

God as man

Glory laid aside



A Discipleship School

David Boan

2

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Unit 2
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*Beyond all question, the mystery of god-
liness is great: He appeared in the flesh,
Was vindicated in the Spirit,
Was seen by angels,
Was preached among the nations,
Was believed on in the world,
Was taken up in glory.*

1 Timothy 3.16 NIV

Unit 1 - In review and stated as an outcome

The reconciliation that God in Christ has achieved for us, causes us to experience that we are at home with Him. Being indwelt and informed by the Holy Spirit, we are now able to grasp his revelation about the life of our Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

We are drawn back into the inner relations of the Trinity, to see that covenant commitment is prior to our creation. The out-going love of God for us was there in the relations between the Father, Son and Spirit. God saw us "in Christ" before the world was made.

The new-covenant-based situation in which we find ourselves allows us to accept that we are God's creatures. Secure in Christ now, we can begin to unravel, through repentance, our former hostility with God. We are content to be dependent on God for our origin and patterns of life.

Knowing that we are wonderfully significant, because He has made us in His image, we are free to shoulder the responsibilities of being decisive. So we abandon our former escapism, which we now see was a refusal to take our place as people of God who matter, both in what we do and say. We have resolved to be decisive, to engage with God and our world; to live disciplined lives that are holy, for this shared holy life is God's reason for saving us. We were always built to share his life as creatures.

Accepting that, through His Son, we were made by God – and made for His Son - we are responding with a full and exclusive intensity. This relationship is permanent and eternal, because it is with God Himself. In response to His love for us in Christ, we have come to a position of active trust – our will is submissively engaged.

We have also begun to prepare to know the depth of our sin, not through the law but, through the consideration of the life, death and resurrection of our Bridegroom - Jesus Christ. It is knowing the cost to God that we understand his holiness.

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This booklet encourages you to -

- 1. Read the downloads from the website www.davidboan.net which are referred to in the "See..." headings which are set flush right.*
- 2. Constantly read the Bible references for yourself. Always test everything that you hear; for the aim is to make your own convictions clear and solid for yourself.*
- 3. Keep reading the Discipleship School Book after each session.*

Each teaching session only covers a selection of the subjects under consideration. The book helps to build up the detail of each evening's teaching and they let you check what is being taught against the Bible text itself. The paragraphs and the pages are consecutive for purposes of indexing and continuity of the whole.

If you ever wish to pass on what you hear then the full set of books, with their indices and main headings are a starting reference for you.

1 - Before we begin to read the Gospels

51 - God in Christ has become man "for us" and for our salvation

Our next four units parallel the main content of the Gospels according to Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Unit 2 investigates how the Son of God, in coming "for us" and "for our salvation", first laid aside His heavenly glory, and entered our world as He took flesh. This deep humiliation for Him throughout His incarnate life – His first coming – is where He says, does, and suffers things "for us".

Unit 3 majors upon His atoning work for us – that work where He offers Himself as a victim upon the earth for our sins. It has its powerful basis in the holiness of God and the love of the Father who sent His Son for us. It is the atoning work that established for us the forgiveness of our sins, which is our redemption.

Unit 4 deals with His Resurrection and Ascension into heaven. This strikes the theme of Christ being "vindicated" or "justified" and so expresses His exaltation as the Son of Man "for us". We now have a man in heaven, drawing us into His heavenly life through His Spirit as we live in space and time upon the earth.

Unit 5 will look at the coming of the Holy Spirit, His presence with us and the work He does "in us" as He imparts His life to us at this present time.

52 -The Spirit and the Word: the apostles had new life and their teaching carried an authority.

*See Galatians 2.20, 1 John 5.20;
Campbell, [1862] pages 114-115*

The apostolic men, on whose witness any Christian instruction is based, wrote of the words and works of Jesus after His death, burial, resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit. So, when they wrote, they were already under the influence of the power of His resurrected life imparted to them by the Spirit.

[1] It is because they knew such assurance and personal change through the gift of the Spirit and His power, that they had no difficulty in reporting of the strong statements of Jesus to their brothers and sisters. These men were impressive to the new Christians who gathered about them because they had the life. We mustn't forget that, because now, we tend to read the apostolic witness for its revelation and doctrine.

The apostles are pre-eminent to us for they are a "double gift". First, of the revelation they

spoke and second, of their lives which bore witness to the power of Christ. Sadly, we are often more interested in the inspiration of the Revelation the apostles brought than we are in participating in the divine Life they knew to be theirs [Galatians 2.20; 1 John 5.20].

Campbell (b:1800 d:1892) pointed out [1862] that we owe a debt to the apostles. Our interest in them was not simply that they taught the truth by speech but that they taught it by what they were. They showed, by demonstration of life, how near to God we are. He considered it a difficulty, in his own day, that the apostles were regarded more as teaching what *we are to believe* rather than also remembering them for showing in themselves what *we are to be*.

Consider!

1. *In our day, as in Campbell's time, we are often imbalanced about Word and Spirit. We need the balance of contending for the Inspiration of the Revelation as much as the Inspiration of the Divine Life within us.*
2. *If we overbalance on the inspiration of the revelation, we may move to a place where we are so concerned about the doctrine being from God that we sound like modern Pharisees, contending for the inspiration of the old – rather than finding the love of God in ourselves for others. “You study the Scriptures diligently, supposing that in having them you have eternal life; their testimony points to me, yet you refuse to come to me to receive that life.” John 5.39-40 (REV, 1989).*
3. *We need to be jealous for the Inspiration of God's life within us with just the same intensity as we are looking for the inspired revelation that is true and apostolic.*

The early church saw in the apostles of Christ changed men with new life. They had a fellowship with the Father and His Son by the Spirit [1 John 1.4]. If the Church did not know them personally, the Gospels they wrote showed their journey, making clear the change in them. The Church valued the apostles for the godly life they displayed. Having seen that first, then they attended them to learn of Jesus and listen to their teaching. It was because of that life folks attended to what they did and said.

[2] The union between Word and Spirit seen throughout the apostolic witness.

Only God can reveal God [see # 58 later]. God mediates Himself by Christ which means that He may be apprehended through the Incarnation of His Word. In the same way, God brings an impartation of Himself by the Spirit: this means that we can participate in His life, to be empowered by our fellowship with Him.

This dual expression of Word and Spirit as the kingdom of God advances is seen in the Acts of

the Apostles; it is also true in our life.

From a Trinitarian perspective, all of the content of truth comes through the incarnate Word. The Spirit does not speak of Himself, but declares the things of our Bridegroom to us. The Spirit is sent by the Father in the name of the Son to dwell within us and to make us capable of receiving and understanding the Word. In this way, the Spirit makes effective the personal address of God to us. This is the “communion of the Spirit” [2 Corinthians 13.13].

53 – The connection between “the Gift” and “the task”; between the being and the doing

See Boan, (1990) The Framework, Chapter 15.2

The Gospels then, based upon apostolic witness, were written for the Christian church. They are records of what Jesus said and did for those who have His life in themselves now, by the Spirit. The difficult and challenging words of Jesus and the task He set before them in His exhortation did not frighten them, nor did it drive them to attempt to perform that “task” out of their own drive and effort. They could already do the task because they knew the “gift” of His life. So the strong exhortations of Jesus were read, as recorded for them, as matters consistent with the work of the Spirit within them and able to be done by faith.

The early church experienced who they were “in Christ” and, because they were sure of their “being”, they were not thrown into disarray and doubt about the “doing” required of them. We shall re-visit this matter in the teaching of Paul, where we shall see that “being justified” becomes the strengthening assumption of all that the Christian person does in practice. Indeed, if Jesus does not bring us the life to do the task, then His requirements are impossible! If we do not have the Spirit of the Son of God, we don’t have the life.

In the Gospels, there are some uncompromising statements of Jesus which challenge us. They can often make us fearful. Perhaps our Christian assurance may not be strong. This is particularly so if we have heard a “contract” based gospel that presented to us that “if” we do certain things, “then” we are acceptable to God and He will bless us. There are many of these “if – then” scenarios for modern Australian Christians; they turn up everywhere. We shall have cause to revisit these matters often in these units on discipleship.

54 – Gospels: Section 1: Jesus with the initiative and the control

In the following sections we major upon the work of Jesus who not only spoke the words of God but did the work of God. He is, in His Person, the very Word of God - being both a declaration/revelation and an active agent of the work of God. He did not just come to speak, although He did that. He also took flesh and came to live for us and die for us; this was the central issue of the Gospel. He did not just come to say something - He came to do some-

thing.

If they do not always have the same way of stating it, all of the Gospel writers concur in presenting to us Jesus entry into the world to declare the Kingdom of God.

[1] The first section of the gospels tells us of the acts and the sayings of Jesus - his coming, his preaching, healing and deliverance of local people. As "The Rabbi", He called and gathered around him the inner group of the disciples given him by the Father.

[2] Then there is the outer work of Jesus standing in the world of men and women, He is a stranger to this world. He brings to it the power of heaven in miracle and workings of healing; He commands it as a king and expects, if the Father shows, that it recognises his kingship and his kingdom. People are recipients of the gracious work of Jesus of Nazareth, they are healed, delivered, and released. They are sent away to testify of these things.

[3] But even as we read we are left with questions. What becomes of His teaching in the ears of the crowds, or Herod Antipas' hearing? Or of His works in the eyes of the Pharisees? We understand that the poor and the weak hear and are relieved, but when Jesus goes to Jerusalem where are they? They are left in Galilee, and the writers of the Gospels do not return to them.

[4] Peter is honoured through the Father speaking to him of the identity of the Son as Messiah. But Peter is rebuked almost immediately for his desire to thwart the Messiah of his way of accomplishing his mission. Later, Peter will deny Jesus.

[5] And what about Judas, who holds the money-box? He hands Jesus over to the very ones who have decided to kill Him? Eventually, all the disciples forsake him, and only the women are looking on at the end. This is the focus of the gospel writers of this first section of the gospels.

[6] In this first section Jesus is seen as the one who is superior and in control. He strides through the first section, taking the initiative in all that is happening. He is exalted above the fray as a Master who has things to say and do which break in on men and women with great power, rendering some grateful, some puzzled, and others very, very angry as they see their religious way of life challenged and their hold on the people of Israel loosened. They are angry enough to react to plot his downfall.

By virtue of the revelation He brought, He shows the religious leaders to be blind and deaf to the hearing of God through the parables He uttered. Others, who are driven and controlled by demons find relief through His presence and power; the rule of the kingdom attends his kingly person.

In all this we see Jesus as the Judge, who, while coming in a gracious way, nevertheless indicates that men and women are not right and are found wanting in their own reliance upon themselves.

[7] We would not be wrong to see behind this picture the One who, in the words of John the Baptist, has the judgment of God in his hand, who is laying the axe to the root of the trees. We see the judgment of the Pharisees and the scribes, and all those who are righteous in their own sight; and for whom, Jesus says, he has no call. His disciples are taken by call from among the sinners, for whom alone He has a mandate to utter the call of God.

55 - Gospels: Section 2: Jesus yielding to the actions of others

But now comes a surprise, for the beginning of the second section actually brings about a great reversal.

[1] In the Synoptic Gospels [Matthew, Mark and Luke], the first sections and the second sections are bridged by a transition period from the first to the second. The transition section records the journey to Jerusalem, which, in Mark particularly, contains the discipleship teaching of the Rabbi who prophesies his trial, death and resurrection. It also introduces the disciples to the cost of their discipleship in following the Rabbi. It culminates in the entry to Jerusalem and up to the last supper.

[2] Certainly by the setting of Gethsemane, we have entered the second section proper. The second section hurries to its end, which is the cross. It does not deviate from that movement, there is a presentation of unbroken sequence of events which climaxes there at the cross.

[3] In this section there are very few sayings of Jesus, and no actions at all. Indeed, any inducement to action to save himself [“12 legions of angels” Matt 26.53, and “come down from the cross” Matt 27.42] are seen, in the light of the transition teaching, as temptations to Him now. For, Jesus is no longer presented as the main Actor with the initiative, but as the Object of other people’s action. His movements are exclusively that of suffering what others are doing to him and his words that of answers as He finds Himself being questioned and challenged; in fact, being judged.

[4] What we see in these chapters are: [a] an arrest; [b] hearings and prosecutions in religious and civil courts; [c] an execution and [d] a burial

[5] They form a logical result of the first part of the Gospels, and also what is foreshadowed in the preaching of John the Baptist.

[6] In the last part of the first section, as we see Jesus’ grief over Jerusalem’s response to him in its day of visitation, Jerusalem’s time had come. The temple would be destroyed. This became a cause, in itself, which figured in his trials. Both the little apocalypse of Mark 13, and Matthew 26 make clear that there are things to come after this which will express a judgment of the world and the world’s rejection of His followers - a rejection that mirrors the rejection which had taken place of Himself. But even as we follow the reading, which clearly records others judging Jesus, it is also true that, after the Resurrection, it turns out to be a judgment

and a trial that He made of them.

[7] This second part of the Gospels then is a trial of Israel, but the judgment does not fall on the guilty [as it did in the Old Testament on Samaria and Jerusalem]. It actually falls on the suffering Servant of Isaiah, who stands in for Israel now. He is the only One who has the mandate to judge Israel, the "King of the Jews".

The one who is prosecuted in the story is the innocent One. This is a reversal of the roles - the ones who are to be judged are allowed the freedom and the movement to do the judging. The Judge allowed Himself to be judged; which is why He came to Jerusalem as a King, yet riding humbly on an ass. This is a mysterious and baffling road to his glory!

[8] The second part of the Gospels then presents us a difficult picture. It is the oppression, suffering and execution of a man who is standing silent and suffering in the midst of them all. It is difficult because here the accusations fall are upon the One who, according to the world's wisdom, least of all should bear them - and, correspondingly, they do not fall on those who ought to bear them.

[9] All this is reinforced by the contrast of the shameful exchange of a murderer [Barabbas] who is released while Jesus is crucified in his place. He is "helped" to carry his cross by a man who is compelled [Lk 23.26] to carry it. No volunteers stood with Him here! He dies alongside two robbers; a death not of a hero but a criminal [Is 53.12]. His enemies taunt Him as a Jew on His Roman cross. Instead of the destruction of the temple that He is said to have prophesied, His own death is happening. Is this the destruction of the temple? Certainly the Gospel of John implies that it is [John 2.18-22]

56 - Gospels: Section 3: Jesus is the Justified, Exalted Son of God

What makes good-news-sense of the whole of the story is the Resurrection, the shortest part of the Gospel narratives.

[1] Concerning this One who allowed Himself to be judged, God the Father, flatly contradicted the condemnation and shaming of Him by raising Him from among the dead. This was a vindication of His righteousness; it justified Him. It declares Him to be the sinless, holy One of God.

[2] In this section of the Gospels they record the forty days when, in the company of his disciples, they ate and drank, beginning a new Gospel history of His community. Here begins the totally new revelation that makes total sense of what is now to be called the Old Testament. He begins to tell them how the Scriptures spoke of Him and his suffering. Here is the Judge who allowed himself to be judged in the execution of His judgment. He is the proclamation, He is the subject of the good news. The Easter story is the Gospel story revealed in its whole and completeness.

2 – The Eternal Son of God

57 – The eternal Word of God takes flesh

See John 1.1-18; 1 John 1.1-4; Colossians 1.15-19, 2.9;
1 Corinthians 15.20; 2 Corinthians 4.4; Hebrews 1.3-4;
Ephesians 1.10,23; Philippians 2.10. Galatians 4.6; Proverbs 8.22-23.

The prologue to John's Gospel sets out for us a clear identity of the Word of God with the person of Jesus. Having stated that, we do not hear the phrase "the Word of God" again throughout the Gospel of John. We are to bear it in mind as lying behind everything we are reading.

John 1.1-18 leads us to observe about the Word of God.

[1] This Word and Wisdom of God was "in the beginning". He did not come later than the creation, nor was He a first-link between God and the creation. If Proverbs 8.22 tells us that it may be said of Wisdom that God "brought wisdom forth" as the first of His works; we must also read on to verse 23 and see that Wisdom says "I was appointed from eternity, from the beginning, before the world began."

The Word of God stands outside of all created things. He is as God Himself.

[2] This Word was "with God". The text makes clear that the Word had no being that was not "in" God and "with" God. How this could be is answered by the next statement.

[3] The Word "was God". This understands that the Word of God has the same divine being as God. Now this opens a remarkable door – for in speaking like this the Gospel is speaking of the divine Word [Logos] who is *internal* to the Being of God Himself. He is coming forth from the inner relations of what the Church would later call the Trinity of the Godhead.

[4] By verse 1.14 we see that the Word, in taking flesh, brings us to the consideration of Jesus of Nazareth. The title is not some honour bestowed on Jesus because of something that He did; it is the coming of the person into our world by the taking of flesh for us, whose title is the Word of God.

[5] This Word of God is the bearer of life [1.4] and the life is the light of men [1.5,9] - men who are constantly stumbling in the darkness of this world.

[6] He is the only begotten of the Father. So, when He is called Son of God, no one else shares His glory.

“...We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of

one Being with the Father; through him all things were made...

In this Creed of Nicaea [325] when we say that the incarnate Word is “begotten” of the Father we are referring to what the theologians call the *eternal generation* of the Son or the Logos [Word]. The Word belongs to the inner being [nature] of God and is quite distinct from the creation of the universe, which has to do with an activity that takes place outside of God’s internal, relational Life.

The Son is of “one Being” with the Father. On the one hand, He is of one nature with the Father; on the other hand, this eternal Son has now become the incarnate Son, sharing with us our created being and nature. This two-sided perspective of Jesus Christ is addressed in the study of Christology. For the early Christians did not only speak to the Father in the name of the Son, emphasising their access through Him; but they also spoke out their praises to the Son, as God – Who is worshipped and adored.

[7] Only God can reveal God; that is a simple truth of any personal being. As the Word of God He is the complete revelation of God in physical, human form. He is the speaking of God to us in a person in Whom God declares Himself.

We have then, in Christ, Someone sent to us by the Father - His true and only Son. That He is from the “bosom of the Father” implies that He has come to convey to us revelation originating within the inner life of the Godhead and being expressed by One who is God Himself. For Jesus Christ is God come to us, - Immanuel - not simply in man but as man. So, for the first time in Israel’s history of dealing with God, the inner relations of the Godhead are being opened as God declares Himself in His Word.

[8] When the text states that He “was” God we understand that an eternal happening is expressed – in the form of time. At the same time we have a temporal event – something happening in created time, the time of creatures like us - but with the content of eternity. This dual aspect expresses what has taken place in the incarnation.

[9] “This one” who has the divine nature [verse 1-2], is the “this one” referred to in verse 15. There John the baptizer says, “this was He of whom I said...”

We are left in no doubt that the whole of the Gospel of John will expound “this one” through recounting the life, death and resurrection of Jesus.

58 – It is only through God that God may be known

See Irenaeus, [182-188] *Adversus haereses*, 4.11, 18-20, 34, Athanasius, [356-60] *Contra Arianos*, and Athanasius, [335] *In illud omnia*, Torrance [1972] page 222

“At that time Jesus said, “I praise you, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because you have hidden these things from the wise and learned, and revealed them to little children. Yes, Father for this was your good pleasure. All things have been committed to me by my Father.”

No one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.” Matthew 11.25-27 (NIV, 1973) and parallel text Luke 10.21-22.

“The Father loves the Son and has given [δεδωκεν] all things unto His hand...” John 3.35 [Gk]

Matthew 11 records that when the generation that heard Jesus did not discern the meaning of His words, nor welcome Him, Jesus expressed the cursed condition of the towns of Israel in which His miracles were done, but in which there was no response of repentance. The responsibility of men and women is powerfully asserted and a judgment is pronounced upon them.

But a balancing truth is now stated, founded on an inner understanding of Jesus’ relationship with His Father. If these folks don’t ‘get it’ about Jesus, then, in the understanding of Jesus, Father has not made a revelation.

[1] Jesus acknowledges the culpability of these towns for their lack of response. Yet, while they are culpable for that, nevertheless, it is the will of His Father which occupies Him. As He addresses His Father, the Lord [God] of heaven and earth, He discerns His Father was pleased to hide the revelation from the wise and the learned. By contrast, folks with no formal learning or worldly wisdom, those who are like babes, are given to clearly see who Jesus is. So the Son understands a judgment of the Father on the “wise and learned”, in that He is not making the Son known.

Subsequent to the Ascension of Jesus, a similar work of the Spirit is outlined in 1 Corinthians 2.6-16; revelation can only be made through the Spirit Who reveals the hidden things of God.

[2] When the local towns of Israel showed themselves blind to the revelation of God through the Son, then the Son knew that His Father had not made Him known. The reason He knew this was because of a relation existing between both the Father and the Son. They have a mutual, exclusive freedom within themselves for either to reveal the other. Jesus is stating here that the knowledge of God given to us in and through Christ is the knowledge of God originating from within His own Being, the very life of God.

[3] Jesus states that, “all things” have been committed [παρεδόθη = delivered over] to Him by His Father. By “all things”, Athanasius (b:296/8 d:373) assures us that the handing over took place not because the Lord lacked anything of Himself. Rather, it was for the purpose of His redemptive work, “for us”, that the Father has conveyed an authority that works over all of creation and also through it.

For the Saviour’s redemptive work to be universal in its scope, all things were delivered over to Him by His Father. Not as to someone who did not previously possess them, but, as Atha-

nasius puts it,

“ He was not man previously, but became man for the sake of saving man. And the Word was not in the beginning flesh, but has been made flesh subsequently.” (Athanasius, *In illud omnia*, 335) para.3.

This helps us to see the “all things” as referring to the redemptive scope of His Person.

[4] This statement of Jesus opens to us the inner relations of God’s Being. We are taken into a stunning possibility through the Incarnation. T.F.Torrance (*b:1933 d:2007*) makes clear that the Incarnation opens us up to a knowledge of God which is not so much something said *about* God, such as a prophet might speak it, but we actually *get to know God Himself*. We get a revelation of the interior relations of God’s own Being. In this way, the Incarnation makes the revelation of the holy Trinity as basic and essential to the way Christian’s understand God.

[5] “...and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal Him.” This means that men and women come to know God through God’s own revealing: either the Son is recognised, which is a work of the Father; or the Father is recognised, which is the work of the Son. For within their reciprocal, holy relationship only Each makes the Other known. This gives us deep confidence that there is no God back of Jesus Christ. We can be absolutely certain that if we have encountered the revelation of God in Christ, then we have met God Himself as man.

This is quite unlike the Old Testament’s epiphanies [manifestations] where there was a hiding of God while at the same time there was a manifestation. There we see that God manifests under a form that is clearly not Himself - it may be a burning bush, three men who come to Abram, etc - and yet there is a speaking which is obviously God speaking. Such epiphanies maintain two truths simultaneously - that God has visited and spoken and yet, what is seen is known to be not God.

This pivotal teaching of Jesus shows us that the self-revelation of God, as it comes to us through the incarnation of the Word of God, presents as a relational matter. It is a revelation focussed on the Father-Son and the Son-Father interrelations; conveyed and made effective to us by the Spirit.

[i] It presents God as knowable; accessible through the way He has made in taking flesh; an act He has taken for us and for our salvation.

[ii] The distinction between the Persons of the Father and the Son, in the Spirit

[iii] This demands, as the early Church found itself driven to think, that we think about the Oneness of the Godhead as a Unity of Three Persons who are distinct from one another. It is a Unity in Trinity.

3 – The Birth

59 - Signs

The meaning of the miracle is conveyed by both the nature and the form of the sign given. With miraculous signs it is important to understand what they signify and how they are used to deal with mystery.

Signs are used in the Old Testament as well as in the Gospels. So, in Mark 2.1-12 Jesus, after declaring the Father's forgiveness to the paralysed man is accused by the scribes of blaspheming, for only God can forgive sins. Turning to them, He indicates that what He is about to do is so "that you may know...". This is what signs are for, they are for unbelievers; those who fail to hear through the word.

And so He went on to heal the paralysis. The healing of the paralytic is the sign of the forgiveness of sins. The eternal reality is the forgiveness, the healing is the sign of that reality. The healing is given for unbelievers, as it was given to Moses to do signs for the elders in Egypt who might not receive him [Exodus 4.1-8].

"These signs follow...." Mark 16.17

The sign is that Christ's disciples "lay hands on sick and they recover" - it signifies that the gospel deals with the greater truth of the forgiveness of sins. It is this reconciliation that deals with the whole man, and brings Him into a share of the life of God.

The sign is that they "cast out demons" - the meaning of the sign is that they have the authority of sons, their names being written in Book of life.

The sign is their ability to "handle serpents" and "drink deadly poisons" which signifies the reality of the work of the cross over Satan, and that the power of death has been conquered in these ones, who find they are no longer slaves to sin which reigns in death. They walk as sons, with the authority of sons; they are conquering as sons, and have the protection of sons.

Signs declare the truth of God in a form that is accessible to the physical realm, and they are to be accompanied by the explanation of the things signified - this is what Jesus did. They actually are the occasion for the declaration of the heart of God. And as assuredly as we are aware of the heart of God towards the world concerning forgiveness - redemption - then we are in a place to believe for the signs to follow those that believe.

Consider the sign of the marriage ring; no one marries to have a ring. That would mean that we would be pre-occupied with the sign and didn't value the thing signified. The groom marries the woman to live with her, so that together they, in turn, can be a sign; to declare the mystery between Christ and the Church.

6o - Mysteries

See 1 Corinthians 1.21; Romans 1.18-32;;16.25

Adam and Eve, having eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil refer to themselves as the foundation of all their knowledge. They are their own reference point. Confident that they know good and evil their self-referred starting point is a biased one, whether they are thinking about themselves, God, or the world. Consequently, in their rebellion from God, they do not have true knowledge at all - this only comes from God as He reveals it to us. It is not through the wisdom of the world that the world comes to know God [1 Corinthians 1.21].

Their rebellion causes them to “suppress” the truth, and so they end in idolatry, worshiping and serving the creature, rather than the Creator. Their heart becomes darkened, and their minds are foolish. It is an expression of the wrath of God that He hands them over to such desires as they have in this state [Romans 1.18-32].

The New Testament uses the word “mystery” [μυστήριον Greek; sacramentum Latin] to mean some truth that is hidden to the eyes of men, but nevertheless present in the world all around them. It is significant that it is only as God “gives” revelation [Romans 16.25] that we can understand the mysteries.

- The Gospels declare the “kingdom of God” to be a mystery that the disciples are given to understand. They do so because the key to the mystery of the kingdom of God which they possess is their Rabbi; it is He who explains the parables to them. To those outside, everything is in parables [Mark 4.11-12, Matthew 13.11, Luke 8.10].
- That there is a partial hardening of the Jewish people at the present time is a mystery; and we can only understand this as the apostle Paul informs us [Romans 11.25]. More of this in the 8th unit of this course.
- That some will be alive upon the earth and not die and be resurrected, but will still be bodily changed to be like Jesus is a mystery [1 Corinthians 15.51].
- The gospel is a revelation of the mystery of God’s will. It speaks of how He had such kind intentions for us before the world was made. [Ephesians 1.9].
- That the Gentiles are fellow heirs with the Jewish people of God’s promises is a mystery. It is the mystery of Christ [Ephesians 3.3-6].
- The church of Jesus Christ is a mystery. It reveals the administration of God’s plan [Ephesians 3.9] concerning the relation between Christ and His church [Ephesians 5.32].
- The gospel itself is a mystery [Colossians 1.26,27,4.3]. The apostles are stewards of the mysteries [1 Corinthians 4.1].
- How iniquity works is a mystery, and needs God to reveal it to us [2 Thessalonians 2.7].
- Faith is a mystery [1 Timothy 3.9] as is the mystery of godliness seen in Christ’s incarnation.

tion and resurrection [1 Timothy 3.16].

- To speak in tongues is to speak mysteries in the spirit [1 Corinthians 14.2] ie there is speech but no understanding for the human listener.

61 - Incarnation of the Word of God - the Birth from a virgin is the Sign

There is no way to understand this Incarnation; it is something which God does entirely Himself. The coming of one who is truly God and truly man is not going to be understood intellectually, but rather spiritually. This is true of Jesus Himself, not just his birth. Simeon had made it clear in the temple, for he says, "This child will be for a sign to be opposed... [Luke 2.34-35].

The birth of Jesus will be a mystery [see # 62 below] and we need to see God's work is only comprehensible in His own light. It can only be understood as a unique act of God. But it is the description of this mystery which we must study in its own setting, and see what the Scripture is signifying.

The sign - the virgin birth - signifies the thing signified - that of the mystery of the Word of God made flesh. That a miraculous conception has taken place is to say that something has happened in which man has no part. It is a unique work of God alone, paralleled by the Creation.

62 - A miraculous conception! What does it signify?

See Galatians 4.4; Torrance, T.F. [1992] page 63:

[1] The "how?" question is not immediately accessible to human understanding.

The conception is a reality. It takes place in the creaturely world, yet independently of it. It happens mysteriously, but it does happen, whether we have an understanding of God's action or of the action itself: God has taken the initiative.

So the virgin birth does not give us a crass description [how could it?] of what happened but it tells us of the mystery of that reality - the fact that it is inconceivable. It speaks of the fact that God has acted on His own; and that all the "how"? questions we can usually ask of an event, "How does it work? Where did all this come from?", these can't be answered without the revelation from God. All of it is God's work that He does in Himself.

The sign then tells us that the mystery does not yield to intellectual understanding but only to a spiritual understanding in which God's work is to be seen in its own light. The earthly origin of Jesus of Nazareth then, can be stated, but only stated in such a way that it is a mystery.

Isaiah 7.14 says that the conception by a virgin will be a sign - we need to keep to this sign by which the witness to the mystery is signified. It is important that we do not believe so much in a virgin *birth* - the birth was normal - what we believe in is a miraculous conception. That is, the coming of God in the flesh has mystery attached to it. But if it is a sign- what it is at a sign of? Let us see what can be stated.

[2] - God has the initiative

The virgin birth at the start of the earthly life of Jesus and the empty tomb at the end of the earthly sojourn of Jesus are really a single sign in themselves. As a start and a finish they describe and delineate the earthly existence of Jesus for us; and both signs show Christ's life as marked off from the rest of human life. Both signs mark transitions. The conception marks the entry from heaven of the Word of God into the world by taking flesh. The empty tomb marks the transition of Jesus out from among the dead into to life.

The virgin birth testifies to the mystery of the revelation that in Jesus Christ, God comes forth from his heavenly glory and enters our world. Moses, when he asked to see God's glory, was given to see the "back" side of God while a word was spoken of God's inner character as compassionate and merciful [Exodus 33.17-23]. In Jesus Christ's face, we have beheld the glory of God the Father.

The tomb and the resurrection show the revelation of the mystery. By our sharing in this mystery at the end of his life we come to know the mystery of the beginning. The gospels are written from the perspective of those who know the resurrection, and so can reflect on the birth.

[3] - Born of Mary, when she was a virgin.

When we say that Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary we want to assert that, within the mystery, the following things are true, .

[a] that He was born as no one else was born

[b] that He was born not because of male generation, but solely by female conception

[c] that He was born of a real mother, a son born of the real flesh and blood of his mother, and so with flesh and blood as real as the flesh and blood of sons of other mothers. [See Galatians 4.4 "born of a woman", in the sense of *born out from* a woman].

There have been those in history like the Gnostic, Valentius (*b:100 d:160*), who said Christ received nothing of his mother but assumed a heavenly body, newly created for the purpose, passing through Mary as water passed through an aqueduct. This means that Mary is simply a channel, not as one from whom God has drawn flesh.

Such an idea strikes at the heart of our salvation. If Christ is not a real man, taking flesh which is fallen - as Mary's flesh is as is ours - then He cannot save us. What is not assumed is ultimately not redeemed.

[d] This is not a *creatio ex nihilo* [creation out of nothing] but a creation *ex Maria*. [out of Mary]. This tells us that the new, second creation presupposes the first. Mary is a creature and from Mary comes the creaturely continuity here; Jesus shares in mortal flesh. He partakes of human nature. His birth is a sign, it is not simply and only supernatural. If it were just supernatural then He would not share in flesh and blood. And yet, creaturely glorification is denied here - man is not God's partner in the action. As to preserving God's initiative, the emphasis of the Church has been that God "took" flesh in the womb of the virgin, Mary; not that she "gave" to God what He, as God, did not have.

[4] - Born of a virgin - the sign speaks of both a gracious gift and also a judgment.

It is Mary's place to demonstrate the graciousness of the gift that has come to her [Luke 1.28, 2.10 Matt 1.18-25]. It is Joseph's part to show forth that it is a judgment as well. This birth does not just run biologically counter to Joseph's life in that he does not sire this Child. It is also socially counter to his life, for he must also bear the shame of the likely misrepresentation as well.

Joseph shares in the event but in a way that opposes him, contradicts him, withstands him and compromises him. He cannot come to terms with it without pain and astonishment and humiliation - he can only appreciate what is being said to him by faith, because the miraculous conception is a sign.

That Jesus is born of a virgin is also a judgment on man. For her virginity in this case does not deny man's human self in the presence of God. But it does deny that he has any power, attribute or capacity in him for God. If he has it - and Mary does have it - it is laid upon her, she acquires it, as given to her by the grace of God.

[5] - "A body You have prepared for Me... [Hebrews 10.5ff]

Jesus was well aware that in His manhood, He had received a body that was mortal - capable of death. In this way the incarnation looks forward to the cross. Without the body there can be no cross at all. So, even at the naming of Jesus in his birth, it is said by the angel, "Call His Name Jesus, for He will save his people from their sins". His birth foreshadows His death; which will be the culmination of his mission.

Torrance, T.F. (b:1933 d:2007) speaks of the incarnation as the taking of what is ours to make it his. This involved a taking, not only of our sin and guilt but also of our violence and wickedness. So that Jesus, in his self-consecrated life, as well as in his atoning death, did away with

our evil and healed and sanctified our human nature from deep within that nature of ours which he took. So we are presented by Christ to God as those redeemed and consecrated in and *through himself as the God-man*.

63 – What is not assumed in the Incarnation is not redeemed in the Atonement and Resurrection

See Torrance, T.F., [1992] page 63

The incarnation is the foundational beginning of the salvation that the Saviour works for us. In Jesus Christ God has entered our human existence and He has united our human nature to His own, without ceasing to be God. That we have a true God-man means that all of the saving work inheres in His person. His Person and Work are one, indivisible from Himself.

It is in His incarnate Person that the reconciliation between God and man and man and God is accomplished. Torrance, T.F. (*b:1933 d:2007*) expresses the direct link between the Incarnation and the Atonement. He thinks of the atoning death as falling into the incarnate life of Christ's person. It is on that ground of His real human life that He assumes in his birth that the death of Christ embraces all men and women. This is because the Saviour has a humanity which is as theirs.

There is no salvation worked for us outside of, or external to, that God-man. Athanasius (*b:296/8 d:373*) makes clear that God becoming incarnate in Jesus Christ means that the Word became flesh as man, not just by coming into man.

4– The Baptism

Our reading in the Gospels would be the following;

John's Mission and Message

John's testimony: his relationship to Christ Mt 3.11-12, Mk 1.7-8, Lk 3.15-17, Jn 1.24-28

Jesus' testimony about John Mt 11.2-19, Lk 7.18-35, 16.16

John and the coming of Elijah Mt 17.9-13, Mk 9.9-13

The Baptism of Jesus

John Baptises Jesus in the Jordan Mt 3.13-17, [17.5], Mk 1.9-11, 9.7 Lk 3.21-22 Jn 1.29-34

Jesus' Authority linked to source of John's Baptism Mt 21.23-32, Mk 11.27-33, Lk 20.1-8

Other readings in the New Testament -

The word of God made flesh Jn.1-1-18

Healings in Gennesaret Mt 14.34-36, Mk 6.53-56, Jn 6.22-25

The needy friend at midnight Lk 11.1-13

Divisions take place over Jesus Mt 10.34-36, Lk 12.49-53

Teaching in the Temple Jn 7.14-39

Sons of Zebedee Mt 20.20-28, 23.11 Mk 10.35-45

Parable of Great Supper [Wedding garment] Mt 22.1-14, Lk 14.15-24

Greeks seek Jesus Jn 12.20-36

Prayer in Gethsemane Mt 26.36-46, Mk 14.32-42, Lk 22.39-46, Jn 18.1,12,27

Day of Pentecost Acts 2.1-12

Paul at Ephesus: Twelve Men baptised Acts 19.1-7

64 - What is the meaning of John's Baptism for Jesus Himself?

John the Baptist had appeared as God's man for the preparation of the people of Israel for the coming judgment and the coming forgiveness of sins, all of which will be brought about by God's righteousness.

For the people who were listening to John the preparation for this time would mean renewal, which implied conversion, which in turn implied repentance. The conversion looked toward something - the remission of sins. Zacharias had foretold this concerning his son, he would "give his people knowledge of salvation" = "the forgiveness of their sins".

For Jesus to come to John was to come to the prophet of the Lord; He would recognise in John's utterances the voice of his Father. John was the man for the hour and it was appropriate for Jesus to yield to the call of the prophet of the Lord. There is a simplicity in this obedience of Jesus to the word of God brought through John; it would lead to submitting to the programme of the Father. John's coming was indicating the timing was now.

When, with all the others listening to John, Jesus listened to the message of the coming judgment and the coming forgiveness of sins, it applied to Him in a different way than it did for all the rest. Along with them He needed to recognise it as God's action and program, and with them He needed to yield to it and experience it; yet He had come to execute it. In submitting Himself to be baptised by John, Jesus was seeking baptism into his own work and mission. John's preaching was the claim of the Father upon Jesus that He would commit Himself to the carrying out of the work to which He had been called.

When He yielded to the baptism of John He saw that it was God's act He was suffering, and that He was the chosen Israelite who was born and ordained to do this thing - He was Israel's Judge and Deliverer. The discharge of this ministry was to be His ministry of the future and the meaning of his life history. In this acceptance of a baptism of repentance He put Himself totally at the disposal of men and his Father: He was not saving his life but losing it for their sake.

65 - John the Baptist responds to Jesus coming for baptism.

John's Gospel, in chapter 1, records that John, the baptiser, initially opposed Jesus in His readiness for baptism. He wanted to restrain Him. Did the Saviour of his people need to con-

fess Himself as a sinner before God in solidarity with His people? Did Jesus need to submit Himself to the judgment of God? Rather John, knowing his cousin's godly life, thought that he, himself, needed to be baptised by Jesus.

But this would have been a serious error; similar to that of Peter [Mt 16.22] "Far be it for you Lord". For it wasn't that some immediate discrepancy between John and Jesus was at issue; it was that everything John was preaching, and for which Jesus was coming, was at stake. "All righteousness" here had to be fulfilled. This gracious will of God, to be fulfilled "for us" in the life of Jesus, was going to turn on this action.

66 - What is Jesus doing in being baptised by John?

See Barth, K, Church Dogmatics IV.4 p.59

[1] His free subjection to the will of God.

[a] He is freely, totally subjecting Himself to the control and Lordship of his Father. He does not choose this act for Himself, it is demanded of Him by God through the voice of John, His cousin, in the wilderness. As an Israelite, Jesus heard with all Israel [Lk 3.2] the man "sent from God" [Jn 1.6]. He obeyed it by standing with sinners of Israel and having Himself baptised.

As John, God's prophetic voice, called the people of Israel to readiness for the coming Kingdom of God, Jesus makes Himself ready in his response. And He was also doing this in a way that was not of his choosing. He did not set the type of service He would do for God. His Father set that. In this way, He is passively obeying the call: so He enters the water praying [Lk3.21]. With empty hands He is trusting in the Father concerning this response to the call, He is at the disposal of God and men.

[b] He is coming to submit to the work of God, and yet He does not come simply as one who awaits the action of God to follow, but also to actually execute it. His coming is a coming to commit to bring it about.

[2] His free association with men and women.

Being, without reserve, submitted to the will of God, He is committed to the solidarity with all men. He was setting himself in the history of men and women who had fallen victim to the judgment of God. And through the preaching of John they had been excited about God's coming, free remission of sins. It was to this that Jesus also directed Himself as the act to be involved in.

In doing this He confesses God as the One whose will is shortly to come on the earth; and he confessed men as those God had in view in doing this will. Others, frightened by the coming will of God, are confessing their sins; this One, calmly, as a Son of God and a Brother of men

and women, is confessing their sins which He has caused to be His own.

Karl Barth (b:1886 d:1968) expresses this confession of Jesus powerfully. He speaks of Jesus as afflicted and laden down with those sins He was to confess because He was such a fellow human of all men and women. This was because He was elected from all eternity to partake of the sin of all in His own person, to bear its shame and curse in the place of all. He was the man who was to be responsible for all men and women. Barth makes clear that at his baptism this is what Jesus began to do when He had himself to be baptised by John. He was opening His history as the salvation history of all others.

[3] His free entry on the service of God and men.

In this act of baptism then, He set Himself to serve both God and men. He set himself to do the very thing which He alone could do for men. And as a man, what He could only do for God. What He set himself in this baptism was a commitment to carry out his mission as Messiah of Israel and Saviour of the world.

67 - What is God, the Father, doing?

See Isaiah 64.1a

The Gospel writers do not only record Jesus' submission to the baptism of John, they also speak of what is expressed from heaven.

[1] Heaven opened

Immediately as Jesus is "coming up" [ἀναβαίνειν] from the water, the heaven opened and Jesus saw the Holy Spirit as a dove, [or as Luke has it, "in bodily form like a dove" Lk 3.22] "coming down" [καταβαίνειν] upon Him [and remaining on Him according to Jn 1.32ff].

In this way, heaven is answering Jesus, acknowledging, confirming and approving what it is that He is doing in response to the word of God brought through the prophecy of John. By being baptised He has entered his ministry; heaven is acknowledging that fact. In rending the heavens and speaking we have a clear and powerful answer to Isaiah's call upon God to actually do something and intervene in the life of Israel. He has done so in the sending of His Son - here He identifies that action clearly.

In the Gospels, these affirmations from heaven occur at important turning points of Jesus' life [eg. the angels to the shepherds with the heavenly host Lk 2.9,13; the Transfiguration Mk 9.2 and parallels; the voice heard in the Temple after Jesus' entry to Jerusalem Jn 12.28ff; and the strengthening angel in Gethsemane Lk 22.43]. They are powerful testimony - God's own witness - to and about His Son.

It is important to see that Jesus' baptism is not a place where He becomes the Mediator on behalf of men. His beginning on his ministry was a simple act of obedience of one who is

"lowly of heart" [Mt 11.29]. He is not grasping at the power to discharge his ministry. He is simply making the decision to respond to the known will of God. He is simply obeying, not having a claim or seeking anything, not wanting anything as a possession; he just wants God to receive glory through his obedience. He cannot anticipate what John or God would do.

Jesus is not then attempting to seize office. He is not trying some "forcing" of heaven's hand by his going down into the waters. He is not pretentious here - what could he gain by being baptised by John along with everyone else? The only thing could be the free answer of God Himself, and that was not in Jesus' hands. The same issue will raise its head in Gethsemane and the cross - with the same answer!

68 - How Jesus lived, making decisions, by faith. He did not act out a role.

If we think of Jesus as a person who, throughout His life simply lived to a predetermined plan, then we shall have a view of Him like we think of an actor, who simply reads his lines at the appropriate time because He knows all things in advance. Many Christians think of Jesus' life this way. And they look for their lines and entrances in the play of life; they see guidance as a future plan revealed all the time. This is not a life of faith at all!

We must see Him as a faithful Son who, constantly traced His actions according to His perception of what He saw His Father doing. He is as a man who lives by faith and He draws us into sharing in His life of faith as well. For that speaks of the life of God as relationship. In this way He lived moment by moment - not as a line in a play, but as a faithful Son living, risking and sharing with his Father the initiatives He sees his Father makes.

69 – The "baptism" of His death foreshadowed

See 1 John 5.5-6

The beginning at the Jordan is related to the end at Golgotha by the saying of Luke 12.50 where the final goal of Jesus' work, his death, is described as a "baptism" which He must undergo. He came not by water only, but by water and blood. If He stood here in the Jordan with sinners in a baptism with water; it is also true that He will stand with sinners in a baptism in blood.

Further, this baptism of Jesus the disciples will share - they also will die in and with him - Mark 10.35-40. Can they drink the cup he is drinking [present tense] or be baptised with the baptism with which he is baptised [present tense]? They say "Yes". He says that it will be so. There is here a deep connection between the life and activity of Jesus and the experience of the disciples. What He has gone through on their behalf will come to be their experience - if it doesn't, how can it effectively be on their behalf? In the later units of this Discipleship

School, we come to see that there is one baptism which both Jesus and the disciples share.

The coming of the Holy Spirit gently [as a dove] from heaven is an assurance to Him of the pleasure of His Father. This One remains on Him, and insofar that He does, as the go-between God, He constantly causes Jesus to be aware of His father's delight in His Son's difficult work of obedience.

Heaven was declaring that Jesus was the one great Receiver of the Holy Spirit - it is on account of this that He is the Baptiser on the Holy Spirit. John's Gospel makes this its concern by noting that the Spirit remained upon Jesus - He can immerse others in the life which He has.

5 – The Temptation

Our reading in the New Testament would be the following

The Baptism of Jesus

John Baptises Jesus in the Jordan Mt 3.13-17, [17.5], Mk 1.9-11, 9.7 Lk 3.21-22 Jn 1.29-34

Jesus' Authority linked to source of John's Baptism Mt 21.23-32, Mk 11.27-33, Lk 20.1-8

The Temptation of Jesus in the wilderness

The encounter with Satan Mt 4.1-11, Mk 1.12-13, Lk 4.1-13

Other readings-

Prayer to Father as Sons Mt 6.5-15

Prayer in Gethsemane Mt 26.36-46 Mk 14.32-42, Lk 22.39-46, Jn 18.1,12,27,14.31.

God's trials are not temptations James 1.12-18

Deuteronomy 6.10-16; 8.1-10

John 4.27-38

70 - The Kingdom context

We have seen that John the Baptist's appearance and his work of preaching and baptising with water involved the obedience of Jesus, as a true Israelite, to the word of God which was brought through John.

We saw how Jesus, in committing to the word of John, acted in obedience and that the voice of God broke through and announced the pleasure that He had in his Son. Jesus is now committed to do the work of the kingdom; He has been baptised in the Jordan, and the Spirit of God has descended and remained upon Him. As the One who has received the Spirit without measure, He is also the Baptiser in the Holy Spirit whom John foretold as the one who was "greater than" himself.

It is important to remember this immediate commitment which Jesus has made in his baptism for it makes clear to us the setting of his immediate temptation. Indeed, it is in the light of this stance He has just taken, in obedience to John's preaching, that the temptation

is issued. He has elected to stand with sinners. It is in the light of that choice He will face temptation.

71 - Temptation and testing - a study in James 1.12-18.

See Isaiah 14; Ezekiel 28

[1] Men and women, created in God's image, from the beginning have been required to live in a way where what comes forth from their heart is shown by their actions.

Each event in their life is a test, and in relation to God, a test of obedience. It is an opportunity to display the relation between man and God. In any given situation then, God has in his mind to show forth, for his glory, what it is that He has placed within the heart of man. So the obedient action of the men women is a manifestation of the character of God, who made him in his likeness.

In an unfallen world then - as it was in the garden - all that God arranges will be events which will show forth God's glory through the life of the man or woman. Each of these events will involve a command to be obeyed which, when it is done is a blessing to the man and the woman.

[2] From the time of the temptation of Adam and Eve and their subsequent disobedience, many events in life from Satan's side come as a temptation. The express intent to not show forth what is in man to the glory of God, but to subvert him to obey some one other than the God for whom he was made.

This is not the glory for which Satan himself was made by God to have; for he too, having the nature of a cherub [Ezekiel 28.14], was intended by God to live for God's glory. To Satan was given the opportunity of glorifying God as a cherub; as an angelic personage in the heavens, rendering obedience to the Lord.

Satan's unauthorised attempts to make man to directly obey him is to steal from God what is the form of glory God ought to have from men and women. Satan's attempt to get them to serve him is also a de-humanising process as well - it will rob men and women of their glory also, for they were made to answer to God in covenant relation to Him. Anyway, whatever men and women can render to Satan cannot be appropriate to an angel; men and women were not made to worship angels. For they are not made by them nor are they made in their image. Consequently when they attempt to have a reciprocal relationship with them, then they cannot express their humanity, their being made in the image of God. They become less than human. They are relegated to beasts - and live by their lusts and desires.

[3] Only a personal being who has already fallen can tempt another. Knowledge of sin is only gained by doing it. The Scripture presents to us the rebellion of Satan [Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel

28] as an event which has already taken place before the tempting of Adam and Eve by the use of the snake in the garden.

[4] Presuming the fallen state of man then, and thinking about what is taking place inside ourselves, when we are tempted we are registering within ourselves the power of certain lusts which carry us away and entice us. These lusts are the fruit of the fall within us - they mark us as fallen ones, ones who have already obeyed the devil. They are a sign that we have come under his power - our nature has been subverted to obey Satan. If we are carried away by this enticement, then the lust will be conceived and gives birth to sin, which in turn brings forth death.

[5] It follows from [3] above that, because God is "good" - He is the very definition of the word - He tempts no one. He cannot be tempted by evil. God's character is without shadow upon it, it is invariably good and true. So whatever the circumstances we receive from Him, we can trust His character that these are not intended by Him to make us fall over. He never sets us up like that; to believe so is to have confused the work of God with that of the devil.

[6] It is in this sense of [5] above, that the Lord always tries or tests his people. After the new birth of the kingdom of God and the baptism in the Holy Spirit, God is always looking for opportunities to demonstrate the wonderful life which He has implanted within us through the resurrection power of the risen Lord. So we should count it all joy when we suffer various trials [James 1.2-8; Romans 5.1-4, 8.28ff].

They are opportunities to show forth the hidden life within us for his glory - we have been restored to be able to become what we ought to have been in the first place. Jesus has "humanised" us; we are proper humans now!

72 - Jesus was "led by the Spirit"... "to be tempted by the devil".

[1] The temptation of Jesus, follows immediately after the Baptism. In this way, the Gospel writers make clear that the temptation mounts a challenge to the commitment Jesus has irrevocably made in that Baptism.

[2] We see in Scripture that the normal attitude of any man or woman is to avoid temptation, to flee [Proverbs 6 & 7] from it, and to ask the Lord to "not" lead us into temptation [Mt. 6.13].

[3] All the more surprising then, to find that the coming of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus results in Him being led into the desert. And even more so to see that He is not led there for prayer and fasting at the commencement of his ministry; or to contemplate matters. Mark records that the Spirit 'drove' Him into the desert to be tempted. This is the purpose for the entry into the desert [so Mt 4.1]; to be tempted by the devil. Luke 4.1 has Jesus "led about" by the Spirit in the desert, and all that time being tempted by the devil; Luke then presents the encounter with Satan as a culmination of that period of that forty day temptation.

[4] This leads us to understand this episode in Jesus' life as a matter in which the kingdom of God took the initiative; it is an aggressive encounter we see here from heaven's side. This will be something which He will do "for us" and which we must not do for ourselves. Whilst the devil is seen to be the author of the temptation - nevertheless there is an engagement here which is sought by the kingdom of God; this is a period of direct confrontation.

73 - The Temptation in the light of the Birth and the Baptism.

See Hebrews 2.11-18; 4.15; 1 John 4.1-2

[1] Fallen man is always the judge of his neighbour, himself, and also God. He will not confess his sins, nor his rebellion, nor even his own fall. His constant unwillingness to repent leads to his continuing in sin - it renews his sin over and over again. Jesus' sinlessness is seen in that he does not do this. He took our flesh, the nature of man as it comes from the fall. He is, in his human nature, constantly open to the temptation of sin.

[2] While Jesus was like us in taking our nature; He was unlike us in action. He did not yield to temptation. He found the cost of obedience to involve suffering in a fallen world: it was something learned in the doing. In his condition he was like all other men, in his action He was without sin.

[3] We have seen before [# 66] that Jesus, in being baptised by John, took his stand with us as people who were under the judgment of God. He committed Himself to the service of God and men. And so he went into the water of the Jordan, confessing His sins [sins which were ours as to their doing] in obedience to the preaching of John. In taking this stand with us Jesus acknowledged God to be in the right in His verdict on our sinful life which was in need of redemption.

[4] The letter to the Hebrews [2.11-18] makes clear that Jesus could be tempted. He is not ashamed to call us brethren [2.11] on the basis we are from the one originator [whether we think of God, who is uncreated, or Adam or Abraham - created beings]. Jesus is a true partaker of "flesh and blood" in like manner as us [2.14]. It is as one who has suffered being tempted that he is able to be the High Priest, representing us who are also temptable [2.17-18]. He can sympathise with the weak and was at all points tempted as we are, but without sin [4.15].

[5] The Birth tells us that He was a true man, one who took fallen flesh, from his mother. So He has flesh and blood as real as the sons of other mothers. It is imperative to believe that Jesus Christ came in the flesh [1 John 4.1-2] and not to be half-hearted about it.

The Baptism tells us that a true man, with flesh just like ours, stood with us and was not ashamed to call us brothers. Unlike us, He was an obedient man to the God - full of faith towards the word of God through the prophet John.

The Temptation tells us that we have a real man who is temptable, and is also an obedient

man and a true son of God, who resists the devil. The devil flees from him until another time.

74 - The Temptation to abandon his standing with sinners.

See Revelation 12.

[1] We have seen in # 72 above, that three Gospel writers are unanimous that this was a leading of the Spirit; indeed Mark has Jesus driven [ἐκβάλλει] into the wilderness by the Spirit. It is to launch an offensive that the Spirit drives Jesus to engage the devil.

[2] Fasting and hungry - He is found expressing a sinful man's unworthiness to live, his readiness to suffer death because of his sins. This shows the radical nature of a man's repentance.

[3] Jesus, unlike other men, is willing to expose Himself to temptation for our sakes. He is a person who, as our champion - our proper man - engages temptation on the offensive, not on the defensive. We, who are compromised, are always on the defensive. He is not one who waits passively to be tempted, simply as the tool of the devil, as a prey of Satan. He is met by Satan, but not as a compromised loser - as we are - but as an opponent who has come to the earth for a specific purpose and goal.

[4] As a child Jesus' entry into the world was a constant goad and source of anxiety to the devil. We are told of the opposition which took place to the birth of Jesus. As the woman gave birth to Him - whether we think of that woman as Eve, Israel or Mary, or all three would fit into Revelation 12.1-3.

Revelation 12 indicates how Satan desired to devour the child Mary gave birth to. We see Herod the Great, as the authority ruling in the name of the great Gentile power of Rome, attempting to catch Jesus in a net of slaughter of local children. At that time, Joseph and Mary guarded him with supernatural guidance about what to do. This attack of the devil was blatant, murderous and brought through powers in his hand.

[5] In the temptation in the wilderness the devil is direct and clear, but the temptations are not any attempt to break the law of God. The devil is not presented as godless or dangerous. Rather, as it was for Eve, the temptations take the form of advice, some 'wise' counsel.

The direction of the counsel is that Jesus should no longer take the way of a sinner repenting, standing in line with the other sinners. It suggests that Jesus not continue in the direction he had begun when he entered the Jordan River. The way Satan offered had no cross. It was an easier, self-serving pathway to accomplishment of the goal.

75 - What was Jesus tempted to actually do?

See Exodus 7.7; Deuteronomy 6.;16; 8.1-10; John 4.27-38

[1] **The first temptation** was, after being hungry for forty days, to turn the stones around

Him in the desert to bread. He is to “tell this stone to become bread” [Lk4.3]. It is an appeal to use the power of His own word to save and maintain his own life. If Jesus had yielded to this then He would have abandoned the immediate work of fasting and repenting, his current work in the identification and standing with sinners - and he would have, long term, undone the possibility of the cross, the ultimate work of standing with and for them.

By refusing to do what was asked Jesus sustained his hunger and trusted in God to actually, through His Word to bring him sustenance and care of His own provision. His trust is well founded - He finds that there are angels sent later to minister to him [Mt.4.11]. In resisting being deflected from his obedient course he, in fact, sustains course, and so remains obedient. This is important for, the centre of life for the obedient man is not only to resist the devil - such resistance only matters because it is, at the same time, the holding to the form of obedience already engaged upon in doing the word of God.

In answering the devil, Jesus uses only what is available to an obedient human who has been tempted to use his own word for his own ends - he answers in words of Scripture [Deuteronomy 8.1-10] which are addressed to Israel.

“Man shall not live by bread alone.” [8.3] is quoted from a section where God is explaining to his covenant people the reason why He tested them in the wilderness for the forty years. It was to humble them and to test them, and to know what was in their heart. It was to make them understand that they did not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. It was a matter of God knowing as well as of men understanding this thing; this was the purpose of the test. [John 4.27-38 has the same dedication of Jesus to make it his food to do the will of his Father - food which was contrasted to that which others encouraged Him to eat.]

[2] **The second temptation** comes in the suggestion that Satan, to whom all the “kingdoms of this world” [Lk4.5, Mt 4.8] belong, should give Jesus lordship over it. The price for Jesus was that He should fall down and worship Satan. It seemed to Satan to be a reasonable and practical modification - a short cut to the kingdom actually. Leastways, this betrays what is Satan’s ultimate concern; it is about who will rule who.

This is the enticement to an easier way than repentance, easier than standing with sinners, easier than seeing evil conquered, easier than seeing sin dealt with as a power which enslaved man. He was asked to bow privately to Satan, so that the world would then be ruled ostensibly by Jesus but really by the devil; - in short, everything would have remained as it had been. All he had to do was nod at the devil. Many men have been “successful” this way.

What Jesus refused to do was to worship an angelic creature of God. Not only because that was not appropriate between man and angel [which it isn’t], but because worship by a man is only appropriately directed to the God in whose image he is made. So He persisted in repentance and obedience; achieving righteousness for us.

In answering the devil Jesus speaks the Scripture again. The section of Deuteronomy 6.10-15 reminds the people that as they enter the promised land they will be receiving lands and cities which they did not build - receiving things easily, without work. They need to watch themselves, God reminds them, lest they forget the Lord who rescued them from slavery; a place typified by being under lords who cause them to work for no reward. Jesus quotes [6.13] "You shall fear only the Lord your God; and you shall worship Him, and swear by his name."

[3] **The third temptation** is that Satan leads Jesus to the Temple, stands Him on the pinnacle and then invites Him to throw Himself down, on the basis that God will bear Him up.

The setting is significant; there is the implication [in Lk] that the pinnacle of the temple in the city of Jerusalem is of greater importance than the high place from where all the kingdoms of the world can be overseen.

Satan's suggestion, as a Psalm quoting creature, is that Jesus should now commit an act of supreme, blind, absolute confidence in God. Such an act would be fitting for someone who was a Son of God. [See Boan, DTC, 2009.06 Having Fallen 1-2] .

Satan's suggestion is also drafted on the basis of the words he has heard from Jesus already: that Jesus is going to live by the word of God and also worship only Him.

What Jesus is refusing to do here has nothing to do with a grandstanding display. There is no hint here of spectators, there are no onlookers who will in some way give acknowledgment or value to this action.

What is at issue is that Jesus is being encouraged to test God out for Himself. To make himself sure of his relationship with God as son by a headlong plunge which will assure him that God is with him. It is as if a man shall carry the work through in his own faith, to take the work into his own hands, it is to initiate the movement, to be certain of it by having a part in it. It is to make use of God to assure himself of his own favour with God. If Jesus had done this, He would have, by an act which looked like great piety and mystical enthusiasm, betrayed the cause of God by making it his own cause.

What Jesus is refusing to do is to tempt God Himself: that is, on the basis of this robust faith that Jesus has in God, Jesus would have been demanding that God accept him because he believes so strongly in Him. Jesus rejected the ecstasy and the satisfaction of religion; identifying it as the supreme form of sin.

In answering the devil Jesus continues in Deuteronomy 6.16 where God continues his warnings to the people of Israel. It is not to test God as they tested Him at Massah, where the issue was about God providing water to drink, the question was, "Is the LORD among us, or not?" [Exodus 17.7].

[4] Notice that, because we are in the wilderness, the abode of demons, the presence of Sa-

tan, the form of the righteousness which Jesus is displaying is negative, that is, He does not sin. We should not miss that this is the place where He is actually establishing righteousness for us. It is because this man resisted temptation, that we, having received his Spirit, can also.

76 - "the devil departed from him until an opportune time"

See Luke 4.13

[1] Jesus as the Judge - It is helpful to consider where the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness fits in the overall theme of the work of the Lord as portrayed in the Gospels. The Temptation is the beginning of the aggressive action of Jesus acting as Judge of those He encounters. He begins with the devil who He judges and pushes back.

He strides on, casting out demons having bound the devil's power. He faces Pharisees, scribes, leaders, ordinary people, young rulers, judging them all alike, and they can find no sin in Him when they try to judge Him. Even to the disciples he shows that He is their Judge. They are shown to be inadequate and sinful. He fully confirms the strong picture which John the Baptist preached, of the one who would judge and put the axe to the trees, the man with the winnowing fork in his hand.

[2] But at Gethsemane the situation changes, for it becomes clear that Jesus is the person who is judged. Jesus is no longer the Subject of what happens, He is the object of what happens. After Gethsemane we have a betrayal, an arrest, trials in various courts, a verdict announced over him, torture, execution and burial. Men and women who are to be judged are given the space, freedom and power to judge their Messiah. Even the Barabbas incident is a scandal, and Simon the Cyrenian is forced to carry the cross. Here is no helping friend - he is one compelled to assist Rome in its work. The oppression, anguish, silent suffering, and friendlessness of Jesus is acute as He is "numbered with the transgressors".

[3] The Resurrection tells us how this remarkable saga became the Gospel, the good news. The man who is defiled, shamed, mocked is justified, glorified, vindicated, declared Son of God.

[4] Considering these shifts in the presentation of the Gospels allows us to understand the large themes and the theology. Gethsemane is the other "opportune time" of Satan.

6 - The Rabbi and his followers

77 - The history of following men

See Exodus 20,24

[a] The call of God.

Throughout the history of Israel, the community had always been defined by the direct

call of God to respond to God's own commitment to them. And, as we have seen, that call involved God electing Himself to be Israel's God. The covenant that resulted involved Israel in a direct response to God's own self-giving initiative.

The election and call of Abram as presented in Genesis follows directly after the confusion of languages. The Lord has thwarted the attempt of men and women to seek out God and enter relationship with Him by their own initiative. The tower of Babel is an attempt to force God's hand into relationship, driven by their own rebellion and sense of loss of fellowship with God.

The covenant struck at Sinai with the rescued people of God was a gracious review of how God had answered the cry of his captured people, brought them out of Egypt as their Saviour and Shepherd. Their covenant response was to obey Him as He shared his life with them.

[b] The appointment of Moses.

It was only as they found God's voice so loud, and His presence so intimidating, that they begged God not to hear his voice again. He appointed Moses as the mediating servant between them and Him – they would hear God through him. Moses functioned as a prophet.

[c] David.

Later, in the time of Samuel, the people asked for a king to go out and fight their battles before them, The Lord made clear that this was a rejection of his own kingship. Through Samuel, He warned them that they were abandoning his direct leadership - the great benefit of covenant. After rejecting Saul the Lord appointed David as the man after his own heart who would amalgamate covenant love and kingship of God's rule. The election of David takes place in the face of the rejection of Saul. This placing side-by-side of and elected person with a rejected one, is typical of God's way with Israel. The kingship was no longer a direct theocracy, but the government of Israel by God through his king under the sound of the voice of accompanying prophets.

But the kingship declined after David, ending with a rebellious people going into exile in Babylon.

[d] The servant of the Lord.

Isaiah had foretold of another "servant of God" who would stand in for Israel and responding to God as Israel did not. He would respond in a way that the righteousness of God would find answering response that filled Him with joy. This righteous Servant would also be their Shepherd and would lead them to Zion. He was the key to the restoration of Jerusalem to the promises of the latter days. They were called to follow this man.

On the return from exile, the Jewish people found that their promised land was still under Persian rule. They elected to return to the Law and, under Ezra's insistence, put away their foreign wives and began to look back as a way to live in their new present. They had become

a people of the book, and so teachers and instructors in the Law were their guides.

But with the absence of prophetic voice revelation was no longer dynamic and present. So they began to develop a way to make the old Law relevant through the traditions of men who interpreted the Law so as to make it appropriate to circumstances that were constantly changing. Into this vacuum came the scribes and the interpreters. Their additions to the Scripture became accepted by the people of God who had no authoritative voice any more.

Finally, after the rule of Medo-Persia was followed by the Greek Ptolemies and Seleucids, the occupation of Palestine by Rome brought the conditions which Daniel had foreseen. The arrival of the Son of Man who would not only bring these kingdoms down, but would cause Israel to receive the kingdom for itself. But the humble arrival of the authoritative voice took people by surprise.

78 - The guides of the day

See Matthew 23

In the context of the day, a rabbi was a man learned in the traditions of the scribes so as to interpret the Scriptures for the purpose of applying them to daily life of those around them. People generally, but particularly their disciples, took their direction. They saw themselves as yoked in tandem with their rabbis – living their life and walking with them under the shared application of their interpretation of the scriptures for practical living.

A disciple meant a learner, a follower of a rabbi. While young men, they would prepare themselves by diligent application to the Hebrew text. When they had a mastery of the text they went in search of a man to follow. It was a life of constant involvement in a masterclass.

They took upon themselves the “yoke” of their rabbi. It was a strong commitment and each disciple would seek to copy and live out his particular rabbi’s interpretative instruction. They were serious men, committed to a religious life that was strict in adhering to the Law, albeit the law as interpreted by their rabbi.

It involved a meticulous application of fine details to life, under strict scrutiny of the rabbi. It was pre-eminently an external righteousness they practiced, open to check and observation. It was, by its very setting, a life style that was lived before others; for their example in the first place, but subject to the temptation of personal kudos as well.

79 - The call to follow the gracious rabbi

See John 17.1-6; Matthew 9.9-13; Mark 2.13-17; Luke 5.1-11

Early in their narratives, the Gospel writers record how the Lord, after his baptism by John, immediately embarked on a public ministry of preaching and teaching. Alongside that work,

he also began to call to himself a group of followers.

In the New Testament the verb used ἀκολουθέω means to “go after” or “behind” someone. The NT only uses the verb ἀκολουθέω or the expression “come after me”. It never uses the substantive, the noun ἀκολουθησις, which tells us we are dealing with an event, not a general concept.

[1] The rabbi who finds you.

Jesus is firstly aware that the Father has given him these men. He finds them and calls them to himself – this is a total reversal to the practices of the day. It is still the same for us today. There is a gracious call which seeks you and finds you as a result of the active outgoing of the love of Father, done through the Son and by the Spirit.

[2] Come for sinners.

Unlike the effort required to qualify for the followers of the blind guides, there are no conditions you must meet, except of course, that disciples should be sinners. The call of Levi [Matthew 9.9-13// Mark 2.13-17] and that of Peter [Luke 5.1-11] make this clear. Indeed, for those who are righteous in their own eyes, Jesus has no call.

8o - The gracious yoke

See Matthew 11.25-30; 23.1-end

Jesus call to “take my yoke” brings us into sharp contrast with the other rabbis of his day.

[1] The call – arises in the first place because God is graciously seeking us. His Son has been sent from heaven to earth. It is a call that has its origin in the love of God for his own. This is so unlike the blind guides, under their system the disciple has to seek the rabbi and prepare himself with much emphasis on qualification. It is fundamentally a seeking for self-interest.

[2] Jesus’ yoke brings us rest. This is a sharp contrast with the daily burden and self imposed discipline of the external religion.

[3] Jesus’ yoke leads to a life that is restful; a sabbath rest prepared for us. For his yoke is an entry into the shared life of God who is our Saviour, who works for us in our place and in our stead. All this in strong contrast to any all-to-human mediator of the word of man, of human traditions learned from a human sinner.

The “rest”, being available to all equally, abolishes the concept of rabbi totally; that is, rabbis who are just human sinners like us. About them, says Jesus, “call no man rabbi, because you are all brothers”. This is the outworking of the Jeremiah 31.31-33, where the distinction between those who ‘know the Lord and those who don’t is abolished.

[4] Jesus’ yoke is based on His work done for us. A work that brings a change of heart, an in-

ternal renovation, a revelation of the Father by the Son, a taking us into participation of their life. Indeed, it is because of this renovation that the living from the heart is now possible.

Contrast this with being led by people with unchanged hearts who can only be blind guides, lacking discernment, dealing with externals; religious rather than spiritual.

[5] Jesus' yoke brings us to the bringer of life. Following religious blind guides has the eventual outcome of murder and strife [Matt 23.24-38].

[6] Jesus' yoke brings us into the hearing of the words of life from the authoritative Voice of the Son of God. The people, contrasting Jesus' teaching in their synagogues with that of the scribes said of Jesus that "no man spoke like this one".

All the blind guides can do is make proselytes of their own opinions. They are peddlers of their own view, makers of tradition which values traditions of men rather than Word of God. No one, in Jesus' estimation, should call such men rabbi or teacher.

[7] Jesus' yoke makes possible – because it is a gift – a purity of heart which leaves us clean inside. Contrast this with the defiling leaven of the Pharisees, which dirties up the inner man while it looks to keep the externals clean. This is to be misguided about the things of the spirit.

81 - The rabbi who explains the mystery of the kingdom of God

See Mark 4.10-20; Matthew 5-7;

[1] They are a blessed group, for they have eyes to see and ears to hear. Unlike the idolaters in Isaiah, they do not become like the idols they follow - deaf, dumb and blind. To those who are such in Jesus day, the scribes and the Pharisees, then everything is in parables. These are outsiders. Jesus' explains everything to the disciples as insiders, who, in Him have the key.

[2] Teaching of the Rabbi for those whose righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees.

In his Sermon on the Mount, Jesus is not acting as a new Moses. Rather He is outlining the new revelation for a new covenant of the life of God internally received, not on stone. This has its parallel in our life with Holy Spirit's ministry [2 Cor 3-5].

[3] Praying like their rabbi – He taught them how to pray: and how not to pray as well!

82 - Coming to be like their rabbi

See Luke 5.1-11; Matt 10.24-5; Luke 10.1-16

Peter, in particular, begins to see that, the more he is with Jesus, that he is unlike Him. Peter even wants Jesus to leave him – to depart from him – because Peter is aware that he sinful

man. Somehow he thinks that he is a drag on Jesus.

[1] It is enough for a disciple to be as his teacher [Matt 10.24-5]. Jesus makes it clear that they were chosen to share life with Him, even though He had nowhere to lay his head, so neither will they. They need to count the cost, to deny themselves and take up their own cross in order to follow Him.

[2] They are his, He claims them and establishes his relationship to them by commanding them. He commands them because they already belong to Him, given by his Father. And as it is with all of God's commands for Israel, Jesus commands to his disciples are a blessing.

[3] They are given to share of his mission. He sends them out and gives them authority to heal, to raise dead and to cast out demons. Like Him they are to go only to the lost sheep of house of Israel. He makes clear, that they are limited only by his own mission as it climaxes in Jerusalem. He will be overtaking them.

Their visit to a village is gracious, but it can also be a judgment. They are to testify if a town received them or not. As they shake the dust off their feet, it will count on the last day [Luke 10.1-16].

[4] They are to be like their rabbi in other ways that involved faith and suffering. They will find that they have faith to do what he does. [Peter's walking on water]. Later, they will suffer, enduring persecution like He did. They also will have to learn how to be meek and lowly of heart – "Learn of Me".

[5] As they follow their Rabbi to Jerusalem He will teach them on the way. They learn that the greatest in the Kingdom is the servant of all – like Him! Just as He has a baptism to undergo, so they will share in it as they follow later.

[6] They learn to trust his prophetic voice. For their Rabbi's future return to the earth is foretold as they listen to Him teach of the rapture of his disciples and the judgment of the world [Luke 17]; on the events that will overtake Jerusalem, the fall of the Temple [Mark 13 and //s]. He will teach them how to wait for Him [Matt 24-25] and how they will undergo trouble and persecution.

7 – The Transfiguration

Our reading in the New Testament would be the following

John's Mission and Message

The Announcement and Birth of John the Baptist Lk 1.5-25

John the Baptist appears Mt 3.1-6, Mk 1.2-6, Lk 3.1-6, Jn 1.6,23

John's Public Preaching and Repentance Mtt 3.7-10, Lk 3.7-9

John's Reply to the Questioners Lk 3.10-14, Jn 1.19-23

John's testimony: his relationship to Christ Mt 3.11-12, Mk 1.7-8, Lk 3.15-17, Jn 1.24-28

Jesus' revelation about John's Mission

Jesus' testimony about John Mt 11.2-19, Lk 7.18-35, 16.16

The Death of John the Baptist Mt 14.1-12, Mk 6.14-29, Lk 9.10-17

John and the coming of Elijah Mt 17.9-13, Mk 9.9-13

1st Prediction of Jesus' Death and Resurrection Mt 16.21-23, Mk 8.31-33, Lk 9.22

The cost and gracious rewards of Discipleship Mt 16.24-28, Mk 8.34-9.1, Lk 9.23-27

The Transfiguration Mt 17.1-8, Mk 9.2-8, Lk 9.28-36

The Question about the coming of Elijah Mt 17.9-13, Mk 9.9-13

2nd Prediction of Jesus' Death and Resurrection Mt 17.22-23, Mk 9.30-32, Lk 9.43b-5

3rd Prediction Jesus' Death and Resurrection Mt 20.17-18, Mk 10.32-34, Lk 18.31-34

Hebrews 1.1-4

Readings from the Old Testament

1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2 - for Elijah's ministry

Malachi 3.1ff and 4.5ff - prophecy Elijah's part in Messiah's work

83 - Context of the Transfiguration

Peter's Confession and The Lord's Subsequent Teaching About Suffering.

[1] Matthew 16.13-28 records

[a] the declaration of Peter that Jesus is the Messiah, after which Jesus declares He will build his church [13-20]

[b] Jesus began to teach them about the fact that He was Messiah, who would suffer and lose His life and come to life again.[21]

[c] Peter challenges this, is rebuked and then there is teaching about the cost of discipleship. [22-26]

[d] Finally, there is the promise of the Son of Man coming in the glory of His father with the heavenly angels [27].

[e] The promise that there are some standing present there and then, who would not die until they had seen the "Son of Man coming in his kingdom." [28]

[2] Mark 8.27-38, 9.1 records similarly,

[a] Peter's confession of Him as the Christ, and the warning from Jesus to keep it a secret [27-30]

[b] The teaching about is about the suffering, rejected Messiah [31-32a]

[c] Peter's challenge and rebuke [32a-33]

[d] Teaching on the cost of discipleship [34-37]

[e] The awesome promise that if we are ashamed of Him now, He will be ashamed of us at the second coming when He comes in glory [38].

[f] Then the promise that some present would see the kingdom "of God after it has come with power" [9.1]

[3] Luke 9.18-27 records similarly, yet has the last statement [8.27] as "not taste death until they see the kingdom of God".

84 - The facts of the Transfiguration.

[1] Mark and Matthew have the departure of Jesus and Peter and James and John to go up the mountain as happening "six days later"; Luke has "eight days after these sayings".

[2] Luke also says that they went to pray, and that it was while praying that Jesus was transfigured before them. [9.28-29]. Neither Matt or Mk mention this.

[3] The transfiguration is described as,

[a] "his garments becoming white and glistening" [Lk];

[b] "his garments became radiant and exceedingly white, as no launderer on earth can whiten them" [Mk];

[c] "his face shone as the sun and his garments became as white as light" [Mtt].

[4] The presence of Elijah and Moses is common,

[a] "Elijah and Moses appeared to them along with Jesus, and they were talking with Jesus" [Mk]

[b] "Moses and Elijah appeared to them, talking with Him" [Mtt]

[c] "two men were talking with Him; and they were Moses and Elijah, who, appearing in glory, were speaking of His departure [exodus] which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. [Lk].

[5] Luke has the disciples at prayer [9.28] and falling asleep, they awake to see the two men standing with Him and his glory [9.32].

[6] Peter offers to make booths for them all;

[a] Luke has the two [Moses and Elijah] departing from Jesus as the setting in which Peter offers to make booths for them all [9.33]. This strengthens the implication that Peter wanted to prolong the event.

[b] Mark adds that they were not sure what to answer because they were afraid.

[c] Mtt has this after the speaking from the cloud.

[7] A cloud overshadows them and the Father speaks concerning His Son.

[a] Mtt has a "bright cloud overshadowing them as Peter is speaking." "This is My

beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to Him!"

[b] Mk has a cloud overshadowing them and a voice speaking "This is my beloved Son, listen to Him!"

[c] Luke has the cloud forming over them, and they were frightened as this happened, and then the voice said, "This is my Son, My chosen One, listen to Him!"

[8] Jesus was found alone after the voice. Although Mtt 17.7-8 has Jesus touching them and encouraging them not to be afraid before they became aware that the others had vanished.

85 - The Second Coming [parousia] related to the Transfiguration.

See 2 Peter 1.16-18

[1] Jesus' promise that the Son of Man would come in the glory of His Father and of the holy angels, must refer to the parousia. This is clear; for Matthew makes it clear that it is a time of recompense of all deeds, so it is the final judgement.

[2] Mark has obviously seen the Transfiguration as the sequel to this promise of Jesus. It is an anticipation of the glory that is to come. This is even clearer when we take 2 Peter 1.16-18 into account. For Peter is writing to the churches of the power that was to be revealed in Jesus' coming. A power that was understood by Peter to be in terms of the glory which had been revealed at the transfiguration.

The transfiguration was a momentary, yet real [because witnessed], manifestation of Jesus' sovereign power. This power pointed beyond the transfiguration to the time when He would come in "power and glory." Significantly, it is a revelation to the core three disciples; it is something for the church to know from the Father concerning the Son. It is because Jesus is declared to be the Son of God they should listen to Him.

86 - Moses and Elijah

See Mark 1.1-3; 9.11-12

[1] Jesus ministry was begun in the wilderness at his baptism, and he had been directed by the Spirit to the wilderness in which He was tempted [Mark 1.9-13]. He is attested by these two wilderness prophets at His side and they testify to the mission He is on.

[2] Moses is the representative of the Old covenant and the promise, now about to be fulfilled in the death of Jesus.

[3] Elijah is the restorer of all things [Mark 1.2ff, 9.11] and the stress on Elijah indicates that the fulfilment of "all things" has arrived in Jesus [Mark 9.12].

[4] The presence of both persons indicate that they are proclaiming the coming of the end. In this way Moses and Elijah are participants in the unveiling of Jesus' glory. They participate in Jesus' glory - through the word of the Father - by being superceded. They too, get to cast their crowns before Him. So the disciples are the witnesses to the glory which they are seeing ahead of time. The picture of the church as the "two witnesses" will be picked up clearly in the Revelation 11, where a repentant and therefore powerful church is at work bearing witness in the world.

87 - "This is My beloved Son; listen to Him!"

See Hebrews 1.1-4

[1] This is the real meaning of the event; and it is like the Baptism of Jesus. In his submission to the program of God, and in His submission to baptism, we saw then that the testimony of the Father's pleasure was given about the obedience of Jesus as He identified with the sinners He came to save.

So here, the clarity with which He is seeing the suffering work which lies before Him [and this will be the true wilderness encounter, both at Gethsemane and afterwards], and the power with which He is resisting the implication of Peter that He should not suffer, all find their powerful affirmation in this statement from heaven.

The first part of the statement, "this is my beloved Son..." provides the basis for the exhortation of the second part. The filial relation of Jesus to the Father is the reason why they must listen to Him [Hebrews 1.1-4].

It is at the places where the humiliation of the Son of God is most transparently before men - his Baptism and the coming time in Jerusalem - that God the Father chooses to express that Jesus is the Son of God, and calls people to obey Him, thus asserting His authority.

It is because He is so much the Son of Man, that He has been given the authority. He has authority because of His weakness - for what is seen as weakness before men and women is what delights the heart of the Father as situations of transparent obedience and faithful relying on Father alone.

These *humiliated places are the peaks of the manifestation of His obedience to the Father*; and so provide occasions when the Father, in the face of the glory the world is interested in, speaks out His favour upon this One.

[2] The "...listen to Him!" is the Father's

[a] rebuke to Peter, who immediately, is proposing a "feast of booths" type celebration of the exodus, which presumes that the work is done; and before that had suggested to the Saviour that He avoid the suffering. Father is making it clear that Jesus, in His continuing obedience, has that part of it right.

[b] proclamation in the presence of Moses and Elijah who are talking with Jesus about the “exodus” which He is about to accomplish in Jerusalem. So the focus is upon:

[1] the upcoming journey to Jerusalem and therefore the death and suffering of Jesus

[2] the statement of Jesus concerning the predicted suffering therefore is correct and confirmed by Elijah and Moses’ discussion of it as the real “exodus”, His people’s salvation. A salvation through judgement, like as of old.

[3] indication that they are left with Jesus alone, he is the sole bearer of the new revelation which God is bringing through Him. Moses and Elijah, as two prophets who have travelled the road of obedience, can bear witness to Jesus, but they can be of no more help than that. [See the same function of the two witnesses in Revelation 11, where a Moses and Elijah figures perform the same function in Jerusalem]. Jesus deeds and words transcend, because they fulfill, all the past revelation.

88 - Elijah has come already: but glory comes after humiliation

See Mark 9.9-13: Malachi 3.1ff; 4.5ff: Rev 11.

[1] The discussion about Elijah [Mark 9.9-13] was triggered by the statement that they should tell no one until after the Resurrection. This implies that there is to be a time of concealment and then, after the resurrection a time of clear and open proclamation.

[2] They are not certain what the rising from among the dead might mean; what does it have to do with the Son of Man?

They knew about the second coming and its glory. But the death and suffering of Jesus was the factor they didn’t understand.

They had just seen Elijah - and so they knew, from the scribes teaching, that the end was therefore at hand. But if that is true, where is the Elijah who the Old Testament said would prepare the people for the searching judgement of God [See Malachi 3.1ff, 4.5ff]? If the appearance of Elijah on the mount of Transfiguration with Jesus indicates the end is near, what room is there for sufferings? So the disciples must have thought.

[3] Jesus makes clear that the coming of Elijah is already achieved and that he has restored all things. [Mk 9.12-13]. However, He shows that the disciples must understand that the Son of Man must suffer and be counted for nothing. The reality of Him being the transfigured Son cannot be grasped until the significance of his sufferings has been grasped. The dullness of the disciples [verse 10] indicates that this will dawn on them after the resurrection.

[4] We have already seen that in affirming that Elijah must come [Mark 9.12a] Jesus however posed a question with that [12b]. The question was, “how was it written of the Son of Man?”

And He is obviously making an allusion to the suffering servant.

The implication is this - if you could understand how it is written of the Son of Man that he is known and recognised in his humiliation, then so you would see that it is possible to recognise Elijah in the same way.

And this question, posed by Jesus, leads us to his exposition of John the Baptist as the Elijah who has already come, and they did to him as they would. He came, leading the people to repentance with a clear anticipation of forgiveness, and yet the amazing thing was that he also suffered. His sufferings took place [Mark 6.14-29] at the hands of Herod Antipas and his second wife, Herodias; just as Elijah of old, in his own ministry, suffered at the hands of a wicked woman, Jezebel, and a weak king, Ahab [1 Kings 19.2,10].

Jesus is saying that this heavenly Elijah should be identified with this captive, murdered prophet: a dead Elijah. This statement is just as offensive to the Jewish mind as a dead, suffering, shamed and crucified Jesus is the Messiah - for it operates on the same assumptions.

Mark, in chapter 1.2-8 had drawn a parallel with the Baptist's ministry [on the understanding of Malachi 3.1; not 4.5ff]. The disciples failure to understand Jesus' teaching about his own sufferings [Mark 8.23ff, 9.6,10-11] extended to their failure to understand John the Baptist's as well. John's identity in the scheme of things, is hidden until after the resurrection. Like Jesus, John participates in God's sovereign purpose which for him ends in apparent defeat - he suffered death and violation of every human right.

In this sense John's ministry and Jesus' ministry is a type and pattern of all the obscurity and suffering of Christian ministry until the second coming. For what they [Herod Antipas and Herodias] did to John, "they", the men who are hostile to God, will also do [Mk 13.9-13] to men and women who maintain an unwavering allegiance to Jesus and his gospel.

John suffered as Elijah, and his ministry demonstrated that the end of all things was at hand. The ambiguity between his true dignity and his hiddenness in the world will be known only at the Parousia - for then the people of God will be vindicated by the Son of Man who shared their sufferings and rejection. This is the point of Mark 9.9 - glory comes only after humiliation.

When Jesus makes it clear to the apostles before the day of Pentecost [Acts 1.8-9] that they shall be his witnesses "...in Jerusalem, and Samaria, and to the uttermost parts of the earth" it is clear that this is something they shall do before the end comes.

Small wonder then, that the church is pictured in Revelation 11 as two witnesses who, in preaching the gospel, lose their lives in the city called Sodom and Egypt [two places where the church of God found itself in the midst of people who were experiencing the judgements of God]. The place where their Lord was crucified that is, outside the gate of Jerusalem, in Babylon, in the harlot, in the world's power that is hostile to God and the Lord's church.

8 - Gethsemane

Our reading in the New Testament would be the following

The Temptation of Jesus in the wilderness

The encounter with Satan Mt 4.1-11, Mk 1.12-13, Lk 4.1-13

Gethsemane

Prayer in Gethsemane Mt 26.36-46, Mk 14.32-42, Lk 22.39-46, Jn 18.1,12,27,14.31.

Other readings-

Prayer to Father as Sons Mt 6.5-15

God's trials are not temptations James 1.12-18

Deuteronomy 6.10-16; 8.1-10

John 4.27-38

89 - Jesus Christ is the Person in whom reconciliation is worked for US.

[1] The Gospels, as we have been studying them already, have focussed on the sending of the Son of God, as the one through whom we shall have salvation from the guilt of sin, from the power of sin in our flesh, from death, which is God's judgement on our sins in this life, and from the second death, or the final judgement of the wrath to come.

[2] So that Jesus Christ is the supreme object of faith for us, it is on Him that we have set our hope. And we have done this because we have received revelation from the Father, through the Spirit, that He is the One He has sent.

[3] In the Gospels themselves, the work of this One is set out in a way that we can discern three movements [# 51-56]. These movements expressed what was done for us *there and then*, so that we may have a sure object of trust for what is being done in our life *here and now*.

90 - Looking back to the Temptation on the wilderness

In the wilderness, Satan can do no more than speak and entice. In Gethsemane, which is his last resort he can return in great power. The power for him is found in the "opportune time". It is a matter of the impending events; here it is the pressure upon the God-man of deep suffering which Satan will use to oppress and challenge Him. Here the centre of the temptation will be the matter of pain. Not simply the pain of crucifixion, but also the pain of the loss of relation with the Father that entering into death will mean. This is a matter we cannot fathom nor plumb. This is the peculiar pain which only the obedient, holy Son of God can know.

The dreadful wrestling which takes place here for Jesus will be that to die is the will of His Fa-

ther [for the salvation of the world] and that the will of Satan coincide. Satan wants to bring Jesus to death, for he believes by doing that he will triumph over Him. For Jesus, it seems that He is yielding to death and giving up the life of God within Him and which He is Himself. For Jesus, these two ways of acting are at an intersection - and it is this which constitutes the power of the enemy's encounter at such an "opportune time".

91 - Gethsemane

See Luke 22.31ff; John 17,11,19, 15,24,26

[1] There is meaning in the fact that Jesus is alone, without companion and helper

He wanted to pray this prayer a little ahead of them, but with their presence and participation. He knew that "temptation" was about to break in on them. And they must watch and pray. For His sake and theirs they ought not to have left Him alone - but they did. Their non-participation in this action - indicates that it was "for us"; yet we have no contribution to bring to it.

The church had good reason to be part of this prayer, but it did not, He carried the day alone. "Simon Simon... I have prayed for thee" [Luke 22.31ff].

Significantly, John does not record Gethsemane here. He has the High Priestly prayer of Jesus which anticipates the passion [John 17,11,19, 15,24,26]. John's Gospel speaks of the glorified picture; the Synoptics of the hard struggle.

[2] The answer of God will be given in the language of facts.

The strengthening of the angel comes before the agony and sweating drops of blood. It equips for the struggle, but does not relieve him from it. He does not in fact receive any answer or sign from God. For him, as for the evil and adulterous generation, there is only the sign of Jonah ie his death. The resurrection lies beyond that - and *that* sign is not given now.

The answer of God comes in the same way as the answer of Satan - by the death itself. The will of God is done as the will of Satan is done - this is the frightening matter before Him. The coincidence of the divine and satanic will, done in both work and word, was the problem of this hour. It was the darkness in which Jesus addressed God in Gethsemane.

[3] What He says in his prayer.

His prayer then, is that the good and perfect will of God might be done other than the work of the deceitful tempter. He prays that God will not give him up to the power of temptation which He had resisted and wants to resist in all circumstances. He wants the triumph of evil thwarted and the claim of Satan to world dominion not affirmed. He prays that the facts might speak a different language than the triumph of the enemy of God.

So He makes his prayer not to avoid the will of God, but that God might have another possibility. What provokes horror for Him is the unity of will He has with God on the one hand, a will He had always obeyed, and on the other hand, the power of evil which He had withstood. It was the impending concealment of the lordship of God under the lordship of evil and evil men. It was the coming of a "night" when no man can work [John 9.4].

9 – The Death of Jesus -

The Plot to destroy Jesus Mtt 26.1-5, Mk 14.1-2, 11.18-19, Lk 22.1-2, 19.47, Jn 11.55, 47-53

The Anointing in Bethany Mtt 26.6-13, Mk 14.3-9, Lk 7.36-50, Jn 12.1-8

The Betrayal by Judas Mtt 26.14-16, Mk 14.10-11, Lk 22.3-6, Jn 13.2, 27; 6.70-71

Preparation for the Passover Mtt 26.17-20, Mk 14.12-17, Lk 22.7-14, Jn 13.1

Washing the Disciples' Feet Mtt 10.24, 40, Lk 6.40, Jn 13.1-20

In upper Room: Jesus foretells his betrayal Mtt 26.21-25, Mk 14.18-21, Lk 22.21-23

The Last Supper: Institution of the Lord's Supper Mtt 26.26-29, Mk 14.22-25, Lk 22.15-20, Jn 6.51-59

Jesus foretells His betrayal Mtt 26.21-25, Mk 14.18.21, Lk 22.21-23, Jn 13.1-20

Rivalry among the Disciples Mtt 20.24-28, 23.11, Mk 10.41-45, 9.35, Lk 22.24-34

The New Commandment of love Jn 13.31-35

Peter's Denial of Jesus Predicted Mtt 26.30-35, Mk 14.26-31, Lk 22.31-34, Jn 13.36-38

Jesus to be numbered with Transgressors: Two swords Lk 22.35-38

Concluding Hymn and departure to the Mount of Olives Mtt 26.30, Mk 14.22, Lk 22.39, Jn 18.1

From other parts of the New Testament

1 Corinthians 11.17-34

From the Old Testament

Psalms 22, 69, 41, 113-118

Isaiah 53

92 - The suffering and the previous Gospel themes

[1] Mark's handling of the passion brings together the themes which he has already made clear in the gospel beforehand.

[a] The conflict with authority [2.1-3.5, 3.6, 11.18, 12.12]

[b] The offence of blasphemy, a capital offence, [2.7] was the legal basis for the Sanhedrin's condemnation of Jesus [14.63ff]

[c] Judas as betrayer [3.19]

93- The Resurrection controls the presentation

[1] We must beware of historical narratives that we are used to as a story. Here the Gospel of

Mark presents us with an interpretation of the events from the basis of its perceived meaning over all.

[2] Jesus' sufferings are the sovereign will of God is without doubt the main theme 8.31,9.12,31, 10.33f,45.

[3] This is seen clearly in the use of the Old Testament passages which are lying back of the presentation.

[a] Isaiah 53.4-12 with its emphasis on [i] obedient suffering; [ii] sustained mockery; [iii] silence before the accusers; [iv] forgiveness; [v] intercession for man and [vi] burial with the condemned.

[b] Psalms 22 and 69

94 - Mark's arrangement

[1] Introduction of the dual themes of plot and betrayal, 14.1-11

[2] Suffering: betrayal and abandonment 14.12-52

[i] Around the meal: betrayal; its preparation; announcement of betrayal and meal and its interpretation

[ii] Abandonment of close friends; prophecy of denial; prayer alone, and the arrest and desertion

[3] Endurance of the Sufferings 14.53-15.47

[i] Judgement by Jews who condemn Him as Messiah 14.53-65

[ii] Judgement by Pilate: condemned King of the Jews 15.10-20

[iii] Crucifixion, death and Burial

[4] Jesus' dignity and achievement

[i] Affirmed as Messiah 14.62

[ii] Affirmed as King of the Jews 15.1

[iii] Veil split for the Jews; centurion confession as "Son of God" [1.1]

95 - Anointing at Bethany

See John 12.1-8; Psalm 41; Deuteronomy 15.11

[1] Set in the context of opposition, misunderstanding and immanent suffering of Jesus initiated at the hands of Judas and the chief priests is the contrast of the woman and her pure devotion to Jesus. [If John 12.1-8 is the same event then the woman is Mary, sister of Lazarus and Martha].

[2] The lavish nature of the gift is an affront to the disciples. There was a tradition to give to

the poor on the night of Passover.

[3] Jesus defends the woman, and in doing so makes it clear that it is the timing which makes her right - it is done at the time of the closeness of his death.

[4] Psalm 41 sees him as the poor sufferer. [Deut 15.11]. The Psalm 41.2 commends the person who cares for the poor, yet Jesus commends the woman, not the disciples here.

[5] It indicates that He knew that he would die a criminal's death, for which there was no anointing. And the intention of the ladies to anoint his body [16.1] after His death was to be thwarted by the resurrection.

96 - Betrayal by Judas

[1] Contrast with the woman in Psalm 41.9

[2] looking back to 14.1-2 we see that the Sanhedrin are looking for an opportunity to make a quiet arrest of Jesus. Their mind is to avoid a riot - "in the absence of the crowd" [Luke 22.6] - due to the inflated population of the city at Passover. It would have been hard to locate Jesus in the large population. Hence the circulation of an official notice for anyone to inform on Him [John 11.57]: did Judas respond to this?

[3] Judas is looking for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them. This would suit them for the presence of Judas would mean that the temple guard would be saved from mistaken identity, and the setting for the arrest would be quiet.

[4] Judas may have taken an oath which bound him to deliver Jesus, perhaps on pain of a curse he contracted if he didn't.

97 - The Preparation for the Passover Meal

[1] The "first day of unleaven bread" would be Nisan 15, but it can also refer to Nisan 14, when the lambs are slaughtered.

[2] John 18.28,19.14,31,42 locates the death of Jesus as 14 Nisan which would imply that the meal couldn't have been a Passover meal.

3] There are a number of things that indicate it was the Passover meal.

[a] Normal meal was late afternoon, this one is in the evening, as Passover is.

[b] Paschal lamb had to be eaten within the city walls.

[c] They were reclining - the first century practice called for even the poor man to be able to recline to eat the Passover.

[d] Normal meal begins with the breaking of bread - on this occasion Jesus broke bread during the meal following the serving of a dish [14.18-20,22]. The Passover meal was

the one occasion when a dish preceded the breaking of bread.

[e] Use of wine was reserved for the festive occasions.

[f] The interpretation [a Haggadah] of the elements of the meal conforms to the Passover custom.

98 - Announcement of betrayal

See Mark 14.17-21; Psalms 113-118; Exodus 12.42.

[1] Passover night was celebrated as a “night of watching unto the Lord” [Ex 12.42]. The focus was the hope for their redemption. Jesus came to the city that night aware that He was going to accomplish the Passover in person.

[2] At this time, the Passover Meal was framed in a liturgy. The central part of this liturgy was the prayer of the family head and the reciting of the Hallel [Psalms 113-118].

[1] Everyone took their places: the head of house pronounces a blessing, first of the festival and then of the wine.

[2] The assembled company drank the first cup of wine.

[3] Food was then brought in: unleavened bread, bitter herbs, green vegetables, stewed fruit and roast lamb.

[4] The head of family recalled the biblical account of the redemption from Egypt. This is followed by praise for salvation and prayer for future redemption. The first part of the Hallel [113-115] was sung.

[5] The second cup of wine was drunk.

[6] Head of house took bread, blessed it and broke the bread in pieces, handed it to those at table.

[7] They ate it with bitter herbs and stewed fruit.

[8] The eating of the roasted lamb would then go on, but not past midnight. When the meal was completed,

[9] the head of house blessed the third cup with prayer of thanksgiving.

[10] Then followed the second part of the Hallel [116-118]

[11] The drinking of the fourth cup was conclusion of the Passover.

[3] Mark stresses the dipping of the bitter herbs and the bread in the stewed fruit [7 above] was accompanied by the statement of betrayal. And Mark also emphasises the meaning Jesus gives to the bread and the third cup [9 above].

[4] Psalm 41.9 gives this emphasis of betrayal. But one of the emphases of that Psalm is the assurance given to the righteous sufferer of the ultimate triumph over his enemies [41.10-12]. Judas is, in contrast to the anointing woman, given an assurance of a very different recompense [41.10]

This is not vindictiveness on Jesus' part; He is simply indicating He is operating according to the divine plan and is assured of his own vindication.

The stress falls first on the violation of the paschal fellowship by the presence of a traitor, who will be recompensed: and second, Jesus' knowledge that He will be betrayed, and third, Jesus' death is certain

10 – The Death of Jesus - in John

99 - John's narrative -the glory of the cross.

[1] The last main division of John's Gospel breaks into four sections:

[a] The Betrayal 18.1-11

[b] The two trials: religious and civil 18.12-19.6

[c] The death of Jesus 19.17-42

[d] The risen life 20

[2] Before this passion of Jesus, John has given us the meaning of the sign by the setting of 13.1- 17.26. In this way he helps his readers approach the passion and the resurrection as a single event which is called the glorification of the Son of man. So the passion does not stand on its own. It has its own discourse to interpret it.

Instead of seeing the resurrection as a dramatic reversal of the defeat suffered on the cross, John regards the cross itself as the place and time of Christ's victory, and one which had been foreseen by the Lord, even though it is a victory with much humiliation.

The humiliation is foreseen in the section [13.1-20] of washing the disciples feet; the victory in the humiliation is seen in the remark which accompanied Judas' exit [13.31-32].

[3] There are three main ideas which keep recurring in the presentation of John.

[a] The way Jesus voluntarily laid his life down. We are prepared for this in the statement of John 10.17-18 concerning the good shepherd. Then in the passion narrative itself it finds actual expression [18.4, 8, 11, 36, 19.28,30].

[b] The fact that the divine plan is being fulfilled right throughout this whole passion. Again, this is indicated ahead of time at 13.1. Then, during the action John records the detail so as to bring it forward in 18.4,9,11,19.11,24,28 [See also Luke 22.53].

The story is told in such a way as to show that human action - even human, sinful action - could be used in the divine action. Indeed, from our studies of Gethsemane we can see that the action of God can, and does, make use of the devil, of a traitor, of false shepherds, of the major Gentile nation Rome [in accord with the vision of Daniel 2.31-45,].

It unfolds in a way that the "victim" is in fact the Initiator the whole matter; He is passive and can be said to have a passion [suffering], yet even in his passivity He is the Actor.

In this way the discourse makes us aware of one: [1] who will humble Himself for his servants [13.1-17]: [2] who will set in train the action of the betrayer [13.21-30]: [3] who sees what is about to happen to him as a clear "going" and "returning" [14.1-31]: [4] who recognises that his own passion will produce a like passion for his followers [15.1-27]: [5] who sees his own passion and the subsequent passion of his followers as a brief prelude to the birth of a new world order [16.16-33]: [6] who prays for his followers to be held in the divine unity that binds the Father and Son indissolubly together [17.1-26]

[c] The authority and majesty of Jesus is brought out powerfully, even when He is being judged and is suffering. This is anticipated in the expression [13.31] to the Father to glorify Him. John records in the details of the arrest and trial and passion similar themes [18.6, 20-21, 37, 19.11, 26ff, 36ff,].

100 - John's narrative compared with Matthew, Mark and Luke

[1] John uses material which is alone recorded in the Synoptists but which facts John assumes. See 18.11, 33, 40, 19.41.

[2] The main incidents which are recorded by more than one of the other gospel writers, but are omitted by John are as follows:

[1] The agony in the garden [Mt. Mk.Lk.]

[2] The traitor's kiss [Mt. Mk.Lk.]

[3] The desertion of Jesus by all [Mt. Mk.] [Jn 16.32]

[4] The examination before the Sanhedrin at night. This includes the false witnesses, the adjuring of Jesus, and the great confession of Jesus [Mt. Mk.]

[5] The mockery of Jesus as a prophet [Mt. Mk.Lk.]

[6] The council at daybreak [Mt. Mk.Lk.]

[7] The mockery after the condemnation [Mt. Mk.]

[8] The compelling of Simon of Cyrene [Mt. Mk.Lk.]

[9] The reproaches of the spectators [Mt. Mk.Lk.] and also of the robbers [Mt. Mk.Lk.]

[10] The darkness [Mt. Mk.Lk.]

[11] The cry from Psalm 22.1 [Mt. Mk]

[12] The tearing of the veil in the temple [Mt. Mk.]

[13] The confession of the Roman Centurion [Mt. Mk.Lk.]

[3] There are other incidents which John omits but which are recorded by single writers:

[a] Matthew records:

[1] Power over the angelic hosts of heaven; [2] Pilate's wife's message about her dream; [3] Pilate's washing of his hands; [4] The self-condemning statement of the Jews ;[5] The earthquake

[b] Mark records:

[1] The flight of the young man naked: [2] Pilate's question as to the death of Christ

[c] Luke records:

[1] The examination before Herod: [2] The lamentation of the women: [3] The three "words" from the cross 23.34,43,46: [4] The repentance of one of the robbers.

[4] There are incidents which John includes but the others do not have at all:

[1] The words of power at the arrest 18.4-9

[2] Examination before Annas 18.13-24

[3] First conference of the Jews with Pilate, and Pilate's private examination 18.28-37,19.9-11

[4] The first mockery and the "Behold the Man" 19.2-5

[5] Pilate maintaining his intention to stick with his written words 19.21-22

[6] The charge of Jesus to John about his mother 19.25-27

[7] The thirst of Jesus "It is finished" 19.28-30

[8] The piercing of Jesus' side 19.31-37

[9] The service performed by Nicodemus 19.39

101 - The succession of events as recorded by all the Gospel writers

1 a.m. - The agony in the garden. The betrayal. Conveyed to the High priest's house

2 a.m. The preliminary examination before Annas in the presence of Caiaphas

3 a.m. The formal examination before Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin at an irregular meeting at "the Booths".

5 a.m. The formal sentence of the Sanhedrin in their own proper place of meeting, Gazith or

Beth Midrash [Luke 22.66]. The first examination before Pilate at the Palace

5.30 a.m. The examination before Herod. The scourging and first mockery by the soldiers at the palace

6.30 a.m. The sentence of Pilate [John 19.14]

7 a.m. The second mockery of the condemned “King” by the soldiers

9 a.m. The crucifixion, and the rejection of the anaesthetic drink [Mark 15.25 “the third hour”].

12 noon The last charge to John about Mary

12-3 p.m. The darkness over the land [Matt 27.45,]

3 p.m. The end

11– Jesus’ Teaching about His Death

There are two great passages in the Gospels where the Lord is recorded as teaching us on His death.

One occasion is spoken in the setting of giving James and John an answer to a question they asked - when they wanted the places at the right and left hand of Him in His kingdom [Mark 10.32-45].

The other is that which He spoke at the Last supper together [Mark 14.17-25 and parallels]. We deal with this section under Unit 9.

102- His life a ransom for many

See Mark 8.31-36; 10.33-34

In the first one, Jesus has taken the lead as the walk towards Jerusalem. The disciples follow in amazement and fear [Mark 10.32]. He then draws them aside and attempts, for the third time, to make them familiar with the nature of his death. He speaks of his deliverance over to the priests and the scribes, his mockery, scourging and death, and then, finally his resurrection. [Mark 10.33-34]. Jesus is preoccupied with his suffering; James and John are thinking about their places in the kingdom.

[a] A “cup” and a “baptism”.

He asks them about whether they are able to drink the cup He will, or to be baptised with the baptism which He will be. Both the “baptism” and the “cup” are images of his death. The cup is something put into his hand by the Father and it involves an awful destiny for which He consecrates Himself. The baptism is the flood of suffering in which He is to be overwhelmed. Both of these references direct us back to his death which he had spoken to

them about in a tragic, short summary.

[b] True greatness.

When the disciples become indignant at James and John, He refers to his death again. Under the discussion of true greatness in the kingdom He makes it clear that greatness does not refer to dominance, but service. That is how it is for all in the kingdom, even for the highest. It is by supremacy in service that the King in the kingdom demonstrates his place. He came not to be served but to serve and to "give his life a ransom for many". These last words are in line with everything that precedes and they are expressive of the Lord's concentration of thought upon his death.

[c] Ransom for many lives.

How shall we understand them? We look back to the Lord's teaching where the Lord speaks of the possibility of a soul being lost or ransomed [Mark 8.31-38] An occasion where He had sought to speak of his upcoming death as well. In 8 34-36 He makes clear that "whoever will save his life shall lose it:...."

Jesus was familiar with the idea that the soul [life] of a man, in the high or low sense of the term, might be lost. And that when it was lost, there could be no compensation for it, as there was no means of buying it back. Jesus thinks of the lives of many as forfeit. He teaches that the reason He came into the world was to lay down his life as a ransom price, so that those to whom these forfeited lives belonged might have them back again. This was the supreme service which the Son of Man was to render to mankind.

[d] To be ransomed is to be liberated: to receive your life back again - abundantly.

A ransom is not warranted at all except where a life has been forfeited. The meaning of this teaching is that the forfeited lives of many are liberated by the surrender of Christ's life, and that to surrender His life to do them this incalculable service was the very soul of his calling. The meaning of the liberation is what it means to the liberated here - they receive themselves back again - they come to live as they were meant to live. As we shall see, they come to live by sharing Christ's life, by undergoing a baptism and a cup along with Him.

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Janice and David Boan, an Australian couple, live in Perth, the capital city of the state of Western Australia.

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At the beginning of 2012, in concert with others, their work became more accessible at the York St Silo, at 4 York Street in North Perth. It is here that David and Jan share the work of the putting forth of God's Word.

Discipleship Schools have been running a long time. This current series represents the most up-to-date version of our current teaching.



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