

**The Gospels**  
Series: The Bible  
May 29, 2022

Thank you again for being part of worship today.

We are halfway through our series “The Bible” as we look at the entirety of the Canon, recognizing the overarching themes and message of Scripture. I hope you have enjoyed this highly unusual series as much as I have.

On page 4 of your bulletin is a graphic representation of the Bible. Like a bookshelf, the Bible has many sections: Law, History, Poetry, the Prophets (both Major and Minor) are in the Old Testament. In the New Testament are the Gospels, a single book on Church History, then the Letters written by Paul, followed by General Letters, and concluding with the Book of Revelation.

Today, we are going to take a 30,000 foot look at the fifth section, the Gospels. We will ask three questions: What are the mega themes of the section? What is the key verse of that section? And how does it point to Jesus, the Son of God? I am so glad you have joined us on this spectacular journey!

Of all the sections of the Bible, we are most familiar with the Gospels. I must admit that I preach more from the Gospels than any other section. We know that the Gospels contain the story of Jesus, His life, ministry, death, resurrection. It is the story of how God came to earth to save us from our sins.

The Gospels are unique in that they are 4 books telling the story of Jesus. No other section of books devotes so much attention to their subject matter. In fact, 3 of the books are incredibly alike. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels. Synoptic means presenting or taking the same or common view.<sup>1</sup> They relate not only the same stories, but many times, the same exact phrases, even words. How could this be?

Bible scholars generally believe that the Gospel of Mark was written first, between 55 and 65 AD. It is thought that Peter was the source of the Gospel. Once it began to be circulated, Matthew read it and decided to take it and add to it things he remembered. It's thought he did that between 60-65 AD.

Likewise, Luke did his own research, along with Matthew's copy, and wrote his Gospel about the same time.

On page 5 of your bulletin is a chart showing the relationship between the Synoptic Gospels and the percentage of material they share with each other and that which is unique to them. The differences come from the fact that Matthew was writing from a Jewish perspective to a Jewish audience, why Luke was a Gentile and wrote more towards peoples who did not know the Mosaic rituals and the Old Testament.

As far as the Gospel of John, we believe he had access to these Gospels, but he wrote with an entirely different mindset. You read John and you see relationships and an emphasis on love. And he wrote between 85-90 AD.

Nonetheless, we are blessed to have these 4 Gospels. In fact, John wrote:

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<sup>1</sup> Merriam-Webster

*Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written.*<sup>2</sup>

Let's move through our series questions.

What are the Mega Themes of the Gospels? There were a lot I could have listed, but I narrowed it down to seven.

### **First, Belief.**

John records eight specific signs, or miracles, that show the nature of Jesus' power and love. We see His power over everything created, and we see His love of all people. These signs encourage us to believe in Him. Believing is active, living, and continuous trust in Jesus as God. When we believe in His life, His words, His death, and His resurrection, we are cleansed from sin and receive power to follow Him. But we must respond to Him by believing.<sup>3</sup>

### **Second, the Kingdom of God.**

Jesus came to earth to begin His Kingdom. The Sermon on the Mount is about God's kingdom, or being a citizen of the kingdom. Because "Kingdom Citizens" is already used as a book title, I decided my book on the Sermon on the Mount would be called "Living Right Side Up."

Jesus taught the people through sermons, illustrations, and parables. Through His teachings, He showed the true ingredients of faith and how to guard against a fruitless and hypocritical life. Jesus' teachings show us how to prepare for life in his eternal Kingdom by living properly right now. He lived what He taught, and we, too, must practice what we preach.<sup>4</sup>

Christ's full Kingdom will be realized at His return and will be made up of anyone who has faithfully followed him. The way to enter God's Kingdom is by faith—believing in Christ to save us from sin and change our lives. But until then, we must do the work of His Kingdom now to be prepared for later His return.<sup>5</sup>

### **Third, Miracles.**

The Gospels record 35 specific miracles Jesus performed, not counting the times where the text simply said, "He healed the people." Mark records more of Jesus' miracles than sermons. Jesus is clearly a man of power and action, not just words. Jesus did miracles to convince the people who He was and to confirm to the disciples His true identity—God. The more convinced we become that Jesus is God, the more we will see His power and His love. His mighty works show us He is able to save anyone regardless of his or her past. His miracles of forgiveness bring healing, wholeness, and changed lives to those who trust Him.<sup>6</sup>

### **Fourth, Teachings.**

We cannot think of Jesus without remembering His teachings. He taught about God, love, the kingdom, repentance, and so much more. Often times, He taught using parables: stories with a message. There are 30 parables that are recorded in only one Gospel, another 3 in two Gospels, and six parables in three Gospels.

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<sup>2</sup> John 21:25 (NIV)

<sup>3</sup> Life Application Study Bible, John

<sup>4</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Matthew

<sup>5</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Matthew

<sup>6</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Mark

In John's Gospel, by contrast, there are no parables or exorcisms. Jesus' teaching focuses much more on His own identity and His unique relationship with the Father. Jesus is the eternal Son who has come to reveal the Father. Salvation comes by knowing the Father through the Son.

Jesus undeniably qualifies as the greatest teacher ever to live.

#### **Fifth, Compassion.**

As a perfect human, Jesus showed tender sympathy to the poor, the despised, the hurt, and the sinful. No one was rejected or ignored by Him. Jesus is more than a good teacher—He cares for you. Because of His deep love for you, He can satisfy your needs.<sup>7</sup>

Listen to this passage from Matthew 8:

*Large crowds followed Jesus as he came down the mountainside. Suddenly, a man with leprosy approached him and knelt before him. "Lord," the man said, "if you are willing, you can heal me and make me clean." Jesus reached out and touched him. "I am willing," he said. "Be healed!" And instantly the leprosy disappeared.*<sup>8</sup>

Jesus had compassion.

#### **Sixth, Servant.**

Jesus helped people by telling them about God and healing them. Even more, by giving His life as a sacrifice for sin, He performed the ultimate act of service. Because of Jesus' example, we should be willing to serve God and others. Real greatness in Christ's Kingdom is shown by service and sacrifice. Ambition or love of power or position should not be our motive; instead, we should do God's work because we love Him.<sup>9</sup>

#### **Finally, Resurrection.**

On the third day after He died, Jesus rose from the dead. This was verified by His disciples and many eyewitnesses. This reality changed the disciples from frightened deserters to dynamic leaders in the new church. This fact is the foundation of the Christian faith, and part of the premise of "Hanging On In An Upside Down World." We can be changed as the disciples were and have confidence that our bodies will one day be raised to live with Christ forever.<sup>10</sup>

When Jesus rose from the dead, he rose in power as the true King. In His victory over death, he established His credentials as King and His power and authority over evil. The Resurrection shows Jesus' all-powerful life for us—not even death could stop His plan of offering eternal life. Those who believe in Jesus can hope for a resurrection like His. Our role is to tell His story to all the earth so that everyone may share in His victory.<sup>11</sup>

As far as the Key Verse in the Gospels, there could be only one: John 3:16:

*For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.*<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Luke

<sup>8</sup> Matthew 8:1-3 (NLT2)

<sup>9</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Mark

<sup>10</sup> Life Application Study Bible, John

<sup>11</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Matthew

<sup>12</sup> John 3:16 (NIV)

Because Jesus is God, He lives forever. Before the world began, He lived with God, and He will reign forever with Him. In John, we see Jesus revealed in power and magnificence even before His resurrection. Jesus offers eternal life to us. We are invited to begin living in a personal, eternal relationship with him now. Although we must grow old and die, by trusting Him we can have a new life that lasts forever.<sup>13</sup>

Our final question during this series is how this section points to Christ. So, how do The Gospels point to Christ? Are you kidding?

So, for this week, I want to tweak the question, and ask “What do we learn in The Gospels about Jesus that is unique?” What do we see in the Gospels that is different than what we see in the Old Testament?

### **First, the Relationship to the Father.**

In the Old Testament, the general feeling was that you were to be afraid of God, that even to look upon God would kill you. He was all powerful, and therefore frightening.

That is the exact opposite of the view of God you get from Jesus. His favorite label was Father.

*I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener.*<sup>14</sup>

*I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me.*<sup>15</sup>

From the cross, He said:

*“Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.”*<sup>16</sup>

Paul learned this and wrote in Roman 8:15:

*So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you received God’s Spirit when he adopted you as his own children. Now we call him, “Abba, Father.”*<sup>17</sup>

### **Second, His ability to relate to people.**

Jesus was deeply interested in people and relationships. He showed warm concern for His followers and friends—men, women, and children. Jesus’ love for people is good news for everyone. His message is for all people in every nation. Each one of us has an opportunity to respond to Him in faith.<sup>18</sup>

### **Third, the humbling of Himself**

No one ever imagined this, that the Messiah would humble Himself as a servant. He did not come as a conquering king; He came as a servant.

As a result, Paul wrote this timeless hymn:

*Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death – even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of*

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<sup>13</sup> Life Application Study Bible, John

<sup>14</sup> John 15:1 (NIV)

<sup>15</sup> John 14:6 (NIV)

<sup>16</sup> Luke 23:34a (NIV)

<sup>17</sup> Romans 8:15 (NLT2)

<sup>18</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Luke

*Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*<sup>19</sup>

#### **Fourth, He is fully God.**

The Old Testament could not imagine a pre-incarnate Jesus. It was only after Jesus came and taught that His disciples came to understand it.

John spoke of Jesus as he opened his Gospel with these words:

*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*<sup>20</sup>

It was obvious that He was a man. Then they realized He was also God as well.

#### **Fifth, the Great Commandment.**

Let me remind you of the context of the giving of the Great Commandment.

*One of the teachers of the law came and heard them debating. Noticing that Jesus had given them a good answer, he asked him, "Of all the commandments, which is the most important?"*<sup>21</sup>

By Jesus' time, the Jews had accumulated hundreds of laws—613 by one historian's count. Some religious leaders tried to distinguish between major and minor laws, and some taught that all laws were equally binding and that it was dangerous to make any distinctions. This teacher's question could have provoked controversy among these groups, but Jesus' answer summarized all of God's laws.<sup>22</sup>

*"The most important one," answered Jesus, "is this: 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.' The second is this: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' There is no commandment greater than these."*<sup>23</sup>

Jesus was the first to bring all of the Law of Moses together into Love God, Love People.

#### **Sixth, the Great Commission.**

We find the Great Commission in Matthew 28:

*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*<sup>24</sup>

The Jews never got the idea that their faith in God was to be shared with others. Instead, they looked down on non-Jewish people, instead of being, what the Lord said through Isaiah, "a light to the Gentiles."<sup>25</sup>

Jesus made sure His followers told everyone about faith in God.

#### **Finally, the Institution of Holy Communion.**

You will not find a single prediction, a single reference, to the Institution of Holy Communion, in all of the Old Testament.

As He and His disciples were sharing the ritual of the Passover, several cups were shared, and prayers were said. They all knew it by heart. But then Jesus did something different:

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<sup>19</sup> Philippians 2:6-11 (NIV)

<sup>20</sup> John 1:1 (NIV)

<sup>21</sup> Mark 12:28 (NIV)

<sup>22</sup> Life Application Study Bible, Mark 12:28

<sup>23</sup> Mark 12:29-31 (NIV)

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 28:19-20 (NIV)

<sup>25</sup> See Isaiah 42:3

*...that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way also he took the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."<sup>26</sup>*

He gave us Holy Communion to remember and proclaim His death and resurrection.

The Gospels are clear: He is the King of Kings. The Christ, the Son of God, Our Savior.

I read about a man dreaming about the crucifixion of Jesus. He was telling in detail how that Jesus was beaten, and the people shouting crucify him. He saw the back of the soldier as he was driving the nails in the hands of Jesus. When the soldier turned, it was he.

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<sup>26</sup> 1 Corinthians 11:23-25 (ESV)