

**A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS  
FOR HISTORICAL STUDY; AN  
ANALYTICAL SYNOPSIS OF THE  
FOUR GOSPELS IN THE VERSION  
OF 1881**

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A harmony of the Gospels for historical study; an analytical synopsis of the four Gospels in the version of 1881 by Wm. Arnold Stevens & Ernest De Witt Burton

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*Bible, the 4 Gospels, English, Harmonized.*

# A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

FOR HISTORICAL STUDY

AN ANALYTICAL SYNOPSIS OF THE FOUR GOSPELS

IN THE VERSION OF 1881

BY

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AND

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## PREFACE.

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THIS Harmony, like the small Outline Handbook of the Life of Christ which preceded it, is intended to promote and facilitate the historical study of the gospels. The Life of Christ is now engaging the attention of Biblical scholars to a remarkable degree. In the decades that followed the publication of Strauss's Life of Jesus in 1835, the literature of the subject was chiefly controversial. An apologetic motive was manifestly dominant in the powerful works of Neander, Ebrard, and Lange. At present it is the subject itself that commands attention. There is a deepening conviction that in Biblical science, and indeed in Christian theology as a whole, the study of the Life of Christ should be made primary and central. Books upon the subject are increasing in number. But it is to be remembered that the principal text-book is the fourfold gospel. The study of the Life of Christ is primarily the historical study of the four gospels, which implies the tracing of the events they narrate in their chronological sequence and in their organic connection. For this purpose a constant comparison of the four narratives is necessary, and a synopsis or harmony becomes in the very nature of the case indispensable.

In accordance with current usage we have used the title "Harmony," although, as frequently happens with technical terms, it is likely to convey to the general reader a sense not intended. To some it may perhaps require explanation that the proper object of a harmony of the gospels is not to harmonize them, if by that is meant bringing them into agreement. It is simply an arrangement by which the corresponding parts of different documents may be brought together before the eye and compared — a method not peculiar to Biblical study, but familiar to all students of literary and historical documents.

Accordingly we have made no attempt to harmonize what is not harmonious, but simply to exhibit the facts. Whatever discrepancies the four narratives contain, we have preferred to let the printed page display them equally with the agreements, rather than adopt an arrangement or a dissection which should withdraw them from view. Wherein the four writers differ, and how they differ, is precisely what the intelligent reader wishes

to know; eventually he comes to value their writings even more for their differences than for their exact agreements.

Still it is not to be forgotten that thus far every effort to accentuate their disagreement has only strengthened the impression of their concord as historical documents. The most powerful of all arguments for the substantial truthfulness of the witnessing evangelists is to be found in the self-consistency and verisimilitude of the history, when exhibited in a harmony constructed according to the principles indicated in this preface. If, after a century of modern criticism of the gospels, it is found that, despite all differences, the four mutually supplement and mutually interpret one another, so that from their complex combination there emerges *one* narrative, outlining a distinct historical figure, and producing upon the mind an irresistible impression of reality, it is difficult to imagine a more convincing attestation of the records on which the Christian church bases its faith in the person and work of its Founder than is furnished by this very fact.

If it be asked what distinctive features the present Harmony possesses to justify the adding of another to the already long list of books of this general class, the answer must be found, if at all, in the following three characteristics, which have been partly indicated above: (1) It is planned with special reference to the historical study of the gospels, rather than to the minute verbal comparison of parallel sections. (2) It endeavors, while exhibiting the parallelism of the gospels, paragraph by paragraph, at the same time to preserve, as far as is consistent with this endeavor, the structure and peculiarities of the several gospels; aiming not to indicate the solution of all harmonistic problems, but, as far as is possible consistently with the construction of a harmony at all, to leave all these problems where the gospels themselves leave them. (3) It is designed to render special assistance in the study of Christ's discourses and sayings, and this both in respect to the individual unity of the reports of them, and in respect to the parallelism of these reports one with another.

Consistently with these aims we have sought to make the nine main Parts, into which the whole material is divided, correspond to the natural periods of the life and ministry of Jesus, as these are indicated in the gospels themselves. The difference of plan between the several gospels, especially between the fourth and the synoptic gospels, makes it impossible that each main division-line of the harmony should coincide with a main dividing line running through all four of the gospels alike. It is hoped, however, that it will be recognized that the plan here adopted is built solely upon the gospels, and exhibits the natural periods of the history, as these appear from a comparison of the four accounts.

We have deemed it of the first importance to fix attention upon these natural divisions of the history. The table of Principal Divisions, or Parts, is therefore spread upon



a separate page. The Analytical Outline also exhibits, in a form convenient for memorizing or reference, a more complete articulation of the whole history. These tables are, therefore, not mere tables of contents for the Harmony that follows. They furnish a conspectus of the history, and are intended to aid the mind in grasping the relation of its several parts to one another.

In the Analytical Outline the Parts are divided into Chapters. The purpose of these chapter-divisions is twofold: first, to group together the sections for convenience of study; and, second, to recognize the existence of certain divisions of the material, intermediate between the Section and the Part, which in some portions of the narrative seem to have been in the mind of one or another of the gospel writers themselves. Chapter VII. perhaps represents the chapter-division at its best: the events of sections 21-26 seem manifestly to constitute in the mind of the evangelist himself a distinct portion of his book. Chapter XIII. furnishes nearly as good an illustration: a careful reader of the synoptists can hardly fail to see that in Mark 2: 1-3: 6 the evangelist has given a rapid sketch of the development of the hostility of the scribes and Pharisees to Jesus. The section inserted here from the fourth gospel does not interrupt the course of events, but only presents another stage in the development sketched by the synoptists. It seems desirable to recognize these facts by grouping these sections into a chapter. These chapter-divisions in general, however, are chiefly useful when the eye can take in at one vision the relation of the chapter on the one hand to the part, and on the other to the section. For this reason the chapter-titles, though included in the Outline, are omitted from the body of the book.

The limits of the Sections and their order have also been determined in accordance with the general principles suggested on the preceding page. A detailed explanation of the application of these principles to individual cases can hardly be given within the space of a preface. It is sufficient in general to state that the order of sections conforms to that of the included paragraphs as they stand in the gospels, except when a difference of order in two accounts compels a rearrangement of one or the other in order to bring parallel paragraphs into the same section; and that the sections have been made to begin where there was reason to believe that the gospel writer himself intended to pass to a new division of the subject, such as a modern writer would indicate by a paragraph division, except when a difference of paragraphing in the different gospels makes this impossible without unduly lengthening a section. Of this latter exception, there are but two instances. It has seemed necessary to run the line separating sections 75 and 76 through what is in Luke but one paragraph, following in this the strongly marked paragraphing of Matthew and Mark. For similar reasons, a paragraph of Luke has been divided between sections 133 and 134.

One matter of detail, however, requires fuller explanation. In certain instances it has seemed necessary to use narrative material twice. This necessity arises in some cases from condensation in the narrative, from which it results that a single sentence or paragraph covers two distinct events or historical occasions, separated perhaps by some distance of time. In other cases it arises from a different arrangement and construction of the narrative in the two or more accounts, involving a different representation of the order of events on the part of the different writers. In both classes of cases it is necessary that certain portions of the record be repeated: in cases of condensation, in order to bring the paragraph or verse into connection with both the occasions to which it refers; in cases of displacement, in order at the one point to preserve the logical connection — to the extent, that is, of presenting entire each paragraph as we judge the writer conceived it in his own mind, — and at the other to show the historical position of the event. Such repetition is in every instance indicated by brackets. The repeated matter is placed in single brackets in the instance in which it is detached from the paragraph of which, in the writer's mind, it was a part, its insertion at this point representing the historical place of the event. In the other instance of its occurrence, namely, when it is retained in the paragraph to which it belongs, it stands unbracketed if this also represents an historical occasion to which it refers; it is placed in double brackets if, by its retention in its original paragraph connection, it is detached from its historical position as indicated by a comparison of the gospels. In one instance (Matt. 1: 18-25) a paragraph containing material belonging to two different points of the history, yet blended inextricably into a single narrative, has been repeated entire, being placed in single brackets in the second instance of its occurrence, this being the position called for by the parallelism of a portion of the narrative with the account in Luke.

As concerns the arrangement of matter within the sections, our general principle of preserving as far as possible the structure of each gospel, as well as our judgment that it is important that the gospel history should be read by paragraphs, not by verses, has led to the abandonment of the plan adopted in those harmonies which make it a matter of chief importance that similar sentences or even phrases stand opposite one another on the page. This plan involves indefinite *dissection* of the gospel narratives, and is then only partially successful in exhibiting their parallelism in details. For the purpose of this Harmony, which is planned with a view to the historical study of the gospels, we have thought it wiser to be content in general with placing parallel paragraphs opposite one another, leaving it to the student to make the more detailed comparison himself.

This method is the more necessary because there are many different kinds of parallelism, even when sections or paragraphs in the different gospels manifestly refer to the same events or discourses. This arises from the fact that the various writers differ

widely in style and in their method of narration. No printed page can adequately exhibit the exact character of the parallelism between paragraphs of dissimilar scope and structure. Sometimes several incidents in a paragraph of one gospel seem to have little relation to those narrated in a paragraph of another, when nevertheless both paragraphs relate what may be called comprehensively one event. For example, Matthew relates that early on the resurrection morning Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and to the other Mary, while John speaks only of Mary Magdalene. We have placed these accounts in *general* parallelism, not attempting to draw out the details of those early appearances to the women into a minute chronological arrangement for which the gospels afford no data. The proper function of the harmony is served if its page exhibits whatever parallelism there is in the accounts themselves. The denials of Peter, which occurred during the progress of Christ's trial, are properly treated in a similar way.

In cases of unequal paragraphing in different gospels, that is, when matter contained in two or more paragraphs in one of the gospels is, in another gospel, by reason of different treatment, brought together into one paragraph, it has sometimes been necessary to introduce blank spaces dividing the more condensed account into parts corresponding to the paragraphs of the parallel account. See, for example, section 139. Such spacing has also occasionally been employed to bring clearly marked subdivisions of corresponding paragraphs opposite one another. See, for example, section 143. In all cases where the space thus introduced into a paragraph exceeds a very few lines, attention is called to the continuance of the paragraph further on by the insertion in small type of the words, "Paragraph continued below," or similar phrase.

In sections 133 and 138 not only spacing but transposition of material within the section has been necessary in order to bring evidently parallel narratives opposite one another. The portions transposed are in every case either whole paragraphs or such subdivisions of a paragraph as might properly be recognized as sub-paragraphs; and at each point at which by reason of this transposition a paragraph is interrupted, a note has been inserted showing where the remainder of the paragraph is to be found.

When parallel material could not be brought together without doing violence to the structure of one account or the other, we have left each paragraph intact as the evangelist wrote it, but have frequently inserted a reference in the parallel column to indicate where the similar material of the parallel accounts is to be found. This method is illustrated in sections 139 and 140.

The sayings of Christ assigned by the different evangelists to different occasions demand special consideration, furnishing, as they do, one of the most difficult, and at the same time one of the most important, problems of the harmony. It should be observed that, in the report of the sayings and discourses of Jesus, there are two kinds of