

**OUTLINES OF THE LIFE OF
CHRIST: A GUIDE TO THE STUDY
OF THE CHRONOLOGY,
HARMONY,
AND PURPOSE OF THE GOSPELS**

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Outlines of the life of Christ: a guide to the study of the chronology, harmony, and purpose of the Gospels by Eustace R. Conder

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EUSTACE R. CONDER

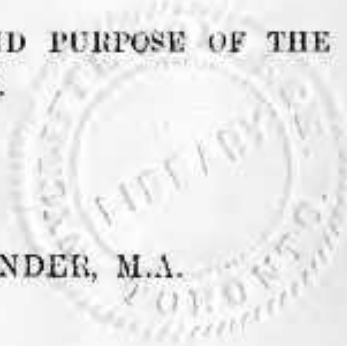
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OUTLINES
OF
THE LIFE OF CHRIST.

A Guide to the Study

OF THE
CHRONOLOGY, HARMONY, AND PURPOSE OF THE
GOSPELS.

By EUSTACE R. CONDER, M.A.



"OTHER FOUNDATION CAN NO MAN LAY THAN THAT IS LAID, WHICH IS
JESUS CHRIST." 1 *Corinthians* iii. 11.

THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,
56, PATERNOSTER ROW; 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD; AND
164, PICCADILLY.

P R E F A C E.

THE present volume does not enter into any rivalry with those large and learned works on "the Life of Christ" which have issued from the press of late years in rapid succession, and whose large circulation bears witness to the undying interest of this inexhaustible theme. It aims at meeting a widely-felt want, by presenting in the most condensed form consistent with practical utility and interest, a trustworthy guide to the study of the chronology of the Gospel history, and of the harmony, contents, and purpose of the Four Gospels. It is therefore neither a compendium of the literature of the Gospels, nor a manual of controversy concerning the Gospels, but simply an aid to the study of the Gospels.

Those who wish to acquaint themselves with the opinions of eminent scholars on controverted points in the Gospel narrative (and what point has not been controverted?) will find abundant store of quotations and references in the learned and popular works of Dr. Farrar and Dr. Geikie; in McClellan's very learned and able work, *The Four Gospels*; and (in the most compact and convenient form) in Andrews's *Bible Student's Life of Our Lord*. With

reference to sceptical criticism, Ebrard's *Gospel History* (Clark's translation) may be consulted with advantage. It is superfluous here to remind the student of other works in which the same ground is traversed, with diverse degrees of accuracy, knowledge, and clearness:—commentaries, Bible dictionaries, and works on New Testament Introduction.

The aim of the present Writer has been to place the instructed and thoughtful English reader, as far as possible, in a position to judge for himself on the questions which meet us in the study of the Gospels. For this purpose it is of first importance to draw a sharp line between facts in evidence and conjectures; between the authority of *testimony* and the authority of *opinion*; and to understand clearly, that the opinions and conjectures of even the most learned scholars do not constitute evidence. The placid dogmatism of contented ignorance is scarcely more to be dreaded than the superficial mimicry of scholarship which consists in knowing the names of a number of eminent writers who support a certain view, and of a number of others equally eminent who oppose it. To weigh authorities against one another, you need a capacious and delicate balance. But in not a few even of the most important questions, it is really an easier task for a well-taught, candid, clear-headed reader to form his own judgment with well-grounded confidence, than to decide on which side authority preponderates. Even in questions of translation, where the most accomplished scholar has no right to give a positive verdict (as in the question whether to translate, in Matt. vi. 13, "from evil," or "from the

evil one"), the English reader may be quite competent to form his own opinion from the context and the sense.

It is of scarcely less importance to perceive clearly at what point evidence stops short, and conjecture and opinion form our only light. An overstrained effort after an unattainable degree of certainty and accuracy is apt to beget a reaction towards doubt and confusion. In the following pages, accordingly, some of the most intricate problems on which harmonists have exercised their ingenuity are set aside, on the simple principle that the "order" which St. Luke leads us to expect in his Gospel (chap. i. 1) is by no means necessarily always the order of time; order of topic being no less important and natural; and that it is therefore a vain labour to attempt to give to every incident or saying its exact chronological place.*

* Even while the last sheets have been going through the press, a friend, whose judgment and critical scholarship command high respect, has pleaded in favour of the notion that Luke ix. 51-53; xiii. 22; and xvii. 11, point to three chronological starting-points, corresponding with John vii. 10; x. 22; and xii. 1. To me it seems plain, on the contrary (a) that the first passage is most suitably as well as grandly interpreted as referring to our Lord's successive visits to Jerusalem, and steadfast purpose, during the last six months, and does not correspond with the privacy on which St. John lays stress; (b) that in the second passage the use of the imperfect tense indicates a *period*, not a single occasion, and well harmonises with the ministry in Perea (ver. 31 shows that our Lord was in Herod's dominions); and (c) that the third passage cannot possibly refer to the final journey, which had no connection with either Galilee or Samaria, but was made from Ephraim (John xi. 54), within the territory of Judæa.

The main order of events and dates, apart from these subordinate details, will be found closely to correspond with that adopted by the learned and judicious Dr. Robinson. As this is in no sense a following of his lead, but results from careful independent examination of every date and authority, this agreement may safely be accepted as no unimportant confirmation of the results here sought to be established.

Some points, especially in the earlier portion of the Gospel history, might perhaps with advantage have received fuller treatment. This defect, if such it be, has arisen from anxiety to keep the volume within very moderate limit as to size. If the outline is correctly and clearly drawn, the reader will find little difficulty in filling in any omitted details.

If thoughtful and devout readers of the Gospels find in these pages as much profit and interest as the composition of them has afforded the Writer, they will not be sent forth in vain ; with which hope and prayer he humbly commends them to the blessing of God.

TABLE OF CONTENTS.



PART I.—INTRODUCTION.

SECTION I.—THE GOSPEL HISTORY.

	PAGE
The Four Gospels. Inspiration not involved in our inquiry ; but historic truth assumed. Note.	9-13

SECTION II.—DATE OF THE NATIVITY.

Length of Herod the Great's reign, and date of his death. Interval between birth of <i>Jesus</i> and death of Herod. Ap- proximately true date. Birth of John the Baptist. Note on certain objections regarding the census and the season of the year	14-24
-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------

SECTION III.—THE FULNESS OF TIME.

Three Revolutions during five centuries before the Birth of Christ, serving as preparation for His Coming. State of Jewish Nation. Note : references and dates	25-32
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------

TABLE OF CONTENTS.

PART II.—THE THIRTY YEARS.

SECTION I.—INFANCY.

	PAGE
Bethlehem. Presentation in Temple. Visit of Magi.	
Flight into Egypt	33-39

SECTION II.—LIFE AT NAZARETH.

Nazareth. Judæa subjected to a Heathen Governor. Visit to Temple. Brethren of Jesus. The Thirty Years . . .	40-47
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------

SECTION III.—THE EVE OF THE MINISTRY.

"Fifteenth Year of Tiberius;" difficulty and solution, Ministry of John. Baptism of Jesus. Forty Days in Desert. First Disciples. First Miracle. Cleansing of the Temple	48-57
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------

PART III.—THE MINISTRY.

SECTION I.—FIRST YEAR, A.D. 27-28.

Personal Appearance of the Lord Jesus. His Teaching. Duration of Ministry in Judæa. Return, through Samaria, to Galilee, and commencement of Galileean Ministry. (Note on Wieseler.) The Four Disciples. Sabbath at Capernaum. Missionary Tour. Sermon on Mount. Paralytic Healed. Matthew Called. Note on Miracles	58-81
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------

SECTION II.—SECOND YEAR, A.D. 28-29.

The Feast referred to in John v. 1. Cure of Infirm Man. Breach with Rulers. Sabbath Questions. On the Shore of the Lake. Choice of Apostles. Unbelieving Kindred. Centurion's Servant. Nain. John in Prison. Incidents. Day of Parables. Tempest Quelled. Gergesa (or Gadara). Matthew's Feast. Jairus. Nazareth. Winter Work. Mission of the Twelve. St. Luke's Gospel. Death of John. Return of Apostles. Feeding of Five Thousand. Walk on Sea. Capernaum	82-110
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------