

# Relating

Sharing life together



A Discipleship School

David Boan

9



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## Unit 9

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“Then Jesus came to them and said, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you’” [Matthew 28.18-20 NIV 1973].

“ This, then, is how you should pray: Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us today our daily bread. Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one.” [Matthew 6.9-13 NIV 1973]

“While they were eating, Jesus took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to his disciples, saying, “Take and eat; this is my body.” Then he took the cup, gave thanks, and offered it to them, saying, “Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the remission of sins.” [Matthew 26.26-28 NIV 1973].

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### ***Session 8 - In Review: stated as an outcome***

The ancient community of God's people took two forms - the children of the promise and the children of the flesh. This was evident in Israel right from the start. The people of God as a single group contained both the elect and the rejected. These two, reciprocal groups, placed together and answering each other, make up the whole of the ancient people of God.

When the Messiah, Christ Jesus came, He gathered up into Himself the whole people of God; for He stands for them all - both the rejected and the elected. As He was encountered by His own people, He was by and large, rejected by them. And yet, out of them He chose, as those given Him by the Father, a small band of men who were to be the future expression of His Kingdom. Even within that small band, there was a betrayer, a rejected one; for like Israel of old, the same mixture was evident.

The rejection of Jesus, and later the gospel message, by the majority of Jewish people, does not mean that the word of God to them has failed. For this mixture of acceptors and rejectors, was always there, and it was according to God's choice; it does not come about through the action or will of men and women. Being a sovereign choice, it is paralleled by the mercy of a sovereign king granted after the judgment of a matter has justly concluded. For the sovereign to exercise the prerogative of mercy in no way compromises the justice of a matter.

Yet Israel has pursued a righteousness by her own effort. She has not understood about the righteousness which is by faith that comes as a gracious gift of God through the death and resurrection of His Son on their behalf. As such, Israel still clings to a righteousness of their own "willing" and "running" - a righteousness out of law. In sharp contrast to this, the righteousness issuing out of faith comes by hearing the apostolic preaching, believing it in one's heart and confessing it out loud through one's mouth. It is a saving faith.

Although Israel has heard the word of God and remained stubborn, nevertheless, God has not cast off His people. For even the example of the remnant that shall be saved, as shown in both Elijah's and Isaiah's time, is evident in Paul's own life. Israel has not stumbled so as to fall; she has tripped up on God's central building stone of Christ.

Gentiles have entered the people of God through the apostolic preaching. These hearing Gentiles, now grafted onto the Jewish olive tree, understand they live on the promises of God to His ancient people. They draw their life from Israel's Messiah.

Later, as the full number of Gentiles still yet-to-be-called, arrive, the currently rejecting Jewish people will find that there is a forgiveness of God that they will embrace. And so all Israel, including its Gentile contingent, will be saved. This is the mercy of God who consigns all humans to know their sin, that He may have mercy on all.

A deep motive of thanksgiving and gratefulness is established as the main motivating drive for the Christian life, whether for the former Gentile or Jew, who now live as one humanity, under God as those who have been decided upon by the merciful King.

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# 1 - Our faith that overcomes the World

## 388 – The theology of the cross: revelation in hiddenness

Exodus 33.23; Isaiah 45.15

Christians have a perspective of the world derived from revelation that is not open to others, until they, too, are called by God. As a result, we are seeing something others do not see nor comprehend. This is part of living in the “last days” and in the tension of the “pressure” of the world that wants us to conform to its ways; to turn us back to the old perspectives and life from which we have been redeemed. This tension is felt most acutely at the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

The suffering and the death of Jesus is a place where Christians have seen a revelation of the very heart of God. But if it is a place where God is revealed, it is also a place where, to the world, he is concealed. As Martin Luther [b.1483 d.1546] thought about this, the cross was a place where, like it was with Moses, we were granted to see the “back parts” of God; we were denied a direct, face-to-face, revelation of God. So the cross, to speak paradoxically, is a place where we see the hiddenness of God’s revelation. It is an indirect revelation but a true revelation nonetheless.

Luther made clear that his theology of the cross was a theology of revelation and so it is not open to speculation. So to those thinking by themselves about God, starting from the obvious material of the created world, the cross was something of a sharp contrast. It was God who is revealed in the cross. His revelation is open to faith, but concealed from others.

For anyone who tries to understand the sufferings of Christ simply using his understandings of the created world, will find that the cross breaks down the confidence of human reason to understand the death of Christ by such thought processes. It is not simply that God is known through suffering; it is that God is actively making Himself known through suffering. Christ’s suffering and temptations are the means by which persons are brought to God.

[e] This opens for us a powerful understanding of the works of God for our salvation. God can work in a way that is appropriate to His nature; Luther called this an *opus proprium Dei* – a proper work of God. But God can also work in a way that seems inappropriate to His nature, as say for example, when God is operating in His weakness and dying. Luther called this an *opus alienum Dei* – an alien work of God. The basic paradox involved is shown in considering the justification of sinners.

“In order that a man may be justified, he must first recognise that he is a sinner, and humble himself before God. Before man can be justified, he must first be utterly humiliated – and it is God who both humiliates and justifies...God makes a person a sinner in order that he may make him righteous. The *opus alienum* is a means to the end of the *opus proprium*...Far from regarding suffering or evil as a nonsensical intrusion into the world...the ‘theologian of the cross’ regards such suffering as his most precious treasure, for revealed and yet hidden in precisely such



sufferings is none other than the living God, working out the salvation of those whom he loves". (McGrath, 1985) page 151

### 389 – Living "from faith to faith"

*Romans 1.16-17, 5.1-2; Boan, 2013, Responding, #307-312*

[1] How we are righteous before God by faith.

We have been studying in past Units, how the Christian is a justified person, who is declared righteous by God on the grounds of His gracious gift of Jesus Christ whom God offered as a propitiation for our redemption. This justification, this right standing with God, enters our experience by faith.

[2] How, being righteous by faith, we shall now go on living by faith.

We have also seen, particularly as we followed Paul's thinking in Romans, that after a person has believed he is justified, he goes on to live "by faith". Basing it on Christ's work, Christians are involved in a constant trusting that their foundational relationship with God is strong. Living life on this basis, continues to be one of faith; it is a constant trusting of the Holy Spirit, present in their person, to bring about a leading of their life as the Jesus led His disciples.

### 390 - The life, which is our faith, is hidden from the world

*"Every child of God overcomes the world. Now the victory by which the world is overcome is our faith" 1 John 5.4*

The text of 1 John 5.1-5 opens for us a progression of thought that allows us to understand the 4th verse.

[1] "Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God" [1 John 5.1a] states a diagnostic test. The person who believes thus about Jesus not only must have received revelation concerning His Person and His historical place as Messiah in Israel's history, they simply could not have made such a confession unless they were born of God. They are children of God because such a faith-confession comes out of their mouth. They believe such things in their hearts and this belief has its origin in a new birth which is the work of God.

[2] "The one loving the One born of God – having His origin in God - loves also the one having been born out [ἐκ] of Him - having their origin from Him" [1 John 5.1b]. Christ has His origin in God, so those who love Him will love those who originate – in the sense of are redeemed to a new creation – in Christ.

[3] "In/by this we know that we love the children of God when we love God and carry out His commandments. For this is the love of God, that we are keeping His commandments, and His commandments are not burdensome" [1 John 5.2-3]. The argument moves to the relationship between the children of God as deriving from a common relationship with the one Father.

This states, amongst other things, that when we are obedient to God we are expressing the form of love appropriate to Him – obedience. Further, this love for God being expressed, is of the sort that children of God offer to a father. Loving Him for who He is in relation to

them, they find obeying him absolutely no burden. Because there is nothing onerous in this primary relationship of obeying God, it sets the common life for loving the other children of God. It is from an obedient love expressed towards the father that a love of the other children derives. For they too know and exercise this free liberty that children of a father know.

[4] "Everyone who has been born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. Who is it that overcomes the world except the one believing that "Jesus is the Son of God"?" [1 John 5.4-5]. Now this loving father-children relationship, experienced by God's children, means that the person born of God overcomes the world. This is because the world knows nothing of this liberty. This is an "overcoming", a conquering of the world by virtue of a life-relationship. It is secret from the world, for any one who is "of the world" does not experience nor can even comprehend it. They simply must observe and recognise that there is something being lived out before them that is totally outside their understanding and their experience.

This other life, this "victory", this "overcoming" of the world, is our faith. So "faith" in this context, means the operating of a life – a life of faith - together with the Father and the other children "born of God". All of this is based upon the revelation of the truth about Jesus Christ that He is Messiah and Son of God.

What this means is that the Christian has a perspective upon life which the world does not understand. Nor does the world value a life of faith in God as making any difference to things as the world thinks they are. Further, often when Christians attempt to express their reasons for the life they are living, it sounds to the world like they are trying to convince themselves of matters which, from the world's perspective, are hardly there.

In addition, often the Christian life is a laying down of one's life in the service of others. Such costly service is not understood by the world either; indeed, a Christian may be seen as being a "sucker" or being "used" by others so appearing to the world to be a weak and manipulated. The Church's best activities can often appear foolish and naïve.

## **2 - The Cross is the Victory now being applied**

*391 - Jesus has made us to be a kingdom, priests to His God and Father*

*Revelation 1.4-6; chapters 1-7*

This worldly perspective of which we have been speaking is reflected in the world's view of any prayer offered to God. When we pray we must do so with a perspective upon the relationship between the earth where we live and the heaven where our Saviour is. The Revelation of John opens this perspective for us.

The revelation to John, on the island of Patmos was an unveiling of Jesus Christ in His current heavenly glory and administering of His kingdom. An unveiling - an open manifestation - implies that He has been veiled. This was so in his Incarnation where God was concealed in Jesus' humanity, His flesh and humiliation.

In the same way, the kingdom of God has entered our world in the life and the cross of Jesus;

this kingdom entry is veiled in history. He is unveiled to us as we are forgiven and drawn into the light as sons of light. We know that the cross is in the field of human history now, overruling the world and its sin.

The Revelation speaks of Him as One who walks among the churches, administrating, encouraging, rebuking and bringing His word to those who are His people upon the earth. [Revelation 2-3]. The book of Revelation assures us that there is a final outcome [“after these things”] of world history; we are given to know the end even while the flow of history is still going on.

Revelation 5 presents us with two main things: a book and the Lamb. God’s secret meaning of world history is what the book is about, and the Lamb is a man who may open this history, for He is worthy. He is worthy to open the meaning of world history for He has conquered in His cross, which is the judgment of the world.

*“I have come to cast fire upon the earth” [Luke 12.49]*

And because that is what His cross means He may open the seals to world history. It is a meaning revealed through conquest - and the conquest has taken place in the death of Jesus.

Revelation 6 presents us with the view of the ordeal of the world that is now taking place. For this judgement of the world is actually what is happening in the ordeal of history. So we learn that the history of the world is the history of judgment: the course of world history is the course of world judgment. But the horsemen are not the prime movers of the world - all that they do is “given them” to do. We must read on to look for the true master movers of world history.

Revelation 7 will give us the relation between providence and grace. The people of God are assured of His care in the midst of trial. There is a peace in the midst of tribulation [troublesome pressure] - and the Revelation wants us to know this before we are given a clear look at evil in Revelation 12-13.

### *392 - Movers of world history: prayers of the saints and the fire of God.*

*Revelation 8-9; Luke 12.49-53, John 12.31*

Revelation 8 opens for us the true Master powers working behind world history. The first six seals tell us of human history, the role of the principalities and powers, the terrible calamities that happen and show how the dark powers are seemingly triumphant over God’s cause. But in chapter 8 we go a little deeper. What is revealed there are the two master movers behind the world. The real cause of the world’s disturbance are the prayers of the saints and the fire of God [Luke 12.49-53, John 12.31].

As the seven angels sound their trumpets, seven plagues come to the earth. The cross of Christ is shown to be the real aggressor of history and so is the man or woman who prays in the Name of God.

We see here that all history moves at the impulse of prayer: the real initiative is not held by the riders on the horses but by the prayer of the saints. The fire of Jesus affects whole regions

of human life; land, earth, sky etc.

Chapter 9 shows us that when Christians pray this leads to the opening of the bottomless pit and a deep torment for those men and women not sealed by God begins.

It is this perspective on prayer which begins our understanding of what it is that is being accomplished whenever living people, trusting God as their Father, struggle and battle on the earth, cry to Him and He answers them in the midst of the trouble which they experience because the judgment of the world that is taking place.

## 3 - In praying: Focus [1] - Faith in God

### *393 - The first object of our faith is God's Character and His attributes*

*James 1.6-8; 1 John 5.1-5 ;Hebrews 11.1-6*

Whenever we pray we must trust the Person we believe in. In matters of prayer, to Whom we are speaking is everything. And if we come to God we must believe that He is and that He is the rewarder of those that seek Him. Without faith, it is impossible to please God [Hebrews 11.1-6].

There are some general matters we need to discuss which enable us to steer our prayers aright. There are certain "givens" which we can rely upon in our dealings with the Lord so that we can ask humbly and aright. James makes clear that if we pray to God over any matter, we must pray in such way that we do not doubt. This text has been taken by some to mean that whatever we ask of God we need to have a sure faith that we shall obtain the particular thing which we ask about. Otherwise, we are in a position of doubt and wavering.

However, as we see that faith is based on revelation received, we understand that the first object of our faith is God Himself, before we come to the second object of faith - His promises.

### *394 - Three primary objects for our faith when we pray.*

When we pray our faith rests on three main centres..

[1] Faith deals with God as the Person Who is to be trusted. And so, when we pray, we are looking towards *His Character and His power*, His wisdom and His mercy.

[2] Faith also lays hold of *God's good promises*, whether they are general or particular. And it is on the basis of His character that faith strongly trusts God to fulfil His promises.

[3] The New Testament instructs us is that it is the Name of Christ under which all our prayers are to be put forward to God. Foundational to all prayer is that Christ has prayed to God on our behalf and in our place. *His Priesthood is primary and our priesthood* may be exercised because His has already been done in our name and in our stead. This we saw laid out when we studied the vicarious humanity of Christ [Boan, 2013, Being, #236-243]. It is for Christ's sake, and for the sake of Christ's Name that God will give all that He has promised.

We are checking here that our faith is in the right Person, independent of whether we feel

our faith to be strong, or our vision of what we are asking is clear. We are not testing by something subjective, something within ourselves, but looking to Whom we are trusting – this is the basis of true faith. We are also praying out of the given relation we have a priests to God.

### *395 – When praying we need to know that we are heard*

1 John 5.13-15

In the section #390-“The life, which is our faith is hidden from the world”, we saw that there is a deep fellowship among God’s children based on their mutual obedience to God the Father. Later, in that letter, the following statement occurs.

*“13 I write this to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, that you may know that you have eternal life. 14 And this is the confidence which we have in him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. 15 And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have obtained the requests made of him.” 1 John 5.13-15 RSV 1946*

The flow of thought here is that:

[1] For believers in the name of the Son of God, the writings of the apostle are intended to assure them that they have eternal life.

[2] The knowledge of that life of God which we share and the trust in the name of His Son generates a confidence in God when we come to pray.

[3] The confidence we have is that we ask according to His will, and that we are heard. That is, because of our share in His life we understand the nature of what He wills, and so, in obedience we are those who align our requests to Him and so fashion them according to our knowledge of his character and purpose. This is so because, independent of what we are asking, we recognise that the will of the sovereign King is what will be done. If matters are not according to his will nothing will come of the request until it is; we are to want what He wants.

[4] Further, our confidence in our relationship with Him that has come about through His grace and choice, means that when we speak He listens to us - we are in fact heard. To have been heard by a King is tantamount to saying ‘the thing is done’. Our request, having been made, has gone home to Him who listens and He gives us the assurance that we have been heard.

[5] If we know that we have asked, and have left the conversation knowing that we have been heard, then we know that we shall receive the prayers we have asked. That is, the confidence that there has been an exchange between us and God is the basis for knowing we shall receive concerning the matters we have asked. He relationship is the basis for the confidence.

### *396 - Faith is in God, not faith "for" something we envisage to obtain.*

When God reveals Himself in regard to these matters mentioned above, He has not bound Himself to give to us what we ask simply because we implore Him in such a way as to trust His Person. So we can see that there is a good degree of latitude about the particular matter

of our asking, both in what we ask and also in what God will answer. So it is not necessary that we should have a full persuasion we shall receive what we have asked to be praying in faith; nor that God will grant that particular matter. For both God and our faith have room left to them. Room for God to answer our prayer in some other way and with some other thing; and room for our faith to ask the blessing without such an assurance that, in that particular matter, we shall receive exactly as we ask.

We need this matter clear if we are to form and lay out our prayers in a right way; and also to teach us how to apply our faith to God's attributes and promises. Whenever we pray to God, since it is His attributes which are the wonderful object of our faith, then it is as we place our faith there we are encouraged to bring forth what we are praying about.

Yet even when we plead the attributes of God back to Him, for the granting of what we are asking, we need to leave a latitude, a reserve in which it is the liberty of God to answer as seems best to Him.

Sometimes, it is true that God does sometimes give to a person a really clear persuasion, an assurance about the matter in hand. Otherwise we must in faith leave all to God to bring about the most glory for the attribute of His Character which we are pleading with Him.

### *397 – Faith in the power of God also recognises His freedom*

*Matthew 9.27-31; Matthew 8.2-3; Mark 9.23-29; Numbers 14.11-19*

We must be sure of God's power to bring about what we are asking. But this does not imply that we are clear concerning His will about what we ask. Whether God will grant it or not is to be left to Him - that is our humble submission. We see this clearly in Matthew 9.27-31 where the two blind men ask Jesus to have mercy upon them – their grounds for appeal to Jesus is His mercy. The one question which the Saviour asked them was, "Do you believe that I am able to do this?" He does not ask if they believe that He will do it, but whether He is able. In this way, seeing that they have grasped the merciful aspect of His Character, He directs them to have faith in his power. They said "Yes Lord!" - they spoke their heart as far as their faith went and as far as His question reached.

It is as if they are saying, 'Lord, we come to be cured. We believe that You are able, it is this which makes us come. And yet we don't know whether You will do it, we leave that to You'. Of course it must be left to Him because what they asked was 'mercy' - a matter entirely of the kings' pleasure. Jesus' reply makes clear that it was done to them according to their faith. And that must mean their faith in His ability to do it - not a certainty that He would - they had no assurance of the thing they asked, only a firm trust in the One asked and His power to perform it should He wish to do so.

Matthew 8.2-3 records a leper saying similar things. "Lord, if you are willing, You can make me clean". He expresses his confidence in the power of Jesus, but left the will of Jesus to be expressed. Jesus expressed His will, for He replied, "I am willing; be cleansed". The leper's faith was demonstrated in that he worshipped Jesus ["fell on his face before Him" Luke 5.12-13] before he asked.

The leper knew something in his heart of the greatness of Jesus. First, he makes clear his desire by his request, that he should be healed. Second, he speaks as one who is not assured that it will be so. Third, he resigns himself to Christ's will, to do with him as He pleased.

We must make this difference between believing on His power as distinct from believing on His will because if we do not believe on His power, that He is absolutely able to perform what we ask, then we do not believe that He is God, and so we do not glorify Him as God.

But to believe that He will, or will not, do a thing detracts nothing from Him being God. On the contrary, it exalts Him for it acknowledges His sovereignty and dominion as God.

Mark 9.23-29 records Jesus' exclamation to the father of the demonised boy. He had said "If you can do anything..." Jesus exclaims, "If You can! All things are possible to him who believes." We notice that the issue is not a matter of will, but of power. And the possibility hangs on the belief in the power. Even when the man confesses a partial belief in His power, Jesus' reply to the first question indicates that faith is said to have the power which God has.

Moses, in Numbers 14.11-19 pleads the power of the Lord as great, and therefore asks for pardon for Israel [Numbers 14.17].

### *398 - To plead the mercy of God presumes His free choice*

Mercy is the attribute of God which, as we have seen [Boan,2013,Offering], emphasises the free choice of God. When we plead His mercy, then we are expressing faith in an attribute of God, which, above all others, manifests itself according to His choice. So we must leave Him latitude to do as He desires whenever we ask for His mercy towards others [Isaiah 30.18].

If God reserves for Himself a liberty to respond to our pleas for mercy, so He leaves for our faith a space, a latitude, as to whether or not we shall obtain it. Those who tell you that you lack faith because you allow space for God to reject your request are deeply misinformed about the nature of God and also about what constitutes faith.

### *399 - The wisdom of God: we presume He knows best*

*Matthew 6.32, Luke 11.13*

The wisdom of God also requires a considerable latitude in our assurance of obtaining what we are asking Him about.

*"...therefore the Lord longs to be gracious to you, And therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you, For the Lord is a God of justice; How blessed are all those who long for Him." [Isaiah 30.18].*

God knows, in His wisdom, what is best in every way. He therefore waits to be gracious in the best way, that His mercy may be most exalted. He waits not only for the right time to be merciful, but in what particular things to please us. We find the answers to our prayers in the time that is the very best for us.

God has promised to withhold no good thing from us. But what the good thing is, and how best it may be good for us, of these matters He is the judge, for He is our Father. He knows

we have need of things, even before we ask Him [Matthew 6.32, Luke 11.13]. He has declared that all things shall work together for our good [Romans 8.28]. But neither does He say what particular matter shall work for our good, nor how our good is found in it.

The things we ask may be answered in a contrary way to what we desire. So wisdom reserves for itself space and latitude, and so it should. For it is in that very thing that its glory lies - that it arrives at the right time with the appropriate matters in hand. We are to wait on Him, because He is a God of judgment, and He waits to be gracious to us in His own way. Waiting on God is simply an act of ongoing faith.

### *400 - The glory of God: we presume only He knows what that is*

*2 Corinthians 1.20, Romans 9.36*

Whenever we pray to the Lord then, we are to frame what we are asking in such a way that it can stand as a request that would be most for His glory. Most of all, faith has its eyes on God's glory - "Abraham grew strong in faith, and gave glory to God" [Romans 4.21].

In the prayer Jesus taught His disciples to pray toward their Father in heaven, the first thing asked, "Hallowed be Your Name", is the measure of all that follows; and the ending "for Yours is the Kingdom...power...glory" is the fitting end. This is the highest matter upon which faith can move with God in its praying.

However, what is clear is that, should we pray this way, only God Himself knows what is for His glory in any matter we have put before Him. We pray for what we judge to be most for His glory, and God accepts it in this way, as something which we consider best in our view and judgment. But He performs according to the riches of His own glory.

So a man can pray in the highest faith, and according to the very best perception he has been given, and still not know that what, in particular, he asks will be received - for what is most for God's glory, only God Himself knows.

It is also true that for a King administrating His kingdom, particular requests of those close to Him have to be weighed against the overall situation in hand. David knows God as a King in this way [Psalm 93.2,74.12]. His perception of God as King lays the foundation for David's praying. In this way, it can be seen that general situations pertaining in the Kingdom, can often cut across personal and particular requests. [See how Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary, was dealt with when he sought for a quiet life Jeremiah 45.3-4].

### *401 - The "faith" climate of the present day*

In our day, under the impact of the "faith movement", there is a consistent and powerful emphasis which is brought to bear upon us. All around us we are hard pressed to make certain that, before we ask God about any matter, then we need a clear vision of what we are asking, and we need to have a particular faith that what we ask we are to receive. This can even lead people to be taught to visualise what they want from God before they ask. Whether that distinguishes a vision given by God from a vision of our own making is hard to resolve - for that possible confusion is never dealt with.



The essence of prayer is taken to be answer; an idea that sets the meaning of the exchange with God from our own selfish position. Such a view sees the receiving what you ask to be the clearest and most fundamental way of stating the meaning of prayer. If we do not have answers, we are told, then we do not know very much about prayer itself.

Further, we are even encouraged to believe that, whether we see anything manifestly changing or not, we are to act as if we have received it. We are told never to pray prayers which end with "if it be Your will" - for this is taken to mean that we doubt. What we have just laid out above indicates that this is a very shallow view of prayer indeed.

#### *402— The toxic ideas of today's climate makes for no unity in prayer*

When certain ideas are held, and particularly when we pray in concert with people who hold them, then we often find that a deep unity of the Spirit eludes us, and that we have no sense of unity of mind with such people. It may also be true that we ourselves may hold such ideas as listed below, which are contrary to a gospel of grace.

It will be very difficult to pray in unity with people when they approach God on the basis of such ideas that God's love is conditional and so depends upon our behaviour. Or that 'if you have 'real faith', God will give to you whatever you are praying for'. Or the idea of a 'bullet-proof faith' - a strong faith will protect us from problems and pain. Or that God is vindictive: He hates sinners, He is angry with us and wants to punish us. Or that what we desire most is divinely ordained happiness - more than anything else, God wants us to be happy

If people hold untrue, or grossly distorted beliefs, about themselves, the church or God, they will find their prayers, and any exercise of faith, seriously damaged and compromised.

## **4 - In praying: Focus [2] - Promises of God**

#### *403 - We need to consider the matter of a thing promised*

God has declared his secret purposes to His children in the form of promises. So what He intends to bestow upon us, is often declared in a direct and clear promise of that matter in the Bible. So, His secret will, as it concerns us, is openly declared by the promise of it. God's children are "children of promise" [Hebrews 6.17]. We are "heirs of blessing" [1 Peter 3.9].

While this open declaration of God's secret intent is true of His blessings and promises; it is also true of His judgments as well - for He rules the world by His word. He executes the judgments written [Psalm 149.9]. In the same way, it is said that God's judgments, which He promised in Jeremiah 12.16-17 did "take hold" [overtook ASV] of men and women [Zechariah 1.6].

First, we have God's thoughts, what He meant to do, which are His secret will. Second, God's thoughts are put into words which are chosen as suitable to express His will. Third, we have the performance of the words, which took hold of them.

In the same way as it is said of the young Samuel as a prophet established by God, "not a word fell to the ground" [1 Samuel 3.19, 1 Kings 7].

#### *404 - God has made promises.*

And here we must ask the same question: "Does the way God puts His promises to us also require that there is a liberty in the way that He shall grant them?" We must ask, "Do we need to have the same latitude in our faith as we saw was necessary in the pleading of the attributes of God?"

In discussing the attributes of God above, we have said nothing of the will of God. Many folks, seeing this matter, make bold to claim then that it is in the promises of God that He has clearly declared His will. In this way they think that, because God has expressed His will in the promises, then He has no liberty about answering them. For them, to see the promise is to know His will, and all that is required is to "Name" the promise and then to go on to "claim" it as the express will of God for the asker, at that immediate moment of asking.

On this basis, it is often urged upon us, that we should have a very clear and special faith persuasion accompanying our prayers, so that we may receive that particular thing or matter about which we have found a promise of God in His written Word.

#### *405 - Consider the tenor of things promised apart from the matter.*

Apart from the matter of the promises itself, we have to consider how the declaration of these promises is intended to affect the persons to whom they are promised and in what respect they are relevant to the particular persons.

Though there is no good thing offered that is not given as a promise or other, it is not God's secret will to perform or bestow all and every good thing to all and each of his children respectively.

This is very obvious in matters of goods and temporal gifts. God has not given material riches to all saints, or honours to all. There are not many rich, wise and noble, although some are so. And yet, because He will bestow all of these upon some, there are promises which make particular mention of all these things. So the sense is this, that the God of all grace and comforts, having before Him all of His children, has many parcels of good things and graces to bestow. His will is to give all and every good thing among them, and in His secret purposes He orders where and to whom He will distribute the parcels "to each one individually as He wills" [1 Corinthians 12.11].

The Bible is not, in the first place, "my" personal book. Rather, it is something given as revelation to "us" - we who are the collected people of God. Many things promised by God are for us; but they may not be for me. We will expect many promises of God to be there for us to serve one another, but we may not read all promises as applying, in their fulfilment, to each and every child of God.

So wherever there is a good gift of God given, it comes as a fulfilment of a promise. And the secret will of God is expressed when He fulfills a promise, yet He knows in His own foreknowledge to whom that promise will come. These are not universal promises to every saint. There are some which are so: and these take the form of "whoever believes will not perish"

[John 3.16]. But there are some which have an indefinite tenor such as the promises to work miracles. These are not in the form "whoever..." but are specific "He who ..." John 14.12, Mark 16.17. To "another the gift of working of miracles" [1 Corinthians 12.10].

In the same way, there is an absolute promise of salvation which may be announced to all, but the promise is not arrived at for all - we see that in life - and yet both promises and performance are in accordance with the secret will of God. We can call these indefinite promises, because the declaration of them may be made to all in preaching. Yet, the declaration of them does not apply to all persons, but some only, and it is not declared in advance who these are.

So to the objection that "every Christian has a right to every promise" we must answer that that was not so for Christ, nor Paul, who had very little by way of temporal goods and possessions. So we can see that, where the promise is indefinite then the faith that is called for must also be indefinite in its reach - so we cast ourselves on God to obtain the promise, a promise which must be made good to some and therefore, why not me? These indefinite acts of faith are good faith for they answer the mind and the tenor of the promise given. And so they are the way the revelation of God for the particular person, and for all persons, is seen.

Three things may be said here:

[1] Faith is good faith, because it answers to the tenor of the promise. And so it is praying in good faith when I do not necessarily have certain knowledge that I shall obtain what is asked as promised.

[2] Wherever the promises of God are of this indefinite nature then God's will stands very free - how to perform these promises is the freedom He has reserved within Himself. It is according to His "will" [1 Corinthians 10].

[3] The dispensation of God's threatenings and promises are past finding out. There is such a variety of circumstances and situations that God is working in the lives of people that no absolute judgment can be made in any given situation.

### *406 - Promises are brought into operation through our prayers*

*James 1.4-5*

God has made promises, and it is our asking of Him that releases them to us, such as He secretly desires to give us. It is on this basis that He gives such promises about prayer itself. "Ask and it shall be given", "Ask wisdom of God..".

If we separate the promises from our prayers then we may not receive - 'You have not because you ask not'. But when God links the promise given, with the asking which He instructs us to do, then there is an increase in our faith that God will certainly give if we ask.

We act on very few of God's promises when we compare the great number that are in His word. So it is true that God gives us many of His promises whether we pray or not. We receive far more than we actually ask in prayer.

What we ask in prayer depends on our understanding; we must apprehend a promise before

we can act on it. But we are blind and ignorant in seeking God. Even though we know our wants, we cannot always know what, among the promises of God we should ask for, or rely upon. So there is a very wide difference between the promises of God as given and the knowledge we have of our situation, and so what is applicable to us.

This all being so, we need to see:

[1] why God gives us more than we can ask or think. And that He was found by those who did not seek Him. We should be very disadvantaged if God only we give us what we know to ask for - and gave us nothing else.

[2] When God promises to hear our prayers, He reserves a great latitude and freedom to answer us. In His dealing with us, two things stand side by side: that God may still deal with us according to His declared mind and promises, and yet deny us that individual matter which we seek in our prayers, and all this notwithstanding His promise to hear our prayers.

*407 - Prayer is holy: - a speaking with God that excludes all onlookers.*

*Matthew 6.1-7,16-18*

In speaking about how people practised their righteousness before men, Jesus was addressing the "yeast" – the hypocritical invasive lifestyle - of the Pharisees. [Matthew 6.1-7,16-18]. He saw that their religious style was really a way of appearing to be busy about the things of God so that men would see them and think they were holy men - men who do lots of God-orientated things.

In this way He addressed the main issue of living before God in a particular way that, at the same time sets out to impress men. So the Pharisees really defiled their relation with God by speaking, fasting and doing all these God- related things so that men and women would regard them highly. The gross nature of the sin is that it prefers men and women before God. It makes our relationship to God subservient and dependant upon our relationship to men. Fundamentally, it says that men and women matter more than God.

In regards to the Father, Jesus calls this way of living hypocritical. It seeks for men's honour; and, insofar that it does, that is the reward it gets. The religious acts never have any significance with God, only towards men, which is really appropriate, because that was why they were done in the first place.

It is in the light of this error of the Pharisee, for whom public praying was hypocrisy towards God, that Jesus taught about going into the closet and speaking to Father alone.

Consistent with His own teaching, the Lord Himself withdrew from His close friends and spent time alone with His Father. He did this in the midst of a busy life, where people were always seeking Him out. It was part of His expression of the holy relation which He had with His Father - there was to be no intrusion into this exchange between Them. In the Lord's Prayer, which He taught His disciples as a way to pray, Jesus lays out the order of approach to God.

*408 - Jesus' life of faith requires that there shall be prayer.*

Jesus did not live a life of pre-arranged role plays for which He simply knew His lines. There is a prevailing view of Jesus, particularly drawn from the portraits of the Gospels, that sees Him not struggling, but rather just going through the motions of these things, it is said, that He simply foreknew. This is a view which leads to an understanding of the Lord's life as a pre-arranged fate. The life of Christ, and particularly his praying, is fairly meaningless to us if we simply think of Him as not having a life indeed, but simply acting out a pre-assigned part.

If that view prevails in our thinking as well, we shall have a real difficulty in understanding how, in the atoning work of Christ, He made intercession for sinners in such a way as He procured for them the benefits of His atoning work. His priestly work – His prayers for us – is vastly undermined by such ideas. Indeed, for ourselves, it puts a powerful obstacle in front of our praying. The difficulty is that of God's interposing prayer between His loving desire for us and the fulfilment of that desire; instead of simply fulfilling it without having to wait to be asked to do so. In the intercessory work of Jesus we have the divine love in Christ pleading with the divine love of the Father, and thus obtaining for us that eternal life, which the Father, in giving us the Son as our Saviour, can be truly said to have given to us.

What Christ desired for us His intercession asked for us. Christ, in His dependence upon the Father, actually came to the place where He asked what He desired in prayers spoken to the Father. That He should cast His burdens upon the Father – burdens He had because He was bearing our burdens – showed us the perfection of His Sonship toward the Father and His perfect brotherhood with us.

But why was the praying necessary? It is because God is not revealed to our hearts as some arbitrary, disconnected fate. He is revealed to us as a living God and His will as a choice of a living heart. We are not to think of Him or His will as a predetermined chain of events – a pre-destined flow to which we just say "Amen". Rather, His will is a moral choice to which we, as His offspring, are to respond with a real moral choice. Jesus' prayers reveal to us the Father's heart, as it is understood and known by the Son.

"That knowledge of the Father which the prayer of Christ implied – the knowledge of the Son who dwelleth in the bosom of the Father – was not the knowledge of a certain future, predestined and sure to be accomplished, but was the knowledge of the unchanging will of the Father concerning man – a will which in all rebellion is resisted, in all obedience of love is fulfilled." (Campbell, 1856, 1996), page 178.

What we share in is the life of the ascended and glorified Lord. When we pray, we too are living by faith on the earth as He did. We are not walking to a pre-arranged blueprint which we know, nor are we saying pre-prepared our lines. We do not "say our prayers"; we pray. We are making true moral choices, in obedience to Father. We too, must struggle and wrestle, and risk. This means that in our utter dependence on Father, like Jesus did, we must pray.

## 5 - In Praying: Focus [3]: union with the Spirit

### *409 - The help of the Holy Spirit in our prayers*

Romans 8.26-27

#### **[1] The advocacy of the Son and of the Spirit.**

Romans 8 opens to us a glimpse of two intercessions being made for us. Both are based on our share in the Trinitarian life of God. One is the work of the exalted Son, it requires us to think of ourselves as having an intercession done for us - in our place and in our stead. We may only participate in this intercessory work as, by faith, we see the great benefit of Christ praying for us from the perspective that we are in Christ Jesus. He makes us the object of His prayer.

The other intercession is that of the Spirit, in which we have an intimate share and which is very much our own praying, can only be a participation as we see ourselves, by faith, in the Spirit.

#### **[2] The intercession of the resurrected Christ, our great High Priest, for us [Rom 8.31-34].**

Recapitulating the message of Romans 1.16 - 5.21, we have learned to take seriously that we are to know ourselves now as those who are in Christ Jesus. All that God has done for us and given us is in that God-man. His intercession for us takes place in heaven, as He is ever before the face of his Father.

God is the good God who has good purposes for us in his foreknowing of us as those who are to be shaped to the image of his Son. He has marked us out in advance, called us, justified us, and glorified us in Christ Jesus. [Romans 8.28-30]. In the context of God who is "for us" and freely gives us all things, it is asked, "then who is against us?" Who can condemn us in this life? We learn that, as the elect of God in Christ Jesus, there is nothing that can separate us from the love of God. Christ is our advocate. Certainly no charge concerning our sins can separate us from God. It is just as clear that no earthly circumstances, no matter how dire, can separate us from the love of God either [Romans 8.35-39].

#### **[3] The intercession of the Holy Spirit, within us.**

In the eighth chapter of Romans we have noticed already that the power of the Holy Spirit is given to us [Boan, 2013, Responding, # 312-315]. He helps us when our body is dead because of sin, to live a life which overcomes our flesh and causes our body to carry out what it is that we have decided to do in obedience to the Lord [Romans 8.9-11].

*"Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. 27 And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." Romans 8.26-27 RSV 1946*

This intercession takes place from the perspective of being in the Spirit. Concerning this intercession, it is said that "in the same way" the Spirit helps our weakness in praying. 'In the same way' refers us back to the weakness of the flesh – which is laid out for us in Romans

7.14-25. This was our state and yet, through the wonderful 'law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus', we experience a deliverance from this inherent weakness through trusting the power of the Spirit to work a godly life in us despite our weakness.

The verb used for "*helps*" [RSV] in Romans 8.26 for the Spirit's action, means the Holy Spirit within us takes hold of us as coming alongside us, and so means 'to take a share in, to help in bearing'; so generally 'to help'. It is a compound verb in its Greek form, and the combination suggests a picture of the Spirit alongside, or with us, bearing in our place the burden of what this 'weakness' means for us. The particular weakness, or inability, that we have is now identified for us by the following clause. It is the fact that we are ignorant of what we must necessarily pray. There are things to pray 'just as we must' and we don't know what they are.

This tells us that prayer is not only necessary in the Christian life in Spirit, but that this necessary matter is encumbered by a powerful ignorance which is considered a weakness. It reflects a state of affairs similar to the matter of the weakness of the flesh expounded in Romans 7 and 8, of the moment-by-moment experience of a victory over the weakness. While our state does not change in the tension of living where we are "in the flesh but not according to it"; so we might say about this present weakness, we must live in the ignorance of knowing what to pray, but not according to that weakness. And the remedy is the same; we must trust the Spirit for the empowerment to pray what we must.

*"But, the same Spirit petitions for us by groanings unutterable [unspoken groanings]"*

This same Spirit, as mentioned in Romans 8.13, Who empowered us in our inability to put to death the deeds of the body – now takes a share in helping us to bear this other weakness that we have, the weakness in praying. The help He brings is that He comes alongside to bear the weakness, the ignorance of knowing what to pray about [the content].

The word used means 'to petition', or 'to make petition for'. It is the picture of an advocate, a paraclete - someone called to the side of a person who must make a case and needs someone to help them make it, to phrase it, as it were, in the appropriate way.

The help of the Spirit is to make the petition for us, and the instrument He uses are 'groanings that are unwordable [unspeakable, cannot be spoken]': "A groaning" translates στεναγμός. It is a groaning noise that registers a feeling that is internal and unexpressed in words. It is a groaning which is appropriate for us, who as redeemed bodily persons are not finished. But the Spirit comes into us to live His Life in us as we live in the tension of our position.

We have already met this word in Romans 8.18-25, as a way that the creation, which was subjected to internal frustration - not by its own choice - now groans as it waits for the maturity and 'finishing off' of the redeemed humans. We ourselves are also groaners, because we now live, with the firstfruits of the Spirit's work happening in our lives, nevertheless we know ourselves not to be finished yet.

So there is a groaning going on in creation as it waits for us and we inwardly groan as redeemed persons who are engaged in waiting for our full sonship, which is the redemption of our bodies. So we are experiencing the "now" of God's kingdom with the parallel "not yet" also in our experience. This living 'in between the times' of the Lord's ascension and his

parousia is the reason for the weakness we have. As to our state, we cannot pray because we are not finished. As to our experience, in the Spirit we can pray because He will help us. It is for us, as in all things, a matter of faith.

Now, in this present state of weakness, inherent to the time of waiting, the Holy Spirit is within us, united to our spirit and He helps us to pray what we ought; He petitions for us, groaning along with us.

*"The One who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is..."*

The direction of our praying is not to the Spirit but to the Father or the Son. Here we see that God is the one who searches the hearts of men and women. This assures us that if our praying is difficult for us because of our weakness, then our heart is known and open to God. He sees what we have at the centre of our interest; he knows our best desires.

This means, amongst other things, that when we pray, even as we are helped by the Spirit, we are not praying to inform God what is on our heart. We can assume that He knows that. He looks into our being and has no need for our prayer to speak our heart to Him. That is not a matter upon which our weakness impinges – for the simple reason that the knowledge of our heart's desires are already searched out and known to our Father.

*Because the mind of the Spirit petitions on behalf of the saints according to God 'according to God'.*

Nor do we need to worry that God, who searches our hearts, would have any difficulties in knowing what the mind of the Spirit is either. That is one matter we can be assured about for, as three Persons they are One.

It is out of the inner Life of the Trinity that we know the mind of the Spirit is already the mind of God. The Spirit's mind is 'according to God'. It is a function of the Life of God that there is Unity of mind and will. That is, the One who searches our hearts, knows what the mind of the Spirit is because it is His mind – one and the same. It is because the Spirit Himself is God, that we have a paraclete within us Who, shares in the unity of will and mind of God the holy Trinity. It is God addressing God that is happening for us.

*'on behalf of the saints'*

The petitions of the Spirit are what we are trusting in as we make our prayers to God. Because the weakness we have is that while we 'must pray', we don't know what to pray. This is another way of saying that we don't know how to pray "according to the will of God". Well, the Spirit does exactly that! And as we trust Him to groan with us, and as we open our mouth to speak to God, we will know the experience – still being in our state of weakness – of praying according to the will of God. We shall be praying 'in the Spirit' [Ephesians 6.18; Jude 20] and not in the flesh.

This has the following implications for the way we pray:

[1] We need to acknowledge our inability to pray what it is we ought to pray - particularly as to content. We must not think that we can do this 'in the flesh' - driven by our own effort. Conversely, we must not kick ourselves that we can't do it - it is a product of the times in



which God has called us to live.

[2] Prayer is matter of faith. It is a trust in the Person of God present to us which looks away from ourselves and centres our expectation upon Him; the Spirit of the Father and the Son. We can only be exhorted to pray according to the will of God if we can in faith do so.

[3] We must pray then, 'in the Spirit' always. Which means looking for His help, looking to Him as an indwelling One.

[4] The desire to pray is ours, even though we are open even here, to have our desires affected by the same Spirit. He can and does motivate us. Our part is to accept to know ourselves as people who are now 'in the Spirit'.

[5] In knowing what to pray, we must let the Life of God be the basis of our trust that prayer can be done in the current weakness of the 'groaning times' we live in.

## 6 - In Praying: Focus [4]: Our Rabbi's teaching

*410 - Secret matters – fasting, almsgiving and prayer [Matt. 6.2-6].*

*Matthew 6.5-15; 16.6, 11; Mark 8.15; Luke 12.1; 1 Corinthians 5.6*

Jesus had spoken of the need to be very careful in practising the righteousness we have in Christ. For his disciples who live in a religious, man-centred setting the only way to avoid religious compromise was to practise almsgiving, fasting and prayer in secret to the Lord. These were not matters that called for anyone else's admission. Otherwise, such practice as disciples do is not regarded, nor rewarded, by God; that is the teaching of Jesus.

The people of the new covenant really did know God personally and deeply. That "their Father" was someone who is "in secret". Not all that was said to God was communally shared – "each shall know me" [Jeremiah 31.31]. The teaching here, whilst addressed to a group, is plainly about how *each person* of the group must activate and engage with God personally.

*411 - "...not as the Gentiles do..."*

*Matthew 6.7-8*

Jesus, having warned the disciples about not following the example the hypocrites within Israel who defile prayer, turned their attention to another group that they should not emulate; it was the Gentiles.

Gentiles, in Jesus' estimation and observation, use meaningless repetitions; saying things over and over again. This is because they see prayer as an obligation and also think that by praying they move their gods to hear them by their many words. So, in Jesus' understanding, the Gentiles, by their prayer and its method, indicate that they are: [1] seeking to get the attention of their god; they seek to be heard; [2] and they are looking to open the conversation by their own initiative; [3] and they are seeking to inform the god to whom they pray of their needs.

On all of these counts the situation of the people of the new covenant, coming out of the

Jewish old covenant base, is sharply different.

[1] They are not seeking to be heard, nor are they trying to get God's attention. They are actually encouraged to "ask...seek...knock" [7.7-12] on the presupposition that their heavenly Father is good, and will give good things – things appropriate to His values – to those that ask Him. They are not wringing out of God things He is unwilling to give; it is the reverse.

[2] They are not opening the conversation: prayer for the people of the new covenant is a response to the outgoing love of God made clear to them in what He has already done for them. Their part is not to take an initiative with God, but to respond to His initiative. They speak back because they have already been spoken to. Their prayer, like their faith, is a response to the revelation already made by God who has spoken to them.

[3] They do not inform Him of their needs; they ask on the basis that children ask their fathers for the necessities of life. They have an in-built assumption in coming to ask that He knows their needs long before they ask Him. Their coming to ask does not establish the willingness of their Father to give, it is the presupposition in which their coming is based!

#### *412 - "Pray then in this way:..."*

Jesus addressed them in the plural; his imperative "pray thus", is addressed to them all as a corporate unit. So, if we were to think of this prayer as a model we might ask, "is it a prayer they should all pray together, or is it plural in its address simply because of the corporate setting, both in the actual sense of them sitting before him and also as a group who have just been compared and contrasted with the Gentiles?" Or, "may the prayer be said by an individual, in the secrecy of his own room, and yet using the prayer as a single person praying something to God which 'we all' could say"?

Or is it a model at all? That is, was Jesus speaking this prayer to list the subject matter which he thought appropriate, and brief, because it was not a using of 'many words'. We may have to re-consider these questions in the light of the subject-matter, the order and the caveat he speaks of at the end [6.14-15].

One thing is for sure, it is an imperative – a command – that we should pray thus. It is not an option that we might pray, or as the mood might take us; it is required. This is at once an obligation as it is a blessing – for all of God's commands to us, when obeyed, lead to a blessing. Jesus taught that we would speak to God; that we would converse with Him, and that we should respond, we may answer back – in the right sense – to the wonderful gracious initiative that He has spoken to us in His Son. It is not an option that we would not respond.

But like all of God's commands, we are not left to ourselves to make it up as we see fit, we are given some instruction as to how to do it. For God does not leave us to risk our own thing here, He helps us to pray so that we may engage with Him. He provides for us the instruction of His only Son who, as truly God and truly man, also prayed to Him as a human worshipper. Jesus is also our High Priest, risen and ascended; He has established the access for us that we could not for ourselves.

#### 413 - "Our Father, ..."

To approach God and to address Him as "our Father" is to adopt the stance of children, of sons of God [Matthew 5.9,45]. This is no presumption; it is the place He has made for us through his Son; it is an access that has been opened to us at great cost. Also, to call Him 'Father' is to accept Jesus' help in approaching Him so as to relate to Him properly and speak appropriately.

And we would speak of "our" Father to Him, even if we were alone in private, because the expression "my Father" is reserved, as we see in our Lord's usage, for the relation of His only Son [7.21]. While it is the case that all our praying to the Father is "through Jesus Christ", it is also true that we worship Christ as Lord and our God. He is both the One *through* Whom we pray and the One *to* Whom we pray. So we would be right to not stray from the "our", even in our personal solitude.

This prayer expresses for us that God is "our" Father, in the corporate sense; and this is so long before I, myself, might address Him personally. So to call Him "our" Father, even in private prayer, reminds each of us that each of us is one of his new covenant people. This would run true for the "give us" and the "forgive us" and the "deliver us" of the later requests. Each of us would not want to be given 'my' bread if my brethren are not receiving also their daily bread, nor forgiven or delivered if they are not.

#### 414 - "...who is in heaven..." - then and now

When Matthew and the other Gospel authors wrote down the things as they happened, they were, of course, recording it after the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord. It is also after the sending of the Spirit. So, when we, as readers, approach this sermon on the mount, we are aware that the recorded teaching of Jesus to the disciples anticipated the full work that He accomplished. It was upon this basis that all of his teaching was given. It was because the whole of His word and works inhered in his Person.

We, the readers, have come to know God after the full matters of Jesus life have been accomplished. So we can think of his life as a block of past time - as the Gospel writers do. The disciples who listened to Him in the flesh did not have that perspective. They had the person of Jesus present to them, and it was in his person that the kingdom was centred, whether they were thinking past, present or future. If He told them to "pray this way" then they would, even if that meant that the basis for such praying might come 'later', so to speak.

[1] At the time Jesus delivered this teaching, the disciples could have used this prayer straight away. For they were being taught by their Rabbi a way to address God in heaven as their Father, as well as how and what to ask according to His will. They could address the Father even while they had the Son with them, on the earth. At that time, such a prayer was an address to the Father through the Son - Who was, from their immediate perspective, their Teacher/Rabbi and so their mediator. Mediator, in the sense that as their rabbi, they obeyed his word to them, took his teaching on board and spoke out to God as their 'father' on that basis.

No matter that 'later', they would deepen that sense of mediation to be aware of him as Son of God, and that after his finished work became known to them, would know that they ap-

proach God the Father through the Mediator – His Son, who they knew as their rabbi.

[2] After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus and His sending of the Holy Spirit we have the church of the new covenant made up of Jews and Gentiles. This prayer would be used in full awareness that the Father and the Son - their ascended Lord - are co-reigning in heaven; Satan has been driven out of heaven at the ascension [Revelation 12] and is now upon the earth as a defeated and desperate foe. In that sense the prayer, as we pray it now, is prayed to the Father in whose presence the Son now stands all victorious.

We then pray it to the Father from a position of His children, who are stationed on the earth as citizens in an alien country, into which our enemy has been thrown down. We are awaiting the arrival of the coming of Jesus to the earth again to truly restore all things as we understand them to have already been restored in heaven.

#### *415 - Addressing God while experiencing God.*

[1] In human life no one can get into someone else's skin. When we have a conversation with someone we know, as we address them we know them as someone 'outside' ourselves – objective to us. It is true, when remembering, we might have a mental picture of them that we keep, such as when they go away and are objectively, 'not there'. But in our thinking about them when they are present, - even if on the telephone, which is talk with someone without sight, but who is 'there' nevertheless - we speak to them in this objective way.

We address God as our Father as we stand upon the earth as a Person who is "in heaven". We do not see Him, for He is spirit – no one has ever seen God. He is not available to our sight, as, in the same way, when our Lord was taken up "into heaven", he also passed behind the clouds into the presence of God and so from the apostle's sight.

So, *in our thinking* about the Father, Whom we are addressing as "in heaven", we recognize that, we are to address God as Someone objective to us; nevertheless Jesus taught us to address our Father as not standing before us. He is not "here" in the sense that we might imagine ourselves as standing before Him present to us on the earth as we are to Him. That is not the way the Lord taught his disciples to think as they spoke to the Father in heaven; as if they were conjuring up his presence before them. The disciples were to speak to God objectively thinking of Father as truly God but as 'in heaven'.

[2] Now, just as no one can get into your skin and be who you are, nevertheless we must grapple with what Jesus taught a woman of Samaria, beside a well, during a conversation they had at midday [John 4.16-26]. During a discussion as to 'where' God was properly to be worshipped, Jesus made clear to her that the location was not important. He told her that "God is spirit" and that we must worship Him in spirit and truth.

Now, is it possible for God Himself, as Spirit, to enter our bodies in such a way that, while we do not become Him, nor He us, He can give us the subjective experience of His presence within us? The answer to that is surely "Yes". This is totally consistent with the promise of Ezekiel and Jeremiah concerning the coming of the new covenant to Israel and, through the

concentrating of Israel's promise onto the person of Jesus as their Messiah, to the Gentiles.

So, for us, as Christian readers of the Gospels, reading after the resurrection and ascension, *in our personal subjective experience*, we know that the Father and the Son have taken up residence in our persons. They have made their home in us by the coming of the Spirit. Each of us has become a dwelling place for God [John 14.2,17, 23, 25-6 and 16.13-15]. The power of this dwelling of God, the Spirit, in our persons is that it conveys to us the strengthening comfort of being known by God and that our communion with Him is in the Spirit. So we find the relationship we have with the Lord is, from His side, conveyed to us through His Spirit and, from our side, this is registered deep within our person and conscience. Indeed, in our praying, Paul teaches us, the Holy Spirit helps. As the Person of the Trinity resident with us on the earth, He empowers us to pray; and from His Communion within the Trinity our prayers are drawn up into the exchanges of the very life of God. This is the main drift of the teaching of Paul in Romans 8.26-27.

So, when we pray, we need to distinguish the internal subjective experience we have of God's communion with us from the external, speaking out to God, which is prayer. In speaking out to God, He is understood in our thinking as being outside of us, objective to us and in the teaching of Jesus as "in heaven". We would never pray to the God who is within us – even though we are in communion with Him. If we must use 'location language' we speak to Him as objective to us and in heaven. In this way our relationship with the One to Whom we speak is secure – because it is outside of ourselves, our faith is centred upon God the Father, who is "in heaven".

#### *416 - "hallowed be your Name, your kingdom come, your will be done"*

In the Old Testament, we have a record of the building of the Temple of the Lord by King Solomon, after his father David had assembled the necessary building materials for it. When he had finished it, he prayed a prayer to the Lord, in which he made clear that God was not located in, much less contained by, a building such as he had built. Solomon's way of expressing that truth was that to use an expression God had taught Israel to use; it was that God had caused "His Name to dwell there". It was a way of speaking how God truly heard the prayers uttered towards 'this place'; and yet in a way that guarded the praying people from a pagan or simplistic view that God, who is 'spirit', was "there" in a simple, locatable, or worse, an imagined, sense.

So here, in the Lord's prayer, we are speaking to God who is "in heaven" – and so not seen by us, for He is spirit. But in speaking of Him in this way, we, who are upon the earth, hallow – declare as a holy and sacred matter - His "name". That is, to be praying as earthlings, we must be aware that we hold sacred the Name of our God, using that expression as He taught us – and our Lord is now teaching the Jewish men [familiar with this way of speech] who were his disciples.

So, in hallowing his Name, we are to revere the one to Whom we pray as our Father. In this way we recognize Him to be a holy Father, a father in relation to his children, but yet a father who is to be respected, revered and treated as the arbiter of what we, as his children, are to

do in obedience to him. He is a Father with a moral bite! When we see it like that, we can see how obviously the next petitions follow.

For the disciples who first heard this, and began to pray it while Jesus was with them, their understanding of the coming of the kingdom would have centred in the Lord Himself, as present among them. We, who live this side of the resurrection and ascension of Jesus apply this in the same way, it centres for us also on Jesus and the kingdom of God He established and applied to the heavenly realms.

We are asking that his rule, or reign, will come on the earth as it has already done so in heaven. We long to see the ruling authority of our Father being expressed over all the earth in the way that it has come so totally in heaven at the ascension of the Lord [Revelation 12].

So, insofar that the ascension of the Lord Jesus brought this rectification into heavenly realms, and that Satan was cast out of heaven as a result, we find that we are praying for the 'coming again' of the Lord Jesus to the earth so that Father's will and kingdom will arrive here in its totality. Our prayer's to the Father about his rule can only be answered in the same way as it was for the early disciples who gathered around their Rabbi – it will be the Rabbi's work. For them, there and then, it was dependent on their rabbi's first, humble, mysterious and degrading coming; for us, here and now, it is dependent on the rabbi's glorious, open and exalted coming again.

#### *417 - "give us...forgive us...deliver us..."*

Meanwhile, we are praying people who are upon the earth as those who, like children asking our father for our lunch and money for the bus, are so dependent on Him as we live just one day at a time.

For our prayers about his kingdom and rule are looking forward to the absolute establishment and glory for Him – and so we live in between the times of the ascension of the lord [what He has already established] and the coming again [what He will establish and for which we have just prayed] of the Lord Jesus.

Living between the 'comings', we are God's children, whose share in the sufferings of our Lord are conforming us to his image. We are going to share his glory as we share in his sufferings. So in our dependency we ask for what Father thinks is enough for us each day, where we live on the earth.

The resurrected and exalted Lord has drawn our life into the heavenly realms with Him. So we are on the earth, participating in His risen life already; we know Him to be our righteousness and redemption. So, here, in between the 'comings', still embroiled with the sinful life of the earth, and still grappling with the lusts of the flesh that assail us, we are sinners and righteous both at once. Before the Lord, as we stand under his gaze, we hear and believe his word that He sees us as righteous in his sight because He sees us "in His Son".

We know that God is not counting our sins against us, and we are secure in the fullness of the satisfaction that Christ has brought to the Father's heart about that matter. His sacrifice has satisfied father's conscience about our rebellion. When we were once far off and enemies of

God yet, in his Beloved Son, we have been brought near. That we are praying at all – and that He commands us to pray – tells us that we are reconciled to Him through Christ.

So, in that safety, we are bold to openly confess all our sins without fear of his wrath, and we are bolder in our access to Him to ask Him to forgive us our sins. This we ask each day.

Given that the Lord has brought the rule of God into heaven, and Satan has been cast to the earth knowing that his time is short, we live under a foe who is stronger than us. He still oppresses those who are upon the earth, and especially God's little ones, such as we are. We, as long as we are here, are required, not to take enemy territory from the devil, but are required to stand, clothed in Christ, who is the armour of God to us. He is our safety, we creep into Him, keeping our eyes upon Him, trusting Him. So we are asking of our Father, who trusts us to stand, that He would deliver us from the evil one. We need that deliverance every day.

So these three petitions, provision, forgiveness and protection, of Christian people are asked of their Father. We are asking, in deep dependency, as creatures and dear children, for provision for ongoing bodily life. We are staying open to Father about our sin, and since He alone can inform us of what displeases Him via his Spirit within us, that He would forgive us. This maintains our relation is true to our earthly compromised existence. We are asking for his protection - to be delivered from our enemy, from whom we have been set free as to our persons; but who has become our mortal enemy because we are disciples of the Lord who conquered him. He has opportunity to oppress us in his desperation – our Father will deliver us.

#### *418 - For yours is the kingdom, the power and the glory forever*

We are asking this prayer of our Father because we long to see our Father's vindication to be established before all the peoples of the earth. And this is not just because we choose to exercise our will in this way; as if asking through some arbitrary whim of our own. It is our conviction, implanted in our rectified consciences that this is to be asked of our Father because it is right and true. It is our Father's will – and we ask Him to do his will because He has drawn us into His life.

That such a prayer could be prayed on the earth by human beings is the most powerful exercise of their shared life with the Father that there could be. Father and his children are declared, as we pray such a prayer, to be one.

#### *419 - For if you forgive others...your heavenly Father forgives you*

The "if"... "if" form of verses 14-15 indicates a logical sequence. [What the grammarians call a third class condition]. It describes a contingency where the forgiveness of the one implies the forgiveness of the other.

The forgiveness that we know from God our Father is to be expressed in the forgiveness of those who wrong us. As we take God at his word about our own standing before Him this is a simple act of faith, we trust his word to us. Then, as faith in God's word for ourselves begins

to work, it comes out in love towards our neighbour. For love of our neighbour is the product of our faith – “faith working through love.” Faith in God is a matter of our person, love is the work; it results from this faith working out towards our neighbour. In this way, the reality of our faith in God finds expression in our forgiveness to our neighbour.

Another way of stating this, often used, is to think of our relation to God as the vertical, and our relationships with our neighbour as the horizontal, human-human exchanges. What this is saying is that as God in his acceptance and grace forgives us freely [although not cheaply to Him!] so our reconciled relation to Him sets our love towards our neighbour to forgive him his wrongs against us. Everything that we are given in relation to the vertical relation, finds its expression in the horizontal relationships. This is succinctly said throughout the letter 1 John [2.9; 3.10-11, 16-18; 4.7,19-21].

### *420 - The persons for whom we really must intercede.*

#### **[1] Our enemies [Matthew 5.44-48]**

The reason we are able to pray for them is because we have been given the sonship of Jesus and so are children of our Father. He is Someone who loves His enemies and so we must also do that. It is simply the family way of life into which we have been admitted.

The reason we must pray for them is because, if they are persecuting us then they are displaying that they are in a place of rebellion towards Jesus in that they persecute His bride. When they do this we know something of their heart towards Him and so, if they are unable to procure the things of God for themselves by this manifest hard heartedness, then we must procure it for them by intercession with the Father.

#### **[2] For all men [1 Timothy 2.1-7]**

The reason we pray for all men is because it is the desire of our Saviour that all men may be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth. And this is based upon the fact that God is One, and that there is only one Mediator between God and man, and that is the Man Christ Jesus and this Man gave His life a ransom for all.

It is on the basis of the ransom given that we know the desire of the Lord Jesus - that He desires that all shall be saved. It is a good thing that, as a “kingdom of priests” [Revelation 1.6], that we should pray.

#### **[3] For kings and governments**

They need our prayers for they are instruments of God, who do not always appreciate that they are so.



## 7 - Sacraments

### 421 – Word and Sacrament

Boan, [2009], *Trusting*

We have seen how faith in God is evoked by the revelation of God. This revelation is made through the preaching of the apostles [Romans 10.8-17]. Further, we have traced in the Acts how the Word of God, under the effective administration of the Spirit of God went forth mightily.

As the Word of God is preached the treasure of Jesus Christ is set before us. When we trust that message we experience the reality of which the Word spoke. We would say that the Word has effectively conveyed to us, by the Spirit and through faith, what God had promised.

We have by the Lord's express command, the Sacraments of the Gospel - Baptism and the Lord's Supper. These are visible signs given to strengthen our faith to live in the present time, before the Lord returns. They are outward signs that inwardly assure us of the promises of God to us. A sacrament is God's witness to us of His favour towards us. Being provisions by God, they must be received by faith. The word or the sacrament is effective, not simply in the word heard, nor in the ritual itself, but because it is believed and trusted.

The sacraments make God's promises come alive for us because they present those promises in a concrete, visible form. We don't however, stop short at the visible form, but go on to discern the gracious actions of God of which they speak to faith. A sacrament is a "visible word" – to use Augustine's language. It expresses a mystery in a solid, tactile and visible way that is open to the senses. But it is not an idol, for that would be to confuse the sign with the thing signified. It is a gracious accommodation of God to allow us to be assured as we trust Him about His promises, in the first place, so that we may be assured and encouraged in our faith, in the second place.

"The sacraments have the same function as God's Word: they offer Christ to us, and in him, the treasures of grace. They are useless if not received in faith just as oil and wine, when poured out, will go to waste unless they are poured into an open vessel. If the vessel is not open, it will remain empty even of the liquid is poured on to it." (Calvin, 1986) page 256

### 422 - The primary mystery is the God-man

Underpinning the two sacraments of the Gospel - baptism and the Lord's Supper - is the Incarnation of the Lord and also his vicarious obedience for us; an obedience that He exercised towards the Father in the human nature that He took from us. It was this human nature that He sanctified in and through his self-offering of Himself to the Father.

So, to think about the sacraments we must consider the whole history of Jesus Christ, from

his birth to his resurrection and ascension. The events of his life give meaning to the reality and power of the sacraments.

This means that the primary mystery [Greek: μυστήριον; Latin: *sacramentum*] we are dealing with in the sacraments of the Gospel is Jesus Christ himself. For He is the incarnate reality of the Son of God, who has incorporated himself into our humanity and assimilated the people of God into Himself as his own Body.

Just as we have shared in this mystery that God has accomplished for us in Christ Jesus, so today we share in this same mystery in the Spirit - through the communion of the Holy Spirit.

So this means that we cannot approach baptism, or the Lord's Supper, as an event in itself; whether we are thinking of a ritual act, that has its meaning in its performance, or of an ethical act that has its meaning in the response men and women to what God has already done. These have their place in the sacraments, but baptism and the Lord's Supper are focussed beyond those rituals and ethical responses.

Baptism has its ultimate ground in the saving act of God embodied in Jesus Christ. So, when the church baptises in Jesus' name, it is Christ himself who is savingly at work, pouring out his Spirit upon us and drawing us within the orbit of his saving life, death and resurrection [Romans 6.3-5].

This saving activity can only take place because the saving act of God is identical with Jesus Christ. He is effective to save now because He is alive, risen from the dead and at work within the Church which is His body.

#### *423 – The equation of μυστήριον [Greek] with sacramentum [Latin].*

*“...the mystery of His will... [Ephesians 1.9; 3.2]*

*...riches of the glory of the mystery... [Colossians 1.26]*

*...the mystery of godliness... [1 Timothy 3.16]*

To translate the Greek word for 'mystery' Latin uses the word *sacramentum*. It is this Latin word which comes into English as 'sacrament' to express what that initial word μυστήριον meant. It originally signalled something which was there, but hidden. When the hidden thing became clear then it was said that the mystery was revealed or manifested.

When we speak of something as being used 'sacramentally', then we are using material things as a way to express, or signify, hidden spiritual realities. Paul does this when he: [a] speaks of the Church as the body of Christ or as the temple of the Holy Spirit [b] speaks of the rock that Moses struck in the wilderness, from which flowed the water for the people. He says that "that Rock was Christ".

## 8 - Baptism - its objective reality

### 424 - Some Greek words: *Baptismos & Baptisma*

*See Metzger [1969]p.43 and Moulton [1920]p.355*

We need to know something on the understanding of Greek nouns:

The endings [suffixes] attached to Greek nouns express a consistent meaning. So the ending –mos and –sis indicates a noun which speaks of the action. So baptismos from the verb baptizw means a “washing, a purification”. It states the action itself.

The suffix –ma, [μα] on a Greek noun, derived from its verb, usually indicates *the thing that results from the action* that the verb describes. So the word βαπτίσμα, also from the verb βαπτίζω, speaks of a baptism, the abiding fact resulting from the act of baptism. Similarly with the verb κηρύσσω, which means “I preach” or proclaim, from which we have the noun κερύγμα which states the thing [or person] proclaimed by a herald, so it refers to preaching in the sense of its content; what is preached.

In the New Testament the word the apostles use for baptism is not the regular Greek word for religious washing βαπτίσμος, but a different one. It is a word they coined just for their purpose. It stressed the objective basis of the action, βαπτίσμα. This tells us that the interest of the early church was not with the ritual but the events that stand behind it. It was in these events that the meaning of baptism - the result of these events - lay.

The word βαπτίσμα, like κερύγμα, has a double reference. First, they both refer to the mystery of *what is done in Christ* and really, that is their ultimate meaning. Second, however, and derived from the first, βαπτίσμα also refers to *an action that the church performs* in baptising.

We also notice in the New Testament that there is no description of the ritual act of baptism. It is not the rite of baptism they speak of, but of the objective reality found in Jesus Christ himself. βαπτίσμα, the noun, is taken to refer, not to the baptising of someone in the name of Christ, but to the baptism with which Jesus Christ was baptised for our sakes in the whole course of his redemptive life – from his birth to his resurrection – this is the one baptism which he continues to supply by his Spirit. When we are baptised what the Lord applies to us is the baptism into him. He, himself is both the material content of that baptism as well as its active agent.

So, while baptism is both the act of Christ and of the Church in his Name, it is to be understood finally, not in terms of what the Church does, but in terms of what God has done for us in Christ, does do, and will do for us in the Spirit.

Its meaning does not lie in the rite itself and its performance, nor even the attitude of the baptised and his obedience of faith. Indeed, the passive nature of baptism, that it is something we receive and do not administer to ourselves, directs us to find its meaning outside of our own responses and efforts.

## *425 - One baptism for Christ and the Christian*

### ***[1] The Baptism of Jesus by John***

Jesus submitted himself to the preparatory baptism of John. He was initiated into the messianic age of which John, with his ministry to Israel, stood on the brink.

This baptism of Jesus in water was the place from which the Christian church drew its ritual act. But it was transformed as Jesus submitted to it, then, as his public ministry unfolded, he filled it with the content of his own life and death for us.

The Gospel writers, since they use βαπτίσμα for John's baptism, obviously interpret it in the light of the inaugurating significance it was for Jesus' ministry. In humbling himself to receive the baptism unto repentance from John, Jesus identified himself with sinners in obedience to the Father's will that he should make 'righteousness' available for many people.

Significantly, the opening of the heavens and the affirming voice of the Father plus the descent of the Spirit had the effect of pointing back to his birth from above by the Spirit and pointing forward to his 'baptism' into death on the cross as He fulfilled the whole work of atoning redemption. It was the Father setting his seal upon Him as a sacrifice.

Jesus, during his public ministry, went on to interpret his whole life as the baptism with which he was baptised, seeing its completion in his suffering death. He spoke of his "baptism" and his "cup" to express the sacrificial nature of his life and death to which he had been consecrated in the river Jordan.

### ***[2] The descent of the Spirit upon Jesus***

At his baptism, Jesus was anointed as the King of a messianic kingdom. Without ceasing to be man, He was given divine authority. He immediately began to assert this authority as he came into Galilee preaching the kingdom of God [Mark 1.15] and also in the Spirit directing him to an encounter with the devil for our sakes. After his victory there he drove out demons from persons who had been taken captive by Satan [Mark 3].

This descent of the Spirit points forward – through John's prediction – that after his passion and exaltation to Pentecost, when Jesus would baptise in Holy Spirit. All this comes to pass, Jesus is found after his resurrection commissioning his disciples to go into all the world and baptise in his name.

### ***[3] The Baptism of Jesus was both in water and blood***

What happened to Jesus Christ himself, establishes the content of both his baptism and ours; it happened for our sakes. So that he was baptised into a baptism of repentance not for his own sake, but for ours. In Him, it was our humanity that was anointed by the Spirit and consecrated to the Father. He received the baptism - which included both his water baptism and his blood baptism of the cross - meant for sinners. In our human nature he received the divine judgment upon sin. In our human nature he made atonement and in our human nature he rose from the dead.

When he was born, died and rose again, it was in our human nature that he was born, died

and rose again. For Jesus, baptism meant that He was consecrated as Messiah, and that He, the righteous One, became one with us, taking upon himself our unrighteousness, that his righteousness might become ours.

For us, baptism means that we become one with Him. Sharing in his righteousness, we are sanctified in him as members of the messianic people of God, brought together and 'compacted' into one body in Christ. So we learn that there is one baptism, one Body through one Spirit [Ephesians 4.4-6].

Christ and His Church participate in the one baptism but in different ways: [a] Christ does so actively and vicariously as Redeemer. [b] The church does it passively and receptively as the redeemed Community. This is the

“...one baptism that is common to Christ and his Church which every act of baptism in the Church presupposes, and from which it derives its significance and efficacy.” Torrance [1975] p.87

The act of baptism is both the act of Christ and the act of the Church. While they may be distinguished they may not be separated; for their content, reality and power are the same. This means that the baptism of each individual can be seen as their initiation into their share of the baptism of Christ.

We can say about the baptised Christian that: [a] through Christ's birth they have a new birth and are members of a new humanity; [b] through his obedient life and death they are forgiven and clothed with a new righteousness; [c] through his resurrection and triumph over the powers of darkness they are freed from the dominion of evil; [d] through his ascension to the Father and the kingdom of heaven opened for them, they wait for his coming to fulfil the new creation; [e] through his sharing in the Spirit they are made members of his Body and admitted to the communion of the holy Trinity.

As the Church obeys Christ's command, whenever it baptises specific individuals in water in the name of the Father, Son and Spirit, it believes that Christ is present baptising with his Spirit. He is acknowledging and blessing the action of the Church as his own action – fulfilling in the person baptised what it is that He has already done for them in his finished work.

#### *4.26 – Baptism: what Christ has done now continues through the Spirit*

*“...We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don't you know that all of us who were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were therefore buried with Him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” [Romans 6.2b-4 NIV 1973]*

As we have seen in our study on the baptism of Christ, the baptism of Jesus was not only His standing with sinners in the Jordan River, it was also His death at Jerusalem. Nor does it surprise us that as Paul speaks of us being baptised into Christ he refers to us as being baptised into his death, in such a way that we can count ourselves as buried with Him in baptism.

*“There is one body and one Spirit - just as you were called to one hope when you were called - one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and*

*through all and in all.” [Ephesians 4.4-6 NIV1973]*

In Ephesians, Paul states that there is a one baptism and one body through one Spirit. Christ and his Church share in the one baptism in differing ways – Christ actively and vicariously as the Redeemer, the Church passively and receptively as the redeemed community.

So, baptism sets forth not what we do, nor primarily what the church does to us, but what God has already done in Christ and now continues to do in us and to us through His Spirit.

#### *427 – Baptism in Water, blood, Spirit and fire.*

[1] The Gospels present John the Baptist’s teaching in such a way that John’s baptism in water is connected with the announcement of a baptism in Holy Spirit which is going to come. The promise of the baptism in water, connected with the [coming] remission of sins is going to be fulfilled by a baptism in Spirit that the One who comes after John will bring.

[2] As we have seen above, the Lord’s baptism in water is accompanied by a baptism in Spirit in such a way that the two are connected together. In His vicarious humanity, He receives baptism in water as He stands with us sinners and He receives baptism in Spirit as well.

[3] The Acts of the Apostles records the baptism with the Spirit on the day of Pentecost which, after Peter’s speech, is followed by a baptism with water accompanied by a calling on the Name of the Lord. This demonstrates that the baptism in water and the baptism in Spirit are distinguished but actually are joined together; joined both in promise and fulfilment.

[4] In the Acts, we can see that the baptism of the Spirit may precede or follow the baptism with water. However, the central thing is the calling on the name of the Lord. For it is in the Lord’s life that these two baptisms with water and with Spirit are found together – they are joined, brought together, in Him.

[5] This joining together, under the one Christ being confessed and called upon, means that we must see these as not two baptisms but as one. It is as if, with a stereoscopic way of seeing, we understand the baptism of men and the baptism of God [Spirit] are brought together in the one person of Christ.

[6] Obviously the baptism in Spirit is of greater significance, for it is through that we are united to Christ. In the Acts of the Apostles the reception of the Spirit marked out who were Christians and who were not. The reception was the objective matter, grounded in Christ and what Christ Himself does for us. Further, the efficacy of baptism in the Name of Christ rests objectively on the grounds that He confesses before the face of His Father all those who confess Him before men. Those who die confessing Christ are baptised in Spirit - which is the reality - even if they had not been baptised with water - the sign of that reality.

[7] We have also noted that the “baptism” of His death, to which Christ set His face, as He journeyed to Jerusalem, was something which he said that His disciples would share as well. Such a baptism in His blood opens a third perspective upon the one Baptism. So far we have seen it in the double light of a saving baptism of water and Spirit. We may be baptised in water and Spirit but not necessarily in our own blood as the martyrs were - those who lost their

lives for Christ. But nevertheless we are caught up in His blood by which we are redeemed. Both sorts of baptism, in water and in blood, flow from the passion and cross of Christ. John's Gospel records that when He was pierced on the cross, water and blood flowed out from His side. The bestowal of the Spirit also flows out of the same passion, as the later teaching of that Gospel indicates.

[8] So we are brought to a three-fold perspective upon the one spiritual baptism; a baptism in water, a baptism in blood and a baptism in Spirit; but they are really one baptism in Christ Jesus. John summarises the teaching:

*"This is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood: and it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is the truth. For three bear witness, the Spirit, the water and the blood: and these three are one" [1 John 5.6].*

[9] John the baptiser spoke also of a baptism of fire. It is a reference to the burning bush within which the fire burned but did not consume it. So we think not of a fire of judgment but of cleansing.

The effect and range of baptism cannot be simply confined to the rite that the Church performs. We are not to dispense with baptism in water, for the Lord commanded it, but as far as our salvation is concerned we focus on the baptism with the Spirit which is given to us on the grounds of the death and suffering of the Lord. Apart from Christ, nothing is of any avail – not even confessing His Name – for, in the last analysis, it is not so much our confession of Christ that counts but His confession of us.

Torrance has a useful picture, he says that we may look at our baptism stereoscopically. What he means is that to understand our baptism we look *through* the rite of baptism in water that has been done upon us at the Lord's institution in the Triune Name of God. We also look *back* to the corporate baptism of the Church at Pentecost that stands behind the baptism of every individual. Then we look *through* that baptism back to the one vicarious baptism with which Christ was baptised – by water, spirit and later, blood – for that is the primary fact that gives baptism its meaning.

These three pictures combined give the full dimension of the meaning of baptism: the baptism of Jesus in water and the Spirit at Jordan, his baptism in blood on the cross, and the baptism of the Church in the Spirit at Pentecost. All this stands behind our own baptism: it is its ground, its reality and its power.

## 9 - What baptism signifies to us

### *428 - The subjective realities of our Baptism*

There are a number of themes associated with baptism in the New Testament. Some of these have the nature of cause and effect, others are themes which, whilst connected with baptism, develop different aspects of matters which follow from it. As we deal with these New Testament themes, we are drawn into the primary and central areas of Christian experience. Fundamentals are important, for they set the scene for later practice. So as we study each

aspect here, check out your own experience.

The first thing, which is so important in studying these themes, is to ascertain what is the meaning of baptism as the New Testament describes it. What we are seeking here is the meaning God wants to reveal to us. What baptism means for each of us is not set by us - it is something which is worked in us as God tells us what to accept as its meaning for our own experience. We are not dealing with the meaning for me. Our own subjective experience of a particular baptism is not its meaning necessarily - rather, we need always to let God teach us what He says it means.

Our experience of God does matter! But our reported experience is not our basis for the meaning of what happened - for that, we must go to the Scriptures.

### *429- The Remission of sins and Cleansing from sin.*

We find in the description of John's baptism, that it was a baptism "unto the remission of sins" (Mark 1.4, Luke 3.3). In this sense, it looked forward to the time when there was a basis for the remission (forgiveness) of sins. Christian baptism effectually signs the remission of sins. (Acts 2.38, Luke 24.4.) It is significant that the words of Ananias to Saul of Tarsus were, as Paul relates them,

*"Arise, and be baptised, and wash away your sins, calling on His name." (Acts 22.16).*

Forgiveness of sins was the constant message which was preached in reference to Jesus (Acts 10.43, 13.38, Hebrews 10.22).

Paul, after mentioning the past position of the Corinthian believers, can say of them, "but you were washed, but you were sanctified..." (1 Corinthians 6.11). And speaking of the whole church, Paul can say that as Jesus loved and died for the church, His bride, that He, "loved the Church, and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word..." (Eph. 5.25-26).

*Consider:*

- 1. Make certain, that as you stand as a baptised person, that you recognise your sins have been remitted. Your former rebellion towards God has been forgiven. In respect of the past, you stand in a right relationship with God. All this is a work of Jesus done as He took up the mission His baptism meant for our sakes. Each of us may take our baptism in water as the beginning of our personal experience of that work of Jesus for us.*
- 2. Distinguish the difference between the basis upon which you have any forgiveness from God (the death of Christ) and the means whereby that forgiveness is made a real in your experience (baptism in water).*
- 3. If you are not baptised, and you are a believer in Jesus Christ, acknowledging Him to be the Jewish Messiah, then be baptised - it is right to do so, and an assurance of sins forgiven should follow.*



### 430 - Admission to the Church

Just as the circumcision of the little Jewish boy on the eighth day was the sign of his entry into the covenant people of God, so baptism is the instrument for entry into the church of God. Just as it was for anyone who submits to circumcision: he had new duties, privileges and was within the covenant people, so it is for the recipient of baptism. When we say that a person is baptised, we mean that they have been admitted to the Christian fellowship of believers.

*"So then, those who had received his word were baptised: and there were added that day about three thousand souls" (Acts 2.41).*

And Paul in 1 Cor. 12.13 can state that "for by one Spirit we were all baptised into one body..." Here we learn that the Holy Spirit is operative in baptism, bringing us into the body of Christ. As we have seen above, baptism by the Spirit and baptism in water are two sides of the one baptism.

### 431 -Regeneration, The New Birth From Above

Two important texts of the New Testament are used to clarify this understanding of the meaning of baptism. Paul, as is recorded in Titus 3.5, after recounting the past lives of the common lot of Christians, then makes reference to the fact that God has saved us,

*"not on the basis of deeds which are done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour..." [Titus 3.5]*

The second is the statement made by Jesus to Nicodemus in John 3.3,5. About this section we note the following matters:

[a] Nicodemus came saying what it is that he knew; and by implication, what he knew of his own ability.

[b] Jesus replied that unless one is born again (from above) one cannot see the kingdom of God. He pointed out to Nicodemus what was the miracle of God which enabled a man to see what Nicodemus claimed to have seen.

[c] Nicodemus did not understand (a function of his mind), for his questions were those of method - "How.. ?

[d] Up to this point, the discussion had turned on revelation i.e. how a man may see what by nature he cannot. At verse 5, Jesus moved from "born again"... "see" to "born of water and Spirit"... "enter" and at the same time introduced the distinction that what is born is the spirit of the man. It is not a fleshy transaction.

[e] Further, the operation of the Holy Spirit was to give new birth to a man's spirit. This was what is meant by "born again". This was further amplified by verse 8, where the principle of not seeing the thing re-born (the spirit of the man) but the changed life of the man (as one does not see the wind, but one can see the effects of its presence) testified to the changed situation.

In this interchange with Nicodemus, it is the expression “unless one is born of water and the Spirit” which is significant for our discussion. What is clear is that baptism, from the two texts that we have looked at speak of regeneration, and this is a work of the Spirit of God.

[f] The expression, “of water and Spirit” is one action. The grammar expresses this – as we have seen above in the section about water, blood, Spirit and fire.

### *432 - The Gift of The Holy Spirit Himself*

*Boan,[1976], The Gift, the Fruit and the Gifts*

When we considered the differences between the baptism of John and that of Christian baptism, we saw that the baptizing function of Jesus was to baptise in the Holy Spirit. The baptism which Jesus sent on His 120 followers gathered in Jerusalem to wait for the power from on high, was the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

Further, when Peter began to preach he asked that the Jews repent and be baptised and...“you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit”. That this expression means the Holy Spirit Himself is signified by the word for gift [δωρεά]). That is, there is only one gift - the Spirit Himself - not to be confused with those gifts [χαρίσματα] which He later distributed to the church.

Indeed, when preaching in the house of Cornelius the same Peter, having seen that the Holy Spirit had already fallen upon them, drew the conclusion that it would be right to baptise them in water. He must have reasoned that since the reality had manifestly come, the sign of that reality was demanded; baptism in water should follow.

Each Christian is seen by Paul as inhabited by the Holy Spirit, his body is a temple of the Holy Spirit [1 Cor. 3.16,6.19] and all were made to drink of the One Spirit [Boan, 2013, Being #267]1 Corinthians 12.13].

*Consider:*

*1. See yourself as indwelt by the Holy Spirit. Recognise that He Himself has taken up residence within you and that “greater is the One in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4.4)*

*2. Recognise that the Holy Spirit has a witness with your spirit that you are a child of God (Romans 8.16) Assurance then, is a function of knowing something in your spirit. It is a fruit of the meeting of your spirit and the Holy Spirit. Baptism, is a sign of both regeneration and the reception of the Holy Spirit and it effectually ministers to us the assurance of salvation.*

### *433 - That We are Children of God*

*Galatians 3.26-27,29*

Our baptism is for us an effectual sign of being in Christ - this is what it mysteriously conveys to us. It leaves us assured as to who we are. Such an assurance is a result which often comes to people after they are baptised. Indeed, one of the first questions I often ask a person, who lacks assurance that they belong to Christ, is whether they have repented of their sins and trusted Christ. But then I go on to ask them are they baptised? The pastoral problem gives

us the clue, for assurance should follow baptism.

Galatians 3.26-27,29 records that;

"...as many of you who were baptised into Christ have put on Christ" and then in the 29th verse can declare that we belong to Christ.

### *434 - That We are United With Christ, We are "In Christ"*

*Romans 5.12-21; 6.1-11*

The classic place where we see this worked out is in Romans 5.12-21 and 6.1-11. The controlling idea is what it means to be "in Christ".

In Romans 5,12-21 we notice the following things:

[a] There are two men, Adam and Christ, who are both significant for the whole of mankind. This is because they are strategic, one as to his placing in time, the other as to his Person.

[b] Humankind is viewed as either being "in Adam" or as being "in Christ" (1 Corinthians 15.22). This is because both of these men as single persons have implications for the "many". As representative men, Paul sets out to compare and contrast them with one another.

[c] The contrasts are: Adam takes us as our head into a reign of death; Christ a reign of life. Adam takes us into condemnation and judgment: Christ to justification and a re-instatement as God's sons. Adam works through disobedience, Christ through obedience.

[d] In Romans 6.1-11, Paul's main idea is that through baptism, a participation - a sharing - in the death, burial and resurrection of Christ is achieved, within the context of our experience. In this way, baptism, as to its meaning, is a baptism into Christ Jesus and this, in Paul's immediate context, means a sharing in Christ's death.

[e] If we are united with Him in death and burial through baptism, then it follows that we also have a new life which is akin to being united with Him in His resurrection life. The old man, who merited wrath and damnation, has been crucified with Christ [Romans 6.6, Galatians 2.20].

In another place Paul can say that

*"if any man be in Christ he is a new creature: old things have passed away, all things have become new" [2 Corinthians 5.17].*

Another image is that of "putting on" Christ

*"as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ" [Galatians 3.27].*

Still yet another image is that we have become members of Christ's body, being united to Christ spirit-to-Spirit [1 Corinthians 6.17].

These changes are described as decisive things that took place in the past [Romans 6 and Colossians 2.12,20; 3.1]. The reference is to a definite occasion which initially took place in the life, death, burial and resurrection of Christ. So our baptism signifies - means - this vital union with Christ; a matter taken up with different imagery by the section, John 15.1-7.

Consider:

1. *Make a study of this central area of union with Christ.*
2. *Stand firmly on this union as something which your baptism signifies effectually to you.*

### *435 - Baptism Signifies Salvation*

1 Peter 3.4,21.

By now, we have come to see that the entry point, or the initiation, really signifies the whole. The meaning of baptism is that it will signify to us salvation of our whole person.

Mark 16.16 "he that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved." Those who were described as being added to the Church were described as those "being saved" (Acts 2.47, 16.30, 1 Peter 1.3,4, 21).

### *436 - The Gifts of Repentance and Faith are associated with Baptism*

Boan, 2013, Responding

In the command of the Lord, and at the first instance of the baptism which took place on the day of Pentecost the two responses to the Gospel asked of persons by the apostles are repentance and faith. Of the two, we find that faith is most often featured.

So for example with Mark 16.16..."he that believes and is baptised shall be saved..." This is also the case with the Philippian jailor (Acts 16.31-33); the Samaritans (Acts 8.12); Cornelius and his house (Acts 10.43-45) and of Crispus and his house and other Corinthians (Acts 18.8). Not a great amount of instruction and preparation was given or required. It was the essence of baptism that it was the sign of what God was already doing within a person - hence the baptism was administered as it was recognised that God was at work in people.

## **10- The Lord's Supper: [1] Old Testament**

### *437 – Remember the past so as to live today: to "keep the feast"*

Psalm 103.1

#### [1] Circumcision

When God had acted in Israel's salvation, He often instructed them to set up a sign of the event so that they would not forget what had been done for them. So, as Abraham believed God when God gave His covenant to him, there was a sign of the covenant brought to bear upon his body; circumcision was the "seal" of the covenant people. It was an outward, visible sign of the righteousness he had received as he trusted God's covenant of grace [Romans 4.11].

#### [2] Remembering

Israel was advised by God that whenever they set up a memorial sign, then the new generation would enquire, "What do these things mean?" In response to that question, the older

generation was to pass on the tradition; they were to re-tell the event. This was the intention of the memorial, to make certain that Israel did not forget.

Scripture constantly warns Israel of the danger of “forgetting” what God in His grace and mercy had done for them [Psalm 103.1]. By “forget”, we do not simply refer to the forgetfulness of the human mind, in the sense of some personal amnesia. It refers to a collective matter for Israel as a whole. It was *a call to continue to live in the grace of the past events that God had established in His relationship with them.*

### *438 - Salvation through Judgment*

*Exodus 11*

Throughout the rescue of the Hebrews from their slavery to the Egyptians, Moses had been elevated in the sight of the average Egyptian, throughout the course of this encounter. So much so, that, when asked, the Egyptians gave of their wealth to the Hebrews so that they might leave. This was truly a plundering of their country [Exodus 12.35-36]. Yet, the Egyptians were willing for the plunder to happen, since their leader had clashed with Another, who was stronger.

The Egyptians learned through their Pharaoh that there was an insane force which would not submit [11.9-10] to the God of the Hebrews. It was a leadership by a rebel over the peoples of the world which would go to its own destruction in pursuit of its exercise of power. It would not yield its will - unlike the people of Egypt, Pharaoh would not let them go.

By the time the plagues had ended, the revelation to the people was clear but not to the Leader who holds power over them. This shows that the target of redemption was people, those made in the image of God - they were susceptible to his revelation, even if held under the bondage of their leader.

The Lord gave the Hebrews favour in the sight of the Egyptian people [Exodus 11.3] and, while they understood [11.8], they were not free to go. One day, there would come a redemption that would include them. And it would lead not to the release from a man who mastered them, but from a rebel cherub who enslaved them - Messiah would do it, and all the earth would see it, publicly done, and on a cross.

### *439 - The Lord's Passover*

*Exodus 12*

So significant was the Passover that it was instituted as the beginning of the Hebrew year [12.2]. Whatever a past year held in the memory of the people, this repetitive event would recall their salvation and so establish each new year as hopeful.

The passover lamb was separated for a holy, exclusive purpose - it was to be eaten for a particular purpose that God would show. Its meaning was centrally located in that it was something normally eaten, and that it was flesh and blood.

Provision was made so that each person should have a full share in the lamb. This was a matter of corporate eating, in which the whole people participated, individually and fully - no

one missed out; each was prepared for and each must be satisfied by what he had eaten.

The lamb chosen was to be unblemished; a clear sign that it was required by the Lord for a holy, separated purpose [12.5]. Its selection was left to those who had nurtured it for a year among their flock; they selected it willingly, releasing it to the Lord's purpose.

It was to be killed at twilight and in such a way that its blood was released from its flesh and immediately painted on the sides and lintels of the doorway of the house, visible to a person passing outside [12.6-7]. From the point of view of the eater of the lamb, its blood was shed in its death first, and then its flesh was eaten.

Its blood, visible outside the house, was for the Lord to see and recognise the obedience of faith in His word of those in the house; that they were using His provision. Inside the house, the flesh was eaten, as all food is, as a provision of life and strength to go forth from the meal in the power of what was supplied.

They were to put the blood on the door-posts and eat the flesh on the same night the judgment was enacted [12.7-8]. In this way, they drew from the Lamb covering blood which preserved their life in the midst of judgment. And they ate of its flesh which gave them life to go forth to serve the Lord in the wilderness.

The lamb was not to be boiled or eaten raw. It was to be the subject of fire; to be roasted quickly and eaten with bread. The two things eaten are flesh and bread. The bread was holy in its function as well; in that it was to be prepared quickly, with no time allowed for any yeast taking time to rise. So, its absence of yeast – unleavened bread – came to express its unmixed, holy nature.

The taste of this meal was not sweet, the lamb is accompanied by bitterness, provided by herbs that accompanied its eating. The herbs indicated that there is something bitter - the whole context of judgment - about this meal which was not found in the lamb itself but in the accompanying setting of the meal.

It was to be entirely consumed by the eaters, for its purpose was entirely reserved for this.

It was to be eaten as the people were standing up - it is a meal not enjoyed for itself but for the purpose for which it was ingested. It was eaten quickly, with an eye to what was happening all around on that night. It was eaten with everyone dressed for action, ready for walking away from an old life, for leaving of slavery, for escaping an enemy, for service to the Lord. It was eaten quickly, as those eat who were not savouring a nice meal for itself, but were getting it into their stomach so as to walk in the strength of it for as far as this "salvation night" would take them [Exodus 12.11].

The reason for treating the roasted lamb this way was because it is the Lord's Passover. The text is stated in Exodus 12.11-12 in such a way as we could attribute the Passover to the lamb eaten or to the event of the wrath of God which He was executing that night. So, we see that 12.11 speaks of the lamb eaten as the Passover; whereas 12.12 as the act of the judgment of God upon Egypt as the Passover. And in 12.13 we have what the Passover is meaning for the Hebrews who are being saved.

For it is both - it is salvation through judgment. 12.12 speaks of what it means for the Lord to pass over the land - for the Egyptians it was a passing "through" their land, it was a destruction - a smiting of the Egyptians [12.23]. 12.13 indicates what it meant for the Hebrews - it was that the Lord saw the blood; and because it was there for Him to see then He "passed over" them, so that no plague fell on them [12.23]. The blood He had provided for them through the lamb, as they trusted His word and obeyed it, turned the wrath of God away from them.

They Hebrews were to observe this memorial permanently, [12.14] in the promised land which they were to go [12.25]. That is, their dwelling in the land was to be constantly controlled by the memory of how they had come to be there - by salvation through judgment. A judgment in which their salvation was effected through the slaying of a lamb, whose blood shielded them from the wrath of God and whose flesh was the life strength in which they walked to freedom from slavery into the freedom to serve God in a temporary wilderness place and then finally in a land of their own.

#### *440 - Spiritual food in the wilderness: manna – bread from heaven.*

*Exodus 16*

On the 15th day of the second month since the Hebrews' departure from Egypt, the people grumbled against Moses and Aaron, but really it was against the Lord Himself [Exodus 16.2,7-8]. They had forgotten that "dying by the Lord's hand in Egypt" was to have come under his wrath as a judgment, which they had already been saved from.

What they focussed on, in their immediate hunger was a comparison with their current position as saved people in the desert. They saw that they had food to eat when they were in slavery. And they preferred the satisfaction of their immediate needs as a possible exchange with their salvation. This was a problem of their flesh.

The Lord made a promise to Moses and Aaron that He would rain bread from heaven for them [Exodus 16.4-5]. This bread from heaven: [a] must be gathered everyday; [b] in needing to be gathered daily would constitute a test for them; [c] would display that God had put into their hearts that they must daily feed on what He provided. This would demonstrate that they were to walk as He instructed. It would show His Lordship over them; [d] should not be gathered on the Sabbath. Rather, they were to find that they could gather enough for two days.

Moses' response made clear that the Lord did not want them desiring Egypt on the basis of hunger. At evening they would know that the Lord had brought them out of Egypt for He would provide for them there in the wilderness. The principle here is that God's provision for us once He has saved us is itself a corrective to us ever wanting to return to slavery because of the desires of our flesh.

## 11 - The Lord's Supper: [2] New Testament

### *441 – The Gospels' context for approaching death of Jesus.*

(Taylor, 1959) Part 2

What the Lord said at the Last Supper, falls into the context of the record of His suffering and death. In Matthew and Mark the recorded sayings of Jesus concerning His death are as follows

[1] The Bridegroom would one day be removed [Mark 2.19-20; Matthew 9.15; Luke 5.34ff]

Jesus was not opposing the practice of fasting; what He was objecting to is fasting while the Bridegroom was with them. The disciples, as they were living then in company with Christ Himself, would need to understand that the absence of the Bridegroom would usher in a sober change to the joy of the feast they were currently engaged in. For Him to be taken away would mean that the mood of the current feast would change to one of sorrow. Here is clear evidence that, even in the early days of His Galilean ministry, the Lord anticipated His death and the sorrow that would be generated in the disciples at His separation from them.

[2] The rejection of the Son of man [Mark 8.31,931,1033ff]

The happenings that Jesus said must come upon the Son of Man were: condemnation, surrender to the Gentiles, mocking, spitting, scourging, killing, and resurrection. While the "taking away" of the Bridegroom was contemplated as the work of others, here Jesus indicates that this series of events that He prophesies, is no arbitrary fate, but is His essential mission.

Jesus indicated that this mission unveiled a new understanding of the work of the Son of man. The themes of rule and dominion, so evident in Daniel 7.14, are now supplemented by the rejection and suffering that are assigned to Him [Daniel 7.21,25] as a time of conflict is envisaged. Now the sober patterns of Isaiah 53 are imminent. Jesus saw His death not as a catastrophe, but as an essential element in His Messiahship. He identifies Himself as the Son of Man and the Servant of Isaiah.

[3] Descending the Mount of Transfiguration [Mark 9.12b; Matthew 17.12b]

As we have seen above, this passage speaks of the sufferings of the Son of Man, but with an explicit reference to something being written of it. But it is asked as a question. The scribes, report the disciples, indicate that Elijah will come before the parousia. Jesus does not dispute that interpretation of Malachi 4.5ff; what He does not accept is that this is the only occurrence of that, but that also it is not the most important event to precede the Parousia.

He asks the counter-question "how is it written of the Son of Man, that he should suffer many things and be treated with contempt?" The fact is that it is not written anywhere; the point He is making is a back-reference to the teaching on Isaiah 53 He had already stated. He is protesting that they haven't yet got it.

As previously, He identifies the Son of Man and the Servant of Isaiah; so now He identifies John the Baptist and Elijah. But He restricts the parallelism to suffering, since the Old Testa-



ment does not speak of the martyrdom of Elijah; what is common to both is “suffering” and being “treated with contempt”.

[4] The “Cup” and the “Baptism” [Mark 10.38; Matthew 20.22]

The Old Testament refers to the “cup” as describing an experience of suffering [Psalm 75.8; Isaiah 51.17ff; Jeremiah 49.12; Lamentations 4.21; Ezekiel 23.31ff]. Baptism is not used in that way but the idea of water being the instrument of overwhelming calamity occurs [Psalm 42.7; 69.2,15; Isaiah 43.2]. These metaphors speak of Jesus’ sufferings, not just simply their climax in His death. He is already drinking the cup and there is an overwhelming experience awaiting Him.

He asks if John and James are able to drink this cup, and promises that, indeed, they will do so. They will parallel His own experience.

[5] The “Ransom” [Mark 10.45; Matthew 20.28]

Picks up the ideas of the Servant of Isaiah 53, particularly 53.11,12a and 12c. Here, the idea of “to give himself” is uppermost and the concept of ransom [Psalm 49.7ff], as associated with the impact on “many” is developed from the Servant. The Servant does not come to be served, but to give His life [luftron ajnti; pollwn] a ransom instead of [in the place of] many.

[6] Parable of the Vineyard [Mark 12.1-12; Matthew 21.33-45; Luke 20.9-19]

“beloved son...let us kill Him and seize his inheritance...took him and killed him...”

Based on the allegory of the vineyard in Isaiah 5.1ff, this parable is not a parable but an allegory itself, including a direct allusion to the death of Christ. The allegory is limited to the persons mentioned: the lord of the vineyard is God; the husbandmen are Jewish leaders; the servants are the prophets; the heir is Jesus. The hedge, pit, winepress, tower and far country are not developed at all.

It does not explain Jesus’ death. What it does show us is His view of Himself as superior to the prophets, His unique relation of Sonship to the Father, the conviction that He has been sent by God as the last envoy to Israel, and that rejection and death await Him.

[7] The anticipated anointing for burial. [Mark 14.8; Matthew 26.12]

Historically this is important. Jesus does recognise the woman’s reverence of His person, but He relates it to His impending death, showing that this was central to His mind at this point.

[8] The Betrayal prophesied [Mark 14.17-21]

Jesus’ identification of the Son of Man with the Servant of Isaiah is clearly evident here. The betrayal is one element of His sufferings. Jesus does not however, simply treat His death as a result of Judas’ betrayal; He understands that it is in the purposes of God. So the “Woe”, spoken in respect of Judas, does not express a curse so much as His deep sadness. And yet, even while Judas’ responsibility is noted, the destiny working out for Jesus is clearly acknowledged.

[9] The Last Supper [Mark 14.22-25; Matthew 26.26-29; Luke 22.14-20; 1 Corinthians 11.23-25]

See below.

[10] The two Old Testament quotations: The Stone and the Shepherd [Mark 12.10ff and Mark 14.27]

[a] The Stone

The quotation is from Psalm 118.22ff. It refers to Israel as despised among the nations, but with a pre-eminent future. It is a favourite quotation of the New Testament writers [Acts 4.11; Ephesians 2.20 and 1 Peter 2.4-8]. Here Jesus expressed His acceptance of the rejection that He understood as his destined role. He understands this as temporary, it will be followed by an eminent position.

[b] The Shepherd

The quotation is from Zechariah 13.7, but instead of the future, "I will smite..." the LXX read the imperative, "Smite the shepherd...". Jesus is foreseeing the effect, after his crucifixion, on the disciples, while he understands them as His flock. This is all in the plan and destiny of God.

### *442 - What the Lord did and said at the Last Supper*

*Mark 14.22-25; Matthew 26.26-29; Luke 22.14-20; 1 Corinthians 11.23-25*

The Synoptic Gospels look on the Supper as the Passover meal; John's Gospel presents it as eaten before the Passover. Whichever it is, Paschal ideas were central to Jesus' thinking at this time. The sayings of Jesus here relate to the [a] the bread, [b] to the wine, and [c] to the future Messianic feast.

**[1] The Bread** – "Take you [plural]; this is my body". Matthew has "take eat", Paul adds "which is for you". Luke adds "which is given for you".

The words are simply a record of His actions; 'As they were eating, he took bread, and when he blessed, he broke it, and gave to them, and said...'.

Old Testament prophets often expressed their words with accompanying actions. Isaiah walked barefoot and naked, and he named his children as his message for the time [Isaiah 20.2, 8.3]. Jeremiah broke a potters vessel and wore a yoke [Jeremiah 19.10; 28.10]. In the New Testament Agabus tied his feet and hands with Paul's girdle [Acts 21.11].

Like the prophets of old who dramatised their words, Jesus' actions at the supper are of the same style. He intended them to see that as the loaf was broken, so His body would soon be broken. It was not so much a symbolic action as an effective representation of what He depicted. His action was not simply a prophecy of His impending death but He was inviting them to participate, to have a share, in what was represented.

The use of the word "body" implies the offering of a sacrifice. Whatever was represented in the breaking of His body, whatever the power of God which was released there, they were being invited to share in the power of the sacrifice of a broken Christ.

"Take and eat..." The disciples were asked to receive the broken bread in the sense His act and

word mean. Eating is a physical action; but on the spiritual side it means to the appropriation of life. That Jesus directed them to “eat” implied that it is more than a symbol. The bread was intended by Jesus, to be the means whereby they participate in the power of His surrendered life. While materially the bread was unchanged, it was invested with this meaning and power by Jesus acts and words. As common bread it was the vehicle of His own life and the medium through which they were to participate in that life.

It suggests that Jesus looked on His own suffering and death as a sacrificial offering of Himself for men and women.

“...the saying throws light upon the way in which He interpreted His self-offering. In bidding His disciples to receive the broken bread, which He had interpreted as His ‘body’, Jesus revealed that He did not look upon His sacrifice as a thing apart from men, to be accepted passively as one recognizes an external event. On the contrary, He thought of it as standing in the closest relation to human need, as an experience to be shared and appropriated; and, as a realist, he provided a rite whereby fellowship in His sufferings, and participation in the hallowing power of His sacrifice, might be assured.” (Taylor, 1937,1959) page 125

### **[2] The wine**

Mark interprets the wine as Christ’s “blood of the covenant” shed for many. This is based upon Exodus 24.8 and Isaiah 53.12. Paul’s expression “This cup is the new covenant in my blood” rests on Jeremiah 31.31 and the ideas contained in Exodus 24.1-13.

Notice here that Jesus does not invite His disciples to drink blood, or even to drink blood symbolically, but to drink wine as representing His life poured out for many.

[a] Exodus 24.11 distinguishes between the blood sprinkled on the altar and the blood sprinkled on the people. The first is a symbol of the people’s obedience, confirmed by words which promise obedience. The latter is dedicated blood, which the Lord has accepted and the sprinkling of the people means that they share in the blessings and powers which it represents and conveys – this is the blood that is called the “blood of the covenant”.

[b] it is said to be “my” blood of the covenant. As the blood of the covenant was applied formerly in blessing the people so now, Jesus personalised it, to say that this life which is surrendered to God and accepted by Him, is offered to, and made available for blessing of His people. And since it is offered to be drunk, then it is more than a symbol of itself, it is an offer to appropriate and so to take the share of the blessing. The wine is not transformed into blood; it is the vehicle of the life released for many in the shedding of blood.

### **[3] The future Messianic meal**

At this Supper He engaged in with the disciples, Jesus looked beyond to the consummation of the Kingdom when He would drink wine at the Messianic banquet. This great feast harks back to Isaiah 32.12 and Habakkuk 3.17 and Numbers 6.4. Jesus draws attention to this a strong eschatological theme.

The expression "I will no more drink ...until..." implies that Jesus drank along with them in this supper. If that is the case, the meaning for Him was different to that for the disciples. For them, the drinking of the cup foreshadowed His approaching death and meant they are appropriating this matter to themselves. For Him, it is a drinking which looks forward to the joys of the Kingdom coming, and the drinking that will take place then.

So Jesus was emphasising re-union, a theme uppermost in Luke's account. And it is emphasised in Paul's statement,

*"...as often as you eat this bread, and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes..."* [1 Corinthians 11.26]

In Jesus' mind, His death was a necessary step to the establishment of the Kingdom of God. It is the supper which is the occasion for Him to express His mind about this – it is a hopeful, joyful matter in such a sombre setting.

### *443 - Participation: Taking into oneself the Son's life by his death.*

*John 6.*

1. We have seen from Passover and also from the Bread - manna - from heaven that in both cases there was an eating of flesh and bread [Exodus 12 and 16].

In the Passover the emphasis fell on the flesh that was eaten and the unleavened bread that accompanied the meal. In the report of the Manna from heaven the emphasis was on the bread itself and on the flesh of the quails only incidentally. The use of bird-flesh separates our thinking from the Passover Lamb so that we concentrate on the bread while at the same time linking together flesh and bread.

2. In John 6.1-14 we have a record of a sign Jesus performed [6.14]. Significantly, John, the Gospel writer, recorded it was the time for Passover [6.4] and Jesus' premeditated intention to perform the sign was evident in his testing of Philip [6.5-7]. The disciples were drawn into this event as well - they were with Him on the mountain [6.3] and the provision for the crowd was directed to them [6.5] and they shared in the gathering up what was left over [6.12-13] when all had eaten to their fill.

The use of the two fish accompanying the five barley loaves also linked together the flesh and bread, but in such a way as to make clear that the emphasis here fell on to the Bread. This is clarified by saying that the people had a satisfying amount of fish [6.11] but the bread was in excess and abundant in its supply. The focus falls on the bread.

All were filled [6.12] and the Lord was clear that nothing should be lost of the bread after it had been used for its purpose. It was dedicated bread to the singular use for which it was given - just as we have found for the Passover lamb which was eaten and as we saw confirmed in the inability to preserve the manna beyond the day of eating.

3. The repetition of the Lord "giving thanks" [6.11,23] would make clear to Christian readers that there was a link to the Lord's Supper, the eucharist - the thanksgiving.

4. The people tried to make Jesus King by force of their own edict, but He eluded them, with-

drawing to a place alone. The disciples set out across the lake. It became dark and dangerous [6.17-19] and they were afraid when they saw Him walking on the sea; so obviously in control over those elements which were dangerous to them. They welcomed Him into their boat and they arrived at their destination. They experienced his presence as salvation from their danger.

5. The multitude were really puzzled as to how Jesus arrived there, knowing he didn't go with his disciples, and knowing it was a rough night. The multitude didn't experience him as the disciples had, but were puzzled.

6. Jesus referred them to the miracle of the loaves and fishes, but indicated that they had filled their bellies but didn't discern the meaning of the sign that it was [6.26].

He said that they were not to work for the food which perishes. Does He mean the manna, which went foul if you tried to store it up? Or everyday food which goes off when you store it? Or food that is destroyed in the eating? Either way, the contrast was with food that endured to eternal life which came from the Son of Man. [6.27]

7. The multitude did not follow up the issue of the bread itself, but latched on to the matter of "working"; such as is the preoccupation of the men who do not know grace. [6.28] Jesus' answer to them was to believe on the Son of Man. They looked for Him to do a work as a sign so that they might believe Him. To impress upon Him their need for a sign they mentioned that their forefathers had eaten bread in the wilderness and that this bread had been given to them from heaven.

8. Jesus, taking up that reference, made it clear that; [a] Moses did not give them the bread from heaven but God, His Father, gives the true bread. [b] This bread of heaven - the bread of God [6.33] - comes down out of heaven and gives life - the life of God - to the world. Further, this bread is not something which is a sign within Israel, as the manna was; it is the true bread which has a universal application to the whole world. They had received bread from Jesus before, now they asked Him to give them this bread for all time.

9. Jesus identified Himself with the bread of life. He said that it is in "coming" to Him and "believing" on Him that people cease to hunger and thirst. He does not mean that they will not hunger for bread or water in the real bodily sense - He makes this clear by speaking of the bread "of life". What He is speaking of is that hunger and thirst, the awareness of not being ever satisfied in life, will be dealt with. That is, He is saying that life itself finds its meaning and satisfaction in coming and believing on the Son of Man. Relating to Him this way, through "coming" and "believing", is life.

10. But the life which He is, cannot be allowed to be spoken of without mentioning the subjection of His own will to the Father; for that is the basis of such a life. For the doing of - or the execution of - the will of the Father is not possible, except it be by the obedience and subjection of the Son. [6.38]

11. The receiving of this life, this bread, has to do with having eternal life [6.40] and that comes to mean not coming into judgment [5.24b, 1 Thessalonians 1.10] and of being raised up on the last day [5.29, 6.39-40,44, 11.24]. The living and believing in Christ is the way of

such a life [6.40,11.24-26].

12. They did not understand how He could come “down from heaven” and also be Jesus, the son of Joseph, whose parents they knew [6.42]. Jesus made clear the Father had not spoken to them and given them revelation concerning the Son as yet - there needs to be a drawing by the Father if anyone is to come to the Son [6.44-45].

13. Jesus re-iterated that the one who believes Him has eternal life [6.47] and that He Himself is the bread of life. The contrast between the forefathers who ate the manna in the wilderness is that they ate it and then died, this bread may be eaten and one may not die. The bread that He gives for the life of the world is his flesh [6.51]. Now we have an equation between bread eaten, and flesh. This picks up the two themes we have seen connected together in the Passover and also in the manna episode.

14. The question “How can this man give us his flesh to eat?” is answered by the two themes of Passover night, flesh and blood. Jesus is speaking of his death, when his blood shall be separated from the flesh of the body. But He now makes a remarkable implication.

15. He speaks of eating his flesh and drinking his blood as true food. The picture of eating, and taking-in life, as one takes food into oneself draws us into the Last Supper, when the bread and the wine are seen as the body and the blood of the Lord as that which constitutes new covenant. So here we have the clear reference to his death as the true Passover, out of which eternal life for the eater is purchased.

[a] Previous to this the blood was reserved for the atonement of souls on the altar, it would never be eaten. The blood of the animals used was reserved to signify this clear function of atonement. The “true drink” which gives life to the drinker is the blood of Christ as that which turns away the wrath of God and opens life to those who believe. It is now possible, even required, that blood be drunk now because it is the true drink of which the blood of the animals was simply the sign. Now that the thing signified has arrived, it must be taken into oneself as true drink. It satisfies those who have hungered and thirsted for righteousness.

[b] The true bread comes to mean his body, his flesh. That is, the death of Christ brings, as a source of life, a reconciliation between God and man such that the life of God can be entered upon and He may be known in intimacy. This opens the way to the Father through the Son into their shared life, by the Spirit.

16. All this taking into oneself of the Son's life by his death cannot be discussed without reference to the Father [6.57-58] with Whom the Son shares his life in the Godhead. So the one who “eats Me” shall live “because of Me”, says Jesus. This mirrors what takes place in the life of God, just as the Father has life in Himself and the Son draws life from Him, so it is in our relation to Christ when we believe in Him. We draw from his life - which is given for us in his death.

### *444 - The Supper an act of Christ and also of the Church*

On the night that He was betrayed, the Lord celebrated the passover with his disciples. While

at the table, He linked the passover with his own suffering as He inaugurated the new covenant for the remission of sins.

As He said, "this is my body" and "this is my blood", he pointed to himself as the mystery [sacrament] of the Supper itself. So the mystery we are concentrating upon is not the mystery of the Supper, but the mystery of his suffering which He put forward in the eucharist for the participation of all who believe in Him.

We are commanded to celebrate the Lord's Supper, doing it as often as we eat bread and drink wine in remembrance of him. In doing this, we show forth his death until He comes. The bread we break is our fellowship [Gk. κοινωνία Latin communio] in the body of Christ and the drink, the cup of blessing which we bless is the communion in the blood of Christ.

He and the disciples shared the loaf and drank the cup. Yet in different ways. He did it actively as the Redeemer - this meal was about His suffering for them. They did it as the foundation of the redeemed community - this meal was about them receiving into themselves the redemption He had won for them. The redeemed community are drinkers of His cup and those baptised in His baptism. So the Lord's supper is simultaneously an act of Christ and an act of the Church in his name.

#### *445 – Paul on the Supper: [1] A warning about God's provisions*

*1 Corinthians 10.1-4*

In the first letter to the Corinthians Paul is addressing some abuses that had entered the common life of the Corinthians concerning the Lord's Supper.

[1] A warning from past experience: spiritual food and drink [1 Corinthians 10.1-4]

In the passage of 1 Corinthians 10.1-6 Paul reads back into the history of Israel the terminology of Baptism and also of the Supper when He speaks of being "baptised into Moses" and the terms "spiritual food and drink".

The Israelites were rescued by God and taken into the wilderness, but in spite of such high privileges, they found themselves becoming idolators, fornicators, and murmurers against God. In this setting, Paul spoke of the manna as "spiritual meat" and of the water obtained from the rock as "spiritual drink". He even tells them that that rock was Christ. Paul is thinking of the Supper, and this would infer that he thinks of the bread and wine as spiritual food and drink, and that the eucharist mediates Christ to the believer.

#### *446 – Paul on the Supper: [2] A warning not to be idolators*

*1 Corinthians 10.14-22*

Paul sets the eating and drinking of the Lord's Supper over and against the participation in the heathen sacrificial meals and then in 10.18 brings in the Jewish sacrificial meal as well. Being both sacrificial meals, they involve table fellowship - for the heathen meal a fellowship with the demons, for the Christians a table fellowship with the Lord.

In 1 Corinthians 10.6, recalling an Exodus context and the making of the golden calf, Paul

remarks that the people sat down to eat and drink and then rose up to play. [Exodus 32.4]. He is thinking of a sacrificial meal held in connection with the calf. In this way the heathen meal was the opposite of eating the “spiritual food” and the “spiritual drink” [1 Corinthians 10.3-4]. In Corinth, it was not as if the idols were anything, but behind them are the demons, and Paul does not want the Christians to eat and drink from the table hosted by demons. To eat meat sacrificed to idols is spiritually dangerous.

Paul makes this clear when he shows that at the Jewish sacrificial meals, “Are not those who eat the sacrifices partners in the altar?” The general idea is that those who partake of the sacrificial meal enter into fellowship with God Himself. The important issue here is the way that fellowship is done, it is by eating that which has lain upon the altar [1 Corinthians 9.13 and Matthew 23.19ff]. This is how they have fellowship with what is on the altar.

We cannot misunderstand the expression “the communion in the blood and body of Christ”. It is communion effected through the bread and the cup with the sacrifice of the Lord’s body and blood given in death. It is a participation [a sharing] in the joy and deliverance that Christ has won for his people. At this Table Christ is the Host who makes his people participate in His sacrifice. Communion is participation in Christ’s death.

But the sharing is not simply in relation to what has happened in the death of Christ, but it is having communion now with the living Lord. In this way, there is a continuing sharing of the meal and this makes sense of the warning to not eat in an “unworthy” manner. To eat that way is to be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. That is, to so think of the meal as trivial or to not discern what is being expressed in the elements is to not understand the spiritual meaning which they effectively convey.

### *447 – Paul on the Supper: [3] About failing to discern the body*

*1 Corinthians 11.17-34.*

In thinking of the eucharist as the place where the Lord’s coming is indirectly proclaimed, Paul understands it as a reconciliation. It is an acted drama, it states things that deeply contradict the Corinthians’ divisions, their heresies and their disordered moral life together. Their disorder destroys the drama. When everyone began to eat what they had brought beforehand, the rich ate well and the less well-supplied had to look on and watch. The eating and drinking was their focus, not the meal shared together. Paul says these practices were incompatible with the meaning of the Supper.

Further, Paul implies that the bread and wine are powerful, not of themselves – in a magical way - but in what they convey sacramentally. So he makes clear that, due to this disordered life together, people have been eating and drinking spiritual food in an unworthy manner. They have profaned the body and blood of the Lord. As a consequence, they have fallen sick and some have died, just as in former times they were “overthrown in the wilderness [1 Corinthians 10.5; 11.27-31].

“ It is notable that in I Cor. x.,xi., all the illustrations, apart from that of eating in an idol’s temple, which is prompted by the circumstances of the readers, are drawn from the Old Testament. Further, St. Paul’s



teaching throughout moves in personal and spiritual realms. For him the bread and the wine are not so much 'food for the soul' as media for participating in redeeming activity. The end in view is fellowship with a Saviour and a sharing in His sacrifice. Finally, as we have seen, the ethical and social virtues are strongly emphasized. Where these are actively present, the Eucharist becomes what it is meant to be: otherwise, it is an instrument of condemnation." (Taylor, 1937, 1959) page 217

#### *448 - The Lord's Supper is a sacrificial meal.*

1 Corinthians 11.17-34

On the night when Jesus was betrayed He acts as the host to a sacrificial meal. The form of the meal is the Passover meal, but the mentioning of Jesus' body and blood, really is the language of sacrifice. They speak of His body given in death and of His blood spilt in sacrifice, which is related to the New Covenant. This mention of covenant is a reminder of the making of the covenant at Sinai in blood, and also of the New Covenant which was prophesied by Jeremiah [31.31].

The picture is that Christ does not appear at the Supper meal as a Priest who offers his sacrifice to God. He is there as the Host, who appropriates to his people the sacrifice He would offer for them, or has offered for them. Participation in the sacrificial meal is not an active participation in the sacrificial act, but it is an appropriation which comes about through the meal of the sacrificial act by the eating and drinking of that which was sacrificed. Paul makes this clear by his addition of the words "for you" added to "this is my body which is for you" as well as the direct connection which he makes between the bread and the cup and the death of the Lord [11.26].

#### *449 - One baptism and the continuing Lord's Supper*

1 Corinthians 10.1-4

Paul speaks of how the baptism into Moses "in the cloud and in the sea" indicates that as Israel was once and for all led out of Egypt, so then, once and for all the Church's deliverance is effected in the death of Christ on the cross. But that same death is also their spiritual food and drink as well. The sacrificial gift of the death of Christ becomes sacrificial food as well for the sustenance of life. It makes us live out of Christ's self surrender and so imparts His Spirit [Romans 5.5].

The Supper, unlike baptism, has a significance to us as it is repeated again and again and accompanies the whole of the Christian life.

Baptism incorporates us into Christ, it is the representation of the transition from "dead to sin" to "alive to God" [Romans 6.11]; from the old to the new man. Therefore it is a once for all event as it incorporates us into salvation; it is not capable of repetition. The Supper is the continuing proclamation of the redemptive significance for the "times between the times". It is the manna and the water for the journey from the Sea to the land of Canaan. The repetition of the sacrificial meal spans the life in this present world until He comes again.

### *450 - The relationship between the Lord's Supper and the church.*

1 Corinthians 10.16-17 ; 11.7-22

The passage 1 Corinthians 10.16-17 has the expression "the bread which we break, is it not communion with the body of Christ" which is followed by the statement "because there is one bread, we who are many are one body; for we all partake of the one bread". In this way, Paul emphasises the close relation of the church as the body of Christ with the Supper; and expresses this as a unity between the two.

This does not surprise us in the light of the fact that the Supper is found in the context of the life of the gathered Church. So the abuses he mentions at Corinth in the way of eating, and so expressing fellowship, can be called being "guilty of the body and blood of the Lord" [1 Corinthians 11.7]. Such behaviour is also called despising "the church of God" and this is expressly linked with shaming those "who have nothing"[11.22].

The Lord's Supper is also linked with the "new covenant in My blood" so the Supper is not some private affair between the individual believer and Christ. It is the covenant meal and therefore the congregational meal. The Supper is a sharing in Christ; it is the foundation and the criterion for the unity of the church as the new people of God.

It is the partaking of the one bread, sharing the one gift and the meal, which constitutes the expression of the unity. Unity is manifested here again and again: it is repeatedly shown forth. It binds together the "strong" and the "weak" in faith, just as also it sharply excludes those who would have table fellowship with the demons.

### *451 - Where the mystery of the sacrament lies.*

As an act of the Church it focusses upon the act of Christ. So it directs us away from ourselves to Him and his work for us. What it is, objectively in Christ and to us subjectively now in the Spirit, it is only as we look to the grounding in the finished work of the Redeemer.

If we shift our focus away from that objective ground to the ritual itself then we shift our focus from the person of the Mediator, God come in the flesh, to the sacramental rite as the saving grace. This problem can also come in regard to baptism, as we witness when the early church was faced with the question of a second baptism or re-baptism. For, in the New Testament, in which baptism is grounded in the vicarious baptism which Christ undertook for us in his life and death on the cross, re-baptism could only imply a re-crucifixion of the Saviour. So, when the focus is shifted away from the Mediator to the ritual in the eucharist, there is inevitably talk of a re-crucifying of Christ, a re-sacrifice of Christ, that is considered to be taking place in the ritual itself.

So there is a constant need to focus our attention beyond any ethical or religious acts to the incarnate Son of God and how He has drawn us into communion with his Father. The mystery of the Eucharist is not to be seen in the relation between Christ and the eucharist, nor ourselves and the eucharist, but in terms of our sharing, by the Spirit, in the whole person of Christ, incarnate, crucified, risen and ascended. That is where the mystery lies - that is the sacrament.





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

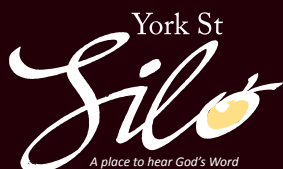
They have been married for 46 years and have five children and 19 grand-children. Throughout this time, they have been teaching the Lord's Word among Christians.

After David was ordained in 1967, he served in two Anglican parishes and a School Chaplaincy in Melbourne. They trained for missionary service but after health issues prevented them going overseas, they taught in a community at the Montrose House and later took the parish of St. Jude's Carlton for seven years. Moving to Perth in Western Australia in 1981, David cared for the Anglican parish of St Alban's in Highgate for seven years.

In 1988, they left the Anglican scene to teach into scattered and smaller groups of Christians in some Australian towns. Later the work extended into the UK, Italy, and India throughout 1995-2000.

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.

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