

## *Part One*

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# INTRODUCTION

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### THE GROUND OF OUR FAITH

The Gospel records of the life of Jesus are the focal center of the entire Bible; and they are the chief foundation of our assurance that the Bible is from God. If these accounts are true, they confirm the Old Testament and guarantee the divine inspiration of the New Testament. If Jesus actually said what these report He said, then indeed He spoke as never man spoke. If He did what these say He did, His works bear witness of Him that He is from God, for no one could do these things except God be with Him. If He died for us and rose again as they testify, He is the Conqueror of death and the Lord of all. If what they say is true, He came forth from God, was born of a virgin, and ascended back to God's throne; then the Son of God has visited us, and we can know whom we have believed, and can trust Him completely to do whatever He has promised.

According to these accounts, Jesus has all authority in heaven and on earth; He will raise all the dead and judge all men; He is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one can come to God except through Him (John 14:6): no one knows God unless he learns of Him from Jesus Christ (Matt. 11:27); if we do not believe in Jesus, we walk in darkness, we will die in our sins, the wrath of God abides upon us, and we will be condemned (John 8:12, 24; 3:18, 36; 12:46-48; Mark 16:16); if we do believe in Him and obey Him, we will have eternal life with Him in glory. Our eternal destiny depends upon what these records say. They had better be right. It is of utmost importance for us to know whether or not they are true and reliable.

#### *Truthfulness and Trustworthiness of the Gospel Accounts*

Some men say the important thing is that the story of Jesus inspires us to nobler attitudes and better deeds, whether it is historically true or not. There are religious leaders who insist that we should simply take the samples and sentiments of the New Testament as a pattern for our lives, and not believe the supernatural claims and events recorded in the Gospels. They even claim that the Gospels present sublime principles in an oriental style of personifying and illustrating ideals in the form of exaggerated accounts of real events or stories of

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imaginary incidents. They say it does not have to be true history to be great religion. *But that is not true.* Beware of such a delusion! Christianity is not mere sentiment stirred by fiction. It is not noble feelings and ideals based on the psychological effect of examples, real or imaginary. Christianity is living under a contract with God, faithfully following His definitely revealed will for us.

The Gospel is not primarily a set of ideals for conduct. It is first a message of facts—real, true, unique facts of what God has done for us and made known to us. It is, of course, a message to be believed, and that faith is to be genuine and deep enough to control our lives. We are to know these things so that we may act accordingly. But the gospel story cannot adequately affect our lives unless we are convinced that it is true.

Furthermore, it certainly cannot bring us the gifts and helps from God which it promises, unless it is true. We cannot change the basic nature of our sinful hearts, or bear the fruit of a divine spirit of righteousness, without regeneration and the coming of the Spirit of God to dwell within us. The righteousness taught in the New Testament is not something that can be embodied in a set of impersonal rules or described in abstract principles, but it is a personal relationship with the living Christ. (See Rom. 8:1-17; II Cor. 5:14-17; Gal. 2:20, 5:6; Phil. 3:8-11; Col. 1:27, 2:6-23, 3:1-17; Rom. 14:17; I Cor. 16:22). The person of Christ the Son of God must be real, must be known, must be relied upon with complete trust, must be loved. Any religion that could exist without faith in the truth of the New Testament message is not the Christianity described in the New Testament—that is sure!

There is nothing the world needs as much as a clear, decisive faith in the Christ of the New Testament. We need the kind of firm conviction that makes us eager to follow wherever He leads, obey whatever He commands, and trust Him whatever befalls us. Faith is not holding to an idea regardless of the evidence, but it is trusting the reliability of the Lord regardless of the consequences. We need a solid foundation of facts and good reasons to show that the New Testament is the Word of Him whom we can trust for all of life and eternity.

The Gospel accounts of the life of Jesus furnish that foundation. John stated the purpose of His writing, and it fits all four Gospels: "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). "*Believing*" means being convinced that it is true, so that we act upon it, with our consciousness, desires, and will

controlled by it.

There is plenty of evidence to convince any reasonable person that the Gospels are true—evidence both within the books themselves, and outside the books concerning them and their contents.

*We Have In The Gospels the Surest Kind of History*

1. *Credibility of the witnesses.* Here are enough good witnesses to establish any fact. They tell their story with serious purpose, factual details and steadfast consistency. Their writings show that they were intelligent men. They were prepared by extensive and close association with the things of which they speak. Early Christian writers declare, without a dissenting voice, that our four Gospels were written by Matthew and John, who were apostles of Jesus, and by Mark and Luke, who were companions of the apostles. Many direct testimonies and incidental references in numerous writings of the first three centuries unite to show that these four Gospels were written in the apostolic age, were handed down to the succeeding generations as authoritative Scriptures, and were in widespread general and public use at least from the beginning of the second century. Thus our four records are the work of men who were qualified as eyewitnesses and close associates of eyewitnesses who were constantly engaged in proclaiming these facts. And the facts which were written by them did not originate at the writing, but had been preached for several years by other eyewitnesses, and had been accepted by vast multitudes of people of whom many had opportunity to know personally or to inquire directly concerning the circumstances involved. These witnesses were men of good character, having reverence for God; love for the truth, and zeal for righteousness. They lived as believers in their own testimony, and spent years in labors and hardships to propagate this message, which meant no gain to them unless it was true. Their sincerity is sealed by their martyrdom and the persecutions which they were willing to bear for the sake of the truth and their love for the Lord.

2. *Agreement of the Testimony.* The accounts in the four Gospels are so similar that they have been accused of copying. Yet they are so independent and different in telling many details that they are sometimes accused of contradicting one another. They make no attempt to explain the differences or to prove agreement, in what they say. On close study they are seen to agree perfectly, but not with the kind of surface agreement that would appear if they were made up to agree. R. A. Torrey observed concerning their testimony of the resurrection of Jesus:

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These accounts must be either a record of facts that actually occurred or else fictions. If fictions, they must have been fabricated in one of two ways—either independently of one another, or in collusion with one another. They could not have been fabricated independently of one another; the agreements are too marked and too many. It is absolutely incredible that four persons sitting down to write an account of what never occurred independently of one another should have made their stories agree to the extent that these do. On the other hand, they cannot have been made up, as we have already seen, in collusion with one another; the apparent discrepancies are too numerous and too noticeable. It is proven that they were not made up independently of one another; it is proven they were not made up in collusion with one another, so we are driven to the conclusion that they were not made up at all, that they are a true relation of facts as they actually occurred.<sup>1</sup>

3. *Support of Archaeology, Geography, and History.* The Gospel testimony is confirmed by agreement, not only with one another, but also with many other writings and with all available facts of the land of Palestine, the rulers, the parties, coins, customs, etc. Gospel writers have been accused of error, but they have never been proved false. When the facts have been brought to light, in every instance the Gospels have been shown to be accurate history: e.g., the account of Quirinius (Cyrenius) and the enrollment in Luke 2:2. Everywhere their testimony can be checked it proves to be sound.

4. *Support of Old Testament Prophecies.* By far the most important outside information to confirm the Gospels is found in dozens of passages in the Old Testament which give many scores of items of information about the Christ, His life, character and work. Matthew makes many references to the testimony of the prophets; and all the Gospels quote Jesus' appeal to the prophets in support of His claims and for explanations of His life and sufferings. This testimony from the Old Testament has special quality and value, because obviously it reports not things as seen understood by men, but truths as known and revealed by God.

5. *Evidence of Miracles.* Miracles wrought by the apostles confirmed their testimony to the hearers who saw and knew them, and their confirmation has been relayed to us by many witnesses, both Biblical and

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<sup>1</sup> R. A. Torrey, "The Certainty and Importance of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ" in *The Fundamentals*, Vol. II, ed. by R. A. Torrey, A. C. Dixon, and others (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, reprint 1972 [1917]), pp. 301-302.

traditional. Their miracles are not mere unexplained wonders, but are given clear meaning as credentials of their message (Heb. 2:4). They tell plainly that Jesus gave them the miracle-working power to support the message, and that He also gave them inspiration of the Holy Spirit to aid them in remembering what He taught and to guide them in revealing the truth. Miracles were a reasonable accompaniment to their message, for it was all concerned with the facts of God's revelation to man and His supernatural intervention in the affairs of the world.

6. *Claims of Divine Inspiration.* An integral and indelible part of the apostles' testimony is found in their repeated claims of supernatural aid and inspiration from God to guarantee the accuracy and Divine authority of their message. This claim extends to some who were their co-workers like Mark and Luke (See Matt. 10:1-20, 40; 16:19; Mark 13:11; 16:20; Luke 24:45-49; John 14:26; 15:26; 16:13-15; 20:21-23; Acts 1:4-8; 2:1-4, 16, 17, 33; 4:8; 5:12-26; 8:6, 13-18; 13:1-4; 15:6-12, 28; I Cor. 2:6-16; 12:8-11; 14:37; Gal. 1:8-12; Eph. 3:2-5; I Thess. 2:13; II Tim. 1:6; I Pet. 1:12; II Pet. 3:15-16). If they are men of truth, these claims are true. In any case, such claims demand from us a strong and decisive verdict either for or against them. Such claims are either very significantly true or they are monstrously false. They mean that the apostles cannot be treated indifferently, but must be considered either deliberate liars, deluded maniacs, or completely dependable messengers of God. There can be no middle ground, no supposition of general good intentions, partial reliability, and innocent mistakes. If they are not the worst of frauds, they are the truest of witnesses, and vice versa.

7. *Incredibility of Fraud.* The charge of fraud is answered by their consistent and extended witnessing, by the agreement of their lives with their testimony, by the success of their proclamation among people to whom many of the facts were known, by their endurance of persecution and death for the Gospel. Furthermore, it is absolutely incredible that the matchless life and character of Jesus could have been invented by deliberate liars, or dreamed up by lunatics, or formed in the popular imagination over any period of time. It is almost as incredible that anyone who invented such a character could have made other men to believe him to be real and to join in the proclamation of the fraud without having any evidences of His reality. The almost irreverent words of Theodore Parker have a strong element of truth in them: "It would have taken a Jesus to forge a Jesus." Another has said, "If Jesus is not the living Lord, then the man who invented Jesus deserves our worship." It is a shocking and repulsive

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thought; but it is true—if the Bible is not true, then there is no true God known to man, and we have nothing more admirable and helpful to man than the lies about Jesus. Just try to imagine how fiction, forgery, and fraud could produce the teachings of Christ, the converting power of the Gospel, and the actual establishment and spread of Christianity—just think of the magnitude of the imposture, the difficulty of contriving the mighty features and the many details of such a system, the sharply contradictory types of skills and cunning and character that would be required in the fabricators—and you will see how anyone who faces the facts must believe that the Gospels are true. It is necessary for any normal mind to believe that every effect has an adequate cause.

We do not have to prove all the facts of the record, if we can be sure of the reliability of the author. If the Gospel record is not only good and honest human testimony, but also written by men inspired of the Holy Spirit, then we can and must believe it whether we can verify it or not. It becomes more than a collection of ideas to be tested; it is a source of truth to be trusted. It is also the solid ground on which we rest a faith that is reasonable, helpful and honest—a faith that knows whom it believes and why he is deemed trustworthy. After we know the evidence that Jesus is the Son of God, we can quite reasonably say, "If Jesus says it, I believe it, and that settles it." When we know the facts of His life which manifest His love and goodness, as well as His wisdom and power, we follow Him with loving confidence and are content to say:

"And so I go on not knowing; I would not know if I might.

I would rather walk with Him by faith, than to walk alone by sight;

I would rather walk with Christ in the dark, than to walk alone in the light."

For Further Study:

Anderson, J. N. D. *Christianity: The Witness of History*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1969. A British lawyer sifts the evidence and makes a positive case for the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Bruce, F. F. *The New Testament Documents: Are They Reliable?* 5th ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1960. Presents internal and external evidence for the reliability of the New Testament books. His acceptance of the two-source theory weakens the book.

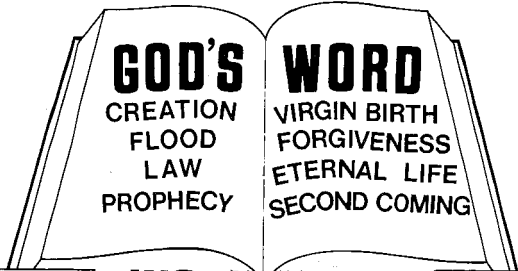
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Montgomery, John W. *Christianity and History*. Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1964-1965. A defense of the truth of Christianity on the basis of reliable historical records showing us a divine Christ.

Wartick, Wallace. *New Testament Evidences*. Joplin: College Press, 1975. Updating of J. W. McGarvey's classic work, *Evidences of Christianity*.

# Divine Truth

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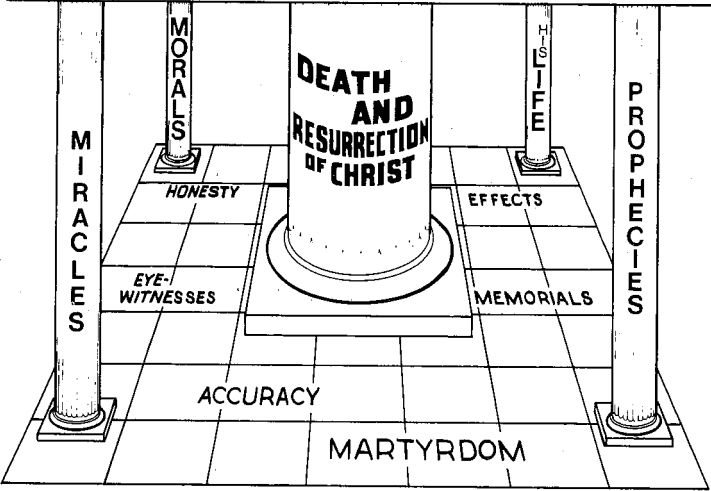
Jn 10:35

**INSPIRATION**

Jn 16:13

**JESUS - GOD'S SON**

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*Grounded in Human History*



A STATEMENT OF FAITH<sup>1</sup>

Christianity is a matter of faith. It has doctrines and practices simply because Christ taught and commanded. Those who believe Christ believe what He taught, and those who accept Jesus as Lord obey what He commanded. Our Christian faith is faith in Christ and the divine revelation of which He is the source and the center. Because He put His stamp of approval on the Old Testament and declared that it could not be broken (John 10:35) and that none of it shall pass away until all be fulfilled (Matt. 5:18; Luke 24:44), we believe that the Old Testament scriptures are inspired, authoritative and divinely dependable. Because Jesus promised the apostles the Holy Spirit to guide them in remembering all that He taught and in revealing all truth (John 14:26; 16:12-14), we believe the New Testament scriptures to be inspired of God and possessed of divine accuracy and authority. Many facts of the record and claims of the New Testament writers confirm this faith.

We believe Christ—and all His appointed spokesmen. Christ said it; we believe it; that settles it, on any subject of which the New Testament plainly speaks.

We believe that the words of the apostles are the words of Christ and are full of compelling authority unto the end of the age. When Paul gives inspired advice concerning marriage, we do not explain it away as his personal and fallacious opinion. His modest reminder in I Cor. 7:40—"and I think also that I have the Spirit of God"—certainly should not be taken as an expression of doubt about His inspiration in view of the positive assertions in the same letter (I Cor. 2:10-13; 14:37) and in others (Gal. 1:12; I Thess. 2:13; II Thess. 3:14). We believe we must find the intended meaning of the apostle in all their teachings and abide by them. We do not disregard any of it as expressing the bias of Paul against women, or any of it as inconsistent with other Scriptures. But we seek to heed every statement to its full intent in complete harmony with all the rest.

We believe in the unique and distinctive authority of the New Testament to the extent that we deplore all the changes made by human hands in transcribing it, all the misstatements of its meaning

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<sup>1</sup> This statement appeared in the *Compass*, official organ of Ozark Bible College, to explain the basic faith of the men who taught at this college. Seth Wilson is Dean of Ozark Bible College.

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in translating it, and all the mishandling of it by men interpreting and applying it. We do fervently desire to have the original inspired word in the purity and fullness of its original meaning and we have no interest in preserving the traditional corruptions of it in any manuscript, translation or commentary. Therefore, we are interested in weighing carefully all reliable evidence for correcting our interpretations, our commentaries, and our Bible versions whether they be new or old, at every point of error, although they are minor points.

We rejoice that God has so written His word and so preserved it that the fundamentals of salvation have been preserved in all versions and copies of it for those who will diligently study it and find its truth in spite of the errors and inconsistencies of its translators. But we believe that when errors in any version are found they should be rejected, rather than perpetuated as part of this divine truth; for, of course, they did not belong to it originally.

This we believe and teach.

## MATTHEW AND THE PROPHETS

It is generally agreed that Matthew wrote as a Jew, addressing his account of the life of Jesus especially to Jews, both believers and non-believers. Although he did not write to Jews exclusively, his purpose was to present Jesus clearly as the Messiah, the true fulfillment of the Old Testament.

At least seventy-one passages from the Old Testament are quoted or paraphrased in Matthew. About seventeen of these are freely adapted from its language.

At least ten records of events are referred to, without any quotation being made.

*Jesus' Use of the Prophets*

This kind of use of the Old Testament certainly did not originate with Matthew. He ascribes most of it to Jesus. Sixty percent (642) of the 1071 verses in Matthew's Gospel contain his quotations of Jesus' sayings and sermons. In these quotations there are fifty-four places in which Jesus used the language of the Old Testament directly or loosely. Perhaps fifteen of these are so brief and so loosely quoted that they may not be intentional quotations. They at least show His familiarity with Old Testament and inclination to use its language.

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John report the sayings of Jesus in the style of direct quotation rather than indirect; yet they do not always agree exactly in wording the same sayings. Thus we see that Matthew may have summarized or altered slightly the original words of Jesus; but we cannot assume that he put quotations from the Old Testament into the mouth of Jesus. Yet Matthew chose (being led by the Holy Spirit) to record especially those teachings of Jesus in which He used the Old Testament. This fits Matthew's purpose to show that Jesus is the Messiah and fulfillment of the entire revelation which God has made.

Jesus (as reported by Matthew alone) quoted from fourteen different books of the Old Testament. At least six times He introduced quotations by the phrase "it is written," a well-established form of referring to the canonical authority of the Scriptures. He mentioned Isaiah, Moses, David, and Daniel as authors through whom God spoke.

Jesus cited at least twenty passages of the Old Testament as commands of God to be obeyed; at least eleven as statement of historic

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fact or truth; and at least twenty-one as prophecies fulfilled in His life or circumstances of His time. He spoke of the prophecies as needing to be fulfilled, probably meaning that any predictions made by God will inevitably come true (Matthew 26:54, 56).

Of the laws or duties which Jesus cited from the Old Testament, He quoted five of the ten commandments, on at least three different occasions: in the sermon on the mount (5:21, 27), in argument with Pharisees (15:4), and to the rich young ruler (19:18, 19). He used Deuteronomy three times in His answers to Satan's temptations (4:4, 7, 10), as stating rules from God which bound His own conscience and conduct. The history which Jesus used as true and important included accounts of creation, Adam and Eve, Noah and the flood, Abraham, Sodom and Gomorrah, Moses and the law, David and the showbread, the Queen of Sheba, Jonah in the fish, and the murder of both Abel and Zachariah,

All of the above facts are from Matthew's account of Jesus alone. The other Gospels add more statements and figures to show Jesus' emphasis upon the testimony of the law and prophets. "These are they which bear witness of me" (John 5:39). "If ye believed Moses, ye would believe me; for he wrote of me" (John 5:46). "All things must needs be fulfilled, which are written in the law of Moses, and the prophets, and the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). See also Luke 24:25-27 and 45-47.

The sermons and letters of the other apostles show much of this same emphasis. Peter's sermon in Acts 2 uses prophecies as its main evidence and for more than half of its total contents. Even in preaching to Gentiles he said, "To him bear all the prophets witness" (Acts 10:43). Paul before King Agrippa described his ministry as "testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come; how that the Christ must suffer, and how that he first by the resurrection of the dead should proclaim light both to the people and to the Gentiles" (Acts 26:22, 23). Their chief method of persuading men to believe was by use of the prophets (Acts 3:18, 21, 24; 8:30-35; 13:27, 40; 24:14; 26:27; 28:23). They also emphasized them in strengthening the faith of believers (Romans 1:2, 17; 3:21; I Peter 1:10-12; 2:6-8; II Peter 1:19-21; 3:2).

As John wrote "that ye may believe," and John the Baptist came "that all might believe through him" (John 20:31; 1:7), so also the prophets wrote that men might recognize the Christ when He came, and might expect Him before He came. They did cause a general expectation all over the East that someone from Judea should become

ruler of the world. Prophecies like those in Daniel 2:44; 9:25-27; and Micah 5:2-15 could account for that. Remember the long career of Daniel in high offices in the Babylonian and Persian empires, and the coming of the wisemen from the east at Jesus' birth.

Preaching the gospel of Christ is not presenting His teachings for men to evaluate with human wisdom or to test by experimentation. It is identifying Jesus for all men to accept, trust, and follow Him, obeying Him as God and only Source of life.

Many scholars and churches of Christendom in the last two hundred years have greatly erred, not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God. They have tried to judge the message of the Bible or modify it by the wisdom and wants of men, putting too much confidence in new conclusions from insufficient discoveries. They have been too much like Aladdin, trading the true wonder-working lamp of God for a shiny new-made thing of brass; because they have not listened to the witnesses who gave God's testimony to His own Son. They have not proclaimed the identity and unique authority of Jesus the Son of God and only Savior of the world.

Jesus' high regard for the Old Testament (Matt. 5:17, 18) was shared or learned by the apostles, and they followed His practice of making effective use of it. Should not all of His disciples today similarly learn from Him?

#### *Matthew's Use of the Prophets*

Matthew's use of the prophets is not so different from that of the other apostles, except for the quantity of citations accumulated in his more extensive quotations of Jesus' teaching and his own repetition of his favorite clause for introducing a prophecy. He also reports the fact that the scribes of Jerusalem quoted the prophecy of Micah about the birth of the Christ at Bethlehem (2:6).

Exactly ten times Matthew quotes the Old Testament in his own narrative to point out the fulfillment of a passage. One other time (in 2:23) he quotes a prediction that apparently is not written in the Old Testament: "that he should be called a Nazarene."

Eight times Matthew uses the same form of expression to introduce a prophecy: "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken through the prophet" or "spoken by the Lord through his prophet." Here they are. Jesus was born of a virgin (1:22, 23). God's Son was taken to Egypt and back to Nazareth (2:15 and 23). Jesus ministered in Galilee (4:14-16). He healed the sick (8:16, 17). He avoided unnecessary strife and concentrated on positive ministry to the need

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of persons (12:15-21). He used parables (13:34, 35). He rode an ass into Jerusalem while being acclaimed king (21:4, 5).

In this expression Matthew probably did not mean to say that these things were deliberately done for the purpose of making the prophecies come true. It does contain the form of grammar which usually expresses purpose; but in the New Testament Greek it also is used to express a result in John 9:2; Romans 11:11; I Corinthians 7:29; I Thessalonians 5:4; I John 1:9; Galatians 5:17; Revelation 13:13; Mark 5:23 and Luke 1:43. It may not even be recognizable in these passages, because it should not be translated too literally. Did Matthew mean to say that either Joseph or Herod purposely acted to fulfill the words of Hosea 11:1, 2? Did John mean, in a similar statement, that the soldiers at the cross gambled for Jesus' robe, or pierced His side instead of breaking His legs, for the purpose of fulfilling prophecies? Matthew's form of introduction to prophecies does not require us to believe that these things happened just because they were predicted; they were predicted because God knew they were going to happen.

In two other places Matthew says, "Then was fulfilled that which was spoken through the prophet": about the sorrow for Bethlehem's babies (2:17, 18), and about Judas' betrayal money and what was done with it (27:9, 10). Once he says, "This is he that was spoken of through Isaiah the prophet" about John the Baptist (3:3).

### *Matthew's Use of Prophets Limited*

Matthew did not try to use all the prophecies he could. He omitted many dozens of impressive ones. But like the other apostles, he wanted to show that the ministry of Jesus, of which he was writing so briefly, was indeed "according to the scriptures" (see I Corinthians 15:3, 4).

Matthew used the prophets modestly, with restraint, just enough to keep us conscious of the fact that Jesus did not come in His own name or contrary to God's plan. He used them most in recording how Jesus used them, and then to show that the Scriptures had foretold many of the very things about Christ which his people did not expect of the Messiah. Such things as: His being God with us by virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14), His life being threatened by Herod and saved by a stay in Egypt (Jeremiah 31:15; Hosea 11:1), His lowly service to the people and in despised provinces (Isaiah 9:1, 2; 42:1-4; 53:4). Even John the Baptist found such actions contrary to his expectations of the Messiah and sent a question about it to Jesus (Matthew 11:2-6).

But why didn't Matthew argue vigorously from such strong and

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obvious prophecies as Isaiah 9:6, 7 and 53:5-12? Matthew was not making a case for Christ from prophecy. He was reporting the simple facts as the Spirit of God guided him. By the same divine wisdom he was caused to cite some Scriptures which foretold or pre-figured them.

Some "scholars" allege that "Matthew twists the Scriptures" to apply them to Christ. I deny the allegation and in all good humor I defy the *allegator* (especially the reptile really responsible for this blindness—II Corinthians 4:4; 11:14, 15; Revelation 12:9). Careful study of Matthew's quotations will reveal that some of them are taken from the Septuagint (the Greek version of the Old Testament which was common among the Jews), although it was not exactly like the original Hebrew in meaning. Some of the passages quoted by Matthew were plain predictions directly fulfilled in the life of Christ. But some of them were spoken originally of another matter, yet in language which finds again fulfillment in the facts of Christ: for example, the sorrow over the Babylonian captivity expressed in Jeremiah 31:15 happens again in the slaughter of the infants of Bethlehem and the surrounding area.

Hosea 11:1, cited at Matthew 2:15, is part of a statement about the history of Israel expressed in such a figure of speech that it fits even better the facts of Jesus. One can easily suppose that the Spirit of God used the language of Hosea to put another line in the Old Testament portrait of the Messiah, of whom more than three hundred details are given in the entire Old Testament.

It is not unreasonable that the inspired writers of the New Testament should state the facts more fully or specifically than the predictions do, or be able to determine meanings which were not evident to the uninspired reader. For example, even if it could be shown that Isaiah 7:14 used a word which meant a young woman, Matthew is competent to tell us that God intended to predict the birth of a son to a virgin, just as Paul can tell us in Galatians 3:16 that the ambiguous word "seed" in Genesis was really intended to apply to Christ as a singular term.

The purpose of predictions and foreshadowing types is not to give details of history in advance, but to identify a plan and its Author, to build a faith in the Author of revelation who knows the end from the beginning. A study of prophecy should give all of us a greater appreciation of the facts of Christ's coming and ministry on earth, when we realize God's long-range planning, His control over the ages, His faithfulness to the promises and purposes of His grace.

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### For Further Study:

- Fowler, Harold. *The Gospel of Matthew*, Volume I. Joplin: College Press, 1968, pp. 81-86. Studies how Matthew used the prophecies with attention to Matthew's use of the word fulfill.
- Gundry, Robert. *A Survey of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1970, pp. 90-93. Itemizes the New Testament quotations of fulfilled Old Testament passages.
- Nicole, Roger. "New Testament Use of the Old Testament" in *Revelation and the Bible*, ed. by C. F. H. Henry. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1958. Pp. 137-151. Excellent essay on this topic.
- R. V. G. Tasker. *The Old Testament In the New Testament*, rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1954. Pp. 41-48. Brief discussion of Matthew's use of the Old Testament.



## 5

## WHY JOHN WROTE HIS GOSPEL

Every writing has a purpose of one kind or another. And every book or sentence is best understood in the light of the purpose for which it is written.

*Stated Purpose*

Many writings have purposes so insignificant, or even frivolous, that we pay no attention to them. But John's story of the life of Jesus has a purpose so vital to all of us that it is more than an academic question of aid to interpretation. His purpose is worthy of our special consideration and appreciation.

John states his purpose in the plainest terms in 20:30, 31:

"Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in his name."

The contents of the fourth Gospel seems clearly to indicate that this author was familiar with the books of Matthew, Mark and Luke and that he supposed many of his readers would know these other books. He seems to have designed his account to supplement the others in giving a greater knowledge of the first year of Christ's ministry, a more explicit view of the chronology of the whole of Jesus' public work and additional emphasis upon the teaching of his deity. But it was not John's purpose merely to relate more miracles or more parables such as the earlier accounts had recorded. He designed rather to give a deeper understanding of the significance of the words and deeds of Jesus. While John's Gospel is in full harmony with the others, and at the same time bears a reasonable relationship to them as the earlier accepted and approved accounts of the same general subject, still the question whether to repeat incidents which they had told is only incidental to his main purpose. That purpose is to produce the greatest possible conviction and understanding about the person of Jesus—the greatest possible faith in Jesus—in all his readers, whether they have read the other Gospels or not. To John the issue was faith versus unbelief, and he emphasized it by quoting much more of Jesus' discussions concerning Himself and the necessity of faith in Him. Take a look at the following passages in John: 3:11-

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15, 16-21; 4:10, 25, 26, 39-42; 5:24, 37, 38, 43-47; 6:29, 35, 40, 62-64; 7:17, 37, 38; 8:21-25, 31, 45-47; 9:35-38; 10:3-5, 25, 26, 34-38; 11:25-27; 12:31-43, 44-50; 13:19, 20; 14:6, 7, 8-12; 16:27-31; 17:8, 20; 18:37; 19:35; 20:25-31; 21:24.

John sought to bring to his readers a positive testimony of fact—the clear evidence of an eyewitness—giving the utmost assurance of the great truth of the deity of Jesus Christ. In doing so he claims to be an eyewitness (1:14 and 19:35) and tells many incidental details with the perfect familiarity of one who has participated in the events of which he writes.

John lays great stress upon the “truth” and things that are “true.” He expects us to accept Jesus for the reason that the testimony about Him is true and entirely sufficient to convince all who love the truth. To bring out the full emphasis and meaning of 19:35 we might translate it thus: “He who has seen has borne witness (and his witness is of a nature to be thoroughly competent, and he knows that he speaks accurately) in order that you may believe.” It is strange how much this Gospel has been accused of being “theology,” “unhistorical,” “an interpretation of later views of the church,” or even “speculative” while it is filled with insistence upon concrete fact and objective truth supported by the most direct testimony and authoritative witnesses.

### *John Tells Who Jesus Is*

All that is in the fourth Gospel has been chosen to produce a definite result. Every part of it is told in order to make us understand that the eternal Word of God, who was in the beginning with God and who was God, became flesh and dwelt among us, and that he lived and died and rose again that we might have eternal life. In the most concrete and concise manner, *John is telling us who Jesus is:*

1. He is the Word of God, the perfect expression of the Father (1:1, 18).
2. He is the Creator of all things (1:3).
3. He is the true light (1:9).
4. He is the Son of God (1:18; 3:16, 35), one with the Father (10:30, 36; 14:9), who came forth from God and returned to God (13:1, 3; 17:8, 13); who is in the Father and the Father in Him (14:10; 17:21; 10:38).
5. He is the Lamb of God (1:36), the divine sacrifice and the only sacrifice that can take away the sin of the world.
6. He is the promised Christ of the Old Testament, the King of

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- Israel (1:45, 49; 4:25, 26; 18:33, 36, 37; 6:69; 11:27; 12:12-15; 17:3; 19:19; 20:31).
7. He is the Lord of nature (2:3-10; 6:5-21).
  8. He is the Lord of the temple of God (2:13-20).
  9. He is the Savior of the world (3:14-17; 4:42).
  10. He is the true witness (1:18; 3:11, 32, 33; 7:16-18; 8:26, 45; 12:49, 50; 17:8; 18:37, etc.) who speaks always exactly and only the words of God.
  11. He is the Lord of life (5:21, 25-29), the "resurrection and the life" (11:25, 26; 8:51; 6:40, 54, 57, 68).
  12. He is the Judge of all (5:22, 27, 30; compare 9:39).
  13. He is the Bread of life (6:35-58).
  14. He is the Water of life (7:37).
  15. He is the Light of the world (8:12; 9:5; 12:35, 46).
  16. He is the author of liberty (8:31-36).
  17. He is the good Shepherd (10:11, 14-18).
  18. He is the door to safety and the way to God (10:7-9; 14:6).
  19. He is the humble Master and the perfect example of love (13:1-17).
  20. He is the Truth (14:6).
  21. He is the sender of the Spirit of truth (14:26; 15:26; 16:7, 13-15).
  22. He is the true Vine, the actual source of spiritual life and fruit in those who abide in Him (15:1-8).
  23. He is the greatest friend (15:13-17), who brings the actual love of God into the experience of men.
  24. He is the risen Lord (20:19-29).
  25. He is the one who is coming to receive His own unto Himself to share His eternal glory (14:3; 16:16, 17, 19, 22; 21:22).

### *John Tells How We Know Who Jesus Is*

Out of a very great abundance of facts and experiences (21:25) John selected those which would produce the deepest conviction about Jesus. That conviction was to be twofold—that Jesus is the Christ of Old Testament prophecy, and that He is the Son of God—the representative of God, the expression of God, and the gift of God to all mankind. This conviction was to be for a specific purpose; namely, to enable the reader to have life (eternal life, free from sin and condemnation) in Jesus' name. John does not affirm such things about Jesus merely for the sake of variety or wonder, but because they are true; and he frequently emphasizes the authority and validity of the

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witnesses from whom we receive such statements about Jesus. For *John is also telling us how we can know who Jesus is:*

1. By the witness of Jesus himself, in His constant claims and the accompanying fitness of His whole life.
2. By the voice of the forerunner prophet, John the Baptist.
3. By the testimony of God.
4. By the witness of the law and the prophets.
5. By the demonstration of supernatural power in the miracles worked by Jesus as "signs" of His relation with God.
6. By the testimony of His disciples, particularly as witnesses of the resurrection of Christ.
7. By the testimony of the Holy Spirit, both as a fact in their lives demonstrating the dependable power of His promises, and as a revealer and guarantor of further testimony through the apostles in convincing the world that God did send Jesus.

When men reject the message of John's Gospel, they do not reject merely the ideas of John, but they reject all these witnesses named above.

To put it briefly and directly: John wrote this book to preach Christ. He wrote it to save souls through faith in Christ. He wrote it because he knew the true nature and power of Christ. He knew whereof he spoke and in whom he was trusting. John was fully convinced and deeply impressed with the reality of the goodness and power of God manifested in Christ. And to John it was not merely the power of an idea to influence the kind of life as we live here in the flesh, but it was actually the power of God to deliver us from sin and death and to give us life anew with Christ, both now and forever. John really believed that "God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life" (I John 5:11, 12). We need to be as convinced of it as John was; and then we need to remember throughout all the lessons on the content of John's Gospel that we are to teach them with the same purpose in mind that John had when he wrote them.

A misconception of John's Gospel and its purpose is apparent in much of the use that is made of it today. It is a mistake that has serious consequences, even though it is committed by well-meaning believers in the deity of Christ. It is the mistake of speaking and acting as if the Book of John clearly gave us the full instructions for manifesting our faith and receiving salvation in Christ. Terms of pardon explicitly stated elsewhere in the New Testament are not

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mentioned by name in the Book of John. The Book of John should not be used as if it were a substitute for all the rest of the New Testament. And when it is used to teach salvation without repentance, confession, or baptism, it is being misused. The Gospel according to John did not stand alone in the day in which it was written, and it does not stand alone today. It well supports the authority of Jesus and the authority of the word spoken by the apostles under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. An intelligent and humbly obedient faith in the message of John will go on and act upon the commandments elsewhere recorded in the New Testament.

John shows in his own epistle (I John) that he certainly did not believe and teach a salvation by faith without the obedience of faith. See I John 1:6, 7; 2:3-5; 2:15; 2:24; 3:10; 3:15, 23, 24, etc. Yet he teaches that love and obedience are grounded in faith and are the outgrowth and manifestation of a real faith making open confession that Jesus is the Son of God.

### For Further Study:

- Guthrie, Donald. *New Testament Introduction*, 3rd ed. Downers Grove: InterVarsity, 1970. Pp. 271-282. Survey of various theories on the purpose of John's Gospel.
- Hendriksen, William. *New Testament Commentary: The Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1954. Pp. 31-35. Examines the reasons and purpose of this Gospel.
- Morris, Leon. *Lord From Heaven*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1958. Pp. 93-102. Studies the claims and credentials of Jesus as presented in the Gospel of John.
- Morris, Leon. *The New International Commentary: Gospel of John*. Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1971. Pp. 35-40. Brief statements of various theories of John's purpose and then the author's affirmation of John's stated purpose.

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### 6

#### DO YOU HAVE IT IN YOUR HEART?

God's word is powerful seed, when sown in good and honest hearts (Luke 8:5-15).

If we had a dollar for every time anyone has said—"I wish I could remember . . ."—we would be rich. But we can be even richer if we will store up in our hearts the precious and useful gems of God's word.

Memory is a most priceless power, given to us by God. It is the means of accumulating and using all knowledge. Watts wrote: "Without memory the soul of man would be a poor, destitute, naked being, with an everlasting blank spread over it, except the fleeting ideas of the present moment." Thank God for this treasury of the mind which makes us rich by preserving the results of our studies and experiences. We can deposit there vast treasures at no cost, and with but little effort.

#### *Power of the Remembered Word*

When J. Russell Morse was 15 months in a Chinese Communist prison, he endured severe tortures and terrific strain supported chiefly by his memory of the Bible. He testifies that the promises and precepts of God's word came to him in memory and gave strength, wisdom, and hope which were sorely needed. Therefore he urges all his brethren to fill their memories with that living and powerful word.

An unknown author has written:

This book contains the mind of God, the state of man, the way of salvation, the doom of sinners, and the happiness of believers. Its doctrines are holy, its precepts are binding, its histories are true, and its decisions are immutable. Read it to be wise, believe it to be safe, and practice it to be holy. It contains light to direct you; food to support you, and comfort to cheer you. It should fill the memory, rule the heart, and guide the feet. It is given you in life, will be opened in the judgment, and be remembered forever.

However, much of the light and power of the Scripture is lost because it is not remembered at the time and place where it should be applied. God's word should furnish us all with guidance in everyday life, with protection in time of temptation, with hope and inward peace, with the message of life by which to bless and save others. It

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was not intended to be a mere subject of Sunday discussion and ceremony, but was given to be applied by everyone in conduct, in decisions, and in attitudes. If it is to be so applied, *it must be brought to mind.*

The Scripture bears witness to its own power and value. "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God" (Matt. 4:4). It is "able to build you up, and to give you the inheritance among all them that are sanctified" (Acts 20:32). It is the seed of the Spirit by which we are born anew: see James 1:18; 1:21; I Pet. 1:23; Luke 8:11; John 6:63. But before that good seed can bear fruit it must take root in the soil of human hearts—its meaning must become a part of the thinking of men.

Then, what a difference it makes! The greatest difference between men is not physical size, strength, age, ancestry, possessions, or the circumstances which surround them; but it is in the thoughts and motives that rule their lives. The essential difference between a communist and a Christian is what a man thinks. As a man thinks, so he is. "Sow a thought, and reap an act. Sow an act, and reap a habit. Sow a habit, and reap a character. Sow a character, and reap a destiny!" "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly" (Col. 3:16a). How great, how well furnished is the life of the man whose mind is *filled with the thoughts of God!*

### *You Can Remember!*

Don't say, "I can't memorize." You can. Don't rob yourself of the great profit that comes with just a moderate effort in the right way. There is no need of constantly forgetting. The memory can be trained, and there is no known limit to its capacity. We may not be able to duplicate the amazing feats of memory that some have performed; but we certainly can improve our use of such powers as we have. A little training and practice, even a little confidence and cheerful effort, can work wonders.

H. H. Halley, author of the *Bible Handbook*, was 39 years old, with only an ordinary memory, when he began using his time on long train trips to memorize prominent verses from the Bible. In a few years he could recite more than one third of the entire Bible. I know several students who objected at first that they could not memorize, but who went on to learn all of the book of Romans or of Hebrews. Age is no barrier. A man past 74 years of age learned a large portion of the New Testament. A friend of mine about that age brightens his days and inspires his associates in a rest home by memorizing and reciting the words of grand hymns he can no longer sing.

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Practical rules for general improvement of memory are simple and easy to apply. Get *sufficient sleep* regularly. Be *thankful* to God for the powers and opportunities that are ours. Take a *cheerful and hopeful attitude*, expecting to accomplish something worthwhile and to enjoy it. Seeing what others have done, be *confident* that you can too. A strong *purpose*, incentive and enthusiasm will help. When you have enough *interest* you do not have to memorize most things. Love and hate always remember.

If you want to make the most of memory, *practice daily*, at the *same hour*; take pleasure in your study; and *expect to remember forever*.

To memorize a Scripture passage:

1. Give it full attention; get a clear, strong impression of both the thought and the wording of it.
2. Especially try to understand it as fully as possible. In the long run, to know the true sense is much more important than to know the exact words. Get the thought in order to learn the words.
3. Picture it in the mind. See the thought, filling in details with the imagination. Then write down a word picture of the way you visualize it. Make the most of your natural tendency to remember by sight.
4. Repeat it aloud. This combines hearing and activity with sight, while it speeds up the recollection. But avoid monotony! It kills interest and dulls the attention. Mere repetition is a very poor substitute for wide-awake interest. Analyze the passage: take it apart and put it back together an idea at a time. Give attention to the subject matter, not to the process of learning. We remember best, not things we have labored to "memorize," but the things we see so vividly, with such understanding and interest, that we do not realize we are memorizing them. Recall and reuse the quotation frequently.

The interest of others helps to lighten any work and to make more enjoyable any hobby. A Bible School Class memorizing together or sharing with each other choice passages memorized each month can greatly stimulate and aid its members. Passages chosen for a definite purpose and related to each other or to regular lessons will be easier to learn.

### *What To Learn*

Learn passages that state key facts of Christianity, like the well-



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known John 3:16 or John 14:6—"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life; no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." Add Rom. 1:16, 17; 6:23; 3:23, 24; I John 5:11, 12; I Cor. 15:3, 4. Be prepared to urge non-Christians to believe and accept the Saviour.

Learn the initial commands of the way of salvation: Acts 2:38—"Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of your sins; and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 17:30—"The times of ignorance therefore God overlooked; but now he commandeth men that they should all everywhere repent." Acts 22:16—"And now why tarriest thou? Arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord." Add Mark 16:15, 16; Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 6:4, 5; Gal. 3:26, 27; Rom. 10:9, 10; Titus 3:5; I Pet. 1:22, 23; 3:21.

Learn the great principles of the Christian life: Col. 3:17—"And whatsoever ye do in word or in deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him." Gal. 2:20—"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me: and that life which I now live in the flesh I live in faith, the faith which is in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself up for me." Add Rom. 12:1-2; I Cor. 6:19, 20; II Cor. 5:14, 15; Gal. 5:22-25; 6:14; Eph. 4:1; 5:11; James 1:27; Acts 2:24; I John 1:6, 7; 2:5; 3:23; Heb. 12:14.

Learn the solemn warnings of the Lord: I Cor. 10:12—"Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall." Gal. 6:7, 8; I Cor. 6:9, 10; I Pet. 5:8; 2:11; I John 2:15-17; II Pet. 2:1, 21; 3:10, 11; I John 4:1, II John 7-11; Rom. 16:17; Eph. 5:5, 6; Col. 2:8, 9.

Treasure the promises. They have a special purpose and peculiar power to strengthen the Christian life. II Pet. 1:4—"Whereby he hath granted unto us his precious and exceeding great promises; that through these ye may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world by lust." Add Matt. 6:33; Phil. 4:19; I Cor. 10:13; Matt. 10:32; Mark 10:29, 30; Eph. 3:20; Phil. 3:20, 21; James 1:12; I John 1:9; 3:2; II Pet. 3:13, 14; Rev. 3:5, 21; 21:4, 7.

One should go on from such short selections as these to learn some longer passages, whole paragraphs of great importance and power, such as: Rom. 8:1-14; 6:1-11; 3:21-31; 12:9-21; I Cor. 13; Col. 3:1-17; II Pet. 1:3-11; Eph. 4:1-6; or 11-16; 6:10-18.

There are also many precious gems in the Old Testament, which may very profitably be memorized after careful study to determine to whom they were spoken, for what purpose, and how what they were

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actually intended to say applies to us who live under Christ and not under the law. Every bit of it is instructive and valuable if it is correctly understood and properly applied, but one must beware of misapplying the laws and promises of the old covenant which are not intended for us today.

### For Further Study:

Lucas, Jerry. *Remember the Word*. Los Angeles: Memory Ministries, 1975. A memory expert utilizes principles of association with special study pictures in this Bible memorization system.

Schoenhals, G. Roger. "Tuck Away a Verse a Day," *Christian Life* (January, 1975), pp. 18-19, 50-1. Also reprinted in *The Christian Reader* (January/February: 1976), pp. 70-76. Practical suggestions on regular Scripture memorization.

Smith, Wilbur M. *Profitable Bible Study*, rev. ed. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1963. Mr. Smith discusses the spiritual benefits of Bible study (pp. 7-26) and the value of meditation on God's Word (pp. 62-65).

Wilson, Ben. "Thy Word Have I Hid In My Heart: An Exhortation to Christian Workers to Memorize God's Word." An unpublished mimeographed essay available from Ozark Bible College Bookstore, Joplin, MO.

LIFE OF CHRIST TIME PERIODS

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LIFE OF CHRIST — TIME PERIODS

PREPARATION	30 yrs.	Birth in Bethlehem . . . . .	Luke 2	
		Flight to Egypt . . . . .	Matt. 2:13-23	
		Home in Nazareth . . . . .	Luke 2:40	
		In temple, 12 yrs. . . . .	Luke 2:41-50	
		Youth in Nazareth . . . . .	Luke 2:52	
		<b>BAPTISM</b> —————	Mt. 3; Mk. 1; Lk. 3	—————
PREPARATION	few mo.	Temptation . . . . .	Matt. 4:2	
		Winning first disciples . . . . .	John 1	
		Wedding feast at Cana . . . . .	John 2:1	
		Not many days at Capernaum . . . . .	John 2:12	
<b>1st P A S S O V E R</b> —————		(April, AD 27)	—————	<i>Jn. 2:13</i> —————
FIRST YEAR	8 mo.	Cleansing the Temple . . . . .	John 2	EARLY JUDEAN MINISTRY
		Nicodemus . . . . .	} John 3	
		Disciples . . . . .		
		Baptizing . . . . .		
		<b>TO GALILEE</b> (At Jacob's Well, 4 mo. till harvest) —————		
FIRST YEAR	4 mo.	2 days in Samaria . . . . .	John 4:35	G R E A T A L
		Beginning Galilean Ministry . . . . .	Matt. 4:12	
		First Tour of Galilee . . . . .	Matt. 4:23	
<b>2nd P A S S O V E R</b> —————		(April, AD 28)	—————	<i>Jn. 5:1</i>
SECOND YEAR	& whole 2nd year	Healing lame man at pool . . . . .	John 5	I M L E N I S T R Y
		Sermon on the Mount (Apostles named) . . . . .	Matt. 5; 6; 7	
		2nd Tour of Galilee . . . . .	Luke 8:1-3	
		3rd Tour of Galilee (12 sent forth) . . . . .	Matt. 9:35—11:1	
<b>3rd P A S S O V E R</b> —————		(April, AD 29)	—————	<i>Jn. 6:4</i> —————
THIRD YEAR	6 mo.	Feeding 5,000: Climax & Close of Galilean Ministry		DECAPOLIS (PEREA) MINISTRY
		Travel to Tyre & Sidon		
		Decapolis (4,000 fed) . . . . .	Matt. 15	
		Confession - Transfiguration Cross - Church . . . . .	Matt. 16; 17	
		<b>FEAST OF TABERNACLES</b> —————	(Oct., AD 29)	————— <i>Jn. 7:2</i> —————
THIRD YEAR	3 mo.	Sermons & growing controversy (70 helpers sent out) . . . . .	Jn. 7; 8; 9; 10:1-39 Lk. 10; 11; 12; 13	LATER JUDEAN MINISTRY
				<b>FEAST OF DEDICATION</b> —————
THIRD YEAR	3 mo.	Perean Ministry . . . . .	Lk. 13; 14; 15; 16; 17	LATER PEREAN MINISTRY
		Raising Lazarus . . . . .	John 11	
		Last busy journey . . . . .	Mt. 19; 20; Mk. 10	
<b>4th P A S S O V E R</b> —————		(April, AD 30)	—————	<i>Mt. 21; Mk. 11; Lk. 19; Jn. 12</i> =
43 days		<b>CRUCIFIXION and RESURRECTION</b>		
		40 days appearances . . . . .	Acts 1:3-11	
		<b>ASCENSION</b> . . . . .	Lk. 24; Acts 1	