

Ps. 78:1-6 *“Oh my people, hear my voice and listen to the words of my mouth. I will open my mouth in parable and utter hidden lessons, things from of old, things we have heard and have known, things our parents taught us. We will tell the coming generation about the glorious deeds of the Lord, of His might and the wonders He has done.*

God established a testimony in Jacob and appointed a law in Israel when he commanded our parents to teach us, their children so that the next generation might know them, our children yet unborn. Then they might arise and tell these things to their children, so that they all would put their trust and their hope in God.”

We are truly blessed to have four different perspectives on the life of Jesus. Because we have the opportunity to see him through different eyes we can understand him more deeply than a single account might have allowed. The four gospels even begin differently. Notice that

Matthew begins his account of the life of Jesus with a genealogy and with Joseph’s perspective of Jesus’ birth.

Mark begins with John the Baptist – the messenger foretold, who came to prepare the way, the one who first recognized Jesus as the Messiah.

Luke, the physician, starts with what some have called the women’s perspective. He tells of two miraculous pregnancies. The first is that of John the Baptist who is to be born to a couple too old to have children, Zechariah and Elizabeth. Elizabeth is not only too old, but she has been barren her entire life. Then, Luke presents us with the visitation of an angel who tells a young virgin that she is going to have a child.

John begins his report before creation, before there was time or space. He uses a common Hebrew writing technique by using words that bring passages of Hebrew Scripture to mind. He starts his account with three words his readers would immediately identify with the book of Genesis – in fact, the three words are what the Jews called and still call the first book of the Bible – *In the beginning*. Genesis says, *“In the beginning, God ...”* John writes, *“In the beginning was the Word.”* By doing this, John has instantly drawn a parallel between “God” and “the Word.” He then makes it clear that he means the parallel to be literal when he says *“and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”* ...

In verse 14 John describes the wonder of what we call the “Incarnation.” He writes, *“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the One and only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.”*

John continues in verse 17 saying, *“grace and truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only.”*

Throughout the gospel, of John makes the message very clear. Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. He was persecuted and tortured. He died on a cross and rose from the dead . . . and he did it for us. He did it for me . . . He did it for you . . .

He didn’t do it because we asked him to. He did it because he loves us.

We may not completely understand how it all works, but we **can trust him**. The Word who is Jesus Christ is alive, and his Spirit lives inside of everyone who trusts in him.

The four Gospel writers start differently, and each Gospel ends differently. All four Gospels include a report of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem but with slightly different perspectives. I chose Luke 19:28-44 today, because I see us in it.

Do you know where? Well, today we have waved branches. We have praised him with joy. But those things are in the other Gospel accounts too. However, Luke has a mention of us (at least probably most of us) that is not in the other reports. Luke recounts Jesus speaking of us. We are the stones.

Look at Luke 19 verse 39. The Pharisees disapprove of the things the people are shouting to Jesus, and they tell him to rebuke them. In verse 40, Jesus replies, "*I tell you, if they keep quiet, the **stones** will cry out.*" Stones? How could stones cry out in praise?

John the Baptist told us how. Look in Matthew in chapter 3:9. John tells the Pharisees that being physical children (or biological descendants) of Abraham was not what would save them (he was saying, in effect, "You're not indispensable") because "*out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.*" God could raise up children from the lifeless stones their feet!

We can't find salvation in who we are, or in who our ancestors were, we are God's holy people only when we respond to his grace. God raises us up from lifelessness. If we look at 1 Peter 2: 4-10, we find that Jesus is THE Living Stone and we are as living stones, being built into a spiritual house. He **did** raise up children of Abraham out of stones to shout His praise. We, the lifeless stones have been made into living stones, built together on the One sure foundation (the cornerstone) who is also the capstone and the rock that causes the unrighteous to stumble. We once were not a people, but now we are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, we have received mercy!

It's breathtaking to think of what He has done for us! Not a single one of us deserves it! It is given to us by His grace alone. We can refuse his gift to us. We can never be worthy of it. And when we accept His offer, He gives us EVERY blessing. Did you know that if you are a believer, you have received **every** spiritual blessing? They are all there to be found as we grow in Him. Ephesians 1: 3 says it,

Eph 1:3 "*Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with **every** spiritual blessing in Christ?*"

Brothers and sisters, Christ tells us to follow his lead and trust in him. When we submit to him, when we tell him we will do things HIS way, we finally find OUR way, our TRUE way, our destiny. It's a destiny of glory that He has had for us since before the dawn of time. We become His people. And all the promises he has given to His chosen ones are ours.

But, before we commit to Jesus, we have no real life. Ephesians 2:12 tells us that we are "*without hope and without God in the world.*" We aren't moving toward our living destiny - the destiny of glory that God has prepared for us. We are following dead ends, striving for things that never satisfy. We struggle long and hard to reach worldly goals, only to find that they are nothing but vapor.

Advertisers understand this. They tap into our deep yearnings to be our "true selves" and find our "true destiny." They tell us that some product will heal our emptiness and hollowness. They give us slogans like "Go for the gusto!" "Live life to the fullest!" "Live Mas!" But no matter how many beers we drink, and no matter how many Taco

Bell meals we eat, our emptiness is never filled. The fake and phony world without God brings only death. God calls us to die to that world of death, so we can live in His.

Augustine of Hippo lived in Africa in the late 3rd early 4th centuries. He wrote this prayer to God,

"You have made us for yourself, and our hearts are restless till they find their rest in you."

Philosopher-mathematician of the 1600's, Blaise Pascal wrote,

"What else does this craving, and this helplessness, proclaim but that there was once in man a true happiness, of which all that now remains is the empty print and trace? This he tries in vain to fill with everything around him, seeking in things that are not there the help he cannot find in those that are, though none can help, . . . since this infinite abyss can be filled only with an infinite object; God himself."

Sisters and Brothers, they're right. We're created to love God, to follow God, to live for him. NOTHING else can ever truly satisfy us. If you sense this emptiness, if this is you, oh, please, please let God fill your emptiness. It's so important. It's truly, truly a matter of life, rather than death.

Should you live for Jesus? Is he really someone worth living for? Is he really someone you can trust? That's the bottom-line question isn't it. Who is this Jesus who is God come in the flesh, who lived, and healed and preached and taught, and went willingly to the cross? Who is this Jesus who is risen from the dead and who still lives for you? Do you know him? Not about him, do you **know** HIM? If not ask him to show himself to you. Tell him you want to know him more than anything else; that you will give everything to know him. Tell him that you choose right now to turn away from those values and things and behaviors that have kept you from him. If you have known him, but lost touch with him, tell him right now, in your heart that you miss him and long for him and ask him to bring you close to him again.

When we commit our lives to Jesus, when we submit to him and trust in him, he brings our stony hearts to life. We become living stones, and he builds us into a living dwelling, a temple for God. We have **real** life, not the worldly life of futility but a life with the future that God has prepared for us. We become alive because of Jesus. Die to futility. Die to emptiness. Die to sin. And live for Him as He lives for you.

"May God himself, our God of love and peace, sanctify you through and through. May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless until the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. "(1 Thess. 5:23). "May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit go with you all." (2 Cor 13:14). Amen.