

This message is intended to introduce a study of THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW. To do this properly, it is always good to consider why we find four Gospel narratives in God's Word. We need to be clear on the following - There are FOUR GOSPEL NARRATIVES: Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. But there is only ONE GOSPEL MESSAGE. This one Gospel message is found in each of the four Gospel narratives as well as in every book of the Bible. The ONE GOSPEL MESSAGE that is revealed throughout the Bible is the word of salvation for sinners by God's free and sovereign grace conditioned on the Lord Jesus Christ Who is God manifest in the flesh (Godman), and Who, as the Surety, Substitute, and Redeemer of God's chosen people, fulfilled all conditions by His obedience unto death whereby He secured their full salvation as affirmed by His resurrection from the dead and ascension unto the Father. It is the message of the forgiveness of all the sins of His people, who were given to Him before the foundation of the world, by His shed blood, His death on the cross. It is the message of the righteousness of God accomplished by Christ for His people, which God has imputed to His elect for their justification and from which He gives them the gift of spiritual life with all of its benefits and blessings needed to bring them to eternal glory. This is the main message of all four Gospel narratives.

The first three Gospel narratives (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) are called Synoptic Gospels because they are similar in their chronology and contain many of the same expressions and phrases. They present the same general historical events of the life, teachings, death, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Although the same Gospel truth is the theme of the Gospel of John, he was inspired by the Holy Spirit to take a different and more doctrinal approach to these matters. So, we can see some differences in these Gospel narratives, but there are no contradictions within them. Why, then, are there four Gospel narratives? Consider first that the most important issues in Gospel truth are: (1) THE GLORIOUS PERSON OF CHRIST (who Christ is), and (2) THE SUCCESSFUL REDEMPTIVE WORK OF CHRIST (what Christ accomplished for His people in His obedience unto death and resurrection). This PERSON and this GREAT WORK OF REDEMPTION are so profound and glorious that the whole of these cannot be contained in one book. Therefore, the LORD determined to use four Gospel narratives with each one emphasizing one particular aspect of the glorious Person and finished work of Christ to save His people from their sins and establish righteousness for them. All four aspects are found in all four narratives, but each narrative emphasizes one particular aspect, and this gives us a more complete picture of Christ.

**MATTHEW** - The main emphasis of the Gospel of Matthew is CHRIST, THE TRUE MESSIAH AND KING OF SPIRITUAL ISRAEL. Matthew was writing to a Hebrew audience, and he was inspired by the Spirit to take great care to show from Jesus' genealogy and fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies that He was the long-promised and long-expected Messiah, the promised descendant of Abraham, the King and Son of David (Matt. 1:1). Matthew's goal was to inform his fellow Jews that the words of the prophets concerning the Messiah were realized and fulfilled in the Person and work of Jesus of Nazareth. This is why we find in Matthew, more than any of the other Gospel narratives, quotations from the prophets as being "*fulfilled*" in Jesus (Matt. 1:22; 2:15,17,23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:14,35; 21:4; 26:54,56; 27:9,35). Matthew opened his narrative by declaring - "*The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham*" (Matt. 1:1) - showing that Jesus of Nazareth is the Seed of Abraham (Gal. 3:16) and, therefore, the legal, spiritual, eternal heir to the throne of David (Rom. 1:3).

**MARK** - The main emphasis of the Gospel of Mark is CHRIST, THE PERFECT SERVANT OF JEHOVAH - "*For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many*" (Mark 10:45; cf. Isa. 42:1; 52:13; 53:11; Matt. 12:18). The

first recipients of this book were believers in Rome, so the Gospel of Mark is mainly directed towards Gentile believers, but it is also very useful for Jewish believers. Mark contains no genealogy of the humanity of Christ as most Gentile believers would not understand the importance of His human genealogy in light of the prophecies of the Old Testament. Mark wrote of the Savior who was energetic, constantly laboring, teaching, healing, and fulfilling the precepts and penalty of the law for His people. The Servant was always busy about His Father's business and fulfilling all the conditions of the salvation of His people. He set His mind to accomplish righteousness by which the Father has justified His elect. Mark moves quickly from one scene to another as he presents Christ as Jehovah's faithful Servant.

**LUKE** - The main emphasis of the Gospel of Luke is CHRIST, THE PERFECT SON OF MAN - *"For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost"* (Luke 19:10). Christ is both the Son of God (His deity) and the Son of Man (His sinless humanity). Luke was the *"beloved physician"* (Col. 4:14), evangelist, and companion of the apostle Paul. He wrote both the Gospel of Luke and the Acts of the apostles. Luke is the only Gentile author of the New Testament. He has long been accepted as a diligent master historian by those who have used his writings in genealogical and historical studies. As a historian, he states that it is his intent to write down an orderly account of the life of Christ based on the reports of those who were eyewitnesses (Luke 1:1-4). Because he specifically wrote for the benefit of Theophilus, apparently a Gentile of some stature, his gospel was composed with a Gentile audience in mind, and his intent is to show that a Christian's faith is based upon historically reliable and verifiable events. Luke often shares many details that are not found in the other gospel accounts. He goes into great detail regarding the circumstances surrounding the virgin birth and early childhood of Christ.

**JOHN** - The main emphasis of the Gospel of John is CHRIST, THE ETERNAL SON OF GOD - *"But these 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"* (John 20:31). He does not begin his narrative with the genealogy of the humanity of Jesus because as Jesus is the Son of God, He is without beginning. John, therefore, begins by declaring the pre-incarnate glory of Christ as the eternal, living Word (John 1:1-3) and states that the Son of Man is also the Son of God, equal with the Father and the Spirit. Jesus Christ had to be both God and Man to accomplish salvation for His people. John's Gospel narrative deals much more doctrinally with the Person of Christ and issues of faith, repentance, and perseverance by God's grace. John also emphasizes that Christ is *"the Savior of the world"* (John 4:42), meaning that He is not only the Savior of God's elect among the Jews but also God's elect among the Gentiles.

So, in having four distinct and yet equally accurate accounts of the life of Christ on earth, different aspects of His Person and ministry are revealed and emphasized. Each account becomes like a "different-colored thread in a tapestry woven together to form a more complete picture of this One who is beyond description." And while we will never fully understand everything about Jesus Christ (John 20:30), through the four Gospel narratives we can know enough of Him to appreciate who He is and what He has done for us so that we may know and believe in Him and live for His glory. One interesting fact we might notice is that there is a close connection in studying the four Gospel narratives and comparing each with the four faces of the cherubim recorded in Ezekiel 1:6,10 and Revelation 4:7. Matthew emphasizes Christ as the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Royal One (Rev. 5:5). Mark emphasizes Christ as the strong ox (calf) working and serving, but also His sacrifice for the sins of His people (Lev. 9:2). Luke emphasizes Christ as the sinless man in whose face the glory of the Godhead shines (2 Cor. 4:6). John emphasizes Christ the Son of God Who soars high above the earth like the majestic eagle (Mal. 4:2). Christ is the righteousness of God by Whom God's elect are justified and given eternal life.