

# GOD WITH US

## Part 8: JESUS

### Message 3 – The Four Portraits of Jesus

#### Introduction

God chose to give us four Spirit-inspired portraits of the life of Jesus. Matthew, Mark, Luke and John each approached the life of Jesus from unique angles. Through the selection and arrangement of their materials (a commonly accepted practice among Greco-Roman historians) they emphasized different aspects of His life and ministry. By comparing them over against one another, we can detect the unique themes each gospel writer was led to record. This survey will focus on a few of the major ideas in each gospel.

#### Matthew's Portrait of Jesus: The MESSIAH

Matthew is the “Jewish” gospel - written by a Jew, to the Jews, about the King of the Jews. Matthew was a tax-collector before he met and followed Jesus. Tax-collectors were good at keeping records and they knew shorthand. It was Matthew that recorded everything Jesus said, in Aramaic. The other gospel writers used his notes to shape their own gospels (in Greek).

#### - A Messiah from David

Right from the outset, Matthew declares his main theme . . . with a genealogy. The Jews had a huge interest in ancestry since they had to prove that they were from the right family lines to hold key offices. The *Messiah* had to have the right family credentials; he had to be from the family line of King David. Matthew begins:

***“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham ...” (1:1).***

The fact that Jesus was the long-awaited “King” of the Jews is confirmed by the visit of Persian royalty who travelled 500 miles to find this new king and worship Him.

***“Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him” (2:2).***

#### - A Messiah like Moses

The Jews believed that the Messiah would be like a 2<sup>nd</sup> Moses.

***“The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him” (Deuteronomy 18:15).***

According to Matthew’s portrait, the lives of Moses and Jesus had some strong parallels.

- Jesus went into Egypt with his parents. *Moses grew up in Egypt.*
- Jesus came up out of Egypt. *Moses came out of Egypt – Exodus.*
- Jesus passed through the waters of baptism. *Moses passed through the waters of the Red Sea.*
- Jesus went out into the desert for 40 days. *Moses led Israel through the desert for 40 years.*
- Jesus taught God’s word from a mountain (Sermon on Mount). *Moses brought God’s laws down from Mount Sinai.*
- Jesus delivered 5 major sermons (only in Matthew). *Moses left us with 5 major books – the Pentateuch.*

### **- A Messiah Foretold**

As the story unfolds, Matthew shows how Jesus continually fulfilled O.T. prophecies. Matthew uses a prophecy-fulfillment formula often. It usually reads like this: ***“This happened just as it was written . . .”***

Jesus Himself put it this way in the Sermon on the Mount:

***“Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished” (5:17,18).***

### **- A Messiah of Compassion**

Jesus had stern words for the proud, stubborn religious leaders that were rejecting Him; and for the cities and villages that hardened their hearts against His words and deeds. But He was tender and compassionate toward all that were open to His message, even if it was Gentiles (non-Jews) that were receptive.

***This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: “Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen; My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased; I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles. He will not quarrel, nor cry out; nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets. A battered reed He will not break off, and a smoldering wick He will not put out, until He leads justice to victory. And in His name the Gentiles will hope” (12:14-21).***

*The compassion of Jesus should encourage us when we are faint. He will not put out even a smoldering wick. How does the passage above encourage your heart? How does it shape your view of Jesus – especially in times of weakness and weariness?*

### **- A Messiah Rejected**

Matthew gives special attention to the way his Jewish countrymen failed to acknowledge that Jesus *was* the Messiah – a failure led by their leaders, the scribes and Pharisees. By ch.12, Jesus is running head-on into the Pharisees over violations of their “traditions.”

***“The Pharisees went out and conspired against Him, as to how they might destroy Him” (12:14).***

This conflict between Jesus and the leaders gains momentum all the way through the story, but it comes to a head right after Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem at the beginning of His last week – the Passion Week. Jesus arrives in Jerusalem and He begins telling parables illustrating how the leaders are rejecting Him.

The parable of the Vineyard Owner and the wicked farmers tells it all (21:33-46). God was the vineyard owner. Israel was His vineyard. God had sent prophet after prophet to call Israel back to Himself; but they mistreated and rejected His servants. Then God decided to send His Son to call Israel back to Himself. But they decided to kill the Son and take away His inheritance.

***When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them. When they sought to seize Him, they feared the people, because they considered Him to be a prophet (21:45,46).***

### **- A Messiah Crucified**

The irony of Matthew’s portrait of Jesus is that the long-awaited King ends up on a Roman cross with the inscription above Him:

***“This is Jesus the King of the Jews” (27:37).***

A crucified Messiah was not part of Jewish expectations. Yet, Matthew shows that the death of Jesus was part of God’s plan all along.

- *Despised/mocked (Matt 27:29/Isaiah 53:3)*
- *Strike the Shepherd/sheep scattered (Matt 26:31/Zechariah 13:7)*
- *He took our sins, infirmities, diseases (Matt 8:17/Isaiah 53:4)*
- *Led to be crucified (Matt 27:31/Isaiah 53:7)*
- *Buried with the rich (Matt 27:57-60/Isaiah 53:9)*

In the end, Matthew shows us that Jesus is much more than the King of the Jews – He is the King of the Universe!

***And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age” (28:18-20).***

**Summary:** Jesus the promised MESSIAH-KING was rejected by the Jews; but God exalted Him to be the KING of the UNIVERSE.

### **Mark’s Portrait of Jesus: The SERVANT**

Mark wasn’t one of the 12 disciples. He was a young man who was always hanging around the group and trying to get in on the action. When Jesus was being arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, Mark has this note about a certain “young man:”

***“And they all left Him and fled. A young man was following Him, wearing nothing but a linen sheet over his naked body; and they seized him. But he pulled free of the linen sheet and escaped naked” (Mk. 14:50-52).***

That was an ancient writer’s way of saying, “*I was there! I saw it happen.*” Tradition tells us that later in history Mark became Peter’s travelling companion and secretary, recording the apostle’s preaching in the city of Rome.

#### **- The Ransom-paying Servant**

Scholars point to mark 10:45 as the defining verse. The context was a dispute among the disciples over greatness.

***Jesus said to them, “You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (10:43-45).***

In Mark, Jesus is the willing *servant* of all who gave His life as the ransom payment to buy our freedom from the penalty of sin. The Romans knew a lot about master-servant relationships, so they would have readily grasped this idea of Jesus being the ideal servant.

## **- The Obedient Servant**

Though Jesus' mission was weighty (paying the ransom through His death), He was determined to be an obedient Servant from start to finish. Mark uses the word "*immediately*" 40 times (!) to show how determined Jesus was to fulfill His calling as God's Servant, and how swiftly He moved to do so. In chapter 1 for example . . .

***"Immediately coming up out of the water, He saw the heavens opening, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon Him" (1:10).***

***"Immediately the Spirit impelled Him to go out into the wilderness" (1:12).***

***"Immediately they left their nets and followed Him" (1:18).***

***"They went into Capernaum; and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and began to teach" (1:21).***

Mark was not trying to say that Jesus was *in a hurry*. He was saying that Jesus *was on a mission, and He would not be deterred from that mission*. He was determined to do what the Father (His "master") had sent Him (the "servant") to do for the sake of others.

## **- The Authoritative Servant**

The opening verse in Mark tells us that Jesus is the Son of God.

***"The beginning of the gospel about Jesus Christ,  
the Son of God" (1:1).***

He is no ordinary servant; He is a servant with unparalleled authority from the Father. And He is a "Son of God" like no other in history (including the current emperor, Caesar Augustus, who claimed to be divine). In Mark's story, Jesus the Son of God/Servant proved His authority over every realm. In a rapid flurry of events . . .

- *He taught with authority.*
- *He forgave sins with authority.*
- *He healed diseases with authority.*
- *He cast out demons with authority.*
- *He raised the dead with authority.*
- *He commanded nature with authority.*

Mark covers all the bases in the early chapters so we know that *this* Son of God, Jesus, has true authority from above.

### **- The Crucified Servant**

Mark, more than any other gospel, is a “passion narrative with a long introduction.” Fully 1/3<sup>rd</sup> of his story is devoted to the passion of Jesus. The word “immediately” is used right up to the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem (11:3). Then, the narrative slows down. Mark hits the brakes and invites us to ponder the rejection of Jesus in Jerusalem, leading up to His death on a Roman cross. The use of “immediately” resumes when Jesus is arrested in Gethsemane and led away to His death (14:43).

*\*A note about the ending of Mark’s gospel. Most ancient manuscripts of Mark end at 16:8. This makes for a rather abrupt ending; but given the way the gospel begins (moving directly into the public ministry of Jesus) and given Mark’s “immediacy,” it makes sense. The verses that follow (16:9-20) are considered by most scholars to be later additions by editors who felt compelled to “smooth out” the abrupt ending. Both the linguistic style and the theology of these verses point to later editorial work.*

**Summary:** Jesus, the obedient SERVANT, came to OBEY the Father’s command – to pay the RANSOM for the sins of mankind.

### **Luke’s Portrait of Jesus: The SAVIOR**

Luke was the only Gentile writer in the N.T. He was also the travelling companion of Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles. It is no surprise, therefore, that Luke has a special interest in how Jesus’ impacts the entire world, not just the Jewish people.

### **- A Savior for Humanity**

Matthew’s genealogy went back to Abraham the father of the Israel. Luke’s genealogy goes much further back. Here’s the last line of his genealogy:

*“. . . the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son of God” (3:38).*

Luke wants us to know that Jesus has come to be the Savior for ALL of Adam’s fallen children, Jew and Gentile alike.

### **- A Savior for Outcasts**

Luke uniquely tells how Jesus showed love to the outcasts. A thief of a cross finds salvation. The “sinful” woman in town finds

mercy. The “good Samaritan” turns out to be the hero and puts even Jewish priests and Levites to shame. A chief tax-collector hosts Jesus at his house. The prodigal son finds his way back to the father’s arms of mercy.

The key verse in Luke is: ***“The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).*** Luke chapter 15 contains a unique collection of three “lost and found” parables (lost sheep, lost coin, lost son). The parable of the prodigal son, unique to Luke, probably best depicts the image of Jesus Luke wished to convey. Jesus is the true son (contra the Pharisees) out looking for the lost sons and daughters of the world, bringing them home to the Father’s house.

*God lost something ... and He wants it back. This is the theme of the entire Bible. Obviously, a passion for the lost gripped the heart of Luke (and Paul) because it gripped the heart of Jesus. How does this impact your own heart for lost people? One of our Oak Pointe 8 Traits of a Growing Disciple is “GO.” Who’s in your top 3 (that you are praying for and seeking to show the love of Jesus to?)*

### **- A Savior from Satan**

Luke’s portrait of Jesus has deeper roots in Genesis 3. God promised that a future male child of Eve would someday come to be the serpent-crusher (Genesis 3:15). Luke’s gospel shows how Jesus *was* the serpent-crusher. The opening Nazareth sermon of Jesus (unique to Luke’s gospel) announces the mission of Jesus to release Satan’s captives:

***“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord” (4:18,19).***

Spiritual conflict between Jesus and Satan appears repeatedly in the story; but most clearly at the end. It is only in Luke’s gospel that we see Satan on the move around the arrest, trial and death of Jesus (22:3 and following). As Luke tells it, the entire ministry of Jesus, and particularly His death and resurrection, were the ultimate defeat of Satan.

### **- A Savior Praying**

Every gospel shows that Jesus modeled and taught the importance of prayer; but Luke emphasizes the praying Jesus more than any

other gospel. Jesus often withdrew for times of prayer (5:16). He prayed through the night (6:12). He taught His disciples how to pray (11:1-4). He spoke in parables about prayer (11:5-13 and 18:1-7). He prayed for Peter when he was being attacked by an invisible enemy (22:31-32). He prayed fervently in the Garden of Gethsemane to the point of sweating drops of blood (22:39-46).

**Summary:** Jesus the SAVIOR has come to announce RELEASE from captivity for ALL of Adam's fallen race.

### **John's Portrait of Jesus: GOD**

John is the atypical gospel, taking a different approach to the life of Jesus. The word "believe" occurs 98 times in John. His collection of 7 miracles and 7 "I AM" statements is meant to define Jesus and to move readers toward belief.

#### **- The God-Man**

From the opening verses, John wants to make it clear that Jesus is GOD in the flesh (see notes from last week).

***"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (1:1).***

***"The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us" (1:14).***

The Jewish leaders tried to stone Jesus for claiming to be God on several occasions: ch.5 - for making Himself equal with God; ch.8 - for claiming to be the God of the O.T. – the eternal I AM; ch.10 – for claiming to be one with the Father. The issue is clear:

***"We are not stoning you for any good work," they replied, "but for blasphemy, because you, a mere man, claim to be God" (10:33).***

#### **- Seven "I AM" Declarations**

Unique to John's portrait are the 7 "I am" metaphors of Jesus.

*I am the bread of life (6:35,48,51)*

*I am the light of the world (8:12; 9:5)*

*I am the door of the sheep (10:7,9)*

*I am the good shepherd (10:11,14)*

*I am the resurrection and the life (11:25)*

*I am the way, the truth and the life (14:6)*

*I am the true vine (15:1)*

## - Seven Miracles

The first 11 chapters of John constitute a “book of signs” where he records 7 miracles of Jesus that support His claim to be God.

*Water turned into wine (2:1-11)*

*Healing an official’s son (4:43-54)*

*Healing a crippled man at the Pool of Bethesda (5:1-9)*

*Feeding of the 5000 (6:1-5)*

*Walking on the water (6:16-25)*

*Healing a man born blind (9:1-41)*

*Raising Lazarus from the dead (11:1-44)*

The reason for this selection of miracles is announced by John:

***“Many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name” (20:30,31).***

## - The Last Discourse

All 4 gospels give an account of the “last supper;” but only John gives us an extended 4-chapter version of this last night (13-16). John focuses on a major discourse between Jesus and His disciples. It began in the upper room where they were gathered for the meal; but continued on after they departed the room and headed toward the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus gave the disciples their “marching orders” as they would be going forward with the mission after He has departed.

## - The Last Prayer

Only John records the long prayer that Jesus prayed for His disciples on His last night (17). This prayer was likely part of His time of prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane, as the group had left the upper room at the end of ch.14.

**Summary:** GOD came to dwell among us in the person of JESUS. He came to give ETERNAL LIFE to all who BELIEVE in Him.

## Discussion Questions

1. Which of the four gospels are you most drawn to? Why?
2. What aspect of the character of Jesus is most attractive to you?
3. What are you learning about Jesus that you did not know before we began this study?