

THE GOSPEL QUARTET

The Lettermen - the Supremes - the Beatles - 98 Degrees - are all examples of famous quartets. A quartet is a musical group consisting of four members. It's music in four-part harmony - *soprano, alto, tenor, and bass*. And there are different types of quartets - *a string quartet, a barber shop quartet, even a Gospel quartet*.

Speaking of a Gospel quartet, that's what we have in the first four books of the New Testament. One beautiful song written by a single composer, the Holy Spirit, in a four-part harmony. God used all four Gospel writers: *Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John* - to, in essence, sing the same song, but to sing it in different parts that would harmonize together and form the greatest story ever told!

It's as if the Holy Spirit film crew sat up four different cameras, at different angles - a camera at each corner of the action. The Gospels cover the same events, the same person, the same story, but from four different perspectives...

Mark wrote with an emphasis on the actions of Jesus. Compared to the other Gospels, Mark has very little dialogue. It appealed to action-oriented Romans. *Luke* wrote to the Greeks. The philosophers in Athens had a lofty view of man. Thus, Luke emphasizes Jesus' humanity, and depicts Jesus as the perfect human. *John* wrote

with the world in mind. He turns the spotlight on the deity of Jesus. Jesus was God - the Creator and the Savior of the world.

And *Matthew* wrote to the Hebrews. Matthew was a Jew, writing to Jews, addressing Jewish concerns. The Gospel of Matthew is a bridge that connects *Old Testament promises* with *New Testament premises*. Nine times Matthew uses the phrase, "It is written" - 14 times Matthew writes, "that which was spoken". There are 129 quotations or allusions from the Old Testament in the pages of Matthew. The first Gospel makes it clear that the *Messiah of the Old Testament* and the *Jesus of the New Testament* are one in the same.

Baseball fans know you can't score a run without touching all four bases - well, neither can you fully understand the ministry of Jesus without all four Gospels.

Jesus is *the* Servant of God - Mark's man of action. Luke says He's the man all men were meant to be. According to John, He is more than a man, He's God in the flesh. And Matthew reminds us that Jesus is the promised King of the Jews - the king who one day becomes King of all kings. Understand the four Gospels, and you'll *follow* Jesus, *trust* Jesus, *worship* Jesus, *submit* to Jesus.

BETROTHED OR BETRAYED ?

Today, the progression between courtship and marriage is a two step process - engagement, then marriage. But in Bible times there were three steps: *engagement, betrothal, marriage*. The betrothed couple had taken vows, and were legally bound. A certificate of divorce was required to end their obligations. Yet the couple lived separately, and were forbidden the sexual pleasures of marriage. Joseph and Mary were betrothed when word came to Joseph that Mary was pregnant.

Imagine Joseph's shock and outrage. How could Mary betray Him and prove unfaithful? The Law gave Joseph the right to have her stoned. I'm sure the thought crossed his mind, but he loved Mary, and decided to send her away quietly. Apparently, Joseph never believed Mary's story that the Father was the Holy Spirit - that the conception had been a miracle. But who could blame him? What if a girl in our youth group turned up pregnant, then with a sweet smile on her face, told us the Child was of the Holy Spirit. *Sure! Not one of us would buy her story.*

It took another miracle to convince Joseph of the truth of Mary's explanation. An angel appeared to him in a dream - affirmed Mary's story, and instructed him to take her as his wife. In verse 21 the angel says, "She will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." The name "JESUS" means "*Jehovah is salvation*".

Devotion Box - God's Greatest Gift And Humanity's Greatest Need

Of all the gifts God could have sent us He chose a Savior. Someone might suggest what we need most is an *expert in terrorism* - who can solve our current crisis. Or a *peace negotiator* - who can end unrest around the world. Or a *financial genius* - who can get the world's economy back on track. Or an *environmentalist* - who knows the fuel industry, while saving the earth from global warming, and acid rain... Or if you're a Braves fan - *a home run hitter*. But of all the needs the human family possesses, the one God chose to address was our need for a Savior - *someone who could save us from our sins*.

The ton of troubles that exist today are ultimately the result of one root problem - *sin*. Above all, we need a Savior who can forgive us, and bridge the gap with God. Rather than treat symptoms, God cut to the core of our problem. The gift He chose to give us was a Savior, and His name is "JESUS".

Bible Scan - Matthew 1-4

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IT'S IN THE GENES

In typical Jewish fashion Matthew and Luke begin with a genealogy – but there's a difference. Scholars believe Matthew traces the family tree of Jesus through the lineage of Joseph, while Luke provides us Mary's genealogy.

Notice how verse 16 is careful to note Jesus was born of Mary - not Joseph. The first 15 verses tell us that fathers *begot* sons, but not when we get to Joseph – it wasn't Joseph who *begot* Jesus. Rather we're told, "And Jacob begot Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus who is called the Christ." Jesus was virgin born, thus bypassing the inherent sin of the first man, Adam.

The promises of salvation were made to the Hebrews. God promised *a Savior* to Abraham - and to David, *a King or Messiah*. Joseph and Mary descended from both David and Abraham. It was through Jesus' *foster-father*, Joseph, that He inherited the *royal right* to *David's throne*. And through His *birth-mother*, Mary, the *racial right*. The parents God picked out for Jesus covered all the bases.

Here's a vital point: since the Jewish genealogies were stored in the temple - and since the temple was destroyed by the Romans - it's impossible for anyone living after 70 AD to produce proper proof of a Messianic pedigree. Jesus is not only the Messiah, He's the only person who can back up the claim.

In Genesis 5, Adam's genealogy is filled over and over again with the phrase, "and he died... and he died." Whereas Jesus' genealogy is filled with "begots". The genealogy of Jesus is more than just a bunch of begots. Matthew sets the tone for the rest of the New Testament - it speaks of new life and new beginnings.

Notice the five women in Jesus' genealogy – Tamar, Rahab, Ruth, Bathsheba, and Mary. Their appearance in the genealogy conveys important truths.

First, a woman's name in a Jewish genealogy was highly unusual. Jewish culture was male dominated. The Old Testament Jews treated women much the way Muslims treat them today. A woman's name rarely appeared in a pedigree. Yet Matthew sets the tone for the elevated status Christianity will give to women. Jesus and His followers revolutionized male and female relationships. Galatians 3:28 sums it up, "There is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ."

Second, the appearance of the first 4 women demonstrate God's grace. Tamar and Rahab were prostitutes - Ruth, a gentile - Bathsheba, an adulterer- yet God is communicating a vital truth. Jesus came to add to His family people soiled by sin. *The branches of His family tree are strong enough for sinners saved by grace.*

HERE COME THE WISE GUYS

Chapter 2, and the visit of the wise men is usually associated with the birth of Jesus, and remembered at Christmas. Most nativity scenes depict the wise guys and shepherds together - but their visit occurred months after Jesus' birth. We learn from Luke that Jesus was born in a stable, but according to 2:11 by the arrival of the wise men Joseph had moved his family into a house. Remember too, Herod doesn't order newborns killed, but children two years old and younger. Some time has elapsed between Jesus' birth and the visit of events of chapter 2.

Also notice, we usually think of 3 wise men. Probably because of the 3 gifts they bring to Jesus. Tradition even names them: Casper, Balthasar, Melchior. But nowhere does the Scripture say there were just three magi.

In fact, when their caravan rides into Jerusalem looking for the Messiah they create quite a stir among the people. Three lone riders would've gone unnoticed.

These magi were Babylonian astrologers who studied the stars. They looked for supernatural signs, and one had appeared – a star in the East pointed out the location of the Hebrew Messiah. Remember, Daniel had once served in the court of Babylon, and had been numbered among the magi. I'm sure they studied the prophecies in Daniel 9, and understood the coming of the Messiah was near.

Another Babylonian soothsayer named Balaam also saw this star, but years in advance. In Numbers 24:17, Balaam predicted, "I see Him, but not now; I behold Him,

but not near; a star shall come out of Jacob; a scepter shall rise out of Israel."

What this "*star*" actually was we're not sure. Famed astronomer Johannes Kepler theorized it was a certain alignment of planets. Was it a comet, or other celestial body? Or was it supernatural – put in the heavens by God for this very moment? Perhaps it was the Shekinnah glory sent by God to point the way.

When these oriental visitors asked Herod where the king had been born, he called for the theologians to search the Scriptures. They found Micah 5:2 - the prophet predicted the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem.

The wise men departed for Bethlehem, and the star stood over the exact building that housed Jesus. Imagine, an humble peasant couple in a rented house entertaining powerful world rulers – oriental dignitaries. What looked stranger were these men bowing before a bassinette - worshipping a toddler. They presented Jesus with gold for a king, frankincense for a priest, and myrrh (an embalming fluid) for a man who was born to die.

Notice the 3 reactions of Jesus in the story of the wise men. First, *rejection*. A paranoid Herod hated the thought of a rival king. He wanted Jesus killed. Second, *ambivalence*. Obviously, the Hebrew scholars knew Jesus' location, but never came to worship Him. And third, *adoration*. The wise men worshipped. Guys, wise men and women still come and worship Jesus.

A VOICE AND A DOVE

Jesus was baptized for 3 reasons.

It *revealed* to the crowd that He was the Messiah. The Father spoke. The Spirit descended in the form of a dove. People heard the voice and saw the dove. Heaven had spoken. It was a powerful testimony.

It was Jesus' way to *relate* to those who follow Him. We're baptized to identify with Jesus. He was baptized to identify with us.

It *reaffirmed* His own identity. I believe Jesus knew He was God from His mother's womb. But at His baptism it was affirmed to Him in an undeniable way. His baptism was His final preparation for His ministry.

THE ORIGINAL HIPPIE

Chapter 3 introduces us to a bizarre character, John the Baptizer. He was the advance man, or forerunner, for Jesus.

John was a wild man – an outdoorsman – a biblical Paul Bunyan. John looked like a old hippie. He wore a camel's skin coat, and a leather belt. And he was into organic food. He always had some trail mix in his pocket – locust and wild honey.

Tradition says John's coat was the mantle worn by the prophet Elijah. It had been stored in the temple, and retrieved by John's dad, Zechariah the priest. When the angel told Zechariah of the birth of his son, the angel said John would come "in the spirit and power of Elijah." Interestingly, John preached near the spot Elijah was taken to heaven – on the banks of the Jordan River.

And notice John's message, verse 2, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!" In essence, John said, "*Turn from your sin, and prepare for the Savior.*"

Despite his austere image, and his in-your-face message, Matthew tells us in 3:5, Jerusalem and all Judea flocked to see John. As one commentator writes, "Without gimmicks or gadgets, without a mailing list or even a miracle, the crowds flocked to John. What he did possess was a dedicated life, a humble attitude, a message from God, and the power of the Spirit. The church today could learn from John's example."

Devotion Box - John's Baptism

John not only preached, but baptized – this was a new practice.

In Judaism, gentiles who converted were baptized, but never Jews. Yet, John used baptism to announce a person's intentions to turn from their sin, and follow God. And Jews were flocking to the Jordan to see John, and hear his message.

Whenever God does a work, there will always be religious authorities who want to take control. This is why the Jewish leaders come out to see John. Sadducees were the liberals, and Pharisees were the legalists – but they all were hypocrites. In verse 7, John gives them a warm greeting, "Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance." John's baptism was a show of repentance, and true repentance is more than remorse – simply feeling sorry for my sin. It's more than tears. True repentance is the desire to change. It's the willingness to rearrange my life in ways that prevent me from sinning again. True repentance involves reacquiring God's power, restructuring my time, renewing my thoughts, reworking my schedule, reassessing my friends, recruiting accountability.

John says if we're sincerely repent there will be fruits of repentance.

It reminds me of the Jew who moved into a strict Catholic neighborhood. And every Friday, the Catholics went crazy. While they were limiting their diet to fish, the Jewish man was in his backyard grilling delicious-smelling steaks. The Catholics decided they needed to convert the Jew. After many months and great effort they succeeded. They took the Jew to a priest who sprinkled him with holy water and said, "Born a Jew, raised a Jew, now a Catholic." The Catholics were ecstatic. They can eat fish on Friday without the tempting smells of steak! But the next Friday, again the scent of steak drifted through the neighborhood. The Catholics rush to the Jewish man's house to "remind" him of his Catholic diet. And there they find him standing by the grill, over the sizzling steak. He has a knife in one hand, and his other hand is dipping in water. He's sprinkling water on the meat, while saying, "Born a cow, raised a cow, now a fish!"

My point is that true conversion will bear fruits worthy of repentance. You'll see a change. There's a problem if it's the same ol' same ol'...

Devotion Box - Jesus' Baptism

John knew that his baptism was only the first step. He says in verse 11, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." John's message was 2-fold – turn from sin, and trust in the Savior. John showed people their need to change, but he was powerless to effect any changes. *The change agent is the Holy Spirit.*

John baptized with water, but only Jesus baptizes with the Holy Spirit. *John paved the way, but John was not the way.* We need the power of the Spirit.

I'm convinced too many people know only the baptism of John. They come to church and are convicted of sin. They leave with the determination to resist temptation, and walk in victory. They've turned from sin... but Satan's temptations are strong. It doesn't take long before Satan pulls them back in. Satan has them on a string – they'll repeatedly repent, but can't break free.

Here's the problem, it's hard to turn from a temptation – and not turn back - unless I can turn to something more powerful than that temptation. This is why we need to be baptized and filled with the Holy Spirit. He floods us and thrills us with His love and joy and peace and power – all stronger than the lures of Satan. It's when I get caught in the pull of the Spirit, that He keeps me from turning back to sin.

Devotion Box - Wise Worship

Notice the 3-fold worship of the wise men: *pilgrimage, prostration, and presentation.*

Here are marks of true worship...

Pilgrimage... Worship involves you coming to Jesus, not Jesus coming to you. You go to Jesus on His terms, not your own.

Prostration – once you get to Jesus, you humble yourself and bow to His will.

Presentation – worship always involves giving to Jesus. Start by giving Him yourself.

Does your worship include *pilgrimage, prostration, and presentation*? Like the wise men, are you a wise worshipper?

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - September 23, 2001 - Ladies Retreat, October 19-20, "It's A Jungle Out There: Choosing The Better Part" .. Calvary Connections, Home Fellowships- check out the back of the Announcement Sheet .. Pick up the latest edition of LikeMinds in the foyer.

"you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins." - Matthew 1:21

**Bible Scan
Memory Verse**

THE TEMPTATION OF JESUS

Satan's First Line Of Attack

Matthew 4:1, "Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil." It's important to realize this was not a surprise attack. Satan didn't orchestrate this encounter. Jesus was being led by the Spirit.

Often when we encounter temptation we assume we made a wrong turn along the way. Not necessarily. God uses temptation to test, and toughen, and tune our faith. It's not Satan, but the Holy Spirit, who calls the shots when we're tempted. When the devil comes to tempt you, remind him that you belong to God. And that's what Jesus does. What's the first temptation Satan throws at Jesus...? Look at what Satan says in verse 3, "If You are the Son of God..." He prefaces the temptation in verse 6 the same way. He tries to get Jesus to doubt His identity, and in an attempt to prove it, make a mistake. This is why Jesus' baptism was pivotal preparation. God affirmed Jesus' identity just prior to this temptation.

I'm convinced this is Satan's first line of attack with us. If the devil can get us to question our connection with God - he can cut off our supply line, and break-up our communication - he can have his way with us. But if we know we're God's kids, we'll trust Him and draw from Him.

The Universal Temptations

1 John 2:16 tells us what makes the world go round, "For all that is in the world - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life - is not of the Father but is of the world."

Three temptations are universal... The lust of the flesh - *the desire to feel great*. The lust of the eyes - *the desire to look great*. The pride of life - *the desire to be great*. Every temptation of Satan appeals along one of these three lines.

Turn these stones to bread - "*Right now You're hungry; but Jesus, You can feel great.*" Throw yourself off the temple, and command the angels to catch your fall - "*Jesus, You'll look great. Everybody will know You. You'll be famous.*" Bow to me and I'll give you the kingdoms of the world - "*You'll be great and powerful.*"

Rather than yield to the temptation to feel great, look great, be great - Jesus chose to *seek God, serve God, worship God*. Jesus put *the spiritual above the physical - the internal above the external - the temporal above the eternal*.

Jesus' Chief Weapon

And notice the chief weapon Jesus used against Satan. Three times (verses 4, 7, and 10) Jesus quotes Scripture. He pulls the sword of the Spirit from its sheath, and slays the serpent with the truth of God's Word. The Bible is a powerful weapon against Satan. Study it, apply it, and use it against the devil!

I love the story in 2 Samuel 23:9-10 about Eleazar the son of Dodo. But this Eleazar was far from a dodo. He was one of David's mighty men. We're told, "(Eleazar) arose and attacked the Philistines until his hand was weary, and his hand stuck to the sword. The LORD brought about a great victory that day..."

Eleazar clutched his sword so tightly he couldn't pry his hand loose, and it was his vice-grip that led to victory. Guys, if you want to win victories over Satan and temptation, don't be a *dodo* - make like *the son of Dodo* - and get a strong hold on your spiritual sword, the Word of God. A vice-grip is needed for victory.

Devotion Box - Fishers Of Men And Menders Of Men

In Matthew 4:18-22 Jesus calls His first disciples. He finds Peter and Andrew fishing, so He says to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Jesus took the natural occupation of these men and gave it spiritual significance. This is the way Jesus works in our lives. He redeems our ambitions, and rechannels them in an eternal direction. If you're a musician, or a gardener, or an athlete - Jesus will find some way to employ your background - expand on it - redirect it - then use it for His glory.

Jesus found Peter and Andrew *fishing*, but He found James and John *mending*. They were mending their nets. Could it be that Jesus made them *menders of men*? It's true. Peter was an evangelist, but John was more a pastor. He was known as "*the apostle of love*". His letters brought healing and maturity to the Church. John encouraged spiritual growth and love for one another.

Jesus calls both *fishers of men*, and *menders of men*.