

## **God Plans Ahead - The Synoptic Gospels Perspective**

God Plans Ahead, and you are part of His Plans

Did you know that God plans ahead?

There are some things God never says:

"Wow, never saw that one coming!" or "I am surprised"

God even planned ahead for the authorities of Jesus' day. He even used the emperors in power.

Augustus Caesar: Called a census of the entire known world. This forced Mary and Joseph to go to the small town in Bethlehem, so that there would be no room in an inn, so that Jesus would be born in a cattle trough, right under the star of the east, where wise men would bring him gifts, and shepherds nearby would worship him--so he could be born, not an earthly King, but a servant, who would come to be the Savior of all.

Tiberias Caesar: Ruled during Jesus' death, and even through the Romans were all about judicial fairness, appointed a wishy-washy Roman governor over Judea named Pontius Pilate, who would preside over Jesus' trial, and after claiming he was not guilty, sentenced him to death anyway. He was removed from his office shortly after Jesus' death.

In the same way:

God Planned ahead when he appointed Matthew, Mark, and Luke to write the synoptic gospels

What is the purpose of the gospels?

Answer: To teach believers about the life and teachings of Christ

Why three perspectives?

London's national gallery of art: there is a single frame with three portraits of King Charles I, one with his head facing left, one facing forward, one

facing right. Van Dyck painted this portrait to give a fellow artist enough perspectives of the King to make an accurate statue of King Charles I.

God paints three perspectives of Jesus to give us a full look of Jesus' life, to most accurately replicate the ministry he had in our day.

There is a famous story of a police officer, who stated when witnesses use the same words, there is a problem, but when witnesses tell the story from a different perspective, it has the sound of truth.

### **Let me introduce Matthew:**

Matthew was a Jew and former Jewish tax collector. He wrote his Gospel for the Jews, so they would see Jesus as both the Messiah (the Jews longed for) and the King of the kingdom (they yearned to see).

His Gospel addresses the Jews via 3 "Highways"

Highway 1: Fulfillment of prophecies - Matthew contains 9 prophecies that the other gospels do not have, particularly about who the Messiah would be. Because family genealogy was so important to Jews, he starts with this RIGHT AWAY (to the Jews, if no family link, no Messiah!). He quickly introduces Jesus as the son of David and son of Abraham, leading Jesus' line back to the first Jew, Abraham, ensuring that King David was included since the Jews knew that the Messiah would also come from David's line.

Highway 2: Linked Jesus to the Kingdom -- Jews needed a king of the kingdom they expected. Matthew, inspired by the Spirit of God, is the only gospel writer who continually recorded Jesus referring to His kingdom as the "kingdom of heaven" (and did this over thirty times). Other gospel writers record Jesus referring to the "the Kingdom of God." Jews believed God's name was so holy, that they rarely said it! So, Matthew used wisdom in his terminology. He wanted Jews to understand the Kingdom so passionately that he includes all 12 of Jesus' references to the kingdom of heaven. He records Jesus introducing each one with "The kingdom of heaven is like" and then records the parable describing how the kingdom operates. In Matthew, the Kingdom of Heaven described by the following 12 parables - pulled weeds, a mustard seed, yeast, the hidden treasure, the pearl, the net, the workers in the vineyard, two sons,

wicked renters, wedding banquet, ten virgins, talents.

Highway 3: Links Jesus' teaching to the Pentateuch (G, E, L, N, D) which the OT Jews held in the highest regard. Matthew splits Jesus' teaching into 5 parts, corresponding to the first 5 books of the Jewish law. He concludes each part with the phrase, "now after Jesus had finished saying all these things." The five sections of Jesus' teaching include: Transition from private life to public ministry, miracles and conflict, ministry in Galilee and growing tension, transition in ministry from Galilee to Judea, and the last section includes all of the last supper, crucifixion, resurrection.

Matthew highlighted Jesus as Messiah and King

### **Let me introduce Mark:**

Mark was not an apostle, Scripture allows us to see that he lived in Jerusalem, was Simon-Peter's friend, Baranabas' cousin, and worked with Paul on missionary journeys.

Mark wrote his Gospel for the Romans, who needed to see the power of Jesus without being threatened by an earthy overthrow of the government.

Shows Jesus as "Servant of The Lord"

Mark did this via 3 "Highways"

Highway 1: Showing Jesus' Power in Ministry: Mark wastes no time. Romans didn't care at all about Jesus' family line, his birth, or early life. Therefore, Mark didn't bother including this. Romans cared about hard work and were mesmerized by miracles. Therefore, Mark was a "bottom line" person. By the end of the first chapter, before Mark's pen is fully wet with ink, John the Baptist has already prepared the way, Jesus was water baptized, called his disciples, cast an evil spirit out, healed Simon Peter's mother in law, held the first healing service, held the first prayer service, and heals the first leper. Whew! Mark records 42 activities of Jesus Christ being performed immediately!

Highway 2: Explains Jewish customs and Aramaic words. Romans spoke Greek. Jews spoke Aramaic. Without some additional explanation,

Romans would lose the message because of their different language and customs. In response, Mark is the only one who includes 8 explanations of Jesus' Aramaic words or Jewish customs. For instance, in Mark 5 Mark records Jesus saying "talitha koum!" and explains that it means "little girl I say get up!" Also, Mark records the following words of Jesus, "Eloi Eloi, lama sabachani," explaining that it means, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?" Regarding Jewish customs, such as in Luke 15, Mark explains Preparation Day (this means it was the day before the Jewish sabbath).

Highway 3: Shows Jesus' obedience to the Father, even to death. Mark spends 1/2 of his relatively short gospel explaining Jesus' suffering, death, and resurrection. This would be inspired by the hope to turn a Roman heart towards Jesus. Anyone who would be so obedient to a Father to suffer the way Jesus did, die the horrible death, and be raised to life was worth listening to. Mark also includes a quote from a Roman centurion in Mark 15. Listen to this: Mark 15, verse 38: "when the centurion heard Jesus cry and saw how he died, he said, surely this man is the Son of God!" Seeing the obedience of Jesus' heart to suffer and die for us can turn a hard heart toward God.

Mark wrote to the Romans about a saving servant, the Servant of The Lord, Jesus Christ

### **Let me introduce Luke:**

Luke was a highly educated Greek man, and also not one of the 12 apostles. He was a physician and dear friend of Paul.

Luke's gospel is part one of a 2 part work known as Luke-Acts

Luke writes for his fellow Gentiles (non-Jews). He portrays Jesus as the Son of Man, the Savior of all, and the one who desires to seek and save the lost!

Luke was all about the ALL

Only in Luke do we get to see the fullness of Jesus' genuine ministry to women, the poor, and the outcast. Jesus wanted to make it very clear that

these groups were valuable despite the culture of the time.

We see the emphasis on seeking and saving the lost. In Luke 15, Luke records the parables of the lost sheep, coin, and son.

Luke spoke to the Gentiles (ALL people) via 4 “Highways”

Highway 1: ALL people through genealogy - Like Matthew, Luke also starts out with genealogy, but traces all the way back to Adam and refers to Adam as "the son of God" to demonstrate further Jesus' relatability to all people.

Highway 2: ALL people through the words of others - Luke emphasizes the angel's words that the good news is for "all people" (Luke 2) and Simeon in the temple (holding Jesus) saying this is “God's salvation, prepared in the sight of all people.”

Highway 3: ALL people through addressing specific groups. Only in Luke is it demonstrated that Jesus is specifically the savior to 9 groups of people. These groups are determined first by heritage, 2nd by status, 3rd by gender: Samaritans, Gentiles, Jews, Sinners/outcasts, respected people, the poor, the rich, men, women.

Purpose 4: All people through being the only perfect person. The highest goal of Greeks was to find the ideal or perfect person. Luke was the man for the job, being a highly educated Greek physician. In Luke mostly, We see Jesus loving all people, relying on prayer, depending on the Spirit of God, and being above the highest standard of character.

Of note, Luke records the last words of Jesus telling the believers to wait for the Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Luke 24 and Acts 1)

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In summary

All gospels contain the following 6 things: John the Baptist preparing the way, the baptism of Jesus in water, temptation of Jesus by Satan, transfiguration, [trial death burial], and resurrection.

God made sure that, regardless of the target audience, that the core necessities were never missed!

## GOD PLANS AHEAD

Jesus was always about reaching the person where we are! Let us be a people that highlights the necessary attributes of Jesus, and exemplifies the necessary attributes of Jesus to win the lost!

The three perspectives show Jesus as loving but righteous, tender but powerful, humble yet fearless, a servant yet a Saving King.

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Resources utilized:

Synoptic Gospels: The Life and Teachings of Christ. Global University. © 2005.

New Testament Survey. Global University. © 2006.