, which will verify the emphasis in the Gospel.

And we have taken seven events or crises in the time on earth of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And we have looked for these events or crises in each of the Gospels. [00:07:01] Now, these seven are listed on the left-hand side. Birth, Baptism, Temptations, Transfiguration, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension.

As personal to the Lord Jesus Christ.

And then if you look at the rows along the top, the first row says, Tick or Cross.

That means, if it's a tick, yes, it's included in the Gospel.

If it's a cross, it means no, it's not. The next line, if tick, where?

If it is in the Gospel, chapter and verse. Next column, if it is, why is it appropriate to find it in the Gospel by John? The next column, if not, why not?

Why not?

It is important to know why things are not included in certain Gospels, as it is to know why they are included. And then a final column.

We always, when we make things up, we always need more space, more extra comments at the end. [00:08:02] And so it is in this kind of study, we leave room just for any final comments.

Right?

Now then, the first thing we look at in John's Gospel is the birth.

Is the birth of Jesus included in the Gospel by John?

No, we don't.

It's a cross.

If so, where?

Well, it doesn't apply because it's a cross. And the reason why it's included is not particularly clear. If cross, why not? Now my preliminary suggestion to you, to test in the light of Scripture, is this.

It would be entirely out of place to include the birth of one whose eternal existence in the beginning is emphasised from the very first words of the Gospel. Remember the grand majestic statement [00:09:02] at the beginning of the Gospel. In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

Telling us, now this is a bit of a trite phrase, but if you get confused, ask Mark what it means, he'll tell you.

He'll remember every word and tell you what it means next week. So just hang on. Everything that had a beginning owes its beginning to him who was in the beginning. That's straightforward, Mark, isn't it? Right?

So, if Jason or Denise get confused, you'll keep them right, OK? Now, what does that mean? Before anything that was created was brought into being, Jesus exists.

Jesus is there.

Very difficult with my finite mind using finite words, using finite tenses.

Because I'm a bit reluctant to say [00:10:03] before anything was created, Jesus was.

Except for one thing. Because I don't want to give the impression of past tense.

There's no past tense with Jesus. Everything is eternal. But, does this say God? To accommodate our little minds, God says, in the beginning was the Word.

And the Word was with God.

And the Word was God. If we take our minds back, as far back as we like, further than our minds are capable of thinking back, however many millions of years ago we might have to think back, wherever you date the beginning of creation, and that's quite another story, but wherever you pitch that, at that time, Jesus already existed. Now, in such a Gospel [00:11:03] which emphasises the start of the Gospel and that Word, that he is the creator of all things, all things were made by him, or as Mark would say, everything that had a beginning owes its beginning to him who was in the beginning. Now, that sounds trite, maybe it does, but it's a good statement when you work it out. Now, because that is true, it would be appropriate to include in such an aspect of the glory of the Lord Jesus the details of the time when he began to be known on earth.

Now, the nearest you get to it is verse 14 of chapter 1, the Word became flesh.

Now, that refers to the whole of his time on earth, if you like, [00:12:01] the incarnation. His incarnation is referred to often. The details of his birth with which that incarnation commenced is not referred to in detail.

I'd like to think that after reflection you would support this statement that it would be entirely out of

place to include the birth of one whose eternal existence in the beginning is emphasised from the very first words of the Gospel.

This is interesting. When you listen to what someone says and you go away and you say so-and-so said this and he's wrong because really the Bible says that, make sure you're answering that person right. Making sure that you're answering the same question [00:13:01] not another question. Not so long ago I was attacked for saying that baptism is not referred to in John's Gospel. I'm not saying that. I'm saying that these are personal to the Lord Jesus. I'm saying the baptism of Jesus is not referred to in John's Gospel. So think about that. We do know that in about verse 29 of chapter 1 that at the time and at the place where John Baptist was baptising he saw Jesus coming along and John said I'm the one who's fit to take away the sin of the world. Now you and I know because we read all the Gospels [00:14:02] we know that that was the occasion referred to in other Gospels when Jesus was baptised. But if you read John's Gospel chapter 1 you will not find any detailed reference to Jesus being baptised in John's Gospel. To compare the Gospels and say why is it included in this one and excluded in another. Now my suggestion here is in his essential deity because he is God he is absolutely unique. One of.

Beyond compare no one like him. No identification with him or association with him is possible in that. Now then what does that mean? When we think about baptism we are thinking of words like that identification association [00:15:02] being linked with Jesus in one way or another and in baptism in particular we are thinking when Jesus went into death we are prepared now to be identified with what happened to him as being God's commentary on what we deserve because of our sins. We are identified with him in baptism.

That's fair.

Now that's true as a statement but really in the Gospel by John it's not appropriate it's not a fitting place to talk of being identified with him in that way at all because it's a Gospel which puts him on a pedestal and says look at him God's beloved son there's no identity. [00:16:01] Now in that there's no identification with him no association with him so the details of his baptism are not hidden in the Gospel.

Now again some of you in the books will read statements like this and I'll put a quotation about it There must always be that two thousand cubits between him and us.

Now if there was time for a lecture I'll ask Jason to explain the significance of what that means but because time is short I'll just give a very brief comment and then Jason can fill me in on the details later. It was defined for the people of Israel in the wilderness when they went through the tabernacle system that was operating then that first of all the priests were there and then [00:17:02] there was a two thousand cubits gap and then there was the ark and then there was another two thousand cubits was there and then there was the people. They had to learn that the ark was holy and that there was a limit on how far they could approach to the ark.

Those who broke the rules had to learn in a very salient way that it's folly to disobey what God says and the ark was a picture of the Lord Jesus Christ and among other things about his deity. Now I think that while in the gospel by Luke which tells us of his perfect manhood it is appropriate to read such words in Luke Jesus drew near [00:18:01] and went with them. Look at the phrases which show the nearness and the charm that was available to those who came to Jesus but as far as John's

gospel is concerned when it presents him as son of God in his essential deity there are things said in the gospel which emphasise certain ways in which there will always be that distinction between him as God and we as mortals.

Now that can be developed a lot but notice in your readings of the gospel the kind of statements that are made that confirm that. The temptations I suggest are not included and in all simplicity I would say the reason is given here. Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. [00:19:02] You remember the potential king was tested in order that it might be demonstrated that he fit to occupy the throne. It was right in man. Mark before he set out on his perfect service he demonstrated he had the kind of qualities that are right in a servant before he set out on that perfect service. Luke we are told there that the perfect man demonstrated his moral perfection in that the temptations of the devil in the wilderness had no terror for God's perfect man. But in John if there is a gospel where the temptations are not to be included it must be John in line with what the Lord said on one of those occasions thou shalt not tempt [00:20:02] the Lord thy God. How fitting what a tribute to the inspiration of scripture. No man made computer could produce the four gospels as we have them. Only God can produce this perfect blend the transfiguration. Well the deity of Christ the son of God God over all blessed forever why not?

Seems a strange formation. Well isn't it?

Isn't it marvellous that we learn in this gospel the one who was ever in the bosom of the Father nor elevation nor exaltation nor further glory can be given to such an exalted one. What elevation I've said [00:21:02] on the schedule is possible for him who ever dwelt in the bosom of the Father. But the glory is not it dwells among us. Chapter 1 verse 14 the word became flesh and he dwelt among us and we saw the glory as of an only begotten of the Father full of grace and truth.

His death and resurrection I want to take together in part because they are the only two of the seven included but it's a very happy study where events are included in a gospel it's not just the fact that they are included it's not only the detail that's significant it's the kind of detail under where the detail is treated that is significant. [00:22:02] Here the gospel which pays tribute after tribute to his majesty his dignity his glory his deity the death and resurrection of Christ the verses are quoted chapters 19 verses 16 to 30 and chapter 20 verses 1 to 18 and together they demonstrate in the dignity and glory of his own person he willingly he laid down his life that he might take it again.

Remember where in another gospel we see the fatigue the weariness that came in upon the frame of the Lord Jesus in manhood in this gospel the emphasis is given [00:23:01] in that wonderful little phrase speaking of him in the dignity of his person it says he bearing his cross went forth to the place of discovery I think that's a marvelous tribute again to the inspiration of the word of God that the right words the right tone of phrase the right inference is in all the phraseology and the words that are used and it is in this gospel where he makes the statement I have the power to lay down my life that I might take it again and in his death and resurrection we see him doing just that the last event we considered in the other three gospels was the ascension that time when after he died and rose again and accompanied with the disciples for a period of 40 days that he then went back [00:24:03] to heaven now other gospels where appropriate include that occasion the ascension in this gospel my suggestion is there is no need to refer to the ascension of one who in the communion of his soul had never left the Father's bosom now unless you read John's gospel a lot that may not make a lot of sense but it means something like this in the communion of his soul the Lord Jesus was never really away from heaven he lived in a body on earth but he had constant living loving communion with his

Father in heaven every moment of every day now it would seem out of place [00:25:01] of such a person to record any necessity or likelihood of him having to be moved geographically physically, materially from earth to heaven now I've listed a verse there which you might like to look at I've said see chapter 3 in verse 13 and again I think it's significant that in the gospel by John it is where we get this particular comment John 3 13 no man hath ascended up to heaven but he that came down from heaven even the Son of man which is in heaven that's a bit like my statement about the beginning isn't it it's a bit of a conundrum going to heaven [00:26:02] coming back from heaven being in heaven always there but when we work out this gives us a reason why there's no need to refer to the details of the personal ascension from earth to heaven of the Lord Jesus Christ in the gospel now this phrase ends the Son of man who is in heaven now this was this is referring to a time when the Lord Jesus was on earth and yet at that time the statement I made the Son of man who is in heaven marvelous tribute to the prophet that in the perfection of communion that really he was in constant [00:27:02] living communion with his father and in that sense could be said who is in heaven now I've only been able to extract the surface make a few implications of things in each of the gospels which confirm to me the truth the reliability of trends which are recognised by many Christians I'm not the first to have noticed that Matthew presents Jesus as the king Mark presents him as the servant Luke has the man Jesus emphasising his deity as God I'm sure I won't be the last but there's scope once that has been said there's scope for any amount by you and me saying now I wonder about [00:28:02] circum-circular events or kind of events is it in a particular gospel if so why if it's included in two of them not other two why not if it's included in them all why is it so important as to be included in all four or there's a lifetime of study ahead for us every day I am no longer surprised when I hear of such and such a Christian well you know he's always in the gospels he's been in the gospels for the last 20 years sickness like that while a Christian might read all the gospel all the bible they have a particular love for the gospels in pouring over them why the Holy Spirit why the particular emphasis is in one way or another [00:29:02] we find no way to finish it our study of the gospels we don't know when the Lord's going to come but we do know that until he does come we have the Holy Spirit vouchsafed to us and until then we are encouraged to study the scriptures for ourselves and I'm beginning to think on other things that we study that after these preliminary introductory basic remarks on some of the distinctions of the gospels that we'll have a fresh and sustained interest in the gospels and until the Lord comes that we'll have a renewed interest daily interest constant detailed interest in what God wants us to understand