

THE FOUR GOSPELS

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THE FOUR GOSPELS

Introductory Study

Owing to the fact that Matthew, Mark and Luke confine themselves to the Galilean ministry of our Lord, and do not speak a word of any visit to Jerusalem until His last solemn journey, there to die, these three Gospels have been called “The Synoptic Gospels”, i.e. Gospels having a common point of view, and differing very materially from John’s Gospel which gives detailed accounts of our Lord’s several visits to Jerusalem and His ministry there. While this subdivision therefore sets forth a truth, it is not the whole truth, for upon examination Matthew manifests a different approach to his theme than either that of Mark or Luke, even as these two differ materially from each other. Even more striking and important than the geographical setting of these Gospels, is the character of their writing. Matthew, Mark and Luke give little comment, adding nothing by way of personal observation or doctrinal inference from their record of parable, miracle, discourse, death and resurrection. John however not only provides a prologue (John 1:1-18) and a stated purpose (John 20:30,31), but “delivers his historical testimony as from the chair of an apostle” (Alford). Again, neither Matthew, Mark nor Luke claim in so many words, to have been eye-witnesses of the facts they record, although the record of Matthew’s calling, necessitates this feature in his case. John however insists in a number of places that he wrote as an eye-witness.

We shall therefore be wise to recognise that God has given us four inspired accounts of the earthly life and ministry of Christ, and that each writer was guided in the selection of his material so that in each case one special aspect of that wondrous life should be thrown into prominence.

We are indebted to men of God from earliest times for the construction of a “Harmony of the four Gospels”, but any reader who has either diligently studied these attempts or, better still, has endeavoured to construct a harmony from his own findings, will have discovered that such “harmony” is often spoilt either by the author doing violence to the arrangement found in the Gospels, or by arbitrarily adopting one aspect or order to the exclusion or distortion of the rest. The truth is, that there is so much material omitted that it is beyond the ingenuity of man to supply the missing links and, moreover, it is evident that had God wished the church to have one harmonious record, He and He alone could have supplied it. We must therefore not only thankfully accept the four gospels as they stand, but recognise that four facets or aspects of truth are intended, and instead of wasting precious time in attempting the impossible, spend our time and strength in discovering “the things that differ”, so learning the Divinely intended lesson.

Before we study each Gospel in turn, let us enquire into the question of authorship, for we speak of the Gospel according to Matthew, Mark, Luke or John.

Matthew. From the earliest days, the authorship of the first of the four Gospels has been ascribed to Matthew the son of Alphaeus and called by Mark and Luke by the name of Levi (Mark 2:14, Luke 3:24). The name “Matthew” and not Levi is used when speaking of him as one of the apostles (Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15). There are, as we well know, other examples of a change of name; Simon was called Peter, Saul was called Paul, and just as we do not read of “Levi” as one of the apostles, but “Matthew”, so we never read of the “apostle Simon” or the “apostle Saul”. These names “Levi” and “Matthew” need cause no trouble to us, they were evidently accepted without comment at the beginning. The testimony of antiquity moreover is unanimous in placing Matthew’s gospel first among the evangelists. The actual date has been put at “eight years after the ascension” (*Theophyl*), “fifteen years after the ascension” (Niceph. Hist.) and “at the stoning of Stephen” (Cosmos Indic:). A.D. 38 is the date adopted by Webster and Wilkinson.

Mark. The writer of the second Gospel has been universally believed to be *Marcus*, the same person who is called “John Mark” in Acts 12:12, and Mark in Colossians 4:10 and 2 Timothy 4:11. We learn from Acts 12:12 that his mother’s name was Mary, and that she was a sister of Barnabas (Col. 4:10). We gather that Mark owed his conversion to Peter (1 Pet. 5:13); that he joined in the first missionary journey undertaken by his Uncle Barnabas and Paul (Acts 12:25), and owing to this blood relationship partly caused the disruption recorded in Acts 15:37-40.

Later, any reflection on his character is effectively removed by the gracious words of Paul (Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:11). It is the unanimous tradition of antiquity that Mark was the “*interpretes*”, the amanuensis, of Peter.

While it is evident that Matthew had Hebrew readers in mind we can deduce from the writing of Mark that Gentile readers were before him. This would account partly for the omission of our Lord’s genealogy, the general omission of Old Testament citations, except, of course, where the Lord Himself is reported as quoting from the Scriptures, and the interpretations offered of Hebrew and Aramaic expressions and the explanation of Hebrew customs.

Luke. While the author of the third Gospel and of the Acts does not give his actual name, there can be no doubt that Luke, the one spoken of in Colossians 4:14, is the writer. We find the writer of the Acts personally associated with Paul in Acts 16:10, and at intervals afterwards, his personal presence being indicated by the appearance of the pronoun “We”. Unlike the gospels of Matthew and Mark, Luke’s gospel was primarily written for the benefit of one named Theophilus, but even if Luke had no other intention than that of helping this enquirer, God intended that it should provide a companion to the Epistles of Paul, and when we exhibit the peculiar features of Luke’s gospel this will be made abundantly clear and we shall see that of the four, Luke’s gospel should be the one most studied by the Church of the One Body.

If the “Acts” is the second treatise written by Luke, and was published soon after the events recorded in Acts 28, it is evident that the gospel called “the former treatise” must have been published some time earlier, and Alford by a series of arguments indicates A.D. 50-58 as the probable limits within which this gospel was published.

John. John is named the son of Zebedee, and was the brother of James. His family seemed to have belonged to the middle class, as they had hired servants (Mark 1:20), and his mother was one of the women who ministered to the Lord of their substance (Luke 8:3 and Mark 16:1). He seems to have been known personally to the high Priest (John 18:15) and possibly had some place of residence in Jerusalem (John 19:27). He is identified as “the disciple whom Jesus loved” and an eye-witness of the things recorded in his gospel.

Tradition places his closing years at Ephesus, where having outlived all the other apostles he died and was buried at about the age of 94. By the many explanations that John offers of matters which would be common knowledge among the Jews, together with the definite statements made in the gospel itself as to its scope, it is evident that this message is addressed to “the world”, its avowed object is to establish the truth that “Jesus is the Christ the Son of God”, so that “life” should be received “through His name” (John 20:31). The revelation of the Person of Christ, “The Word, Who was with God and was God “ Who became flesh and dwelt among us” is the distinctive feature of this gospel, and where Matthew stresses “fulfilment” of the words of the Prophets, John emphasises personal testimony “ “one thing I know”. There seems to be some reason, however, unstated but generally known, that called forth the gospel so long after the synoptics had been written, and Irenaeus, Tertullian, Epiphanius and Jerome taught that John wrote to controvert the teaching of Cerinthius and the speculations of the Gnostics.

It has been put forward by one authority that there were three classes of writing that arose in the apostolic age (1) the simple narrative, such as Matthew and Mark; (2) the compilation which attempted a more complete account, set out “in order” “ such as Luke; (3) the third class, which would arise out of growth in the faith, that would not only desire *historic fact*, but would enquire into *doctrinal meaning*, and to this class John’s Gospel belongs (*see Lucke, quoted by Alford*).

Some features that are peculiar to John may well have become subjects of discussion among believers. For example, the rejection of the Lord by the Jews and the need to establish the perfect sinlessness of the One thus rejected. John stresses the fact that the Saviour “laid down His life of Himself”, no man taking it from Him. Signs are discovered in Paul’s writings that believers were not above questioning the authority of the apostles and John devotes several chapters in which the equipment by the “Spirit of Truth” was assured to the Twelve. These items lie upon the surface, a deeper and more intimate acquaintance with this gospel reveals richer and fuller grace than could have been called forth by mere controversy. To the “faith” engendered by the synoptic gospels, we may add “knowledge” as we read John.

In the A.V. and R.V. these four gospels are denominated “the Gospel according to Matthew (Mark, Luke or John)”, *Euaggelion kata Matthaion, Markon, Loukan or Ioannem.* *Euaggelion* is Anglicised as the Evangel, and

means “good news”. *Kata* “according” denotes, not that the gospel was in any sense Matthew’s nor does it mean that the present gospel was compiled from material gathered from Matthew’s teaching, it signifies simply that Matthew was the author of the narrative so named.

It lies beyond our immediate purpose to discuss in fuller detail the testimony of antiquity, the canonicity of each book, and the many literary and historical side issues that naturally arise. Our chief aim is indicated by our heading “Fundamentals of Dispensational Truth”. The four gospels yield their richest treasures to those who put into operation the principle of “Right division”, and in the studies that follow these introductory notes, the dispensational aspect will be kept steadily in view.

The number of books which make up the New Testament is twenty-seven, and they are distributed thus :

Gospels	4	Matt., Mark, Luke, John
Acts	1	
Early epistles of Paul	7	Gal., Heb., Rom., 1,2 Thess., 1,2 Cor.
Later epistles of Paul	7	Eph., Phil., Col., Phile., 1 Tim., Tit., 2 Tim.
Epistles of Circumcision	7	James, Jude, 1,2 Peter, 1,2,3 John
Revelation	<u>1</u>	
	<u>27</u>	

These books fall into three groups :

- | | |
|----------------|-------------------|
| (1) Historic. | Gospels and Acts. |
| (2) Doctrinal. | Epistles. |
| (3) Prophetic. | Revelation. |

With this initial and introductory study, the way is clear for a consideration of the four gospels.

An approach to the Four Gospels

Four inspired accounts of the earthly ministry of the Son of God have been given to the people of God and it is the Divine intention that these four accounts should be understood as providing four distinct aspects of the truth represented by the earthly life and ministry of Christ. Four texts of Old Testament scripture can be used to set out these four distinctive aspects of truth, namely :

Matthew	“Behold thy King ”	(Zech. 9:9).
Mark	“Behold My Servant ”	(Isa. 42:1).
Luke	“Behold the Man ”	(Zech. 6:12).
John	“Behold your God ”	(Isa. 40:9).

These four references can be supplemented by observing the use in the Old Testament of one peculiar title of the Messiah, namely “The Branch”. The figurative use of a great tree to set forth in symbol a great man, leads to the use of a “branch” to indicate some notable offspring or descendant both in the Hebrew of the Old Testament and in modern usage.

“And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him” (Isa. 11:1,2).

Here we have the figurative use of rod and stem; branch and root, disposed in alternating pairs. This title is endorsed and expanded in Revelation 22:16 :

“I am the root and offspring of David”.

In the prophet Jeremiah we have the promise :

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper” (Jer. 23:5).

The gospel according to Matthew sets forth the Lord as King, and traces His genealogy back through David.

The prophet Zechariah addresses Joshua the high Priest saying :

“Behold, I will bring forth My Servant, the BRANCH” (Zech. 3:8).

It is in this capacity and office of a SERVANT, that Mark presents the Saviour; hence there is no genealogy in the opening chapter, but immediate service, and this feature persists even unto the resurrection, the Gospel closing with the words “The Lord *working* with them, and confirming the Word with signs following” (Mark 16:20). Luke sets forth the Lord as the MAN and traces His genealogy back to Adam, it is of Him Zechariah speaks when he says “Behold, the MAN whose name is the BRANCH” (Zech. 6:12). Some two centuries earlier Isaiah, looking forward to the day of restoration, says “In that day shall the Branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious” (Isa. 4:2), and so provides the text which is appropriate to the Gospel according to John.

The four gospels point to the Lord Jesus Christ as the One in Whom all these promises were or shall be fulfilled. These four phases of prophecy however are all closely connected with Israel; there is another fourfold promise that goes back to the days of Adam that must also be fulfilled in Christ as set forth in the four gospels. From the earliest times, the Cherubim have been associated with the four gospels and it will be remembered that these living ones are described as having four faces :

“The face of a *man*, and the face of a *lion*, on the right side: ... the face of an *ox* on the left side; ... also ... the face of an *eagle*” (Ezek. 1:10).

That these cherubim are not of passing interest, but seem to be woven as it were into the very text of Scripture, a moment’s consideration will prove. There are six different periods marked out in the Scriptures, where the cherub or cherubim (*im* Heb. plural) accompany the unfolding of the Divine purpose :

Ezekiel 28. A supernatural being, who held the title “the anointed cherub that covereth”. He was cast out as profane. The word “anointed” is used of “The Messiah” or “The Christ” when applied to the Lord Jesus.

Genesis 3. At the fall of Adam and at the expulsion from Eden, the cherubim are seen associated with the flaming sword that kept the way of the tree of life. “Paradise lost”.

Exodus 25. The cherubim now appear in the holiest of all and form a part of the mercy seat at the meeting place of the priest and God. They are intimately connected with the plan and purpose of redeeming love as set forth in the typical teaching of the tabernacle.

1 Kings 6. The cherubim are a feature in the temple built and dedicated by Solomon, whose reign of peace and abundant prosperity sets forth in type the glory that is yet to be.

Ezekiel. In the opening and closing sections of Ezekiel we see the glory of the Lord leaving and returning to Israel accompanied by the cherubim.

Revelation 4 Under the term “the four beasts” (lit. “living creatures” as in Ezekiel 1), the cherubim are associated with the great prophecy of restoration that leads up to “Paradise restored” in the last chapter.

If we attempt to set out these references to the cherubim in structure form, we become conscious of a gap, or something missing, but if we include the four gospels as indicating that the cherubim find their fulfilment in Christ, Who is set over against the fall and failure of the anointed cherub of Ezekiel 28, the pattern is complete.

- A The Anointed. His pride and fall.
- B Paradise lost. Pledge of restoration.
- C Tabernacle and Wilderness.
Temple and Land.
Glory and Temple.

- A The Anointed. His humility and triumph.
 B Paradise restored.

We therefore believe that it was a sound sense of fitness that led the early Christians to identify the four gospels with the cherubim.

Matthew	The LION	The King.
Mark	The OX	The Servant.
Luke	The MAN	Back to Adam.
John	The EAGLE	My Lord and my God.

Christ is set forth in Matthew in the highest earthly position, that of King, and in Mark as the lowest, that of a Servant. Luke presents Him as the second Man the last Adam, and John as “The Word made flesh”, “The Son of God”.

It has been said concerning the fact that we have four gospels “The marvel is that we have not had more”. Luke tells us that many had “taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of things which are most surely believed among us” (Luke 1:1). Some find a difficulty in believing the doctrine of Inspiration when faced with these four separate accounts. Yet a consideration of the duplication of another important event might enable the reader to see that purpose, influencing choice of material under Divine superintendence, may fully answer the case.

Paul’s conversion is recorded in Acts 9, again in Acts 22 and yet again Acts 26. To which must be added his own references in the epistles. The first record made by Luke places the conversion and commission of Paul in its historic setting, the accounts given by Paul himself follow this primary record, but with that freedom which must ever mark the retailing of first hand knowledge. Moreover, there is one item of information which neither Acts 9 nor Acts 22 record, namely, the words actually *spoken from heaven to Paul himself*. These are found for the first time in Acts 26:16-18 and their absence from the earlier accounts can be satisfactorily explained for dispensational reasons. In like manner we shall discover that there is a definite and sufficient reason for the fourfold presentation of the Gospels “each has a purpose to fulfil and each has been written with a specific object. The critics’ view is that because there are similar passages in each of the four gospels, that there must, therefore, have been an earlier common original which is now, apparently, “lost”. The critics however cannot agree among themselves as to which Gospel denotes this supposed original. Urquhart has given a table showing six different theories, in which Matthew, Mark and Luke have respectively been “proved” to be the original, and he comments :

“In other words, criticism tells us (1) that each of the three was the original Gospel; (2) that each of the three was derived from another; and (3) that each of the three was derived from the two others!”

There has probably occurred to the reader, as it has to the writer, that a trite comment of Euclid namely, “which is absurd”, could be quoted very fittingly here.

Dr. E.A. Abbott wrote :

“It is well known that in many parts of the four gospels the same words and phrases are curiously interlaced, in such a way as to suggest that the writers have borrowed either from each other or from some common source”.

This conclusion has stultified research and led its followers into the blind alley of self contradiction.

John Urquhart replies :

“But why? Is the explanation not at least equally good that they have come from One Mind, by which the similarity was preserved when no variation was called for?”

This is illuminating, it involves us in no contradictions, it accepts both the differences and the agreements as coming from ONE AUTHOR, God the Holy Spirit, who caused the four-fold Gospel to be written in harmony with that Divine purpose which it was the blessed object of the Son of His love to bring to glorious fruition.

The accompanying diagram may help the reader to visualise this fourfold gospel.

**The Structural outline of Matthew,
exhibiting key words and correspondences.**

Having seen that the four Gospels form a unity, though each of them has its own individuality and its subject matter so chosen that it will develop and illustrate the peculiar purpose set before the writer of each; we shall now endeavour to set out some of the essential differences and so arrive at a just appreciation of the individual purpose of each.

First of all we must seek the underlying structure, then the disposition of its subject matter, and learn by the inclusion or exclusion of certain facts and features what the distinctive message of each record may be. Here however the reader is caused to halt by reason of the many outlines and structures that men of God have offered. Bengel in his *Gnomon of the New Testament* published in A.D. 1742 has set the course for one type of analysis which has influenced many subsequent writers. It occupies six pages of print, and cannot be reproduced here. Its main divisions are :

- (1) The nativity, and the matters immediately following (1:1 to 2:23).
- (2) Our Lord's entrance on His ministry (3:1 to 4:11).
- (3) The deeds and words by which Jesus proved Himself to be Christ (4:12 to 16:12).
- (4) Our Lord's prediction of His passion and resurrection (16:13 to 20:28).
- (5) The events at Jerusalem immediately before the passion (21:1 to 25:46).
- (6) The passion and resurrection (26:1 to 28:20).

In recent times, the outlines prepared by Dr. Campbell Morgan are suggestive, and even if the reader is conscious that the alliteration may sometimes have run away with the theme, these outlines are nevertheless worthy of attention and respect. Dr. Campbell Morgan's outline of Matthew is in the main threefold, with many subdivisions which we cannot here reproduce.

Matthew 1:1 to 4:16. The Person.

- (1) Relation to earth 1:1 to 3:12.
- (2) Relation to heaven 3:13-17.
- (3) Relation to hell 4:1-11.

Matthew 4:17 to 16:20. Propaganda.

- (1) Enunciation of law 4:17 to 7:29.
- (2) Exhibition of benefits 8:1 to 9:34.
- (3) Enforcement of claims 9:35 to 16:20.

Matthew 16:21 to 28:20. Passion.

- (1) His Cross and His subjects 16:21 to 20:34.
- (2) Rejection of Hebrew nation 21:1 to 23:39.
- (3) Prediction 24:1 to 25:46.
- (4) Passion 26:1 to 28:20.

The *Companion Bible* gives the structure in the form of an introversion, and as most of our readers have access to (if not possession of) this valuable work we will not occupy space by reprinting it here.

While recognising all the labour that has been expended by other believers in the past, let us once more turn to the gospel of Matthew itself and see what fresh light the Lord may be pleased to give. We observe in the opening verse that Jesus Christ is set before us as the Son of David and the Son of Abraham, and that the genealogy itself is artificially subdivided as follows :

“So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations” (Matt. 1:17).

Here we have two patriarchs with whom covenants were made and promises given that find their fulfilment only in Christ. The failure of Israel led to their rejection and to the rise of Nebuchadnezzar, with whom commenced the “Times of the Gentiles”, and it is suggestive that we meet the word *musterion* “mystery” for the first time in the book of Daniel (LXX, Chapter 2).

This great prophetic event throws light upon the turn taken in the Gospel at chapter 13, where we meet, for the first time, the expression “The mysteries of the Kingdom of Heaven”. We cannot *prove* from Matthew 1:1, but we receive a suggestion from that verse, that Matthew *may* have subdivided his theme so that his gospel shall set before us first, Christ as the Son of David, and secondly, Christ as the Son of Abraham, the former title stressing kingship, the second title referring to the antitypical death and resurrection of the true “Isaac” offered on one of the mountains of Moriah at a place called Calvary. We discover by reading through the gospel, that there are two great time periods which cannot be ignored, and these therefore we present as our first pair of items in the discovery of the structure of Matthew.

“*From that time* Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17).

“*From that time* forth began Jesus to show unto His disciples, how that He must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day” (Matt. 16:21).

Here most evidently we have two distinct departures, two ministries, two themes. The first stresses the kingdom, the second the cross. The former ranges under the name “David” the second under the name “Abraham”. One finds its type in Solomon the Son of David, the other in Isaac the son of Abraham.

The next repeated feature which our reading brings to light, is found in the records of the baptism at Jordan and the transfiguration on the Mount.

“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased” (Matt. 3:17).

“And behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him” (Matt. 17:5).

We now have two pairs of corresponding terms,

- A The voice from heaven.
- B From that time ... began.
- B From that time ... began.
- A The voice from heaven.

We observe moreover that in chapter sixteen, just before the new revelation is made concerning the Lord’s sufferings, that Peter makes his great confession.

“He saith unto them, But Whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:15,16).

With this we must place the confession made by Christ Himself when adjured by the High Priest :

“I adjure Thee by *the living God*, that thou tell us whether thou be *the Christ, the Son of God*. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said” (Matt. 26:63,64).

The words “Thou hast said” are in the original *su eipas* and in the early Greek manuscripts (where there were many contractions employed to economise space and where no space was allowed between one word and another) we find that where, in Matthew 16:18 we now read *su ei Petros* “thou art Peter”, the earlier contraction was *sueips*, which would naturally be expanded to *su eipas* “thou hast said”, had Peter not been in the immediate context. This matter needs much more examination and proof than these few notes can supply, but we are convinced that in both cases the words stand for one and the same thing “ an emphatic affirmation, and that Peter’s name does not come

into Matthew 16:18 at all. We now have sufficient data to build the complete structure of the Gospel according to Matthew, not by alliteration however useful such a method may be, but by recording the actual facts as found in the Scriptures.

Matthew

A	1:1 to 3:16. From Birth to Baptism. The ministry of John the Baptist. "Born King of the Jews".
	B
	a 3:17. The Voice from Heaven.
	b 4:1-16. The Threefold temptation of the King.
Son of David the King	c 4:17. Time. "From that time ... began".
	d 16:16-18. Confession "The Christ" <i>su eipas</i> "Thou hast said".

In this section comes the Sermon on the Mount, giving rules for guidance during the rejection of the King. In this section also come the Parables of Matthew 13, showing the character of the kingdom, its mystery phase, during rejection.

B	c 16:21. Time. "From that time ... began".
Son of Abraham	a 17:5. The Voice from heaven.
	b 26:36-44. The Threefold agony of the Priest the King-Priest.
	d 26:63,64. Confession "The Christ" <i>su eipas</i> "Thou hast said".

In this section the parables are largely connected with service during the absence of the Lord. The Sermon on the Mount changes to Prophecy on the Mount and speaks of the end of the "mystery" phase of the kingdom, by the personal presence of the King in glory.

A	27,28. From Baptism of suffering to birth in Resurrection. Ministry of those who are to baptise all nations. "This is Jesus the King of the Jews".
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This structural outline is put forward, not as in any sense exhaustive, but suggestive. To produce a complete structural outline of a book containing twenty-eight closely packed chapters as those of the Gospel according to Matthew, is beyond our range in this booklet. Such however could be built up by the student working methodically within the bounds now presented.

The two time periods, chapters 4:17 and 16:21, are decisive factors in the division of the Gospel. The two "voices" and "confessions" supplement, and the threefold temptation of chapter four finds its complement in the threefold agony of chapter twenty-six, and in both the tempted Saviour emerges triumphant. When we come to compare the Gospels, we shall then be able to throw into relief those distinctive teachings that will demonstrate without peradventure the key note of each Gospel, although as the reader will remember we have tentatively put forward the well-known headings "Matthew, the King; Mark, the Servant; Luke, the Man; John, God.

The Distinctive Character of both "Mark" and "Luke".

After detailing a series of differences observable between the Gospel of Mark with that of Matthew and Luke, A.W.F. Blunt, B.D., in the *Clarendon Bible*, says of Mark's gospel :

“Thus the Marcan Jesus is neither, as in Matthew, the giver of a new law, nor as in Luke, the preacher of a catholic paternity ... His portrait is drawn with the utmost economy of line and colour. Practically all is subordinated to the emphasising of His Messianic intention. First He announces the Messianic kingdom, then He admits His Messianic position, then He publicly assesses the Messianic role, goes up to Jerusalem to die, and dies for His Messianic claim”.

We appreciate the note in the *Companion Bible*, p. 1381, which reads :

“The Four Gospels are treated in the *Companion Bible* not as four culprits brought up on a charge of fraud, but as four witnesses whose testimony is to be received”.

The difference between these four witnesses however must wait until, as in the foregoing articles on Matthew, we have attained some idea of the structural outline of the gospel itself. Blackwall in his *Sacred Classics* wrote of Mark's Gospel :

“Simplicity and conciseness are its characteristics; for the majesty of the subject, the variety of the actions recorded, and the surprising circumstances attending them together with the important doctrines and precepts laid down, this is the shortest, the clearest, the most marvellous, and at the same time the most satisfactory history in the world”.

Written across the Gospel according to Mark are the words recorded in 10:45, thus :

The Son of Man came (1:1-13).
To minister (1:14 to 8:30),
And to give His life a ransom for many
(8:31 to 16:20),

which three sub-divisions are summed up by Campbell Morgan as :

Sanctification, “ Service, “ Sacrifice.

Like Matthew, who was also called Levi, Mark is referred to as “John whose surname is Mark” (Acts 12:12,25), and the Latin surname suggests some association with a Roman family. Mark has a fair sprinkling of Latin words; he translates the meaning of the Aramaic expressions introduced and explains Jewish customs. The fact that Mark wrote for the Romans would explain the omission of the genealogy and the general absence of quotation from the Old Testament Scriptures. The passage quoted at the beginning of the Gospel is the only exception, for the quotation given in 15:28 is omitted in the R.V. Writing for Romans—who were men of action and whose ideals differed materially from both those of the Greeks and the Hebrews—Mark emphasises the acts rather than the discourses of the Saviour, a feature which his frequent use of the words “immediately” and “straightway”, intensifies. Mark differs from Matthew not only in the omission of the genealogy and quotations from the Old Testament, but in his treatment of a common theme and his selection of material. For example, where Matthew records fourteen parables Mark records but four; where Matthew occupies a whole chapter of forty-two verses (10:1-42) to record the call and commission of the twelve apostles, Mark compresses this subject into seven verses (6:7-13); where Matthew's purpose demanded thirty-nine verses (23:1-39) in setting forth the denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, Mark's purpose is served by the use of but three (12:38-40); where Matthew records in detail the temptation in the wilderness (4:1-11), Mark simply records the fact that the Lord was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of the devil (1:13). Perhaps, with his Roman readers in mind Mark makes one addition to the record, namely, that the Lord was “with the wild beasts” (1:12,13). Mark does not *record* the “Lord's Prayer”, a strong *echo* in chapter 11:24-26 satisfying the requirements of his gospel. In the face of so much abbreviation and omission, the full report of the prophecy of the second coming found in Mark 13, shows the extreme importance that must be attached to this epoch-making event for Israel and the nations of the earth.

While the articles combined in this booklet were in preparation, a very precious letter was received from a valued fellow-worker, which so beautifully brings to light what we were feeling after, that we can do no more than quote it here, trusting that the reader will be as helped by its reprint as we were at its first reading.

“I think there are four portions of Scripture which refer to the Lord as "Servant", namely, Isaiah, Zechariah, Mark and Philippians, with perhaps the addition of such passages as Luke 22:27 and John 13:16.

“Is it correct to say that in His "servantship" lies the redemption that is in Christ Jesus (the stripping of Himself John 13; Phil. 2) the Servant being the sufferer, and is the servantship a priestly one? If it is, a completed work, as in Hebrews, seems indicated in Mark 16:19, "Sat down at the right hand of God". This seems to have been the line taken by Campbell Morgan, but he links Mark with the Pentateuch “ the answer to the unfulfilled aspiration and sigh of humanity for a priest.*

“Amongst the omissions (no miraculous birth; no reference to childhood at Nazareth; no claim to authority, e.g., in the parable of the tares where the command to the reapers is omitted; no woes upon the Pharisees; no reference in Gethsemane, to the legions of angels; no statements as to His having all power in heaven and in earth) “ amongst such is the omission of *nomos* "law" which occurs in Matthew eight times, in Luke nine times, in John fifteen times. Service SUCH AS HIS was the free offering of His heart of love and knew no urge save that of His own nature or that He came to do the will of His Father.

“There is something that is very comforting in the thought that of all of whom God might have used to write along the lines of this gospel for our learning, it is the *failing servant*, who draws back from the path of service he had entered, but who later, through grace, was made "serviceable" to whom it is given to set before us, so graphically and so entrancingly, the *unfailing*, the perfect Servant, Christ Jesus our Lord (see Acts 12:25; 15:36-41).

“The narrative in Mark seems to have behind it the training of the twelve; in the book from which the prophecy of Mark is quoted, namely Isaiah, the disciples would have read of a ministry to be exercised by the Servant of God “ now they SEE IT LIVED OUT under their very eyes; *there* they would have read the passages containing, I suppose, the fullest setting forth of Messiah in the Old Testament, now they are in daily contact with One Whose very living amongst them draws from them (one being spokesman for the rest) "THOU art the Messiah" and immediately (8:29,31) He began to teach them concerning His suffering, as if He would lead them on from Isaiah chapters 40 - 42 to 52:13 - 53:12 (compare Isa. 53:1 and Mark 8:27), while the whole gospel ends with His quietly dismissing them FOR SERVICE, but going forth "working with (them)"“.

“They went forth, and preached ... the Lord working WITH (them)” (*sun* Mark 16:20).

“How dependent we are on Him both for equipment and then for performance. There seem to be two avenues to the knowledge of the Lord Jesus—through the Book and by companionship with Him. It is possible to know more of the Book than of Him “ oh for commensurate knowledge” “That I may know HIM”. Living, walking, with Him, they learnt Him to be what the Book says He is and was. Blessed fruitful knowledge. May it be ours”.

A word must be given on the last twelve verses of Mark 16. The Revised Version margin reads “The two oldest Greek manuscripts and some other authorities omit from verse nine to the end”.

Scrivener, one of the foremost authorities in textual criticism wrote :

“The twelve concluding verses of this gospel are still found in every Greek Manuscript except the two oldest. Cod. B, however, betrays consciousness on the scribe’s part that something is left out, inasmuch as after *ephobounto gar* verse 8, a whole column is left perfectly blank (*the only blank one in the whole volume*), as well as the rest of the column containing verse 8, which is usual at the end of every book of Scripture”.

In the *Companion Bible* Appendix 168, the reader will find a summary of the controversy, and will observe that Dean Burgon’s work is indicated as the basis of the argument presented.

It lies quite outside the scope of our pages to attempt textual criticism, for if it is not dealt with exhaustively it is valueless. Those of our readers who are interested can find all the material necessary for arriving at a sound

* This aspiration is fulfilled for Gentile believers, by Christ as the one Mediator and Head. Paul never refers to Christ as a Priest outside of the epistle to the Hebrews. “That they should be WITH Him, and that He might send them forth to preach” (*meta* Mark 3:14).

judgment in the various volumes written on the question of Textual Criticism, and of Mark 16, in particular those of Scrivener, Dean Burgon, Hammond and Gausson may be cited as authors to be consulted early in the enquiry. For our own part we are satisfied with the evidence at hand (whether these last twelve verses be the work of Mark himself, or added by another) that they form a part of those canonical Scriptures given by inspiration of God which we ignore at our peril.

LUKE'S GOSPEL SETS FORTH CHRIST AS "THE MAN".

According to Eusebius and Jerome, Luke was born at Antioch, in Syria. He is reckoned among the uncircumcision by Paul (Col. 4), and was by profession a "physician" (Col. 4:14). Tradition also has it that Luke was a painter of no mean skill. A fellow-labourer of Paul, he joined the apostle at Troas and accompanied him to Macedonia as far as Philippi (Acts 16:7-12), where he apparently left him for a time. Van Doren says of Luke's gospel "we are plainly not listening to the Galilean fishermen, but to the educated citizen of Antioch, well versed in the literary language of empire".

"Origen, Eusebius and Jerome understand the expression "my gospel" is used in Romans 2:16 of the Gospel of Luke. But the language of Luke's preface forbids the notion of any exclusive influence of Paul" (Van Doren).

The truth concerning this expression lies midway, though Paul did not come into contact with Christ during His earthly ministry, the peculiar Gentile trend of Luke's Gospel would provide a complete background for the gospel preached by the apostle of the Gentiles.

The outline suggested by Dr. Campbell Morgan for Luke's Gospel is an adaption of the words found in Luke 13:32. Omitting lesser subdivisions, here it is in substance:

Luke's Gospel. The Man.

A 1:1 to 3:38. **PERFECT**

- | | | |
|-----|-------------|-----------------------------|
| | 1:1-4 | Prologue. |
| (1) | 1:5 to 2:39 | Being and Birth. |
| (2) | 2:40-52 | Childhood and Confirmation. |
| (3) | 3:1-38 | Development and Anointing. |

B 4:1 to 9:36. **PERFECTED**

- | | | |
|-----|--------------|------------------|
| (1) | 4:1-14 | Temptation. |
| (2) | 4:15 to 9:27 | Teaching. |
| (3) | 9:28-36 | Transfiguration. |

C 9:37 to 24:53. **PERFECTING**

- | | | |
|-----|----------------|------------------------------|
| | 9:37-50 | Prelude. |
| (1) | 9:51 to 18:30 | Purpose and Preparation. |
| (2) | 18:31 to 24:12 | Approach and Accomplishment. |
| (3) | 24:13-53 | Administration. |

Of the four Gospels Luke's is the one that is associated with the gospel as preached by Paul, not merely because Luke was a fellow-worker with the apostle, but because he so evidently wrote with the Gentile convert in mind.

Sadler has devoted a considerable portion of his introduction to Luke's Gospel to the links that are observable between the Epistles of Paul and the Gospel of Luke. For the benefit of the reader, we will epitomise these observations, but their full force can only be felt when the parallel passages are actually read together, unfortunately limitations of space make it impossible to set out these parallels here.

Paul's Gospel had an historic basis (1 Cor. 15:1-10). It had moreover a definite doctrine of the Person of Christ (Rom. 1:1-4), the birth, death and resurrection of the Son of God being basic.

In 1 Corinthians 15 Paul says of the risen Christ "He was seen of Cephas, then of the twelve". Luke alone mentions the appearance of Cephas (Luke 24:34).

Luke lays great stress upon the fact that the ceremonial law was observed at the birth of Christ (Luke 2:21), which provides a background to the words of Galatians 4:4 and Colossians 2:11.

Paul's description of a "widow indeed" (1 Tim. 5:5) is foreshadowed by Anna (Luke 2:37).

The acceptable year of the Lord (Luke 4:19 and 2 Cor. 6:2); the title "steward" (Luke 12:42 and 1 Cor. 4:1); the condition of alienation as one of death (Luke 15:24,32 and Eph. 4:18); the use of the word "revealed" in connection with the second coming (Luke 17:30 and 1 Cor. 1:7); the comment "for all live unto Him" (Luke 20:38 with Rom. 14:7, 2 Cor. 5:14); the reference to the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24 and Rom. 11:25) and the close association of the ascension with the resurrection observable in the gospel and the epistles.

Luke's record of the institution of the Lord's supper (Luke 22:19,20) is followed very closely by the record of 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, and it must be remembered that in both this institution, and the summary of the gospel given in 1 Corinthians 15, Paul declares "I have received of the Lord" and "that which I also received".

Verbal coincidences as the use of *katecheo* "catechise" (Luke 1:4; Gal. 6:6); "children of light" (Luke 16:8; 1 Thess. 5:5); the possible reference in 1 Timothy 2:15 "the childbearing" to the account given of the birth of the Saviour in Luke's Gospel and the use of the word *ophthe* in Luke 22:43 and 1 Timothy 3:16 "seen of angels".

If the exhortation "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16) refers to a scriptural record, a record moreover that contains the only Christian hymns recorded in the New Testament then Luke's gospel may be intended by the apostle under the heading "the Word of Christ" (e.g. Luke 1:46-55,68-79, etc.). Again when the apostle beseeches the Corinthian Christians "by the meekness and gentleness of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:1) some such record as that of Luke seems intended.

Other links with Paul's Gospel will be brought to light when we institute a comparison between the Gospel of Matthew and that of Luke.

The Distinctive Purposes of the Gospels according to Matthew and Luke demonstrated.

The words used by Luke and Paul have been tabulated, and it has been found that "every second word in the Gospel of Luke is also used by Paul" and so close is the language of the Acts of the apostles to the diction of Paul's epistles, that there is actually a volume of considerable interest published, entitled "Paul, the author of the Acts" (H. Heber Evans). Moreover, among those who deny that Paul was or could be the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, are those who maintain that its author was Luke. This we do not believe, and have every confidence that Hebrews is one of Paul's fourteen epistles—yet the closeness of language between Paul and Luke is emphasised by this suggestion.

The message which was given to the apostle Paul for the Gentiles, and the ministry of the reconciliation committed to him, arose out of the failure of Israel (speaking after the manner of men) to repent and believe the good news of the kingdom. The great teaching of the apostle, which included the Gentile within the sphere of the promise of Abraham (Romans and Galatians), is scarcely suggested by Matthew's Gospel. We have already seen that Matthew's Gospel is divided into two parts, each part is connected with the relationship and covenants indicated in Matthew 1:1. The first part, covering Matthew 4:17 to 16:20, is associated with the kingly title "Son of David"; the second portion, commencing with the announcement of suffering, death and resurrection (16:21), is the fulfilling

of the title “Son of Abraham”. The second phase of the Lord’s ministry could not be made a matter of public proclamation until the great transaction of Calvary had removed the curse, and made it possible for the blessing of Abraham to flow out to the Gentiles (Gal. 3:13,14). The Acts opens with a renewed witness concerning the kingdom of Israel and David’s throne, but also links with it the wider covenant made with Abraham. Luke, who wrote the “Acts”, had already written a “former treatise of all that Jesus began to do and teach” and in that treatise he laid a foundation for Paul’s Gospel of the reconciliation. He does not stay at Abraham when he gives the genealogy of the Lord, but goes back to Adam.

The unfolding of the divine purpose is closely connected with the revelation of Christ Himself. It will be found that the circle of truth widens and deepens as the time arrives for some richer title of Christ to come forth. The inner circle, latest in time of revelation, and first to be fulfilled and exhausted is associated with *David*. To this the first portion of Matthew is devoted (Chapters 1 to 16). The next circle, which goes *back* in history, and looks *forward* beyond the confines of the rule of David, is connected with *Abraham*. The second portion of Matthew (Chapters 17 to 28) and the Acts belong to this section of the purpose. Luke’s gospel goes back beyond *both* Abraham and David, and traces the genealogy of the Saviour back to *Adam*. This forms the basis of Paul’s message to the Gentiles; and indeed it is Paul alone of all the New Testament writers who makes known the wondrous and far-reaching connection that is established in the purpose of God between Adam, mankind (including Jew and Gentile) and Christ.

Let us now examine one or two passages that are found in both Matthew and Luke, and see what divergence there is, if any, and what significance may be attached thereto.

(1) THE FORERUNNER.

(a) *The Time and Period.*

Matthew 3:1, “In those days”.

Luke 3:1,2, “Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrach of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrach of Ituraea and of the region of Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrach of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests”.

Matthew, the Hebrew writer for the Hebrews, is unconcerned about the bearing of Gentile rulers upon the date of John’s commission, whereas Luke the writer for the Gentiles, gives the utmost attention to the Gentile powers that be.

(b) *The Preaching of John.*

Matthew 3:1,2, “Came John the Baptist preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”.

Luke 3:2,3, “The word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness. And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins”.

Here once more the divergence is according to plan. Matthew, the writer of the gospel of the King for the Hebrew Christian, stresses “repentance in view of the kingdom of heaven”; Luke, companion of Paul, and writing for the Gentile convert stresses “the remission of sins”.

(c) *The Quotation from Isaiah.*

Matthew 3:3, “For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight”.

Luke 3:4-6, “As it is written in the book of the words of Esaias the prophet, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight. Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth; and all flesh shall see the salvation of God”.

It will be seen at once, that Luke could not be satisfied with the brief quotation made by Matthew. He must go on until “the salvation of God” seen by “all flesh” is reached, for such a theme coincides with the purpose of his gospel.

(2) THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

(a) *The Time and Period.*

Matthew 2:1, “Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king”.

Luke 2:1,2, “And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed (and this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria)”.

Matthew’s circumference is “Judaea” and its centre Herod; Luke’s circumference is “all the world” and its centre Caesar Augustus.

(b) *The Worshippers.*

Matthew 2:1, “There came wise men from the east to Jerusalem”.

Luke 2:8,15, “There were in the same country shepherds ... Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us”.

Matthew makes no reference to the shepherds; Luke makes no reference to the wise men. Each is divinely guided in his selection as the sequel will show.

(c) *The Purpose of the Nativity.*

Matthew 2:2,5,6, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews? ... they said ... In Bethlehem of Judaea”.

Luke 2:11, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord”.

Here the contrast is most marked | Matthew says in Bethlehem is born the *King*; Luke says in Bethlehem is born a *Saviour*, each evangelist keeping strictly to his aim and purpose.

Luke supplements his account of the shepherds” and of the Angels” testimony by the added doxology “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward *men*” (2:14), whereas Matthew quotes the prophet Micah saying “that shall rule My people *Israel*” (2:6). In addition, in Luke, old Simeon is brought before us, an Israelite looking for the consolation of Israel, but when he saw the infant Christ, and took Him in his arms, Israel is not mentioned first, but strange as it may seem, he said, “A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of Thy people Israel” (Luke 2:32).

(3) THE LORD’S OPENING MINISTRY.

(a) *The Context.*

Matthew 4:1, “Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil”.

Luke 4:1, “And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan and was led by the Spirit into the wilderness”.

No comment is here necessary, the only reason these passages are quoted is to show that the next statements are rightly compared together.

(b) The Subject of the Ministry.

Matthew 4:17, "From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand".

Luke 4:18,19, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He hath anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor: He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord".

Here once again each evangelist is true to the purpose of his gospel, Matthew consistently speaks of the kingdom, Luke of the Gospel. In Luke the Lord continued His discourse and drew attention to the fact that in the days of Elias there were many widows in Israel during the great famine, but unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet, and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian. Just as with the supplement in the second chapter, so here, the Gentile, not the Jew, is pre-eminent "both the widow of Sarepta and Naaman being Gentiles. One further illustration will suffice.

*(4) THE SECOND COMING.**(a) The Context.*

Matthew 24:19, "and woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!".

Luke 21:23, "But woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!".

As above, these two passages are quoted to establish the fact that both passages record the same prophecy.

(b) The Prophecy.

Matthew 24:21, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be".

Luke 21:23,24, "For there shall be great distress in the land and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led away captive into all nations: and Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled".

Here therefore is a demonstration of the distinctive point of view of each gospel. Matthew traces the Saviour's descent back through David and Abraham and stays there, Luke however pursues it back to Adam. Matthew speaks of the quest of the wise men, and their question concerning the King of the Jews, Luke tells of the angels and the shepherds, and that the child born in the city of David is a Saviour. Old Simeon supplements by putting the Gentile first. The opening ministry of Christ as recorded by Matthew speaks of the kingdom as does that of John the Baptist, whereas in Luke the opening ministry of our Lord stresses the gospel of mercy and deliverance, while instead of announcing the kingdom John preaches remission of sins.

We all know what a prominent position is given by Matthew to the parables of the mysteries of the kingdom, in no lesser prominence the distinctive parables of Luke set forth his peculiar teaching. Who but Luke could record the parable of the Good Samaritan? How fitting is the parable of the Prodigal Son! The parable of the Unjust Steward with its use of *oikonomia* illustrates Paul's usage of the word when translated "dispensation". The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican is the doctrine of Romans in picture form, and contains the only evangelical use of "justification" found in the four gospels. The parable of the "ten pounds" is similar, but not the same as the parable of the "ten talents" recorded by Matthew. The special point of Luke's parable is the statement that it was uttered to correct the impression "that the kingdom of God should immediately appear". Consequently this nobleman "went into a far country to receive for Himself a kingdom, and to return".

The reader will find upon careful comparison, that in the smallest details, Matthew and Luke can be discovered consistently heading for their distinctive goals, and while such an examination cannot be conducted in these pages,

the reader who has never attempted it, has a joy awaiting him that no second hand acquaintance with Holy Writ can provide.

The Dispensational Place of John's Gospel.

For the full exposition of the Gospel of John, the reader will be able to consult our book *Life Through His Name*, (now obtainable from the Berean Publishing Trust), but in order to make this booklet as complete as possible yet without undue repetition, we will discuss the dispensational place which this Gospel occupies.

In the first place let us get well into mind the fact that the primitive church had *three* gospels, and three only. So far as we have any knowledge neither Matthew, Mark, Luke, Peter nor Paul saw or knew of the Gospel according to John. Polycrates, Bishop of Ephesus, at the end of the second century, and Irenaeus, the scholar of Polycarp, who was himself a disciple of John, record the fact that John remained in Ephesus till the times of the Emperor Trajan, and that he died there in extreme old age, as is testified by Eusebius also. The mistake concerning John that is exposed in John 21:23, may have obtained some credit by the fact that John outlived all the other apostles. It is evident that the gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke contained all the teaching that was essential during the period governed by *the Hope of Israel* and that the statements concerning the "world", "whosoever" and the "other sheep" found in John's Gospel would have been premature or "undispensational" at the time. The relative place of the different sections of the New Testament, with particular reference to John's Gospel might be set out thus:

- (1) Gospels.' New Covenant in operation. Matt., Mark,
Luke.
King and Kingdom rejected.
- (2) Acts.' New Covenant in operation.
King and Kingdom re-offered. Israel rejected.
Hope suspended.
- (3) The Mystery.'" New Covenant NOT in operation.
Paul's prison epistles.
"All the saints in Asia be turned away from me".

- (4) John's Gospel.'" New Covenant NOT in operation.
The world. The other sheep.
The gospel of eternal life.
- (5) The Revelation.'" Resumption of the New Covenant.
The Day of the Lord.

In Matthew's gospel is recorded the parable of the marriage of the King's Son, which is divided into three distinct phases, corresponding with the periods covered by the three Gospels, the Acts and the gospel according to John.

First Invitation (Matt. 22:3), "They would not come", the three gospels.

Second Invitation (Matt. 22:4-7), "They made light of it", the Acts period; the servants were entreated spitefully and slain by the remnant, who in turn were destroyed and their city burned by the King in his wrath.

Third Invitation (Matt. 22:8-10), "Gathered all ... both bad and good", John's gospel.

The punishment of those who did not accept the second invitation took place between Acts 28 and A.D. 70 during which period the dispensation of the mystery was revealed, believed and then largely forsaken. After Paul's death John wrote his gospel, giving a message and a calling to the "world" and revealing that the Lord had "other sheep" who were not of Israel's fold, which must be gathered, so that at last there may be "one flock and one shepherd".

At the present time there is an inner circle, embracing that small company of believers that are members of the Body of Christ and blessed under the terms of the Mystery, with Paul the prisoner as the appointed channel of teaching and truth, and a large outer circle embracing a vast number of believers, who while they have life, have no clear idea as to what is the hope of their calling. These find their gospel, comfort and teaching in John's Gospel.

Let us consider the character of the times in which John's Gospel operates, as compared with the character of the times covered by the three synoptic Gospels and the Acts. During the earthly ministry of Christ, He pointedly limited His ministry to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and forbade His disciples to go into the way of the Gentiles. This limitation is most definitely set aside by John's Gospel. There, the most prominent word indicative of sphere and scope is "the world", where it occurs about seventy-nine times, as against fifteen occurrences in the three synoptics. The bulk of the Scriptures, whether Old or New Testaments, was written for Israel, about Israel, or written for the guidance of believing Gentiles who were "blessed with faithful Abraham". To-day Israel has long been in the condition known as *Lo-ammi* "not My People" (Hos. 1:9), and if the Gospel of John belongs to the period when Israel is not a living active factor, then, it should contain evidence that it was written for non-Jewish readers. We turn to the Gospel, and are not only struck with the title *Logos* "the Word", which is more intimately associated with Greek Philosophy than it is with the Law and the Prophets, but we discover that John goes out of his way to interpret terms which every Jew would know from childhood. Consider the following passages in the light of the argument that John wrote for non-Jewish readers, as over against the idea that John, like the writers of the three gospels, addresses the same people on the same theme.

"They said unto Him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master) where dwellest Thou?" (1:38).

"We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ" (1:41).

"And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews" (2:6).

"The Jews" Passover was at hand"; "The Passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh"; "The Jews" Passover was nigh at hand" (2:13; 6:4; 11:55).

"The Jews" feast of Tabernacles" (7:2).

"And it was at Jerusalem the feast of the Dedication, and it was winter" (10:22).

"The Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans" (4:9).

"Go, wash in the pool Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.)" (9:7).

"Thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone" (1:42).

It is evident that no Jew needed to be told the meaning of *Rabbi*, *Messiah*, or *Cephas*, neither did he need to be instructed that the Passover or Tabernacles were feasts of the Jews. Let us take the reference in 10:22 as a proof text. Some time ago a book came into our hands, and as we read we were at first somewhat mystified. Birds were described as flying North, *in order to get to a warmer clime!* Christmas Day was described in terms of the warmest summer, and where one would naturally look for typical Christmas fare and indoor conditions, *picnics* and open air enjoyment of the summer were its accompaniments. It began to dawn upon us that this book belonged to another part of the earth than England, and the mystery was solved by turning to the title page, where we discovered that it had been written and published in New Zealand. A book originating in London and addressed to European readers, would never use such an expression as "it was Christmas Day, and *it was winter*", or "it was August Bank holiday, and *it was summer*", and the fact that John felt called upon to add the words "and it was winter" to his reference to the feast of Dedication is a proof that non-Jewish readers were in mind. Upon opening each of the three synoptic Gospels, we discover Christ presented to the people as the long promised King and Saviour, not until we are some distance through the narrative does it appear that Israel will reject their King. With John's Gospel, rejection is imprinted on the opening chapter.

"He came unto His own, and His own received Him not" (1:11).

Here the rejection of Matthew 12 and 13 and Acts 28 is assumed as it also is in the words of John 9:39 "For judgment I am come into this world, that they which see not might see; and that they which see might be made

blind”, where an allusion to Isaiah 6:10 (quoted in both Matthew 13 and Acts 28) is apparent. The synoptic Gospels operate under the terms of the New Covenant and consequently the New Covenant memorial feast, known also as the Lord’s Supper, is given a prominent place in them all. It is somewhat surprising, if one does not possess the dispensational key, to discover that *John makes no mention* of the institution of the Lord’s supper in his gospel! If, however, the point of view advocated here be correct, then, seeing that before John’s Gospel was written the people of the New Covenant had passed off the scene, it is but right and proper that John should leave the New Covenant feast unrecorded.

The revelation of the Mystery through the prison epistles of Paul had been made known some years before John’s Gospel saw the light of day, consequently although John did not *teach* the truth of the Mystery, he need not have been ignorant of it, and a comparison with the doctrine of Christ, as made by John with the earlier revelation found in Colossians will show how this twofold ministry could run together, John ministering to the world, Paul ministering, through his prison epistles, mainly to the Gentile believer.

John 1.

The Word
(No man hath seen God).
The Only Begotten.
All things made by Him.
His fulness.
The Word made flesh.
Preferred before me.
He was before me.

Colossians 1.

The Image
of the Invisible God.
The Firstborn.
All things created.
All fulness.
The body of His flesh.
He is before all things.
He has pre-eminence.

In the record of our Saviour’s conversation with the woman of Samaria, John slips in a note of time in order to indicate that what the Saviour had *then* said to the woman, had at the time of writing been fulfilled. At the time that Christ spoke to this woman it was still true that salvation was of the Jews and that Jerusalem was the place divinely appointed for worship. He, however, revealed to this woman that a day was coming when this would be changed, saying :

“Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father”.

“The hour cometh (and now is, *adds John*), when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth” (4:21,23).

John’s gospel covers the period indicated by the words “and now is”, a phrase repeated in 5:25-28 and referring to the gift of life which is the central message of his gospel.

The complete structure of John’s gospel, both as a whole and in its separate parts can be found in the book entitled *Life Through His Name* by Charles. H. Welch, which is an exposition of John’s Gospel in its entirety.