

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

in  
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

by

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## CHAPTER SIX

### THE MESSENGERS OF THE KING

Matthew 10:1-42

Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell the story of our Lord's sending out the twelve disciples to preach and teach and work miracles in His name; but Matthew's record is much more detailed than the other two are, and has a dispensational character not found in Mark and Luke.

For example, only Matthew mentions the words of Christ, recorded in verses 5-7:

**“Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.”**

This statement of the Lord illustrates what Matthew is setting forth: That first the kingdom had to be offered to the nation of Israel; then when the Jews refused their King, He turned to the Gentiles. Moreover, the earthly kingdom was offered to Israel, not to Gentiles; whereas salvation from sin is offered to all men of every nation, Jew and Gentile.

Again, Mark and Luke do not record the words of Christ in connection with His sending forth the twelve, as recorded by Matthew in 10:16-42. And while verses 16-23 have to do with the experiences the twelve disciples were to meet on their journey; yet they cover a wider scope also, and look forward to the yet future experiences of the faithful remnant in Israel during the great tribulation period, after the true church has been translated, and just prior to the return of Christ in glory to establish His millennial kingdom.

All this is in keeping with the purpose of Mathew's Gospel.

Take, for example, verses 22, 23:

**“And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of Man be come.”**

The last part of this prophecy was certainly not fulfilled in the experiences of the twelve disciples. But they were Jews, representative of the faithful remnant in their nation who will not worship the Antichrist during **“the time of Jacob’s trouble.”** That faithful remnant will preach **“the gospel of the kingdom,”** and lead many of their fellow-Jews to Christ in that coming day. They shall **“not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come”**; for all the world will see Israel’s King returning in power and great glory to reign.

Now it is significant that only Matthew records this passage; for he is the one who presents Christ to his nation as the King of Israel.

The dispensational character of this passage explains also the latter part of verse 22,

**“ . . . he that endureth to the end shall be saved.”**

**These words are almost identical with those of Matthew 24:13, also definitely dispensational in character. They do not refer to the believer’s eternal security of salvation; or to the lack of it, dependent upon his “holding out faithful,” as some teach. They were addressed to Jesus, and concern Jews, as the whole context makes clear; and cannot be interpreted apart from their scriptural setting. To take them out of their context, and to teach that one has to work in order to keep on being saved, is to deny the whole body of Scripture, the express Word of the Lord Himself and of His divinely inspired apostles — not just once or twice, but in hundreds of definite statements.**

The passage beginning with verse 34 can also be interpreted accurately only when considered in the light of its dispensational character; that is why it has bothered many Christians, who have little understanding of prophecy.

Many of these have asked, “Why should the Prince of Peace say, **‘Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword’?**” There is but one answer: Our Lord was saying that the preaching of the Gospel during this church age would not *“bring in the kingdom,”* as many teach today; but that it would divide families over the issue of the claims of Christ.

Only the personal, visible, bodily return of the King of Israel to earth will usher in His millennial kingdom, with its peace.

Meanwhile, during this age of grace, through the preaching of the Gospel of grace, He is calling out His bride, the true church, composed of Jew and Gentile.

The God-given purpose of this age and the kingdom to follow is outlined in the words of Acts 15:14-18:

**“God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: that the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world (or ‘ages’).”**

What the Lord Jesus was saying in Matthew 10:34, He explained in the words which follow, that the preaching of the Gospel would bring **“the sword,”** as it were, into families, dividing them asunder according to the individual’s acceptance or rejection of Him as his Lord and Saviour. And this is exactly what has happened in Gentile homes, but more especially in Hebrew homes.

Nowhere has fanatical persecution been more bitter than in the Jewish homes where individuals have become Christian. Even today, when the nation of Israel, still out of Christ, is becoming more tolerant of the idea that Jesus of Nazareth was one of their great prophets — to quote them; yet for an orthodox Jew to accept Christ as his Messiah, often means that he is disowned by his family, pronounced as one dead, or even persecuted to the point of having to flee for his very life. Then **“a man’s foes”** verily are **“they of his own household”** (Matthew 10:36).

Christ’s own interpretation of these words makes even more forceful His appeal to His ancient people to put Him first — before father or mother or son or daughter, if they would be **“worthy”** of Him. Even though becoming a Christian means cross-bearing, separation from loved ones and home; yet Christ must come first, for salvation and for God-honoring service. And His reward is bountiful, even for the giving of **“a cup of cold water”** in His name!

We would not leave this chapter without calling attention to some of the other spiritual lessons to be found here.

In this outline study of the four Gospels, we cannot pause for many details; yet we shall do well to consider long and prayerfully such lessons as these:

Only by the **“power”** of the Spirit of the risen Christ shall our service for Him avail, verse 1. **“The workman is worthy of his meat,”** verse 10.

This teaches the servant of Christ to trust Him for every temporal blessing; and it places a responsibility upon Christians to provide for the ministers and missionaries of the Gospel.

Certain judgment awaits the city, the nation, or the individual that rejects the Christ of God, verse 15.

Persecution will be the lot of those who are faithful to Christ in a wicked world, which crucified the Lord of glory, verses 16-25.

There is a personal devil and there is a literal hell, whether men like to hear the truth preached or not, verse 28. Our Father in heaven watches over His own, verses 29, 30.

Public confession of Christ must come from him who has been born again, verses 32, 33.

These are only a few of the many, searching and reassuring teachings of the Lord Jesus, recorded in the tenth chapter of Matthew, as He commissioned His messengers to go out to proclaim the King of Israel and His kingdom as “**at hand.**”

We shall do well to meditate long and prayerfully over their meaning.

~ end of chapter 6 ~

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