

Third New Testament Summary the Uniqueness of the Gospel of Christ

The story of the New Testament is the story of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It has been said that all theology is christology from the exclusivist stand-point that Christianity represents objective truth and if this is true -- and if Jesus is Lord -- then this story of the New Testament is the single most important story in the history of man (though Christians also hold to the Old Testament as God's Word which anticipates Christ and teaches the theology which undergirds the New Testament). The "4 Gospels" are four books of a unique genre. In fact, they are their own genre. They are not chronologies. For example in many places, they "jump around," and most importantly, they focus on the 3-year public ministry of Jesus Christ (especially the last week and last few days of his life). They are rich in figures of speech. Take note that the three "synoptic" (common view) Gospels present the parables (extended simile's) of Jesus Christ, while the 4th Gospel (John's, known as the "Maverick" Gospel) presents the famous "I AM" statements of Jesus Christ which harken back to Exodus 3 (where Moses asks God, "What is your name?" Answer: "I AM" ... the basis for "Yahweh" which means "I cause to be."). It is important to understand that the "incarnation" of Jesus Christ is a divine mystery and miracle. It is not simply synonymous with "conception"...it is the mystery of God the Son taking on human nature (do not confuse the term with the Hindu and New Age idea of "reincarnation"..."reincarnation" and Christian "resurrection" are diametrically opposed). Understand that when Christians (most) speak of "The Kingdom of God" they mean the rule of God [note that millenarian movements within Christianity will often equate "The Kingdom of God" with their idea of a future, 1000 year millennium on earth]. However, the traditional idea is explained this way: where you find Jesus Christ, the King, there you will find the Kingdom of God. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God is within you/among you." (Luke 17:21) Because the Kingdom of God is so vital to the Christian faith...sin, the world and the evil one have ferociously attacked it. The early "Christian deviations" are examples of such attacks. The main one was from the teaching of the Gnostics. Their name is derived from the Greek word "gnosis" which means knowledge. They taught that the key to salvation was the freeing of the good spirit from the flawed and inferior physical body. They taught that it was necessary to find the "secret knowledge" (which Christ provides) to apply the knowledge necessary for freeing oneself from the body. Christians adamantly reject this idea. God's creation is good and continues to be good! God also redeemed our bodies as well as our spirits through Christ. The greatest problem with gnosticism, however, is that it rejects the Gospel (that we are saved from sin and death through the substitutional life, death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ). Another deviation is "docetism" from the Greek work "dokein" that means "to appear." Here, they realized that it was difficult to say that the body was bad, since Jesus had a body, however, through this teaching they said that it only APPEARED that Jesus had a body. To this the ancient theologian Gregory of Nazianzan said, "What Christ did not become/take on, He did not redeem." If Christ only appeared to have a body, then our bodies will not rise and they are in fact only inferior parts of the creation. The heretic Cerinthus tried to improve on Docetism by saying that Christ did indeed have a real body, but that the divine spirit did not descend and enter into Christ until He was

baptized and furthermore, the divine spirit departed from Christ when Christ was on the cross. This false teaching denies the incarnation...that God (Christ) took on our flesh...and it denies that Christ is true God and true man (the two natures in one person, "the personal union"). Also, be aware of the main objection from the Jews: "How could Christ be God if He died as a criminal, because the book of Deuteronomy says that everyone who is hung on a tree is cursed...so how can the Messiah be cursed?!" This is what Galatians 3:13 addresses by the way. The answer is that the ONLY way the Messiah could truly save us was taking on our flesh (becoming one of us) AND *on the cross of Calvary*, He ALSO had to take on Himself our sin, our condemnation and our curse. On the cross, He was cursed in our stead so as to remove the curse of our sin from us. This is also why 2nd Corinthians 5:21 reveals that Jesus "became sin for us," taking our place on the cross, so that God's judgment of all sin (our sin) would fall on Jesus. Thus, Isaiah 53 says, "by His wounds we are healed." (vs. 5) When you are in Christ, God no longer sees your sin; Jesus took it. Jesus died with it. Your sin is now buried. Psalm 103:12: "as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions/sins from us."

In Christ, Dr. Espinosa