

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPELS

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It has long been known and taught that the four gospels present four aspects of the same truth – that Jesus Christ is sovereign overall and in every sense divine yet He is in every sense man. This axiomatic truth has been pictured simply but profoundly from ancient time and is presented in ancient artistic icons.

In Matthew Jesus is the Lion-king

In Mark Jesus is the suffering ox

In Luke Jesus is the peerless man

In John Jesus is the soaring eagle.

What is wanting in this ancient understanding is the systematic adducing of evidence within the gospels themselves that this is so. The Westgate Gospel Commentaries major on that evidence.

MATTHEW

ΙΔΟΥ– THE MESSIANIC IMPERATIVE OF SURPRISE

So to recap Matthew sets out for us a long series of “Behold’s” (70 in all). He is intent on grabbing the reader’s attention in a long series of verbal imperatives. I have called these “attention enhancements” which make it imperative for us to examine the claims of Christ as Messianic King and our Melchizadek. The Greek aorist imperative **ἰδοὺ** is equivalent to our English “Behold” and reflects the Hebrew adverb “Lo” **הִנֵּה** (HENAH) and sustains the element of surprise throughout the gospel. The surprise Matthew is conveying by his repetitive use of this keyword is the surprise of the appearance of Melchizadek in the events he records. His first “must” to contemplate is “Behold there came wise men from the east”. This in itself surprised Jerusalem and horrified Herod. The gospel writer takes us through 70 “imperatives of surprise” and we finish looking at the glorious surprise of the commission as Christ’s final imperative – “Go ye into all the world and behold I am with you all the days”.

MARK

ΕΥΘΥΣ– THE EXPERIENCE OF INSTANT CHANGE

Mark records accurately but not in order the things Peter told him. The gospel is essentially Peter’s memoirs. It is laden to the gulleys with the word “immediately” in fact it is passing strange that scholars have made so little of this factor. The Greek **εὐθύς** like **εὐθέως** is used adverbially of “immediacy”. Where it has even come to be noticed by scholars it has been passed off as a sign of haste or a stress that the author or his penman Mark purvey into the text from their active and even somewhat impetuous fast-moving lives. At best it is given to us to believe that the account is fast-moving. All of this misses the cardinal issue that Peter is at pains to point out that Jesus ministry was making **immediate change** everywhere – in his life – that of his mother in law – that of Capernaum and Galilee and all of the land. Every city was touched – all the sick were healed over and over again. Peter is at pains to point out the “instant change” that Jesus makes when he came as Lord. Peter takes us from the very first change that came with Jesus baptism when the heaven opened once for all to faith. He concludes by holding before us the determination of the death of Christ

implicit in the Sanhedrin decision and the glorious association of that “substitutionary death” with changes in the lives of Joseph of Arimathea, Mary Magdalene, all the women and apostles and not least the conversion of Peter himself and subsequently in massive perpetuating change worldwide.

LUKE

ΕΓΕΝΕΤΟ – THE DYNAMIC OF THE HAND OF GOD AT WORK

Luke adopts a very different word – the word **εγενετο** is key to his accounts in the Gospel and the book of Acts. The word is passed over readily and translated coldly “And it happened”. The term, however, reflects the Hebrew **hyh** “and it was so” or “it was created”. For the origin of this way of looking at history we must go back to the beginnings. Scriptures says “And God said ‘Let there be light and there was light’”. God said “Let us make man in our own image”. God made man and gave him dominion and set him over the garden to dress it and to keep it. Thus man and his work were comprehended in the creative fiat of the Lord. Jesus as man was not the image of God only – he was God and in him our understanding of God’s rationale of history is most clearly seen. All around him things happen, by his Spirit things happen but they don’t just happen – “everything by God is planned”. Luke introduces us to the dynamic work of God in Christ in the Abijah period of Israel’s religious calendar which is June 24 when John was conceived being born 4-7 Nisan on which basis its sequel – the virgin conception of Mary was circa 25 December and the birth of Messiah who came from heaven to be born at Bethlehem circa 15 Tishri or the religious feast of Tabernacles. Luke signs off with Christ blessing the apostles as He is divided from them and is taken again to heaven whence He came to continue his work for His church.

JOHN

OYN– THE LOGIC OF CUMULATIVE EVIDENCE OF DEITY

The Gospel of John opens with a fundamental statement “The word became flesh and dwelt among us and we behold his glory – the glory as of the only begotten Son full of grace and truth”. We further read “In him was light and that life was the light of men”. In John’s epistle we read “In God is light and no darkness at all”. Jesus in the gospel of John is the “light of the world”. Ancients and moderns speak of Alumni – the great leaders of thought and inspiration among whether in thinking in ancient days or in our universities today. Christ in this sense is the light. So as John writes the life of Christ he uses his favourite little adverb **ouv** (193 times) *to continue* his narrative and develop *by a long series of inferences* his profile of Christ as God – to yield more and more evidence and cumulative proof of the life of God in Christ tabernacling among us. The idea of light or glory in the tabernacle of the Jews lies behind this expression. Almost 200 times John brings us to the Light of Christ in the fourth gospel yet he acknowledges that all the books in the world could not tell the whole story. As the sun stimulates life and brings light to the eye so Christ appears in every dark corner of Israel as this first century manuscript records and that unmistakably as the light of the world. John believed with all his heart and soul that His gospel light would illumine every nation with its glory. John begins with **ouv No.1** the Inference from John’s denial of the Messianic claim to the inference that it is validated in Christ and concludes with **ouv No.193** where the omniscient risen Christ promises him to see him again before death and states that if it were his will he could live on without dying (cf Elijah).

Bob Coffey, ABC Commentaries.