

WHY FOUR GOSPELS? THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

in
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

by

Louis T. Talbot

Copyright © 1944

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

LUKE — THE GOSPEL OF THE HOME

The book of Luke has been called the Gospel of the home, of childhood, of womanhood, and of the poor and lowly. It is filled with human interest — with songs and tears, with praise and prayer, with sorrows and rejoicings. Here we see depicted the beautiful picture of the birth of John and the Lord Jesus, the three months' visit of their mothers, the prophecy and rejoicing at the birth of the forerunner of the Lord, and at His birth who came **“to seek and to save that which was lost.”** Here we see the Nazareth home life, the obedience of the Child Jesus to Joseph and Mary. What a Child He was! Never a cross word, never a disobedient act; never a shirking of duty; never an evil thought! For He was absolutely holy, without the slightest taint of sin; **“yea, altogether lovely”!**

We are told that in every chapter but five there is mention of women, with much space given to the things concerning Elizabeth, Mary, Anna, Mary and Martha, the widow of Nain, the woman with an infirmity eighteen years, the weeping **“daughters of Jerusalem,”** the sinful woman who washed the Lord's feet with her tears and wiped them with the hairs of her head, the widow with her two mites, Mary Magdalene, and all that group of women who ministered unto the Lord before and after His death on the cross.

This is, indeed, the Gospel of womanhood.

Again, the many parables of Luke — more than in the other Gospels — have to do with human relationships.

Go back over the list of passages recorded by Luke alone, and find how very many parables there are in that category — the prodigal son, the Good Samaritan, and many others that have to do with the home. Here we see the Lord in the homes of Simon the Pharisee, of Mary and Martha, of Zacchaeus, and of the Emmaus disciple. Would God that every home on earth today would open its doors to the compassionate Saviour of men!

THE REALITY OF THE SINLESS HUMANITY OF THE SON OF MAN

The humanity of our Lord was as real as His deity. As we have often tried to show, our eternal God planned to die for sinners. But God could not die until He became a Man. **“The Man Christ Jesus,”** therefore, was **“God manifest in the flesh,”** **“Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.”**

Because He was God still, born of the Virgin Mary by the power of the Holy Spirit, He lived a holy, sinless life on earth. Satan was permitted to tempt Him, not to see whether or not He would sin, but in order to prove to men, angels, and demons that He could not sin because He was the holy God. He was also **“tempted in all points like as we are, yet without sin,”** in order that, as the sympathetic Saviour, He might **“succour them that are tempted.”** But the point we would make here is that, although tempted, He did not sin. He always was and ever shall be **“holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.”**

Long before He came into the world, the Old Testament types and shadows foretold His perfections, through the emblems which presented in prophetic picture His sinless humanity.

For example, the Passover lamb had to be without spot and without blemish. The manna which fell in the wilderness, a beautiful picture of Jesus, the Bread of Life was white, suggestive of His purity of life. The meal offering was made of **“fine flour unleavened, mingled with oil,”** and frankincense was put upon it. How significant these instructions were!

The fine flour speaks to us of the fact that there was no coarseness, no unevenness, in the perfect humanity of our Lord. In the Bible, leaven is always a type of sin, and the absence of leaven emphasizes the fact that there was no sin in the **“Man Christ Jesus.”** Oil is a type of the Holy Spirit. Frankincense is a gum which, when pulverized, yields a sweet-smelling savour. All of these God-given instructions pointed on to the perfections of the promised Son of Man, whose earthly life was **“a sweet-smelling savour”** to His Father in heaven. They tell us in prophetic type what the Father spoke when He said from heaven,

“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

Other prophecies of the Old Testament had foretold this message, reiterated by evangelists and apostles:

- **“Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips”** (Psalm 45:2).
- **“Neither was any deceit in his mouth”** (Isaiah 53:9).
- **“. . . the prince of this world cometh, and hath nothing in me”** (John 14:30).
- **“He . . . knew no sin”** (II Corinthians 5:21).
- **“Christ . . . did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth”** (I Peter 2:21, 22).

Such passages as these could be multiplied manifold — all from Holy Writ. But surely these more than establish the truth of the sinlessness of Jesus, the Son of Man!

Now we need to remember that our Lord's humanity was just as real as it was sinless; to prove this fact Luke wrote this third Gospel. There was a heathen philosophy, held by many in the days of the early Christians, which was similar to many false cults of our own time, teaching that God is impersonal, that matter is unreal, and that the human body is a phantom. Such a view was held by some who claimed to be Christians; hence the warning given in I John 4:3,

“Every spirit that confesseth not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is not of God.”

The denial of the reality of Christ's humanity is what Christian Science teaches today; so also do such cults as Theosophy, New Thought, and other pagan doctrines. Yet they call themselves Christian! The heart of the teaching of such false systems is this: That God is impersonal mind, that Christ is an idea conceived in the mind of men, and that the body of Jesus was just a phantom — or, in the language of Christian Science, “a corporeal concept.”

Such satanic doctrine cannot stand, in the light of Gospel truth, especially such as Luke presents, proving irrefutably that our Lord's body was material, actual, real.

The illustrations of this fact are too numerous for us to attempt even a passing reference to them all. We mention just a few:

- The actual birth of a real Child; in a manger, a literal place; the swaddling clothes;
- The Boy Jesus' growth in wisdom and stature, in a physical body;
- His asking and answering questions;
- His genealogy through Mary;
- His walking among men,
- Touching the eyes of the blind,
- Laying His hands upon the leper,
- Eating before men,
- Allowing the cruel nails to be driven through His hands and feet,
- Showing the nail prints to His own after He arose from the dead.

These are the actions of One who was real, in a human body which was yet without sin! They are tokens of the fulfillment of the prophetic words of the Son of Man to His Father in heaven, quoted by Paul in Hebrews 10:5,

“A body hast thou prepared me” (cf. Psalm 40:6). There are a few characteristics of the Lord Jesus which we would consider, at least briefly, in this connection, characteristics peculiar to Luke. Let us look at them for a little while:

1. The Prayer Life of “The Man Christ Jesus.”

Now prayer is a human experience; and Luke tells us more about our Lord's prayers than do any of the other evangelists. Thus Christ manifested His dependence, as a Man, upon His heavenly Father. Here are the references to His prayers, recorded only by Luke:

- He was baptized as He was **“praying,”** 3:21.
- After He had healed **“a man full of leprosy,”** He **“withdrew Himself into the wilderness, and prayed,”** 5:16.
- On the night before He chose the twelve, He **“went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God,”** 6:12.
- Before Peter’s great confession that Jesus was **“The Christ of God,”** the Lord had been **“alone praying,”** 9:18.
- **“As he prayed,”** he was transfigured, 9:29. What a glorious view Peter, James, and John had — the Lord Jesus praying — transfigured!
- **“As he was praying,”** one of His disciples said unto Him, **“Lord, teach us to pray”;** and He did teach them, saying, **“Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name . . .”** 11:1, 2.
- When He told Simon Peter that Satan had desired him, to sift him as wheat, He added, **“. . . but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not,”** 22:32.
- The Lord’s **“intercession for the transgressors”** who crucified Him, as we have already seen, is recorded only in Luke,

“Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do,” 23:34.

- And his prayer of trust in committing His spirit unto the Father, we have also observed, is mentioned only by Luke,

“Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” 23:46.

There are two other references to the prayers of the Son of Man mentioned by Luke, both of which are spoken of by one or all of the evangelists :

The first is the prayer of thanksgiving, also found in Matthew 11:25-27, cf. Luke 10:21, 22.

Moreover, it is a proclamation of His equality with the Father.

The other reference, mentioned by all the evangelists except John, is that of the Lord’s **“strong crying and tears,”** in Gethsemane (cf. Hebrews 5:7). But Luke only mentions two facts which emphasize the humanity of the Lord Jesus:

- (1) That **“there appeared an angel unto him from heaven, strengthening him”;** and
- (2) that **“his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground,”** 22:43, 44.

Not only does Luke emphasize Jesus’ humanity in His prayer-life, but he also has much to say about how He taught His disciples to pray; as another has expressed it:

- (1) with importunity, 11:5-10;
- (2) with perseverance, 18:1-7;
- (3) with penitence, 18:9-14.

If He who was sinless needed to pray, how much more do we who are “sinners saved by His grace” need to “pray without ceasing”!

2. The Dependence of the Son of Man upon the Holy Spirit.

While we must ever remember that the Lord Jesus was One with the Father and with the Holy Spirit, yet as a Man — the God-Man — He was subject unto the Father and Empowered by His own Holy Spirit. Luke speaks often of this Divine-human relationship, for he is emphasizing the reality of our Lord’s humanity.

At the beginning of His public ministry He was anointed by the Holy Spirit at His baptism (3:22). Later, “**being full of the Holy Ghost,**” He was “**led by the Spirit into the wilderness**” to be tempted by the devil (4:1). And following His temptation, “**Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee**” (4:14). In the synagogue at Nazareth He read the passage from Isaiah to which we have already referred. On that occasion the Son of Man applied the significant words of the prophet to Himself, saying, “**The Spirit of the Lord is upon me . . .**” (4:18).

In the parable of fatherhood, illustrating His teaching concerning prayer, the Lord said to His disciples,

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?” (11:13).

In the similar passage recorded in Matthew 7:11, we read “**good gifts**” instead of the “**Holy Spirit.**”

Knowing that His disciples could do nothing for “**the furtherance of the Gospel**” without His indwelling Holy Spirit, the risen Lord told them to “**tarry . . . in the city of Jerusalem**” until they should be “**endued with power from on high**” (24:49).

If the sinless Son of Man spent His days on earth in conscious fellowship with His own Holy Spirit, depending upon Him for strength and power, shall we who are sinners saved by His grace do less?

We dare not forget the words of the prophet,

“Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts” (Zechariah 4:6).

3. The “Altogether Lovely” Son of Man.

We might continue, in endless discussion, the facts concerning the perfections of “**the Man Christ Jesus.**” But surely our study of the book of Luke, brief as it has been, has given us overwhelming evidence of the beauty and holiness of Him who was “**made flesh, and dwelt among us.**”

We have seen:

- His faith and obedience,
- His utter trust in the will of His Father in heaven;
- His courage and strength as He set His face “**steadfastly . . . to go to Jerusalem**”;
- His prayer-life,
- His compassion,
- His love.

Little wonder He was called the “**Friend of sinners**”! The poor, the lowly, the down-trodden, and broken-hearted knew the tender sympathy and undying love of the “**Son of Man**,” who came “**to seek and to save that which was lost.**”

Luke’s emphasis upon the compassion of the Lord is seen in the many details of human sympathy omitted by the other evangelists.

We mention only three here:

The widow of Nain was accompanying the body of her “**only son**” to the burial when “**the Lord saw her**” and “**had compassion on her, and said unto her, Weep not**” (7:12, 13). Then He raised the young man from the dead. Every detail of this story speaks to us of the sympathy of Christ for the sorrowing, as well as of His divine power.

Again, Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell the story of the raising of Jairus’ daughter from the dead; but only Luke tells us that this ruler of the Jews had “**one only daughter**” (8:42).

And yet again, Matthew, Mark and Luke tell of the father who took his demon-possessed son to the disciples while Christ was on the mount of transfiguration; and because they could not cast out the evil spirit, the father took his son to Jesus. But Luke alone adds the significant words of the distressed parent, “. . . **he is mine only child.**”

THE SONS OF MEN CONTRASTED WITH THE SON OF MAN

In striking contrast with the sinlessness of the Son of Man, we see portrayed in Luke the guilt and sin of the sons of men.

We see on every page man’s need of a Saviour. From the opening chapter, we see the barrenness and unbelief of Elizabeth and Zacharias — eloquent picture of the spiritual condition of all the sons of Adam. Just as a miracle was required in the birth of John, so also every child of Adam must experience the miracle of the new birth, in order to bring forth fruit unto God.

The depravity of the human heart is seen in the vain effort of the men of Nazareth, who, “**filled with wrath**,” tried to cast the sinless Son of Man headlong off the brow of the hill. Filled with hatred, malice, murder, they were seeking to kill Him who was filled with the Holy Spirit.

Still later we see the man “**full of leprosy**” healed by the Lord Jesus.

Leprosy, in the Bible, is a type of sin. He who “**knew no sin**” in contrast with the man “**full of leprosy**” — what a picture!

Let us turn back to the list of experiences in the life of our Lord recorded only by Luke to see these contrasts multiplied manifold:

- The religious hypocrites in the presence of the Good Samaritan;
- The poor woman bowed down by Satan’s power for eighteen years set free from sin by the Great Physician;
- The lost sheep and the seeking Shepherd;
- The prodigal son and the forgiving father.

Nowhere in all of God’s Word do we get a more searching glimpse into the sinful, human heart, a more forceful picture of man’s depravity, impotency, and degradation, than in the book of Luke. And nowhere do we get a more beautiful portrait of the seeking Saviour than in this masterful presentation of the Son of Man, as He was seen and worshipped by the “**beloved physician,**” who in turn was guided by the Holy Spirit to pen these lines.

**“THE MAN CHRIST JESUS” —
RISEN — ASCENDED — INTERCEDING FOR HIS OWN!**

As we come to the close of this lesson, we wonder if some discouraged child of God has been beholding “**the Man Christ Jesus**” through tears that blind the eyes?

In a world at war, in a world of sin and godlessness and unbelief, are you going through deep sorrow, my Christian friend? Then look up by faith to the right hand of the Majesty on high. There, at “**the throne of grace**” sits the crucified, risen, ascended, interceding, and soon-coming Lord, who is the Son of Man.

- Because He was the “**Man of Sorrows, and acquainted with grief,**” He can sympathize with you in your trials.
- Because He “**suffered being tempted,**” He is able to “**succour them that are tempted.**”
- Because He was “**touched with the feeling of our infirmities,**” He knows and understands our deepest sorrow.

“He knows; He loves; He cares!”

And at the throne of God He is the representative Man, pleading the cause of His redeemed, His own, bought with His precious blood. As our Forerunner, He is the guarantee that we, too, shall one day pass “**within the veil,**” into the “**holiest of all,**” even heaven itself.

In His unchanging, eternal priesthood, He ministers for us according to our needs and His perfect will. What more could we ask? Heaven and His presence for all the endless ages are ours because He was willing to become the Son of Man, suffering, seeking, dying, that we might have everlasting life.

When He came into the world:

- He was born in a manger;
- He had **“not where to lay his head”**;
- He died on the accursed tree;
- He was buried in a borrowed tomb.

But now, our ever-living Priest — **“a priest upon his throne”** — He appears in the presence of the Father on our behalf.

The aged John saw Him in the midst of the seven golden lampstands, symbol of the blood-bought church. He saw Him who is the **“Son of man, clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about the paps with a golden girdle”** (Revelation 1:13). These are garments of our Great High Priest.

We who love Him shall one day behold and share His glory. With John and all the redeemed of all the ages, we shall look upon His face which shines like the sun. We, too, shall hear His voice, which is **“as the sound of many waters.”** We shall **“behold the man”** — the **“Man Christ Jesus”** — in all His uncreated glory — **“a priest upon his throne!”**

Then let us look up — through our tears; beyond the bloodshed and cruelty of a world which thrust Him out at the point of a spear; in spite of burdens and sorrows and heartaches — let us keep **“looking unto Jesus,”** the **“Son of Man,”** who came to **“seek and to save that which was lost,”** who now lives forever to intercede for us, and who will one day take us to be with Himself, to behold and to share His glory.

Dear unsaved friend, having beheld Luke’s portrait of the seeking Saviour, can you turn from Him still?

“Behold the Man” who died for you; let Him into your heart; and He will **“save that which was lost.”**

The Son of God who became the Son of Man, in order to die for you, loves you with an undying love!

~ end of chapter 18 ~

<http://www.baptistbiblebelievers.com/>
