

Prince of The Southern Baptist
Pulpit

**JOHN ALBERT
BROADUS**

A New Collection of Sermons and
Lectures Concerning Our Lord
Jesus Christ

Second Edition

Foreword by Tom J. Nettles

INTRODUCED, SELECTED, AND EDITED
BY
ROGER D. DUKE

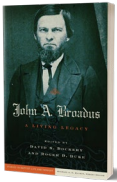
About the Author

Dr. Roger D. Duke is an author, theologian, educator, itinerant preacher, published scholar, and professor at several institutions of higher learning including: Union University, Baptist College of Health Sciences, Liberty University, Memphis Theological Seminary, and Columbia Evangelical Seminary.

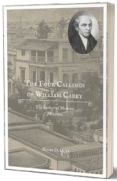
He earned his D.Min from The University of the South (Sewanee) School of Theology, performed post-graduate Ph.D studies at the University of Memphis, completed his M.A. at Harding University, and attained a M.Div at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

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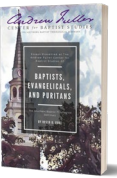
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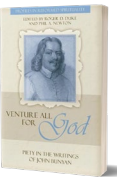
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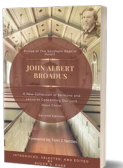
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AN OUTLINE OF THE LIFE OF CHRIST

By

John Albert Broadus

The four Gospels are independent works. Each of them is a complete whole. Beware of superseding the text as we find it with harmonies. We must study those Gospels each in itself, and then mentally combine the impressions. Once in Mr. Story's studio in Rome some visitors asked him if he could make a bust of their father from photographs without seeing him. "Yes," he said, "with some difficulty, after a fashion. But you must let me have photographs of heads and busts from every point of view." If you take all the pictures of Christ in the Bible by prophets, evangelists, apostles, and in the book of Revelation you will get a far better conception of Him than if you had only one writer. .

..

Why, then, should we attempt a harmony of the Gospels or a life of Christ at all?

1. Because we naturally wish to get a general historical outline of the life of Christ. We do not want

to have merely vague and confused recollections derived from the different Gospels.

2. To explain discrepancies. Everybody notices, when he comes to compare the Gospels, apparent contradictions. A few years ago there was a school of German writers who lived on the discrepancies of the Gospels. Trial by jury was not introduced in Germany till after the revolution of 1848. Had these writers been in the habit of judging different accounts of the same series of events, as everyone is in this country, they would have seen that discrepancies are not only inevitable, but that they are positively necessary to authenticate any account. If four different witnesses should tell exactly the same story in all particulars, I wouldn't believe any of them. I would think they had put their heads together, or had been taught a lesson. It is necessary for belief in four different accounts of a long series of events, that there should be some things that at first don't seem to agree. Of course, if those discrepancies could be shown to be hopeless, downright, inexplicable contradictions, it would be another thing. But many things that at first were hard to explain, have been explained. Many apparent conflicts between one part of the Bible and another, [this are what] ¹ . . . puzzled me during my early studies, have been cleared up while my hair is

¹ Compiler edit.

growing gray. Certain difficulties were the whole stock in trade of a large section of critical objectors fifty years ago, which you will scarcely ever hear a word about now. As to discrepancies, let me make a remark. I am not bound to show that my theory of explanation is the only right one. There may be several ways of explaining a difficulty. If I prefer one way, I have no call to attack another. It is enough that one is reasonable.

3. We naturally wish, in the practical use of the Gospels, to combine all the material in regard to any particular scene or discourse in the life of Jesus. If you take up some scene and read all the accounts, and put them together so as to get the whole effect, you are so far making a harmony of the Gospels. It is, therefore, convenient and desirable that this work should be done throughout. We must, however, expect difficulties in various points. We must learn to distinguish between things where we can be certain, and things where we cannot be certain. Some points are certain; others are more or less probable. Two books I would recommend are: 1st. Robinson's "*Harmony*," either in English or Greek, Riddle's new edition, Hartford; 2d. G.W. Clark's "*Harmony*," . . . is better at some points. ² Where you find these agree, you can be pretty confident they are

² Ibid.

right; where they differ, there is room for difference.

...

There are several books of that kind [that examine the Four Gospels as one]. [At] One time in my life I was very fond of them. But the trouble is, they sink the individuality of the several Gospels the different stand-points and the different tone. I think it is a great deal better to have the extracts complete, and compare them yourself. Thus you will see the difference and the connection in each case. I should, therefore, upon the whole, not advise the use of books of that sort. The other way is more trouble, but you get better results, and you don't think you know so much, which is one great point.

. . . The time of our Saviour's [sic] birth was certainly in the fifth year before the ordinary *annus Domini*, which was fixed in the fifth or sixth century by error. Herod died in the spring of 750, as is shown by Josephus's reference to an eclipse of the moon that occurred near the time of his death, and astronomy shows which year that was. So the birth of Christ must have been in the year 749=B.C. 5. The *annus Domini* cannot be changed as a chronological error now. We can only say it was a mistake, and that the birth of Christ was five years earlier possibly a little more, but certainly that much.

Luke says that Jesus was about thirty years old when He began His ministry. According to that He began *Anno Domini* 26. Now, His ministry lasted

three years and a fraction, so far as we know, provided the feast of John v. 1 was a Passover, which it probably was. Otherwise we should only know of its lasting two years and a fraction if that feast be not taken as a Passover. If you say the ministry was three years and a fraction, then it began at or in the latter part of A.D. 26, and ended at the Passover of A.D. 30 in the spring of that year, about our Easter.

Now, let us take up the leading periods in the life of our Lord. The first began with the birth and childhood of Jesus. You find introductory matter in each of the Gospels. Matthew begins with a genealogy reaching back to Abraham, and Luke with one reaching back to Adam. John goes back to eternity. Mark plunges *in medias res*. The introductory matter of Luke includes the annunciation, and the story of the birth of John and the birth of Jesus. By the way, the saying of Simeon is by most people incorrectly understood. It was not, "Now, do Thou let Thy servant depart in peace"; but, "Now, Thou lettest" a recognition of the fact that now the event had come which the Lord had let him live to see. Then you have the story of the Magi, and of the flight into Egypt, I remember an illustration here. During the war, when the United States troops took possession of Beaufort, S. C., a great many wealthy families were living there temporarily. I heard as time went on that some of them had to part with their family jewels to get the plainest food, as

was natural under the circumstances. The gifts of the Magi were a means of support to Joseph and his family in Egypt. We cannot conceive of the difficulty that must have been experienced by a little family in leaving home and going into another country and there trying to find something to do. Those gifts may fairly be regarded as a Providential means of support. Then we come to the massacre of about five hundred little boys in Bethlehem, and the return of Joseph and his family northward from Jerusalem.

Where is Nazareth? Take a pear and slit it lengthwise, leaving a crooked stem. In the lower half of that pear you have exactly the shape of the valley of Nazareth. From the high western mountains the growing youth could have gained extensive views in all directions. To the south were the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. On the east He could see the mountains beyond the Jordan. On the west lay the grand Mediterranean very blue and beautiful. On the north appeared the snow-clad range of Hermon.

I divide the public ministry of Jesus into six parts. We pass the quiet years of preparation, concerning which little is known, though much has been conjectured. Compare the apocryphal gospels and the silly stories that have gathered in connection with them, with the inspired narrative, and then see the grand simplicity of the Gospels themselves. The Jews had a foolish notion that a man was not grown until he was thirty. I don't dare to say that I

sometimes think they were, right. At all events the Deliverer of mankind was actually in the world, living retired, and never appeared till He was thirty years of age, although He foreknew that He was so soon to die. How we ought to be thrilled with the thought that the Saviour [sic] lived and died a young man! Though He knew His public career would be but a brief three years, still He lived on quietly preparing, and still He waited while John the Baptist was preparing too. These are the six divisions

1. The introduction of our Lord's ministry: the work of John the Baptist, the baptism of Christ and His temptation. The localities of these events are not certainly known. Here occurs John's testimony to Jesus in the Fourth Gospel, in consequence of which Jesus gains a few disciples, with whom He goes to the wedding at Cana, and then to Capernaum, which becomes the principal home of His public ministry.

2. The early ministry of Jesus, which is described in the Fourth Gospel alone, and lasted several months perhaps eight months. Jesus visits the Passover and expels the traders, holds the conversation with Nicodemus, and afterward labors long and successfully somewhere in Judea, until at length He makes and baptizes some disciples. John hears of this, and expresses his satisfaction. The Pharisees hear of it; and to prevent a premature excitement of their hostility, Jesus leaves Judea for

Galilee. Meantime John is imprisoned Josephus says at Macherus, which was a few miles east of the northern end of the Dead Sea, and of which the ruins have lately been for the first time fully described by the English traveler, Tristram, in his "Land of Moab." On our Lord's way to Galilee He stopped at Jacob's well, where occurred his conversation with the woman, which is a model of skill and felicity in the introduction of religion into ordinary conversation.

3. The great ministry in Galilee. This is described in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. John touches it only at one point: The feeding of the five thousand. This probably lasted about eighteen months that is, if the feast in John v. 1 was a Passover. Our Lord's headquarters were at Capernaum. During this time He made three journeys around Galilee, which Josephus says contained over two hundred cities and large villages. Our Lord's labors must have been far more extensive than we should imagine from the few specimens of His miracles and discourses that are expressly reported. This is shown by the general statements in Matthew iv. 23 and ix. 35; [both of] ³ which are in strong language. During this time He selected the twelve disciples, and gave the Sermon on the Mount as a sort of opening lecture in their theological

³ Compiler edit.

training. Toward the close of this period He sent them out two by two to go before Him; and after their return continued His instructions throughout His ministry, slowly preparing them for their work. The first great groups of parables belong to this period found in Matthew xiii. and Mark iv; [they] ⁴ treat of the Kingdom of God in its beginnings.

4. Excursions made by Jesus from Galilee occupying six months, and described by Matthew, Mark, and Luke. We can see several reasons for His leaving Galilee at this period. Herod Antipas, the tetrarch, had taken up the notion that Jesus was John the Baptist risen from the dead, and would be uneasy about Him; and so Jesus keeps out of his dominion. The masses of the people were becoming fanatical, thinking that He must be the Messiah, and would gather armies and destroy the Romans. The Jewish rulers were ready to use all this against Him with the Roman authorities. Our Lord often had to withdraw from the excitement produced by His ministry, because the popular interest, which was more political than religious, threatened to precipitate a crisis and end His ministry before He had finished His work for the people and the instruction of the twelve. We may also notice that this was summer, and in every one of the four

⁴ Ibid.

excursions Jesus went to a mountain region. Capernaum was far below the Mediterranean, with tropical products, and there was an obvious propriety in getting to the mountains. He first went across the lake; but the multitude followed Him, amounting to five thousand, and thus retirement had to be abandoned. The second excursion was to Tyre; but a Syrophenician mother found Him out. In the third excursion He went northward through Sidon, and away north to Galilee and around into Decapolis, northeast of the lake. There again the multitude gathered, and He fed the four thousand. Then the fourth excursion was northeastward, to the neighborhood of Caesarea Philippi. He stayed here some time, giving much instruction to the twelve; and here occurred the Transfiguration, which was probably on some mountain of the Lebanon range.

5. The later ministry in Judea, and ministry in Perea. This occupied six months. It is described in Luke ix. 51 to xix. 27, and in John vii. to x. This is much better arranged in Clark's *Harmony* than in Robinson's. We have only to understand that events and discourses here given in Luke, similar to preceding ones in Galilee, were repetitions such as would be very natural in another part of the country. No one can properly understand the teachings of Jesus who has not had some experience as a public religious teacher himself a field-preacher, a street-preacher. The mere professor, who never did any

practical preaching, will constantly misjudge as to points of this kind. To this period belongs the second great group of parables, given only in Luke, and referring chiefly to the life of individuals.

6. The last week in Jerusalem, and the crucifixion. Our Lord has long kept away from the hostility of the Jewish authorities until His ministry should be ended. But now His hour is come, and He goes straight forward to the end. He seems to have spent every night at Bethany, and in the daytime to have taught in the courts of the Temple for several days. Here occurs the third great group of parables, which refer again to the Kingdom of God in its future prospects. Of course this period ends with the last day of our Lord's passion, with the Lord's Supper and farewell discourses, with Gethsemane and Calvary. It may with confidence be said that we have of late years found the true site of Calvary on the northern extension of the Temple hill. This view was adopted by Chinese Gordon, and is held by Principal Dawson, and by the Rev. Selah Merrill, of New England, recently United States Consul at Jerusalem. Very probably it is correct.

The concluding period of our Lord's life embraces His resurrection, His ten appearances during the forty days, and His ascension. More attention ought to be given in our religious thought and discourse to the resurrection of Christ as the central pillar of Christian evidence, and an

important item of Christian doctrine. Books on this subject to be recommended, are: Milligan's "*Lectures on the Resurrection of our Lord*"; Westcott's "*The Gospel of the Resurrection*"; another work by the same writer, "*Revelation of the Risen Lord*," which treats of the ten appearances; Canon Liddon's "*Easter Sermons*" (two small volumes); and Candlish's "*Life in a Risen Saviour*," being lectures on the 15th chapter of 1st, Corinthians. These are all English works; all, or nearly all, are reprinted in this country, and they are not costly.

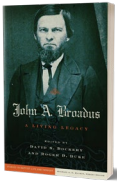
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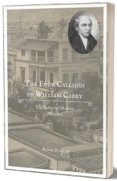
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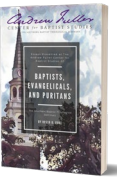
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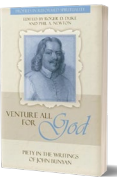
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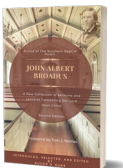
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