

Period of Preparation/Intertestamental Period & Life of Christ

A survey paper of the Gospels (Includes book summaries, chapter titles and five eternal truths)

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Part 2 - Summary

Period of Preparation/Intertestamental Period

Jesus Christ came to Earth in fulfillment of Messianic prophecy (Isaiah 9:2-7), and to lay the foundation for the salvation of all mankind (Isaiah 28:16). In order to realize the magnitude of His coming, it is important to examine the events, and the shaping of the political and religious environment which led up to, and prepared the way for His entrance into this world. Moreover, it is during a time of prophetic “silence,” between the last writings of the Old Testament, and the opening of the New Testament, that we see God work providentially, in the arenas of political power, socio-economic classifications, and religion, setting the stage for His Son’s arrival (Marty 2).

Leading up to, and during this 400 year period, the Jews, God’s chosen people, saw changes both from within their own nation, and from without. Beginning with Persian rule under Cyrus, around 539 B.C., and ending more than 200 years later, under Xerxes I, the Jews saw an eventual return from their Babylonian captivity, into Jerusalem (Pfeiffer 19, Marty 4). Both the walls and temple at Jerusalem were rebuilt; Esther, a Jewess, chosen as queen, ushered in a period of favor for her people; three books of history (Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther), and three prophetic books (Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi) were written; the Samaritans, opposed to the rebuild at Jerusalem, constructed their own temple at Mt. Gerizim; the office of High Priest was elevated from a religious-only office, to that of civil enforcement of the Law; and for the Jews “of the Diaspora” (dispersed Jews throughout the region), the Synagogue was established, to preserve Jewish culture and religion (Marty 8). By this time, the common language spoken by the Jewish people was Aramaic, the language taught them under Babylonian rule (Marty 27).

Then, between 331-143 B.C., young Grecian ruler, Alexander The Great, swept in, conquering the regions of Asia Minor and Egypt, and threatened Jerusalem (Pfeiffer 67). Jewish tradition states, however, that he spared Jerusalem, after being told Daniel’s prophecy: that he would conquer Persia (Marty 10). “Hellenism” began, ushering in an age of learning and uniform Greek culture, eventually impacting traditional, Hebraic writing and teaching of Scripture: from literal, to a more allegorical approach (“hidden” meanings applied to certain passages)--as seen in Alexandria, near the end of the period (Marty 12). After his death, in 323 B.C., Alexander’s empire was divided, and the Jews

saw toleration of their religious customs and culture continue under the Egyptian Ptolemies. Greek became the official written language (the Old Testament “Septuagint” was translated into Greek by Jewish scribes during this time) (Pfeiffer 79).

Peace, however, turned to tyranny under Syrian Seleucid rule, to the extent that Antiochus IV, calling himself “Epiphanes” (which means “the illustrious one”--a manifest god; nicknamed “Epiphanes”--madman--by the Jews), desecrated the Jewish temple by dedicating it to the Greek god, Zeus, and sacrificing a pig on its altar (Pfeiffer 81, Marty 12). This resulted in a further disbursement of Jews out into the known world, and around 143 B.C., the Hasidim, called the “Pious Ones,” resisted this ethnic cleansing (called “Hellenization”), and began organizing a revolt (Marty 12).

Hasmonean rule began in 167 B.C., with the Maccabean Revolt. Priest, Mattathias, and his three sons led a series of battles against Antiochus’ Syrian forces (Marty 13). As each Maccabean fell, another rose up to take his place. Especially known for his bravery was Judas “the hammer” Maccabee, and his Guerrilla War. Although able to form strong alliances with other countries, Maccabean brother, Jonathan, was ambushed and killed. Simon, the remaining brother, was named “priest forever,” and was chosen now as both spiritual, and political leader, as the Jews claimed independent rule from Syria (Marty 14). It was during this period that the Apocrypha, or “hidden” historical books, were written, and the Jewish governing body of the Sanhedrin was formed.

Many victories behind them, the Jewish nation now looked for Messiah, and thought they had found him in Simon. However, in 134 B.C., Simon, and two of his sons were murdered by “an ambitious son-in-law;” the third son, Hyrcanus, managed to escape, and succeeded his father on the throne (Pfeiffer 95). It was also around this time the religious sects of the Pharisees (“legalists”), Sadducees (“opportunists”), and Essenes (“Isolationists”--believed to have written the Dead Sea scrolls) appeared on the scene.

After Hasmonean queen, Alexandra, died, the Jews struggled under the feud-like rule of her two sons, Hyrcanus II and Aristobulus II, before falling prey in to Roman rule in 63 B.C. Securing buildings, roads, raising taxes, and establishing rules of law, the Roman empire would continue reigning until A.D. 500 (Marty 16, Pfeiffer 101). Some Jews sought protection as tax collectors for Rome (Publicans), while others sought freedom through violent overthrow of the government (Zealots).

Coming into power 16 years before Roman invasion, Herod the Great (an “Antipater”--descendant of the Edomites, who descended from Esau), who reigned in Palestine until 4 B.C., for his assistance in Roman campaigns, was given the title, “King of the Jews.” A “brilliant architect,” he renovated the temple Zerubbabel built, but renamed it “Herod’s Temple.” Ruthless and jealous, he killed two wives, three sons, and after failing to deceive the Magi into revealing the location of the coming Messiah’s birth, ordered the complete slaughter of Bethlehem’s children (Marty 17).

The sub-rule of the Antipaters in the Roman-Palestinian empire (including the “Agrippas”--I & II--who ruled until A.D. 100) would continue during Jesus’ time on Earth (he would eventually stand before Herod’s son, Antipas, who also beheaded John the Baptist) (Marty 18). Governing these rulers, between A.D. 6 and A.D. 70 were a series of Roman governors, three of which are mentioned in the New Testament: Pontius Pilate (who gave Jesus over for crucifixion), Felix, and Festus (both of which gave audience to the Apostle Paul) (Marty 18).

During Roman rule, no “middle class” existed. Either one was a member of the aristocracy (senators/military leaders/religious leaders/rulers), or lived as lower-class freedmen (farmers/workers/small businessmen), even slaves (Marty 22).

Religion, at this time, was an “inclusive” environment, and a variety could easily be found: from the myriad of gods found in the Greek-Roman Pantheon, to Roman Emperor worship, mystery religions (eastern in origin, with subtle references to Christianity), Gnosticism (secret knowledge, Platonism), philosophy (originating in Greece, founded on reason and nationality), and Judaism (the religion of the Diaspora). For the Jews, the Synagogue (originally intended as a temporary gathering place) continued to be a center for teaching and reading of the Law (Marty 28-29).

It was in this 400 years of dispersion, God’s chosen people, the Jews, were strategically prepared and positioned for the wide-spread preaching of the Gospel. With the use of a Greek universal tongue, the message of Christ would be communicated to all. Finally, as Rome introduced its system of roads, the reach of God’s truth and salvation would widen even further (Marty 34).

In the end, Rome would see Christianity as a threat (and no longer as part of Jewish belief), and would attempt to destroy it. However, nearing its fall, and seeing itself as “morally bankrupt,” it would at last adopt the message of redemption, found in the finished work of Jesus Christ (Marty 34).

Life of Christ

Yeshua Ha Mashiach, “Jesus the Messiah,” according to Biblical records, was born around 5 B.C., in the tiny settlement called Beit-Lechem (“Bethlehem”), outside the walls of Yerushalayim (“Jerusalem”) (Marty 42, Stern JNT x). This happened approximately 1 year after governor Quirinius had decreed a national census be conducted (Marty 42). On God’s timeline, however, His Son’s arrival had been on schedule since God made His promise of legacy to Avraham (“Abraham”), and in the furthest distant past, after the Fall of mankind, when He promised forever an end to death and sin (Stern JNTC 2, Gen. 15:5; 3:15 NIV).

Jesus’ foster parents, Yosef (“Joseph”), and his virgin mother, Miriam (“Mary”), both Jewish descendants from the line of King David, when told, by angelic messenger, their part in God’s miracle to soon take place, received it with gratitude, acting in immediate obedience (MHCCOTB Matt Ch 1, Stern JNT 74). Elizabeth, Mary’s elderly relative, gave confirmation to Mary, with her expected pregnancy of the prophet, Yochanan Ben-Z’kharyah (“John the Baptist”) (Luke 1:42-44, Stern JNT 76). The result, a grandly-heralded entrance from Heaven, down onto a lowly, cold, straw-laden manger: the Savior of the world had come, and prophecy from the Tanakh (Old Testament) prophets, Micah 5:2 and Isaiah 7:14 was now complete (Luke 2:10-18 NIV, Stern JNT 2, Marty 43). Mary and Joseph, in accordance with God’s Law, then dedicated Jesus in the temple at Jerusalem, where Shimon (“Simeon”), and Chanah Bat-P’nu’el (“Anna”), both elderly servants, made a b’rakhah (blessing) to the Adonai for the blessing Jesus would now bring to all (Stern JNT 75).

Men whose lives were dedicated to reading the signs in the stars, the “Magi,” would soon arrive in Jerusalem, expecting to receive information from Jewish ruler, Herod the Great, about the one born “King of the Jews,” whose star they’d followed (Marty 17, Stern JNT 2). Instead, they found Herod unprepared for their information and inquiry, and

anxious himself to know the location of this child (Matt. 2:2-8). Upon finding the young Messiah, and after presenting gifts to Him, these “wise men” were then led home by an alternate route, having been instructed by God of Herod’s true plans for Jesus’ assassination (Matt. 2:12). Not yet out of harm’s way, God spoke to Joseph, and instructed him to escape with his wife, and the child into Egypt; there to remain 1 year before returning into Israel (Marty 42, Matt. 2:13-21).

For fear of Archelaus, son of Herod the Great, Joseph settled his family not in Bethlehem, but rather into “the district of Galilee,” at a town called Natzeret (“Nazareth”); here, too, prophecy was fulfilled, stating the Messiah would be scorned: “a Nazarene” (Marty 43, Matt. 2:22-23). The Scriptures give only a glimpse into Jesus’ early years, as seen when, after losing sight of Him amongst their returning caravan, Joseph and Mary traveled a day’s journey to find the young Messiah back in Jerusalem, at the Temple, in verbal interchange with the Jewish religious teachers (Luke 2:41-47). In his Jewish New Testament Commentary, David Stern suggests Mary’s question to Jesus--“Why have you done this to us?”--is a misplaced over-reaction, since both she and Joseph were first recipients to the truth about their Son, and therefore should’ve known where to look for Him (Stern JNTC 110). Jesus then answers accordingly, “Didn’t you know I had to be in my Father’s house?” (Luke 2:49b)

This statement by Jesus also serves as proof to His claim as Deity: God, the Son (Marty 43). It is following this incident we are told our young Messiah would spend the remainder of His early years, apprenticing carpentry with Joseph (Mark 6:3), and gaining favor with those around Him (Luke 2:52).

When next we see Jesus, it is around the year A.D. 26 to A.D. 27. He is about 30 years old, when He is immersed by John the Baptist to identify with sinners, and initiate His ministry on Earth (Marty 42-44, Matt. 3:13-17). He is then led “into the wilderness,” for “40 days,” there to endure a time of testing by Satan (“diabolos” Gk.), where 3 times he is tempted independence from God the Father (Matt. 4:1-11, Stern JNTC 21). With each confrontation, Jesus submits to the Father’s will, and speaks Scripture--His own Word, resulting in eventual silencing of the Adversary, and angelic support (Matt. 4:11, Marty 44).

Jesus' first miracle occurs at a wedding in Canah ("Cana") in "the Galil" (Galilee), with His transformation of water into wine, which then inaugurates the world into the "Messianic Age," as seen in the prophet Amos 9:13--"God's LAST provision for salvation is His BEST of His provisions" (Marty 45, Stern JNT 120). Jesus then moves down into the region of Judea, there to give witness to Jewish P'rushim ("Pharisee"), Nakdimon ("Nicodemus"), and to deliver forever in Scripture to the rest of the world, that it is only in a "second birth" by faith, in love, offered in Jesus Christ, that God will save us from eternal condemnation and separation from Him (WTTNTS 20, Marty 46, Stern JNT 121).

John 4:4-30 records Jesus' shattering "racial, social and religious barriers" in His encounter with a Samaritan woman, in the town of Sychar (Marty 47). Here he declares specifically that He is the expected Messiah, and gives contrast to the short satisfaction of water from Jacob's well with the continual life and nourishment found in the Spirit, through Himself, as the living water (MHCCOTB John Ch 4).

Upon returning to Nazareth, in the region of Galilee, his childhood hometown, Jesus declares fulfillment in Himself of the prophet Isaiah, and is met with violent rejection (Luke 4:14-30). He then withdraws into K'far-Nachum ("Capernaum"), where He calls the first of his talmidim ("disciples"), there to deliver what is best known as His "Sermon on the Mount" (Luke 5:1-11; 6:20-46, Stern JNT 83). Later, accused by the Torah-teachers ("teachers of the Law") of healing in the power of Ba'al-zibbul ("Satan"), Jesus corrects them, stating if I kingdom is divided against itself, it is impossible for it to stand. Furthermore, He warned them that speaking against Him as Messiah would be a sin forgiven by God, but speaking against the Ruach HaKodesh ("Holy Spirit"), at work before their eyes through Him, would not be forgiven (Mk. 3:22-29, Stern JNT 48).

It is at this point in His ministry, Jesus chooses to teach in parables, stories with scriptural truths about the kingdom of God. His aim here was to open the eyes of His followers, while at the same time, closing the eyes of those who would oppose Him as Lord (Mark 4:12). Jesus demonstrated His divine authority over creation, when He calmed a great storm, which threatened to capsize His disciples' boat (Mark 4:35-41).

This would happen a second time, only Jesus would come to them walking on the stormy waves, then inviting Kefa ("Peter"), one of His twelve disciples to join Him,

which by faith he did, even but for a moment (Matt. 14: 22-33, Stern JNTC 52).

Jesus proved His sufficiency of grace for us, in the overflow of wine, seen back in Cana, the healing of the demon-possessed man in Gerasenes, the resurrection of a dead girl (Luke 8:26-56), and next, on the Galilean mountainside, where he miraculously fed the crowd of more than five thousand, with just seven loaves “and a few small fish” (Matt. 14:29-38, MHCCOTB Matt Ch 15). God, used these events as a testimony of Jesus’ Deity to Peter, who, when soon after was asked by Jesus, confessed “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt 16:16). A declaration Jesus credited only from God the Father, as in the next moment, Peter is summarily rebuked, speaking as the Enemy, saying Jesus would never suffer and die, to be raised again (Matt. 16:22, Stern JNTC 55). This rebuke serves not to weaken, but rather strengthen Peter’s fascination with Jesus, as in what is known as the Transfiguration, he, and two other disciples, are given close encounter with Jesus’ true form, “white as light”; seen standing and speaking with Old Testament prophets, Moshe (“Moses”), and Elijah (“Elijah”) (Matt. 17:1-8, Stern JNTC 55). God the Father is heard here as a “voice from the cloud,” giving endorsement to His Son’s Lordship (Matt. 17:5).

Moving into Judea, Jesus attended Chanukkah (“The Feast of Dedication”), in Jerusalem, where Jesus answered the Judeans plainly that “I and the Father are one,” stating that in Him is given the authority to grant eternal life (John 10:22-28, JNTC 188). At this, the crowd tried to stone him, but He “slipped out of their hands (Stern JNT 135).

As He saw the time drawing near to His Passion, it was in the region of Perea, where Jesus’ primary parables focused on the cost of discipleship in Him (Luke 15-18, Matt. 18-19). Moving again into Judea, He brought physical life back to a dead Lazarus, and the true joy of giving to a short, tax collector, named Zaccheus (WTTNTS 21, John 11:17-44, Luke 19:1-9).

In another fulfillment of Scripture, Jesus then directed His disciples to secure a donkey and its colt, for what would become a triumphal entrance into Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-44). This marked his “official offer to become king of Israel” (Marty 54). He would shortly thereafter reveal the jealousy of His father’s holiness, when He overturned the money-changing tables in the Temple; those seeking to take His life now looked even more for an opportunity to seize Him (Mark 11:12-18).

A tender moment then happens during a feast, in the town of Bethany, given by a leper named Simon, when a woman breaks open a jar of perfume, and begins to anoint Jesus' head. When she is rebuked, Jesus tells them to let her continue, as she is preparing Him for his burial (Mark 14:1-9). It is at this time, Y'hudah from K'riot ("Judas Iscariot"), one of Jesus' 12 disciples, makes a bargain with the religious leaders to betray Him (Stern JNT 65).

God's purpose of redemption would culminate in Jesus' last remaining hours before His death. Seated with His disciples, at Pesach ("Passover"), He would announce a "new covenant" in His blood, foretell His coming betrayal and betrayer, model one last instruction of servitude for them, and comfort them with the promise of His coming Holy Spirit to Earth (Matt. 26: 14-30, Mk. 14:12-26, John 13-16, Stern JNT 65).

After His last supper with them, Jesus then led them out into Gethsemane, above Jerusalem, where He strained intensely in prayer for His disciples, Jerusalem, and for Himself (Luke 22:44, Matt. 26:36-42, John 17). He is then arrested there, and brought before Kayafa ("Caiaphas"), the cohen hagadol ("high priest"), who questioned His teachings and activities; when asked, Peter simultaneously denies to those gathered he knew Jesus, haunted then by his claims to cling to Jesus until death (John 13:37-38; 18).

The Jewish leaders have Jesus beaten, then taken to Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, who is unable to find lawful reason to have Jesus put to death. Pilate then learns Jesus is from Galilee, and so sends Him to Herod Antipas, who, because of Jesus' unwillingness to entertain, quickly tires of Him, returning Him again to Pilate (Luke 23:1-12). Pilate then tries to placate the mob gathered before him, by having Jesus scourged. Then, in a final attempt to free Jesus, Pilate knowingly places before the crowd a choice between their "king of the Jews," and known murderer and insurrectionist, Barabbas. To Pilate's surprise, the crowd chooses Barabbas (Matt. 27:15-26, Mk. 15:6-15, Lk. 23:18-25, John 18:39-19:16).

Pilate releases Jesus to the crowd, who choose the worst possible punishment upon Jesus: crucifixion upon an "execution stake" (Luke 23: 20-25, Stern JNT 148). Jesus suffered death on a hill at Golgotha ("Golgotha"--place of the skull), taking upon Himself not only the sins of the Jewish nation, but the sins of all mankind (Matt. 27:36-54, Mark 15:21-37, John 19:25-30, Stern JNTC 83).

The evening of His death, His body is laid inside a borrowed tomb. The next day, the religious leaders meet with Pilate, who then grants them permission to guard Jesus' tomb (Matt. 27:5-65). The next day, "after Shabbat" ("the Sabbath"), Mary Magdalene, and Mary, the "mother of James" are met with surprise, finding the tomb empty, the stone in front rolled away, and receive angelic instruction to find the risen Jesus back in the city (Matt. 28:1-7, Mk. 16:1-8). Their news, and that of Peter and John, eventually reaches the 11 remaining disciples, and while gathered together in a closed room, Jesus Himself appears to them, speaking and sharing food together with them (Lk. 24:36-49, John 20:19-29).

The Bible records other appearances of our resurrected Messiah, prior to His ascension back into Heaven, near Bethany, in Galilee (Mk. 16:12-16, Lk. 24:13-32, John 21:1-25). His return to Heaven brought down to Earth His commission to all believers, to be fulfilled with the coming of His promised Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20, Mk.16:15-18, Acts 1:8)

Book Summaries

Matthew

Author: Mattityahu (“Matthew“), son of Alpheus (Stern JNT 1)

Date: approx. 50-70 A.D.

Audience: Jewish nation

Place of Writing: Jerusalem

Theme: Jesus, the Messiah-King

Purpose: Jesus’ Fulfillment of Jewish Prophecy as King (Marty 65)

Summary of Content:

Matthew’s Gospel begins with the genealogy of Jesus, as seen from his foster father, Joseph’s side. Through the next 3 chapters, proofs of Jesus’ “fulfillment of prophecy” are presented in the visit of the Magi, God’s protective relocation of young Jesus, John the Baptist’s ministry and prophetic endorsement of Jesus, and Jesus’ baptismal commissioning into ministry (Marty 65-67). We also see Jesus overcome temptation in the desert, then preaching and recruiting His first followers.

David Stern, in his Jewish New Testament translation commentary writes that “prophecy fulfillment is the chief rational reason...for Jews...to accept Yeshua [Jesus] as the Messiah” (Stern JNTC 5). Therefore, Matthew, in writing His gospel, brings out elements of kingship in Jesus, as he describes events of chapters 5-17: Jesus sermon on the mount, His instructions on earthly relationships, living in truth before both God and men, supernatural calming of a storm, physical acts of healing on the lame, sick, blind, and demon-possessed, his prescription for fasting, and call for workers in the field.

Dr. William Marty, in his book, *Surveying the New Testament*, calls this a period of “instruction, authentication, opposition, and explanation” of Jesus purpose as the promised Messiah (Marty 67). In chapter 12, we see the opposition, as Jesus defends His authority as Lord of the Sabbath, and in chapter 13, after being rejected in His hometown, He moves into other local areas to minister. He causes such a stir, that in chapter 14, Herod Antipas, who had granted his daughter’s wish to have John the Baptist beheaded, believes John has risen from the dead! Soon after, in authentication of His ministry, Jesus miraculously feeds a crowd of more than 5,000, and Peter takes a step of faith out of the boat, to walk toward Jesus on the water. In chapter 17, Jesus’ true form is revealed in His “Transfiguration” to 3 of his disciples. In chapters 18-19, Jesus settles matters over “greatest and least” in His kingdom, and tells of His father’s love for the “lost sheep.” He further explains, in chapter 20, of His approaching death and resurrection in Jerusalem, while pausing to heal a blind man. His triumphant entrance into Jerusalem in chapter 21 sets the stage for Jewish rejection, as he clears the Temple of money-changers.

In His last remaining teachings, found in chapters 22-25, Jesus warns of hypocrisy, to watch for signs of His return, and tells of reward or judgment toward obedience. Chapter 26 describes the plot to kill Jesus, His last supper with the disciples, His final prayer, arrest, and trial before the Jewish leaders; Peter also denies he knew Jesus.

Matthew ends in chapters 27-28, with Judas’ suicide, Jesus crucifixion, burial, resurrection, bribery of the temple guards to lie, and Jesus “Great Commission.”

Mark*Author:* John Mark*Date:* 55-65 A.D.*Audience:* Roman*Place of Writing:* Rome*Theme:* Jesus, as Servant King (Marty 76)*Purpose:* Self-denial*Summary of Content:*

A much smaller book than Matthew, Mark opens his gospel with John the Baptist's "proclamation" of Jesus (Marty 77).

He continues, in chapters 1-3, through description of a series of miracles Jesus performed (healing leprosy, paralyzed healed, demon-possessed freed), demonstrating His power, and authenticating His preaching to His disciples (Marty 77). He also sharply chastises the religious establishment for accusing Him of healing in the name of Satan, and out of the large crowds of followers, draws out 12 as his "inner circle".

Through the use of parables, in chapter 4, Jesus describes the various kinds of reception His message will bring (seeds along a path, trees and their fruit), and challenges his disciples to let their lights shine, like lamps on a stand.

We see in chapter 6, Jesus rejected in his hometown, the account of Herod's beheading of John the Baptist, feeding of 5,000, and Jesus walking on the water. More healings follow in chapter 7, and in chapter 8, another crowd--4,000--are miraculously fed by Jesus!

Jesus begins to predict His coming crucifixion to the 12, in chapter 10, and in chapter 11, His "passion" week begins with His entrance into Jerusalem. He clears the Temple of the money-changers, and in chapter 12 answers tests from the religious leaders regarding taxes, marriage, and the greatest commandment. He also highlights the smallest offering given by a widow, as the most given in His kingdom.

After giving warning to watch for His return to Earth, in chapter 13, the final 3 chapters describe Jesus' anointing at Bethany, His last supper, arrest, trial before the Sanhedrin, Peter's denial of Him, His trial before Pilate, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension.

Luke*Author:* Luke the Greek Physician*Date:* 59 A.D.*Audience:* Greek*Place of Writing:**Theme:* Jesus, God's Perfect Man*Purpose:* To show Jesus as uniquely-human, and uniquely-divine (Marty 85)*Summary of Content:*

According to opening notes found in the Hebrew-Greek Key Word Study Bible, although initially addressed to Theophilus, it is widely-accepted that Luke's account was intended to be shared to the public. Moreover, not only was it intended to reach a local, Jewish audience, or even a regional, Roman audience, but "all mankind" (Zondervan 1194).

He accomplishes this, setting the stage, with great detail: as to God's prophecy to Zechariah and Elizabeth about Jesus' forerunner, John the Baptist (Lk. 1:5-25), Jesus' birth foretold to young Mary (Lk. 1:26-56), the journey of Mary and Joseph to Bethlehem (2:1-7), angelic announcement to the shepherds (2:8-20), Jesus' dedication at the Temple (2:21-39), and also a glimpse into Jesus' early childhood (2:41-52).

The following 10 chapters describe, once more in detail, the baptismal/prophetic ministry of John the Baptist, Jesus' baptism and genealogy (from Mary's side), His temptation by Satan, rejection in His hometown of Galilee, calling of His first disciples, and no less than 10 miraculous acts and healings. In this, Luke demonstrates "Jesus' interest in sinners, outcasts from Judaism and the poor" (Marty 84).

From His disciples' request of Him to teach them how to pray (Lk. 11), to His teaching on faith over persistence (Lk. 18), and Jesus' final prayer the night of His betrayal (Lk. 22), we are shown our Savior as a "man of prayer" (Marty 84).

In His teaching on counting earthly riches (Lk. 12, 16, 18) vs. giving richly, as with the widow's mite, in chapter 21, describes our Savior as one who is more interested in our hearts, more than our wallets.

Especially emphasized is Jesus kindness "toward women, the weak and poor, outcasts, and those who were suffering" (Zondervan 1194).

John

Author: John, the Apostle

Date: 85-90 A.D.

Audience: Gentile

Place of Writing: Ephesus

Theme: Jesus, Savior of the World

Purpose: To prove that Jesus is the Son of God (Marty 94)

Summary of Content:

Standing out from the other 3 “synoptic” Gospels, it could be said John’s account is instead a series of vignettes, showing His miraculous signs as proof that He is indeed God’s Son (Zondervan 1238).

Assumingly, John, the Apostle, refers to himself throughout the book not by name, but as the disciple “Jesus loved” (Jn. 13:23, Zondervan 1238).

Some important miracles, not recorded in the other 3 Gospels, may be found here (Zondervan 1238): water becomes wine (Jn.2:1-11), the son of an official healed (Jn. 4:46-54), Bethesda healing (Jn. 5:1-9), man born blind sees (Jn. 9:1-7), Lazarus lives again (Jn. 11:38-44), and fishnets break a second time (Jn. 21:4-6).

John opens in a grand prologue, introducing Jesus as God’s “Word made flesh,” the essence of the Father, in physical form, pre-existing anything created (Marty 96, Jn. 1:1-14). He then illustrates with easy-to-understand language, Jesus’ public and private ministry (Jn. 2:11-17:26, Marty 96).

In conclusion, John presents Jesus Christ as the supreme sacrifice for us, with His death on the cross, and our only way to the Father, as seen in His resurrection (Jn. 18:1-20:31, Marty 96).

John ends his account with an intimate picture of “reinstatement” of Peter by the resurrected Jesus, commanding Him to simply “follow,” and not look to see who else will come (Jn. 15-23, Marty 96).

5 Eternal Truths:

1. Jesus IS God

He has not only proved this in the prophecy leading up to, and during His birth, but also in the unbroken connection He continues to make in the lives of those who follow Him.

2. God Loves Us

It was His love which promised, way back in Genesis 3, that salvation would come, and sin would be abolished, through the work of His son, to those who believe.

3. The Spirit Speaks

Revealing to the disciples confirmation of Jesus' authority, and continues to teach in the hearts and minds of His followers.

4. We Need Jesus

Just as we needed forgiveness through blood sacrifices, we needed Jesus, God's "perfect man", to be our once-for-all sacrifice, to open our way into God's favor.

5. I Am Called

The commission Jesus gave before ascending into Heaven is the same today, as it was when He spoke it to those gathered before Him: to "go", and preach the Gospel to all, baptizing, and teaching obedience to His truth.

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