



## Messiah: His Historical Appearance

In Tract One of this series we saw that the Eternal God is a holy Trinity; in the second message that according to prophecy one of these divine personalities was scheduled to come to earth for man's redemption; in the third, the outline of Messiah's redemptive career was set forth as presented from Psalm 110; in the fourth, we learned that King Messiah was to be executed before the overthrow of the Jewish nation which occurred in the year 70 A.D. In all of these messages we have been looking at the truth largely from the standpoint of the Hebrew Scriptures. In the present discussion we want to see the historical Messiah — the Lord Jesus Christ.

According to the law which was delivered by Moses, every matter tried by the courts of Israel was to be substantiated by two or more witnesses. This legislation was indeed a wise provision made by the Almighty in order to forestall error and injustice. A careful study of the revelation of God shows that it was made according to the pattern of “the law of the witnesses.”

The Lord Jesus Christ, according to the Old Testament predictions, entered, the world by virgin birth, grew up as a man, performed His earthly ministry, and finally laid down His life for the redemption of humanity. Specially chosen men who had associated with Him during His personal ministry were appointed by Him to be His chief representatives after His departure.

According to the best obtainable data, the Lord Jesus Christ was executed in the year 30 A.D. The Holy Spirit came upon the Apostles to guide them into all truth, bringing to their remembrance all things which Jesus had taught and making new revelations to them. Thus the oral testimony was given out during the first three decades of the present era. Christianity sprang up in the very city, Jerusalem, where its Founder had been crucified. Notwithstanding severe opposition and persecution, the number of the disciples grew daily. Finally, however, there arose a persecution against the church in Jerusalem after the stoning of Stephen. On account of this new opposition the church was scattered abroad everywhere; but its members went into every nook and corner of the land, preaching the gospel. The believers, being instructed by the Apostles, carried out the order to procedure as laid down by the Lord: they were to preach the gospel first in Jerusalem, next in Judea, then in Samaria, and finally they were to carry it to the ends of the earth. Thus: “the living voice,” as the testimony of the witnesses of our Lord's ministry was called, continued to give forth accurately what they had both seen and heard.

The farther His life and times receded into the past, the more insistent was the demand for a written record. “The living voice” gradually became more indistinct the farther the nascent church journeyed from the scenes of the crucifixion. Hence by 60 A.D. the demand for the gospel in permanent form was so very insistent that the Holy Spirit led, as occasion demanded, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to compose records of our Lord's life.

By giving us the *four records*, the Almighty was following the principle of the “law of the witnesses.” Each of the gospel writers, guided by the Holy Spirit, collected the material from the life of our Lord which would assist him in presenting the Master and His works according to the ideals set before him. With this general understanding of the case we are now ready to examine more minutely the four portraits of the Lord Jesus Christ.

According to the results of conservative scholarship, Mark in all probability was led by the Spirit to write his record first. A careful study of his account makes it very plain that he was presenting Christ as “the servant of Jehovah.” In order to paint such a portrait, he was led by the Spirit to select those materials which would enable him accomplish this purpose. A servant is diligently engaged about his master's business — thus our Lord Jesus Christ was always found doing the things that were pleasing to God.

There are certain catchwords of expressions that are characteristic of Mark. He constantly relates, in a brief yet graphic manner, the various things which Jesus did. His record is filled with narratives rather than speeches. After relating one thing that the Lord Jesus did, immediately he tells us that He hastened to perform another: hence, such words as *straightway* and *immediately* are characteristic of this gospel record.

In the Old Testament the Messiah is represented as the “obedient servant of Jehovah.” This presentation of Him is especially set forth in Isaiah's prophecy. A comparison of these predictions with the material which Mark used leads one to believe that he presented Jesus as the obedient servant of Jehovah. He clothed his thoughts in such language as was easily understandable by the Roman people for whom he, according to tradition, wrote.

Recent conservative scholarship has reached the conclusion that in all probability Matthew was the next to compose a life of our Lord. An examination of his Gospel shows that he was writing for Hebrews acquainted with the Old Testament and that he was speaking in thought forms easily intelligible to the Jew. The Hebrew people, according to certain authorities, were in the first half of the first century expectantly looking for the appearance of King Messiah. Matthew was led by the Spirit to present the life of Jesus in such a way as to convince the honest hearted truth seekers that Jesus of Nazareth was the one who literally filled out the picture of the expected Messiah. He constantly speaks of the kingdom of heaven, a typical Jewish expression, popular in the first century. All his material aided him in presenting Jesus as King of the Jews. For instance, in the first chapter he gives the regal genealogy; in the second, he tells us of the wise-men who came to visit Him who was born King of the Jews; in chapters five, six, and seven is found the King's “manifesto.” The parables of the kingdom of heaven are set forth in chapter 13. Thus throughout the book the material which serves in presenting Christ as King of the Jews is drawn from the vast store of information. Doubtless there was before Matthew's mind the Old Testament portrait of Messiah as King of the Jews. Hence he attempted to convince his brethren that Jesus of Nazareth was the one for whom they were looking.

Luke, the most trustworthy historian of ancient times according to present-day scholarship, wrote what the rationalist Renan called “the most beautiful book in the world,” the gospel of Luke. From the standpoint of literature, it is indeed a classic, as is recognized by all Greek scholars. Luke's writings are those of a polished and highly educated man. Let us not in this connection

forget that the Holy Spirit took the man as he was and used him to write his message, giving him both the thought and the words by which the ideas were expressed. According to tradition, which is supported by the internal evidence of the Gospel of Luke, this writer presented Jesus as the ideal man, our Kinsman-Redeemer, a perfect Man who came to redeem the human family from its misery and woe.

A casual reading of the third Gospel shows very clearly that Luke's ideal in writing this record was that of a perfect man who assumes the responsibility of caring for and delivering others. It is also evident that he viewed Jesus as a man, although he recognized the fact that He was God in human form. It was his consuming Spirit-inspired passion to present Jesus as the ideal man; hence he laid continual stress upon those human characteristics which shine forth so beautifully in our Lord's life. He presented Him as a holy man who had a burning desire for blessing humanity. In doing this, he laid great stress upon the prayer life of the Lord Jesus. Many human touches characterize this special record of the gospel.

The consensus of believing scholarship is that John wrote his record of the gospel last. From beginning to end his purpose is in evidence. He recognized the fact that Jesus was "the King of the Jews," the obedient servant of Jehovah" and "the Ideal Man, our Kinsman-Redeemer." Nevertheless he presented Him in none of these aspects. The ideal for which he was laboring was to picture Jesus of Nazareth as one of the divine personalities who entered the world by virgin birth. In his record there is very little narration of incidences in the life of Jesus. John was led by the Spirit to select those messages delivered by Jesus and those controversies in which the divine nature of his Lord was discussed in order that he might present most clearly the doctrine concerning the deity of Jesus of Nazareth. Hence, in nearly every chapter of this most wonderful book there shines forth with noonday radiance the deity of our Lord.

Some have objected to John because of this feature. Of course, such a criticism is due to unbelief in the heart. The historicity of Jesus has been thoroughly established and recorded in the first four decades of this era. There was in the latter half of the first century a tendency to question the deity of Jesus and an effort to overemphasize His human nature. Hence the Spirit led John to write his record to counteract that Jesus, though a man, was divine. Hence his record supplements that of the other three Evangelists.

These four pen-pictures of the Lord Jesus Christ reveal the identity of their hero. Though in each book Jesus is presented as occupying a different position, it is quite evident to the reader that the same person is described in each instance.

When the Four Gospels are studied carefully and prayerfully, it is seen that they give a harmonious story that bears the earmarks of truth from beginning to end. All seeming contradictions can be thoroughly and satisfactorily explained in the light of all the facts.

Simon Greenleaf, whose name is a household word throughout the legal profession, arranged a harmony of the Gospels and subjected it to the laws of evidence and has demonstrated to us that the testimony the four Evangelists meets every criterion of true and accurate evidence.

In view of the facts that we have four harmonious and consistent records of our Lord's life, and of the further fact that his entire career corresponds exactly to the first coming of Messiah as presented in my book, *Messiah: His Redemptive Career*, we logically conclude that Jesus of Nazareth was and is the Son of God, the Saviour of the world.

In view of all these facts, dear friend, will you not accept with your whole heart this Lord and Saviour as the only hope of salvation? May He enable you to make the decision now. You have no promise of tomorrow; today is yours. Hence wisdom dictates that you should accept the Lord Jesus now and give your heart and life to Him. May the Lord lead you to such a decision is my prayer.