

# WHY FOUR GOSPELS? THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

in  
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

by

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## CHAPTER NINE

### SHADOWS OF “THE LAST DAYS”

Matthew 14:1-15:39

In chapters fourteen and fifteen the Holy Spirit has recorded through Matthew a number of experiences in the life of the Lord which are suggestive of events to take place in the end of this age. They are not designated as dispensational. They present Christ's love for His own, His power to work miracles which only God can perform, His compassion upon the multitudes, His knowledge of the very thoughts of men — all of this and very much more.

Yet the events recorded here present also an analogy to the course of prophecy to be fulfilled in the end of this age and in the age to come. Therefore, in this book which very definitely outlines God's plan for His people, Israel, it seems fitting to make this comparison between these deeds and teachings of Christ and His definite statements found elsewhere in this book and throughout His Word concerning things to come.

#### *Persecution Foretold.*

The martyrdom of John the Baptist not only indicates that the godless world hates and persecutes those who love the truth, but it may well represent also the bitter persecution of the faithful remnant in Israel during the reign of the Antichrist. It is difficult for us to conceive of more cruel treatment than the Jews of Europe have suffered at the hand of Hitler in this second World War, or at the hands of Christ-hating peoples for nearly two thousand years; and yet our Lord told His disciples in His Olivet discourse that, during the great tribulation, there would be such suffering as never was hitherto; no, nor ever should be.

#### *Miraculous Preservation Promised.*

When the Lord Jesus heard of the death of John, He “**departed thence by ship into a desert place apart.**” This speaks of Him as the rejected One. But during the time of His rejection, those who sought Him found Him and were miraculously fed, even in the desert.

Even so, those who receive “**the gospel of the kingdom**” during the reign of the Antichrist will not be able “**to buy or sell**” because they will not have received “**the mark of the beast.**” Yet even in their time of great tribulation, many of these will flee to a place of safety where they will be preserved by their Messiah and soon-coming King. The Lord Jesus who fed the five thousand by His divine power is the same Lord who has promised to preserve His ancient people, Israel, in their time of greatest sorrow and affliction.

*Peace and Blessing Assured.*

Following this miracle Christ was on a mountain, alone with His Father; while His disciples were “**in the midst** of the sea,” in a terrible storm.

**“And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid”** (14:25-27).

This is a picture of the Jewish remnant in the end of this age; they will be in the grip of a storm, when the fury of the nations will be like a raging sea. But in their darkest hour, “**at the fourth watch of the night,**” as it were, their Messiah and King will appear with the assurance, “**Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.**” In that solemn hour He will speak peace to His people; He will speak peace to the nations; and the sea will cease from raging; for He is “**The mighty God.**”

Not only was the Lord worshipped by those Jewish disciples in the ship, but when they “**came into the land of Genesaret,**” multitudes of Gentiles also were blessed. The sick were healed; and “**as many as touched . . . the hem of his garment . . . were made perfectly whole.**” And so it will be at the close of the Great Tribulation period, after the Lord speaks peace to the nations. Not only will the faithful remnant in Israel enter into His millennial kingdom, but all the earth will be “**full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea**” (Isaiah 11:9).

*Israel Blinded Now.*

In the first twenty verses of chapter fifteen we read of still further criticism of the Lord by the rulers of the Jews, as they sought to ensnare Him in His doctrine. They were quibbling over traditions of the elders, at the same time perverting their own Old Testament Scriptures. Christ called them what they were, “**hypocrites**” and “**blind leaders of the blind.**”

Just as blind spiritually are His ancient people today. For nearly two thousand years the nation of Israel has rejected her King. Meanwhile, He has been leading multitudes of Gentiles to know and love Him as the only Saviour, even as He answered the prayer of the Gentile woman, following the criticism of those rulers of the Jews many centuries ago.

*Blessing to the Gentiles Foreshadowed.*

It would be a strange story; this record of Christ’s dealing with the Syrophenician woman, if we did not consider it in its dispensational character. The Lord was not unconcerned about her need. He was teaching her — and all His followers — an important lesson. When she addressed Him as “**Son of David,**” He “**answered her not a word.**”

As a Gentile, she had no right to claim the earthly inheritance of Israel; and **“Son of David”** is one of His names which show His relation to the Jewish nation. Finally, after the disciples besought Him to send her away, He once more stated that He came to present Himself to Israel as a nation — before He was to turn to the Gentiles, saying,

**“I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel”** (15:24).

It is significant that Matthew is the only evangelist to record these words, although Mark also tells this story. Then when the Gentile woman continued to beg for deliverance for her demon-possessed daughter, when she addressed Him as **“Lord,”** worshipping Him, then He answered her prayer, saying unto her,

**“O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour”** (15:28).

During this church age, when the nation of Israel is rejecting her Messiah, He is calling out Gentiles to be members of His body, His blood-bought church. Thank God! There are also many individual Jews in that company! But the nation as such is still spiritually blinded during the absence of her King.

*A Millennial Picture.*

The scene which followed the healing of the daughter of the Gentile woman is a remarkable picture of our Lord’s millennial blessing upon all the earth. He **“went up into a mountain, and sat down there.”** And **“great multitudes”** of the lame and blind and dumb and maimed were brought to Jesus’ feet; **“and he healed them.”** **“The multitude wondered . . . and glorified the God of Israel.”**

Then it was that He fed the four thousand miraculously, suggestive of yet further blessing during His earthly kingdom.

It is only in Matthew that we read that they **“glorified the God of Israel,”** for Mark’s record has a different purpose from that of Matthew. Matthew was writing especially for the Jew; and here we are reminded once more that, in our Lord’s millennial kingdom, all the Gentile nations will glorify **“the God of Israel.”**

**“In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you”** (Zechariah 8:23).

~ end of chapter 9 ~

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