

Session 1 Why Four Gospels? Their Unique Purpose and Message

I. THE HOLY SPIRIT GAVE US FOUR DIFFERENT VIEWS OF JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

*When I think of this next nine or ten months of part one and part two of **Studies in the Life of Christ**, the promise that I think of most—I do not have on the notes but I quote it all the time—is Isaiah 33:17. Isaiah 33:17 is an end-time promise that the beauty of the Messiah—Jesus—would be seen by the people of God. What a remarkable reality: that God has promised that the beauty of the King would be seen! The Scripture says, “Your eyes will see the beauty of the King,” and that passage is in context to the generation the Lord returns.*

So when I think of this class personally, as a student and as a teacher, I am thinking of the beauty of Jesus on every single incident in His life. I am not just thinking history and I am not just thinking theology, though I am thinking about those two. I am not just thinking practical application, but I am thinking of beauty, delight, savoring, my heart being awed, my heart being enlarged by who this Man is, because this is the Man that we love. This is the Man that loves us. He is right now at the right hand of the Father. This is no ordinary man. Beautiful, we love Him! He loves us! He reigns forever, and He is at the Father’s right hand right now.

*Well, in this first session we are going to do just a quick overview. We are going to look at the four Gospels and answer the question, “Why are there **four** Gospels?” The simple answer is that each Gospel has a distinct, unique purpose in God’s economy. That the Holy Spirit is so masterful as the great divine author of these four books. Each one of the authors—Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John—was inspired by the Holy Spirit in a way that was beyond even what he could fully grasp because the Holy Spirit was putting into print a portrait of the face of Jesus. In each of the four Gospels there are many things in common, but there are also many things that are very distinct and unique to each Gospel.*

The reason we want to know this is because it alerts us to understand the context more clearly. When we are alerted to the specific context, such as Matthew was writing to the Jewish people—yes, to everybody, but particularly to the Jews—Mark was writing to the Romans, Luke to the Greeks, John to all believers in all generations, then we can understand the perspective of that Gospel better. There are many more distinctives, and these simple things help us to see the context. We bring those details together to get a more complete picture of what the Holy Spirit is saying

- A. Each of the four Gospels have many things in common—describing Jesus’ movements in ministry along with His teaching, miracles, death, and resurrection. Each gospel has a unique purpose and message, though the four together do not provide a complete biography of Jesus’ ministry.

I have written here that each Gospel has a unique purpose. Yet, even though all four of them can be brought together to give us a greater picture, it is still not a complete biography of Jesus. There is so much of Him that was not recorded even in these four portraits. There is so much that we see if we bring these four portraits together and we catch the differences and we catch the context of why it was written and who it was written to. As we study this more carefully and put these details from the treasure hunt into the picture of the beauty of Jesus, it becomes more glorious and more fascinating as we come to more and more discoveries of who He is.

*Now I have written at the very bottom of page one that A. W. Pink wrote a book called, **Why the Four Gospels** and that I have taken much of what I am presenting today from this book. We have a PDF file of the whole book on the website; it is not very long, maybe 100 pages or so, I do not know, not very long. So this is the book that I have drawn from heavily in this one session. He took the book of a man named Andrew Jukes and added to it. So I am using both of them. I want to alert you to this book because I want to stir your interest in the fact that the Gospels have common elements, but are very distinct and different. Let’s get a snapshot.*

B. In Matthew, Jesus is presented as the *Son of David*—thus as the King of Israel.

Again many things overlap, but even the incidences that overlap have very distinct nuances that are true to the purpose of that particular Gospel. Matthew, for instance, was clearly written to the Jewish people in a very specific, unique way. It presents Jesus as the Son of David. Therefore, Jesus as the Son of David is an emphasis unique to Matthew.

You do not find the emphasis in the other three Gospels that Jesus is the King of Israel. From the very beginning of Matthew, the wise men right there are at the very start—Matthew 2—are coming to Jerusalem. They asked, “Who is this on born King of the Jews?” That is the context of the book. That very sentence gives us a key to where that book is going.

C. In Mark, Jesus is shown as the *Servant of God*—the leader who took on the form of a servant.

Mark is quite different. It does not focus on Jesus as the Son of David like Matthew does, but rather on Jesus as the servant of God. He is the perfect workman, He is the One who took the form of a servant and gives us insight into the personality of the Trinity. The Gospel of Mark focuses not just on His power and His deeds, but on His servant heart.

The early church fathers said that Mark was writing to the Romans and Luke to the Greeks, Matthew to the Jews, and John to all, particularly to believers. I mean the others are for believers as well, but they were written more to people in general beyond that.

D. In Luke, Jesus is seen as the *Son of Man* (humanity)—connected yet contrasted with fallen man.

Luke is different again. It does not focus on the Son of David, but rather on the Son of Man. That is the unique focus and distinctive; it is Luke’s purpose. The humanity of Jesus and His connection to the human race and the human struggle is highlighted in Luke more than any of the four Gospels. Jesus is set forth as connected to the human race, yet in contrast because He is the perfect human.

E. In John, Jesus is revealed as the *Son of God* (deity)—connected with the Father and His family.

Then in John He is set forth as the Son of God. The point of emphasis is His deity. So in Matthew we have the Son of David, in Luke the Son of Man, in John the Son of God, and in Mark the perfect servant, the servant leader, the perfect workman who shows forth the personality of the Trinity in all that He does.

II. THE FOUR FACES OF THE LIVING CREATURES

A. John saw four living creatures around the throne of God (Rev. 4:7)

⁷The first living creature was like a lion, the second...like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. (Rev. 4:7)

Here is something that gives us understanding how the Holy Spirit was very intentional about showing four faces of Jesus. This is not a new idea that some theologians came up with recently. This is something the church fathers have promoted from the very beginning of church history.

Long before that, around the throne of God, there were and still are four living creatures. Each has a particular face. These four living creatures cry, “Holy, holy, holy!” They worship God night and day. They are the closest to the very throne of God. These living creatures are a reflection of God’s personality. The four faces of the four living creatures give confirmation that the Holy Spirit in His authorship of the four Gospels was very

intentional about bringing four faces of God into focus. It says in Revelation 4, the first living creature has the face of a lion, the second like a calf or ox, the third a man, and the fourth an eagle. Matthew corresponds with a face of the lion as the King, Mark with the face of the calf or the ox as the servant, Luke with the face of the man, and John the face of the eagle, the bird that flies the highest of all others as it soars into the heavens. There is a clear correspondence of the four faces of the living creatures and the four faces of Jesus in the Gospels.

Again each of the Gospels carry a lot of things in common, but they each have a very clear distinction. If we get it, if we read that Gospel with that context in mind, with that lens so to speak, that paradigm, we will gain more understanding. For example, if we know the context that the Holy Spirit is actually aiming at revealing Jesus the King to the Jews when we read the book of Matthew, we will understand more.

Then we compare all four Gospels together and the treasure hunt becomes glorious. It becomes deeper. It is pleasurable. I find so much delight in this with the discovery of nuances about Him and different angles of His beauty that I have never seen before. Of course this is endless.

- B. *Matthew corresponds with the face of a lion: The King of Israel. The lion is the king among beasts.*
- C. *Mark corresponds with the face of a calf (ox): The servant leader. The ox is known as an animal of service and sacrifice. This points to Jesus taking the form of a servant.*
- D. *Luke corresponds with the face of a man: The Son of Man. This corresponds with Jesus' humanity.*
- E. *John corresponds with the face of the eagle: The Son of God. The eagle soars highest among birds.*

III. THE MESSIAH AS THE BRANCH OF THE LORD

One of the most common prophetic pictures in the Old Testament of the Messiah is the Messiah prophesied as "the Branch of the Lord." That is the way that the Messiah was described, using the symbol or the word picture, "the Branch of the Lord." There are quite a few reasons for that, and I do not want to go into that right now, but it is one of the most common Old Testament pictures and symbols of the Messiah.

Probably the only one I know more common would be the Lamb or the sacrifice. The Lamb that was offered would be an even more common picture of the Messiah.

Let's look at this. Here I want to show four of these prophecies of the Branch of the Lord. These are Old Testament prophecies written hundreds of years before Jesus would become a Man and walk on the earth. I believe there is a clear correspondence of these four prophecies of the Branch of the Lord—the coming Messiah—with the four faces of Jesus in the Gospels and with the four faces of the living creatures around the throne.

- A. *Matthew's gospel emphasizes Jesus as the King.*
⁵"...I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign..." (Jer. 23:5)

In Jeremiah 23:5, the Lord says, "I will raise up a branch of righteousness. He will be a King." This corresponds to the Gospel of Matthew where the kingship of Jesus is emphasized.

- B. *Mark's gospel emphasizes Jesus as God's servant.*
⁸"For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the Branch." (Zech. 3:8)

In Zechariah 3:8 the Lord says, “I will bring forth My Servant the Branch.” The Branch is not only a King, but the Branch is also the servant of the Lord. He is the One who took upon Himself the form of a servant. He emptied Himself of His divine privileges and took upon Himself the form of man.

He was not just a servant while He was on the earth; that is also the heart of God from eternity past. This is so glorious: that God is not just powerful and wise, but that at the very core of God’s personality He is a servant. Isn’t it amazing that the God of Genesis 1—the uncreated, eternal God—has a servant’s heart? Because when we look at the history of the powerful kings and monarchs in history, most of them were evil men who had no interest in serving anybody but themselves. The Most High at His very core is a servant.

C. Luke’s gospel emphasizes Jesus’ humanity.

¹²**“Behold, the Man whose name is the Branch!” (Zech. 6:12)**

*Zechariah 6:12 says, “Behold the **Man!** His name is the Branch of the Lord.” There is a human dimension. He is not just a King, but He identifies with the human struggle and human need in the most intimate way.*

Now you know the devout in the Old Testament times were comparing the prophecies, trying to put together this composite picture of the Messiah, the Branch of the Lord.

D. John’s gospel emphasizes Jesus’ deity.

²**In that day the Branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious... (Isa. 4:2)**

Oh, I love this one, Isaiah 4:2! Well, I like them all. “The Branch of the Lord shall be seen in His beauty and His glory.” He is glorious beyond any comprehension. He is not just a King; He is a King with a servant’s heart. He is not just a King with a servant’s heart; He is human. He understands the human struggle. He fully identifies with humans, and He loves humans. He is not just human; He is glorious. He is beautiful. He is God Himself. Beloved, this is the story that the Holy Spirit has brought us into. This is who we are and what we are about. We are about interfacing with this beautiful Man, the Man we love, who is at the right hand of the Father who loves us.

IV. THE GOSPEL OF MATTHEW: THE SON OF DAVID AND KING OF ISRAEL

A. Jesus as the Son of David is heir of Israel’s throne—He is the rightful king of the Jews.

We will not cover all these notes; we will just take a quick look. I want you to leave with the idea of, “Oh, I want to go get more of this!” Again the book by A. W. Pink lays it out in far more detail. I want to encourage some of you to go further than A. W. Pink went on this and put together. What Pink did was to take the many different things like the feeding of the 5,000 or when Jesus healed this person or that person and compare them with one another, and so he found all these details that were different from one Gospel to the other. The thing that is remarkable is Matthew has the same predictable, distinct focus time after time, as do Mark, Luke, and John each.

Well, again, just to repeat so you get this clear in your mind, in the Gospel of Matthew the highlight is the Son of David. Jesus as the Son of David, not as the Son of Man, not as the Son of God. He is those, but in Matthew the focus is the Son of David, because as the Son of David He is the heir. He is the rightful heir to the throne of Israel because God promised in many prophecies in the Old Testament that the heir would be David’s son.

- B. Matthew presents Christ as the One who fulfilled the Old Testament promises and prophecies related to Israel's Messiah. The word "fulfilled" occurs in Matthew fifteen times, and there are more quotations from the Old Testament in Matthew than in the other three Gospels combined.

Matthew wrote with the Jewish people in mind. Now again we can all read it and appreciate it, but he was writing from a Jewish perspective. He presented Jesus as the Man who fulfilled the Old Testament prophets far more than Mark, Luke, or John did. Matthew quoted the Old Testament and said, "This Man fulfilled that prophecy."

In fact, the word "fulfilled" in reference to Old Testament prophecy occurs fifteen times. There are more quotations of the Old Testament in Matthew than the other three Gospels—Mark, Luke, and John—combined together. This is not an accident. The Holy Spirit orchestrated this.

- C. Jesus is presented as King—This is seen twelve times.
- D. Matthew's first sentence gives us a key to the book (Mt. 1:1). David is the only king in the genealogy who is called "king" (Mt. 1:6). Notice that David is called king twice in one verse!

¹The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham...⁶ and Jesse begot David the king. David the king begot Solomon by...the wife of Uriah. (Mt. 1:1, 6)

The very opening sentence of Matthew, the very first sentence, gives us a key to the whole book. Look at Matthew 1:1: the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham. It goes on until about verse 16 giving all of these generations, one after the other.

What I want you to notice here in verse 1 is that by the Holy Spirit and His guidance, Matthew says Jesus is the Son of David first and then the Son of Abraham. Well, Abraham lived 1,000 years before David. David was far after Abraham, and all the rest of these genealogy is in chronological order except for the first sentence. So the Holy Spirit is saying that when you read the Gospel of Matthew you are looking at the Messiah through the lens of His promises to be King as the Son of David.

There are fourteen kings mentioned in Matthew's genealogy, but only one of the kings is actually given the title of king in this genealogy and that is David. The Holy Spirit gives him that title twice. So the point is that the Holy Spirit is making it really clear when you read Matthew, "I am going to reveal the kingship of the Jewish Messiah who fulfilled the prophecies." That is the hope of Israel. That is a particular context. Now not everything in the book is about that, but that is the primary storyline in the book.

Now that is not the storyline of Luke. Luke honors that and agrees with it, but Luke, Mark, and John each have a bit of a different storyline that is emphasized. I mean the main story is clear and is in unity in all four Gospels: that Jesus is God, and He came to the earth and took upon Himself the form of a man, and bore our sin, and is the compassionate leader with the power of God. Then we are saved by grace. That storyline is clear.

- E. Just as "son of David" connects Jesus with Israel's throne, so "son of Abraham" connects Him with Israel's land. Abraham was the one to whom the Lord initially gave the land. This is the only place in the New Testament where the land is called "the land of Israel" (Mt. 2:20-21).

Being the "son of David" connects Jesus with the throne of Israel. The "son of Abraham" connects Jesus with the land of Israel, because the land was first promised to Abraham.

- F. Matthew opens with the visit of the wise men from the East to worship the Christ Child, and the wise men inquire, “Where is He that is born King of the Jews?” They were not asking about a savior, but rather the King of the Jews. Mark, Luke and John do not mention this event.

Now I already mentioned that when the book of Matthew opens, the wise men are coming into Jerusalem saying, “We are looking for the King.” They did not say, “We are looking for a Savior.” They said, “We are looking for the King of the Jews.”

In Luke it is exactly opposite. When the angel appeared to the shepherds, the angel said, “The Savior is born.” It does not say that a King is born. It says that a Savior is born, because Luke is focusing on Jesus’ humanity. Again he is writing with a view of touching the folks in a Greek culture. They were looking for a Savior. They were looking to understand God’s purpose for man.

- G. Matthew speaks of the disciples being sent to “the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Mt.10:5-6).

Matthew is the only one who makes the point that Jesus said, “I am sending you to the lost sheep of Israel.” Mark, Luke, and John do not quote that command of Jesus. It is still a true command, but they have a different focus in their Gospels.

- H. Only Matthew mentions the seven parables of the kingdom (Mt. 13).

*Only Matthew mentions the seven parables of the kingdom. The other ones do not mention these parables. These parables are about how the **kingdom** functions.*

- I. Only Matthew mentions “Jesus’ throne of glory” in His millennial kingdom (Mt. 19:28; 25:31) and that all nations will be gathered to Him as the King (Mt. 25:31-40).

²⁸“Assuredly...in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Mt. 19:28)

“When the Son of Man comes in His glory...He will sit on the throne of His glory. (Mt. 25:31)

Only Matthew highlights Jesus sitting on the throne of glory ruling the earth in the millennial kingdom for a 1,000 years after His return. The other Gospels do not mention the throne of glory. Matthew wrote in accordance with the purpose the Holy Spirit gave Him to show forth the King in His glory.

- J. Matthew alone mentions the parable of the wedding feast of the King’s Son (Mt. 22:2).

Only Matthew records the parable of the wedding feast and the king who arranged a marriage for his son. Now the King in this is the Father, and the King’s Son is Jesus. Of course the King’s Son will become King; that is how the story unfolds.

- K. Only Matthew mentions the sevenfold rebuke of the scribes and Pharisees (Mt. 23).

Matthew is the only one that records the seven-fold rebuke to the Jewish leaders. Why didn’t Mark and Luke rebuke the Jewish leaders? Well, they had a different focus for their Gospel. As we go through this week by week, I will be pointing out these things. I want you to get kind of a road map before we begin the journey so it makes sense.

- L. In Matthew, it was the guilty Jews who cried, “His blood be on us and on our children” (Mt. 27:25)

- M. Matthew ends without any mention of the ascension, but with Jesus' declaration that "all power had been given to Him" (Mt. 28:18)—power is one of the primary distinctions of a king.

¹⁸And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations...²⁰teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always..." (Mt. 28:18-20)

V. THE GOSPEL OF MARK: THE SERVANT OF GOD—SERVANT LEADERSHIP

- A. Mark's gospel focuses on Jesus as a servant. This explains why Mark did not mention a genealogy, the miraculous conception, the birth and wise men, or Jesus in the temple at age twelve. Why? This part of the life of Jesus did not fall within the main purpose of Mark. It also explains why there are more miracles recorded in Mark than any of the other gospels.

Now we are going to look at Mark. Again, the A. W. Pink book gives so much more detail. It is so fascinating. I read it line by line. I read it some years ago and read it again recently. I just loved it! My heart was exploding! So I am taking about ten percent of that book and sharing it here. It is beautiful. I know you have a lot of other classes and a lot of busy things to do, but that is a book you want to sneak away, take some time to read it, and just think, "Wow!"

The focus of the Gospel of Mark is not the Son of David and Jesus the King, but it is the servant of God. Again, this servant leadership is a core value and personality not just of Jesus but of the entire Trinity—God the Father, Son, and Spirit—at the very core the Father is a servant. This is fantastic beyond measure that the Father, the Genesis 1 God, is a servant. He does not have to be talked into it, but He is running His kingdom through the paradigm of servant leadership. He is raising up an honoring of those who embrace servant leadership.

Of course Jesus the King will lead this way. The Holy Spirit is the epitome. You know, forever the Father and Son are in focus, and the Holy Spirit is behind the scenes so to speak, but He is as much God as the Father and the Son. He is just as happy drawing everyone's attention to the Father and Son, with no one drawing attention to Him, because He is profoundly, at the core, a servant. Forever this is His role.

We say, "Holy Spirit, we want all of You."

He responds, "I am coming to you as the great servant. Guess what I am going to do to you? I am going to transform you until the very perspective of servant leadership makes sense to you for your own life." So we want more of the Holy Spirit, and this is where He is going to lead us: into a deeper servant leadership reality.

Well, this focus explains why Mark did not give a genealogy. I mean Matthew has this genealogy that goes back to David and Abraham. Mark has none. Where is the genealogy? There is no story of the virgin birth and the angels and the manger and wise men. There is no Christmas scene, nothing. Mark, get with it! There are none of these stories, no genealogy, nothing.

I believe the Holy Spirit would say, "That's because in the storyline of a servant that is not important. The servant is here to serve others." There are many details that are not in Mark that are in the others, because those parts of Jesus' life—His supernatural conception and birth and Jesus in the temple when He is twelve and the angels appearing when He fled from Herod, went down to Egypt, and came back up to Nazareth and all these things—are not necessary as a servant does not have a biography. A servant lets go of his own thing and is fully engaged in the master's work and the master's purpose.

Now Jesus is the King that is seen in Matthew, and in Mark He is the servant who is fully engaged in the Father's will, in serving God's will and bringing God's blessing and power to the people. It is interesting that as the servant there are more miracles in Mark than in any of the others. There are more power demonstrations, more delivering people. Of course Mark was written with the Romans in view, and the Romans honored power, so there are more miracles. Again, by the Holy Spirit's leadership, they are miracles from a servant's heart to show God's desire to strengthen, deliver, and help His people.

- B. In Mark, there are no rebukes to Israel and the Pharisees as in the other Gospels and no mention of Jesus cleansing the temple. Notice the omission of many of Jesus' divine titles from this gospel. In Mark, Jesus is not mentioned as King (except in derision). He is called "the Son of David" once.

Unlike Matthew, Mark has no rebuke of the Pharisees. There is no mention of Jesus cleansing the temple like in the other Gospels. Many of the divine titles in Matthew, Luke, and John are not in Mark. There is no mention of Jesus the King in an honorable way. He is only called the Son of David one time in the entire Gospel, while He is called the Son of David over and over again in Matthew. These Jewish elements that we are so familiar with in Matthew, that are a little bit in Luke, and a little bit in John, but mostly in Matthew, they are not in Mark almost at all. Again, as a servant Mark is not concerned with presenting His genealogy and story, He is concerned with being absorbed with the will of His Master.

- C. Mark begins abruptly compared to the lengthy introductions in Matthew, Luke, and John.

Mark begins abruptly. I mean he gets right to it. You know in Matthew there are three introductory chapters. There are three full, long chapters of the genealogy and of the story of the birth and the infancy. In Luke there are also three long chapters. John is very different; it goes to "In the beginning was God." It does not go to human ancestry; it goes to the uncreated God in eternity past. Mark skips all of this and gets right to the task of the serving ministry of Jesus.

- D. A term occurring often in Mark's gospel is the Greek word *eutheos*, which is variously translated "immediately" or "at once." This word is over forty times in Mark's Gospel. There was no holding back, reluctance, or delay as Jesus did the Father's work. This word tells of the prompt nature of His service as well as the urgency He felt concerning His mission.

²⁰*And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants...*²¹*Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath. (Mk. 1:19-21)*

Now one thing that is impossible to miss—and A. W. Pink does a brilliant job pulling this out, as he spends a couple pages on this, but I wanted to just note it to you because we are going to note it throughout the course—it is that there are several words in Mark that happen over and over, that show up over and over and over again. You cannot miss them. I am only going to mention one or two.

The reason they show up over and over and over again is because they have a purpose. They are supposed to be seen and understood. One is the word: immediately. Forty times the word or the equivalent of immediately is in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus immediately goes here. He immediately does that. This word shows up over and over, yet you hardly see it anywhere else in the other Gospels. Like, this is odd. Why would Mark say this over and over? Did he have something about that word? No, the Holy Spirit was leading him. In Jesus the servant there was no reluctance, no delay, no drawing back when He did the Father's work. He was energetic. There was urgency. There was a promptness. There was an instant response in Him to do the Father's will.

Of course when we see that, what the Holy Spirit is saying to us is that we should marvel and delight in this facet of the beauty of Jesus. The Holy Spirit is saying, “This is what I am working in you as well: a quick response of obedience, not a hesitant, long, wrestling match, but an instant response to the will of God.” Not three months or three years later after five wrestling matches with the Lord and He ambushed us and boxed us in and took away all of our options so we would say that, yes, we will do it.

Winston Churchill was the prime minister of England during World War II in the 1940s. Some attribute this clever quote to him. You may like it, you may not, but I love it. I think of this within our spiritual lives. They claim he said, “The Americans always do what is right, after they have exhausted every other option.” So he said, “The Americans always do what is right,” and the English gasped. Pause one, two, three, “after they have exhausted every other option.”

There is a kind of believer who always does right after they have exhausted every other option. The Holy Spirit is saying, “I do not want to wrestle with you. I will because I love you. Just be warned.” I am older than you so I can tell you this: Jesus is a state champion wrestler plus some. He is the best. He is going to win, I promise you, not just because He is strong, though He is. Not just because He is smart, though He is really smart. He will win because He loves you more than you love you. He will box us in, ambush us, hem us in, take options away. He says, “You will really be glad that I hemmed you in on this when you see the whole picture.”

What He is really after is that we would have this servant response immediately, no delay, no reluctance, no wrestling, no drawing back. I do not mean an impetuosity about issues that we do not have clear wisdom on, but I mean when the wisdom is clear in moral issues in our life and other issues, there is an immediate response, immediate servanthood.

- E. Mark mentioned Jesus’ *hand* related to His service more than the others (Mk. 1:31, 41; 5:41; 7:32; 8:22-25; 9:27). In this, we can see the power, kindness, and tenderness of His hand and touch!

Well, there is so much more in the A. W. Pink book on Mark. I have just given you a snapshot to stir up your appetite for this to get you to say, “I do not know if I will get to it right away, but, boy, I am going to read that book. I am going to go deep on that.”

That is what I am trying to do in this first session. It gives us a grid when we look at these different incidences in Jesus’ life. We will see three or four angles on the same event. It is marvelous. We will see many of those throughout the course this fall and this spring, doing Part One and Part Two on the Life of Christ.

VI. THE GOSPEL OF LUKE: THE SON OF MAN—HUMANITY

- A. Luke’s gospel deals with Jesus’ humanity, presenting Him as the “Son of Man” instead of as the Son of David or the Son of God. This theme connects Christ with the whole earth.

In the Gospel of Luke, written to the Greeks, the focus is not the Son of David, but it is on the Son of Man. That is what even the early church fathers said. The idea here is Jesus’ humanity. It is not the Son of David, not the Son of God, but Jesus connecting with the human reality, the human struggle. He has sympathy. It says in Hebrews 2 that He is a sympathetic High Priest; He understands the human plight. He has tenderness because He walked on the earth with a physical body. He says, “I get it. I really do get it.” So He looks at us with understanding and sympathy.

So the Holy Spirit assigned Luke to write a portrait of Jesus with the face of a Man. Of the four living creatures, one had the face of a man. In the prophecies concerning the Branch of the Lord, one of them focused on the man, the human. He is not an angel, He is not only God, but He is human, fully human. Because of this

assignment of the Holy Spirit to Luke, we see many things in Luke's story of Jesus that the other do not have, because they bring the human dimension into the story.

- B. Luke gives us the fullest account of His birth. Luke traces Jesus' genealogy to Adam (Lk. 3), and he emphasizes Jesus as a friend of sinners (Lk. 7:34. 15:2; 19:7) and as a man of prayer (Lk. 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:28-29; 11:1; 5-8; 18:1-8; 22:31-32; 22:41,44; 23:34).

We see the fullest account of His supernatural conception and birth in Luke. We see the whole drama of Elizabeth and John the Baptist's father and all that is involved in that. He tells how the wise men came and the angels appeared, etc. It is interesting that the genealogy in Luke does not go just to David and Abraham; it goes all the way back to Adam. Why didn't the genealogy stop at Abraham and David, the Jewish fathers? Because the Holy Spirit was saying, "No, we are showing the Messiah as identified with the whole human race." He goes all the way back to Adam. He is the Son of Adam, all the way back to the garden.

In the Gospel of Luke is the only place Jesus is called the friend of sinners. There are quite a few stories, real events, that magnify Him as a friend of sinners. The Gospel of Luke far beyond the others shows Him as a man of prayer, because in the human partnership with God there is a prayer dynamic that is central. Over and over in Luke, the Messiah revealed through His humanity the emphasis of prayer: the value of it, parables on it, teaching examples of it.

- C. Luke presents Jesus as subject to human circumstances, as seeking the lost (Lk. 15), weeping over Jerusalem (Lk. 19:41), showing compassion, eating food with people (Lk. 7:36; 11:37; 14:1; 19:7; 24:30, 42, 43). He also emphasized the role of women in Jesus' ministry (Lk. 8:1-3).

In the Gospel of Luke Jesus is seen as subject to human circumstances, all kinds of them. He is seeking to save the lost. In Luke 15 that is seen in the prodigal son, the lost coin, the lost sheep, the lost son. He is going after the lost in Luke in a way that is not in the other Gospels. In Luke, He weeps over Jerusalem.

In Luke there is a surprising amount of times where He goes in homes and has food with people. Eating is emphasized in Luke. Even when Jesus comes back in a resurrected body, in Luke He eats with them. If you study Luke, that is not surprising. It would surprise you if He did it in the other Gospels. Why is He seen eating throughout the Gospel of Luke? Because His humanity is being emphasized as is His relationship to the human race.

Another thing that Luke emphasized beyond the others is the role of women, not just in Jesus' ministry where He touched them, but on Jesus' team. Luke goes out of his way—and that is probably not the best way to say it. Luke was led by the Holy Spirit is a better way to say it—to show the value that women had in Jesus' team and in His ministry. Again, he is writing to the Greek culture and mindset. He is writing to magnify the humanity of Jesus.

- D. Only Luke called the place of Jesus' death by its Gentile name—*Calvary* (23:33). Luke wrote, "A superscription was written in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew, 'This is the King of the Jews'" (23:38). This hints at the international scope of this gospel! Matthew and Mark do not record the "superscription" written in the world-languages of the day because it was not within their scope.

Only in Luke is the place of Jesus' death called by a Gentile name, "Kranion." "Calvary" is the Latin translation of the Greek name "Kranion" which means "The Skull." "Golgotha" is the Aramaic name or the Aramaic Hebrew. The Latin translation, Calvary, is the one that we are familiar with. Then in Luke the inscription over Jesus on the cross, "This is the King of Jews," is said to be written in Greek, Latin, and

Hebrew. In other words, there is an international scope that the other Gospels do not highlight at this point because it is not within the scope of what the Holy Spirit called the other Gospels to say.

- E. Luke is the only one who records the parable of the Good Samaritan showing His heart for people.

The story or the parable of the Good Samaritan is only in Luke.

- F. In Luke the One born is not called “The King of the Jews,” but *Savior of all people*. This title reaches out beyond the confines of Israel and takes in the Gentiles too.

¹There is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. (Lk 2:11)

When the angels appeared to the shepherds, the angels said that a Savior is born, not a King, but a Savior. In Matthew, when the wise men came, they were looking for a King, not a Savior. The angels were talking about a Savior, not a King. Now the angels knew He was the King, but the point of Luke’s Gospel was the Savior dimension.

VII. THE GOSPEL OF JOHN: THE SON OF GOD—DEITY

- A. John’s gospel presents Jesus as the Son of God and His relationship with the family of God. John’s gospel emphasizes Christ’s divine glories. He is the Word “in the beginning” with God and is declared to be God. Notice how different John’s introductory statements are from the other gospels.

¹In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ²He was in the beginning with God. ³All things were made through Him... (Jn. 1:1-3)

As I am going through this I am just thinking of how this is just the beginning of the beginning of this glorious subject. So again I want to stir you up to read that book. Again, you might not be able to get to it in the near future because of the load of your studies and all that you have going on, but just “note to self,” that is a goldmine book you want to mine.

The Gospel of John presents Jesus, not as the Son of David, not as the Son of Man, but as the Son of God. The Gospel of John is very different. Matthew, Mark, and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels. Everyone say “synoptic.” Look at your neighbor and say “synoptic.” I want you to get that term; some of you have already got it. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are the synoptic gospels. They are very similar. John is entirely different. It is unique because it is not showing the Son of David, the Son of Man, or the Servant. I mean it does a little bit here and there. There are little flashes of all of these faces in each Gospel, little flashes, but each Gospel has a primary theme. John reveals the high and the deep mysteries of Jesus’ relationship to the Father and the Father’s relationship to Him and Jesus’ spiritual connection with the people of God in a spiritual way. Not just in compassion where He is meeting their needs, but He is interfacing with their heart by the Holy Spirit in the deepest way. He is abiding in us, and we are abiding in Him. It is not so much compassion and power, but it is deep interaction with the human heart at the most profound spiritual levels that lasts forever. That is in John in a way that Matthew, Mark, and Luke do not hardly touch at all.

Again, not one Gospel has the whole truth. Even the four of them together is not a complete biography. John even said in John 21 that if all the things that Jesus did were written in books the earth could not contain all the books it would need to capture every incident in Jesus’ life. There is so much beyond the four Gospels. Again what a great start! We will be reading these Gospels a million years from now in the resurrection. These Gospels are a part of the eternal, canonized Scripture. They are the eternal Word of God.

Well, in Matthew 1, Jesus is traced back to David, to Abraham, and all the leaders of Israel. In Luke He is traced clear back to Adam. In Mark, there is no genealogy as He is a servant. No one is concerned with a servant's genealogy. John—whoa!—"In the beginning"—Jesus—"The Word. He is God." Wow, this is really different from the stable and the wise men. This is a whole different portrait, yet all of them are true.

In the beginning was the Word, speaking of Jesus. The Word—Jesus—is God is the idea. He was in the beginning with God, meaning the Father. He is with the Father in the beginning. God the Father is uncreated; there is never a time He did not exist. For a finite mind to grasp that is beyond our comprehension. Somebody might say he cannot buy that. I say, "Just humble yourself." You have a little peanut brain like we have. The greatest brain in human history is a peanut compared to the stars. Look up there, humble yourself, and do not imagine you are going to grasp all the mysteries of the One who spoke the stars into being, billions, billions, billions of stars beyond measure.

Men strut around saying, "Well, I do not really think..."

I say, "Hey, go slow! Just go really slowly right now."

You remember Augustine, one of the great fathers in the late fourth century, early fifth century. He was one of the most famous theologians in history. Now I have read several different versions of this story. Augustine was writing a thesis on the Trinity—God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit and how it is three distinct persons but one God: total unity, uncreated God, perfectly equal, different roles but totally equal, one reality, one essential God in three persons—because there was confusion about it. He was considered to be the greatest theologian of his day, and you know even 1,500 years later is still considered that, one of the great ones.

So Augustine was walking on the beach. He was praying. The Lord spoke to him. He said, "My son, you see that shell? Go pick it up." He picked up a sea shell. He bought it before the Lord. Yes, I mean the brilliant theologian. The Lord whispered in his heart, "Empty the ocean with that seashell."

"Well, God, I cannot empty the ocean"—It was the Mediterranean Sea—"I cannot empty the ocean with the seashell."

The Lord spoke, "Neither shall the small seashell of your mind empty the ocean of My being." Basically He said, "Humble yourself."

Behold your God. Uncreated God, the Father. The Son is uncreated. He, verse 2, was in the beginning with God, meaning with the Father. All things were made through Jesus, the second person of the Trinity. Wow, now that is a genealogy! John's genealogy is very different than the others.

- B. As the Son of David and the Son of Man we see Jesus' connection to the earth— but as the Son of God, we see His connection with Father in heaven. John described Jesus as dwelling "with God" before creation (1:1, 2), "the only Begotten of the Father" (1:14), the very "Son of God" (1:34).

As the Son of David and as a Son of Man in Matthew and in Luke we see His connection to the earth and to people. As the Son of God we see His connection to the Father in heaven as well as His spiritual union with His people. The spiritual union is emphasized in John far beyond the others.

- C. The theme of the deity of Christ is central as no other Gospel presents the Godhead of Jesus so clearly. Today many are drifting from Truth, so we must clearly and regularly present Jesus' deity.

⁹***For in Him [Jesus] dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily... (Col. 2:9)***

*The theme of the deity of Jesus is central to the Gospel of John. There is nowhere in the Bible that shows the deity of Jesus in greater clarity than the Gospel of John. This is really important because so many believers are drifting from the truth today. I am talking about believers. In my opinion—it is just an opinion—the clear prophecies in the Scripture about an end-time falling away have begun to be fulfilled. Again there is an end-time great harvest too. There is an end-time gathering **and** an end-time falling away happening simultaneously over some decades. My opinion is that the end-time falling away has already begun. I have said this before concerning the amount of believers who were fervent just ten short years ago and are now living in open compromise with no troubled conscience about it. The increase over the last ten years of those who are thinking, “Well, you know, I do not really go for all that stuff in the Bible anymore. I love God in my own way.”*

*It is like, “Love God in your own way?” Whoa, whoa, whoa! We love God in **God’s** way. We are not buying that rhetoric that “we are loving God in our way.” There is a King; He is God. He is the creator. He has all authority. It is His way. We are to love Him in His way. Yeah, we do it in weakness. We do it flawed. We are broken, but we are still aiming to love God God’s way. In the grace of God, in His generosity, He carries us along. We are aiming to do it His way.*

A lot of them are saying, “Well, you know I am not really into the deity of Jesus anymore. It is just kind of ridiculous if you think about it.” I have heard these kinds of things. I mean even well-known preachers and others are saying that there is kind of a postmodern way now, so “We do not know if the Scripture really meant then what they mean for today.” All of this whole dialogue and conversation is not just in America. It is in the whole earth. It is going over all the cultures of the earth. It is not unique to America. It has hit the earth by storm in the last ten years. It did not begin then, but it began really going fast.

One of the big debatable, pseudo-intellectual arguments is that whole, “I really love Jesus and I love His salvation, but I really do not do the ‘He is fully God.’ I am not really going there.” Beloved, if He is not fully God, then He is a liar and deceiver. He cannot be our Savior and tell us He is God, if He is lying.

*C. S. Lewis wrote a book called **Mere Christianity**. I read it in college. In it he wrote about Jesus being either the Lord, a lunatic, or a liar. It is very famous. I remember that in the 1970s we were all reading it. C. S. Lewis, one of the greater writers in modern times, said that either Jesus is the Lord, or He is a lunatic, or a liar. He is either God and He is telling the truth—He is Lord—or He is not God but He did not know it—He is a lunatic—or He is not God and He knew it all the time—He is an incredibly dangerous liar. He is one of these three. There is no other option. Either He is God and He knows it, or He is not God and is a lunatic because He thinks He is, or He is not God and He is tricking the human race. He cannot be “not God” and still be “Savior.” There is a whole rhetoric going on where He is a great example, though neither savior nor God. No, no, that is completely illogical. If He is not God, then He is a liar, a serious liar. He has allowed all of history for 2,000 years to have all these conflicts when He is not even true?*

Beloved, I have good news for you! He is God, and He is Lord. There is no room for the pseudo-intellectual who has a mind like a little seashell who thinks he is going to empty the ocean of God with their brilliant intellect, even with social media and Google backing them up. Take all Google and all the social media, get it all together, and still I have got a mind that is a little seashell compared to the ocean of God’s being.

One of the unwavering tenants of faith is that Jesus is God. The Bible is the authoritative Word of God. I do not mean we get mean about it, but we are bold, and we are clear, and our hearts delight in it. We have confidence. We have joy. Where we are unsure, we talk to the Holy Spirit. We do not talk to Google and social media. We open the Bible and say, “Holy Spirit, tell me how does this work?” We need to have the right conversation with the right person, with the Great Teacher.

The reason I say that is that while in this room here we are already in unity, but when you go out someday, we already are being hit with it out there. Many believers are distancing themselves and drawing away from this truth of Jesus' deity and the infallibility and authority of Scripture. Beloved, that is what Paul the apostle said regarding the devil appearing as an angel of light. That is a doctrine of demons. Because we love people, we do not want to do the "pseudo-intellectual double-flatter each other." We want to say, "Hey, look up there! Look how big the stars are. Look at your resume, come on. Let's get down on our knees, open our Bibles, and humble ourselves before the beautiful God." Well, in the Gospel of John over and over His deity is affirmed.

D. Thirty-five times in this Gospel, Jesus speaks of God as "My Father."

In John, thirty-five times Jesus calls God, "My Father." The scripture makes the meaning of this clear in John 5:18, where the Pharisees basically said, "If you call God Your Father, You are calling Yourself equal to God." They understood what that meant. Jesus said that thirty-five times in John.

E. Seven people affirm Jesus' deity in this gospel—John the Baptist: (1:34); Nathaniel (1:49); Peter (6:69); Jesus Himself (10:36); Martha (11:27); Thomas (20:28) and John (20:31).

Seven people in John affirm the deity of Christ.

F. No parables are found in John's gospel. Jesus taught in parables to conceal truth from those who had rejected Him. In John's gospel, Christ is not concealing truth, but revealing God. A popular yet inadequate definition of Christ's parables is *telling earthly stories with a heavenly meaning*.

G. Only John declared the following divine titles and statements—Jesus revealed as "the Word" (1:1) and declared to be the creator of all things (1:3); "the only Begotten of the Father" (1:14) and "the Lamb of God" (1:29); "the "Light of the world" (8:12); "the Bread of God who gives life to the world" (6:35); "Before Abraham was, I am" (8:58); "I and Father are One" (10:30). "He who has seen Me, has seen the Father" (14:9). "I am in the Father, and the Father in Me" (14:10).

I have listed here a number of divine titles that are only in John. Meaning, John is the book on the deep spiritual union of people with Jesus and Jesus' deep relationship with God—the Father and the Son—that fellowship within the Trinity.

H. In the Sabbath controversy, John records a different reply—Jesus insisted on the right to do works of mercy on the Sabbath by appealing to having a higher authority, "My Father and I work" (5:17).

¹⁷*Jesus answered them, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working."*

¹⁸*Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God. (Jn. 5:17-18)*

I am going to give you one last thing that distinguishes John, and we are going to look at a bunch of these kind of examples. I will give you one here in the Sabbath controversies. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John all record Sabbath controversies. What I mean is when Jesus did something on the Sabbath. By the way, He did that on purpose. He got up right next to the leaders, checked His watch to make sure it was Saturday, and healed somebody on purpose. He wanted the conversation brought to the surface. It was not an accident. He did not "get caught." He did it on purpose.

It is interesting that in Matthew 12, in the great controversy of the Sabbath, many of them said, "You are a deceiver. You are doing this work on the Sabbath."

The argument Jesus made in Matthew 12 is, “Hey, there is one greater than the Sabbath here. I am your King. I am greater than the Sabbath and I am greater than the temple.” That is the King in Matthew.

In Mark, which demonstrates the servant, they also brought up the argument, He said, “No, no, you do not understand the Sabbath was made for man.” He did not say He was greater than the Sabbath.

In Mark, the servant Gospel, He said, “No, the Sabbath was for man. It was made to help man. It was made to serve.”

*In Luke, on the Sabbath, Jesus healed a woman who had been bound eighteen years by a demon. They said that you cannot heal on the Sabbath. He appealed to compassion because that is what Luke is about. Jesus said, “How can we **not** let this woman, a child of Abraham, eighteen years bound by a devil, be released?” His argument about the Sabbath was about compassion in Luke.*

In John, look at John 5:17, where Jesus again healed on the Sabbath. Here He appealed to a higher authority to do works of mercy on the Sabbath. He said, “So you think that it is wrong for Me to do this on the Sabbath.” He went on, “Let Me tell you what is happening. This is My Father working on the Sabbath, and He and I are working together.” They were so enraged because He made Himself equal to God. That is how He answered the Sabbath controversy.

So in Matthew He appealed to His kingship, in Mark His servanthood, in Luke His compassion, and in John—the same argument, same debate—He appealed to His deity. These kinds of nuances happen, incident after incident, right through the Gospels. We are going to ask the Holy Spirit to just absolutely ravish our hearts with discoveries of the beauty of this Man that we love.

- I. Jesus is revealed as the great “I am” with a 7-fold fullness—“I am the bread of life” (6:35); “I am the light of the world” (9:5); “I am the door” (10:7); “I am the good shepherd” (10:11); “I am the resurrection” (11:25); “I am the way, truth, and life” (14:6); “I am the vine” (15:1).

Amen, let’s stand.

Father, here we are. We love You. Oh, we say that we love You! Holy Spirit, here we are. Lord, we want to respond to You, and we want to receive from You in these next few moments. Oh we love You, Jesus! You are the Man we fully love. You are fully God. Holy Spirit, we just open our hearts. We invite Your leadership, Holy Spirit. Lord, we humble ourselves before Your Word. We submit to Your Word.

I want to pray for different ones. Maybe you are in a time where the enemy is hitting you. Maybe there are some key issues in the Scripture you are confused about. You are saying, “You know, this feels right, but I am still not fully settled on a few of these things, and yet I want to get settled. I do not want to be swept away in some cultural argument. I need the Lord to touch me, I need to get an anchor in a deeper way.”

If you would like prayer—maybe you are a student, or maybe you have been in the kingdom for years but you are just feeling a little shaky—if you would like prayer, I want to invite you to come on up. I want to ask the Holy Spirit to make this a night of renewal, a night of confirmation, a night where it is like an iron is dropped in the ground and goes in deep like a stake.

Do not be embarrassed. If you are thinking, “I am not sure. I am kind of losing my way on some of these things. I need to get a new clarity,” I want to invite you to come on up. There is nothing wrong in being in that honest place.

Others of you are saying, “I am just being hit by the enemy. I just want the Holy Spirit to touch me tonight. I love Him, but I am in need of a renewal in my heart.” Maybe you are a new student here. Maybe you have been

around a long time. You know, there are times I need renewal. I have been teaching the Bible for years and going to prayer meetings for years, but I need moments of renewal sometimes more than others. If you are in that place, do not feel negative or shy about that. Just say, "Yeah, yeah, I do." We are always in need of these things.

I invite the ministry team to come up. I also invite anybody in leadership on our missions base, IHOPU, in our Friendship Groups. If you are a leader, go ahead and come on up and join us.

Lord, here we are. God, I ask for clarity right now, clarity. I ask for the eyes of the understanding to open by the Spirit, not by human argument. Lord, enlighten the eyes of our understanding. We want to be clear. We want to be strong.