

WHY FOUR GOSPELS? THE FOUR-FOLD PORTRAIT OF CHRIST

in
Matthew, Mark, Luke and John

by

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CHAPTER FOURTEEN

THE RESURRECTION OF THE KING

Matthew 28:1-20

If the cross were the end of the story, then we should have no Saviour; Israel would have no Messiah and King. But following the cross is the empty tomb — upon which fact our Christian faith stands or falls.

Each of the Gospel writers devotes an entire chapter to the bodily resurrection of our Lord from the dead; John gives two chapters to this and His post-resurrection ministry.

Let us see now what Matthew tells us about the resurrection of the King of Israel.

1. The Resurrection of the King — A Fulfillment of Prophecy.

The disciples should have known that Christ would rise from the dead on the third day; for, as we have seen in our study, He told them repeatedly to expect just that. Moreover, their own Old Testament foretold in no uncertain terms His bodily resurrection from the dead, especially in Psalm 16:8-11, where the Holy Spirit said plainly,

“ . . . my flesh also shall rest in hope. For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell [Sheol]; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

But the disciples were slow to believe **“all that the prophets had spoken.”** They were even slow to believe what the Lord Himself had said unto them before He went to the cross.

2. Proofs of the Resurrection of the King as Recorded by Matthew.

There are **“many infallible proofs”** of our Lord’s resurrection; but let us read the closing chapter of Matthew to see only those given there. They alone are overwhelming and convincing:

(1) There was the Roman guard, watching over the tomb sealed with the Roman seal.

In our last lesson we saw that, humanly speaking, no one could break that seal; it was a matter of life and death for the tomb to be guarded and the seal kept unbroken. But the Roman soldiers and the unbelieving Pharisees failed to take God into account.

(2) There was the testimony of the angel from heaven.

(3) There was the earthquake, a supernatural phenomenon.

(4) There was the silent witness of the empty tomb.

(5) There was the appearance of the risen Lord to the women, who knew Him and worshipped Him.

(6) There was the testimony of the women to the disciples.

(7) And there was the appearance of the risen Lord to the eleven, as He gave them His great commission, on a mountain in Galilee.

Add to these the other facts recorded by Mark, Luke and John in their Gospels and in Acts; add to these the evidence given in the epistles and in Revelation; and what have you? One of the most authentic, irrefutable facts of history.

- Our risen Lord's appearances over a period of forty days;
- The fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and of His own words;
- His appearance to "**above five hundred**" believers at one time;
- His real body of "**flesh and bones**";
- His power to transform human life.

These are just some of the additional "**infallible proofs**" that Christ is risen indeed!

3. The Great Commission of the King.

All the Gospel writers tell us how the Lord sent the eleven disciples out to preach the Gospel, witnessing to His redemptive work; but it is in keeping with the purpose of each one that this message is stated as it is.

For example, Matthew portrays the Lord on a "**mountain,**" symbol of His earthly kingdom, giving kingly directions for the carrying out of His purpose and will. He speaks of "**all power in heaven and in earth,**" which, as their King, He had the right to exercise on their behalf and through them. Thus Matthew's description is prophetic, not only of this age, but of the age to come, when Israel's King will reign in glory — "**in earth,**" as well as "**in heaven.**"

The absence of the ascension story in Matthew is significant; for Israel's King belongs to the earth; the covenant which He made with Israel has to do with the land of Palestine.

Thus Matthew closes his Gospel record with the King upon a mountain, issuing commands to His disciples, promising His power and presence and blessing even as they go out to obey His will.

Mark closes his record with the faithful Servant of the Lord, His work on Calvary accomplished, seated on the right hand of God, still **“working with”** the disciples, **“confirming the word with signs following”** (Mark 16:19, 20).

Luke closes with Christ’s promise of the Holy Spirit and the ascension of the Lord into heaven, even **“while he lifted up his hands, and blessed them”** (Luke 24:49-51). Luke also gives one of the most beautiful pictures of the ascension in Acts 1:9-11, promising also the return of Christ in power and glory.

John does not record the ascension into heaven, but speaks of Christ’s second coming; and then suggests in the closing verse the human impossibility to record all the wonders of the eternal Son of God, saying:

“And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written” (John 21:25).

Thus we find, in the facts recorded by the four evangelists at the close of their Gospels, a climactic order that is impressive: Matthew tells the resurrection story, as do the others. Mark portrays the ascended Lord, **“working with”** His disciples. Luke promises the coming of the Holy Spirit. And John speaks of Christ’s return to earth. Of course, all the evangelists tell all of these things and very much more! And throughout the endless ages we shall be finding out new and precious truths concerning our crucified, risen, exalted, and coming Lord!

Meanwhile, as we come to the close of our very brief study of Matthew, we hear Israel’s King and our Saviour bidding us go to **“all nations,”** in the name of the Triune God, winning the lost to Him who came to die for them.

We hear His reassuring promise to be with us **“alway, even unto the end of the age.”** In His power and by His grace we would obey His command, telling sinners of the Saviour, concerning whom David wrote some three thousand years ago, saying, as God spoke through the shepherd-king:

“I have set my King upon my holy hill of Zion . . . Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way” (Psalm 2:6, 12).

Israel’s King is the eternal God and the only Saviour of all mankind. One day He will be recognized by all the world as King of kings and Lord of lords. But now, in His long-suffering and by His grace, He is calling out **“a people for his name.”** With all His blood-bought bride, we would pray in the words of the closing petition of the Bible, **“Even so, come, Lord Jesus!”** (Revelation 22:20).

~ end of chapter 14 ~

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