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## ***1- Reading***

### **Reading a book and reading an author.**

It is obvious to say that whenever you read a book you are, of course, at the same time, reading an author. As we read we meld both actions seamlessly. However, there is value in thinking separately about these two actions, even as we recognise that they are not divorced from one another in practice.

The reading of a book is, at one level, simply the reading the words on its pages. We need a basic knowledge of grammar and a grasp of the words the writer uses, as well as an ability to see how the writer changes the usage of particular words. This last is especially important for the reading of John's Gospel. John repeatedly takes a simple word and uses it in different settings, which expand its meaning for the reader.

The reading of an author is something else again. The grammar and the word skills simply serve to get us to the main matter in hand, which is to sympathetically engage the author's mind. We need to be open to what the author wants to say. This is so important to us right now, at the beginning of our journey together with God.

To pick it up and read it is a decision we make about the book; to receive what we read in a yielded, honouring way is a decision we make about the author.

### **Understanding of our human writer is the receiving of a person.**

Writers write with a desire to communicate and be understood. In turn, as readers, we must be sympathetic and value them as fellow humans who have something to say. This bond between us assures us of being able to understand them.

As we speak of an open attitude, a yielding to the author in a sympathetic way, we may face a difficulty in our reading of the Bible. For, we are reading material presented to us as the words from God; words which He has brought through the agency of human beings. As we are receivers of what He is saying we may become aware that we are not neutral; we may

even be hostile listeners.

Yielding to an author does not mean to be simply passive towards the author. Rather, it is a temporary stance, being prepared to stand in the author's shoes, as it were, so that we may receive what he/she is conveying. Such good-will facilitates a true exchange, and governs our accurate reception and perception of what is revealed. In doing this we absorb the word pictures and the ideas of the writer. In registering his words, we are treating the writing as a personal "outgoing" from him to us. This attitude is central to reading the book of any author but it is especially important when we are reading prophetic material – such as the Bible.

**Revelation of a person presumes reconciliation.**

With the Bible, we are reading the spoken words of men and women, but the ultimate Author speaking through them is God. It is His Spirit which stands at the back of the words.

The message of the book is basically good news, that is why it is called the gospel. Yet it is good news about a fractured and broken relationship with God that has been set right. It states that God is at peace with us. It is the message of the gospel that God's outgoing love towards us reflects His own purity of heart towards us. But we will discover that our own heart will be questioned as we learn of His goodness towards us in what He has done. If his ways indicate his holiness and purity, we cannot help but find that our ways are impure and defiled. If we hear of his fatherly care of us, we may find that irksome, because it makes clear that He assumes that we are dependent upon Him.

In fact, what we shall find is that the revelation to us of how He has set us right with Him through Jesus will actually make us clearer and clearer how much we were not right before. The cure will powerfully highlight the disease. This is good news which God in his gracious way will tackle for us delicately – He knows us better than we know ourselves. It is good to prepare yourself for this.

Any revelation God makes of himself to us must always be accompanied with a reconciliation between Him and us. The two go together because of the state of affairs which exists between us and God. And there are things we cannot receive of another person if we maintain hatred and hostility toward them.

## ***2- Reading two authors at the same time***

### **Engaging the Source behind our writer.**

It may be that even before we pick up the Bible to read what God has to say to us that we are hostile and defensive – and that we are far from soft and open towards Him. For reading the words that God speaks to us

through the apostles of Christ and the prophets of Israel requires us to not treat Him as some other human author. His words are scary to some, deeply desired by a few and resisted by most – we are not neutral towards God when we begin to read; we already have a stance towards Him.

**No one is neutral.**

Don't be surprised at the fact that we are not neutral. This is true with every meeting you have with any person. All of us walk into the situations we encounter with a set of ideas, positions, and things we presuppose – things we assume – and upon which we are currently living. They have been learned from others, our parents, teachers, friends or our enemies. They are people of our past who were persuasive, or authoritative, people we respected or even disrespected. We have adopted their word - or our negation of it - and taken it to ourselves and now live on it. So we currently arrive with a position, a stance, a place which is currently ours.

Sometimes the gospel addresses ideas that may hinder your reception of this message. You can think of these hindrances as little fortresses, placed in your mind by past words you have accepted, embraced or actions you have done. Don't be upset by this; you should find that you encounter objections in your mind as you read. That is part of the internal struggle that will convince you of certain spiritual realities which this gospel will later identify, even giving them a name.

## **Word of God and Spirit of God**

From God's side it looks like this – if he is to make revelation of Himself to us, before we can perceive it and receive it, then He must work a reconciliation between us with Him even as we read. Not only is the gospel good news about what He has done in Christ for us, it is also a living word of God, sufficiently alive to affect us.

This affect upon us is the work of the Spirit of God. Because the words – and so the writings – of the apostles of Christ and the Old Testament prophets are authorised by God and the Spirit of God makes the words active and effective for the hearer, or reader, of them.

So, in this way, the Word and the Spirit operate together in such a way to make revelation to anyone attending to the communicated - preached, announced, written, read – words of God through his authorised messengers.

For, we see the words of God which the apostles of Christ have written as their witness to the good news; and the Spirit can let us see their true

meaning, while at the same time, He opens us up to that reconciliation. And that reconciliation is necessary so that we can receive the revelation of who Jesus Christ is. And the test is this – that if we are open to be reconciled through the good news concerning Jesus Christ then we will, at the same time have a revelation of Who He is. The two go together.

### **Covenant relationships.**

We often need to look back into the covenant relations between God and Israel, his people. We speak of the Old Testament. A “testament” is a Latin word used for the idea of the joint life between God and Israel based on a gracious covenant – a two-sided agreement. The covenant God initiated with the Hebrew people, through Abraham, took them into relationship with Him as his own people [Genesis chapters 12,15,17].

### ***The fleshly life of Israel.***

God’s faithfulness to his chosen people was constant, even when the conflict between them was strong. We often have to look back to the old covenant setting, as it is seen in Israel’s life with God, to understand certain ideas which are used by our New covenant writers. In Israel’s life, as recorded in the Old Testament, this revelation and reconciliation we have noticed, goes on all the time. In rescuing the Hebrews from slavery to their enemies by his own judgment upon the Egyptian people and their gods, the Lord shielded the Hebrews from his wrath through the provision of the Passover lamb. Moses led them out of Egypt and God gathered them to Himself [Exodus chapters 1-12].

As they began to live in the desert, with the presence of God among them as they received the Law through Moses, Israel’s fleshly life was drawn into a deep tension from the pressure of the holiness and purity of their God. The clearer the revelation of his Person, the more uncomfortable they became.

### ***God’s righteousness.***

Israelite history shows how they, in their deep sin and inability, constantly fell away from their covenant obligations, even though they were keen to fulfil them. The Old Testament history shows them as a covenant-breaking people who were yoked together with a covenant-keeping God. They were made aware of their own unrighteousness. Nevertheless, God’s righteousness saved them; His faithfulness sustained the relationship.

This led to suffering on both sides. The Lord’s faithfulness was sustained while in anguish to Himself; Israel found herself constantly under God’s discipline, being exhorted to repent and return to Him.

### ***Israel unable to change by herself.***

Repentance was a fatherly call to return, a coming back to what Israel already knew of God and his requirements of her. But the historical record shows that, while she could be exhorted to return, Israel could not change herself. As a leopard could not change its spots, so Israel was unable to change her natural state. The prophets speak of this as an internal matter. Her heart was fallen, wicked and led astray.

***Servant of the Lord.***

God longed for Israel to be his true servant, who would obey Him and respond to Him – a responsive answering to Him in which He could delight. Eventually, the Lord made it clear that Israel could only properly be the servant of her Master through One who would be this in her place and on her behalf [Isaiah chapters 40-55]. This Servant of the Lord, as a true substitute for Israel, and a true representative before God on her behalf [Isaiah 52-53], would make the response to God which He looked for in Israel. Coming from Israel and living vicariously for her He would live in such a way that God's delight would be fulfilled in the covenant relationship.

***Messiah.***

This provision of such a Person had been stated before, through his prophets [2 Samuel chapter 7]. These promises of a coming Messiah – an anointed Ruler in Israel – presented to Israel's faith the hope of a Redeemer from among their own people who would rescue them from their unfaithfulness, while governing them in prosperity and safety. Messiah would bring the Law, the covenant and the life with God to its appointed goal.

***Substitute and representative person.***

He would be, for Israel, the One who sets things right for them with their God, particularly in the matter of their unfaithfulness to the Lord. He would be called, in Jeremiah's words, "The Lord our righteousness" [Jeremiah 23.5-6]. That is, through the faithfulness of God to Israel, He would be the sacrificial person provided by God as instrument of saving them *from* their sinful life as God's angry response was encountered. Through the response that He would make on Israel's behalf to God as their representative, He would offer the righteous response God looked for in man but never found. This Messiah would become Israel's righteousness responding for her in her relations with God. In His person, He would save them to right relations within a shared life with God, through the coming of His Spirit into them. So the people of Israel found themselves hoping for a "coming" Messiah. The position of the New Testament writers, the apostles of Jesus, is that they have understood that the coming Messiah has now come. He is the substance of a new covenant.

And here and now, some of the Jewish people and many of Gentile nations have found the Messiah from the Jews to be their salvation – they have found in Him the gift of righteousness with God for themselves. The gospel tells us that this was in the plan and the purpose of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

***The record of the apostles.***

The original disciples of Jesus of Nazareth were Jewish men of their day who followed Him as their Rabbi, or teacher, because He graciously honoured them in calling them to do so. Their call, as they saw it then, was to be with Him, to share his work and to become like Him.

By their own record, as we have it in the Gospels, they were drawn to Him but misunderstood much of what He was doing and preaching. Even after a revelation from heaven that He was the Messiah, the Son of God, they still had difficulty in coming to terms with his desire to journey to Jerusalem, even though he knew it meant his trial and crucifixion.

At his death they were devastated as his nation condemned him and the occupying Roman's permitted his crucifixion as a deserving criminal. But, at his resurrection, they knew that God had justified him – cancelling the condemnation of the world and issuing his own acceptance and vindication of his Son. Later, as Jesus was received back to the heavenly Father's side, and sent his Spirit into his disciples, they experienced a deep sense of forgiveness and had a power to live the life their Rabbi had taught them while He was with them. These men, commissioned by Jesus as his authorised messengers, or apostles, gave their witness concerning Him in the light of his resurrection, ascension and their own reception of his Spirit. This witness is what we have in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke. They contain the gradual dawning on the disciples of the truth of Jesus and present his teaching to us in the light of what God accomplished in his death and resurrection. The Gospel of John complements the presentation of Jesus made in the other Gospels.

## **We have the same needs as Israel.**

As we have seen, like Israel we are not neutral in coming to the New Testament, which lays out God's new covenant with Israel and with all men and women. As with Israel, he will address the issue of our reconciliation with our Creator. Like Israel we are incapable of bringing pleasure to God unless there is a Life through whom we can offer our obedience to Him.

The apostolic men encourage us to believe that this can be so, for they were changed by the gracious Life of Jesus which they received through his Spirit and to which they bear witness.

## **Someone to trust**

*Read - Boan, [2018] The Glory of Persons*

You may even now be finding that there is revelation happening to awaken a longing in your heart that such things although they seem to good to be true, could really be possible. Well that depends upon Who is saying it, and Who they are. It is helpful always to see what is being presented to you as a revelation of a person who you can trust. Trust always has as its object a person. And it is built upon the revelation of the person; for this forms our comprehension of what they are like. Don't be disturbed by this idea of faith, it is what we do everyday in regard to persons we meet – it is the relational exchange on which all personal encounters are built.

## **A gracious message.**

Many people before us have found that the gracious message of the gospel was good news to them; even while it confronted them with the most probing perception of their life. This is due to God's Spirit, who we cannot see but, who works changes in our inner being which can be aware of and describe.

In sinning against Him and being sinned against ourselves we have become the victim of our own sins and the sins of others. In our defiled and dishonoured state we find ourselves, like Israel, uncomfortable to be reading the words of God. We would, perhaps, prefer not pick up the book. But God's gracious way reveals a deep understanding of our predicament. He does not show his holiness and purity to us without, at the same time, declaring to us his provision of a Saviour to make us clean and acceptable to Him.

This presents to our faith a kindly word that draws us to face our impurity through the provision of his cleansing. He will coax us to consider our disease only so that we might be cured. It is the provision of the gracious cure that is the Lord's setting and context for us to think of ourselves as needing it.

The gospel then, is not only a gracious message of reconciliation it is a robust way of approach to considering the worst things about ourselves without leaving us overcome or depressed. It is an alive, probing word that goes deep into our soul and spirit and shows up even the thoughts and intentions that we have inside us. But we can bear that if there is salvation through the judgment it brings. We can trust Someone who will show us the worst about ourselves – some of which we already know – because the wound is opened only for the sake of closing it. This is what is so wonderful about a gracious God. He is a Father who is trustworthy to judge our lives because He has the love and care to provide for us to face his judgment.

## **Let the revelation draw you by its gracious presentation.**

The gospel message graciously brings us God's loving way of daring to embrace the uncomfortable matters within us. It also answers our own fears and uncertainties generated by our awareness that we are creatures, and, as such, accountable to our Maker.



Perhaps we are unwilling to face the judgment of God, being only too aware of our own failings? Perhaps we are young and already doubt that life can hold anything for us. Despair can make us vulnerable to destructive forces. Perhaps we are older and wonder about our impending death; a matter God's word speaks of as the natural outcome of sin against Him?

Then let the gospel draw you to consider how God himself has set Jesus Christ forward as his offering for sin, acceptable to Himself. In other words, the death of Christ is going to be a true dealing with the judgment of God upon the whole human race. The accountability we incur, as creatures before God, has already found its day in the judgment God has brought against sin in the death of Jesus. God is a holy Father who cares for us enough to provide for a way, at his own cost, that draws the threat of his wrath away from us.

We must read on, to hear of the Word of God, Jesus Christ, who became flesh for our sakes. This dread of facing our Maker has in fact been taken away – for we can, and must, learn to face Him in the One He has provided for us. Let God then, draw you as you read the gospel. Let his gracious way of bringing us good news change our perspective on the difficult and sad things of life. Be prepared to face the hard facts about yourself for He can be trusted to deal with them caringly.

### **Are we ready to open the gospel book?**

This chapter prepares our heart to begin to pick up the book and read. It presents to us, as a spiritual blurb, a little cameo of the Author, so that we may feel that we can engage with Him and not get rattled or disturbed, and certainly not get frightened. At the same time, the chapter leads us to be honouring to Him, and to listen carefully to how He puts things. We need to now attend to his word-fall, how He says things. If we think that God speaks in a quaint and different way, that is because, through John the writer, He uses words we can understand and then subtly changes the setting in which they are used to enlarge our understanding of him.

### **3 - After Session 1**

*Things we did not have time to explain on the way.*

The early Christians understood that God's early dealings were with the Jewish people. He started with them as He began working a salvation for the world which included both Jews and Gentiles. So it won't surprise you that John, our writer, uses the record of God's former dealings with his ancient people - which he assumes we know about - as a rich background for projecting the ministry of Jesus, the incarnate Word of God. The first session in the series assumes some important sources in the Old Testament. So we need to read some things from the Old Testament to appreciate the background to the events we are reading.

#### **The pre-existent Word of God before Creation**

*Read Genesis 1.1-2.4*

In the opening verses of the John 1.1-3, the creation of the world underlies what John writes. However, even before he gets to that, he wants us to know of the Word of God, who was with God and was God. So we have here already two Persons in the Godhead. Jesus' later monologues in the Gospel refers to God and his Word as the Father and the Son.

It stands to reason that the creation of the world - the beginning - is an act of will of God. John, uses the background of the creation record in Genesis. Here God's desires to create are 'spoken out' and the Word of God is seen, in John, as the personal active agent of the Father that brings everything into existence.

So the world is a thing 'made' by God but distinct from his person. So God has always been there, long before all the worlds that He made. God was not always Creator, but He certainly was always Father. So the pre-existence of the Word, this second person of the Trinity, who is called in this Gospel, the Son of God, means that the Son was eternally generated of the Father. The Church came to say it that way in the 4th Century.

This word "generated" simply states that God's shared life is such that the Father and the Son [and the Spirit, for that matter, who we learn of in this Gospel as well] were always there and share the same being. It is on this

basis of 'sharing the being' that the Son can reveal the Father to us. And to have met the Son is to have seen the Father. These matters, introduced early in the Gospel, come to their full statement in John chapters 14-17.

### **Titles of Jesus found in Israel's past history**

In the last half of chapter two, John, our writer, heaps up the significant titles that are attributed to Jesus in this Gospel, and which the opponents of Jesus will also use. So we might do well to understand a little about them.

#### **'Lamb of God'**

*Read Genesis 22.8; Exodus 12-14; Isaiah 53; Jeremiah 11.19; Leviticus 16*

Lamb of God, or 'God's Lamb' initially refers to the Passover Lamb, so central on the night that the Hebrews exited from Egypt. In that case, the lamb could be thought of as God's lamb since it reflected God's way of releasing them from their slavery and taking them to a new life with Him. Yet the Hebrews selected this lamb according to God's requirements and provided it from their own flocks. Here, in the Gospel, God has chosen his own Lamb, his own Son from within his own life.

This 'passover' theme of the sacrificial lamb, brings together two themes - the first being the shed blood that shielded the Hebrews from the anger of God as His Spirit 'passed over' them; the second being the eating of the Lamb itself as the full meal to sustain them in the walk to freedom into an intimate life with God centred on relating to Him alone in the wilderness. These two themes of "eating my flesh" and "drinking my blood" are central to John's Gospel.

There is more; Lamb of God also has reference to the 'Servant' that Isaiah speaks of towards the end of chapters 40-55. Like the goat on the day of Atonement, the servant bears and bears away the sins of the people as they are laid upon him [Isaiah 53]. He suffers for them and justifies them and so deals with the wrath of God which is due to Israel. In his own person he represents them and also substitutes for them.

John uses the expression "Lamb **of God**" to speak of God's gracious provi-

sion of a sacrifice that is - because it issues from his own Life - acceptable to Himself. It is a sacrifice which man has no part in providing. There is nothing men and women can do towards this salvation for them that God is providing at his own expense and grace. It also introduces for us, right at the beginning of the Gospel, that the real meaning of the life laid down for us is basic to the understanding the death of Jesus [John 10.10.11-18].

### ***'Messiah' and 'king of Israel'***

*Read 1 Samuel 9,16; 2 Kings 9; Leviticus 4*

The Messiah as an anointed King is expressed by a bundle of ideas which taken together, enriches what we understand by the word Messiah. Originally, the Hebrew word, which has come to us through Aramaic and as it transliterated into English gives us "Messiah". The Hebrew word means "anointed", and when that meaning is brought to us through Greek and transliterated, we have the English word "Christ".

The Hebrew word usually referred to a kingly figure as he was instituted and authorised into his royal office by the act of anointing him with oil. We can see descriptions of these anointing ceremonies in 1 Samuel 9.16; 10.1; 2 Kings 9.2-6. The Old Testament records that priests were also anointed into their office and function. Leviticus 4.3,16; 8.12 would be examples of that. So as a starting point, we can think of the Messiah as an anointed promised King.

In his teaching Jesus made it very clear that in His coming to Israel, the kingdom of God has drawn near to people [Mark 1.14-15]. This sets our thinking about the kingdom, the reign, as a matter not of a place but of a person, now present. The rule of God is centred about the presence of God in person.

About this basic idea of the anointed king, the Old Testament has other situations in history, which expand our understanding of the person of the Messiah and his function. Here is a short list.

#### **1. Genesis 3.15**

Speaks of the seed [offspring] of the woman and the seed of the serpent, the creature through whom Satan, the arch rebellious angel, had approached the woman to tempt her. It is stated by God that they are now locked in a prolonged conflict, in which both will suffer injury. The wounds of each, when they finally engage, are devastating to Satan and minor to the 'seed' of the woman.

2. Genesis 49.10

Is a prophecy which is picked up and expanded in Ezekiel 21.32.

3. Numbers 24. 17

Speaks of a Star which has marched [gleamed] out of Jacob. Balaam's oracles are a source of Messianic understanding in a time when the enemies of Israel were frightened of the Hebrew horde, which surrounded them.

4. Deuteronomy 18.15

This passage which refers to a prophet like unto Moses arising later, is quoted in Acts 3.22 and 7.37 as having individual Messianic reference. John's Gospel has the Jewish leaders ask of John the Baptist whether he is 'the prophet'; he says 'no' but it is clear later that the disciples know that this person is Jesus, the person "of whom Moses wrote in the law" [John 1.45]

5. 2 Samuel 7.4-17

Nathan prophesies of the Davidic throne which shall not end. Son of David is a title addressed to Jesus in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke.

There are three lines of movement which show the expectancy within the OT of the Messianic hope. A hope of a human agent who would establish Israel's salvation and the establishment of God's rule or kingdom.

[a] The righteous warrior-king of Davidic descent [2 Samuel 7].

[b] The prophetic sufferer shown in Isaiah 40-55 and especially 52.13-53.12.

This is similar to Zechariah's picture of the Shepherd who is struck [Zechariah 12.10-11].

[c] The prophetic ideal, based upon Deuteronomy 18, which has the heraldic prophet, speaking of the great day of the Lord. The person spoken of in Malachi 4.4ff [Heb 3.22ff] who was identified the Messiah Himself [Acts 3.22ff]. See also Mark 6.15, 8.28. John 1.21, 6.14, 7.40.

6. Restorer Acts 3.21; ascribed to Messiah in Malachi 3.1, 23ff.

### ***"of whom Moses wrote"***

See under Messiah, the reference to Deuteronomy 18.

### ***'Rabbi'***

This is a term found in the mouths of disciples of a teacher with whom they are in a 'life' relationship. It means 'teacher' in the sense of a teacher of life and how to live it. A full study of this is found after session 7, as the series concludes.

### ***'Son of man'***

*Read Daniel 7; Ezekiel 12.2; 13.2; 14.3; 15.1; 16.2*

There are two themes presented to us in the Old Testament referring to the 'son of man'.

[a] Ruler and Judge - Daniel 7.13 representing the people of the

saints of the most high, as they engage bestial and monstrous powers. It is symbolical of the human rule of God's people and is Christ's favourite designation for Himself. He quotes this text of Daniel to Pilate [Mark 14.62; Matt 26.64, Lk 22.69] It was also central in his trial before the Sanhedrin. It implies the judicial function.

[b] lowly suffering servant, typified by Ezekiel as a man to whom the word of God comes directly from God. A word given so that he may speak it to others, who, in their stubborn rebellion, are not very likely to receive it. Look carefully at Mark 10.45, 12.6-10 cf John 13.12-17 and Luke 24.25-26.

## **4 - Before Session 2**

*Things that we need to know before we read the Gospel in Session 2*

### **The Jewish festivals in this Gospel**

As seen on facebook - David Boan, and also Knowing Jesus, an early 'taster' of this series was Snippet 11. It pointed to John's way of using Jesus' participation in upstaging the Jewish festivals.

Matthew, Mark and Luke, in constructing their narratives, make a clear division between Galilee and Jerusalem. John's gospel reflects this simple layout of theirs, but it intersected by another, which majors on the happenings at the Jerusalem location. John brings Jesus, at least five times, to Jerusalem at the time of significant Jewish festivals.

They are presented to us in an order: Passover, Pentecost [5.1], Tabernacles, Dedication and Passover again. The great discourses of Jesus are grouped around these feasts, as well as another Passover, this last in Galilee [6.4]. Discussions placed within the setting of these festivals show Jesus taking over the main thing of each festival. John indicates that Jesus participates, not simply as one Jewish man with his fellow Jews, but as the really central person in the meaning of what God was doing in those ancient events.

Such festivals, commemorating the past history of the Jewish people of God, direct us, through John's discourses, to appreciate how Jesus is the culmination and final meaning of the historical events that took place be-

tween the Jewish people and their God. They all point to Him. And John expresses this truth by having Jesus speak a monologue in the middle of the feasts where he finds himself. In each case Jesus is indicating the importance of some element of the feast and that the people should come to him for the reality of which the feast historically foreshadowed.

Passover, one of the major feasts that all men were required to celebrate in Jerusalem is a major theme of John's and requires a special study of itself. This will appear later.

Generally, we need to know our way around the Jewish feasts and fasts

## **The Feasts and Fasts as found in the Bible.**

### **A- Lunar Feasts**

Feasts that were connected to the Sabbath. Every 7th day was a Sabbath. Every 7th month was a sacred month. Every 7th year a sabbatical year. After 7x7 years was the Year of Jubilee.

[1] Sabbath – was connected with the new moon [Amos 8.5, 2 Kings 4.22-23, Isaiah 1.13, Hosea 2.11]. On the sabbath the daily morning and evening sacrifices were doubled. For the Sabbath law and how it should be marked see Exodus 16.23-30; 20.8; where it celebrates God's seventh day rest at Creation 23.12; 31.13-16; 34.21; 35.2; Leviticus 19.3; 23.3; 26.2; Numbers 15.32-36, 28.9-10; Deuteronomy 5.12-15 where it celebrates the redemption from Egypt.

[2] New Moon – the prophets gathered the people around them [2 Kings 4.23] and the number of offerings was increased [Ex 40.2, 27; Numbers 10.10; 28.11-15].

[3] The Feast of Trumpets on the first day of the sabbatical [7th] month [Tisri] Numbers 29.1-6; Leviticus 23.24-25.

[4] The sabbatical Year – the land was kept fallow, neither tilled nor reaped Exodus 23.10-11; Leviticus 25.1-7, 26.32-35

[5] The year of Jubilee – as the sabbatical year corresponded to the 7th day, so the fiftieth year corresponded to the 50th day [Pentecost] Leviticus 25.8-55, 27.17-24. The beginning of the Jubilee year was sounded by a trumpet on the Day of Atonement [Lev 25.9]. It was concerned with [a] the emancipation of slaves and [b] the return of mortgaged property to its hereditary owner.

### **B – Solar Feasts**

Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles followed the seasons of the year [Exodus 23.14-17; 34.23; Deuteronomy 16.16.] They were annual pilgrimages when the men of Israel were to appear before the God of Israel.

[1] Passover – [followed by the feast of unleavened bread Mazzoth] celebrated the lamb eaten as a sacrifice for its blood to turn away the wrath of God as the Hebrews and the Egyptians felt his judgment [Exodus 12, 13, 23, 34; Lev 23.5-14; Number 9.2-14; 28.16-25; 33.3; Deut 16.1-8, 16].

[2] Pentecost – [also called the feast of weeks, the feast of harvest, the feast

of firstfruits] lasted a single day [Ex 22.29; 23;34.22-26; Lev 23.10-21; Num. 28.26-31; Duet .16.9-12 ] See John 7.1-10-21.

[3] Tabernacles - [also called the feast of booths, feast of ingathering] it marked the completion of the harvest of fruit, oil and wine and historically it commemorated the wanderings in the wilderness. Sacrifices were more numerous at this time. [Exodus 23.16; 33.4.22; Lev.23.34-36,39-44; Num 29.12-40; Deut. 16.13-15, 31.10-13].

#### C – Minor Feasts

[1] Feast of Purim [“Mordecai’s day” 2 Maccabees 15.36] commemorates the overthrow of Haman and of his plots against the Jews [Esther 9.15-32, 1 Maccabees 7.49, 2 Maccabees.15.36].

[2] Dedication or Lights: Feast of the dedication of the Temple – instituted by Judas Maccabeus to commemorate the cleansing of the temple after it had been desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes [1 Mac. 4.52-59, 2 Mac 10.6-7] See John 10.22.

[3] Feast of Wood offering. – the last of the occasions when a wood offering was brought for the use of the Temple. Nehemiah 10.34, 13.31.

#### D - The Fasts

[1] The Day of Atonement [the day of coverings, Yom Kippur] – was the only fast day prescribed by Law. On this day of the offering of the sin offering by the high priest alone in simple clothing.

*The difference between the solar and lunar calenders appears a the end of this paper.*

## Solomon’s Temple

*Read 2 Samuel 7; 1 Kings 7-8; Haggai; Zechariah*

King David had a mind, to supercede the temporary , moveable ‘tabernacle’ of God with a permanent building for God, as the people came to be centred in Jerualem in the promised land. But it was Solomon who built the temple and dedicated it.

It was destroyed at the sack of Jerusalem and the people went into exile in Babylon. Afterwards, a smaller and less grandiose temple was rebuilt. In Jesus time, Herod the king had set out to rebuild the Temple and it had been under construction for 46 years. Hence the discussion which takes place John 2.13-22.

## Numbers 21 - ‘as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness’

*Read Numbers 21.4-9*

We need some background to understand what Jesus is about to say to



Nicodemus in chapter 3 of the Gospel. The book, Numbers, records the wanderings of the people of Israel in the wilderness after their rescue from the slavery of Egypt.

Numbers 21.4-9 records a journey of the people of God from Mount Hor in the wilderness to go around Edom on their way to the Transjordan, the eastern side of the River Jordan.

The following things are clear in this section.

1. The people were grumbling at God and Moses. They were remonstrating about the wilderness and the lack of food and water. They found the manna, the 'bread from heaven' which the Lord was providing, tasteless – to them it was "miserable food".
2. The Lord sent fiery serpents into the people, they bit them, and some of them died. This is a judgement of God. But by that we are to understand a decision to discipline the whole people so as to set them right; and to draw them to understand what is wrong in their relation to Him. It seems extreme to us; but it turns out to be necessary, due to the condition of the people.
3. Significantly, the people discern that they have done wrong, not through their own conscience or personal awareness of their heart, but by virtue of the judgment enacted among them. This points to an important issue. The people of Israel are reading their relationship to the Lord by looking at the external circumstances of what is taking place among them. It is not until He acts, and they see it, that they then infer the state of their relationship to Him. This testifies to their dullness of heart and explains to us why He has to act this way to get their attention. Wherever the knowing that comes by personal relationship is lacking this is what people do with God – they seek to interpret the state of the relationship by the external events. They are found asking, when circumstances get tough or extreme, 'why does this happen to me?'
4. The people's response is to go to Moses and ask Him to intercede for them. This state of affairs actually reflected their desire, which had been expressed earlier at Mt Sinai [Exodus 20.18-21]. They were not willing to hear God's voice directly, they preferred Him to speak to them through Moses. So Moses became their intermediary with God. This again emphasises the absence of personal access and relationship between God and the people.
5. Aware of their sin now, what the people ask of Moses is that he intercedes with the Lord. What they are asking is that the Lord may remove the serpents from them. That is, the serpents are not taken seriously as a judgment, they are understood to be a way of communication from God that they have sinned. Having got the message, the people think it perfectly reasonable that the serpents should now be removed. Preoccupied with their own selves as central, they do not ask of Him what is it that disturbs Him; they do not see that He has sent the serpents as an expression of his holiness in reaction to their sin. His decision about them is expressed as his judgment. Like a caring father He has acted with dull and unhearing children.
6. What the Lord commands Moses is to make a fiery [from molten brass] serpent and to set it on a pole so that, when anyone is bitten, he may look at the brass ser-

pent and live. There is no removal of the biting serpents which He first sent – they stay, and stay biting. They are the expression of his wrath as a judgment for the people. They speak of his holiness and unwillingness to wink at their sin. But while this judgment stays active and operative, another side of God's character, his mercy, comes into play. That He does not wish them to die, but rather turn from their rebellion and live, is expressed through the gracious provision of the brass serpent and the promise of life if they look to this one who is lifted up.

7. What they are asked to do, while they are experiencing the response of God to their rebellion, that is, while bitten and so knowing their life is forfeit now, is to trust his gracious provision. They receive life through trusting his word about it as being his provision. A provision made without taking away the wrath of God already being expressed.

8. This latter point is vital, for the instrument of salvation from the wrath is the same instrument through which the wrath is expressed. Experience of wrath comes through the serpents' biting, right where the people live; and the salvation from wrath's consequence is effected through the one serpent which is lifted up on the pole in their midst. His mercy saves them through judgment.

9. In their anxiety of being bitten and then, once bitten, as they look up to the brass serpent - an act that said they are believing the promise of God's word - the effect on the people, as they were saved, would be to know his mercy. And this mercy would assure them of the love of God for them, and that he is no tyrant, setting out to kill them, but a gracious Father who severely disciplines his dull children, so that they might hear and then live through his gracious provision for them.

So we see that there is not only a reconciliation made between a merciful God and his rebellious people, there is, at the same time and through the same salvation, a revelation of the nature of the love of God for them. As stated before, revelation and reconciliation go together in Israel's experience as they will with ours as well.

10. This also means that God acts in such a way as to be consistent with His nature. His being and his acts - who He is and what He does - are consistent expressions of his Person. For Him to act is to reveal his nature; in this case as holy and, at the same time, merciful.

### ***Bread from heaven - eat my flesh...drink my blood...***

*Read Numbers 11.7-9; Exodus 9.15; John 6.49-53; Psalm 78.24*

These texts listed above this paragraph, give the background of the suggestive argument between Jesus and the Jews in John 6.30-59.

The radical idea of taking in to yourself, ingesting, the word of God so that it may be said to be remaining [abiding] in you, is found in John by the use of the stark metaphor of eating and drinking. It is way of taking into your person what it is that sustains your life.

We have already seen from chapter 1.14 that the taking of flesh by the

pre-existent Word of God is now to be used in chapter 6.30-59 as a parallel to the coming down out of heaven of the manna in the wilderness. So the metaphor of 'eating my flesh' comes to mean receiving my life which is going to be given for the world. To eat it is to do what the Old Testament people did, it was to receive it as the life giving and sustaining bread from God. Just how this giving of Jesus' flesh, the giving of his life, is to be understood is dealt with in the booklet After 5/Before 6.

## Drinking Christ's Blood

The drinking of blood is a shocking image for the 'kosher- food' - eating Jewish person to whom animal's blood was forbidden; let alone the drinking of a person's blood [see reference to Leviticus 17.10-11 below]. This is very strange language to modern people. In our writer's day of course, and coming from a Jewish background, this was very rich language indeed. It suggested all the rich tapestry of history to the Jewish mind. But for modern Gentile people it has to be thought out and the metaphors explained.

How shall we think about this? Let's put it down carefully as separate points.

### 1 - Jesus did die.

That Jesus died is the important thing. And the use of the imagery of the "blood" sets the way that we must speak about it. If He had died of a disease, or of old age, it would require a use of different imagery. But he died in a violent way; and so "Blood" is the imagery by which the Lord has given us to think of the death of Christ.

### 2 - It is not the quantity of the flow which we consider.

Nor does it matter how much blood was spilt, a little, or every drop. That would only matter if the virtue was in the blood itself, as being simply a substance. If it were a matter of the quantity, then the sacrifice would not have been complete unless every drop had been used.

### 3 - Leviticus 17 - sacrifice, and where the value did not lie.

"And any man from the house of Israel, or from the aliens who sojourn among them, who eats any blood, I will set My face against that person who eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people.

For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement." [Leviticus 17.10-11 ASV]

While Leviticus 17 contains the hints we need, we should be aware of the following things. For these limit our use of the image of the blood:

[a] Nowhere in the Old Testament does the value of the sacrificial blood lie in itself, simply because it is blood.

For the majority of worshippers in Jesus' day the origin of sacrifice was forgotten and the rite was practised as if the blood in itself had an atoning value. The symbolic significance was gone. As a result, the New Testament writers had to restore the meaning to the Old Testament imagery - we have to do the same.

[b] Nor does it lie in the suffering which may accompany the shedding of blood. This is never dwelt upon in the Old Testament.

[c] Nor does the value lie in the life which is symbolised by the blood. Although that is a rich line of idea as applied to the Person of Christ in the New Testament, the sacrificial power is not placed there by the Old Testament.

[d] Nor does the value of the blood lie in the obedience of faith which responds to God's will and grace. The obedience which comes from faith may be necessary to bring a sacrifice but it is not the basis of its acceptance.

#### 4 - Leviticus 17: sacrifice, and where the value does lie.

The value of sacrifice lay in it being the will of God, it was God's appointment, his provision for a particular matter of dealing with sin that came between his people and Himself. What He had ordained there was the machinery of grace for Israel's national purposes. The issue was the nation, not the individual soul. It arises out of grace that God receives the offered life and accounts it for public righteousness. Sacrifice was used individually because it was first corporate-ly established and given.

#### 5 - Jesus' dying was voluntary.

However, it would have mattered a great deal if Jesus had died a natural death, by accident or disease. For what matters is that his life was laid down, not that it was taken from Him.

For His purpose, everything turned on His will to die. Yet, for that purpose it did have to be a death of moral violence - a death inflicted by human wickedness and the violation of the law - to give both the full force to man's sin, and the full meaning to Christ's blood.

#### 6 - Jesus' death was a victory over death.

The acceptable thing to God was not Jesus' demise, or a martyr's effort. His death was acceptable to God because it was the victory over death. Death, as a power, was abroad and ruling mankind; Jesus' death was death's arrest and capture. It involved a crisis. The resurrection, which followed His death, is the crowning of a real moral crisis and achievement. His death and resurrection are two sides of the one act. His death is redemptive, setting captives free.

#### 7- For Jesus to "shed His blood" means He surrendered His whole self, lovingly and entirely.

His death was a true moral deed, a conquest, in which His whole personality was victorious and decisive. The shedding of blood, the seat of life itself, means this - that what He did was a total surrender which involved his whole self.

What God is looking for, in His own holiness, is not some religious tribute. But God's total, intimate Life is seeking a holy self; someone who offers, by bringing their whole self, to this conquest. The essential thing was not self sacrifice, for that can be wilful, futile and mischievous. But sacrifice of the central self - not sacrifice by self, but of self, and of the whole self. Sacrifice which was not simply voluntary, but personal, loving and entire. Not till then is it striving up to the shedding of blood.

And it was an offering of a holy self to a holy God from the side of sin - the human side where sin held sway - and so that sacrifice involved not only substitution but judgment. It brought a satisfaction to God, a settlement, a vindication or a resolution. We see a similar requirement in what Nathan required of David in God's Name. It was not only repentance and confession but satisfaction [2 Samuel 12.7,13-14].

8 - Blood is spilt in matters sacrificial and also criminal.

In Jesus' day, the method of execution was by stoning or crucifixion - two methods which require blood to be spilt.

Also, the sacrificial offering required the spilling of blood. In this way, the criminal and the religious procedure ran together in a way that they do not for us today. Since it is strange for us, we need to take note of that.

9 - Pagan sacrifices presume a different view of God than those of Israel.

There are two truths, found in Leviticus 17.11 which differentiate Old Testament sacrifice from pagan sacrifice.

[a] "I have given it to you..." Sacrifice is the result of God's grace; it is not its cause. When a man uses sacrifice to approach God such a thing is first given by God before it was offered to Him. The real ground of any atonement is not in God's wrath but in His grace. Ideas of placating, or conciliating, or of mollification of God are excluded. There is no thought of purchasing God's grace.

[b] It appears that the pleasing thing to God, and the effective element in the matter, was not the death but the life. The blood was shed as a means of isolating the life from the material base of the body and the flesh, and presenting it in this refined state to God. The suffering of the animal was not uppermost here, but as a means simply of getting away the life for its sacred use; a use implied in the kosher prohibition of not eating the body with its blood.

Further, the shedding of blood was not a punishment on the guilty or the innocent. Nor was it intended to free the offerer from the death penalty: for such sins as warranted these there was no sacrifice.

10 - The outward, material sacrifice symbolised the real, inner sacrifice, which was the offerer's offer of himself.

The victim, or the gift offered, signified the hearty submission of the offerer to God's prior gift and provision. It was the living symbol of a life; that is, of an obedient will. It was an individual use of God's public gift to man; it was the provided way of access. In this way it was a surrender to God's positive will, and this surrender was done in the sacrificial act. It was not a gift to God but an appropriating of God's gift provided by institution of sacrifice itself.

It was not the blood, simply considered of itself, which was effective. Indeed,

the prophets only spoke against Israel's use of sacrifices like these when they discerned that they were using them as something magic, which worked by virtue of the blood itself.

So the worship was ethical in its nature and responsive and obedient in its form. The sacrifices were consecrated by self sacrifice - what lay on the altar was the offerer's will. What was precious was not the elements, or the thing, but the act.

The whole of the Hebrew system tried always to down play the place and the value of the gift, and to worship in spirit and truth a seeking, acting and giving God. A widow's mite could be more meaningful than a nation's mint. This is the way we understand the sacraments, baptism and the Lord's supper - the precious thing was the act, not the symbolising thing.

11 - By "blood" we understand that what is offered up is a life in its most intimate, spiritual and moral form.

Then we can say:

[a] that the pleasing, satisfying and atoning thing to God is not the suffering. Atonement is not to be understood along the lines of equivalent pain. Suffering becomes a condition or a form which accompanies the act, and not a factor, in the sacrificial act.

[b] that the essence of the sacrifice is not a thing, or a piece of property. It must be life. Our will is our dearest life, the thing we most cling to and give up last. Our will alone is our ownest own, the only dear thing we can and really ought to sacrifice. The blood, as life, means the central will, the self will, the whole will, in loving surrender.

This is the sacrifice which is found also in God. The cross in the New Testament does not so much portray God as accepting sacrifice as making it. And then it is not the extremity of physical suffering which is presented but the greatness of the death; not the depth of the agony but the height of the surrender which is the triumph of eternal life.

Seen powerfully in the prelude of Gethsemane, the death of Christ is the active death of self will - a yielding into the holy will of God. But we can also say that it was a death of self will done also by that will.

We make sacrifices which, although costly, do not draw blood from us. They do not go to the centre of our life. But with Christ, his blood means that He drew upon the centre of Himself and involved His total self. The foundations of his greater deep were broken up. His whole personality was put into his work and identified with it - not merely his whole interest or ambition.

Man's sin drew upon all of God's Son, and taxed the Holiest to the height. It made call upon what is most deep in Christ and dear to God - Himself, His Person, His vital soul, His blood. The love of God is only shed abroad into our hearts [Romans 5.5] in the shedding of this most precious blood.

12 - Modern errors about the blood which are not moral in application.

Our Gospel text requires us to think of the blood of Christ, but we must take it to modern ears carefully. We shall have to be thinking of its ethical terms and avoid all imagery which doesn't make that clear. There are modern understandings which are attempts to do this which stray:

[a] Christ's death is seen as the supreme glorification of heroic sacrifice. This

might draw men's admiration, but for God, Christ's act is not moving to the Father's heart because He is a hero.

[b] the manifestation of God's love under the terms of sacrifice. This is true to say but Christ is not simply showing us here how sacrificial is God's love towards us.

[c] its object is to move mankind to repentance and so supply the condition for forgiveness. This thinks of repentance as a necessary cause of reconciliation; instead the cause is itself God's act of forgiveness. This confuses cause with effect.

13 - Atonement has to do with a judgement.

What we must now speak of is the side which has to do with judgment, expiation, atonement. It magnifies the weight of human sin, as the sense of God's holiness grows. This is the side the Christians' cannot drop away from Christianity without giving the Gospel away. Individuals may think they can remain Christian while they discard it - but the Church cannot.

Love, pity and kindness are not redeeming love. Philanthropy looks at amelioration of people's difficulties or conditions; not redemption, which is the restoration of persons. Charity does not reconcile, only justice does. There is great need to recover today the moral salt of judgement.

14 - The blood of Christ does not just speak of his great effort, but of His self surrender and of a holiness needed for a grace for all mankind.

When we speak of the blood of Christ then we don't just mean the effort of his whole self, but the exhaustive obedience and surrender of his whole self. But not in the sense of a "voluntary humility"; for this is no self-willed, self-chosen obedience, no self created task as some devotees do. It was complete obedience on a universal scale to the moral requirements of grace. That is, a complete surrender to what the holiness of grace required in a situation of when the whole of mankind, as a race, sins.

15 - Any sacrifice in the midst of sin is a judgement.

By his holiness being present in such a world, the sacrifice of Christ was inevitable. Holiness must suffer in the midst of sin. It was not offered to man but for man; even though, it is true, that it had immense effects on man. It was first offered to a holy God, to hallow His Name and make it honourable. But this moves us from sacrifice to the graver issue of judgment.

This moves us in imagery from temple ritual to criminal execution; from the religious ordering of Israel to the civil code and social order based on God's righteousness. And full self-sacrifice to a holy God involves the submission of self to the moral order and judgement of God. Holiness and judgement are forever inseparable.

16 - As a judgment, sacrifice reveals God's holiness - showing what sin means to God.

We need to take the holiness of God seriously, not as an attribute of God's, but as his essence and nature, changeless and inexorable. The holiness of God is the deeper revelation in the cross than the love of God; for it is the holiness of God's intimate life which gives His love its divine value. And it is meaningless without judgement - for He could not wipe the slate and write off the loss. He must

either afflict with punishment or assume it Himself. He chose the latter course, honouring his Name and law whilst saving the guilty. Such was his love that He took his own judgement for us.

#### 17 - Death of Jesus establishes our holiness

And His judgment had results which exceed those of punishment - producing results in a holier way.

[a] It was vindicative, not simply vindictive. It vindicated his name and justified sinners [Romans 3.21-26]; not simply caused them to be condemned. It proved the true rightness of His love; it did not just take revenge.

[b] It re-established holiness and did not just condemn the sinner. Expiation here, is the exact opposite of exacting punishment - it is assuming it.

[c] Exactment to the last farthing is not required in a full, true and sufficient satisfaction. The law is satisfied by a due confession - a public acknowledgement of the moral situation. Holiness alone can fully assess the morality of the matter. Sin cannot, for it is unholy, and our love cannot, for it is self centred. Only the Holy One of God can make a good confession here.

The word confession is used here in its most basic sense. When we confess something we take a hidden, often private, matter and we make it public. So we can confess the truth of a matter which is at the time hidden. Or we can confess the sin of a matter, which was also hidden. What is common is the idea of showing something in public in such a way that it is brought into the light and is seen for what it truly is. This is what it is to make a confession, or to confess something.

By His death, publically on a cross, Jesus made a practical confession. It was not made in words but in a deed. His death spoke. His death was an experience which was holy to God; for from His intimate connection with His Son, He knew its meaning and power. Jesus' death was sympathetic to man; for it confessed publicly that this was the result of sin and guilt - it stood alongside sinners with understanding.

His dying was a practical confession of God's holiness far more than man's guilt could have testified to. A guilty man, by his guilt, testifies to the holiness in God. But he does so as one who does not know God's life - his guilt being the testimony that he does not know it. Jesus, on the contrary, as the holy Son of God testifies to the holiness of God in a much greater way. For his death shows what is the cost to the life of God for sin to come into the world. As He confesses, by His death sins result - He correspondingly shows its greater seriousness for the life of God.

God requires His holiness to be confessed prior to the confession of sin. For it is by the first, that we come to the deepest expression of the second. As His holiness is seen, by the cross, so the confession of sin is also seen by the cross.

#### 18 - Christ's death a confession of holiness concerning sin.

Death is the only sense in which Christ could confess from his inmost experience, could confess with His blood [ie his whole life]. His practical and entire confession [showing forth] of holiness from the midst of sinners He loved, is the divine significance of His blood. He stood beside the sinners but He was on God's side in this matter.

Love in sacrifice costs moral pain. It is a pain which is active, which takes



the initiative. It is not passive, as in inflicted pain. Not the pain of a sting, which is passively endured; but of wrath, of anger which suffer in order to express itself. It is not the pain not of suffering a wrong, which is passive. But it is the pain actively endured as the cost involved in the rectifying of a wrong. It is not the passive pain of grief, suffered because of loss; but the active pain as the cost of bringing judgement. It is the sort of pain which sin gives to God, when in His reaction against it, He judges and destroys its fruit. [We see this in parenting children - there is a sacrificial love which costs us pain in the correction and rectifying of our children's lives and activities.]

In the death of the God-Man two sides of the effect of sin are seen. The blood of Christ stands not simply for the sting of sin on God from God's side; but also for the scourge of God on sin, from man's side. Not simply, from God's side, of His sorrow over sin; but also, from man's side, of God's wrath on sin. Not simply, from God's side, the bleeding of Christ's side which gives creation to a Bride; but also, from Man's side, the bloodshed of the battle that casts down the prince of this world [John 12.31] and destroys his works [1 John 3.8]. There is also a breaking in us of the power of the guilt in which we were involved, and an establishing of the holy kingdom.

19 - Christ first justified God - the first step in saving man.

*Read Numbers 31*

Christ's work is prefigured in Phinehas' work [Numbers 31]. Christ's first business in saving us was to honour the Father's holy love. He saved man because He vindicated God's Name and so first saved God from being mocked by man. Jesus' death was not merely a collision with the historic forces of Rome and the social powers at work in Israel at the time, but the recognition within these of the holy wrath of God at work in the world.

Christ's work was the power so to deal with man's wrath against God [by letting them kill Him] as to accept God's wrath against man [dying on their behalf]. In this way He made sin further God's purpose of salvation which it had sought to foil or obstruct. The necessity of Christ's death was created more deeply by God's holiness in Him than it was demanded by the perversity of Rome and those in Israel that He exasperated. He died more deeply moved by the reasons He found in His life with God, than He was killed by opponents who historically He encountered.

It is this element of dealing with the curse, doom, and judgement which is preserved in the historic word of Christ's blood. It is not simply death that atones, but this death as a supreme act and expression of holy and obedient life which does justice to God's holiness as the Son alone could do; and which is possible only under the conditions of death, and such a death as Christ died.

20 - Christ experienced sin as God does; and its effects as Man does.

*Read 1 Corinthians 5.21*

In being "made sin" we mean that He was treated as sin [though not as a sinner]. Christ experienced sin itself, as God does, while He experienced its effects as man does.

He knew, from God's side, how sin, understood as a power, was so real, so radical, so malignant, so deadly to the Holy One's very being. The wages of sin is death, death is the result of sin. So, when Christ died at sin's hands it meant that sin

brought death to the holiness of God, for both could not live in the same world. It seemed to be death's victory. When He rose it meant that what was to live and rule in the world was the Holy God. Sin and death are now conquered.

Dying as man, Christ placed his whole self beside man as accountable, but on God's side in the issue. While standing with sinners, He was, at the same time, confessing God's holiness in the judgement, and justifying His treatment of sin.

There is no more sublime order of experience than from the heart to bless and praise a good and holy God in a situation such as this. It is to this order of experience that the work, the blood of Christ belongs.

21 - Justifying of God by Christ is the basis of the justifying of men and women.

Never is man so just with God as when the God-Man's broken, holy heart calls "just" the judgement of God which he experiences but has not himself earned. And never could man be just with God but through God's justification of Himself as it is worked in the blood of Christ.

It is only as we see the groundwork laid here for the self-justification of God, that there is a basis for the justification of man. The sinner could only be saved by something which damned the sin. The Saviour was not punished, but, from our side, He took the penalty of sin, the chastisement of our peace. But He did not feel chastised or condemned. But he willingly bowed, with a moral understanding that only the sinless have, to the ordinance of God, the suffering and death which was rightly ordained should attend the sin of his brethren.

22 - The expiation through Christ atoned for His murder.

Often in the New Testament the word for propitiation is translated as expiation. We have seen that propitiation is attached to the idea of sacrifice. It has to do with covering our sins from the eyes of God. In this way, the sinning persons are covered from His wrath. Propitiation is directed towards persons.

Expiation is a matter of crimes - as you propitiate a person, so you expiate a crime. This means that the due penalty for the crime is paid in full. When that happens it is said that the crime has been expiated.

Christ only speaks of his blood at the end of his ministry [except for the ransom passage in Mark] at the Last Supper. Although, in Johns' Gospel it is as early as chapter 6.

Throughout his life he spoke of forgiving grace but without any reference to any expiation. This is because His prophetic words are not enough of themselves; they are an invitation to come, but the cross is the enacting of what makes the coming possible for men and women. As a prophet He could not make the people cleave to Him, or see how much more than a prophet he was, He couldn't keep them from murdering the Messiah.

According to the Old Testament, this murder was sin which was high handed, having no expiation - sacrifice for murder was unprovided for in the Hebrew economy of grace. There was no grace for the deliberate rejection of grace. A new expiation must be made which would cover this. The death of Christ expiated the inexplicable sin of killing Him, and the sin of all humanity with whom God was dealing in and through Israel.

We see this powerfully enacted on the day of Pentecost. When the crowd, on hearing Peter's speech [Acts 2.14-36] as to how they have killed the Messiah whom

God had raised and exalted, are cut to the heart. Obviously thinking, because they know the Law, that they are without hope in this matter, they find the grace of God has provided for them. There is forgiveness offered them through the death of Jesus. the very One Whom they had killed.

23 - God was satisfied with the death of His Son.

In considering the death of Jesus we can't avoid using the word "satisfaction". To say that God is "satisfied" we do not mean that :

[a] there was a quantitative replacement of anything that God had lost. Nor do we mean

[b] that there was a glutting of God's anger by an equivalent suffering on someone.

What satisfies God in the death of His Son was the adequate confession, by the act and the suffering, of the truth that God is holy when He judges. This established before the whole world the holiness of God.

The satisfaction to God was that He was met by a love which was equally holy as his own from the human side, confessing Him as a justifying God of holy love.

There is no compromising of the case by some pact, ritual or judicial exchange, but so that the Holy Father finds the rest of his own conscience in the personal achievement of a holy Son. "This is my beloved Son..."

This section has been long, but necessary, for to even speak of the blood of Christ, which must be "drunk", - appropriated into your own person - means that all of what has been said above unleashes powerful, inner experiences of Christ's disciples.

They have found that believing the flesh and blood of Christ has accomplished such things as setting them right with God, cleansing their conscience from defiling things they have done. All this changes them on the inside, as to how they now view themselves in respect of God and also how they see themselves and their neighbours.

## ***Appendix: Lunar and Solar Calendars***

### ***1 - Equinoxes and solstices.***

The earth revolves around the sun. The sun, from the perspective of the observer on the earth, appears to move among the stars. The apparent movement of the sun is on a path called the "ecliptic". The equator and the ecliptic meet at an angle of 23.5 degrees. This point at which they meet are the equinoxes [a time of equal night and day]. Where the sun is at its maximum declination north + 23.5 degrees this is called the summer solstice for the northern hemisphere, Where the sun is at its maximum declination south + 23.5 degrees this is called the winter solstice for the

southern hemisphere. These equinoxes and solstices set the seasons of the year.

The equinox where the sun moves from the south of the equator to the north of the equator is called the vernal/Spring equinox; March 20-21 each year. This time serves for a fundamental reference point for the fixing of the stars.

The equinox where the sun moves from the north of the equator to the south of the equator is called the autumnal equinox; September 23 each year.

## **2 - Seasons.**

The lengths of the different seasons are unequal because of the changing velocity of the earth in its elliptical orbit during the year. The earth is closest to the sun [perihelion] about January 2 and is moving faster then than it does mid-year. So the northern winter and autumn are shorter than summer and spring.

## **3 - Lunar calendar.**

The year was divided into 12 months of 29.5 days, making a total of 354. The accurate figure was that this made up a year of 354.367056 days and the figure 0.367056 meant that 11.012 days had to be added to the calendar every 30 years. With this addition a calendar very accurate to the moon was attained.

## **4 - Solar Calendar [Julian]**

Following the rotation of the earth around the sun this made for a year of 364.2422 days. The figure 0.2422 meant that it was necessary the addition of a an extra day every fourth year [leap year]. The calendar's accuracy was measured by how well it fitted with the two equinoxes and the 2 solstices. The calendar was considered very accurate if the equinoxes fell on or about the same day each year.

## **5 - Lunisolar Calendar [Jewish].**

This is a calendar which tries to keep the lengths of the lunar months and the tropical year in harmony by using periodic adjustments. The lunar month of 29.5 days is made into a 29 day or 30 day month alternately. Twelve of these gives 354 days. Additional months are added at times to bring the number of calendar days to the number of days in a solar year. This was normally done by adding a 13th lunar month every 2 or 3 years. This is the form of the Jewish calendar.