

THE SUPER GOSPEL

A HARMONY OF ANCIENT GOSPELS

INTRODUCTION

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By Robert C Ferrell

To Nancy

FOREWORD

The Super Gospel is many different Christian sources compiled into a single, readable text. Although many acknowledge and accept the canonical gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, people are becoming increasingly aware of other gospels that once circulated throughout the greater Christian world. Many different forms of Christianity arose within it, and thus there grew to be divisions. Each group held its own version of Christianity as apostolic and genuine, and other groups as heretical and inauthentic. As time progressed, power struggles within and among these various groups began to obscure the fact that the writings themselves all spoke of the same Jesus--a loving Jesus, a forgiving Jesus, an accepting Jesus.

Differences within and among these groups were emphasized--and sometimes manufactured--in order to generate hatred and mistrust and divisions between them. These feelings thus began to dominate our Christian thinking, even to the point where Christians were branding other Christians as heretics and killing them. The New Testament speaks of this in many places; "The love of the many shall wax cold," and "Friend shall turn against friend." Did the Church quench the Holy Spirit by these actions? Theology at best is a contrivance of man, and as such is inherently flawed, and is therefore not able to act as the true light. "The true light was he which lights up every man that comes into the world."

What could possibly act as an antidote to these traditions? What could possibly lift this curse of intellectualism and speculation and doubt from our shoulders? What could possibly unite us after all of these years? What if the unthinkable were to happen? What if there was more than what we were told? What if we were to discover that these works had all been authored by the same God?

If we would only take the time to align the documents themselves

and set aside all preconceived notions of what they are supposed to mean in terms of theology and scholarship, carefully arranging the words as to subject matter, chronology, and affinity, and placing them where they most logically belong, we could arrive at a higher

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understanding of the Logos. We could then put these words to the test, comparing “Scriptural things to Scriptural things” to “try the spirits to see if they are from God.” The best way to do this would be to simply let them speak for themselves. Put them all where they fit best and see if they form a sensible document.

The story begins with Mary’s parents, Anna and Joachim, two very kind and generous people who despite living righteously in the eyes of God and men, remain childless into their old age. One day, when Joachim is offering his animals to the Lord in the Temple of God, he is publicly chastised by the high priest, who sees his lack of children as a sign of God’s disapproval. Humiliated, Joachim takes his herdsmen with him into a distant land to hide away from everyone he knows, including his wife Anna, who mourns for her barrenness and the loss of her husband. Angels then appear to both Anna and Joachim letting them know that they will indeed have a child, Mary, whose name will someday be the “talk of the earth.” Mary is then born to Anna in her old age.

After three years in her parents’ house, Mary is dedicated to the Temple in Jerusalem, where she remains until she is twelve. The priests then order her to take a husband. When, however, she refuses, the priests assemble together, draw lots to determine who should foster her until she is ready to wed. Joseph, an elderly man, is chosen, and Mary goes to live with him for two years, “lest she should pollute the temple.”

After the two years have passed, The priests again assemble to select a husband for Mary. After Joseph holds his own rod back and no sign appears, an angel reveals to the high priest that Mary should be given to the man who had “held back his rod.” Joseph is then loudly summoned before the gathering, the sign of a dove coming “out of his rod and onto his head” confirms that Joseph is to be her husband. Mary then goes to live as his betrothed. There the archangel Gabriel announces to her that she will give birth without a “man’s seed.” After this, Mary runs away to live with her cousin Elizabeth, where she remains for three months.

Joseph soon returns from a building project and discovers that she is pregnant. He questions her story and accuses her of adultery until

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her virginity is revealed to him in a dream. An officer of the priest then catches sight of Mary and reports to the high priest that the “virgin” is pregnant. Mary and Joseph are immediately summoned before the High Priest, interrogated, and given the “water of the Lord’s testing.” After Joseph shows “no sign of guilt,” Mary is given the same test, and the sign of guilt does not appear. Since no guilt is found on either of them, the Priest declares that they are innocent, and so they go home rejoicing and praising God.

After this, Quirinius orders that a census be taken, so Joseph and Mary are forced to travel to Jerusalem. On the way to Bethlehem, however, her time comes to bring forth, so Joseph quickly finds Mary a cave to conceal her, and then goes out to seek for midwives. But as he is on his way, he is met by a midwife’s apprentice, who tells him that a “young man,” probably an angel of God, had come running up and crying out that a “virgin was about to give birth.” So they both make their way to the cave.

After Joseph goes out to find even more midwives for Mary she, gives birth to Jesus. We then see him descend through each of the seven heavens. And as he enters into this world, everything in creation literally comes to a halt. The people, the animals, and the earth all stop moving as the light is brought forth in the cave. Jesus is at this point a nearly weightless being of light, and he speaks to his mother from the cradle.

When Joseph returns, he cannot even see the child for the brilliance of the light. The first of these other midwives then goes in and believes, but when she tries to convince the other one, Salome, who is waiting outside, she insists on “proving her status.” After Salome has inspected Mary, her hand begins to wither and burn. An angel of the Lord then tells her to touch the infant and worship him. Her hand is then restored and she runs around telling everyone about it. An angel then appears to her and orders her to keep these things to herself. The shepherds then visit, and after a few days, Joseph and Mary take Jesus up to the temple, where they present him to Simeon, and Anna prophesies about him. Then we have the visit of the Magi, the Slaughtering of the Innocents, and the Journey into Egypt.

At first we see that nearly anything that touches Jesus has the

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power to heal, from his swaddling cloth, to even his bathwater. His childhood abounds with stories of miracles, like his ability to form clay animals and bring them to life, to heal the ill, and to reveal to his teachers things that they had never heard of before. He does, however, cause many problems for his parents. the people they live and work

around object to his working of miracles on the Sabbath, his brash and defiant attitude towards his elders, and his ability to kill or injure people with his word alone.

And though he would often undo the damage he had done, people would get angry and call him a sorcerer, forbid their children to play with him, and snub the entire family. So Joseph and Mary found themselves shunned wherever they would go, which ranged from Egypt to Judea to Galilee. It is even pointed out that, “It is truly mysterious that the Lord of every nation should be moved around all over like this--back and forth across so many lands.” The story of his childhood culminates in his return to the temple at the age of twelve, where we are given more details as to just what Jesus said to the learned men that so impressed them. After this, we have the death of Joseph the Carpenter.

The Ministry section of the Gospel contains many interesting details about Jesus, such as his physical description, a second transfiguration, his refusal to flee to King Abgar in Edessa and avoid crucifixion, and the hymn he sang with his disciples before his agony in the garden. It is the astonishing sayings from sources like the Gospel of Thomas and the Agrapha--or the various sayings of Jesus that are scattered all over the writings of the Early Church Fathers--that dominate this section. These sayings give this part of the gospel a character all its own. After all, in this section lie his greatest teachings, such as the Sermon on the Mount and the so-called Apocalypse of Jesus, both of which are far more detailed and nuanced with the addition of these lesser known sayings and sections. Here we are confronted with teachings that we were perhaps not ready to accept in the early Church age, teachings that give us more insight into our own angelic nature and the governance of the heavens.

Most of the time these sayings correspond to an already existing verse, and thus there can be no better fit. One such example is Jesus at 7

the Feast of Tabernacles. John, in chapter 7 verse 11, reads, On the final and most important day of the Feast, Jesus stood and cried aloud, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink.” Here the Gospel of Thomas has a similar passage. Since the verse fits here better than anywhere else in gospel literature, at this point a would-be gospel compiler would or should insert saying 108: “Anyone who drinks from my mouth will become like me! I will, in fact, become that man, and the hidden things will open up to him.” At this point, yet another verse seems in order, a quote from the Heavenly Dialogue by Origen in his work, Against Celsus 8:15: “Many are those who circle

the well, yet no one ever draws from it. Why fear now when you've come so far? Isn't it clear to you that I lack neither courage, nor a weapon." At this point I continue with John through chapter 8 verse 1. "Whosoever trusts in me, as it says in the Scripture, 'Rivers of living waters will flow forth from him.'" And in so saying, he spoke of the Spirit, which they who believed in him would soon receive." Seeing the verses together where they best fit reveals to us an impressive teaching about ourselves and our relationship to Christ. We come to Jesus to drink. Drink from where? His own mouth! The water is therefore his inspired word. If we make his words our words, then we will also speak these inspired words. Jesus will then come to live in us and open the hidden things up to us. It is important to recognize where we are in the teaching now, as people who get their words directly from him, and not through others. The next verse speaks to those who don't accept the "water" from the well--which really means the inspired words, they will not "drink," meaning they will not accept them. Where it says, "Many are those who circle the well, yet no one ever draws from it. Why fear now when you've come so far? Isn't it clear to you that I lack neither courage, nor a weapon." The weapon is, of course, the depths of his inspired word. Here Jesus is the well, but how do the rivers of living waters flow from the one who comes to him? Because Jesus becomes that man and the spirit flows through him!

Such insights, however, sometimes require the proper grouping and ordering of sayings to form a single coherent teaching. One such "selfassembly

of verses" quite possibly takes place while Jesus and his

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disciples are on the road to Galilee. Combining sayings 7, 11, 60, 87, 106, 111, and 112 from the Gospel of Thomas yields the following exchange: "A Samaritan was carrying a lamb on his way into Judea. "<How come> that man <has to> carry that lamb?" Jesus asked his students. "So that he might kill it and eat," they responded. "He will not eat it while life is still in it," Jesus observed, "but only after he has butchered it, so that what he eats is nothing but a carcass." "He cannot do so otherwise!" they reasoned. "Such indeed is your circumstance," Jesus continued, "find a place for yourselves to live, or you also might become a carcass--and like a carcass be devoured! Blessed is the lion that the man consumes so that the lion becomes human; and cursed is the man that gets eaten by the lion so that the lion takes on humanity! How miserable the body that depends upon a body, and how miserable the soul that depends upon these two.

Accursed is the flesh that is governed by the soul, and accursed is the soul that is governed by the flesh. This heaven will pass away, as will the next. The dead do not have life, nor will the living ever die. Back when you would eat what was dead, you used it to feed what was alive. And now that the light is shining on you, what will you do? On the day that you were one, you split in two, so when you are two what ever will you do? When you join the two into one, you will be transformed. Then, as the Sons of Humanity you will say to the mountain, 'Move away!' and it will be moved. The skies will roll up before you, and the earth will too, and whoever receives his life from the One Who lives forever will never see death." (Does not Jesus himself affirm, "Of one who has come to see the truth of his nature, the world is not worthy?") Now even though it could be said that this hypothetical exchange never really took place, an interesting question is why it can be arranged this way at all. It should not be possible to arrange these verses such that they answer their own questions unless the author had somehow intended for the reader to discover this. Given the chance, these works actually harmonize with both the canonical traditions and with each other. Combining them reveals the unity of thought that lies behind them, showing there to be a greater Source behind them.

The Passion Narrative is far more detailed in this gospel than in the 9

canonicals alone, with Pilate going to even greater lengths to save Jesus from crucifixion. Many people vouch for him before the crowds, retelling the stories of his miracles and his healings, attesting to the betrothal of his father and mother, and pleading for his life. Here we also learn that when Pilate does pass sentence against Jesus, it is at the request of Herod. As Jesus hangs upon the cross, the Apostle John flees to a cave on the Mount of Olives for fear, where Jesus visits him and gives him a vision of a cross of light. In this vision, Jesus explains that though the lower, human aspect of himself, truly hung upon the cross, the Logos remained unnoticed upon it; that the Word was what suffered, the Word was judged, and the Word was what died. From the point of view of the Scriptures, then, the religious authorities' crucifixion of Jesus was to represent an as yet unknown mystery, that the Scriptures would be put on trial, and then to suffer death at the hands of the religious authorities, and raised again on the "third day," or in the third millennium, "for with the Lord, a day is as a thousand years and a thousand years are as a day." After it is revealed to John "...that the Lord put every single detail into symbolic language, as a gift to be given to mankind, that their hearts might be transformed

thereby and thus receive deliverance,” he returns to the cross with this understanding, where Jesus entrusts Mary to his care and places his spirit into the Father’s hands.

After this, “...the Lord himself look[s] down on earth from out of heaven to hear the groaning of the fettered and to liberate the sons of the slain.” He descends into Hades, frees the captives, reconciles Adam and Eve and the other prisoners to himself, throws Satan and Hades down into Tartarus, and leads the saints up into heaven. And “...the bodies of many of the righteous who had died already were seen raised back up to life. They came out of their graves and, following the resurrection of Jesus, entered into the Holy City and appeared to many of its citizens...” After this, his spirit returns to the tomb, where he is resurrected and with the help of two angels emerges from it having “...spoken to the ‘spirits in prison.’” His stature now ascending into the heavens, he transforms himself into a man and appears to Mary Magdalene, he then shows himself to the other women, and later hides his true appearance to the two men on the road to Emmaus.

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Despite the number of reports attesting to the fact that Jesus had arisen bodily and appeared to the women, and even to Peter, the disciples still do not believe. Later, Jesus materializes before the disciples in the locked room, chastises them for their lack of faith, and reveals to them that the reign of Satan has passed, but that other, terrible things still lie ahead. Here is where I place the Dialogue of the Savior, a document that I went to great pains to restore, followed closely by the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, two post-resurrection, but pre-ascension gospels that delve into the deceptive nature of the material realm, the judgment of the Archons, or Governing Angels that keep us from ascending to the presence of God and the heavenly light. After this, we have the reappearance of Jesus to the disciples and to Thomas, where he shows him his hands, his feet, and his side. Then he appears to them by the sea of Galilee, they cast their nets and bring their haul ashore. Then we have the Great Commission. From this point forward, three documents, the Epistle of the Apostles, the Apocalypse of Peter, and the Sibylline Oracles intertwine to describe the spiritual state of the coming age, complete with images of spiritual consequences for the various crimes of mankind. The punishments are extremely graphic in nature, but are not to be taken on a literal level. There are numerous cues as to their meaning in terms of mankind’s spirit, soul, and body. It is a picture of the spiritual condition of mankind all the way up to the Day of Judgment. The Disciples then weep and mourn for the ‘sinners’ and their fate,

whereupon Jesus informs them that, “To all of these, His righteous ones, the eternal God Who governs all, will grant them something further still: When they ask Him to rescue mankind from the ‘unquenchable fire’ and ‘perpetual grinding of teeth,’ He will give them what they long for, and this is definite. I will then deliver out of torment whomsoever my righteous and elect ones should ask of me.” After this, Jesus reveals the angelic nature of the exalted man to Peter, James, and John, “...these two men appeared to us, standing there before the Lord, but we were not able to look their way and see their faces, for they beamed forth even more light than the sun. Their garments were luminous beyond words, and beyond compare, such as has never been seen by any man in this world. The gentleness thereof

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no mouth can express, nor can any heart conceive of the glory of their adornment or the beauty of their faces. Astonishing and wonderful was their appearance. The greater one, I would venture to say, shone more in his brilliance than a crystal. And we were all amazed at the sight of them. Their bodies were even whiter than snow, and had a redness surpassing any rose. That redness, moreover, was mingled with the whiteness thereof. It is simply not possible for me to put their beauty into words. They had curly hair that framed their faces and shoulders in a delightful manner. And around their foreheads there was a crown of nard--like a garland woven out of nard blossoms--and beautiful blooms of different hues, like a rainbow on the water, (or) in the air was [their] hair; so finely fashioned was their form, and [they] were decked out in all manner of ornamentation. And when we looked on them in all of their splendor we marveled in their presence, and we were startled by their sudden appearance.” The future glory of the saints is then described, “And [we] stood there trembling with fright, but we all looked upward and saw the sky spreading apart. We could see flesh-bearing men approaching and welcoming our Lord, along with Moses and Elijah. And we heard the voices of many angels as they rejoiced and proclaimed, “Oh priest, gather us in your glorious light.” And as they were approaching the heavenly firmament, we heard him say, “Go in peace!”

The Lord sent forth his twelve apostles as he rose into the sky, but he was not changed into the form of the angels there. Satan himself, and the angels of that firmament saw him there and worshiped him. And great was the anguish in that place, as they cried out, “How did our Lord come down here to our sphere and we not notice his greatness, seeing in him that he was the King of Glory? Only now do we recognize that this was the majesty that was on him even from the

sixth heaven.” The Lord then ascends through the six other heavens and takes his seat to the right hand of the Most High. Then the disciples go “joyfully back into Jerusalem, remaining in the temple, and praising God ceaselessly.

And after receiving their instructions, reporting to Peter and his companions. Afterward, Jesus himself puts them to work as ambassadors in charge of spreading the holy and imperishable word of

eternal salvation from one end of the earth to the other. So they go and preach it everywhere, the Lord working with them, confirming the word with the signs that follow.

Robert Ferrell

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ABBREVIATIONS

1Cor.....	First Corinthians
1Pet.....	First Peter
1Thess.....	First Thessalonians
2Bar.....	Second Baruch
2Clem.....	Second Clement
2Esd	Second Esdras (Fourth Ezra)
2Pet.....	Second Peter
AcA&M.....	Acts of Andrew & Matthias
AcAn.....	Acts of Andrew
AcJn	Acts of John
AcPt.....	Acts of Peter
AcThad.....	Acts of Thaddeus
Acts.....	Acts of the Apostles
AnaPlt.....	Anaphora Pilatae
ApPt	Apocalypse of Peter
ArIn.....	Arabic Infancy Gospel
Arundel404.....	Latin Infancy Gospel (Arundel ms 404)
AsIs.....	Ascension of Isaiah
BMary.....	Birth (Nativity) of Mary
ClemAlex.....	Clement of Alexandria
ClHm.....	Clementine Homilies
Dec.....	The Decensus
DecltA.....	Decensus, Latin A
DecltB.....	Decensus, Latin B
DSav.....	Dialogue of the Savior
DTry.....	Dialogue of Justin with Trypho
Egtn.....	Egerton Gospel

EpAb.....	Epistle of Abgar
EpAp.....	Epistle of the Apostles
GEb.....	Gospel of the Ebionites
GEgp.....	Gospel of the Egyptians
GHeb.....	Gospel of the Hebrews
GMary.....	Gospel of Mary Magdalene
GNaz.....	Gospel of the Nazoreans
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GNc.....	Gospel of Nicodemus
GPh.....	Gospel of Philip
GPt.....	Gospel of Peter
GTh.....	Gospel of Thomas
GThGr.....	Gospel of Thomas (Greek Fragments)
HJC.....	History of Joseph the Carpenter
InTh.....	Infancy Gospel of Thomas
IgEph.....	Ignatius of Antioch to the Ephesians
InThL.....	Infancy Gospel of Thomas (Latin)
John.....	Gospel of John
LJB.....	Life of John the Baptist, by Serapion
Luke	Gospel of Luke
Mark.....	Gospel of Mark
Matt.....	Gospel of Matthew
OSol.....	The Odes of Solomon
PEv.....	Protevangelion of James
POxy.....	Papyrus Oxyrynchus
PsMt.....	Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew
QBar.....	Questions of Bartholomew
Qur.....	Gospel Material Preserved in the Quran
Rev.....	Book of Revelation (Apocalypse of John)
Rm.....	Epistle of Paul to the Romans
SbOr.....	Sibylline Oracles
SM.....	The Secret Book of Mark
TrdMth.....	The Traditions of Matthias

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