



The Life And Ministry Of Jesus The Messiah

A step-by-step look at the life of Jesus in 25 chapters.

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Why Jesus Is Everything

The consequences of the incarnation

The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all sin. (1 John 1:7)

Every recorded part of Jesus' life has a redemptive meaning and include His birth, childhood, ministry, resurrection, ascension, and return. Sure the cross is central and it always will be but it is also the central part of a redeeming life. Every aspect of Jesus' life has some significance and with some great significance for us. This article covers some of the redemptive issues stemming from His birth when He accepted humanity, mortality, weakness and poverty.

Born Under the Law

Galatians 4:4,5 But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Jesus' birth, of a woman, under the law enabled Him to change our status from slaves to a law code to joy filled sons and daughters of the living God. To accomplish this He had to take on humanities burden of living under the law - He accomplished this by being born of a woman in Israel at a time of deep legalism and hardened Pharisaism. Yet He lived without fault.

Took on mortality that we might receive immortality

Philippians 2:8 *And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death -- even death on a cross!*

1 Cor 15:45-58 *And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven. As was the man of dust, so also are those who are made of dust; and as is the heavenly Man, so also are those who are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?" The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.*

Jesus, at His birth took on full human nature and a body that was capable of dying - and this did die on the cross. Jesus, though God, was mortal. His death on the cross was no pretense. It was a time of physical agony and spiritual dereliction. He drained the dregs for us. In doing so He took the sting out of death. Because He, a human being, with a fully human and mortal nature, rose from the dead, one day we shall also rise from the dead when He returns.

Jesus became poor that we might become rich

Philippians 2:5-11 NRSV *Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, (6) who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, (7) but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, (8) he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross. (9) Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, (10) so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, (11) and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

2 Corinthians 8:9 NRSV *For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.*

Jesus though endowed with all the riches of glory and all the splendor of heaven became poor that we might know the true riches of His love and the grace of God. These verses may refer to material riches in some way but that is not their main intent. Rather it is a demonstration that God is a God of self-giving, a God who generously pours Himself out.

Jesus became weak that we might become strong

2 Corinthians 13:4 NRSV *For he was crucified in weakness, but lives by the power of God. For we are weak in him, but in dealing with you we will live with him by the power of God.*

Hebrews 4:15-16 NRSV *For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who in every respect has been tested as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore approach the throne of grace with boldness, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

When Jesus took on human nature He also took on human weakness, the capacity to sin, and the smallness of a child, the ability to be crushed and vulnerable. He became just one individual up against an unjust system that eventually crucified Him. He was not a stainless steel robot or a Terminator. He was no Rambo. He was fully human, wept, got tired and eventually was overcome by powerful forces and put to death. Yet in God's plan this very weakness proved to be a great strength. He now is in the heavenly realms interceding for us, understanding us, empowering us. He is our Savior.

The Childhood Of Jesus

The persecution by Herod

This horrific "slaughter of the innocents" has raised many questions and is a regular "Why" question. "What sort of a God would allow this - let alone prophesy it?" It is really a declaration of how bad evil can get. It is a revelation of the depths to which human megalomania will sink in order to preserve itself. Let's put it plainly - God did not want those innocent children murdered. His reaction was to weep. Scripture speaks of Rachel (Jacob's wife and the mother of Israel) weeping for her children. This is God's heartfelt compassionate reaction. The slaughter of the innocents was not "God's will" it was Satanic, dark and murderous. God foretold it but He did not will it. He revealed it but he did not glory in it. He allowed it but only so evil could be seen as evil and the more thoroughly condemned.

The action of Herod was the action of someone who was anti the Christ. It was representative of how the kingdoms of this world must react once they realize that Christ will demand complete rulership. It sets Christ's kingdom off from the start as a kingdom of martyrs and suffering saints born into a world inimically opposed to their existence. As Paul later writes in Romans "We are considered as sheep to be slaughtered". The innocents are the first Christian martyrs. They were slaughtered because they might be the Christ, because they might turn into the Messiah one day. If we grow in God we will meet opposition from the world that opposes those who "might be Christ". Paul writes to Pastor Timothy "All those who live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted". They will not be persecuted by everyone but they will meet stern resistance from those who are grasping on to worldly power.

How can such a awful deed have any redemptive significance? By itself it has none. Only in Christ and the resurrection of the dead does it redeem innocent suffering. There are purposeless mad rages of evil, ethnic cleansing, and horrible butchering of innocent women and children that occurs every year around the globe. They are not forgotten. God weeps for them and interestingly "refuses to be comforted" as these are no normal tragedies to be gradually forgotten. It will be always remembered in the heart of God. He will never be comforted or consoled until justice is finally done on behalf of those who have suffered the ravages of pointless evil.

The Flight into Egypt

This is a reworking of the Exodus, "out of Egypt have I called my Son". The Son is the first of all Israel and is now the Messiah; the head of Israel and its historical recapitulation. Egypt represents bondage and the security of this world. "Out of Egypt" is a journeying lifestyle, the lifestyle of the heroes of faith who were "searching for another city, a city not of this world". In Christ we are freed from this world to journey into the next. In Christ we can transcend our bondages and come into the glorious freedom of the children of God.

The Stay in Nazareth

Here we see the Son of God growing in stature and in favor with God and man. Growth was part of his life and ours. There is no Scriptural evidence for Jesus performing miracles before His baptism. He grew as young boys grow - but without sin. Learning, instruction, boyhood, not instant perfection was the way of the Messiah and our path as well.

Bar Mitzvah - The Redemption of Precocious Teenagers!

At 12 Jesus was outstanding - a "young Einstein". He astonished the Rabbis with his questions and with his insight into the Law. He was also learning to be independent. I remember these precocious, independent years well, they were probably the most enjoyable of my life. His poor perplexed parents driven to distraction by their son who was having a great time being the focus of attention in the temple! His answer "Did you not know that I would be in my Father's house?" would have got me a clip around the ear or a scolding. Joseph and Mary just seem relieved that He was safe and somewhat proud of this difficult and extraordinary child.

Jesus had done his Bar Mitzvah and taken his place as a male in Jewish society. He was now a "son of the law". He could have stood aloof and independent from his parents but he chose to "remain in submission to them". Here is a model teenager -working out His independence and "distance" from His parents - yet remaining in submission to them, and without sin. Jesus was once a teenager - and He grew up OK. By living through those years He took them and all their turmoil into the Godhead and sanctified them. He redeemed teenagers from two curses - overdependence on home - Jesus was no mother's boy. And arrogance - for He was in submission.

The Temptation of Jesus Christ

Matthew 4:1-11 NRSV *Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil. (2) He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. (3) The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." (4) But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'" (5) Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, (6) saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" (7) Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" (8) Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; (9) and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." (10) Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" (11) Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him.*

John Milton, the English poet, set his epic poem "Paradise Regained" during the temptation of Jesus in the wilderness. Milton saw that the temptation was in many ways a recapitulation of the disaster in the Garden of Eden, but in reverse. This time Satan was three times defeated and the Messiah burst forth to bring hope to the world. This titanic struggle for world dominion took place out of the sight of men. Hidden away in the Judean wilderness the fasting Messiah battled the Prince of Darkness over the plan of redemption and the ultimate fate of the human race. The battle will not be finally won until the Lord returns but the first great defeat was one here. This was D-day, this is the repulse, this is the forces of darkness pitched headlong against the forces of good - and suffering a crushing defeat. The beachhead could now be made, the inroads gained, victory after victory won in the power of God.

Paul Tournier, the Swiss doctor, counselor and Christian writer sees the temptation of Jesus as a temptation to magic. Magic is using the power of God separated from relationship with God. Magic is the independent use of God's supernatural gifts and promises. The magician is one who uses impersonal formulas and incantations, the only will the magician obeys is

but in the light of the will of God and involving a call to repentance and right living. The prophet is ethically motivated and in union with the will of God. The fortune-teller on the other hand makes no ethical demands; their future is a self-serving one. They are divorced from the Truth. Magic and supernatural power can seem only a whisker apart. Yet they are worlds apart.

Let's look at a case study where a servant of God was tempted to use his powers for his own purposes and selfish gain. That's right - Balaam! His story is long and involved and well known to most Christians - there are three whole chapters of the Bible devoted to it - Numbers 22, 23 and 24. It starts off with King Balak treating Balaam like a magician whose powers were for hire to the highest bidder...

Numbers 22:5-12 NRSV *He sent messengers to Balaam son of Beor at Pethor, which is on the Euphrates, in the land of Amaw, to summon him, saying, "A people has come out of Egypt; they have spread over the face of the earth, and they have settled next to me. (6) Come now, curse this people for me, since they are stronger than I; perhaps I shall be able to defeat them and drive them from the land; for I know that whomever you bless is blessed, and whomever you curse is cursed." (7) So the elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the fees for divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and gave him Balak's message. (8) He said to them, "Stay here tonight, and I will bring back word to you, just as the LORD speaks to me"; so the officials of Moab stayed with Balaam. (9) God then appears to Balaam to tell him that His power and His will cannot be separated "God came to Balaam and said, "Who are these men with you?" (10) Balaam said to God, "King Balak son of Zippor of Moab, has sent me this message: (11) 'A people has come out of Egypt and has spread over the face of the earth; now come, curse them for me; perhaps I shall be able to fight against them and drive them out.' (12) God said to Balaam, "You shall not go with them; you shall not curse the people, for they are blessed."*

Balaam understands this and replies in kind to his distinguished visitors (**Numbers 22:13-19 NRSV**) So Balaam rose in the morning, and said to the officials of Balak, *"Go to your own land, for the LORD has refused to let me go with you." {....."Although Balak were to give me his house full of silver and gold, I could not go beyond the command of the LORD my God, to do less or more. (19) You remain here, as the others did, so that I may learn what more the LORD may say to me."*

A great deal of Middle Eastern flattery and bargaining ensues and eventually Balaam leaves to serve Balak and oppose God. God send an angel to kill him and his donkey saves him from death. Eventually he blesses Israel instead of cursing them and leaves without honor or reward, a compromised and disgraced servant of God.

Balaam was a genuine prophet, who God appeared to and who had such a reputation for wielding considerable spiritual power "whomever you bless is blessed, and whomever you curse is cursed."". Unfortunately Balaam also had a weakness for money and for status so that he was eventually bribed to attempt to curse Israel and to lead them into immorality and idolatry at Peor. The New Testament comments on his career twice". (**2 Peter 2:15-**

Balaam son of Bosor, who loved the wages of doing wrong, (16) but was rebuked for his own transgression; a speechless donkey spoke with a human voice and restrained the prophet's madness." (Revelation 2:14 NRSV) But I have a few things against you: you have some there who hold to the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel, so that they would eat food sacrificed to idols and practice fornication."

Satan's temptations of Jesus are very similar to Balak's temptations to Balaam. The first temptation is the temptation to use a powerful spiritual anointing for self-gratification apart from the will and purposes of God - "Change these stones into bread....". Jesus was hungry - He had been fasting for 40 days the body was desperate for fuel and raging hunger had returned. Later He fed the five thousand here He was not permitted to feed Himself. The explanation for this can be found later in two statements that Jesus made about the nature of His ministry.

John 5:19 NRSV *Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, the Son can do nothing on his own, but only what he sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, the Son does likewise.*

John 8:28 NRSV *and ... So Jesus said, "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will realize that I am he, and that I do nothing on my own, but I speak these things as the Father instructed me."*

Jesus said and did ONLY what He saw His Father doing and saying. Even "innocent" acts such as eating were under the Father's command. Jesus had a higher will than His own self-gratification and that was the pleasing of His Father in Heaven.

(2) He fasted forty days and forty nights, and afterwards he was famished. (3) The tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." (4) But he answered, "It is written, 'One does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.'"

Later in His ministry He commented...

John 4:34 NRSV *Jesus said to them, "My food is to do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work."*

And He expects us to have similar priorities:

John 6:27 NRSV *Do not work for the food that perishes, but for the food that endures for eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you. For it is on him that God the Father has set his seal."*

Matthew 6:25 NRSV *"Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. (25) "So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today.*

The second temptation has a number of hidden traps.

Matthew 4:5-7 NRSV *Then the devil took him to the holy city and placed him on the pinnacle of the temple, (6) saying to him, "If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down; for it is written, 'He will command his angels concerning you,' and 'On their hands they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.'" (7) Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'*

The traps are: 1) the temptation to magical showmanship and self-display. 2) The temptation to use the Scriptures as supremely reliable magic formulae that operate outside of personal relationship with God "...they will bear you up, so that you will not dash your foot against a stone." 3) The temptation to pride. 4) The temptation to "test God" in a matter of foolishness leading to death. God will not be manipulated by headstrong foolishness and self-aggrandizement - no matter how "scripturally based". And the Devil knows it and he is a murderer from the beginning...

John 8:44 NRSV *"You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies."*

He kills the servants of God in many ways - through persecution, illness, suicide and sometimes by their own hand in acts of foolishness. The young man who stepped into the lions den at a famous zoo was clutching his Bible. He was eaten. Friends said he was trying to prove the story of Daniel true. I believe Satan had deluded, tempted, and murdered this young man. How did Jesus respond to this Scripture-quoting demon? Not with reason, but with Scripture, from the book of Deuteronomy. 'Do not put the Lord your God to the test.'" The answer was simplicity itself, by seeing one of the temptations and responding to that He avoided all of the temptations that went with it. This is instructive for us. For instance when God says not to be "unequally yoked with unbelievers" it is not just so we don't marry non-Christians but so we preserve ourselves from the dozens of other temptations to moral and religious compromise that go with it. When God says not to judge others it is because along with the temptation to judge come the temptations to pride, criticism, envy, boasting and factionalism. Thugs gang up on you -and so do sins and temptations because they have the nature of their Father the Devil. If you give in to one sin, ten more will pounce on you. Rebuke one and they all tremble

The third temptation is the most blatant - the temptation to capitulate to evil for the sake of "quick success".

Matthew 4:8-11 *Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their splendor; (9) and he said to him, "All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me." (10) Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! for it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve only him.'" (11) Then the devil left him, and suddenly angels came and waited on him."*

To worship Satan is repellent. I can sense the anger in Jesus' command "Away with you

outrageous temptation and few except the very great would be tempted by it. Few except kings and emperors want to rule the whole world. Most of us are content with our own little corner. This would only be a temptation to Jesus if His plan was to rule the whole world - and it is!

Revelation 12:5 NKJV *She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.*

Revelation 19:15 NKJV *Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."*

The theology behind this is given in a couple of brief verses in 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 15:24-25 NKJV *Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. {25} For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet."*

Jesus will destroy all earthly authority - which seeks to have an independent authority of its own separated from God. Autonomous authority and independent living is rebellion against God and His plan and order for mankind. Those who submit to God's rule shall participate with Christ in His victory

Revelation 2:25-27 NKJV *"But hold fast what you have till I come. (26) "And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations; (27) 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'; as I also have received from My Father;"*

For Jesus coming into this absolute victory was going to mean the humiliation of the cross before the exaltation of the resurrection and ascension. Satan offered a short-cut. He could have the lot now, 2000 years early, without the pain, without the separation from God, without the sin-bearing. Just one little catch - He would have to worship the Prince of Darkness.

How often we are offered similar bargains - sometimes subtly, sometimes blatantly. As a young teenager in love I was tossing on my bed at night when a spiritual presence entered the room, stood at the foot of my bed and said "I will give you the girl if you give me your soul". Fortunately I said "This must be either God or the Devil, show me who you are". A frightening, tall creature of darkness appeared. It had a face that was like a mask and very black and fierce. I was filled with fear and terror. I scratched around inside me for something to say and blurted out "Go to Hell!". The creature vanished. I was not a Christian then but I stayed up all night with my light on and found a Gideon's Bible I had been given and started reading it. I believe many others have had similar experiences.

Satan will trade the desirable things of this world for our eternal souls to come under his power. If Satan is bold and arrogant enough to try this with Jesus - he will probably also try it with you. In Luke's account of this temptation we get a slightly fuller version.

.....

the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. (6) And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish. (7) "Therefore, if You will worship before me, all will be Yours." (8) And Jesus answered and said to him, "Get behind Me, Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the LORD your God, and Him only you shall serve."

Satan boasts that the kingdoms of this world and their glory " has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish." The Bible does not deny this in fact if anything it reinforces it:

1 John 5:19 NKJV *We know that we are of God, and the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one*

However an invulnerable beachhead has been established and Satan is beginning to lose his authority

1 John 5:18 NKJV *We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him*

1 John 5:4 NKJV *For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world; our faith.*

Satan may be the ruler of this present evil world but there is a fifth column in the world - the Church and it is on the side of the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. Satan's rule is a limited rule with a tragic end for in the justice and power of God the Devil shall be destroyed (and not before time for he has shed the blood of the saints).

Revelation 20:10 NKJV *The devil, who deceived them, was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.*

There are a couple of additional aspects to the temptation of Jesus that are mentioned in the book of Hebrews and which give us some understanding of why - why God allowed Jesus to be tempted and why we are tempted also.

Hebrews 2:17-18 NKJV *Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (18) For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.*

Hebrews 4:14-16 NKJV *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (15) For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Jesus was tempted so that He could help those who are tempted. He did not just do this to be a "good example" but so that He could be a source of mercy and grace in time of need. This is not "bootstrap Christianity" where you have to pull yourself up! Rather it is God's personal, merciful and gracious supply to struggling Christians. God will give us the power

discerning, godly Christians. Jesus is our merciful High Priest.

The other aspect is that Jesus "learned obedience" through temptation - and that is the path for us also!

Hebrews 2:10 NKJV *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

Hebrews 5:7-9 NKJV *who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, {8} though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. {9} And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him*

Now temptation is not "from God" - that much is clear from Scripture (James 1:12-15) but the pressures of life that tempt us to disobedience are the proving grounds of our obedience. In fact James calls those who endure under temptation "blessed" - but it surely a very strange blessing!

James 1:12 NKJV *Blessed is the man who endures temptation; for when he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.*

At first I found these concepts daunting and even a little bit offensive: How can Jesus be "perfected"? Surely He was perfect all along? What good is there in suffering and temptation and why does God do things in such strange ways? These questions have probably occurred to you also. Well here is a very condensed answer to this problem.

Jesus was perfect in his nature from day one. However the fullest measure of perfection is when that nature proves itself in the arena of life. When the potential becomes actual and bears fruit then it reaches its fullest perfection. On the cross enduring scorn, humiliation and rejection Jesus proved what He was made of. The full potential of His divine nature was displayed there. And in the temptation in the wilderness we see Jesus proving His worth, His perfection, His glory - and soon with proved character he would go out to do the mighty works of God. Prepared and tested character is the prerequisite to powerful service in the name and nature of God. Sure, some seem to have powerful ministries without much in the way of character but these will be exposed as false on the Day of Judgment. **Matthew 7:21-23** *Obedience under testing perfects our faith and makes us worthy for serving our Lord.* What better conclusion can I have to this study on the temptation of Jesus than to quote the words of the apostle John:

1 John 4:4 NKJV *You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world.*

Praise God!

The Baptism and Early Ministry of Jesus

Matthew 3:13-17 NKJV *Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. (14) And John tried to prevent Him, saying, "I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?" (15) But Jesus answered and said to him, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then he allowed Him. (16) When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. (17) And*

suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Mark 1:9-11 NKJV *It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan. (10) And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove. (11) Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."*

Luke 3:21-22 NKJV *When all the people were baptized, it came to pass that Jesus also was baptized; and while He prayed, the heaven was opened. (22) And the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him, and a voice came from heaven which said, "You are My beloved Son; in You I am well pleased."*

John 1:29-34 NKJV *The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! (30) "This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.' (31) "I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water." (32) And John bore witness, saying, "I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. (33) "I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' (34) "And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."*

The Redemptive Qualities of The Baptism of Jesus

The baptism of Jesus represents His initiation into Spirit-empowered ministry. Jesus was born of the Holy Spirit and indwelt by the Holy Spirit from His mothers womb. This gave Him exceptional natural gifting unmarred by sin and a clear mind, filled with exceptional wisdom that could challenge the rabbis of His day from an early age. But as wonderful as these gifts were He still needed something more if He was to bear the burdens of the world

stream of human misery and conflict represent a moving into public life and the bearing of not just His own burdens but the burdens of all the lost.

Jesus needed an empowering by the Holy Spirit before He moved out to proclaim the Kingdom of God. This may sound slightly heretical - after all wasn't He God - the fullness of Deity in bodily form, the incarnate Word full of grace and truth? (Col 2:9, John 1:14-18) Yes!! Absolutely, He was, is and always will be God. He did not "become divine" at His baptism or any other time. He was the "Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" - He was God before the world began and was intimately involved in its creation. (John 1:3, Col 1:17). However as God He "took on the nature of a Servant" and in this limitedness He was born of a woman, grew up as a child in submission to His parents and like anyone else entering ministry needed the anointing of the Holy Spirit before He took on the burden of proclaiming the Kingdom, healing the sick, raising the dead and suffering for righteousness' sake. In some way he limited Himself to what "a perfect believer" can do. He even said to His disciples that: (John 14:12 NKJV) "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." Somehow in the economy of God the believer ("he who believes in Me") CAN accomplish the works that Christ did on earth ("the works I do he shall do also") plus a bit extra (and greater works than these he will do because I go the Father).

Now lets put that in context - Jesus is talking about the works He did in front of the disciples, during His earthly ministry but before He went to the cross (the words were uttered during the last supper). We cannot work the works He did while in heaven - such as Creation. Neither can we take the sins of the world on our shoulders. He has done that and that is His glory alone. But in the power of the Holy Spirit which has been given to us since Jesus has gone to the Father we can work the works He did between His baptism and the cross. Don't take my word for it - its Jesus who said it! And the book of Acts certainly reinforces the idea that the Spirit-empowered believer can do great things for God. Now turning this on its head for a minute... if Jesus said "those who believe" could do what He did during His ministry then His earthly ministry must have been "limited" to that of the "perfect believer". It is as the "perfect believer" that Jesus went and got baptized and it is as the "Spirit-empowered perfect believer" that he went forth in ministry. This leads me to a little theological hypothesis, that the life of the "perfect believer" has two stages. Stage one is that of perfect piety when we fear God and grow in wisdom. We become good in ourselves. Stage two is the stage of public proclamation when we receive God's power in ministry and our piety and wisdom becomes the foundation for a Spirit-filled life where we become "rivers of living water" to a world in desperate need. I must very quickly add that stage two is not "superior" to stage one. Without a foundation in ethics and goodness ministry can be a dangerous place. It's the wrong place to learn wisdom. No-one despises a doctor for going to medical school even though he may minister to no-one there. We understand preparation in secular things and we should be prepared to do the preparatory work on our own life. Power without ethics and wisdom is the last thing God wants in your life. Both stages are necessary if "the perfect believer" is to do and be all that God wants.

NT Christians were generally baptized immediately upon profession of faith. The day of

conversion as "the day of my baptism", not because baptism saves us but because it was the unique external event that occurred on the day they professed faith in Christ. Also, in the revival conditions of the early church their baptism was often accompanied by the laying on of hands and the impartation of a spiritual gift to the new believer in Spirit baptism. This occasionally was not the case. (Acts 18:24-19:7) Apollos was a believer with a great deals of natural speaking ability yet still needed to understand the baptism in the Spirit if he was to proclaim the gospel "accurately". Also some believers who knew only the "baptism of John" and had not "even heard that there was a Holy Spirit". This is not unusual even today as some Christians receive very little teaching due to isolation, misunderstanding or inadequate ministry. Ideally all three aspects of baptism belong together. But they have wandered apart. We have people who are baptized but not changed. We have converts who have never had water baptism. And we have strong Christians who have not received the empowering ministry of the Holy Spirit.

We need to press on and to desire to be Spirit-filled proclaimers of God's Kingdom. If we are to move beyond this accumulation of wisdom and truly minister to others in an effective way we need a "baptism in the Holy Spirit". This simply means we need an all-encompassing immersion in the God-head that empowers us for ministry. Baptism in the Spirit is not a private thing and it doesn't belong to any one denomination. It is not always accompanied by speaking in tongues or prophecies. Jesus' baptism had neither. The miracles came after the baptism. This baptism is an initiation not just into the church but into the power of the Kingdom. This baptism is what happened to Jesus as he moved from an obscure life to centre stage. It happened to the disciples at Pentecost who finally got plunged into full revival ministry themselves. And it happened to Wesley and countless other leaders of the Christian faith. The Jordan is a place where we get the power to stand in the flood of human souls and minister Christ to them.

The "baptism in the Spirit" is real, powerful and moves us out of our private pietism into public proclamation of the Kingdom of God. For me this happened unsought when God confronted me with the utter self-centeredness of my faith. I saw that I needed to cleanse out the filthy black mess of sin that remained in my life. It was an encounter with the awfulness of selfishness. It was evident that I had no hope apart from what Christ could do in me and with me. This was not a conversion, it was dealing with the sin that entangled me, I was set free to run the race and I did. I led a huge number of people to God in the ensuing weeks. I was on fire with God because I had met Him in power. It was Jacob at Bethel all over again. This encounter with God, this "deeper experience" was not ecstatic - except that in the middle of it I did have a vision of my sin and of God. It took my faith from the private realm to the public realm; from self-edification to spirit-filled ministry; from a complaining Christian to a proclaiming herald.

Jesus did not have all this selfish sin to deal with, but He did need the power that God would provide in response to humble obedience. And He identified with sinners and "went down the front" with all the people being ministered to. I still struggle with "going down the front", how can I, a Christian leader, admit that I too have needs. I should "be an example" a stainless steel "there's nothing wrong with me" Christian. There is a real live

somehow my faith puts me a cut above the ordinary Christian. I do need ministry - lots of it. I go down the front now perhaps more than ever. It still hurts to do it. But Jesus wandered out there and said He was in need of God. He said that "it was fitting to fulfill all righteousness". Many preachers have felt like John the Baptist when they give an appeal and some real saint of God comes down the front and wants prayer to be a better Christian. I think "I need ministry from you, not you from me..." but the saint's attitude is "this is fitting...". It's a humble person who can accept ministry from someone who is "unworthy to untie the thongs of their sandals".

A few quick correctives - the "baptism in the Holy Spirit" that we speak of here is NOT the same as the initial indwelling. All believers are indwelt with the Holy Spirit from the moment of their "new birth" just as Jesus was indwelt with the Holy Spirit from conception. Perhaps a better term would be "the empowering of the Holy Spirit", it is certainly less confusing. Three things are united in one term in the New Testament - water baptism, conversion and Spirit baptism. At Pentecost they all seemed to occur together. Water baptism is associated with repentance from sin and the appeal to God for a good conscience (1 Peter 3:21, 22 Acts 2:38). Conversion represents the change of being from old man to new man that comes as God re-creates the sinner into a "saint" (holy one, believer)(Eph 5:8,9 Col 1:13,14). "Spirit baptism" involves being empowered to take up our place in the body of Christ in the exercise of whatever spiritual gifts have been imparted to us. (1 Cor 12:13) Just as it is a bad manner to see a person as a lesser Christian if they have not had water baptism so it is not gracious to categorize people as "spirit-filled" and "un-spirit-filled". Such distinctions are divisive. Certainly to do as Priscilla and Aquila did and take someone aside and explain the way of God more accurately (and in love) is fine and helpful. However I sense a certain spiritual pride in some believers in spirit baptism that leads me to urge caution in the way we approach the issue. Also there is no hint in the New Testament that "tarrying", seeking, or any prolonged anguish is necessary as preparation. It is not some exalted spiritual but a frequently misunderstood part of the gospel along with water baptism and conversion. It is for all believers and like everything else is received by faith in the proclaimed word of Christ.

The Early Ministry

The early ministry of Christ is an outworking and authentication of His baptismal experience. I will deal with the temptations separately next month but here in His early ministry he comes primarily as the anointed one with the power to resist evil and to bring in the Kingdom of God in power.

Matthew 4:13-25 NKJV *And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, (14) that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: (15) "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles: (16) The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death Light has dawned." (17) From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (18) And Jesus, walking by the Sea of*

the sea; for they were fishermen. (19) Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." (20) They immediately left their nets and followed Him. (21) Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets. He called them, (22) and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. (23) And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. (24) Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. (25) Great multitudes followed Him; from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.

The anointing received at his baptism leads Him into a widespread ministry of proclamation. **Matt 4:23a** *"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom,"* From Galilee in north of Israel the word went out and many people were attracted to the "great light" (Matt 4:16). His fame caused people to travel hundreds of miles to see Him, people came from Syria in the north, Jerusalem in the south and from along the Jordan to the west. People came from the Greek speaking Decapolis and the Hebrew speaking Judea. Like moths to a flame multitudes were drawn to the ministry of Jesus. The anointing has "drawing power".

Secondly, the baptism of the Spirit produces a public and obvious concern with holiness. Not that Jesus was unconcerned with holiness before! But now it is out in the open - His message is "Repent for the Kingdom of God is at hand". This holiness is also reflected in a calling of others into ministry to lead lives separated from worldly concerns in the pursuit of the Kingdom. Simon and Andrew are called by Jesus not to be "nice people" but to be "fishers of men", to be apostles of a new Kingdom not just improved world-lings. The baptism in the Spirit imparts that eternal perspective that makes the Kingdom the only thing that really matters.

Thirdly, the anointing has power to heal - after His baptism He healed "all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease...". Before His baptism not a single healing is recorded. After it He puts the physicians out of business. All who came to Him were healed not by His diagnostic ability or His knowledge of herbs but by the power that flowed from Him that He received when the Spirit came upon Him. If we desire to heal others in body or in soul we will end up struggling to heal a handful by our own strength but we may heal thousands if God so chooses to impart His Spirit of healing in power upon us.

The final authentication of His baptism in the Spirit is the possession of extraordinary spiritual authority over the powers of darkness. This was, of course latent in Jesus from the beginning but it became obvious to all when His public ministry began and He moved in the continual power of the anointing of God. After Pentecost the apostles moved in this same power to heal the sick and to exorcise demons. These abilities are "graces" - no ordinary mortal by their own knowledge can heal the sick with a word or cast out a demon by their own authority. And they certainly cannot do it on the scale that Jesus or the apostles did it.

greater works" not because we are special but because Christ has gone to the Father. Because of this the Holy Spirit - who is God and who can do these things, has been poured out upon us. Jesus early ministry clearly shows that our effectiveness is not of ourselves but lies entirely in the power of God.

Summary

The "baptism in the Holy Spirit" as experienced by Jesus resulted in :

- (1) The proclamation of the gospel of the Kingdom.
- (2) Attractiveness to others that draws people widely to hear God's message, this is not natural attractiveness (of which Jesus apparently had very little) but a supernatural blessedness that draws people in like moths to a flame.
- (3) A concern with holiness that calls others to lead a repentant and separated lifestyle.
- (4) Healing of the sick that is way beyond normal expectations in its scope. This wide scope is both in the numbers healed and in the great range of maladies that are cured -including "incurable" conditions such as epilepsy and paralysis. (Matt 4:24)
- (5) Authority over the powers of darkness.

These five things are among the works of Jesus that we can replicate and even exceed (John 14:12) though few have done so or gone anywhere near it. They are the marks of an authentic baptism of the Spirit. They are the fruit produced by an empowered and prepared believer whose character is without fault. Next month we will take up the relationship between tested character and spiritual empowerment when we look at the temptation in the wilderness - the subject of Milton's "Paradise Regained".

Prayer

Lord so work in me that I may be a fit vessel for your empowering. I acknowledge that any results I may see are because You indwell me or anoint me. I place myself before You and in obedience ask for an empowering of the Spirit suited for this hour and this time and for the mission you have called me to. Proclaim Your Kingdom through me in holiness and in Truth. May I testify to your Kingdom through healing and deliverance. May I set You forth so clearly that many will flock to find You. Amen.

Jesus and Healing

Working Out What The Bible Says On: Jesus and Healing

Introduction

Jesus' attitude is always the "plumb line" for our attitudes. Things "straighten up" when we see things from His point of view. This study aims to work out what Jesus' attitude was towards healing. It's a controversial area for us today but it was very much part of Jesus' life and ministry and as we watch Him in action - we may just learn something. May God bless you as you read this.

Let's start with the obvious!

Jesus always saw sickness as something to be healed

Whenever Jesus came across sickness His attitude was to heal it. (Matthew 4; 23-25, 8:16, 17, 9:35) Jesus had compassion on the sick just as we automatically have compassion on our own children when they are ill. It would be a most cruel and unusual for a parent that seeing one of their own children ill would say, "This child should suffer some more in order to learn a lesson". These natural instincts we have are part of the image of God in us and reflect the heart of God. All who came to Jesus for healing were healed. None were told to wait until..... (Put whatever you like in the gap).

Jesus sometimes saw sickness as the direct work of the Devil

Sickness can come from the Devil in two main ways - as a direct attack on the life of a righteous person, permitted by God but not "God's will". Job's sores (Job 2:4-7) and the sickness of the woman bound in the spirit of infirmity (Luke 18:10-16) seem to be in this category.

Jesus sometimes saw sickness as the direct result of sin

Throughout the Old and New Testament there has always been a strong connection between sin and sickness. Except for the book of Job and some cases of barren but righteous women there was an almost universal causal connection between the disruption of fellowship with God and bodily illness. This flows from the Bible's view of the person as a whole being body-soul-spirit knitted into one with each part affecting the other. Consequently spiritual health can also impart physical health and quicken our mortal bodies. (Romans 8:11) There is no record of Jesus being ill, though He was mortal and human and subject to the normal exigencies of human flesh. While Jesus broadens the OT

understanding so that not all sickness was due to sin he twice indicated that a person's illness was based in prior sin. (Mark 2:5, John 5:14) Paul is more explicit about it in his writings to the Corinthians who had a strong triumphant streak. He indicated that sickness could be the result of Church discipline for gross immorality - "handing someone over to Satan for the destruction of the flesh." (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). The abuse of the Lord's Supper was also seen to result in physical illness (1 Corinthians 11: 28-32). In extreme cases sin may even result in physical death. (1 Corinthians 11:30, Acts 5:5-10, Romans 1:26-28). The normal aim of such illness is repentance and the soul being saved on the day of salvation. (1 Cor. 5:1-5, 11:28-32). Thus it is wise for the person seeking healing to confess any known sin and to get right with God before prayer is administered. This naturally leads to the question:

Should we heal someone that the Lord is chastening?

The answer to this is simple. If they turn to God in their illness and submit themselves to the elders of the church, confessing their sins and asking for healing (as in James 5) then the chastening has done the work of leading them to repentance and we should heal them. Thus there is no contradiction between "healing all who ASK for it" and allowing the Lord to chasten people unto repentance. The very act of asking is a sign of seeking God. Later we will cover how to help people when repentance is needed prior to healing. While Jesus and the apostles acknowledged a connection between sin and physical illness they never blamed anyone for being ill (or even lacking faith in their healing) but rather always sought to heal them.

Jesus often drew a direct connection between faith and healing

Healing is a manifestation of the kingdom of God in our mortal bodies and I think a prefigurement of the resurrection. Like all Kingdom realities healing is received by faith. Jesus explicitly acknowledges this in Matt 8:10, 9:28, 29, 15:28; Mark 2:5; 9:24, 10:52 and the parallel passages.

Jesus saw healing as one of the signs of the Presence of the Kingdom

In Matt 4:23, 9:35 and Luke 9:11 healing and the preaching of the Kingdom are tied together in Jesus ministry. The ministry of the disciples (the 12 and the 70) is to have both aspects the Kingdom proclamation and the demonstration of Kingdom power (Matt 10:7, 8, Luke 9:2). Luke 10:9 is quite explicit (Luke 10:9 NKJV) "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.' In Matt 12:28 Jesus associates exorcism in His name with the Presence of the Kingdom (Matthew 12:28 NKJV) "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you." This role of healing in demonstrating the validity of the gospel and the Presence of the Kingdom is graphically demonstrated when the imprisoned John the Baptist sends his disciples to Jesus....**Luke 7:19-23 NKJV** *And John, calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to Jesus, saying, "Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?" (20) When the men had come to Him, they said, "John the Baptist has sent us to You, saying, 'Are You the Coming One, or do we look for another?'" (21) And that very hour He cured many of infirmities, afflictions, and evil spirits; and to many blind He gave sight. (22) Jesus*

answered and said to them, "Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them. (23) "And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me." Jesus saw healing as a demonstration of the real Presence of the Kingdom that would encourage those who struggled to believe.

Jesus saw healing as a work that His disciples and His church could also work

This is partly covered above. Here are a few verses indicating the spread of healing from the 12 to the 70 to the wider church:

Matthew 10:1 NKJV *And when He had called His twelve disciples to Him, He gave them power over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease. **Luke 10:1,9 NKJV** After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go..... "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'*

Acts 5:16 NKJV *Also a multitude gathered from the surrounding cities to Jerusalem, bringing sick people and those who were tormented by unclean spirits, and they were all healed.*

James 5:13-15 NKJV *Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. (14) Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. (15) And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.*

The theological mandate for this is found in the empowering Presence of God experienced by Jesus at His baptism and experienced by the Church at Pentecost. With this in mind Jesus could say to his disciples: **John 14:10-12 NKJV** *"Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? (11) "Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves. (12) "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father." The works spoken of here are the works Jesus did between His baptism and the cross. It is indicated that the Spirit-filled believer (discussed elsewhere in this chapter and very much in mind) "will do also" some of these works and perhaps do "greater works" because the Spirit's power will be manifest in the believer and in the believing community. We cannot do Jesus' works of creation or redemption but we can do the works He did during his ministry -preaching the Kingdom, healing the sick, driving out demons etc. Jesus seemed disappointed and in fact angry when His empowered and called disciples failed to do these works (Luke 9:39-42) and doing them seemed to be an integral part of his approach to training them for ministry (Luke 9 and 10).*

Jesus saw healing as a demonstration of God's mercy and compassion, it was never "earned"

Mercy is a somewhat neglected concept. It means that you have the right to punish or destroy but do not do so. It was used technically when someone had lost a duel and the victorious party had every right to kill them. The victor could lift his sword point thus showing mercy. God's mercy goes much further than "not killing" but even unto restoring the person to wholeness. Jesus gladly responded to those who appealed for healing on the basis of the mercy of God (Matthew 9:27, 15:22, 17:15, 20:30, 31). Jesus also frequently healed out of compassion (Matt 14:14, 20; 34, Mark 1:41, 5; 19, 9:22-24, Luke 7:13-15).

Compassion is Christ's practical response to human need. It includes the practical action of the Good Samaritan and of Christ feeding the hungry multitudes (Luke 10:33, Mark 8:2) it is never just an empty sentiment. The power of God is linked to the compassion of God. However God's mercy and compassion is His to command and should never be taken for granted (Romans 9:15). The gospel record though should lead us to believe that His compassion is readily available to all who seek it. Remarkably it was this aspect, more than almost any other that enraged the religious leaders of His day. They often sternly opposed Jesus' healings being angered at the mercy He demonstrated. (Matt 9:9-13, 32-34, 12:10-15, Jn 9:13-34) The Pharisaical mindset sees healings as "rewards" perhaps due to the saintly righteous but certainly not due to sinners. I cannot recall a single Pharisee being healed. This leads to three rough rules of thumb "You will only receive as much grace as you think you need." (Luke 18:9-14) and "No grace comes to those who think they deserve it." (Luke 18:9-14, Galatians 3:2-5, 5:1-11, Romans 11:6) and "You receive more grace than you give but you have to give it first". (Luke 6:35-38)

Jesus saw healing as a sovereign work of the Father not as an act of "Christian magic"

There is a fine line between the "magical" and the "Christian" uses of supernatural power. Supernatural power becomes "magical" when it is seen to operate separately from the will of the Father. For instance the bronze serpent that Moses held up in the wilderness eventually had to be destroyed because its healing properties were attributed to it separately from YHWH and it thus became an idol. (2 Kings 18:4). A similar thing happened to the Ark of the Covenant in the days of Eli (1 Samuel 4:3, 4) when it, not the Lord, was credited with victory for Israel. Consequently it went into captivity for a while. (1 Samuel 4, 5)

The temptations Satan used on Jesus were temptations to achieve the purposes of God by means divorced from the will of God. He was asked to turn stones into bread for his own gratification. He was asked to use His new endowment of supernatural power for the purposes of showmanship and jump from the Temple. Finally He was to conquer the world - but acknowledge Satan as the source of his Kingdom. The word of God and fasting kept Jesus from these temptations. It strikes me that these must be very powerful temptations to be able to be used on Jesus and it does seem that certain Christians are in their grip - to their very great spiritual peril (Matt 7:21-23). Jesus kept His integrity in ministry by only

doing that which He saw the Father doing. (John 5:19,20, 36 ; 10:32,37,38; 14:10-12). Relationship with God and obedience were keys to His overcoming this most subtle of temptations. Thus the safest way to minister is to minister in an attitude of holy fear, reverence, praise and worship.

Therefore preparatory worship is more than emotionally satisfying it also draws us into the necessary state of humility and obedience that can safeguard us from wrong desires. Paul Tournier treats this aspect of the temptation to magic in healing well in his book "A Doctor's Casebook In The Light Of The Bible" pages 113-116 (written in 1954!). He finishes up by saying " There are then two contrary errors: to refrain, for fear of magic, from every kind of bold and sensational act, even when God requires it of us; this course has been all too common in the Church, and is what has made us as poor as it is today in manifestations of God's power. And, on the other hand, through zeal to demonstrate that power, to run after the sensational, even when God does not will it, and so fall into magic; certain religious sects are guilty of this. In the Gospel, the skeptics sneered at the miracles in Galilee and at the Cross: 'He saved others; let Him save Himself, if this is the Christ of God, His chosen' (Luke 23:35). Neither the miracles nor the Cross can be taken out of the gospel without distorting it."

Jesus always healed what the person wanted healed

There is a tendency to be wiser than the patient when one is in healing ministry and doctors, counselors and psychiatrists are particularly guilty of this and I am afraid some Christians are getting in on the act. If a person wanted to be healed of leprosy or blindness that was what got fixed. Even though Jesus knew the hearts of people He did not say "Your real problem is..." Jesus took people's problems at face value and healed them. He was not an arrogant know all and He left people with their dignity.

Jesus remembered the social context when He gave instructions after healing

Jesus treated the sick as part of a social structure that needed to accept that the person had been healed. Lepers had to show themselves to the priest and be certified as clean so they could resume their place in society. (Matthew 8:2-4, Luke 17:12-19) Certain illnesses can relapse (particularly schizophrenia) if the family does not incorporate the person as "healed" but still views them as "sick". Jesus frequently gives instructions to the family or the sick person that initiates a resumption of normality. (Matt 8:14, 15; 9:6; Mark 5:43; 10:52, John 11:44).

Even though Jesus had a powerful healing ministry it was not His top priority

His redemptive work on the cross, the training of the disciples and the proclamation of the good news of the Kingdom were all given a higher priority than healing the multitudes at various times. Healing was an integral part of the whole and a visual and practical

demonstration of His message but it was never of ultimate importance. (Mark 6:12, 13 then 30-32; Luke 4:40-43; 9:51).

Jesus saw healing as a manifestation of Divine authority and power

The original commission to Adam was to 'subdue the earth' to bring about God's order and perfection in Creation. As the last Adam Jesus subdued evil spirits and even illness which represents a serious imperfection in God's created order. To do this He exercised spiritual authority which He also passed on to others. (Matthew 8:9-13, 9:6, 10:1; Mark 3:15, 6:17; Luke 5:17; 6:19, 9:1, 10:19). Healing requires power and authority to flow from God. Sometimes evil spirits can strongly resist this power and a "power encounter" may take place such as that with the Gadarene demoniac in Mark 5. Healing is a miniature exertion of God's restoring power and is a way of "doing His will on earth as it is done in Heaven" - where there will be no more sickness or crying or pain. (Rev 20:1-3)

Jesus and Healing Ministry

The healing ministry of Jesus is one of the most acknowledged and most controversial parts of His redemptive work. There are those who see healing as being "in the cross" and thus automatically and instantly available to the believer. Others see physical healing as outside of redemption which they confine to dealing with sin. Both views are, to my mind, a little less than fully biblical. Jesus did indeed bear our illnesses - but not first of all on the cross, but during His earthly ministry to the sick. Matthew clearly sees the fulfillment of the prophecy being while Jesus was alive and ministering!

Matthew 8:16-17 NKJV *When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, (17) that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He Himself took our infirmities And bore our sicknesses."*

However that fact that Jesus has ceased His earthly ministry does not mean that He has ceased His healing ministry because healing is part of the nature and goodness of God and that does not change. The ministry of healing is as unchanged as Christ Himself.

Hebrews 13:8 NKJV *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.*

The healing ministry of Jesus can be broken into two parts:

1) That which He did before the cross and which He taught His disciples to do (Matthew 10:8, Luke 10:1, 9, Acts 5:16) and which we can participate in by faith today (John 14:12, James 5:13-15)

2) That which He did in the cross itself. This is a unique and completed work and we simply proclaim its benefits. This is the healing of our spirits from sin, death and going astray. (1 Peter 2:24, 25).

I will deal with the second part in a later part of this series on redemption. For now I will concentrate on physical healing, exorcism and raising the dead as typified by Jesus earthly ministry before the Cross and which He continues today through His servants. (Acts 4:22, 30, 5:16, James 5:13-15)

Physical healing

Even among unbelievers there is a general perception of Jesus as a healer of the sick. It is closely entwined with who He is and how He acts towards needy people. People see Jesus as someone who is supposed to meet their deepest needs including the need for physical healing. When people see healing take place in Jesus' name it strengthens their faith in His nature and in the gospels thus enabling many to believe for salvation. Healing the sick and preaching were often associated in Jesus' ministry. But to confine healing to something that validates the gospel is to miss Christ's compassion for the sick and to turn healing into little more than an attention- gaining religious publicity stunt. Jesus was genuinely moved out of

compassion for the sick. For Him healing was an essential part of His ministry to hurting people and not merely an "opener" before the message. Jesus associated healing with the Presence of His Kingdom (Luke 10; 9). The Kingdom has not yet arrived and still needs to be proclaimed with power and authority. Jesus through His body the Church needs to confront evil in all its forms - physical, emotional, spiritual and systemic. Thus we can expect His healing ministry to be manifested today to some degree in the redemption of our physical bodies from the effects of evil. This will be finally accomplished at the resurrection but is accomplished in part and as a foretaste through His healing ministry today. So we see that Jesus is still the same yesterday, today and forever and is still healing the sick.

Each day thousands of people around the world experience healing in answer to prayer. Sure not all are healed, sure a lot more should/could be healed, but the Church is reawakening to the Presence of Jesus in our midst as our healing Redeemer. The following six points provide a brief theological tour of the reasons underlying Jesus' healing ministry. I am sure you can diligently search the Scriptures to find even more!

- As the incarnation of God. One of the names of God is YHWH Rapha "The Lord Your Healer". Our God has always been a healing God and this is His nature. Therefore Jesus as incarnate deity represented this by healing the sick. **Exodus 15:26 NKJV** and said, *"If you diligently heed the voice of the LORD your God and do what is right in His sight, give ear to His commandments and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the LORD who heals you.*
- As an intercessor against evil and bearer of sin. Jesus confronted all forms of evil and lifted it off people. (This is perhaps a more literal translation of nasa to bear). As the confronter and demolisher of evil He took on sickness and the toll it takes on suffering humanity. **1 John 3:8 NKJV** *He who sins is of the devil, for the devil has sinned from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that He might destroy the works of the devil* [See also Matt 8:16,17, Isaiah 53:4,5]
- As One who did "the Father's will" and only did what He saw the Father doing He enacted God's "Father-heart" toward His Creation. If as human fathers we want our children well how much more does God want His images healed - both physically and spiritually? **John 5:19-21 NKJV** *Then Jesus answered and said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner. (20) "For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself does; and He will show Him greater works than these, that you may marvel. (21) "For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.* [See also Luke 11:10-13] Note: These verses tell us that all His works flowed from an intimate relationship of obedience to the Father so that Jesus knew His actual will in all things. This was not some quick presumption of what His will "should be" (like we tend to do) and knowing the Father's will from an intimate relationship with Him is perhaps one of the keys to healing people today.
- Out of mercy - God's relenting in judgment on sinners - and consequent bestowing of blessing. The blind men cried "Have mercy on us Son of David." and were healed. Many

of Jesus' miracles flowed from His compassion for hurting humanity. As a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy and His nature as the Messiah. For instance in Malachi it says: Malachi 4:2 NKJV) But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise With healing in His wings; And you shall go out And grow fat like stall-fed calves.

- As a demonstration of the Spirit's power and the Presence of the Kingdom of God. (Luke 10:9 NKJV) "And heal the sick there, and say to them, 'The kingdom of God has come near to you.'

Exorcism

Matthew 12:22-29 NKJV *Then one was brought to Him who was demon-possessed, blind and mute; and He healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw. (23) And all the multitudes were amazed and said, "Could this be the Son of David?" (24) Now when the Pharisees heard it they said, "This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons." (25) But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: "Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. (26) "If Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? (27) "And if I cast out demons by Beelzebub, by whom do your sons cast them out? Therefore they shall be your judges. (28) "But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you. (29) "Or how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds the strong man? And then he will plunder his house.*

There is increasing recognition today of an evil spiritual kingdom arrayed against the Kingdom of God. Movies such as "The Exorcist" and "The Omen" and sensationalized reports of exorcisms gone wrong have done little to help the Church. They have instead created a paralyzing fear of tackling the demonic realm. Yet for Jesus His authority over the demonic realm was undisputed and absolute. He cast out demons with a word (Matthew 8:16, Mark 1:27) and relieved the symptoms of their possession (Luke 13:11-13). He also passed this authority to the Twelve and later to the 70.

Luke 10:17-22 NKJV *Then the seventy returned with joy, saying, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name." (18) And He said to them, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. (19) "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. (20) "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven." (21) In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight. (22) "All things have been delivered to Me by My Father, and no one knows who the Son is except the Father, and who the Father is except the Son, and the one to whom the Son wills to reveal Him."*

This is a great perspective statement. It puts authority over spirits in the second rank of blessings behind those associated with salvation (v. 20). Yet it clearly states that even "babes" - the ordinary Christians who are neither "wise" or "prudent"(v. 21) can operate in

spiritual power and authority providing they operate within the scope of Jesus' redeeming Name.(v. 17-19) . Demons do not respect knowledge. They only respect authority and power. God gives His authority and power to all who believe and operate in his name. The humblest believer can be endowed with great authority from God. The apostles were certainly "unschooled" miracle workers. (Acts 4:13, 14)

The power to deal with the demonic comes from God through faith in the name of Jesus and is part of His works that He trained His Church to do (Matt 10:8). The Presence of the Kingdom demands the absence of the demonic and evicting evil powers is a battle of heavenly proportions that the Church is called to wage.

2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NKJV *For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war according to the flesh. (4) For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, (5) casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ,*

Ephesians 6:10-12 NKJV *Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord and in the power of His might. (11) Put on the whole armor of God that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. (12) For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.*

We cannot wage this battle in our own strength but only with weapons that are given to us from God and with His delegated power and authority. We only have a right to this authority because of what Jesus did on the cross in "spoiling", capturing and defeating and "looting" the "principalities and powers."

Colossians 2:15 NKJV *Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.* The Christian is by definition "in Christ" and participates in this victory of his Master just as a mere private participates in the victory of a General. When one wartime commander defeats another even a private in the winning army has authority over a general in the losing army. Christ has won the battle for us and God has given us authority to defeat evil. (Luke 10:19; Romans 16:20) Demons are afraid of 1) The blood of Jesus Christ 2) The bold testimony of Christians 3) The authority of Christ and His saints. (Revelation 2:11, Ephesians 1:20, 2; 6).When Christians resist evil even Satan himself is forced to flee. (James 4:7)

How can we tell if a demon is involved? In brief demonic activity most frequently stems from the person's or their immediate families involvement in occult activity, destructive addictions or promiscuity/pornography. These are very strong life-controlling things that affect our spirits directly. When illness results from such a lifestyle and proves largely untreatable (some alleviation may be experienced but never freedom) then pray and ask God if evil spirits could be involved in the person's subjugation. There were two main groups of symptoms of demon activity that were alleviated when Jesus cast out evil spirits - 1) Chronic untreatable illness 2) Mental instability , inner torment and derangement. On liberation from demonic activity epileptics were healed (Mark 9:17-27), infirm cripples

straightened up,(Luke 13:11-13) blind and mute people received speech and sight (Matt 9:32-34) and people were relieved from inner torment (Luke 6:18, 8:29-35). This is not to say that all chronic illness or mental instability is due to demonic activity but merely that when it is due to evil spirits that we have the authority in Christ Jesus to alleviate the distress. I can recommend Ed Murphy's "Handbook of Spiritual Warfare" for a balanced and thorough treatment of this topic.

Raising the Dead

One of the most obvious effects of Jesus redeeming us is that we will all one day be raised from the dead. **1 Corinthians 15:51-55 NKJV** *Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed; (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. (53) For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. (54) So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: "Death is swallowed up in victory." (55) "O Death, where is your sting? O Hades, where is your victory?"*

Jesus is "the resurrection and the life"(John 11:25, 26). He is able to impart life to our mortal bodies through the power of the indwelling Spirit (Romans 8:11). The final wonder-filled resurrection to glory is pre-figured in gospel events such as the raising of Lazarus from the dead. (John 11:1-45). Raising the dead in the here and now as a result of the faith-filled prayers of the saints is in the category of "great wonders". Raising the dead was a rare event even in the ministry of Jesus and the apostles and only occurred a handful of times. It is never implied that all who die should be raised to life. It always seems an extraordinary mercy of God toward some person "deserving" of that mercy because of great need or a life of good works. While the New Testament amplifies at length on the healing ministry of the church and the gift of healing and commands the elders to pray for healing there is only one recorded injunction to "raise the dead" - that given to the twelve by Jesus when sending them out into ministry, . (Matthew 10:8). Thus the New Testament raises the possibility of believers being able to do this work of Jesus but seems, frustratingly, to leave it there. There have been various reports of the dead being raised even today however they are nowhere near as common as that of healings or exorcisms. Those raisings from the dead that have occurred in modern times seem to have mainly been in conditions of exceptional revival. I think this is generally its proper context.

Despite all this caution we should remember that Jesus is the Lord of Life - in all its forms (not just spiritual life) and that He can raise the dead and give people a second chance at life. After all "nothing is impossible with God"(Luke 1:37). The possibility of the dead being raised in answer to prayer exists because Jesus has chosen to confront and defeat Death "the last enemy"(1 Cor 15:26). While Death will be the last enemy to be defeated some victories are possible here and now though most will undoubtedly wait until the resurrection of the dead when Christ returns.

Summary and Conclusion

Jesus' redemption of mankind has opened up possibilities for the believer in healing the sick, raising the dead and in casting out demons. Two of these - healing and exorcism seem to have been commonplace in the early church while raising the dead seems to be much rarer. Jesus confronted evil in all its forms and has borne not just our spiritual afflictions such as sin and judgment but our physical illnesses and emotional grief. He began to bear these latter things during His earthly ministry (Matt 8:16, 17) and culminated this lifting of burdens on the Cross. Since then He has continued to heal the sick through the ministry of His body the Church.

Where to from here? There is not sufficient space for me to fully outline a balanced and compassionate and Biblical theology of healing. That would take a book. What I can recommend is starting with a concordance or computer Bible program go through and study every biblical reference to healing, exorcism and raising the dead. Test your theories against the biblical data and pray, pray, pray for the sick. They need your prayers and Christ's help.

Jesus And The Law

Jesus believed in a kingdom that was "not of this world" and established a kingdom that would eventually fill the world and bring to an end "the kingdoms of this world". His agenda was distinctly anti-the-system and it was this that brought Him scourging, crucifixion and death. Jesus created no systems and left no bureaucracy. It has been argued by some theologians that man was designed to be a totally free, Spirit-indwelt agent. Certainly Jesus gave a strong hint to this in John's gospel where He says "The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit." (John 3:8) It is the thesis of this writer that we were made to be God-indwelt beings of great beauty, wisdom and intelligence, full of a Spirit empowered reality. All people were to be "in the image of God" , bits of eternity expressed through human flesh. This original intention for mankind is being fulfilled through the church, the glorious bride of Christ and Holy Spirit indwelt believers. This Spirit-filled state is not one that fits into the ordinary patterns of life. It has an order - but an order that makes sense only when eternity is taken into account.

For instance if God had intended Spirit indwelt beings to be legalistic, ordered, judicial and to seek redress in this world by legal means then He would never have instructed us to ignore our rights, turn the other cheek, go the extra mile or to love our enemies. When a society falls in love with legal process every slighting, every wrong, every injury, is brought to court and "justice must be done". Instead God has destined His church to be unjustly treated in this world in order that it might participate in the sufferings of Christ and have eternal glory. We are meant to be a persecuted people, a people who suffer wrongs gladly in the name of Christ knowing that the temporary sufferings of this age will be compensated for by our receiving an overwhelming weight of glory.

Jesus calls His people to be people who do not quickly resort to law. He has called us to be people who call upon the Spirit and upon their God. Neither Jesus nor any of the apostles took anyone to court - even though they were most unfairly treated. As Christians we are to turn off the tape in our head that says "I'll take them to court for that..." and replace it with a Christ like ability to suffer well. I must confess this has been one of life's great challenges for me as I have often wanted to take a certain so-and-so to court, or to sue a doctor for malpractice. Yet despite the reasonableness of it, despite the fact that God has not taken away my rights to justice, I know inside myself that there is a better course. I know, clearly, that seeking legal solutions is as expensive spiritually as it is economically. Somehow it does not cure the bitterness or sooth the soul.

Jesus has called us to leave behind the world's way of legal thinking "the leaven of the scribes and the Pharisees". His inveighing against "the teachers of the law" was not because the law of Moses was evil but because it was interpreted in a cruel and oppressive way. The law was being interpreted by the flesh not the Spirit. Jesus often quoted the saying "I desire mercy rather than sacrifice", telling the scribes and Pharisees to go and learn what mercy and true spiritual values meant before they constructed laws about tithes, the Sabbath and a thousand other things. Spiritual values underlie legal requirements. Without these under girding spiritual values of mercy, justice, and charity the

superstructure of commandments and regulations collapses and becomes a tool for oppression.

Galatians 5:19 lists the works of the "flesh" or god-less nature of man as being "sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies and the like..". It is the central group from hatred to envy that I want to bring your attention to. What happens when this god-less nature, this "flesh", gets hold of a bunch of laws, any laws, from the rules of bridge to the Constitution of England. We quickly see people hating one another in court, using the law as a weapon, we see discord produced, we see jealousy and fits of rage, we see the law twisted to further selfish ambition and interpreted so as to cause dissensions, promote factions and serve the cause of envy. The flesh loves the law, under the rubric of "justice" the flesh aims to achieve its own divisive way.

Law without the Spirit is a dreadful thing. Do not get me wrong, law is not bad, it is just twisted and misused. There is a true Christian love of law that is a deep reverence for the ways and values of God. There is a Spirit-filled law-abiding. We will see more of that later. But be certain of this - true Spirit-filled Christianity is not of the letter. True Spirit-filled Christianity both transcends the letter of the law and penetrates to the spiritual values underneath. A trained and Spirit-filled Christian conscience in living communion with its Savior knows what is right and true without having to consult a thousand law books and a myriad regulations. Christians must give up drawing lines to live behind and find Jesus in their conscience instead. Legalism and the love of the letter of the law is not for the Christian.

How did Jesus deal with His incredibly law-loving culture? How does the Sermon on the Mount prove or disprove all I have just said? Surely it, above all, is a collection of laws? As I showed in chapter one, it is not, and cannot be, a new law code. I am sorry that my fellow preachers and commentators have treated it as such. There are those who use the beautiful Sermon on the Mount as a club to beat young people into line and damage many a sensitive conscience on the way. How many young men struggling with new-found surges of lust and unbreakable habits have been utterly condemned by some preacher saying that such lust is adultery and wicked? They crawl out condemned; beaten, discouraged, feel total failures as Christians and sometimes even leave the faith as a result. Of such interpreters it can be truly said that they "lay huge burdens on men's shoulders and do not lift a finger to shift them". We cannot stand by and tolerate the spiritual carnage that results when Christianity is turned into a set of laws to be fulfilled "don't smoke, don't drink, don't dance, don't associate with those kinds of people etc."

There are many people who have said to me "I just can't be a Christian any more..." utterly crushed and dejected by the failure they feel at living up to "Christian expectations". Surely this is not the intended outcome of the Sermon on the Mount. Surely this outpouring of God's grace is there to help and not to hinder?

Jesus does two things with the law in the Sermon on the Mount. Firstly he sets it right. It had been monstrously twisted by the spirit of legalism and the ease of the flesh. Jesus puts it back on plumb centre showing us the spiritual values underlying the letters of each law

He addresses. Secondly He breaks the "spirit of legalism" forever and teaches a higher ethic than the lex talonis. He teaches us to suffer well, to be meek and to love in a radical new way that penetrates to the core of life.

When Jesus says "But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those that persecute you." He spoke as one who would be crucified. He spoke as the one who prayed "Forgive them Father for they know not what they do." He spoke as one who would shortly have to live out His words. How then, can we, who know all this, and who possess the indwelling Holy Spirit, act in high dudgeon and drag our enemies off to court? If that next door neighbor irritates you with their barking dog do you call the Council, full of wrath and demanding "justice" or do you pray for them? Do you do good to them, build a friendship, and find out the dog is not so bad after all? These daily nuisances are when I find people least lovable and where I must find some spiritual resources to change my impatient nature.

Now I must say that I have not been held hostage by terrorists or brutally assaulted. The great criminal injustices of life have escaped me by and large. These are, perhaps, in a somewhat different category. Terrorism cannot just be politely ignored. There is a time and a place for the proper exercise of criminal justice in order to protect society. The Sermon on the Mount does not invalidate the hanging of terrorists or the jailing or rapists - but it does invalidate your and my temper tantrums over our small and even moderately large injustices. How to treat the criminally inclined is a whole different topic. Some people have forgiven completely and never sought the help of the police; others forgive and see the person jailed. I see nothing inconsistent with the second approach. Loving our enemies does not mean taking away from them the consequences of their behavior. God loves His enemies but allows us all to make our mistakes and suffer our consequences. I think the Christian heart should be reluctant to brace the law. It should be an awful last resort not a first expedient.

Yet Jesus was not law-less. He believed utterly that God had standards that human lives should be ordered by. When Jesus taught that marriage was ordained ideally to last forever and was not a disposable commodity He meant it with every fiber of His being. When He taught us that greed was not good and that Mammon was not God, He could not have been more in earnest. What then are we to make of the standards taught in the Sermon on the Mount if they are not a "law code". The first thing we must note is that they are incomplete. The Sermon on the Mount does not touch on many things - the proper conduct of worship, idolatry, theft, much is left out. As a law code it is terribly inadequate. What it does address is the spirituality underlying Pharisaism. This includes judging others, twisting the law, hypocrisy, the love of money, prayer, fasting, almsgiving, boastfulness and spiritual superiority.

If the Sermon on the Mount is a law code it is a law code for lawyers! It condemns those who used their understanding of the law to justify themselves and to condemn others. All of us are clearly shown to be in need of grace. So then - it is no law code but an unleashing of grace. The standards of the Sermon on the Mount are not laws we must live up to in order to be pronounced good - that has happened when we believed in Christ. Rather they are standards that call us to a life of grace. They are the goal of our walk not the perimeters of our disobedience.

Can we use the Sermon on the Mount to judge our fellow Christians - or unbelievers for that matter? Certainly not! The whole aim of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount was to end such judging. The Sermon on the Mount is to be used to show each of us where we need God's grace. It is a manual for prayer so that in its light we can approach God and ask Him to change us. It is a call to sanctity and right practice in life. It calls us to live worthy noble and extraordinary lives as saints of the Most High God.

Deep down inside each of us, in "the flesh", there lives what I picture as a little green leprechaun with a shillelagh who is itching to get out and whack someone on the head. One day at some point we let him out - it is an issue of justice or doctrine or morals. The little green man has a grand old time and many people are hurt - some forever. There is no issue worth letting that little green man out for. The Sermon on the Mount is like a dose of cyanide to this law-loving leprechaun. It takes away his right to ever use his shillelagh. It says to him that there is nothing worth brawling over. It says it is better to lose than to brawl and fight and accuse. It is better to suffer injury than to judge one another; it is better to weep than to say that we alone are righteous. Jesus did not come to give fuel to that little green man. He did not come to feed him more laws to stoke his fires of "righteous indignation" and to create a legalistic, defensive monster. He came to put that little green man behind bars forever - in fact to crucify him, to take the commandments that were hostile to us out of the way through the cross (Colossians 2:15) and to create a race of gracious grace-filled people.

The Sermon on the Mount tells us how gracious grace-filled people behave. The Sermon on the Mount gives us a calling worth living up to and a direction to grow in. That young man struggling with his lusts can now be told - we do not judge or condemn you, here is the direction Jesus is calling you to grow in, we want to help you get there and we are here for you every step of the way and we know it will take some time. We can invite him to join the brotherhood of the weak - of those who need grace and we can understand for we ourselves are tempted and weak. I believe far more people would stay Christians if they were treated with that sort of gracious understanding. The standards of the Sermon on the Mount cannot be relegated to the Millennium or turned into a law code. They are God's callings for grace-filled souls. They are the end of the little green man, they are the condemnation of the Pharisee, they are the death sentence for the legalistic mind set. They require a new way of thinking about life - not by the letter of the law but through the lens of the Spirit who wrote the laws and engraves them on the heart of all who believe.

We can no longer hide our inner beings from the gaze of God while outwardly conforming to a law code. The Sermon on the Mount demands our inner beings as well. It claims God's rulership of the heart. Jesus brought heaven's laws to human hearts through the Holy Spirit and here displays heaven's teachings so that those who are of God may rejoice and those who hide from Him may repent.

The Sermon on the Mount shows us that the inner laws of the heart - the knowing of God in the inner being and the living out of His life through us are paramount. We are not allowed to hide from God - not even miracles, prophecy, exorcism, almsgiving or prayer are allowed as hiding places. We may not hide our being behind our doing. It must come out into the light. We must be known by God for who we are - for being loving, humble, meek, and seeking after God. Jesus does not allow us to use the law as a mask any longer.

We cannot say "I am OK with God, in fact he really likes how I live." such pompous prattle is gone. The law cannot protect our hearts from the gaze of God. Jesus takes away the law as our shelter from God. Jesus finishes legalistic self-righteousness as a comfort zone forever. We are really only left with three choices - to deny or distort the truth of the Sermon on the Mount, to ignore it, or to start out on the life of grace.

Jesus And The Bible

Jesus comes closest to agreeing with the Pharisees when it comes to His view of Holy Writ. To Jesus the Scriptures were absolutely sacred, lasting and eternal, and of paramount authority. Jesus was no textual critic taking a bit from here as merely human and a bit from there as authentically divine. There was no question for Him that the Bible was true from start to finish along with all its evident supernaturalism.

And this was not just Jesus being "a man of his time" with outmoded views imposed upon Him by his culture. For a start Jesus did not let the culture of the day impose their views on him in any other matter, let alone one as important as this; secondly the range of views on Scripture then was as broad then as it is today. The viewpoints abroad in Jesus day included everything that is common today. There was extreme mysticism and allegories, skepticism about miracles and the supernatural, strict literalism, superstitious veneration of prophets tombs, codified morality, people seeking signs and wonders, others retreating to the deserts to save their souls.

Numerical systems abounded, Messianic triumphalism was common, Platonic idealism occupied the minds of those favorable to Greece and Rome. Philosophies and interpretative schemata from political to allegorical found adherents in first-century Palestine. Jesus could have chosen to champion one or all of them . He certainly refuted many of them. The Sadducean view that there were no angels, demons, or after-life was characterized by Jesus as "sadly mistaken". Messianic triumphalism was refuted by His poverty, His suffering and His death on the cross. Mystical and fanciful interpretations were scuttled by Jesus' straightforward approach. Jesus took Scripture seriously and fairly literally - every word therein was Truth.

Yet Jesus transcended the literalism of the Pharisees by putting the interpretation of Scripture on the basis of spiritual and moral insight not on the scholastic ability to add, subtract and compare texts. Scholarly study has its place but, as is commonly experienced, it can be dry and very unsatisfying spiritually if it is not enlivened by appropriate spiritual insight.

My original theological training was in fundamentalism and there the Bible is held in high esteem and texts are treated with respect - but largely without spiritual or humanitarian insight. No fundamentalist could have come up with the insight that the Sabbath was made for man - not man for the Sabbath. Fundamentalism sees man as being made for the Scriptures and what they command. Fundamentalism often lacks the mercy of Jesus and a true love of people. It lacks the basic spiritual insight that could bring it to life - yet I am very glad of the knowledge of Scripture it has given me and which has enabled me to write this book. Liberalism on the other hand is even more of a catastrophe. It denies the basic building blocks of Christian faith - even the hope of the resurrection. In its effort to communicate with unbelievers it has lost its faith. I believe if Jesus was to "have His say" He would call us back to the simple, experimental faith of St. Francis of Assisi where the call is to live out the gospels as if they were true - and of course they are.

Here we come to two essential statements about Jesus and the Bible. First - Jesus believed every word of the Bible was true. Secondly - Jesus put the Bible into practice assuming that it was true. I have signed many statements saying that I believe in the Bible - in fact I signed one last week. But I must honestly ask - do I really and truly believe it? Will I take the risks that come from putting the scary dangerous bits into practice? How many times have I sold a possession to give to the poor? How much do I really believe in God healing people? Can I really be meek and humble when people in bureaucracies treat me like dirt? Can I leave my rights behind some days? To be gladly obedient to God when there is very little earthly advantage in doing so is my challenge. Yet Jesus took hold of the Bible and said "This is worth obeying - right down to the last jot and tittle" and He obeyed it - right down to the last jot and tittle.

But what was the nature of that obedience? It was the obedience of someone who was fully human but not corrupt. He did not cheat. He did not use more of the indwelling power of God than any human being is fairly entitled to. As I explained earlier we were all meant to be God-indwelt images of God. He was human but He was in no way corrupt. He did not bend commandments to get around them or create excuses for sin. He lived in the bare light of God's love and holiness. It was a full obedience - obedience in spirit and truth as well as outwardly in form. It was a natural obedience not a bug-eyed striving of a tormented soul, it was a natural outflow of an obedient inner being not a terrible attempt to conform to expectations. It was a wise obedience that knew obeying the law in one situation may not be the same as obeying it in another. It was an obedience governed by a spectacular level of spiritual insight. The law for Jesus and the Bible for Jesus were absolute governing determinates of His life. He saw Himself in them - and indeed He is there. When we come to living by the Sermon on the Mount our guiding principle should be - how did Jesus live by the light he had and how then should we live in the light of this sermon?

Our obedience must then be obedience without evasion. We must try to actually live out the calling to blessedness set before us. Every jot and tittle of the Sermon on the Mount is important and authoritative to you and I. Underlying our obedience must be mercy, discretion, love of others and a growing spiritual insight. I have said a fair bit about this earlier and so I will leave it here - but it is a lesson worth repeating that the sermon needs a certain cohesive underlying spiritual insight before it can be properly and graciously applied and lived today.

When Jesus approached Scripture there was no question in His mind that it was true. The question seemed to be how it was to be lived and understood and what everlasting principles were revealed. He distinguished between weightier matters - such as justice, and lesser matters such as tithing. But even the lesser matters were not to be neglected. His only agenda seemed to be joyous obedience to God. What do I mean by this? In the encounters Jesus had with other people they all seemed to have a private agenda which distorted the way they viewed Scripture.

The Pharisees seemed to ask "How can I justify myself before God?" then there were others who had nationalistic political agendas and asked about the Messiah "When will he restore the kingdom to Israel?" and those such as the lawyers and Sadducees who had

self-centered social ambitions and could not tolerate Jesus' answer to the question "Who is my neighbor?" Then as now people wanted Him to interpret Scripture in a way that would validate their lifestyle of choice. On the other hand when Jesus came to the Scriptures He seems only to have asked "How can I glorify my Father who is in Heaven?". He saw God in Scripture, in nature and in the events of the world around Him. He revealed in what was revealed and Scripture glowed for Him as he sought God's glory in obeying it, living it, being it, and of course imparting it. Joyous obedience to God out of simple-hearted love of the glorious Father drove Jesus into the Scriptures and opened the book to Him.

Interpretation involves renunciation. Jesus renounced reputation, possessions, political power and even life itself in order to live out Scripture in a hostile world. To see Scripture clearly means letting go of those things that blind us. I remember when I was a new Christian I tried to go out with a girl who was not a Christian. There were certain sections of Scripture I crept around and just plain refused to read. I would not read them because I knew they would tell me I was wrong and I wanted the girl more than I wanted to obey God in that area. I had to sort that out before I could get back on track spiritually.

There are many things we may have to simplify or even renounce totally if we are to see Scripture as Jesus saw it. I doubt we can be materialistic and read the gospels with much comfort. I doubt we can hold grudges and join church factions and then survive the epistles. Or we may have to renounce some of our far too busy schedules and make time to fast and pray. While the concepts of Scripture can be of vast delight the real joy comes from radical obedience and realizing that God is there and with you and loving you as you attempt to put it all together and into practice. That radical obedience costs but it makes things clear. That is what I mean by interpretation involves renunciation - you cannot have armchair Christianity and truly know God. You must get out there and do it.

Here is a simple suggestion for putting into practice the Jesus view of Scripture - start with one commandment that really scares you. For you it may be merciful - go and be merciful to someone you hate, who annoys you, who you would like to judge all the way to Hades and back again. Or it may be God calling you to come out of your cultural boundaries and love people from other nations and backgrounds - even other denominations! You may be called to help the poor. Take something - just one thing that scares you witless and do it for Jesus just because you love Him and want to obey Him. Then do it again and again. Joy will fill your soul and God's word will come clearer and you will see God's love for those people all through Scripture. Christianity will become an adventure not an obligation - and so it should be.

Jesus never taught His followers how to interpret Scripture - only how to live it out. Jesus did not produce scribes, He produced disciples. I am not suggesting that we abolish all the courses on hermeneutics (the art and science of interpreting Scripture) taught in Bible colleges and Universities rather I am suggesting that we average Christians need to get our focus fixed on living right lives rather than arriving at correct conclusions. Correct conclusions are well and good and incorrect conclusions can be damnably dangerous however we quickly reach a point when we are doing little more than engaging in warfare over how many angels can fit on the head of a pin and disobeying the Pauline injunction not to engage in disputes over words. In the contest for our interpretation we divide the

body of Christ, cause factions and set up disputes all "in the name of Christ". When we indulge in that we fail to live out the gospel. We live like scribes not like disciples.

What I am suggesting is not new, there have always been proponents of a practical obedience. What I am asking of you, especially if you are a pastor, is that you stop nit-picking and start living. Take up the challenge of actually doing what the gospels say. Be a disciple and in doing so you will not only save yourself but will inspire others to seek salvation as well. The to and from of this and that interpretation were the stuff of the scribes and Pharisees and consumed their energies and defined their social relationships. For Jesus this was not so. I am sure that He cared that Scripture was interpreted rightly - He takes great pains to disembowel the wrong interpretations of His day in the Sermon on the Mount, but for all this it was not His preoccupation. Jesus did not define His piety in terms of "for" and "against" this or that interpretation. For Jesus piety was not arrived at through discussion but through action. Jesus and His disciples lived - they were not a committee or a forum, they were not an itinerant band of speculative Jewish philosophers, they were a group of people committed to living for the Creator and to serving the Most High God. So must we be.

Jesus appears to have done us all a great disservice in leaving behind no writings and no teachings that give us a neat and tidy infallible system of biblical interpretation. If correct biblical interpretation is necessary for holiness and if faith cannot proceed except on the basis of right exegesis then He should have told us how to do the job with less confusion than we currently have. These assumptions assume Christianity is an exercise of the intellect first of all, then the will and last of all the emotions. The spirit is relegated to being a source of data for the intellect which is placed in supreme position of guidance for the Christian. Such a position is sadly mistaken.

If we take that position then we go ever backwards trying to find absolutely reliable data - back to original languages, textual and form criticism, redaction criticism and parallels from ancient languages and we end up ultimately asking "How do I know what I know - in fact do I know anything at all? Can I prove that the Bible is true and if I cannot prove it how can I know God exists and if I can't then....." We get lost in a quagmire of doubt and some even lose their faith in the process. It just doesn't work that way. Faith does not depend on confirmation by ancient manuscripts.

Faith lives off life and the confirming witness of the Holy Spirit. When I was converted I came to believe the Bible was true, my spirit found nourishment in its words and my initial doubts were eventually swept aside. Years later new aspersions were cast against Scripture and I began to ask questions again but the "proofs of Scripture" I discovered were appreciated by me because I already deep down believed in the truth of Scripture because of the testimony of the Holy Spirit. First came the Spirit, second came the "proofs". This is how it is with most people. We believe the Bible not because it is demonstrated to be true by some historian but because of its impact on our lives and the testimony of the Holy Spirit convincing us inwardly that it is true. The historical proofs come later. The intellect comes last, the spirit comes first.

Jesus did not teach us how to interpret Scripture because he was to send the Holy Spirit

into our hearts to write His laws there and to create a prophetic community which glorified God together. The Holy Spirit imparts to us the few dozen truths we need to know to be fully Christian, in fact He imparts all truth (1 John 2:20,27). We do not need to make Christianity more complicated than the Holy Spirit makes it. You do not need to know Greek in order to be godly. If we simply paid disciplined attention, disciple-like attention, to the basic doctrines of the faith and to loving the Lord our God with all our heart and mind and strength and our neighbor as ourselves then we would be quickly on the path to saintliness.

This path to saintliness seems to be the centre of Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount. Of all the Old Testament He could have chosen from in this call to blessedness He selects those things that lead to saintliness most quickly. He does not present a systematic theology of God's dealings with Israel or a lecture on the proper interpretation of prophecy - as important as these things may be. He gets to the common core - about what it really means to be God's person and to live in joyful and holy obedience. Jesus seems to see the Bible as a guide to saintliness, as the light-filled book of the Kingdom. To Him the Bible is not burdensome and not to be so interpreted as to become a burden.

It is the opposite; it is the razor that cuts us free from the entanglements of life and into the glorious freedom of the humble and the poor in spirit. It cuts away pretension and the crushing burden of having to maintain a facade of righteousness. It demolishes the thousands of regulations imposed by men in order to prop up their own respectability. The Bible of the saint is a book that is loved not feared, it is a book that frees not burdens, it is a book that strengthens the heart in the love of God and promises joy at the end of the pathway of suffering. The Bible for Jesus floated on the Spirit - its author and interpreter.

There is a view abroad today that Scripture is there as a set of proof texts to increase our faith, that "the promises of God" are what we are to hold to and that the proper result of Bible study is a miracle-working faith. This is not Jesus' view of Scripture at all. Jesus aims at producing responsible, godly and love-filled disciples. Miracles are secondary. Love, not faith, is the goal of the teaching of Jesus.

Faith is good and miracles are marvelous but there is a greater good that Jesus calls us to and that is the good of a noble, faithful and loving character. It is who we are in our inner being that is His preoccupation, not the results of our prayers. Paul, echoing these sentiments says that even if we have faith to move mountains but do not have love - then we are nothing. While the call to blessedness may include a call to work miracles or to great faith that is not the end or goal of the matter. True Truth leads us to Christ and to Christ-likeness as the goal of our Christianity.

If the goal of Bible study is saintliness then what is the Bible and how does it change us? Jesus answers that the Bible is the Word of God and that we are changed to the extent that we prepare ourselves for and train ourselves in godliness. In His parable of the sower He explains that the seed of saintliness is the Word of God - both spoken and written it seems. He then goes on to describe the outcomes of this same seed falling on hearts with differing degrees of softening and differing degrees of attention to the things of God. The Word of God is not magical. It cannot convert the totally hard-hearted. It does bear great

fruit though in those who are "good soil" - who are receptive to the Word and who deal with the distractions of this life, in them it has a power of its own to bear fruit , thirty, sixty even a hundred-fold over.

The Bible for Jesus had life and had the power to be life-giving to those who would receive it with a good and faithful heart. In all His kingdom parables the Kingdom is portrayed as having a particularly vigorous energy about it. It is the quickly growing mustard seed, the leaven in the loaf, the salt of the earth, it is light, it overcomes the world. The kingdom of God is full of vitality. It is exploding with life and part of this life is the Word of God which is portrayed as "living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword.". The Bible is not a dead book but a living force-to-be-reckoned-with! For Jesus the Scriptures were not something you studied, dissected and killed but something that lived in you and animated your whole being. Yet he did study Scripture; let me not discourage you from that! Study it as much as you can, but do not kill and dissect it - let it live within you with power and surrender to all the changes it brings.

I see in many a gradual loss of enthusiasm for the Scriptures. At first there is a tremendous zeal and much learning. Then in the midst of all the learning the Holy Spirit prompts them to some difficult personal change and they push it away with a gentle "Not now...". Gradually the years slip by, too many "Not now" accumulate and the Spirit's voice seems dull and Scripture rather boring. The zest has gone and they do not quite know why. Perhaps you are in this category. I know about it because I have been there too. There is a way back to refreshing times and that is simply to say "Yes, Lord". Vow to yourself that you will simply do that entire God tells you to. Do it to the best of your ability and if you fail, try again. Turn "Not now" into "Yes Sir". Take the time to bother with obedience. I know that sounds harsh to you. When I say that you must bother with obedience it is because I know that many days it will be an effort and that on many days it will seem an effort that is not worth the making. But you do love Jesus and you will try won't you?

This clear path to saintliness through the enlivening power of specific Scriptures applied and obeyed in the heart of a receptive and diligent believer is what the Scriptures were meant for. The Scriptures were never meant to be the happy hunting ground for historians, linguists or even theologians. The Scriptures are meant for the saints. I hope you understand that ordinary people like you and I can be saints too, that you don't have to dead and buried to radiate the love of God in your corner of the world. Anyway Jesus got it right (are you surprised) and He used the Scriptures the way they were meant to be used. Not as weapons to divide people in ecclesiastical bun fights but as pointers to the Truth and to the saintly life. Not as proof texts for some marvelous system of thought. Not as flag-waving rhetoric to rally people (as one US politician tried to do recently - and failed). Not as a way of feeling better than others. But as the lights that lit the path to Heaven, as the life-giving power behind true godliness, as the razor of truth that sets people free from the greed and materialism and foolish vanity that ensnares them for so long and in such great fear.

This chapter is only an introduction to the ways Jesus used the Scriptures in love. But I think it has begun painting a picture for you that you can think about and take away with you. Remember the Scriptures are for the saints. Remember how Jesus used them to free

people. How He used them in all purity of heart and motive. How He obeyed them and rejoiced in them. Remember their living power to change us. Remember how seriously He took them. With them He rebuked the strong who were using their strength unjustly and encouraged the weak who felt crushed by even the most basic duties of life. With them He changed the world and produced disciples - not scribes. I want you to use the Scriptures well. I want you to continue to look at how Jesus used the Scriptures and to follow His very wise and spiritual example. The Scriptures are not cannon fodder for your personal war or ammunition for rebuking your enemy. They are not cudgels for defending the faith. They are there to grow saints for God and to proclaim His truth in your life. You will most help the Scriptures by a life of joyous obedience. No-one wants an argumentative person, but everyone loves a saint.

Can Jesus Be Our Model For Emotional Maturity?

Hebrews 12:1-2 NKJV *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, {2} looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

It is one of the key teachings of Christianity that our Master and Model is Jesus Christ and we are to be conformed into His image and be like Him in all respects. Let's look at two well-known verses in this regard:

Romans 8:29 NASB *For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;*

Ephesians 4:15 NASB *but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ,*

God's plan for our lives is that we become conformed to the image of His Son. Now to "grow up in all aspects into Him" includes the emotional aspects of the nature of Jesus Christ. Becoming emotionally mature and skilled is part of our sanctification - but it is only a part. There are many other aspects of sanctification as well such as faith, knowledge and purity. Growing up emotionally is important and it's the part of sanctification that this book will focus on but please don't get the impression that I think Biblical EQ is all there is to sanctification.

Is Jesus Christ An Appropriate Model For Emotional Maturity?

There are a number of objections that people might think of against using Jesus Christ as our Model of EQ:

1. The standard is too high, the idea is terrifying, it just gives me a panic attack to think of it. I can never be like that.
2. He was God and sinless, I'm neither. He had an unfair advantage. What's possible for him is just not possible for me.
3. There isn't enough information in Scripture to make a judgment. Its an argument from silence. You can just make Jesus into whatever you want Him to be to suit your purposes.
4. He was Jewish and lived in the Third World 2000 years ago and just ambled around the place healing lepers. What would He know about the pressures of corporate life and the

emotional jungle that my office is? OR I'm a woman, He was a man and totally different emotionally. It's just silly to ask me to be like Jesus.

5. Jesus was a prophet and had the emotions of a prophet. I could never be that confrontational - its not my spiritual gift.

6. Jesus? High EQ? Kind of lacking in social skills if you ask me! I'm much more tactful and artful than that. Don't ask me to act in ways that get you nailed to a lump of wood.

Well let's look at some ways we can answer those objections and the assumptions that underlie them.

Objection 1: The Standard Is Too High

Solution: Jumping Off Jacob's ladder - Getting Rid of Legalism over Emotions

Many evangelicals have a "Jacob's Ladder" view of the spiritual life with Jesus at the top and host of angels in-between and Christians climbing up rung by painful rung. The idea is to ascend to perfection, to strive to arrive. One slip and you tumble to the bottom to start all over again. Those that adhere to this view of spirituality are always envying those ahead of them, clinging on to the ladder for dear life, and having not too much to do with those "below" lest they get dragged down.

This view of the Christian life is thoroughly unbiblical. Ephesians 2:6 tells us that all those who are in Christ are already seated with Him in heavenly realms and Hebrews 12 tells us that we have come (past tense) to the Heavenly Zion. In Christ we have already arrived in terms of spiritual status. There is no ladder and if there is all born-again Christians are standing shoulder to shoulder on the top rung as brothers of Jesus Christ (Hebrews 2:10-15). We have been saved by grace and not by our own spiritual strivings (Eph 2:8-10) and there is no condemnation for those in Christ Jesus (Romans 8:1) including condemnation about our emotional life.

To aspire to be like Jesus is not a matter of status or spiritual ascent. It's a journey, a destination, a joyous arriving. It was what we were made to be like from all eternity. If we view our emotional life as an indicator of spiritual status then it will be utterly terrifying to think of Jesus as our model. An emotional insecurity will seem to be a "sin" and every lustful thought a pathway to Hell. If we judge ourselves and rate our spiritual life by the difference between our emotional life and the emotional life of Christ, by how far we have yet to go on our imaginary Jacob's ladder, then all we will feel is endless guilt and insecurity. By trying to go up, you will go under.

If you recognize yourself as being on an imaginary Jacob's ladder, it's time to "jump off". It is time to let go of striving and relentless self-assessment, to stop comparing yourself to those around you, and to let the strain of sanctification go and to instead to learn how to receive grace so that you grow far more quickly than you can in your own strength.

When I am saying "let's consider Jesus as our model for the emotional life of the Christian" I am NOT setting a new standard to be "lived up to" by discipline and self-control. Your discipline and self-control will run out long before you reach that standard! Being like Jesus is our vision and our destination. We fix our eyes on Jesus, we seek to grow up into Him, we pattern ourselves after Him. It becomes an exploration and an adventure, a time of growing and learning, a receiving of grace upon grace as we learn to be like Him. It is a gracious growing - not a terrifying ascent.

Objection 2 - He was God and that's cheating!

Solution: He was also fully human. Jesus was the prototype of the perfect Christian, the elder brother among many brethren. We are of the same kind as Him.

Jesus was not some aloof divine maharaja floating six inches above the ground, another category of being entirely from you and I. Jesus is God yet He was also fully human and tempted in every point as we are and still retains that humanity in Heaven as our faithful high priest.

Hebrews 2:10-18 NASB *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. (11) For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father; for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren, (12) saying, "I will proclaim thy name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation, I will sing thy praise." (13) And again, "I will put my trust in Him." And again, "behold, I and the children whom God has given me." (14) Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; (15) and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. (16) For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham. (17) Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (18) For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.*

This passage and others like it in Hebrews (4:14-16, 5:7-10) emphasize that life of Jesus was difficult. It was so difficult that it was quite rightly described as suffering and had all the emotional hallmarks of suffering. It was no light suffering for it was to have the effect of perfecting Him! It was a suffering that matured His obedience by testing it under very stressful conditions. As we shall see Jesus was pressed again and again to almost breaking point but He never sinned. Though He was God He laid aside those privileges (Philippians 2:5-11) to become fully human and a servant and was "made like His brethren in all things that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest".

He was made like us in our experiences of hunger, thirst, tiredness, frustration, misunderstanding, betrayal and even of unjust treatment by others. Even a cursory reading of the gospels will tell you that He did not just cruise through these experiences. He wept, He rebuked, He cried out, He rejoiced, He got angry, He became "troubled in spirit", He

groaned in anguish and sweated drops of blood. Life for Jesus was difficult and it was often emotionally intense. This has made Him merciful in His role as high priest for He has fully been where we are.

In fact the reason we can be like Jesus is because He became very much like us. In fact He calls us "brethren" (Hebrews 2:11) which means that we are enough alike Him to be considered family and to bear a close "genetic relationship" that has some sort of equality about it. The Scriptures also say that we share the heavenly realms with Christ Jesus, and are members of Heavenly Zion (Ephesians 2:6, Hebrews 12:22-24). Therefore we are literally "in the same realm" as Christ Jesus. Romans 8:29 tells us that we will be conformed to His image almost like someone pressed into a mould. Our shape will be the same as His shape. We will be like Him. There will be a resemblance. We can resemble Him because He chose to resemble us. Finally Ephesians 4:15, which I quote often in this book, says we are to be made like Him "in all respects". That's a very close likeness.

To dramatize this with a touch of humor- imagine I was to compare a trout with a horse using these same criteria. Can a trout occupy the same realms a horse? No, a trout swims in the river and a horse gallops on land.. Can a trout be called a brother of a horse in any genetic likeness? Not at all. Can a trout be made into the image of a horse or expect to be made like a horse in all things? It's ridiculous. In order to occupy the same realms, be brothers and be able to transform into Christ Jesus we must be very much LIKE Jesus. In fact we are like Jesus because we are fully human and He became fully human. He became like us so that we could become like Him. Jesus took on our emotional life so that it may be redeemed and become like His emotional life.

Finally we share a common destiny with Jesus Christ and a common home.

John 14:1-4 NKJV *"Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. (2) "In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. (3) "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. (4) "And where I go you know, and the way you know."*

"That where I am, you may be also". This is not just the offer of streets of gold. It's the offer of an elder brother to His younger brethren. It is fellowship, it is love and it is a family. We shall be enough like Jesus to be considered family; He as the Son of God and we as sons of God. When we are made in all aspects like Him and conformed to His image we will share His habitations and have meaningful fellowship with our Lord and God. Going back to our trout and our horse - there is no possibility of meaningful fellowship there. It is only in likeness and communication that there can be fellowship with God. Jesus is not alien to us but in fellowship with us and we can be like Him. Our emotions, in the end, will be fitted for life in eternity with God. The goal of biblical EQ is thus not commercial success or social popularity but fellowship with God and harmony in Heaven.

Objection 3: There isn't enough information about His emotional life to base an EQ theory on

Solution: There is enough to give us key reference points so we can gain a reasonable impression of what it means to have a redeemed and Christ-like emotional life.

The information about the emotional life of Jesus is contained both in direct references to His humanity such as "Jesus wept" in John 11 and in broader more theological references that imply His full humanity and complete goodness. For instance John calls Him "the light of life" and states that darkness had no place in Him and could not overpower Him. To have no "darkness" in one's spirit is to have emotions that are never deceitful, false, envious, spiteful, grumbling or small-minded. All his emotions were "light" not in the sense of light-hearted but as in the sense of positive, true and illuminating, righteous, appropriate and genuine. There was never a snicker or a snarl, never a dark brooding, violent emotion. Whether in tears or triumph the emotions of Jesus were noble, wise, good and perfectly righteous. Then there are the direct references.

A survey of any good systematic theology such as Erickson or Grudem will find a wealth of information under the heading "the humanity of Jesus" as well as a good discussion of the complexities this entails (such as how the divine and the human were combined in one person). I will leave these intricacies to the theologians and will just list some of the biblical references which show how complete His humanity and emotional life was: Jesus experienced hunger (Matt 4:2, 21:18), thirst (John 19:28), fatigue (John 4:6), He rejoiced at the end of the sending out of the seventy-two (Luke 10:21), marveled at the faith of the centurion (Matthew 8:10) and felt love for the rich, young ruler (Mark 10:21). His most frequent emotion is compassion which is recorded 11 times in the gospels (e.g. Matthew 9:36). Anger was part of life for Jesus such as when He became angry at the Pharisees for their hardened cruelty (Mark 3:5). Zeal for God's honor caused Him to cleanse the temple (John 2:17). He grew in stature and in wisdom and in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52) was subjected to high-powered temptation (Matthew 4:1-11), and learned obedience without sinning (Hebrews 5:8-9). He had some of life's more painful emotions as well. For instance He wept (Luke 19:41, John 11:35), His soul was troubled (John 12:27) and a while later He was "troubled in spirit" (John 13:21). He underwent extreme emotional distress to the point of death (Matthew 26:36-41) and prayed with loud cries and tears (Hebrews 5:7). Finally of course he experienced an agonizing death on a cross (Matthew 27:34-54) with its attendant feelings of abandonment (Matthew 27:46).

The way Jesus processed His emotional life can also be deduced from some of the incidents in His life. For instance He was extraordinarily calm in the face of storms and authoritative even in the face of arrest. He was an accessible person who was a "friend of sinners" and seemed to enjoy a reasonable social life with stable friendships with His disciples and with the household of Lazarus, Mary and Martha at Bethany. He had an inner circle of Peter, James and John and the apostle John seems to have been a true friend and was known as "the disciple whom Jesus loved". Thus there is sufficient evidence from direct references, incidents in the gospels and proper theological inference to construct a reasonable portrait of the emotional life of Jesus - at least one that can inform our discussion of biblical EQ.

Objection 4: Jesus is not a culturally relevant or gender relevant model for the emotional life I lead. To ask me to model my emotional life on His is inappropriate.

Solution: The cultural details of Jesus life are scant. God seems to have mainly preserved only those details about Jesus that are relevant for all places and times.

The core message of who Jesus is has been perceived by Jew and Gentile, slave and free, male and female down the centuries. We will find out that Jesus shows us how to cope with pressure, express anger, set limits and boundaries, participate in grief and feel for the lost, the sick and the downtrodden. No one argues that Jesus shows us how to have compassion and love as our primary emotional realities. These are the sort of principles that survive cultural and gender differences. Each of the EQ skills that Jesus displayed is written into Scripture for our instruction. Much about His personality is left out - even such vital details as His age or His personal preferences. This means that those details that are in there (e.g. He is recorded 9 times as saying thanks at meals) are ones that the Holy Spirit wanted to draw attention to and are largely personality independent. [In the case of "saying grace" it is the value of being thankful and cultivating a life of gratitude for daily provision.] Millions of people in dozens of cultures find the gospel accounts of Jesus highly relevant to their situation. Using Jesus as our model means following what Scripture says not what medieval paintings portray. There is no indication that Jesus had a beard or long hair or was slightly effeminate looking. All these cultural details are absent from the gospels. What is present is the account of a person with a remarkable understanding of humanity and an enormous desire to heal it and redeem it. If we mould our passions on His passions we will be highly relevant people in a very needy world.

Objection 5: Jesus had a totally different spiritual gifting. I could never be as assertive, confident or confrontational as He comes across as in the gospel narratives.

Solution: Becoming like Jesus is not about becoming a clone of a prophet but is a unique journey of self-discovery.

God does make us each very different and He certainly does not ask us all to be evangelists or prophets. In fact it is quite clear that there is no one "right" Christian personality. Some are like Peter or Paul, while others resemble Moses, Daniel, Barnabas or Elijah. Yet as different as each of these people are or were, each of them was Christ-like. There is almost a trick to this. If I imitate another human e.g. Billy Graham, I end up not being myself in the end yet if I imitate Jesus the reverse happens – I find myself. This is because Jesus is the center of humanity and the crown of humanity and we were all created by Him and for Him and in him everything holds together, including our personalities (Colossians 1:15-20). Thus becoming like Jesus is like a journey to the center of the Universe, full of adventures and surprises where we end up back where we began but marvelously transformed. When the timid person decides to become like Jesus he finds new boldness. When the sarcastic wit decides to become like Jesus she finds new gentleness and tact. When the messed up and confused person decides to become like Jesus, clarity appears as if from nowhere. The

gospels talk about losing yourself in order to find yourself and indeed we do. One person sets out, another return that is somewhat similar but entirely different. The timid person loses their fear that they have harbored for so long, the sarcastic person loses their cruelty, the disordered person loses their freedom to be foolish. No-one becoming like Jesus becomes a clone. It's not a journey to a single point, a "dot" we must all approximate. We don't all end up in Jerusalem wearing sandals. Maybe it's a bit like a spiritual black hole in which we seem to vanish but actually end up on a journey in another Universe traveling faster than the speed of light.

Objection 6: Jesus was tactless and His "high EQ" just got Him crucified. That is not something ordinary people should imitate. They should be tactful and careful.

Solution: Jesus was not tactless; He was an effective agent of change and a brilliant communicator who was steadfastly opposed. His EQ skills made Him effective and powerful and thus are worth imitating.

The ministry of Jesus and His EQ skills seem to have gone through three stages:

Favor: First Jesus grew in favor with God and man (Luke 2:52). Secondly His early ministry was characterized by people being astonished at the gracious words that fell from His lips. (Luke 4:22). At this stage His EQ skills make Him perceptive, gracious and tactful.

Effectiveness: Where He taught with authority and challenged the teachings of the scribes and the Pharisees. Some opposed, many listened, His following grew. His opponents were infuriated by Him, but at this stage they were not yet afraid of him. At this stage His EQ skills make Him authoritative and effective as a public speaker and prophetic teacher

Power: Jesus eventually became a national political and religious figure that many people wanted to see become King. He was able to challenge the highest authorities in the land and to create genuine fear in His opponents. His enemies were now truly afraid of Him and plotted His death like that of any political enemy. At this stage His EQ skills make Him a skilful leader of a mass movement and also someone able to withstand enormous pressure and persecution.

For Christians the development of a high biblical EQ goes through these same three stages of favor, effectiveness and power. Stage one is "to grow in favor". This is where EQ skills are honed and refined and poor strategies are discarded. Stage Two is effectiveness where EQ skills are honed in one's own home town and district and an effective and authoritative ministry develops. Stage Three is power when EQ skills are used to effect large scale change in one's community such as being a community organizer, politician, writer, moral crusader, preacher or evangelist.

These latter stages generally provoke a reaction from the Evil One who launches his attacks against the now highly effective Christian. Two Scriptures are relevant here:

2 Timothy 3:12 NKJV *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

Matthew 16:24-28 NKJV *Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. (25) "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. (26) "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? (27) "For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works.*

Godliness will attract the scorn of some and the hatred of a few. If those few occupy places of power then the persecution can be trying indeed. Nevertheless we are called to be lights in the midst of darkness and sheep in the midst of wolves; as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves. A high EQ will enable you to skillfully handle high level social and political issues and be a real influence for good in your society. However, this will attract attention, envy, rivalry, and in some cases ridicule, scorn and hatred.

The prophet Daniel is a prime example of this. His high biblical EQ, wisdom and maturity made him effective and influential but made others envious and landed him in the lions den amongst other places. But God delivered him! My experience of Christian political involvement is that the persecution is always more than I wanted but always far less than I feared. If you strive to attain the EQ of Jesus Christ you will eventually become so gracious, poised, and authoritative that you will have a real presence that makes a difference at national and international levels. Unfortunately you will also have real enemies opposing the righteous changes that you are seeking to bring about. Then its time to take up your cross and follow Him!

Conclusion

Thus, we see that Jesus is indeed a very adequate and in fact ideal model for the development of the Christian's emotional life. This is a high calling and in some ways a daunting one. How did Jesus cope? What gave Him the strength? Or as His neighbors in Nazareth said when He returned from the wilderness "Where did He get this wisdom from?" From the Holy Spirit! And the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of Jesus – particularly in His emotions, soul and spirit, is the subject of the next fascinating chapter.

Questions for Discussion:

1. How scary is it to have Jesus as the model for your emotional life? Is it adventurous scary or terrifying scary?
2. How much like Jesus can we hope to be?
3. What is the best thing about having Jesus as our spiritual model?
4. How can we "jump off Jacob's ladder"?
5. Name the three stages Jesus went through in developing His EQ skills?
6. At what stage are you at in developing your own EQ skills?
7. Name six emotions that Jesus felt. What do you think it was like for Him?

The Holy Spirit, The Emotional Life of Jesus, And The Emotional Life Of The Spirit-Filled Believer.

Isaiah 11:1-2 NKJV *There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. (2) The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.*

The central teaching of this book is that as part of their redemption Christians are to take on the emotional life of their Savior and that this occurs as a result of the power of the Holy Spirit who transforms us into the image of the Son of God. If the Holy Spirit is indeed the divine dynamic and the agent of deep emotional transformation then we should see some evidence of that in His work in the life of Jesus. Obvious questions arise that we will investigate such as: Did His baptism and empowerment with the Holy Spirit change Him or did He remain just the same? Are there any hints that the Holy Ghost lay behind the impressiveness of His personality? Can we appropriate some of the same power that moved Jesus?

The Baptism of Jesus and His EQ

While Jesus grew in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man there was also a sudden break in His life, a radical change in His emotions and personal authority so that those who knew Him said "where did He get this wisdom from...."

Matthew 13:54-58 NKJV *And when He had come to His own country, He taught them in their synagogue, so that they were astonished and said, "Where did this Man get this wisdom and these mighty works? (55) "Is this not the carpenter's son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brothers James, Joses, Simon, and Judas? (56) "And His sisters, are they not all with us? Where then did this Man get all these things?" (57) So they were offended at Him. But Jesus said to them, "A prophet is not without honor except in his own country and in his own house." (58) Now He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief.*

He had changed! While Luke shows us that Jesus was a child prodigy (Luke 2:42-50) no one expected Him to turn into a miracle working prophet. The transition from promising youth to powerful prophet seems to have come at His baptism. There was a massive empowering work of the Holy Spirit that changed Jesus just as Pentecost changed the disciples.

The highest level EQ skills such as boldness and courage and skill in healing and proclamation are Holy Spirit endowed. The early church realized this when they prayed for boldness and the room shook! (Acts 4:29-31). EQ change empowered by the Holy Spirit

can be remarkable and sudden and leave others astonished. I can testify personally to a remarkable change in one meeting in September 1978 when I went from being a timid and secretive Christian to being as bold as a lion and an ardent evangelist!

The Body of Jesus and The Holy Spirit

As we all know our physical state and our emotional state are closely connected. We are more disposed to get angry when we are tired or hungry. We also seem to inherit certain emotional dispositions from our parents. We are "hard-wired" from birth into a certain emotional disposition (however this can later be altered as we shall see). This can be as toxic as a problem with rage or as beneficial as the ability to be enraptured by music. The Holy Spirit set Jesus' genetic structure at conception so that He was unusually inclined to love righteousness and hate wickedness (Hebrews 1:9). A passage from Hebrews indicates that His body was prepared for him by God, so that Jesus would love to do the will of God. (Emphasis mine)

Hebrews 10:5-7 NKJV *Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for Me. (6) In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin You had no pleasure. (7) Then I said, 'Behold, I have come; In the volume of the book it is written of Me; To do Your will, O God."*

Here we see that as Jesus came into the world He had a body prepared for Him by the Father and the express intent of His coming into the world was "to do Your will O God." Jesus had a body that was free from sinful genetic predispositions towards rage, alcoholism, drug addiction, or whatever other negative traits that can be passed on genetically. Basically Jesus was born without any sinful dispositions. His body and nervous system were formed to do the will of God by the creative, body-renewing and forming work of the Holy Spirit.

If the creative work of the Holy Spirit was able to make Jesus' body such that it was free from sinful tendencies then obviously that power can go to work in our bodies also. This gives us hope that long standing biological urges can be erased by the healing and renewing ministry of the Holy Spirit and countless Christian recovery programs attest that this is the case. Alcoholics can and do lose the biological desire to drink, homosexuals can and do have their sexual orientation set right, drug addicts can and do completely lose their cravings, sex addicts can be and are freed from the torment of 24hr a day lust. But is this a realistic and a scriptural expectation? Let's look at Romans 8:11

"But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you."

The Holy Spirit can give life to our mortal bodies – not just our resurrection bodies, but the very bodies we have now, our mortal bodies. His renewing life can pulse through us and cleanse us from sins and addictions just as he can heal a person from illness or disease. Like a divine electrician he can fix the fuse box and rewire the house so the circuitry functions as it was always meant to – for the glory of God.

The biological basis of sin is not separate from the spiritual basis of sin. When God delivers you from sin He can deliver you from sin in your spirit, sin in your soul and eventually from the power of sin in your members. He can fix the physical and medical basis of rage, lust, addictions and anti-social behavior. Minimal brain dysfunction, ADHD, post-traumatic stress disorder, and whatever else may be engraved in our neural tissue - can be healed by the Holy Spirit.

Let's see how this happened for the Christians at Corinth:

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 NKJV *Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, (10) nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionist will inherit the kingdom of God. (11) And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.*

The Corinthian Christians has come from some pretty terrible backgrounds including fornication and adultery (sexual addiction), homosexuals and sodomites (probably pedophiles in this case), and drunkards (alcoholics). These behaviors are generally acknowledged to have a strong and persistent biological and neurological component.

However they are now PAST behaviors, they have been repented of and forsaken and the Corinthians are now washed and made holy! "Such WERE some of you" - its over, dealt with, fixed. And this transformation took place "in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God". Paul puts it this way....

Romans 8:13 NKJV *For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

Galatians 5:16-18 NKJV *I say then: Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. (17) For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish. (18) But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.*

The Spirit can deal with the flesh in both its spiritual and biological aspects. We are not at the mercy of our genetics or our addictions. The Holy Spirit can set us free! What He did in constructing the body of Jesus so that it was prepared to do God's Will can be done for you as well "for nothing is impossible to him who believes".

The Soul and Spirit of Jesus

Listed below are all the direct gospel references to the soul and spirit of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 26:38 NKJV *Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me."*

Matthew 27:50 NKJV *And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit.*

Mark 2:8 NKJV *But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, "Why do you reason about these things in your hearts?"*

Mark 8:12 NKJV *But He sighed deeply in His spirit, and said, "Why does this generation seek a sign? Assuredly, I say to you, no sign shall be given to this generation."*

Mark 14:34 NKJV *Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch."*

Luke 10:21 NKJV *In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight."*

Luke 23:46 NIV *Jesus called out with a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit." When he had said this, he breathed his last.*

John 11:33 NKJV *Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.*

John 12:27 NKJV *"Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour."*

John 13:21 NKJV *When Jesus had said these things, He was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, "Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me."*

John 19:30 NIV *When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.*

Three things especially stand out:

- That Jesus perceived life's situations with His Spirit.
- That Jesus was moved on the basis of those perceptions.
- That Jesus candidly expressed His emotions to those closest to Him.

[Also to be noted are His ability to surrender His spirit to God and that with the surrender of His spirit His life ended.] Note the power and depth of Jesus reactions. He cries out with a loud voice, is troubled unto death, or rejoices greatly. His Spirit-filled emotions were powerful and present. He is no antiseptic, calm beyond belief, purely logical and mental being. The triumphs and tragedies of faith move Him deeply indeed - as they have moved all great men and women of God.

Jesus and Perception

In Mark 2:8 Jesus "perceived in His spirit". The spirit is the true organ for the perception of reality for Jesus as Isaiah declared in one of the best known passages in the Bible:

Isaiah 11:1-5 NKJV *There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. (2) The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD. (3) His delight is in the fear of the LORD, And He shall not judge by the sight of His eyes, Nor decide by the hearing of His ears; (4) But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked. (5) Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, And faithfulness the belt of His waist.*

The presence of the Holy Spirit upon Jesus gave Him extraordinary knowledge and wisdom so that He judged situations righteously and truthfully and inwardly. He did not judge situations as they appeared to the eyes and ears and to sense perception (verse 3 above). Rather He judged life's situations with a spirit of wisdom and understanding, counsel and knowledge that saw into the heart of things. This special perception that Jesus had shows in many of the gospel encounters and is neatly summarized by the apostle John who writes: (John 2:24 NKJV) But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because He knew all men. (see also Matthew 9:4, 12:25, Mark 5:30, 12:15 Luke 11;17, John 5:6, 6:61, 64 , 13:1-3, 18:4)

Jesus' perceptions of situations then led to His emotional reactions to them. On sensing His impending death His soul was troubled unto death, on seeing the grief at Lazarus's tomb He groaned in spirit and was troubled, when the disciples returned victorious He rejoiced, when He perceived the hardness of heart of the Pharisees He became angry, and when He sees masses of people coming out after healing and teaching He is moved with compassion. (See "objection 3 in the previous chapter). Jesus then expressed these emotions powerfully but appropriately. There is always great dignity in the reactions of Jesus Christ. His emotionality was deep and expressive - never trivial, sentimental or chaotic. This then gives us a process for our own emotionality:

1. Perceive life spiritually, righteously, truthfully and with a Kingdom perspective.
2. React in our soul and spirit. Be moved by life. Not aloof and detached or cold and hard.
3. Express those reactions with dignity, power and poise. Be full-hearted emotionally but also be wise in expression.

In the next chapter we will see that the apostles and many great men and women of God over the centuries have done precisely this - bringing their emotions under the control and empowerment of the Spirit of God so they reacted to things no longer from a merely human perspective with its five senses and self-interest but from a divine perspective with spiritual perception and true Kingdom interests. This is what makes a good Christian

biography so compelling - we sense a different way of looking at the world - a heart controlled by God and seeing His interests in all things. In that chapter I will argue that a Kingdom perspective is not only good for our sanctification it is also critical for good emotional health and a high EQ. However I have more to say about the emotional life of Jesus first.

The Beliefs of Jesus Christ

Emotions flow from beliefs. When I was a young boy I was playing by the local creek when I found a huge lump of iron pyrites (Fool's Gold) and it was heavy and soft and looked like gold. I showed my brother Peter and we went home very secretively so nobody could see us with our important find. We then showed Dad and said, "We are rich! We are rich! We found this huge lump of gold and there's more just down by the creek!" Dad just laughed and explained about Fool's Gold. Even though our belief was not a true belief it still made us very happy while it lasted. We were so excited, not by actually finding gold, because we didn't actually find gold, but by the belief that we had found gold. When this belief was corrected, our emotion of joy was unsupported by an adequate belief, and it vanished. We went from very excited to being a bit disappointed. Once the belief vanished, the emotion vanished. Underneath emotions are beliefs, if you take away the belief the emotion vanishes, if you change the belief sufficiently, the emotion changes.

How we believe has a direct affect on how we feel. This applies even in spiritual things. So if, like Jesus, you think that stealing houses from poor widows is wrong, you will react to it with the intensity that Jesus did. The difference between a video camera recording an event and a person seeing the event is that the person has prior beliefs. These prior beliefs cause the person to react to what they see. Let's look at three incidents in the life of Jesus to see how His beliefs informed His emotional reactions and made them different from those of so called "normal people". First we will look at His cleansing of the temple:

Mark 11:15-17 NKJV *So they came to Jerusalem. Then Jesus went into the temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. (16) And He would not allow anyone to carry wares through the temple. (17) Then He taught, saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it a 'den of thieves.'"*

John 2:13-17 NKJV *Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. (14) And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business. (15) When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers' money and overturned the tables. (16) And He said to those who sold doves, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (17) Then His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up."*

What beliefs of Jesus lay behind the strength of His reaction here? In Mark's gospel we see that Jesus believed:

- That the purpose of the Temple was to be a house of prayer for all nations.
- But that it had become a robbers den.

In John's gospel Jesus is shown believing that it is:

- My Father's house
- But instead it had become a house of merchandise (with the implication that it was dishonest trade.

[The accounts are not contradictory they just report slightly different samples of Jesus reactions at the time. It is probable that he said many other things as well while He was overturning the tables.]

Let's look at the sequence of events. Jesus believes it should be A but perceives it is in fact B this leads to emotional reaction C which is expressed in verbal and physical behavior D. For Jesus His beliefs included the honor due to His Father, the fact that the right use of the temple was prayer and that all nations should have access to it. They also included the belief that trade, especially dishonest trade was inappropriate in such a location. These were not widely and strongly held beliefs in His time otherwise the traders would not have been there in the first place. His unique beliefs led to His unique emotional reaction based on His spiritual perception of the nature of the situation.

Let's move on and look at another of Jesus' puzzling reactions - during a fierce storm on the lake of Galilee.

Matthew 8:24-26 NKJV *And suddenly a great tempest arose on the sea, so that the boat was covered with the waves. But He was asleep. (25) Then His disciples came to Him and awoke Him, saying, "Lord, save us! We are perishing!" (26) But He said to them, "Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?" Then He arose and rebuked the winds and the sea, and there was a great calm.*

Here Jesus' belief seems to have been that He was absolutely safe and that nothing could touch Him because His Father was protecting Him and the disciples. His belief also included the fact that it was a sane and reasonable thing for Him to speak to waves and wind and expect that they would obey Him. Furthermore He seems to believe that the disciples ought to share these beliefs and were quite unjustified in being fearful in the midst of such a storm.

Based on these beliefs Jesus perception of the situation seems to have been "Not a problem!" It just wasn't a big deal. To say that this is "counter-intuitive" and defies all common sense is no under-statement. Nevertheless his beliefs were justified for He calmed the storm with a word. It truly wasn't a problem for Him at all.

People of great faith have a tremendous poise in crisis situations. In a later chapter we shall learn how to handle situations we dread from a position of faith and a sense of mastery. Here Jesus beliefs led to Him having emotions of calm and a sense of mastery in a crisis situation and enabled Him to take effective action to remedy the situation.

For our third illustration of Jesus' belief system we will go a few verses earlier in Matthew 8 to see the only time Jesus is recorded as "marveling" at something...

Matthew 8:7-14 NKJV *And Jesus said to him, "I will come and heal him." (8) The centurion answered and said, "Lord, I am not worthy that You should come under my roof. But only speak a word, and my servant will be healed. (9) "For I also am a man under authority, having soldiers under me. And I say to this one, 'Go,' and he goes; and to another, 'Come,' and he comes; and to my servant, 'Do this,' and he does it." (10) When Jesus heard it, He marveled, and said to those who followed, "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel! (11) "And I say to you that many will come from east and west, and sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. (12) "But the sons of the kingdom will be cast out into outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (13) Then Jesus said to the centurion, "Go your way; and as you have believed, so let it be done for you." And his servant was healed that same hour.*

Here Jesus is marveling at the "great faith" of the Roman centurion. There are many beliefs of Jesus recorded here such as the hardness of Israel, the salvation of the Gentiles and the power of His commands to heal the sick but none of these beliefs are the mainstay of His marveling at the centurion. Jesus is reacting to the presence of great faith in an unexpected place - a Gentile and a soldier, a man who was outside of the covenant and whose job was killing people and who was in part responsible for the occupation of His nation.

This was the reaction of one belief structure to another belief structure. The centurion expressed His beliefs about a) his unworthiness as a Gentile (though a powerful man) to have Jesus visit him and b) His belief in Jesus' authority and the power of His words of command. As the centurion expressed these beliefs Jesus in turn resonated with them. Just as the hardness of heart of the Pharisees enraged Him, just as the littleness of faith of the disciples disappointed Him, the great faith of the centurion encouraged and astonished Him. It was a "rare find" "Assuredly, I say to you, I have not found such great faith, not even in Israel!

So we see that belief structures react to one another and evaluate one another. When we find another who is astonishingly full of faith we rejoice. When we find someone hard and cynical and unbelieving we are discouraged or angered. Like Jesus we search out those that resonate with us. They are a rare find and a treasure. The way we interact with others will depend in large measure on what we believe about what they believe. Much inter-denominational misunderstanding revolves around "what we believe about what they believe" and the strong emotional reactions that result. It's a critical area for mental health and is why some types of fundamentalism though very sound in many areas are incredibly damaging psychologically.

Putting It All Together

Earlier we saw that perceptions led to internal emotions which were then expressed appropriately. Later we have seen that our perceptions work in with our beliefs to produce

astonishing emotional reactions that are unique to the Christ-like Spirit-filled believer. On top of this we have a physical predisposition to certain types of emotional reactions and behaviors - covered in the first part of this chapter. Thus we can say that for Jesus and the Spirit-filled believer the steps are:

1. Perception of person or situation - ideally in the Spirit.
2. Interaction of perception with belief system.
3. Internal emotion generated.
4. Interaction of internal emotion with physical predisposition.
5. Expression of emotion outwardly.

You may be wondering about the title of this chapter "The Holy Spirit and the Emotional Life of Jesus" where is the Holy Spirit in Jesus' beliefs, perceptions etc. Let's see!

Perception: Jesus perceives by both His Spirit and the Holy Spirit who brings these realities to Him.

Beliefs: The Holy Spirit writes the law of God on our minds and hearts and forms our beliefs within us as our teacher and the One who shows us the things that God has prepared for those who believe and reveals to us the deep things of God. Here are just a few direct references to His teaching ministry. (John 6:45, 14:26, Galatians 1; 11, 12, 1 Corinthians 2:9-16, Ephesians 4:21, 1 Thessalonians 4:9, Hebrews 8; 10-11, 1 John 2:20, 27)

Internal Emotions: Emotions can proceed directly from our spirit under the influence of the Holy Spirit "and Jesus rejoiced in His spirit." and emotions such as love, joy and peace are called the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22, 23).

Interaction with Physical Disposition: The indwelling Holy Spirit gives life to our mortal bodies that we may be renewed and be able to cry out "Abba Father!" to our gracious Heavenly Father. See also the first section in this chapter on how His powerful work can break the domination of our lives by sin and addictions.

Outward Expression of the Emotional Reaction: The spiritual basis for revelation that culminates in teaching is shown in 1 Corinthians.

1 Corinthians 2:9-13 NKJV *But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him."(10) But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. (11) For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. (13) These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.*

Thus verse 13 is the culmination of a long sequence. Firstly truth which eye cannot see and ear cannot hear is revealed to us through the Holy Spirit (verses 9-11). Then we receive them through the Holy Spirit who teaches us and works them into our belief system. This is freely and graciously given (verse 12). Finally we speak and we speak not human, but divine wisdom and not in human words and categories but in words the Holy Spirit gives us.

Thus Scripture is not just God's Word in human words; rather it is God's Word in the Spirit's Words. Let's see how this worked for Jesus:

John 8:28 NKJV *Then Jesus said to them, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things. {29} "And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him."*

The responses, reactions, words and expressions are taught to us by God and are in spiritual categories "comparing spiritual with spiritual."

That leads on to the last section of this chapter - symbols, metaphors, and archetypes - how the Spirit teaches us to express spiritual things - including our emotions.

The Language of the Spirit and the Emotional Realm: Symbols, Metaphors and Archetypes.

As I am writing this "Just As I Am" is playing on the stereo in the background and the choir is singing "O Lamb Of God I come.". This is the language of the Spirit that makes no sense to the carnal man but which abounds in Scripture and in the great moments of the Christian faith including the hymns that lift us to God. To take up where we left off in the passage 1 Corinthians:

1 Corinthians 2:13-16 NKJV *These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. (14) But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (15) But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. (16) For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ.*

There is something called "the mind of Christ" which enables the believer to make sense of symbolic language such as "the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" and to quickly grasp the meaning of parables and to feel the wonder of the scenes in Revelation. The Holy Spirit enables us to perceive and believe correctly thus renewing our mind into the mind of Christ. He is our Teacher and instructor and does so in the language of the spiritual realm - dreams, visions, symbols, parables and metaphors - using analogues of the faith to explain it as well as more straightforward language such as that of the book of Romans.

In the language of the Spirit beasts with seven heads and ten horns are juxtaposed with scarlet women and numinous symbols such as the Throne of God. These can be visual as well as verbal symbols and realities angels, demons, cherubim and seraphim are seen by the seers and prophets. To the purely material and "scientific" mind this is all quite offensive and many liberal theologians have stumbled over it. The more we think of the power of our own intellect the less we think of God's Word and the more we think of God's Word the less we think of the power of our own intellect!

Jesus was supremely taught of God and a master of the symbolic realm so the He expressed Himself skillfully in parables, aphorisms, sermons and stories. His teaching was unlike that of the scribes and Pharisees for He taught with authority and in such a way that those truly seeking God understood Him while those who were just curious walked away puzzled and frustrated with His teaching. The language of the Spirit is not "plain language" but is strangely numinous and symbolic. If you have seen some the "New Age advertising" around that taps into these common and universal symbols of the emotional world you will know what I mean.

These symbols or archetypes such as a woman dressed in a flowing white robe holding a torch aloft, or a dove against a clear blue sky, or a rainbow or a man on a white horse dressed for war or a shining sword or a red dragon. These symbols have universal emotional content almost independent of culture. The psychologist Carl Jung spent His life exploring them and Hitler was a master at exploiting them. Transpersonal psychology and various schools of psychoanalysis take them very seriously indeed. Myth, saga, music, song and poetry all tap into this treasure trove of emotional and spiritual symbols as do fables and stories and most national anthems.

We interact with spiritual language either totally or not at all. The phrase "the Lamb of God" either has immense meaning or is a total enigma. It is an almost binary form of communication that literally "separates the sheep from the goats" and believers from unbelievers.

John 10:25-27 NKJV *Jesus answered them, "I told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in My Father's name, they bear witness of Me. (26) "But you do not believe, because you are not of My sheep, as I said to you. (27) "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me.*

In a startling statement Jesus said "but you do not believe because you are not of my sheep". In other words you have to be one of God's people to understand His teaching! It's the other side of the more usual "because you do not believe you are not God's". Here its "because you are not God's - you do not believe." Some eagerly believe and can understand the language of the Spirit while others are just further hardened by it. (John 12:40).

Thus the spiritual person understand the things of the Spirit including symbols, parables and dreams; is taught spiritual things by God, has a deep emotional response to them which in turn finds its deepest expression in the language of the Spirit speaking spiritual truths in words taught by God comparing spiritual with spiritual.

Summary

For Jesus and ideally for the Christ-like Spirit-filled believer the model of the process for the development of the emotional life is as follows:

1. Things are perceived in and by the spirit by believers with the mind of Christ and a lucid grasp of symbol and metaphor. These believers see life as being in a Kingdom framework.
2. This perception is then passed through a grid of beliefs taught to the believer by God.
3. This results in a godly internal emotional state in the believer - of rejoicing, awe, wonder, repentance, burdens for the lost etc.
4. This is then mediated through the renewed life-filled temple of the Holy Spirit that is the believer's body and translated through his or her natural God-given temperament.
5. Finally the emotional response is expressed in words taught by the Spirit bringing edification to the body of Christ and reflecting the mind of Christ on the matter.

This should result in a deep, powerful resonant emotional life that is totally in tune with Kingdom realities and which can express matters of justice and truth as well as care and compassion. This Holy Spirit produced emotional life should weep for the lost, ache for the poor and celebrate the repentance of a single sinner. Like Jesus we should have a Holy Spirit given courage that enables us to speak God's truth in God's words at God's moment. Like Jesus the Holy Spirit in us should make us radiant with a healing and gracious personality so that people sense the love and peace that is in us and know that in our earthen vessels dwells a priceless treasure.

The next two chapters will test the above five step theory before we put it into practice on ourselves. Firstly we will look at the emotional life of apostles, prophets and great Christian leaders. Then we shall examine the dreadful emotional life of carnal Christians. On the way we shall see if the model we have developed works.

Discussion Questions:

1. What are the five steps in the five-step model?
2. What was special about the body of Jesus Christ?
3. What difference did the Holy Spirit make in the life of Jesus?
1. How did Jesus perceive reality differently from others
5. How did the beliefs of Jesus Christ affect or determine His behavior?
6. How is symbolic language often quite different from the language we normally use? Why is it useful?

Perfected by Suffering

Heb 2:10 NKJV *For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*

Heb 5:6-10 NKJV *As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek"; (7) who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, (8) though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. (9) And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, (10) called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek,"*

Heb 4:15 NKJV *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Jesus' Suffering

It is an astonishing thing for most Christians to think of Jesus "being perfected" and "learning obedience". It seems contrary to our popular idea of Jesus as arriving fully formed and spotless like a stainless steel robot that saves the world. That was not the case - He came as a human being and human beings LEARN. Jesus learned to obey. This seems like a contradiction when Scripture declares Him at the same time to be "without sin" (Hebrews 5:14 above). Jesus learned - but never made a mistake! He was the perfect pupil without a blot on the copybook - but He nonetheless did learn!

Throughout His 33 years He "learned obedience". At first He learned obedience to His parents Joseph and Mary whom he "continued in submission" to. And of course He learned obedience to God. The Jesus we see at age 30 to 33 is thus a more perfect and mature Jesus than the child of 12 we briefly see in the early chapters of Luke's gospel. He has matured not only intellectually and physically but spiritually and in His ability to endure sustained temptation and stay on course with His Heavenly Father. Jesus the man has learned a level of obedience that Jesus the child could never have attained to. By the time He reached the cross and had endured the intensity of Gethsemane He was perfected in obedience and was the Perfect Lamb that could be slain for the sins of the world.

Let me immediately say that suffering at no time removed any supposed moral imperfections in Jesus. Jesus had no moral imperfections to remove. Rather suffering

strengthened the virtues of His free will so that it was more and more obedient, more and more able to follow God through more and more difficult and confusing circumstances. Thus suffering simply strengthened that which was good in Jesus. It was not the penal suffering of a prisoner but the strengthening suffering of a great spiritual athlete in training. Jesus had the greatest liberty of anyone yet He used that liberty in only one way - to serve God.

Our Suffering

This bears greatly on our own view of suffering. It says that suffering is absolutely inevitable in the Christian life because if Jesus - who was sinless, was perfected through sufferings so then we, quite logically will also need to suffer to be perfected in our struggle against temptation. Let us consider an everyday example:

"Bill Christian" works as an apprentice mechanic in a typical garage that is adorned with pictures of scantily clad women. He will suffer in a number of ways; firstly, he will suffer in his own struggles not to look lustfully at the pictures or to be enticed into sin by them. This is an intense, humiliating and difficult struggle for most Christian men. Yet there is peace in the victory. Eventually God will provide a way to overcome or to escape the temptation.

1 Cor 10:13 NIV *No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it.*

Secondly, he may suffer torment and outrage at the environment as Lot did with Sodom and Gomorrah.

2 Pet 2:7-8 NIV *and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (8) for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard*

Thirdly, if Bill Christian takes a stand against the pornography in his workplace he may suffer ridicule, persecution or even be given the sack - depending on how contentious the issue becomes. This is the inevitable and unenviable portion of every godly Christian - because sooner or later our living for Jesus will get us noticed.

2 Tim 3:12 NKJV *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution.*

This is just one example of how living a Christian life will lead to suffering - even if we do not sin at all. Bill Christian suffers because he is a righteous person living in a fallen and sinful world. This suffering does not however destroy Bill - it just makes him stronger in God. That which Satan intends to destroy us with God uses to sanctify us! As someone once said "That which does not kill me makes me stronger!" - That can be adapted to "The temptation which does not defeat me makes me godlier."

So we see that suffering is absolutely inevitable if we are to be righteous in our thinking, our behavior and our view of the world. In particular the Christian's soul should be distressed by sin. To be uncaring about sin is not a desirable form of sophistication - it is in fact deadness of heart. To be distressed by sin does not lead us into misery but into its opposite. True joy flows down upon us when we take a right - and stern view of righteousness and wickedness.

Heb 1:9 NKJV *You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.*

Redemptive Suffering

Heb 2:14-15 NKJV *Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, (15) and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*

Jesus "took on flesh and blood" so that He could suffer death on the cross and through that suffering and death destroy the Devil and release the Devil's prisoners. This is paralleled in the work of the church which often has to "suffer and die" before revival breaks forth. In church history it often seems that for every great spiritual breakthrough there is an element of suffering. We see many hints of this in Scripture and theologians have given the name "redemptive suffering" to the suffering borne by a Christian in order to break the power of the Devil over a person, group or nation.

In redemptive suffering there is a painful wrestling with the "powers and principalities" which are determined to keep people in bondage and which will attack and attempt to destroy the servants of God who threaten their domination of people, social groups, cities and nations. Satan can inflict pain, disease, death, persecution and poverty along with fear, discouragement and doubt. He does not give up his territory easily. Satan has come to "steal, kill and destroy" (John 10:10) and is called "the father of lies" and "a murderer from the beginning" (John 8:44). However Satan can only move within the permission given by God. Paul was persecuted and afflicted by Satan but *"out of them all the Lord delivered me"* (2 Timothy 3:11)

Paul had to suffer in order to accomplish his ministry. This was revealed to him even before he undertook it. **Acts 9:16 NKJV** *for I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.* It was a source of both anguish and pride right up until his martyrdom

Col 1:24 NKJV *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.* He exhorts Timothy and all Christians to follow his example in this. **2 Tim 3:10-12 NKJV** *But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, (11) persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured. And out of them all the Lord delivered me. (12) Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution."*

Not only is the believer perfected through redemptive suffering but Satan is defeated and people are liberated from the kingdom of darkness. While redemptive suffering is powerful we should let it come to us and not go looking for it. Neither Jesus nor the apostles went seeking persecution. They just did a good job of preaching the gospel and endured the persecution that came as a result.

The Suffering of Testing by God

God allows us to undergo personal trials and testing so that we may be made useful for His service. One of the classic examples is Peter the apostle....

Luke 22:31-34 NKJV *And the Lord said, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. (32) "But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren." (33) But he said to Him, "Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death." (34) Then He said, "I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me."*

Satan was allowed to "sift Peter like wheat". Peter was only picked out by Satan because he was a key servant of God essential for the progress of the church. He was tested not because he was bad but because he was the best. Thus this suffering came on Peter because of his place in the plan of redemption and it was used by God to perfect Peter and make him an apostle of power later on. Peter failed the test, denied Christ publicly three times and needed to be restored to ministry. This does not seem a successful outcome but it changed Peter's brashness and kept him from the serious sin of pride as he headed up the growing Jerusalem church. This teaches us that even our failures during times of testing can perfect us and actually be woven into God's redemptive plan.

The trouble with testing is that it sometimes just feels like punishment or random catastrophe. That is the way the grumbling Israelites interpreted their testing in the wilderness and they failed badly and were laid low in the desert. Neither are we aware of how enormous the blessing can be from a successfully passed test. It seems Job did not realize that his suffering would bless millions and change the entire concept of God that people held at that time. It just seemed to be a really bad time that he was going through. Things like prolonged loneliness - which tests our ability to keep our relationships godly and to be content, or poverty - which tests our ability to believe in God's provision, can be tests that refine us and strengthen us in God.

These God ordained tests are NOT temptations. God does not pressure us into sinning or entice us to disobedience. James makes a clear distinction between "trials" that strengthen us and "temptations" that destroy us. **James 1:2-4; 12-15 NIV** *Consider it pure joy, my brothers, whenever you face trials of many kinds, (3) because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. (4) Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything. .. (12) Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that God has promised to those who love him. (13) When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; (14)*

but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. (15) Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death. For James trials come from outside and are to be endured and rejoiced in and develop perseverance, perfect character and enable us to receive the crown of life. Temptations come from within under satanic influence and lead to sin and death. Thus trials and temptations are poles apart. For instance poverty is a trial and can strengthen the Christian's character; however the temptation to steal is an evil desire and a temptation that leads to death. God may make a person poor to teach them contentment, but it is Satan that will suggest to that poor person that they steal. God put the tree of good and evil in the Garden but He did not tempt Adam and Eve to eat of it. God tempts no-one.

Why does God test us? Testing is like the football match after the weeks training. It shows what we are made of and where we need to improve. To watch training videos, absorb theory and throw the ball around with your friends is fine but the point of it all is to produce a match winning football team. Its the match that counts. To listen to good sermons, fellowship with believers and study the Bible is good - in fact it is essential, but God wants to see how we perform as Christians in the real world too! So He arranges tests which strengthen our obedience to Him. If we learn from these tests and improve then we inherit the crown of life. Thus tests are one way in which we are perfected through suffering.

Illness, Natural Disaster and Misfortune

When a family member dies in a car crash or a young loved one dies from cancer how do we cope and how do we handle this suffering? How can we perfect through tragedy? There are seasons of misfortune that God allows us to strengthen our love for Him and our patient endurance in God. However misfortune is often interpreted in a very negative light. It comes across as God having failed us or God punishing us. Job did not understand that the whirlwind that killed his sons or the raiders that took his cattle were in fact allowed of God because Job was the best person in the world. Job's interpretation, like that of many Christians, was that God was angry at him and that this was a punishment for some sin that he had no idea of. That was not the case at all!

If God does not explain why something happens it is probably because you are not to blame. When God punishes a person for sin He makes a clear connection between the sin and the punishment. He may use a policeman to charge someone or a Nathan the prophet to say "you are the man" or a doctor to say "your disease is due to your heavy drinking...". God never punishes us without telling us why. Unexplained suffering therefore is not - and never will be - punishment.

Unexplained suffering and catastrophe is allowed in our lives for a number of reasons. They include being able to identify with humanity (Hebrews 2:17, 18), and being made compassionate and faithful in Christian service (Hebrews 2:17, 4:15). Unless we suffer a certain degree of normal human pain and grief we are unable to be truly com- passionate with those around us. Jesus was "a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief". It is suggested by many commentators that Joseph may have died when Jesus was a teenager.

Therefore tragedy is an inevitable part of living in and identifying with a fallen world and we can be perfected by it in becoming softer and more compassionate - becoming better not bitter.

Suffering As A Result Of Our Own Sin or Folly

Luke 15:13-19 NKJV *"And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. (14) "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. (15) "Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. (16) "And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything. (17) "But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! (18) 'I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, (19) "and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."*

Most of us can identify with this - a time when God has brought us to our senses when we were being foolish and wasting our lives. Pain can bring us back to God. We can be perfected and instructed through the suffering that comes with our sin or folly. Much of our deepest suffering is of this kind. People end up in deep financial trouble because they will not budget. Others end up in disastrous marriages because they ignore the teachings in God's word. The pain of these things is not God trying to be cruel but God trying to get our attention so that we repent and learn. Even mature Christians may have some areas where they need to experience some pain and humiliation in order to learn - laziness, pride, lack of consideration for others - will all have painful consequences in our lives. As I said in an earlier section if we are suffering because of our sin God will make it clear to us . In the case of the prodigal son the suffering was clearly connected with the sin. He knew he was in the pig-pen because he had been a sinful, profligate, prodigal fool. If you suspect you may be suffering because of your own sin or folly ask God to show you what you need to fix up and He will gladly do so. Through Scripture, a friend, a sermon or an incident that is so clear it cannot be mistaken He will show you.

The Cross of Jesus Christ - Part One

The Cross in Colossians

The cross is central to Christianity and the studies on it are numerous. I thoroughly recommend Leon Morris's "The Cross In the New Testament" for a deep and thorough understanding of this topic. This month we shall focus on the cross of Christ as presented in the book of Colossians.

Colossians has two main references to the cross. In chapter one verse twenty Paul writes of the cross in cosmic terms. The cross reconciles all things to God -whether those things are on earth or on heaven. This gives us the basis for missionary work because we know that every ethnic group is included in this reconciliation. It also gives us the basis for personal holiness built on the foundation of a far-reaching reconciliation with God. In chapter two verse 14 Paul writes of the cross as erasing the record of our sins and thus destroying the basis that the evil powers and principalities had to accuse and destroy us. Paul goes on to show that this action on the cross removes all the basis for having to observe rituals in regard to food, drink, festivals, new moons and Sabbaths etc. Now lets look at these interesting references in more detail.

Colossians 1:19-23 NRSV *For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, (20) and through him God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, by making peace through the blood of his cross. (21) And you who were once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, (22) he has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death, so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him—(23) provided that you continue securely established and steadfast in the faith, without shifting from the hope promised by the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven. I, Paul, became a servant of this gospel.*

These verses point out the following four things about the cross.

1. That Christ was a perfect and pleasing sacrifice to God. In Him all "the fullness of God" was pleased to dwell.

Jesus was fully God and fully man. Perfect in every way. Because of His perfection God was pleased to use Him as the agent of reconciliation for all things. Being fully God meant that His reconciliation extended to all things in the heavenlies as well as all things on earth. Since the sacrifice was fully God, then it was infinite in scope. Jesus was able to be a substitute for all the sins of all the people for all time. The fact that Jesus was fully God also means that the sacrifice was sinless, perfect, and totally acceptable.

2. That the reconciliation is extensive and all-embracing. *God was pleased to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven,*

No class of being is left out of the possibility of salvation. Kings can be saved, poor people can be saved, Jews can be saved, Gentiles can be saved, slaves can be saved, and so can their masters. There is no group at which we can point the finger and say "this group cannot experience salvation, Christ did not die for them, and they are beyond redemption". The cross is effective for all classes of people. This verse does not mean that all individuals will be saved regardless of their beliefs or lifestyle. It is not an indicator that all will, somehow, go to heaven. This has sometimes been argued from this and other verses. For a concise rebuttal of universalism read Millard J. Erickson's Christian Theology pages 1018-1022.

3. That the cross results in peace." making peace through the blood of his cross".

The sacrificial death of Jesus ends the war between man and God. Paul describes us as "once estranged and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds,". In other words both our inner and outer beings were at cross-purposes with God. When peace is made we move from being enemies of God at cross-purposes with Him to becoming obedient sons and daughters performing His will. This results in His blessing resting on our lives and this produces a state of blessedness known as "peace" or "Shalom" - the well-being, prosperity, abundance and joy of God. To enter into this peace the blood of the cross like the blood on the doorposts in Exodus has to be personally applied. The model in Exodus was that the lamb was slain, its blood collected in a bowl, then applied to the doorposts with a bunch of hyssop. This prevented the wrath of God's destroying angel visiting that house. The blood in the bowl protected no-one. It only became effective as it was applied with the bunch of hyssop. Christ is the perfect Passover lamb and the reconciliation purchased by His blood is only available to those who apply it to their lives through faith. (Exodus 12:6, 12-13, 21-23; 1 Cor 5:7) According to the philosopher and Bible teacher Derek Prince this peace applies to six areas of our lives:

- The blood of Christ brings redemption out of the hand of the Devil.(Eph 1:7, Psalm 107:2)
- Through the blood of Christ all your sins are forgiven. (Eph 1:7)
- The blood of Jesus God's Son, is cleansing you now and continually from all sin. (1 John 1:7-10)
- Through the blood of Jesus Christ you are made righteous, justified, "just-as if I'd never sinned. (Romans 5:9, Proverbs 28:1, Isaiah 32:17)
- Through the blood of Jesus Christ you are sanctified, made holy, set apart for God. (Hebrews 10:29, 13:12 ; Colossians 1:12, 13 Romans 8:2)
- Your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit , redeemed, cleansed, sanctified by the blood of Jesus, therefore the devil has no place in you and no power over you. (1 Corinthians 6: 13, 19-20, 1 John 5:6, Eccl. 4:12)

The peace with God that comes through the blood of the cross affects every area of our lives bringing them into wholeness of body, soul, and spirit.

4. That the purpose of the cross is so that God may purchase for himself a holy and blameless people. His church."....He has now reconciled in his fleshly body through death.

so as to present you holy and blameless and irreproachable before him"

This is confirmed in the epistle to the Ephesians where Paul writes in **Ephesians 1:3-4 NRSV** *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, {4} just as he chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world to be holy and blameless before him in love.* Jesus objective is to "present you holy and blameless". He wants to produce people that are spotless in every respect. Sometimes we see nothing further than forgiveness. As wonderful as forgiveness is we cannot rest there but must press on in the light of that forgiveness to lead holy lives. The cross works in our lives to give us the power to be holy. As you accept this transforming power and harness it by faith you will be made holy from within.

The second of the Colossians passages looks at the cross in the light of false religions and philosophies and show how Christ is vastly superior to all other spiritual powers and philosophical systems.

Colossians 2:13-22 *And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with Him, when he forgave us all our trespasses, (14) erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. (15) He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it. (16) Therefore do not let anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths. (17) These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ. (18) Do not let anyone disqualify you, insisting on self-abasement and worship of angels, dwelling on visions, puffed up without cause by a human way of thinking, (19) and not holding fast to the head, from whom the whole body, nourished and held together by its ligaments and sinews, grows with a growth that is from God.* A further four points about the cross can be extracted from this short passage they are:

5. The cross gives life to the spiritually dead. *And when you were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive together with Him, when he forgave us all our trespasses,*
The point at which we are "made alive" is the point when we accept the work of the cross in our lives and are forgiven all our trespasses. Our life is not an independent life but comes from being "with Him". The spiritual deadness of the unbeliever is total. To put it bluntly some corpses may be warmer than others and some may be very decomposed indeed but they are all corpses. They cannot come alive by their own power. **Ephesians 2:8-9 NKJV** *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, (9) not of works, lest anyone should boast. Life for the spiritually dead flows from God through the cross to all who believe.*

6. The cross ends the power of rules and regulations over the life of the believer. *(14) Erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. (15) He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it. (16) Therefore do not let*

anyone condemn you in matters of food and drink or of observing festivals, new moons, or Sabbaths. (17) These are only a shadow of what is to come, but the substance belongs to Christ.

The total forgiveness of us purchased on the cross ends the power of rules over the life of the believer. Let's look at it this way. Rules in the spiritual realm are either from God or the Devil. The cross has defeated the Devil and so his rules have no power. The cross has also purchased forgiveness for breaking God's rules. The cross has freed us from them into a lifestyle where we are led by the Spirit and not under a law code for approval from God. The cross has thus abolished the rules about food, drink, and festivals that are from God and destroyed the rules about food, drink and festivals that the Devil tried to impose. Thus there are no laws of this nature that the believer has to obey. They were once useful as "tutors to lead us to Christ" but they are the 'shadow' not the 'substance'. Christ is the "real thing" and rules are now a thing of the past.

7. The cross is a final and permanent end to Satan's ability to accuse us erasing the record that stood against us with its legal demands. *He set this aside, nailing it to the cross. (15) He disarmed the rulers and authorities...*

When Satan wants to dig up our sins and fling them at us we can say to him. "I'm afraid you will have to go the cross and find them - they have been nailed there by God". Crucified criminals had their crimes nailed above the cross so people could know why they died. On Christ's cross is a board with all the sins you and I have ever done nailed to it. They were nailed to Christ's cross and he took the punishment for them. He bore all the charges in one massive hit - and rose from the dead. It was as if Jesus stood in court with literally millions of charges against His name and pleaded guilty to all the sins you and I had committed (out of love for us so that we could go free). Then the Judge (God) said "You will serve all these death sentences concurrently - on the cross". (They had to be served concurrently - you cannot keep executing someone). Since the penalty for the crimes had been paid Satan had no further basis for accusing believers before God. . Their charge sheets were all nailed to the cross! With "penalty paid in full" written on them! Satan was out of ammunition! Paul describes this as "disarming the principalities and powers.." and "triumphing over them". It was a victory indeed!

8. The cross gives Christians the confidence they need to break with the domination of their lives by spiritual powers, taboos and superstitions. *He disarmed the rulers and authorities and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in it.*

The Colossians like many Christians now came from a culture which had strict taboos related to spirit-worship and other customs. This part of the gospel message was and is very freeing to them as they no longer have to abide by the countless fear-filled rules of their culture. Some of these taboos can be very cruel -especially toward women. Before the missionaries came to the Gogodala tribe (in which I worked for a short while) the women were required to require wear large heavy cane baskets that covered their heads and most of the length of their bodies for three months after the death of any clan member. This meant that most women were permanently encased in these cruel baskets out of fear of what the spirits

would do if they broke with this taboo. The spiritual powers that are behind these taboos and which make them work are defeated by the cross of Christ. All the taboos have been broken down and the demonic powers have no ground of attack. They have in fact been publicly humiliated and stripped of their power. The Gogodala are now a very Christian tribe that sends out evangelists to other tribes. The cane baskets are long forgotten as the light of the gospel has broken forth into their hearts. The cross ends any need to fear or obey the spirits of darkness (even as a precaution). No Christian needs an amulet, a charm, an incantation, a potion, statue, spell, secret writing, mantra, special diet, or any other thing to ward off evil spirits. We have the cross and the blood of Jesus and that has rendered the spirits powerless, humiliated and made us victors "triumphing over them through the cross".

Conclusion

The cross of Jesus Christ gives us the confidence and assurance we need to progress in God. We know that we are part of a work of God on a cosmic scale where the perfect Lamb of God was sacrificed to reconcile everything on heaven and on earth to God and bring us peace and forgiveness of sin. The cross enables spiritually dead people to be made alive in Christ and empowers those with new life to become holy and blameless and without accusation. The cross is also our protection against all the attacks of the demonic world. It has disarmed Satan and removed his ability to accuse us and means we no longer have to live in fear of breaking taboos or incurring curses and spells. As a result we need no longer be bound by obscure rituals, pointless obligations, religious dietary requirements and festivals designed to appease the spirit world. The cross is our defense and our refuge and gives us the ability to triumph over all spiritual powers. Thus we are freed from human observances into the liberty of the Spirit through the cross of Jesus Christ. Praise be to God

The Cross - A Radical Commitment

In this second part of our series on the cross we will look at the cross as a symbol of radical commitment. And not just in theory.

In Uganda hundreds of thousands, if not millions of Christians were martyred by Idi Amin and his troops in an effort to turn Uganda into an Islamic republic, in Vietnam Christians are vigorously persecuted and in China the house church leaders are beaten and arrested. According to David Barret's World Christian Encyclopedia over 150,000 Christians are martyred for their faith each year. The flood of testimonies of these martyrdoms and books like "Vanya" that recount the martyrdom of prominent believers tell us that we may all be faced with the very real choices regarding our faith.

Many of us have faced painful choices where we have struggled to obey God. Breaking off a cherished relationship with an unbeliever. Giving up a good well paying career to enter Bible College and Christian work. Separation from family for the sake of the gospel. Financial hardship. Isolation. Fear of ridicule. These all play their part. Being a Christian is a difficult and often expensive commitment. If this life alone were to be considered then we are crazy to follow Christ for persecution is inevitable. **2 Timothy 3:12 NKJV** *Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution* in fact this persecution was so intense throughout the apostle Paul's life that he thought that his state was "pitiable" unless eternity was factored in! **1 Corinthians 15:19 NKJV** *If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men the most pitiable.*

Firstly, we will look at what the cross meant in terms of radical commitment for Jesus, then what it means in terms of radical commitment for us.

What the Cross Meant In Terms Of Radical Commitment for Jesus

Philippians 2:5-11 NKJV *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, (7) but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (9) Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Hebrews 12:2 NKJV *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

The cross was for Jesus A movement from kingly authority in Heaven to a servant nature on earth. A letting go of His rightful status (as God) without feeling "robbed" or ripped off.

A humbling of Himself in obedience. A suffering of death - on behalf of others. Something deeply shameful and humiliating Something to be endured.

He answered the challenge the cross presented by: Looking to "the joy set before Him" - the reward from God. Perfectly obeying. Enduring shame. Completing the task he began as the "author" of our faith and the "finisher" as well.

What the Cross Means In Terms Of Radical Commitment for the Christian

Luke 9:23-27 NKJV *Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. (24) "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. (25) "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? (26) "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. (27) "But I tell you truly, there are some standing here who shall not taste death till they see the kingdom of God."*

Here we see what the cross involves for us... Self-denial. Daily humble obedience following Jesus losing our lives - throwing them away for Jesus' sake. Weighing up the long-term consequences Not being ashamed of God - willing to suffer shame in this world for glory in the next.

This can be very costly and Jesus spells it out for us in the following passage:

Luke 14:25-35 NKJV *Now great multitudes went with Him. And He turned and said to them, (26) "If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. (27) "And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. (28) "For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not sit down first and count the cost, whether he has enough to finish it; (29) "lest, after he has laid the foundation, and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, (30) "saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' (31) "Or what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? (32) "Or else, while the other is still a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks conditions of peace. (33) "So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (34) "Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? (35) "It is neither fit for the land nor for the dunghill, but men throw it out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!"*

The costs Jesus mentions include: Family relationships Your own life Bearing the cross. Coming after Jesus - suffering His fate in identification with Him. Carefully thinking through the cost Forsaking all Not compromising and so losing one's flavor and "bite".

From time to time the earliest Christians struggled with their lot and the sheer exhaustion of the sacrifices they were making -including confiscation of property, imprisonment and martyrdom.

Hebrews 12:1-3 NKJV *Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. (3) For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.*

We see that they were called to make Jesus their example at such time and indeed we can see the similarity between what the cross meant for Jesus and what it means for us.

THE CROSS FOR JESUS	THE CROSS FOR US
Letting go of His status of God	Deny ourselves...
Death on a cross	Not loving our own life, "losing our life"
Taking the form of a servant	Daily humble obedience "take up our cross daily".
Endured the cross	Do not become weary or discouraged
For the joy set before Him	Counting the cost of discipleship, factoring in eternity
Obedient unto death...	No compromise, remain "salty"
Despising the shame	Not being ashamed of Jesus but confessing Him before men.
The "finisher" of our faith	Run with endurance the race set before us - until the end
Endured hostility from sinners against himself	All who live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

As we take the cross into our own lives we take on board a special relationship with God as well. Paul speaks of this when he writes, **Colossians 1:24-25 NKJV** *I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church, (25) of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God, and in the epistle to the Philippians he speaks of his sufferings as involving fellowship with Christ in a special way **Philippians 3:10-11 NKJV** that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, (11) if, by*

any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. In Colossians 1:24, Paul writes of Christ's sufferings as "lacking". He does not mean that they lacked in redemptive power. The wonderful redemptive power of the cross was Paul's gospel and he knew he could not add to that! Rather the "lack" is in the delivery of that good news to the world. Christ suffered to purchase men from sin. Paul suffers to get them to understand what Jesus Christ has done for their forgiveness. The sufferings of Christ need to be "added to" by the sufferings of Paul and other preachers of the gospel if the church is to be built. We are like people on a relief mission with food for the hungry - being waylaid by opportunistic bandits and profiteers - the forces of darkness. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against powers and principalities. (Eph 6:12). So our cross works with Christ's cross to produce the Church. Christ's cross wins the victory for souls our cross applies that victory to souls. Christ's cross brings reconciliation with God; our cross makes us ambassadors of Christ and ministers of that reconciliation. God has tied the power of his gospel and the fate of His church to the preparedness of His saints to suffer, to take up their crosses daily and to follow Him. Let's finish with Paul's exhortation to Timothy, a fellow minister of Christ.

2 Timothy 1:8-12 NKJV *Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me His prisoner, but share with me in the sufferings for the gospel according to the power of God, (9) who has saved us and called us with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, (10) but has now been revealed by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ, who has abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, (11) to which I was appointed a preacher, an apostle, and a teacher of the Gentiles. (12) For this reason I also suffer these things; nevertheless I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day.*

The Crucifixion

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Crucifixion was considered by the ancient world, especially the Romans, to be one of the greatest sources of physical suffering a human being could endure. It was reserved for provincials, non-citizens, and the most heinous of traitors. It is to be noted that it was considered such an indignity that no Roman citizen, however hated, was to be crucified. When the Emperor Vitellius was deposed in 69 AD after a reign of only a few months, he was slapped and beaten by the crowd, publicly humiliated, ridiculed, and a hook was passed through his neck and his body thrown off the Tarpeian Rock into the Tiber--but even he was not crucified; that punishment was considered too extreme. When Nero was deposed by the Senate, the pronounced sentence (prevented by his timely suicide) was to be beaten with rods and thrown into the river. Not even the hated Nero would have been nailed to a cross. Paul of Tarsus, as a Roman citizen, was beheaded, which was considered a "kinder, gentler", even merciful mode of execution. The idea was that beheading at least permitted the person to retain a little dignity and honor, so important in the Roman world. The only methods of execution permitted by Jewish law were strangulation, stoning, beheading, and burning.

Crucifixion was adopted by the Romans from the Phoenicians, and when done publicly was a most effective deterrent as well as punishment. The criminal first was flogged with a Roman flagrum, a short leather whip consisting of a handle at the end of which were two or three leather scourges. It had either jagged pieces of bone or metal, or dumbbell-shaped pellets of lead, sewn or bound onto the ends of the leather scourge. The pellets would have had the effect of pelting the victim repeatedly with the ancient equivalent of lead musket balls, pulverizing but not puncturing the skin. The skin would break down fairly quickly, becoming quite degraded. The person would bleed, but the main punishment would come from blunt trauma. On the other hand, if the jagged pieces were sewn into the scourge, they would upon impact flick out tiny chunks of flesh and there would be profuse bleeding. The destruction of the integrity of the flesh and loss of blood by both types of flagrum was such that forty lashes was considered to be tantamount to a death sentence, so when a Roman magistrate wished to cause the victim suffering, but not the full horror of crucifixion, the criminal might be sentenced to thirty-nine lashes before crucifixion. This would usually result in death, thus sparing them the lingering pain and suffering of a cross.

Roman crosses came in three types: The St. Andrew's Cross (*crux decussata*), which is shaped like an "X"; The *crux commissa*, also called St. Anthony's Tau, in which a crossbar is affixed to the top of a stake, forming a "T" shape; and the familiar *crux immissa*, forming the well-known shape that is traditionally associated with the death of Jesus. It was undoubtedly this type of cross used during that day on Golgotha, as the Gospels record that a record of Jesus' "crimes" was affixed to the top above His head. This would only be possible with the *crux immissa*. Greek crucifixions would use a variation of the *crux immissa* in which the crossbeam (*patibulum*) was of equal length to the upright beam (*crux*

simplex). Usually a peg (sedile), or occasionally a seat, was provided for the offender to straddle. It would be large enough to bear his weight.

The above mentioned record of crimes, called the titulus, was put on a white painted piece of wood and the centurion led the procession, carrying the titulus, to the place of death. In Jesus' case there was an additional painful indignity: the Crown of Thorns. It was probably in the form of either a circlet or cap. There were two Greek words usually translated by the English "crown." Though the distinction between the two was often blurred and sometimes the two were used interchangeably, in general the diadem (diadema) was the royal crown which is inherited and indicated a person of high rank. The stefanos, from where we get the name Stephen, was the crown awarded for athletic or other achievement. It was this latter crown made for the Lord during His ordeal, possibly indicating that He was not to be permitted the symbolic royal rank which the Romans thought He thought He deserved.

Deuteronomy 21:1-9 dictates what to do if a man is found murdered and the killer is not known. The elders of the nearest town were to kill a heifer and wash their hands over the sacrifice, declaring their innocence of the crime. Pontius Pilate, a learned man who had the intellect to prepare for a magisterial post by familiarizing himself with local law & tradition, might well have been conscientious enough to acquaint himself with this commandment of the Lord. He even paraphrases David in II Samuel 3:28 (Septuagint) and declares himself innocent of the blood of Christ.

So the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ probably went something like this: After Pilate pronounced the death sentence, he performed a version the rite of judicial cleansing, quoting David while doing so. He then turned Christ over to the centurion in charge of the crucifixion detail, believed by some researchers to be named Longinus. Wrapping Him in the "royal" robes of mocking, they bound His arms to the forty-pound patibulum, painfully stretching them out so that the beam would have been in at least partial contact with the flogging scars. Remember, too, that the Crown of Thorns had been on His head for over an hour. He had already been beaten about the face and head and spat on, and His face would have been aching from having His beard pulled on and jerked around--almost pulled out.

The titulum was prepared, dictated by the Governor himself. Normally the charge of "blasphemy" would be written on the sign; but Pilate, his ego still smarting from being maneuvered into ordering a crucifixion with which he was not comfortable, was determined once more to proclaim the man's innocence and tweak the noses of the Sanhedrin at the same time. Instead of admitting to the public that Jesus had indeed been guilty by writing "blasphemy" on the sign, Pilate instead wrote Jesus' true earthly title, thus implying that the Jews could not be trusted even to obey their own hereditary King. On the top it read IESOUS HO NAZORAIOS HO BASILEUS TON IOUDAION--Jesus the Nazarene, the King of the Jews. It was followed by the Latin HIC EST IESVS NAZARENVS REX IVD'ORVM. Finally, written last as if to pour salt on the open insult of the sign itself, were the Aramaic words Y'shua Han Notsriy, Malkha D'Yihudiy (Jesus the Nazarene, King of the Jews). The Sanhedrin objected to the blatant statement that Jesus was their King, but Pilate told them in effect "I wrote what I wrote. If you don't like it. . . tough!"

Jesus was then paraded through the streets. The combination of blood loss, shock from the flogging, and physical and spiritual stress made Him by this time very weak. A strong man, named Shimon from the Roman province of Cyrene on the north coast of Africa, was forced to bear the patabulum because Christ was too weak. (Some scholars contend that, since he was from Cyrene, Simon was a black man; others believe that the name Shimon was exclusively Hebrew, thus they reason that he was probably Semitic.) By this time, removal of the crossbeam may have been as painful as putting it on Him in the first place; flexing the arms downward and the change in posture required could be excruciating. Finally, the procession reached the Place of the Skull. The entire walk was close to three-quarters of a mile, and Jesus was in an extremely weakened condition. Even if He had wished to offer resistance, by this time it would not have been possible for Him to put up much of a fight.

The spot was probably already occupied by the two thieves, crucified about twelve feet apart and hanging only a few inches off the ground. Shimon was allowed to put down the crossbeam. The mocking purple robes, which by this time because of the drying blood had begun to adhere to the wounds, were yanked off Him. It would have had all the unpleasantness of a band-aid being yanked off an unhealed wound, magnified by a hundred times larger area. The scars in His back that had begun to clot and close were probably opened up and began to bleed again. However, even though this was an execution carried out by Rome, it was at the behest of the Sanhedrin; hence, to remove Jesus' inner modesty garment would have offended Jewish sensibility, so He probably was allowed to retain His personal covering.

At this point Jesus was first offered a drink of wine vinegar mixed with gall, a powerful anesthetic mercifully provided by the women of Jerusalem to crucifixion victims to dull their pain--and their wits. Jesus, knowing that His atonement for our sins required His suffering, refused it. Jesus was laid on the ground over the crossbeam, allowing cold dirt and gravel into the lower scourge wounds. His arms were bound to the cross, at the shoulders or the elbows or both, with rough rope. Then Longinus ordered one of the soldiers to take an iron nail, about 4.5 inches long and with a square shaft about 1cm in diameter, with a head of about three quarters of an inch. Jesus' hand was stretched out, and the nail hammered in at about the place where the meaty part of the hand joins the wrist, not through the palms as is frequently depicted in Renaissance art. This would have severed the median nerve, causing an involuntary, spasmodic, and painful flexing of the thumbs inward toward the palm of the hand. Though nails alone would probably have been enough to hold the body, no chances were taken that the person could get themselves down or open the wounds wide enough to mercifully bleed to death; hence the tying to the cross as well as the nails. A ladder was lifted up after the nailing, and with the help of ropes Jesus was lifted about a foot off the ground and affixed to the crux simplex. Either pegs, nails, rope, or a combination of the three were used to attach the crossbeam. He was seated on a small, short peg between His legs which acted as a support for the body. It was smaller, harder, and more painful than the smallest bicycle seat, but in essence the same idea.

A flat piece of wood like a board was placed over his feet, and a somewhat larger spike (smaller than but akin to a railroad spike) was hammered through the wood, both feet, and the cross. His feet were first turned to the side and His legs bent at the knees. This position would have twisted His back in a constant wrenching, causing muscle strain and even more

agony to the already existing wounds. Then, using the ladder, one of the soldiers climbed up and attached the sign. As this was being done, Jesus said, "Father, forgive them; they have no idea what they're doing."

The scarlet "robe" Jesus wore was originally the outer cloak of a Roman soldier, and the tunic He Himself owned had been woven on a new kind of loom recently invented which allowed wider cloth to be made than was previously possible. The old type had a horizontal seam near the midsection where the two pieces were sewn together, top and bottom; but with the new wider cloth this was no longer necessary. This is what was meant by His "seamless" garment. Jesus' tunic was of this new kind, and the soldiers decided that the garment was too valuable to throw away; so in fulfillment of Psalm 22:18 they threw dice for Jesus' meager belongings. Dice was a common game in Roman society and many soldiers had a set; but gambling for the deceased's possessions was not only un-Jewish, it was against Roman army regulations, so they were breaking their own rules. One wonders why Longinus did not put a stop to it.

Not only the soldiers, but also the passers-by, probably on their way to the Upper City via the Gennath Gate, and even the two thieves, teased and insulted Him, until His lack of response no longer made it fun. Jesus hung there from approximately 9:00 AM until noon, suffering. Then at noon, all of a sudden, clouds began to form over the whole of Palestine. For three hours, the land was so overcast that it was called "darkness." During this time, one of the two thieves between whom Jesus had been crucified began to insult Him yet again and say things like "So You're the Christ? Then save Yourself--and us!" But the other thief, after three hours of seeing the Lord on the cross, had stopped mocking long ago and come to believe. He chewed out the first thief by reminding him that their punishment was legitimate while Jesus' was not, and that since he was about to meet God face to face he had best shut up. Then, turning to the Lord with regret in his heart for his previous ridicule, said, "Jesus, remember me when you enter Your Kingdom." Jesus forgave him and said, "I'm telling you the truth: today you will be with Me in The Paradise."

After a while, Jesus saw His beloved friend Yohannan (John) standing with Miriam (Mary) His mother. Using a polite form of address of the time, "woman", said, "Woman, behold your son", referring to John. Then He told John, "Son, behold your mother." In this way, Jesus was performing His last temporal act by seeing that Miriam would be provided for. It is noteworthy that Jesus, as eldest son, heir, and head of the family, would customarily have passed these jobs, along with the responsibility of being Israel's legal regent, to His brother Yaqov (James). However, at this moment James was not a believer; so, though Jesus' temporal authority passed to James, He entrusted the care of His mother not to the logical and expected person (His brother) but quite properly to the believing one (John).

By this time, breathing for Jesus would have been excruciating, and so He would most likely have been taking shallow breaths. This, over that period of time, would mean that gradually His lungs would fill with fluid and his body would not be able to utilize oxygen properly. In addition, it is entirely possible that one or both of His shoulders had become dislocated and His back was thrown out. Certainly His legs bent and held fast for so long, would have been spasming and cramping involuntarily, but being affixed by the nail they could not move at all. This would likely have resulted in great shuddering spasms from the

lower part of His body, exacerbating His back and breathing difficulties, twisting and jerking the spike wounds in the feet and inflaming the flogging scars, which by this time would be drying and adhering to the wood of the cross. Any breaking of that adhesion would open the wounds and ignite the nerves yet again.

At about 3:00, Jesus shouted out Psalm 22:1 in Aramaic--Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani? "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" Some of the observers speculated that He was calling out for Elijah, possibly mistaking Eloi for Eliahu. Jesus, knowing that His work was finally done, now requested something to drink. The gall mixture was gone, but a jar of just the wine vinegar was found and He was given a drink by the only means possible without climbing the cross: a sponge was soaked in the wine and lifted to His lips on a stick. Then things began to happen rapidly, almost simultaneously. Looking up to Heaven, He said tetelestai, "It has been completed." He added, "Father, into Thy hands I entrust My Spirit." Then, following an agonizing cry, He of Whom the prophets spoke and by Whom the sick were healed, the blind given sight, and the dead raised to life . . . died.

At that moment, the veil that separated the Holy of Holies from the rest of the inner Temple was torn in two from top to bottom, signifying that He Himself had entered into the Holy of Holies in Heaven, of which the earthly version was just a pale copy. Then, presenting Himself at the altar, the Father accepted His sacrifice. There was now no longer a need to separate men from God. Man was once again welcome at the feet of his Creator. The souls of the godly, waiting for so long for the sacrifice to be made, could at last with their sins atoned for enter into the Presence, no longer just of Abraham, but of the great I Am.

A great earthquake was felt in the darkness, and those who had believed in Christ but had died before Him had their very graves ripped open by unseen hands and, whole and new-raised, they entered into the city of Jerusalem. What a walk into the city that must have been! Many of them, under threat of death, were forced to flee Jerusalem shortly thereafter. However, one can hardly doubt that having been dead once and raised by the power of God, they cannot have been all that afraid of going through it a second time, knowing that this last time they would receive not their resuscitated old flesh, but the new bodies of the First Resurrection.

One of the soldiers, remembering the request of the Sanhedrin to break the legs of those on the crosses (a common practice--when the crucifiers figured the criminals had suffered enough they broke their legs with either the shaft of a spear, a rock, or a hammer, thus accelerating their death from pain, shock, and the inability to rise an inch or so off the peg and draw a clear breath) broke the thieves' legs first. Then, seeing that Jesus was already dead, he did not break His legs. However, for good measure he impaled His body on a spear, piercing upward on the left side between the fifth and sixth ribs. The wound was made about halfway between the side and the front. It pierced the pleural cavity and the heart, releasing the flow of water and blood as recorded in the Gospels. The clear fluid came from the lungs and chest cavity, filling up for six hours now with fluid. The blood came from the heart.

Longinus, seeing all this, fell on his knees and confessed what all believers throughout the

ages have confessed, and what we as Christians and partakers of His suffering, confess to this day: "This Man was certainly righteous; He truly was the Son of God!" We participate in all these agonies through the Communion, in which we remember His death. But the joy underlying the sadness and agony of the death of Christ, and always in the back of the Christian's mind as he or she participates in the Lord's Supper, is that Jesus did not stay that way. Three days later, on a brisk Sunday morning in Palestine, He rose from the dead. He proved that the One who could conquer death by His own power and could raise Himself from the dead . . . can certainly raise us

The Wounds Of Christ



Mel Gibson's movie, "The Passion of the Christ" focused national attention on the suffering and death of Jesus Christ. Two Old Testament passages speak of this in some detail – Isaiah 53 and Psalm 22 – these passages were written hundreds of years before Jesus birth but predict the cross in astonishing detail and show us a) how God's word – the Bible - can be trusted and b) that the Cross was no accident but was planned by God. This article looks at what these passages tell about Christ's suffering and what it means for us. My comments are inserted in square brackets after each main paragraph in the text.

Isaiah 53

[This prophecy was written in the 8th century BC and is an incredible accurate picture of Jesus suffering hundreds of years later.]

*Who has believed our report?
 And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?
 (2) For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant,
 And as a root out of dry ground.
 He has no form or comeliness;
 And when we see Him,
 There is no beauty that we should desire Him.
 (3) He is despised and rejected by men,
 A Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
 And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him;
 He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.*

[Jesus was "despised and rejected by men" – as the Passion makes clear in its depiction of the mocking by the Romans and the malice of the Jewish High Priest. Jesus was not attractive in the conventional sense "He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him." and was not naturally esteemed by people. "And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him."]

*(4) Surely He has borne our grief
 And carried our sorrows;*

*Yet we esteemed Him stricken,
Smitten by God, and afflicted.
(5) But He was wounded for our transgressions,
He was bruised for our iniquities;
The chastisement for our peace was upon Him,
And by His stripes we are healed.
(6) All we like sheep have gone astray;
We have turned, every one, to his own way;
And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

[The word "griefs" is better translated "sickness" (Hb:choliy) and the word sorrows (Hb: mak'ob) means both physical and mental pain. The "chastisement for our peace" refers to the Hebrew word shalom or wholeness and abundance. Thus these verses deal with both our iniquity and the painful human conditions such as sickness, grief and lack of wholeness that flow from it. The cross brings healing for physical, emotional and spiritual ills. These are taken for us by Christ who bears the burden and exchanges it for us – see Matthew 8:17. The terrible suffering of Christ seen in The Passion of the Christ – was Jesus bearing our sins and sickness and anguish and was for our healing from physical, mental, and spiritual pain and for our salvation.]



*(7) He was oppressed and He was afflicted,
Yet He opened not His mouth;
He was led as a lamb to the slaughter,
And as a sheep before its shearers is silent,
So He opened not His mouth.*

[Jesus did not protest His treatment but silently endured it.]

*(8) He was taken from prison and from judgment,
And who will declare His generation?
For He was cut off from the land of the living;
For the transgressions of My people He was stricken.
(9) And they made His grave with the wicked--
But with the rich at His death,
Because He had done no violence,
Nor was any deceit in His mouth.*

[Jesus was innocent "He had done no violence, nor was there any deceit in His mouth." - yet He was punished, not for His own sins, but for ours. "For the transgressions of My people He was stricken." Jesus' body was taken care of by Joseph of Arimathaea, a rich man (Matthew 27:57) and rested in his new, unused, grave.]

*(10) Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him;
He has put Him to grief.
When You make His soul an offering for sin,
He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,
And the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand.
(11) He shall see the labor of His soul, and be satisfied.
By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many,
For He shall bear their iniquities.*

[These verses indicate that it was God's purpose to bruise Jesus and to put Him to grief – in this case the word translated "grief" is "chalah" and means "to be or become weak, be or become sick, be or become diseased, be or become grieved, be or become sorry." Thus both His physical and mental pain was part of making "His soul an offering for sin". then there is a strange contrast in tone: "He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,". In other words Jesus shall die, then rise again, and thus be able to "prolong His days." Jesus will see the results of the cross and be satisfied and He will justify (put right with God) many people because "he shall bear their iniquities" so that we do not have to bear our sin and can stand before God clean and new.]

*(12) Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great,
And He shall divide the spoil with the strong,
Because He poured out His soul unto death,
And He was numbered with the transgressors,
And He bore the sin of many,
And made intercession for the transgressors.*

[Jesus was numbered with the transgressors – dying between two thieves and He "made intercession for the transgressors" when He said "today you shall be with me in Paradise" to one thief and prayed "Father forgive them for they know not what they do" concerning the soldiers. Jesus "poured out His soul unto death" that is He gave up His life, it was not snatched from Him. In the end this resulted in true greatness and power " I will divide Him a portion with the great, And He shall divide the spoil with the strong," God highly exalted Him – see Philippians 2:5-11—below:

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, (6) who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, (7) but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (9) Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father."]

Psalm 22 (written in the time of King David, 900 years before the cross)
To the Chief Musician. Set to *"The Deer of the Dawn." A Psalm of David.

*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?
 Why are You so far from helping Me,
 And from the words of My groaning?
 (2) O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear;
 And in the night season, and am not silent.*

[Jesus quoted the first line of this Psalm on the cross thus indicating that it applied to Him - Matthew 27:46 "And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?". This is called the "cry of dereliction" as He bore the full weight of our sin.]

*(3) But You are holy,
 Enthroned in the praises of Israel.
 (4) Our fathers trusted in You;
 They trusted, and You delivered them.
 (5) They cried to You, and were delivered;
 They trusted in You, and were not ashamed.*

[Jesus faces the puzzle of a righteous man being left to suffer. He goes to the nature of God and trusts in His delivering power – which comes not through instantaneous deliverance but through death and resurrection.]

*(6) But I am a worm, and no man;
 A reproach of men, and despised by the people.
 (7) All those who see Me ridicule Me;
 They shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,
 (8) "He *trusted in the LORD, let Him rescue Him;
 Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!"*

[Those surrounding the cross mocked Jesus thus fulfilling this verse of Psalm 22. **Matthew 27:39-44** *And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads (40) and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." (41) Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the *scribes and elders, said, (42) "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. *If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe *Him. (43) He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"(44) Even the robbers who were crucified with Him reviled Him with the same thing.]*

*(9) But You are He who took Me out of the womb;
 You made Me trust while on My mother's breasts.
 (10) I was cast upon You from birth.*

*From My mother's womb
You have been My God.
(11) Be not far from Me,
For trouble is near;
For there is none to help.*

[“From My mother’s womb, you have been My God” – Jesus was a special creation of God in the womb – conceived when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary. Mary was at the foot of the cross during the crucifixion.”]

*(12) Many bulls have surrounded Me;
Strong bulls of Bashan have encircled Me.
(13) They gape at Me with their mouths,
Like a raging and roaring lion.*

[Bulls and lions indicate dangerous people and evil spirits. The apostle Peter calls Satan a roaring lion, by Peter (1 Peter 5:8). Jesus was surrounded by raging evil that wanted to destroy Him.]

*(14) I am poured out like water,
And all My bones are out of joint;
My heart is like wax;
It has melted within Me.
(15) My strength is dried up like a potsherd,
And My tongue clings to My jaws;
You have brought Me to the dust of death.*

[Jesus life was poured out like water, the cross put his bones out of joint and made Him thirst and become extremely weak.]

*(16) For dogs have surrounded Me;
The congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me.
They* pierced My hands and My feet;
(17) I can count all My bones.
They look and stare at Me.
(18) They divide My garments among them,
And for My clothing they cast lots.*

[They “pierced my hands and my feet” - with nails. See **Matthew 27:35** *Then they crucified Him, and divided His garments, casting lots, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet: "They divided My garments among them, And for My clothing they*

cast lots. "Dogs/congregation of the wicked – people who are without moral values had surrounded Jesus.]



(19) But You, O LORD, do not be far from Me;

O My Strength, hasten to help Me!

(20) Deliver Me from the sword,

My precious life from the power of the dog.

(21) Save Me from the lion's mouth

And from the horns of the wild oxen!

[Jesus does not struggle to save Himself or use His powers to that end but instead trusts in God.]

You have answered Me.

(22) I will declare Your name to My brethren;

In the midst of the assembly I will praise You.

(23) You who fear the LORD, praise Him!

All you descendants of Jacob, glorify Him,

And fear Him, all you offspring of Israel!

(24) For He has not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted;

Nor has He hidden His face from Him;

But when He cried to Him, He heard.

(25) My praise shall be of You in the great assembly;

I will pay My vows before those who fear Him.

(26) The poor shall eat and be satisfied;

Those who seek Him will praise the LORD.

Let your heart live forever!

[Jesus' suffering was "heard" by God who answered Him by raising Him from the dead. See **Hebrews 5:7-9** " who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, (8) though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. (9) And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him," In Psalm 22 it says "Let your heart live forever" – Jesus died, but was raised and lives forever. Hebrews 7:25, Revelation 1:18]

(27) All the ends of the world

Shall remember and turn to the LORD,

And all the families of the nations

*Shall worship before *You.
 (28) For the kingdom is the LORD's
 And He rules over the nations.*

[The Cross opened up access to God to all nations – not just to the Jews. Jesus died for people from all nations and took their sins (if they repent and believe). After it the apostles went out taking the gospel of forgiveness of sins to the whole world and Christianity as we know it was born.]

*(29) All the prosperous of the earth
 Shall eat and worship;
 All those who go down to the dust
 Shall bow before Him,
 Even he who cannot keep himself alive.*

[Jesus will be worshipped by people, both great and small across the whole earth and even the most desperate "he who cannot keep himself alive" will find eternal life in Christ Jesus.]

*(30) A posterity shall serve Him.
 It will be recounted of the Lord to the next generation,
 31 They will come and declare His righteousness to a people who will
 be born,
 That He has done this.*

[The story of the cross – and the suffering of Jesus will be told from generation to generation.]

Conclusion

Jesus did not die because Jews planned it – but because God planned it hundreds of years beforehand and announced it through both David (Psalm 22) and Isaiah (chapter 53). God had a plan to deal with the pain of the world – its sin, its mental and emotional anguish and its sickness and disease – and that plan involved sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on a cross to pay the price for our sins.

When Jesus died on the cross He paid the price for making us whole again and for forgiveness before God. He did this by being a perfect sacrifice – completely innocent of all sin. By having faith in Jesus God saves us from sin and also deals with our mental and emotional anguish and our sickness and disease – this is demonstrated in the healing miracles of Jesus - see Matthew 8:14-17 – by His stripes we are healed!

WHAT EASTER IS ALL ABOUT

by Rowland Croucher

Let him easter in us, be a dayspring to the dimness of us,
be a crimson-cressed east. (G M Hopkins, 'The Wreck of the Deutschland')

Most early Christians were Jews who were used to celebrating religious festivals at various times in the year (Passover, Tabernacles, and Pentecost etc.). So Christians were encouraged to follow the great events of our Lord's life at various times in the year. We begin the 'Christian Year' with Advent as we prepare for Christ's coming. Advent also completes the cycle by reminding us of Christ's second coming to judge the world. The Christmas festival celebrates the Incarnation of God in Christ, when 'the Word became flesh'. Some churches commemorate the coming of the Wise Men at Epiphany (January 6); others the baptism of Jesus. Lent reminds us of Jesus' temptation and sufferings, preparing the way for the celebration of the triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday and the contemplation of his Passion and death on the cross on 'Good Friday'. Easter is the celebration of Christ's resurrection. Then we have Ascension Sunday. Pentecost, seven weeks after Easter, is the anniversary of the coming of the Holy Spirit. (It is sometimes called Whitsunday, the Sunday on which baptismal candidates were dressed in white). Last of all Trinity Sunday recalls the key doctrine of our faith: there is one God, in three Persons - Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

In the forty-day season of Lent (46 if you include Sundays) we take a spiritual inventory. Moses, Elijah and Jesus fasted for forty days, so from the fourth century the Church has observed Lent as a time of inner examination, prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Fasting is more than 'giving up candy for God'. It is the sharpest way we know of making ourselves pray, and pray more intensely. For Jesus and his disciples this was a time of tension, a time of expectancy and excitement. In Lent we prepare ourselves to experience the mighty meaning of the Cross. Lent begins with Ash Wednesday, when in some churches ashes are put on people's foreheads to remind them of their mortality: 'Remember you are dust, and to dust you shall return'. Lent comes from the Old English *lencten*, the 'lengthening' of the days of Spring. Lent anticipates new life. It's when 'the daffodils come before the swallow dares' to quote one of Shakespeare's loveliest lines.

Beyond the triumphant entry into Jerusalem, Jesus weeping over that city, his anger at the exploitation of the poor as he overturned the Temple money-changers' tables, his anguish in Gethsemane, the mockery of a trial... Jesus the Son of God is crucified on a cross between two criminals. And they call that Good Friday.

Good Friday? Yes, for three reasons: reasons associated with the three greatest needs humans have - to be loved, to be forgiven, and to find meaning in the face of their inevitable death.

(1) When Jesus died he was demonstrating that the God who was his Father entered our life and loved us even to the point of death. The death of Jesus, says Bonhoeffer in *Letters and Papers from Prison* is the ultimate symbol of the suffering of God in the life of the

world. God allows himself to be edged out of the world and on to a cross. Only a powerless and suffering God can really help us... God did not come to save us by an act of terror so that we would be cowed into belief, but by a great act of love. Abelard, a twelfth century philosopher and theologian, believed the cross primarily demonstrates the greatness of the love of God, a love that should move us away from our sin and to love God in return. God so loved, that he gave (John 3:16). The Son of God, says Paul, loved me and gave himself for me (Galatians 2:20). Our response? Obedient love - even if we suffer too (1 Peter 2:21).

(2) There's a theme running through the Bible which is somewhat foreign to Westerners, that of animal sacrifices for human sins. John the Baptist recognized Jesus as 'the lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world' (John 1:29p, 36). Exodus, Leviticus and Numbers describe how animals can 'bear the sins' of humans. These animal sacrifices (eg. of bulls and goats) were repeatable, but, says Hebrews, Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many (9:28). Jesus thought of himself as the Suffering Servant (see Isaiah 53) offering his life as a sacrifice, as a ransom for others' sins (eg. Mark 10:45). Anselm, an eleventh century Archbishop of Canterbury argued that sin is an insult to the majesty of God, and at the cross God's honour was 'satisfied'. The Protestant Reformers emphasized more our sin breaking God's holy law, we deserved to incur the penalty - death (Romans 6:23) - but Christ died in our place, paying the penalty and setting us free. We are so important to God that what is destroying us is of ultimate concern to him, and he acts to offer a way out of our misery. We are invited to repent, turn from our sins, and be forgiven, because we have been pardoned!

(3) Gustav Aulen, a Swedish theologian (Christus Victor) says the cross is mainly about a cosmic drama in which God in Christ does battle with the forces of evil and defeats them. Jesus' death on the cross not only demonstrates God's amazing love for us and saves us from our sins, but it also saves us from death and all the evil powers as well. Through his death he destroyed the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and free us from the fear of death (Hebrews 2:14,15; see also Colossians 2:13-15, 2 Timothy 1:10).

The three traditional theories of the Atonement, a demonstration of love, the bearing of penalty, and victory over evil may have had more appeal to earlier ages than our own... Australian New Testament scholar Leon Morris has suggested that today we might also see the cross addressing problems of futility and frustration (see Romans 8:20, Hebrews 2:8-9); sickness and death (Isaiah 53:4, Matthew 8:17); ignorance (Jeremiah 17:9, 1 Timothy 2:4); loneliness (Genesis 2:18, Mark 15:34, Romans 8:38-39); and selfishness (Luke 9:23, Galatians 2:10, Romans 6:4).

Aleksander Solzhenitsyn, the Russian dissident, was working twelve hours a day at hard labour. He had lost his family and had been told by the doctors in the Gulag that he had terminal cancer. One day he thought, 'There is no use going on. I'm soon going to die anyway.' Ignoring the guards, he dropped his shovel, sat down, and rested his head in his hands.

He felt a presence next to him and looked up and saw an old man he had never seen before, and would never see again. The man took a stick and drew a cross in the sand in

front of Solzhenitsyn. It reminded him that there is a Power in the world that is greater than any empire or government, a Power that could bring new life to his situation. He picked up his shovel and went back to work. A year later, Solzhenitsyn was unexpectedly released from prison and went to live in the United States.

Good Friday? Yes. When God's human creatures are bad, God is good. When we are at our worst, God is at his best...!

The French thinker, August Comte, once told Thomas Carlyle that he was going to start a new religion to replace Christianity. 'Very good', replied Carlyle, 'all you have to do is to be crucified, rise again, and get the world to believe that you are still alive. Then your new religion will have a chance.'

Easter is the annual celebration of the resurrection of Christ, and is the most important date in the Christian year. In the early church the Easter celebration included the lighting of a candle, prayer, readings from Scripture, and the joyful celebration of the Lord's Supper. It was also a common time for baptisms, with resurrection life symbolized by white robes. Over the centuries some pagan spring customs have been added, including Easter eggs and rabbits!

The death and resurrection of Christ are the key events and doctrines of the Christian faith. In an early creed (1 Corinthians 15:3 ff.), Paul reports several eyewitness accounts to substantiate his claim that if the resurrection had not occurred, the whole Christian faith is false (verse 14) and ineffective (verse 17), Christian preachers are wasting their time (verse 14), our sins aren't forgiven after all (verse 17), we die without hope (verse 18), we are the most miserable of people (verse 19), and so without resurrection let's 'live it up' for tomorrow we die (verse 32).

The dominant note in the celebration of Easter is joy. 'Make people laugh and you open heaven to them', says a rabbinical proverb. 'The risen Christ makes life into a constant celebration' writes the 4th century bishop and theologian Athanasius. Some Greek Orthodox Easter worship services include the Rite of Laughter: 'Now let us laugh. Let us worship God by laughing together...!'

Easter turns despair into hope. The American playwright Eugene O'Neill lived tragically, and shortly before his death he wrote poignantly: 'I can partly understand how God can forgive humans, for we are so weak and ignorant. What I can't understand is how he can ever forgive himself?' We have each, in our darkest moments, probably wondered the same thing ourselves. But Easter, if it has any message for us at all, says that human tragedy is never ultimate. He who vacated the tomb is alive, and has not vacated his throne! And all powers-that-be will become powers-that-have-been (1 Corinthians 2:6). Easter reminds us that God is in control of the universe. The Easter-event is about a God who loves eternally, individually and sufficiently.

..... My dear Saviour, let me ask Thee
since Thou art nailed to the cross
and since Thou sayest Thyself: It is finished!

Am I now set free from death?
 May I, through Thy suffering and death,
 inherit heaven?
 Has salvation come for all the world?
 True, Thou canst not speak for pain,
 yet Thy head Thou bowest
 And tacitly Thou sayest: Yes!
 Chorus (Chorale):
 Jesus, Thou Who wert dead,
 now livest forever;
 in my last agony
 nowhere will I turn but to Thee
 Who hast redeemed me.
 O my beloved Lord!
 Give me only that which Thou hast won,
 more I do not desire. (*Aria and chorus from J. S. Bach, St. John Passion*)

'Yes' and 'no' are little words, Lord, but they are very powerful. The Son of God said 'yes' and submitted himself to the joys and pains of our life. Mary said 'yes' and submitted to the mystery of bearing the incarnate God. Jesus said 'yes' and submitted to Gethsemane and arrest and trial and death on a cross.

But Jesus also invites us to say 'No'. If we will come after him we will deny ourselves, take up our cross and follow him. This is the only way of saying 'Amen' or 'Yes' to him. To deny ourselves is to love him, and our neighbor. To die to self is to live for you, Lord God, and for others.

Remind me, Lord that life is only lent to us. So may Lent and the Cross be truly Life to me. I truly and earnestly repent of my sins.

The Blood of Jesus Christ

John 6:53-56 NKJV *Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. (54) "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. (55) "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. (56) "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.*

It offends our social sensibilities to be told to drink someone's blood and to eat their flesh. It certainly offended many of Jesus' followers who turned away at this point. (John 6:60). The blood of Jesus Christ is not an easy topic and yet understanding it is absolutely central to the Christian life. We will look at twelve benefits of the blood of Jesus Christ.

1. **Eternal Life** (John 6:53-56). Unless we "drink His Blood" we have no life in us (6:53) but when we partake of what Christ has done for us on the cross we have eternal life (6:54). Eternal life has two aspects. Firstly it is life that has its origin in eternity and which flows from the eternal realms. The blood of Jesus Christ introduces us to a life that flows from the throne of God, which is holy, pure and full of praise and which lifts us up to be citizens of heaven seated in heavenly places with Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6). It is the opposite of a selfish sensual life that flows from the world or a life of envy and hatred energized by evil that flows from Hell. (James 3:15,16) It is life energized by love. Secondly eternal life is eternal and lasts forever because it is made of something incorruptible, something glorious that cannot fade away. It is grounded in God's eternal Spirit. It is immortal, imperishable and undefiled (1 Peter 1:4).
2. **Abiding in Christ** (John 6:53-56) "Abiding" means that we are to have a continuing personal relationship with God. It is like taking a guest in to "abide with you a night". We become God's guest through the blood and are "at home with Him" and also he becomes our guest and is "at home with us". God and man visit each other in love because of the blood of Jesus Christ. (John 6:56)
3. **Purchased by His blood (Acts 20:28 NKJV)** *"Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. The blood of Jesus Christ is the precious purchase price that bought us back from sin and from the hand of the Devil who is the enemy of God. (Psalm 107:2). This purchase price also bought us out of our useless way of life that we used to live in. (1 Peter 1:18-19 NKJV) knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers, {19} but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot. To be redeemed means to be purchased from slavery or imprisonment or the ownership of another. The blood of Jesus Christ is the price that has moved us from darkness to light*

and from a futile and aimless lifestyle to productive membership in God's Kingdom.

4. Our bodies were also bought by Christ's blood (**1 Corinthians 6:19-20 NKJV**) Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? (20) For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's. Our bodies were bought for God by Jesus Christ and he now owns them and fills them with His Spirit and His temples. Like any temple they are for the glory of the God to whom they are consecrated. Therefore since both our body and our spirit were bought by the "price" which is the blood of Jesus our bodies should be set apart for God's service. (Romans 12:1,2)

5. We are washed from our sins by His blood. **Revelation 1:5 NKJV** *To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood, Jesus scrubs us clean from our sins through the use of His blood.* 1 John 1:7 explains the process. He uses (**1 John 1:7 NKJV**) *But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.* There is an "if" that begins this verse. If we walk in the light as He is in the light. In other words we have to bring our sins out into God's light and let Him clean them. Just as its hard to clean the bathroom if the light is off so God needs us to bring our sin-stains into His light if we are to be cleansed. There are two consequences that flow from walking in the light - fellowship with one another and the cleansing of the blood. Being truthful about our sin gets rid of hypocrisy, tears off our masks and makes us able to have true fellowship (instead of Christian pretense with one another. Instead of receiving condemnation we receive fellowship and purification. The blood of Jesus Christ is the effective cleansing agent for the sins we truthfully and honestly bring into the light of God.

6. We are made righteous. The term the New Testament uses for "made righteous" is "justified". (**Romans 5:9 NKJV**) *Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him.* God no longer treats us as sinners. He no longer pours out His wrath toward us. It is turned away by the blood of the Passover Lamb. (1 Corinthians 5:7, Exodus 12:6-13). The blood of Jesus Christ makes us legally righteous - that is no longer the objects of God's wrath; it also makes us actually righteous cleansing us from sin and sanctifying us. (Hebrews 10:29, 13:12). This means that through the blood of Jesus Christ the Christian can appropriate all the blessings that flow to the righteous including boldness (Proverbs 28:1), peace, quietness and assurance (Isaiah 32:17) and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit (Romans 14:17).

7. We are made holy (sanctified). (**Hebrews 13:12 NKJV**) *Therefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered outside the gate.* Jesus went to the cross in order that you and I might become holy. Our holiness is not a religious game; it is something that Jesus died for. He shed His own blood so that our lives may be spotless in every way. Holiness has two meanings firstly it means "set apart for God". The blood of Jesus Christ when applied to our lives marks us as

belonging to God and saves us from destruction. The Old Testament example of this was the blood of the Passover Lamb (**Exodus 12:12-13 NKJV**) *'For I will pass through the land of Egypt on that night, and will strike all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgment: I am the LORD. (13) 'Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt.* This was a "type" or forerunner of Jesus who is our Passover. (**1 Corinthians 5:7 NKJV**).... *For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.* God's wrath is turned away by the blood and we become a holy people that He spares. The second part of holiness is more well known it means "To be pure and without sin". The blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from sin and works practical holiness into our lives on a continuing basis. (1 John 1:7). We work with the blood to achieve holiness. We cannot achieve any degree of holiness by our own efforts without the blood. The blood applied can do much work alone. But the applied blood plus our "working out our own salvation with fear and trembling" is most effective. It is a bit like cleaning an oven. Without the oven cleaner chemical the task is hopeless. A good oven cleaner when sprayed on can get rid of much of the grime. If we add a bit of our own effort a spotless oven results. This is, at best, a very poor analogy to holy things but it may help some of you. The blood of Jesus Christ makes us holy.

8. The blood of Jesus Christ brings us forgiveness of sins. (**Matthew 26:28 NKJV**) *"For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. (Ephesians 1:7 NKJV) In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace* The blood of Jesus Christ brings about the forgiveness of our sins. Nothing we can do can make God forgive us. However the sacrifice of His Son on the cross has brought in a new covenant and basic to this covenant is the idea that God forgives all who believe in His Son Jesus Christ. This is a sheer undeserved gift. It is part of the riches of His grace (Eph 1:7). All your sins past present and future are forgiven by God because of the blood of Jesus Christ.(Hebrews 9;12,28,10;10).

9. A clean conscience (**Hebrews 9:14 NKJV**) *how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?* What are these "dead works". These are the futile good works of the religious that always fall short of God's standards and which just end up bringing condemnation on us. (**Isaiah 64:6 NRSV**) *We have all become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy cloth. We all fade like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.* If we need to be cleansed from these "righteous deeds" how much more do we need cleansing from our blatant sins! The things that torment our conscience are forgiven, cleansed and removed by the blood of Jesus Christ so that our conscience instead of acting as the accuser is now put into God's service to strengthen and sanctify us.

10. Boldness in Christian living (**Hebrews 10:19-23 NKJV**) *Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, (20) by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh. (21) and*

having a High Priest over the house of God, (22) let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. (23) Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful. Once we are fully aware of what the blood of Jesus has done for us then we become fantastically bold. The first place this boldness takes hold is in prayer "boldness to enter the Holiest" it then moves into other areas of our life giving us "full assurance of faith". The author to the Hebrews who was writing to Christians who had apparently lost much of their original boldness (Hebrews 6:12) takes the majority of the epistle to explain the working of the blood. He knew, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, that the knowledge of the work of the blood is the basis for boldness in the Christian life.

11. Victory over the Devil and his angels (Revelation 12:11 NKJV) *"And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death. When we testify to what the Word says about what the blood does we defeat the enemy of our souls. The testimony of the saints is about what Jesus Christ has done for them. By proclaiming this testimony they make it possible for others to believe and when these believe then Satan is defeated. Our testimony should always be about the cross and about the blood. Paul knew this when He wrote (1 Corinthians 2:1-5 NKJV) And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. (2) For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. (3) I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. (4) And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, (5) that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God. Paul did not rely on persuasive Greek rhetoric but on the simple manifest power of the message of Christ crucified. The testimony of the blood is powerful overthrowing the fortresses of Satan (2 Corinthians 10:3-5). Its message leads to a power which is spiritual but not hidden - it can be demonstrated in power. (1 Corinthians 2:4)*

12. Unity in Christ (Ephesians 2:13-14 NKJV) *But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. (14) For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation. (Revelation 5:9-10 NKJV) And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood, Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, {10} And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."* These two verses tell us that the blood of Jesus Christ is the basis for fellowship between Christians of every tribe and tongue and nation who has had the dividing walls between them broken down. We have been redeemed out of our cultures and into the church of God. No longer are we many groups but rather we are one group in Christ though our ethnicity will still be part of us. The basis of this unity is not some constitution or set of rules but the sheer fact that we have all been redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ. And not just redeemed - given a heavenly status as kings and priests to God. And not just status but real power "we shall reign upon the earth". The blood has bought us back from separation and powerlessness to unity and being "more

than conquerors".

These are the twelve things that the blood of Jesus Christ does for you. Are you as impressed as I am? Are you "shouting hallelujah through the bunghole" like Billy Sunday? It's magnificent. Why don't we end this article with a prayer of praise? Let's use the one from Revelation 5:9, 10.

Prayer

(Revelation 5:9-10 NKJV) *And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood, Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, (10) And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth." PRAISE THE LORD!*

Why Believe In The Resurrection?

Like many articles this one was prompted by a reader's letter. As he put the problem very well I am including the main paragraph from it.

"Why is Jesus' resurrection so critical?" - That first might seem almost blasphemous but its a nagging question that always pops up in my mind at Easter. Let me explain my question further... if our sins were taken by Jesus as the supreme payment and sacrifice, our sins were covered at that point and then why did He have to rise from the dead? I guess I'm likening his death (probably wrongly so) to the OT sacrifices which I realize were incomplete and not perfect or final but this still doesn't completely explain why the resurrection is so crucial to our faith. Once we die and move onto into eternal life, would not our sins have been covered whether or not the resurrection occurred? Again, I know and feel that I'm missing a fundamental here but am confused as to where it is."

Markus

Please read the following with a Bible in hand, the quoted Bible verses are very important. Feel free to print this out and study it just hit "Print" on your web browser.

There are seven main reasons why we need to believe in the resurrection.

1. It declared Jesus to be the Son of God in power. **(Romans 1:4)** By being raised from the dead God declared Jesus to be His Son? While this was also done at the baptism and the transfiguration the difference here is the phrase "in power". By overcoming death Jesus was declared to be more powerful than death, decay and this natural order. Without the resurrection Jesus would be just a good moral man, a great prophet and an example of suffering for others. But He would still be "under" the natural order and subjected to death and of no use as a Savior from these things. The fact that He has risen again and conquered death means that He has the power to rescue us, is not just another man, but is the Son of God.

2. It gives us a sound historical basis for a future hope. **(1 Cor 15:12-55, John 11:25, 26, 1 Thess 4:14)(1 Thessalonians 4:14 NIV)** *We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him.* The fact of Jesus' death and resurrection gives us cause to believe that when we die we also will be raised from the dead. Our future hope is based on an historical fact. It's a case of "we believe A...so we believe B". A is firmly founded on the testimony of many witnesses. The resurrection is one of the best attested of all historical facts. See the book "Evidence That Demands A verdict" by Josh McDowell if you would like more information on the historical evidence for the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ.

3. Unless Christ is raised from the dead then we won't be either. And if we are not raised from the dead then we are "of all men most to be pitied". If there is no resurrection then the pragmatic "best policy" is to eat, drink and be merry for tomorrow we die. (1 Cor 15:12-18, 32) If Jesus could not rise from the dead then what hope would we have? Death would be final for all. If then our only reward is in life then live it up - "eat,

drink and be merry". It would make the martyrdom of the early Christians (and present-day Christians) seem foolish and unwise they would be "of all men most to be pitied". However that is not the case. There is a resurrection from the dead and we will receive an imperishable reward.

4. It declares that God has accepted Jesus' sacrifice on the cross and our sins have been atoned for. **(Romans 4:24, 25)** If Jesus had just died on the cross and not risen from the dead then how could we know for sure that God had accepted the sacrifice and that our sins were completely forgiven? By raising Jesus from the dead God showed that He had "justified" Jesus and with Him all who believe in Him. At the cross the slate was wiped clean, at the resurrection we were given a credit balance, we were justified.

5. There is more to the Christian life than just having your sins forgiven and going to heaven. There is living in the power and victory of God and this is possible because of the new life Jesus brings with the resurrection. Paul calls it "the power of the resurrection". (Romans 6:2-11, 8:11, Phil 3:10) The resurrection moves us from zero to positive in the Kingdom of God. **(Romans 5:8-10 NIV)** *But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. (9) Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him! (10) For if, when we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to him through the death of his Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through his life!* Paul, in Romans, says that while we were yet sinners we were forgiven - but wait there is more - now we are forgiven there is a wonderful salvation to be lived out. "We are saved by His life." Christ's resurrection life in us is the basis for a powerful Christian testimony. **(Philippians 3:10 NIV)** *I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,* The power of the resurrection is the powerhouse for a great Christian life!

6. When Christ was raised we (believers that is) were also raised "in Him" and seated with Him in the heavenly realms so that we have victory over the powers and principalities of this demonic world. **(Ephesians 1:20, 2:6, 7 Colossians 2:12-15, 3:1-4)** For more on this topic go to our article on "[Demons Defeated](#)". The resurrection leads to the ascension. When God raised Jesus from the dead He also raised believers "with Him" so that we now have authority over principalities and powers. This authority is given to us not because of anything we have done but because God is gracious. It is an amazing outpouring of His kindness to us. (See verses above).

7. Faith in the resurrection is necessary for you to go to Heaven. **(1 Cor 15:1-3, Romans 10:9-13, Hebrews 6:1-3)** Whenever the fundamentals of the Christian faith are mentioned the resurrection is listed among them. The resurrection is at the heart of the gospel - that is what God has done for us in Jesus Christ. Whenever the apostles preached they testified to the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. It is a "key fact". When Paul boils the gospel right down to its essentials the resurrection is there. Belief in

the resurrection is one of three things we need to do to be saved. The other two are declaring Jesus to be Lord and calling on His Name. **(Romans 10:9-13 NIV)** *That if you confess with your mouth, "Jesus is Lord," and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. (10) For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you confess and are saved. (11) As the Scripture says, "Anyone who trusts in him will never be put to shame." (12) For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile--the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him, (13) for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."*

The Ascension of Jesus Christ

The consequences of the ascension of Jesus Christ are so amazing that they changed the whole way that people prayed and worshipped God and participated in Him. Jesus took apart the heavenly realm when He ascended and removed the power of the evil principalities and powers to dominate the life of those who believed in Him (Ephesians 4:8-13, Col 2:13-13). Furthermore He took us with Him on His journey into the heavenly realms so that the believer in Jesus Christ is now a citizen of heaven (Phillipians 3:20), a resident of the heavenly Jerusalem (Hebrews 12: 22-24) and is seated with Christ in the heavenly realms (Ephesians 2:6) with a graciously given heavenly status that was previously impossible for any human to achieve under the Law (Matthew 11:11-13, Ephesians 2:4-10). Jesus ascension also resulted in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit (John 7:39, 16:7, Acts 2:33) and the giving of spiritual gifts to the church (Ephesians 4:8-13).

Perhaps the best starting point is the purpose statement given in Ephesians by Paul. This is the "why" of the Ascension and of Pentecost. **(Eph 4:8-13 NKJV)** *Therefore He says: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive, And gave gifts to men." (9) (Now this, "He ascended"; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth? (10) He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things.) (11) And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, (12) for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, (13) till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*

Now Paul's purpose statement lists a number of reasons behind the ascension-outpouring. The ultimate reason for the ascension is that *"He might fill all things"* **(Eph 4:10)**. See Col 1:15ff for more on that! What does he want to fill all things with? Himself! What then is the outpouring of the Holy Spirit about - filling ALL believers with Jesus! Being filled with the Spirit of Jesus is the purpose of Pentecost and the ascension.

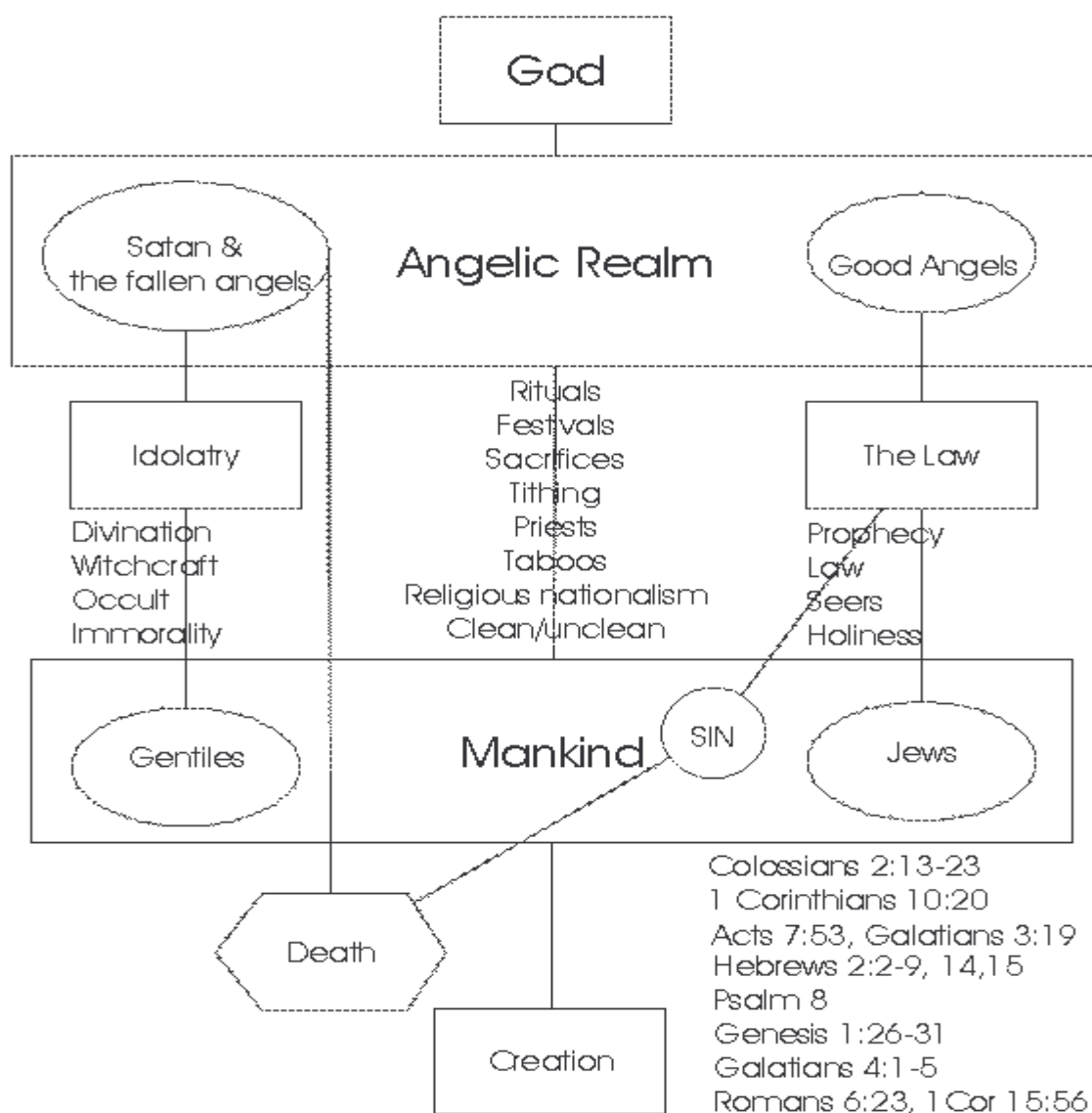
This connects with the other great purpose expressed in this passage. Those believers may come to a unity of faith and become "a perfect man" in the stature and fullness of Christ. That is the objective we see most clearly now. To build up Christians God sovereignty gives the ability to edify His body to certain people as a gift.

On the way to do this Jesus takes **"captivity captive"** spoiling the demonic world of its spiritual powers. Like the conqueror He is He then distributes spiritual gifts to men. They include the five-fold ministries and the gift of tongues on the day of Pentecost and the various spiritual manifestations necessary for the building up of the body of Christ. So we see that the purposes behind the ascension-Pentecost are - that Christ might fill all things, that captivity would be captured, that spiritual gifts might be given to the church, which would then become like Christ. The purpose of Pentecost is Spirit-filled and empowered images of Jesus Christ.

Taking Captivity Captive

The following is a schematic diagram of how things were in Old Testament times. It shows how much both Jews and Gentiles were captives. The Jews were captives under the Law and the Gentiles captives under their demonic religions. Quite obviously not everything can be fitted onto a single diagram and it is not to scale or meant to be theologically normative but it will, I hope, help us to grasp what the state of things was.

The Old Testament

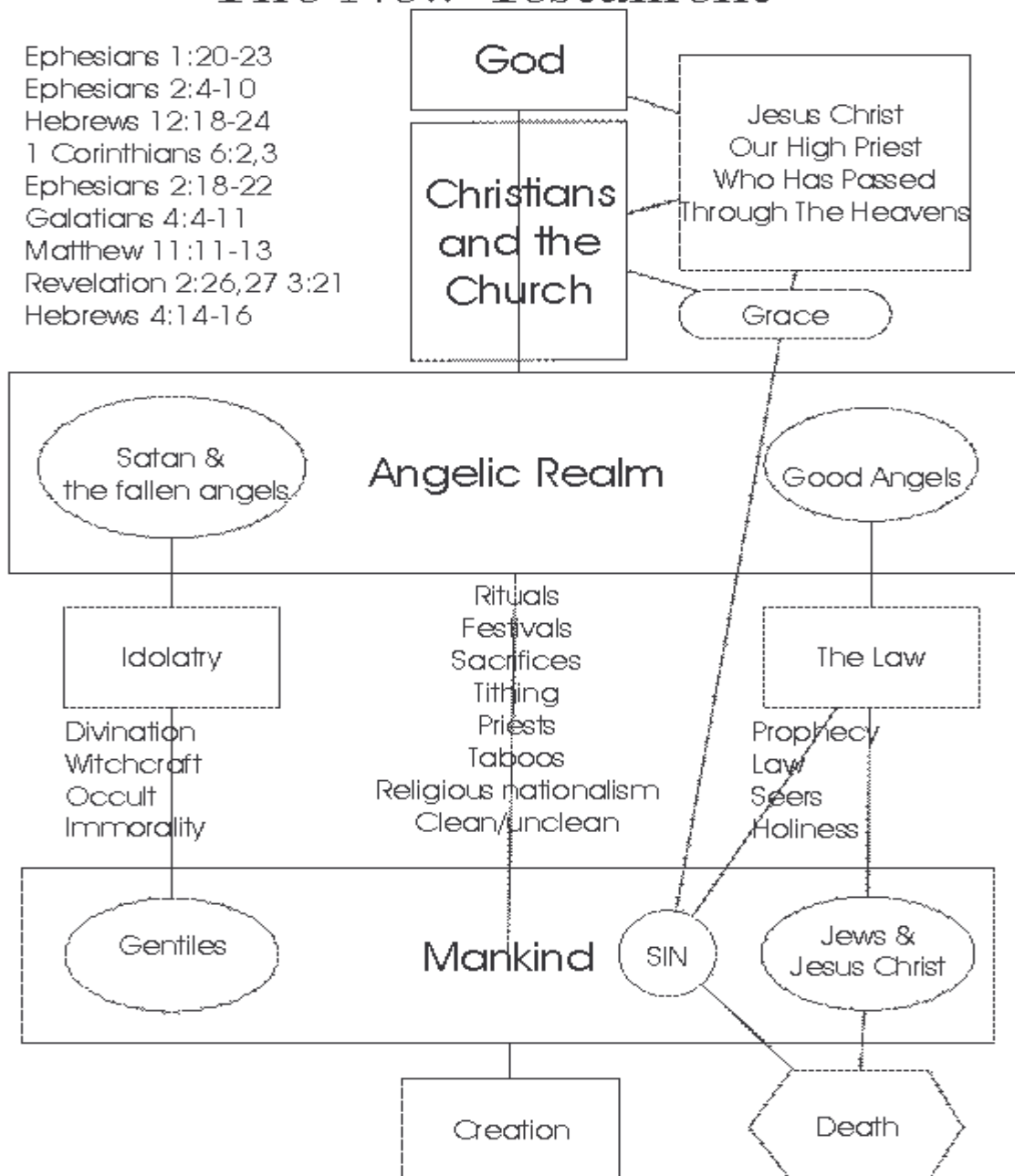


Let's look at what it is trying to tell us. There are four levels - God, the angelic realm (inhabited by both good and evil angels), mankind and creation in general. Mankind rules creation, the angelic realm is more powerful than mankind and God rules over all. It is the middle portion of the diagram that is the most interesting. We can see from Acts 7:53 and Galatians 3:19 that the Law was given through angels. 1 Corinthians 10:20 also tells us that the Gentile religions were the work of demons and that the worshippers worshipped demons and not God. So we see that **before Christ both Jewish and Gentile religion was under the direct control of the angelic realm.** The good angels mediated the Jewish religion and the demons mediated the innumerable Gentile religions. Both systems were **somewhat similar** (though the Law was vastly superior) and listed in the middle of the diagram are some of the similarities. **Both** Jewish and Gentile religions had temples and priests and sacrifices and tithes and offerings and dietary restrictions and special days and festivals and various taboos and categories of clean and unclean things. Though the Jewish religion was much holier and more moral it operated with much the same basic external structure as the Gentile religions. They had the same externals - though the internals were very different. Judaism however did not resort to witchcraft, divination, sorcery or magic which are exclusively in the domain of Satan. In both Colossians and Galatians Paul calls these external things - the taboos, festivals etc the "elementary principles of this world" or the "stoichea". Thus mankind in the Old Testament was ruled by religions based on the exact performance of rituals and the keeping of numerous laws and taboos. Relationship to God was through a priestly caste and involved sacrifices. Except for a very few individuals there was no ongoing relationship with God. Sin led to death which, at that stage, was under the power of the Devil (Hebrews 2; 14, 15). The general experience of both Jewish and Gentile believers was one of fear and bondage (Hebrews 2:14, 15). All this was to change with the death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ.

After Jesus' Work On The Cross, Resurrection and Ascension

Again we have a diagram - the main change being the creation of the Church and its high status in the heavenly realms.

The New Testament



Lets look at some of the changes and seek to explain them. Death moves out of Satan's control (Hebrews 2:14, 15) into that of Jesus Christ who now has the keys of Death and Hades (Revelation 1:18). The accusing power of the law over us is broken (Colossians 2:13-15) because it is nailed to the cross. Jesus has been raised up above every power and principality in the heavenly realms and we - who are "in Him" - are of course seated where He is. **(Eph 1:20-23 NKJV)** *which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, (21) far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age*

but also in that which is to come. (22) And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, (23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

The Church contains you and I so the exaltation of the Church is the exaltation of the believer. Thus the fact that the Church has been made to be the "fullness of Him who fills all in all" has amazing consequences for the believer. Paul continues to show how we have been raised "from the gutter most to the uttermost" ... **(Eph 2:6-7 NIV)** *And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, (7) in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.* Thus we see that we **have** (past tense) been raised up with Christ and seated with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus (verse 6 above). This was done not because we were good but because of God's great grace which Paul calls "the incomparable riches of His grace." Thus we have been taken from being sinners (Romans 3:23, Ephesians 2:1-4) and made into people who are "seated in the heavenly realms". We are now given a status and authority far beyond anything we deserve so that God may show just how gracious He can be.

This new spiritual status of the believer, this citizenship of heaven, is absolutely central to Paul's teaching. So much so that Paul is quite astonished when Christians do not grasp that we are to rule the world and judge the angelic realm. **(1 Cor 6:2-3 NKJV)** *Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world will be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? (3) Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, things that pertain to this life?* To Paul it is just a gospel basic that Christ has triumphed and that we share His triumph and rulership as inheritors of the Kingdom. Christ has ascended above the angelic realm and we have also done this "in Him" therefore we have been invested with an authority greater than that of the angels and will one day judge them. (Note: Authority is different from strength, Napoleon was probably not the physically strongest member of his army but he had authority. So Christians do not have the power of angels yet but we do have position and authority and the right to be in command.) Thus Christians can exorcise demons because we are now at a higher level of authority than that of the fallen angels.

Since we are above the angels we are above their systems or the "stoichea". Thus Christians are not to observe taboos, festivals, days, months, years, Sabbaths, make sacrifices, or worry about tithes, offerings or priests. Let's look at this because it has been a stumbling block to so many believers. **(Gal 4:1-10 NKJV)**... *(3) Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world ("stoichea"). (4) But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, (5) to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. (6) And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" (7) Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ. (8) But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. (9) But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? (10) You observe days and months and seasons and years.* Thus the religious observance of "days and months, and seasons and years" is a sign of being in bondage to the "elements of the world". These external

observances are no longer a part of the Christian faith. You can use a calendar - but you must not attach any religious significance to the dates on it! Faith not festivals is what makes us closer to God.

Paul amplifies this at length in Colossians chapter 2 and I will only quote a portion of it here. Firstly He shows how the cross disarmed the principalities and powers and took away their legal right to enforce their taboos. **(Col 2:13-23 NKJV)** *And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, (14) having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. (15) Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.*

Then Paul carefully goes through the consequences of being forgiven and of no longer being under the power of laws, taboos and ceremonies. *(16) So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, (17) which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. (18) Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in false humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, (19) and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.*

The radical nature of our freedom from these "basic principles of the world" is described as a "death". Just how many responsibilities does a dead person have? None! So the Christian no longer has any obligatory responsibilities to cultural taboos, festivals, Sabbaths or dietary regulations. Paul continues... *(20) Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations; (21) "Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle," (22) which all concern things which perish with the using; according to the commandments and doctrines of men? (23) These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, false humility, and neglect of the body, but are of no value against the indulgence of the flesh.* To put it simply all "religiosity" has been put behind us when we enter into the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Freedom

We have freedom; we do not have to live in fear as if we serve a God who will be angry over the smallest error. Its a bit like sending someone to mow the lawn and they come back nervously asking "Which blade of grass do I mow first?" and you say "Start anywhere as long as it gets done". God has given us tremendous freedom and we don't have to live in a spirit of slavery worried about getting everything "just right" - about which blade of grass to mow first. Such is the spirit of religious fear. It is akin to the pagan dread of the spirits - if the ceremony is not done "just so" then curses would come forth. The "spirit of fear" produces people who cringe before God over every tiny detail. However with the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ that is done away with. The situation now is one of love and Sonship. **(Rom 8:15-17 NKJV)** *For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry*

out, "Abba, Father." (16) The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (17) and if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

We are beloved sons of God living in freedom. As sons of God, above the angels, we are going to inherit a kingdom prepared for us since the foundation of the world. We are heirs. In that Kingdom we will be seated on thrones with Jesus (Revelation 3:21), we will rule over the nations (Revelation 2:26, 27), we will judge the world and even angels (1 Corinthians 6:2,3), we will become beings with immortal and imperishable bodies (1 Corinthians 15:45-55) and dwell safely in amazing wealth, peace and freedom (Revelation 21 & 22). When this occurs what it means to be a "son of God" will be revealed. At the moment it is, at best, vaguely understood. When this occurs the meaning of our being seated in heavenly realms with Christ Jesus will become absolutely clear. Christ will take up His authority over all creation through us and amazing changes will occur. The whole world will be set free! Paul continues on in Romans 8 to say... **(Rom 8:18-22 NKJV)** *For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. (19) For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. (20) For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; (21) because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. (22) For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now.*

Thus the death, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ was the critical turning point that has ensured the total freedom of all creation! Creation, now in bondage, will move into "the glorious liberty of the sons of God". God is in the business of setting all things free. He desires liberty - not cringing enslavement, for all! However it is a two-step movement firstly there is freedom from the old religious system, our coming out from domination by the elementary principles of this world and from sin and death. Then step two is not anarchy - but having God's moral code written on our hearts through the Holy Spirit. (Hebrews 8:10) We are freed to become who we were always meant to be - righteous, holy, spirit-filled beings of love. (Galatians 5:16-24) This is the work of the Holy Spirit and why the ascension of Jesus Christ is also strongly associated with the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit and the Ascension of Jesus Christ

(John 14:12 NKJV) *"Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.*

(John 16:7 NRSV) *Nevertheless I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Advocate will not come to you; but if I go, I will send him to you.*

(Acts 1:4-5 NKJV) *And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which," He said, "you*

have heard from Me; (5)"for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

(Acts 2:31-33 NRSV) *Foreseeing this, David spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, saying, 'He was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh experience corruption.' (32) This Jesus God raised up, and of that all of us are witnesses. (33) Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this that you both see and hear.*

(Acts 11:15-16 NKJV) *"And as I began to speak, the Holy Spirit fell upon them, as upon us at the beginning. (16) "Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, 'John indeed baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit.'*

During the Last Supper Jesus clearly indicates that when He "went to the Father" something would happen to the disciples would enable them to do great works of power equivalent to His own (John 14:12). Later on in the upper room discourse He reveals this to be the sending of the Helper, the Holy Spirit which could only be sent after His departure. (John 16:7) In his last conversation with His disciples He termed this empowerment the baptism in the Holy Spirit (Acts 1:4,5) and promised them they would receive it soon and that it would make them powerful international witnesses to Him (Acts 1:8). On the day of Pentecost it was poured out in a manner that was both visible and audible (Acts 2:32-33) and likewise during the Gentile Pentecost at Cornelius' place where it is also referred to as "the baptism in the Holy Spirit". (Acts 11:15, 16)

The heavenly realms are now occupied by Jesus and since we are in Him, we have been seated with Him in these realms (Eph 2:6). Therefore we can have confident access to God and unhindered participation in the things of the Spirit with Whom we have been baptized (1 Cor 12:13). This does not mean that we all have all gifts or that all will have one particular gift. God is sovereign in how He distributes the gifts of the Spirit. (1 Cor 12:7-11) Within His sovereignty there is evidently some room for us to ask for particular manifestations of the Spirit. (Luke 11:13, 1 Cor 12:31, 14:1)

To sum up, the purpose of Pentecost is Spirit-filled and empowered images of Jesus Christ. The Pentecost event is known as the baptism in the Holy Spirit which was received by the Jews (Acts 2:32, 33), the Gentiles (Acts 11:15, 16) and the Christians at Ephesus (Acts 19:1-6) and Corinth (1 Cor 12:13). It is for all the Church. The outcome of the Pentecost event is power for ministry (Acts 1:8) through the Holy Spirit "coming upon" people (Acts 2:32,33) and sovereignty giving spiritual gifts for the edification of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:1-7).The Holy Spirit is not a mere "experience". He is Christ coming to fill all things.(Eph 4:10,5:18) He wants to fill you with Jesus and transform you into His image.(Eph 4:8-13, Rom 8:29-31) He also wants to AIBI power you to be a witness for God. (Acts 1:8) You may ask for Him and God will gladly give the Holy Spirit to you (Luke 11:13) (in new ways. it's a puzzle, we have Him but we can still receive His power) though you should ask for "the greater gifts" to be used in love for the edification of the church. (1Cor 12:31, 14:1)

Conclusion

The ascension of Jesus Christ to "fill all things" was the end of religion as it is generally conceived and the beginning of a Spirit-filled and joyous relationship with God. The main thing that Jesus wants to fill is you! To that end He has sent His Holy Spirit into this world to dwell in the hearts of believers sanctifying them to be like Him and empowering them to do good works. He has also created a new thing - the Church, which is distinct from the world and angels and which will rule over both. He has placed believers in the heavenly realms with Him and freed them from the innumerable fear-filled obligations of the old religious systems. He has brought us into Sonship and membership of the household of God. This church is to consist of "images of Jesus Christ" indwelt by His Spirit and living in direct personal relationship with God. Therefore there is no longer any need to observe new moons, Sabbaths, tithing, religious festivals, to have a church building, a priest, or to abstain from alcohol, red meat, pork or certain types of seafood. There is no need to be celibate, be involved in rituals of self-abasement or penance or to punish one. That is all gone. What has replaced it is a life that flows from being indwelt by God, a life that is characterized not by solemnity and punctilious observation of fearful rituals but by freedom and love and joy and peace. **(Gal 5:22-23 NKJV)** *But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, (23) gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law.*

The Heavenly Enthronement of Jesus Christ

After the Ascension, some time in the ten days before Pentecost, Jesus was enthroned in Heaven on the throne of David, at the right hand of the Father. Ancient courts often had a number of thrones and co-regents alongside with the main ruler. So the enthronement did not mean that Jesus replaced God on the throne but rather that He co-reigns with Him in Heaven in the most significant position "at the right hand of the Majesty on high". Later in this article we will find that faithful believers also get thrones and co-reign with Christ!

This was instituted by means two mysterious pronouncements of the Father found in Psalm 110:

A. *"Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." which institutes Him as King over the nations and over the earth and the course of human history.*

B. *"The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." which institutes Him as an eternal High Priest with authority over the heavenly realities and the salvation and redemption of all creation.*

This enthronement was a reward for His obedience, suffering and death on the cross and resulted in Him being given "the name that is above every other name" (Philippians 2:5-11) and becoming King of Kings and Lord of Lords, with all authority in Heaven and on earth being given to Him. (Matthew 28:18, 1 Timothy 6:15). It also results in His kingship over the nations (Matthew 25:31-33) and His high priestly ministry for believers (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 8:1) which is discussed more fully in other articles on the [Ascension](#) and on the [High Priestly Ministry of Christ](#).

There are many passages referring to the throne of Jesus Christ in the Scriptures and we will try to deal with most of them (excluding parallel passages) in this article.

The Angel Gabriel announces to Mary that Jesus would occupy the throne of David:

Luke 1:32-33 NKJV *"He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. (33) "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."*

When did this enthronement take place?

Mark and Hebrews put it very simply - after the cross and resurrection, before Pentecost and the present time of writing:

Mark 16:19 NKJV *So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.*

Hebrews 10:12-14 NKJV *But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God, (13) from that time waiting till His enemies are made His footstool. (14) For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.*

Peter preaches on this theme of resurrection, ascension and enthronement as having already happened during his sermon during the day of Pentecost using Psalm 110 as his

text:

Acts 2:30-36 NKJV *"Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, (31) "he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. (32) "This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. (33) "Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. (34) "For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, (35) Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.'" (36) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ."*

And three chapters later Peter hammers home the exaltation and enthronement of Jesus to the very people who had Him humiliated and killed:

Acts 5:29-32 NKJV *But Peter and the other apostles answered and said: "We ought to obey God rather than men. (30) "The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. (31) "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. (32) "And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him."*

Stephen seems to have got a glimpse of Jesus in His new role:

Acts 7:55-56 NKJV *But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, (56) and said, "Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!"*

This is a slightly unusual reference as Jesus is seen as "standing" not sitting and some commentators say He was standing to receive the first martyr of the Church.

Hebrews sees the enthronement as a reward for the cross.

Hebrews 12:2 NKJV *looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Paul expands on the enthronement as a reward for suffering in Philippians 2:

Philippians 2:8-11 NKJV *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (9) Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, (10) that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Paul sees the enthronement as a demonstration of the mighty resurrection power of God and the authority of Jesus Christ:

Ephesians 1:19-23 NKJV *and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power (20) which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, (21) far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name*

that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. (22) And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, (23) which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Paul also sees the throne as Christ's present position in the heavenly realms:

Colossians 3:1 NKJV *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, and sitting at the right hand of God.*

For believers the exalted position of their Savior means the assurance of grace:

Romans 8:34 NKJV *Who is he who condemns? It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us.*

Hebrews 4:14-16 NKJV *Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (15) For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.*

Hebrews 8:1-2 NKJV *Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, (2) a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man.*

All other thrones are subsidiary to this Throne of Christ, Jesus is the King of Kings:

1 Peter 3:21-22 NKJV *... through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, (22) who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him.*

Colossians 1:16 NKJV *For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him.*

1 Timothy 6:13-16 NKJV *I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, (14) that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, (15) which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, (16) who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.*

Revelation 17:14 NKJV *"These will make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, for He is Lord of lords and King of kings; and those who are with Him are called, chosen, and faithful."*

Revelation 19:11-16 NKJV *Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. (12) His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He*

had a name written that no one knew except Himself. (13) He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. (14) And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. (15) Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. (16) And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

The post-resurrection authority of Jesus is also the basis of the mandate of the Church: **Matthew 28:18-20 NKJV** *And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, (20) "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.*

And the author to the Hebrews uses the enthronement of Jesus, and His consequent authority, as one of the reasons why He is superior to the angels:

Hebrews 1:1-14 NKJV *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, (2) has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; (3) who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, (4) having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*

(5) For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, Today I have begotten You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son"? (6) But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: "Let all the angels of God worship Him." (7) And of the angels He says: "Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire." (8) But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. (9) You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions."

(10) And: "You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. (11) They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; (12) Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail."

(13) But to which of the angels has He ever said: "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"? (14) Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

Many of these passages quote Psalm 110 which prophesies of the Messiah being enthroned as both King and a priest "according to the order of Melchizedek". It is one of the most quoted Psalms in the NT:

Psalms 110:1-7 NKJV *The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool." (2) The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies! (3) Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth. (4) The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek." (5) The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. (6) He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries. (7) He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; Therefore He shall lift up the head.*

Jesus uses this Psalm to confound the Pharisees:

Matthew 22:41-46 NKJV *While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, (42) saying, "What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?" They said to Him, "The Son of David." (43) He said to them, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him 'Lord,' saying: (44) 'The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool"'? (45) "If David then calls Him 'Lord,' how is He his Son?" (46) And no one was able to answer Him a word, nor from that day on did anyone dare question Him anymore.*

The most puzzling and difficult passage is in 1 Corinthians where Paul is discussing the resurrection of the dead and the course of history:

1 Corinthians 15:23-28 NKJV *But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming. (24) Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. (25) For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet. (26) The last enemy that will be destroyed is death. (27) For "He has put all things under His feet." But when He says "all things are put under Him," it is evident that He who put all things under Him is excepted. (28) Now when all things are made subject to Him, then the Son Himself will also be subject to Him who put all things under Him, that God may be all in all.*

How does Jesus as King put an "end to all rule, authority and power"? The Scriptures give us a few hints of the Kingdom of God shattering the kingdoms of this world as a giant rock or an iron bar:

Daniel 2:34-35, 44 NKJV *"You watched while a stone was cut out without hands, which struck the image on its feet of iron and clay, and broke them in pieces. (35) "Then the iron, the clay, the bronze, the silver, and the gold were crushed together, and became like chaff from the summer threshing floors; the wind carried them away so that no trace of them was found. And the stone that struck the image became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.... (44) "And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed; and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.*

Revelation 11:15 NKJV *Then the seventh angel sounded: And there were loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever!"*

Revelation 12:5 NKJV *She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne.*

Revelation 19:15 NKJV *Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.*

This judgment of the nations will occur at the Second Coming:

Matthew 26:64-66 NKJV *Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

Matthew 25:31-33 NKJV *"When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. (32) "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats. (33) "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.*

Those who faithfully follow Jesus will reign with Him in the new Kingdom that follows the destruction of the "kingdoms of this world" and replaces them.

Matthew 19:28-30 NKJV *So Jesus said to them, "Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (29) "And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. (30) "But many who are first will be last, and the last first*

2 Timothy 2:12 NKJV *If we endure, We shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.*

Revelation 2:26-28 NKJV *"And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations; (27) 'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'; as I also have received from My Father; (28) "and I will give him the morning star.*

Revelation 3:21 NKJV *"To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.*

Revelation 20:4 NKJV *And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.*

His disciples James and John understood that Jesus would occupy the throne of David and so their mother asked:

Matthew 20:21 NKJV *And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom."*

Jesus corrects this love of self-exaltation while retaining the promise of a kingdom for believers - who, like He did, suffer for God as sacrificial servant-leaders:

Matthew 20:22-28 NKJV *But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." (23) So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared by My Father." (24) And when the ten heard it, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers. (25) But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those who are great exercise authority over them. (26) "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you, let him be your servant. (27) "And whoever desires to be first among you, let him be your slave; (28) "just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."*

Luke 22:25-30 NKJV *And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and those who exercise authority over them are called 'benefactors.' (26) "But not so among you; on the contrary, he who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves. (27) "For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves. (28) "But you are those who have continued with Me in My trials. (29) "And I bestow upon you a kingdom, just as My Father bestowed one upon Me, (30) "that you may eat and drink at My table in My kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."*

Finally believers will reign with Christ forever:

Revelation 5:9-10 NKJV *And they sang a new song, saying: "You are worthy to take the scroll, And to open its seals; For You were slain, And have redeemed us to God by Your blood Out of every tribe and tongue and people and nation, (10) And have made us kings and priests to our God; And we shall reign on the earth."*

Revelation 22:5 NKJV *There shall be no night there: They need no lamp nor light of the sun, for the Lord God gives them light. And they shall reign forever and ever.*

Final Comments

The path to the throne lay through service and the cross for Jesus - and for all His disciples down the ages!

Because Jesus has been enthroned we know that God is just and rewards those who suffer patiently for Him. The Jesus we now pray to is a King - the King of Kings, the Lamb upon the throne. His days of humiliation are over. He has been exalted and pours out the Holy Spirit from on high.

Because Jesus has been enthroned we can know that He is in the process of establishing His kingdom and destroying all resistance to His will. Jesus is in the process of subduing His enemies either through repentance and the gospel or by final force at His coming. Jesus will either convert the nations or judge the nations. Finally Jesus will be the only authority, the final authority in human history.

Because Jesus has been enthroned we can know that we have a faithful High Priest, a king priest of the order of Melchizedek. We can find grace and help in time of need and come to a throne where Christ Himself intercedes for us and justifies us.

Let's worship Him in spirit and in truth!

Jesus - The Better High Priest

In this article we shall look at the present heavenly and High Priestly ministry of Jesus. Just what is Jesus doing now - since the ascension and before His return in glory? Jesus is our eternal and abiding High Priest who has passed through the heavenly realms, who is merciful to sinners, and yet will have all His enemies made as a 'footstool for His feet'.

The book of Acts begins with Jesus ascending into heaven and the angels telling the disciples that He would return one day - just the way He went - that is, in bodily form, and to Jerusalem. A few days later Pentecost exploded and the early church was born in tongues of fire. The "Church Age", that time between Pentecost and the Return - had begun. So just what is Jesus doing now? Acts, Hebrews and Ephesians give us some clues.

Jesus Is At the Right Hand of the Father

There are at least 20 references to this fact in Scripture: Matthew 22:44, 26:64, Mark 12:36, 14:62, 16:19, Luke 20:42, 22:69, Acts 2:25, 2:33-34, 5:31, 7:55-56, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3, 1:13, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2, Rev 5:7. Some of these are parallel passages so we will just look at the main twelve passages below.

Matthew 22:44 NASB *The Lord said to my Lord, "sit at my right hand, until I put thine enemies beneath thy feet"?*

Matthew 26:64 NASB *Jesus said to him, "You have said it yourself; nevertheless I tell you, hereafter you shall see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven."*

Mark 16:19 NASB *So then, when the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God.*

Luke 22:69 NASB *But from now on The son of man will be seated at the right hand of the power OF GOD.*

Acts 2:25 NASB *For David says of Him, 'I was always beholding the Lord in my presence; for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.*

Acts 2:33-34 NASB *"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. (34) "For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: 'the Lord said to my Lord, "sit at my right hand,*

Acts 5:31 NASB *"He is the one whom God exalted to His right hand as a Prince and a Savior, to grant repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins.*

Acts 7:55-56 NASB *But being full of the Holy Spirit, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God; (56) and he said,*

"Behold, I see the heavens opened up and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God."

Romans 8:34 NASB *who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us.*

Ephesians 1:20 NASB *which He brought about in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places,*

Colossians 3:1 NASB *If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God.*

Hebrews 1:3 NASB *And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high;*

Hebrews 1:13 NASB *But to which of the angels has He ever said, "sit at my right hand, until I make thine enemies a footstool for thy feet"?*

Hebrews 8:1 NASB *Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,*

Hebrews 10:12 NASB *but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, sat down at the right hand of God,*

Hebrews 12:2 NASB *fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*

Revelation 5:7 NASB *And He (Jesus) came, and He took it (the judgment scroll) out of the right hand of Him who sat on the throne.*

What do these verses tell us about the ministry of Jesus? Firstly they say that Jesus is in a position of vast authority, but being at the right hand of the Father Jesus is the Prime Minister of the Universe. Acts calls Him a Prince (Acts 5:31). Those that despised Him when He was on earth would have to reckon with the power He would wield after His ascension and especially at His return. Jesus reply to His critics was "hereafter you shall see the son of man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming on the clouds of heaven." Hebrews goes further and says that from this position of authority Jesus upholds the Universe by the "word of His power". His commands, His utterances, His "words of power" uphold all the created order! (Hebrews 1:3)

This cosmic and powerful Christ is not just the "tyrant of the Universe" but uses His high position for the benefit of those who love Him. He has "made purification for sins" and "intercedes" for us as our representative at God's right hand. (Romans 8:34, Hebrews 1:3). From His high position in the heavenly realms He pours out the Holy Spirit upon those who

believe (Acts 2:33, 34) and grants repentance and forgiveness of sins. (Acts 5:31) At the right hand of the Father He is a faithful and merciful High Priest who we can come to for grace and help in time of need. (Hebrews 4:10-16)

However He will also dispense justice and make His enemies a footstool for his feet and it is at the right hand of the Father that he receives and opens the scroll of judgment and brings into action the close of the age. (Matthew 22:24, Hebrews 1:13, Revelation 5:7)

Jesus Is Conquering the Nations

The nations will either be conquered either by evangelism or by the "sword of his mouth". His enemies will either repent and we will "make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-20) or they will be "ruled with a rod of iron"

Revelation 12:5 NASB *And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.*

Revelation 19:15 NASB *And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.*

Astonishingly it seems that faithful Christians will also rule over the rebellious nations as Christ's representatives:

Revelation 2:26-28 NASB *'And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations; (27) and he shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken to pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father; {28} and I will give him the morning star.*

So we see that Jesus has ascended to a position of vast authority and is on a program to conquer the world. The church Age is about that conquest and the preferred method of conquest is the peaceful proclamation of the gospel. When that is no longer of any avail, force will be used! (Matthew 24:14 NASB) "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.

Jesus Is Baptizing With the Holy Spirit

Acts 2:33 NASB *"Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear.*

Matthew 3:11 NASB *"As for me, I baptize you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, and I am not fit to remove His sandals; He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*

Since Pentecost Jesus has been pouring out the Holy Spirit in revival, in personal renewal and refreshing and in peace and love in the believers' heart (Romans 5:1-5). Jesus has

received the promise of the Spirit from the Father and "gives the Spirit without measure" to those who ask Him.

Luke 11:13 NASB *"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him?"*

John 3:34 NASB *For He whom God has sent speaks the words of God; for He gives the Spirit without measure.*

The Holy Spirit is given to three groups of people (which are really one):

Those that thirst for the waters of life - (Revelation 21:6 NASB) *And He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.*

Those that believe - (John 7:39 NASB) *But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.*

Those who obey - (Acts 5:32 NASB) *"And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Holy Spirit, whom God has given to those who obey Him."*

Jesus is Building His Church and Preparing His Bride

Matthew 16:18 NASB *"And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.*

Ephesians 5:25-27 NASB *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her; (26) that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, (27) that He might present to Himself the church in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless.*

Not only is Jesus conquering the nations through missionary evangelism He is making something of those converts - a glorious church, holy and blameless, without spot or wrinkle. God has a program of perfection for His Church and it will be implemented! Jesus said he will build His church on the faithful declarations of imperfect men such as Peter and He will! He prepared His Church chiefly through "the washing of water with the word" - we are cleansed as we study and obey the Scriptures. Jesus is purifying, sanctifying and cleansing a church so that it will be a wonderful bride and bring honor to Him on the wedding day!

Jesus Sympathizes With The Frailties And Weaknesses Of The Saints, Interceded For Them And Represents Them Before God As A Faithful High Priest

The book of Hebrews has many references to this sacrificial and sympathetic high priestly role of Jesus (Hebrews 2:17, 3:1, 4:14-15, 5:5, 5:10, 6:20, 7:26, 8:1-8, 9:11,25; 13:11-

12) and Romans 8 says that Jesus intercedes for us from His position at the right hand of the Father (Romans 8:34). This intercession is based on a deep understanding of human nature because Jesus was tempted in all points as we are but was yet without sin, (Hebrews 4:15) so He can be a merciful High Priest who is conscious of human frailty. ([Click here for an article on this](#))

Jesus is a high priest of a special and eternal order - the order of Melchizedek, the prototype of all priests and one who is eternal. (Hebrews, chapters 6 and 7). Instead of belonging to a human priesthood that perishes and becomes obsolete like the priesthood based on Levi, the priesthood based on Melchizedek is perpetual and heavenly and belongs to the tabernacle that is in heaven (Hebrews 9:11). Thus it is a better and more potent priesthood with a deeper intercession before God- one that can completely remove sins (which the Aaronic priesthood could never do). The supremacy of this priesthood is outlined in the following verses:

- **Hebrews 6:20 NASB** *where Jesus has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*
- **Hebrews 7:26 NASB** *For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens;*
- **Hebrews 8:1 NASB** *Now the main point in what has been said is this: we have such a high priest, who has taken His seat at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,*

The main point of the book of Hebrews is that Jesus, having passed through the heavenly realms and the plurality of spiritual "layers" is now in the highest place anyone can be before God - at God's very right hand. Therefore His priestly ministry is far more effective than that of any Jewish High Priest and therefore Christianity is a better system than Judaism because a resurrected and triumphant Christ, the very Son of God, to whom God has said "THOU ART MY SON, TODAY I HAVE BEGOTTEN THEE"; - is the High Priest and main intercessor.

Thus Jesus being a High Priest at God's right hand makes Christianity the supreme world religion - better than Judaism, which in turn was better than Gentile religions. We have a Better High Priest and there lies our hope and confidence.

Hebrews 4:14-16 NASB Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. (15) For we do not have a high priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but One who has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. (16) Let us therefore draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help in time of need.

Prayer

Lord Jesus, You are at the right hand of the Father interceding for me that I may become holy and blameless and spotless. You understand all my weaknesses and give me grace and help in time of need. Lord purify my heart and its desires, take all wicked ways from me and put a right spirit within me that I may walk in Your ways. Pour out Your Holy Spirit upon me and fill me with Your life. Allow me o drink from the water of life and to know what it is to have the Holy Spirit without measure and be fully filled with God's love. Glorify Yourself in me I pray Amen.

Word Study on "Parousia"

("Parousia" is a Greek word meaning "personal presence" and relates to the Second Coming)

It's Greek to Me!

Parousia is a Greek word used 24 times in the New Testament to mean "coming, arrival, personal presence". It is most often used to indicate the second coming and the arrival of the Son of Man though it can also indicate a visit by a Christian worker, apostle or even the "man of lawlessness". In the Greek world of the New Testament it meant among other things a) A State visit or b) The presence or appearance of a deity during worship e.g. by divine fire. It has a range of meaning to that of the archaic English word "visitation". Here is a definition from Strong's concordance:

Definition

3952. parousia, par-oo-see'-ah; from the pres. part. of G3918; a being near, i.e. advent (often, return; spec. of Christ to punish Jerusalem, or finally the wicked); (by impl.) phys. aspect:--coming, presence.

There are six uses of the word to describe a visit by a person or their personal "presence" (1 Cor 16;17; 2Cor6:6, 2Cor 6;7; 2Cor 10:10; Phil 1:26; 2:12) this combination of "arrival" plus "personal presence" gives the flavour to the word even when it is being used theologically. The Parousia of Jesus Christ is both His arrival and the manifestation of His "presence" to all mankind. We shall concentrate on this aspect for the rest of the word study.

Jesus' use of "parousia"

The word is only used 4 times in the gospels - all in Matthew chapter 24 the "Little Apocalypse" when Jesus discusses the signs of His coming. The references are Matthew 24:3, 27, 37 and 39. In verse 3 the disciples ask "Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign of Your coming,(parousia) and of the end of the age? Jesus then replies:

(Matthew 24:27 NKJV) "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be.

(Matthew 24:37-39 NKJV) "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming (parousia) of the Son of Man be. {38} "For as in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, {39} "and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming (parousia)of the Son of Man be.

Jesus emphasis is that His return will be sudden and surprising. It will be as sudden as a lightning flash and it will catch a preoccupied and self-centred world quite unawares. It is pre-eminently a sudden dramatic divine intervention in history for salvation of the elect and judgement of those who have rejected God's rulership over their lives.

Parousia as the hope and goal of the Christian life

The apostles seem to have had a single minded devotion to the return of the Lord. As a child I waited for Christmas with single-minded tenacity, wanting to be good and to be rewarded for it. And Christmas seemed such a long way away each year. But it was certain and it was wonderful. This is a pale but accurate reflection of the apostolic hope which was a certain hope of a glorious reward. There are 11 main passages and they can be grouped under four headings:

1. Resurrection and blessing

1 Corinthians 15:23 NKJV *But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ's at His coming.*

1 Thessalonians 4:15 NKJV *For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep.*

2. Holiness /Christian character

1 Thessalonians 2:19 NKJV *For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?*

1 Thessalonians 3:13 NKJV *so that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints.*

1 Thessalonians 5:23 NKJV *Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

1 John 2:28 NKJV *And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.*

3. The destruction of the wicked

2 Thessalonians 2:8-9 NKJV *And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming. (9) The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs, and lying wonders,*

2 Peter 3:12 NKJV *looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be dissolved, being on fire, and the elements will melt with fervent heat?*

4. The patient endurance of the saints

2 Thessalonians 2:1-2 NKJV *Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him, we ask you, {2} not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.*

James 5:7-8 NKJV *Therefore be patient, brethren, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, waiting patiently for it until it receives the early and latter rain. (8) You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand.*

2 Peter 3:3-4 NKJV *knowing this first: that scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, (4) and saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation."*

For the Christian the Second Coming will be a joyous royal visit. It is "The day" for which we strain forward with eager anticipation. For the wicked it will be when God arrives in fire and declares His personal Presence to a rebellious world which will then be under the deception and dominion of a man of lawlessness inspired by Satan. This man of lawlessness will be destroyed and God's Kingdom rulership declared. Christians will be gathered up to be with God and resurrected from the dead to receive an eternal reward. The elements will melt with the heat and the universe as we know it will perish. This is also the only day that matters for the Christian - it is the day for which we are keeping ourselves holy, pure and blameless. It is the end of the race when we receive the prize. If we abide in Christ we will have no reason to be ashamed on that day.

The manifest Presence of God will re-order all Creation and we are to wait for this with patient and certain expectation similar to that of a farmer waiting for his crop to mature. We are not to be like the mockers who deride the second coming as due to God being tardy or non-existent. Rather we are to "hasten the day" this may mean that we are to engage in mission for it is when the gospel has been preached to all the nations that the end will come and this, in Matthew 24 is the pre-eminent sign Jesus gave of His coming. (Matthew 24:14 NKJV) "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the entire world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.

Conclusion

Jesus warns of a sudden end to this age that will be as final as the closing and locking of a door. He meant this to give an urgency to our days so that we would not be caught up in serving our appetites rather than our God. While most Christians agree that the end of this age may soon be upon us few are living diligently in the light of that information. As Christians we should cease arguing over trivial details of eschatology and start living as if it was true. This means that we should:

- Live holy lives abiding in Christ and perfecting holiness in the fear of God.
- Rejoice in hope knowing that we have a Savior who will certainly appear and all our work for Christ will not be in vain but abundantly rewarded.
- Be alert to the various deceptions that Satan will launch against the church in those days.

- Engage in radical simplicity knowing that all our material possessions will be just fuel for the fire on that day.
- Be awake to God not "asleep in the light". This means we are to have a sense of perpetual readiness and anticipation and in constant spiritual growth. The attitude that "I will get right with God just before Jesus comes back is "foolishness" and imperils the joy that the believer can enter into.
- Wait patiently for the coming of the Lord without giving in to skepticism about the apparent delay or alarmist panic concluding that He has already come.
- Hasten the day by engaging in world mission and Kingdom activity.

Why I Believe In The Trinity

[by Mark Drake](#)

(This article was originally a post on the newsgroup bit.listserv.christian)

Introduction

I've stayed out of this trinity discussion so far, but mostly because I felt that many of the posts had little content, and I didn't want to contribute in the same fashion. I am going to try to present an article of the trinity that has content, and is biblical, without speaking just to one particular opposing view. This is by no means meant to be an exhaustive treatment.

There are at least three groups of non-trinitarians who read christia. JW's, who believe that Jesus is a created being and the Holy Spirit is a "force," not a person. LDSs who believe that the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are persons, that they make up the Godhead, but while they are united in purpose, they are not united in being. Lastly, there are the Oneness folk who believe that God reveals Himself to us in different ways, as Father, Son, or Holy Spirit, but they believe that there is only one person, not three. (If I got any of this wrong, I'm sure you'll let me know. :-)

The Definition Of Person

As my definition of person, I take the normal, natural one that everyone uses in everyday life. If I come across my housemate Dan staring at a mirror and talking, I would say a person is talking to himself. If I come across him holding a conversation with our friend Felix, I would say that one person is talking to another person. If I come across Dan holding a conversation with himself, using different means of expressing himself for each half of the conversation, I would still say one person was talking to himself, and I would hope he was practicing lines for a play, otherwise I would begin to worry.

First I would like to get over a silly anti-trinity argument. This being that the word trinity is not found in the Bible, therefore the trinity is not a biblical doctrine. I respond that the word monotheism is not found in the Bible either, but no one is saying we shouldn't be monotheists. The word used to refer to a concept is not what is under discussion. We are discussing the concept itself.

The Biblical Data

The foundation of the doctrine of the trinity is found in the OT.

Deut 6:4 *"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD;*

The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, who gave Moses his personal name YHWH (represented as LORD in this quote) is one. Fairly straightforward.

Point I - There is only one God.

Isaiah 43:10-11 *"You are my witnesses," says the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, that you may know and believe me and understand that I am He. Before me no god was formed, nor shall there be any after me. (11) I, I am the LORD, and besides me there is no savior.*

Is 44:6 *Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the LORD of hosts: "I am the first and I am the last; besides me there is no god.*

These passages reaffirm the Deuteronomy passage, and also give some of the characteristics of God. He is the only God, He is the only savior, He is the first and the last.

Consider now this passage from Revelation:

Rev 22:13-16 *I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end." (14) Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates. (15) Outside are the dogs and sorcerers and fornicators and murderers and idolaters, and every one who loves and practices falsehood. (16) "I Jesus have sent my angel to you with this testimony for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star."*

Who is the first and the last? Jesus. This passage clearly identifies Jesus with the LORD (YHWH). I also think that everyone acknowledges that Jesus is our savior, yet the passage above from Isaiah (44:11 above) says that only the LORD is our savior.

Point II is that Jesus is God.

Acts 5:1-4 *But a man named Ananias with his wife Sapphira sold a piece of property, (2) and with his wife's knowledge he kept back some of the proceeds, and brought only a part and laid it at the apostles' feet. (3) But Peter said, "Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back part of the proceeds of the land? (4) While it remained unsold, did it not remain your own? And after it was sold, was it not at your disposal? How is it that you have contrived this deed in your heart? You have not lied to men but to God."*

Peter claims that Ananias lied to the Holy Spirit, and then says that he lied to God. Do you lie to a force? To a thing? No, you lie to a person (who in this case is identified with God).

Confirmation that the Holy Spirit is a person is found in Acts 13:2 2 While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."

Point III - The Holy Spirit is God

The Holy Spirit is a person.

I don't think anyone denies that the Father is God, but here are some scripture passages.

John 6:27 *Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of man will give to you; for on him has God the Father set his seal."*

Eph 1:17 *that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you a spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him,*

2 Cor 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort,*

Point IV - The Father is God

I don't think that anyone denies that the Father is a person, or that Jesus is a person. It is such a natural reading of the Bible that someone would have to go to great extents to try to demonstrate otherwise. I therefore wont bother covering it.

Point II – A. Jesus is a person

Point IV – A. The Father is a person.

With all these points, we seem to have created something of a paradox. We have three persons who are God, but we have affirmed that there is only one God. How do we resolve this? An easy resolution would be to say that they are really just the same person. Is this consistent with scripture? Let's see.

Eph 1:17 *says "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory"*. Now, this is a very confusing phrase if the Father and Jesus are the same person. Jesus (who is the Father) is his own God. ??? **2 Cor 1:3** is even worse *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ"*. Now Jesus is his own father! **Rev 1:1** says it is *"The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him."* So God (presumably the Father, but I suppose not necessarily at this point) gave himself a revelation? A rather confusing state of affairs, n'est pas?

John 14:26 *But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you.*

So now we have one person, the Father, sending another person, the Spirit, in a third person's (Jesus') name. But if Jesus is the Father, who is the Spirit, why did Jesus say such a confusing thing? Why didn't he just say he would be with us in spirit?

It would seem that scripture makes no sense if one assumes that the Father is the Son is

the Spirit, that there is only one person. There are many, many passages dealing with two of these three persons at the same time whose only natural reading says that they are separate persons. To believe otherwise does violence to language (any language).

This leads to another point.

Point V. The Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus are three separate persons.

My points then are:

- **Point I - There is only one God.**
- **Point II - Jesus is God (A) Jesus is a person**
- **Point III - The Holy Spirit is God. (A) The Holy Spirit is a person**
- **Point IV - The Father is God. (A) The Father is a person**
- **Point V - The Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus are 3 separate persons.**

The Seeming Paradox

What about our seeming paradox? "We have three persons who are God, but we have affirmed that there is only one God." Well, the orthodox position is to say that we believe the word of God, and accept on faith that this only seems to be a paradox.

"If there is one God, and if there are three persons called God in the bible, then by faith I must accept the doctrine of the trinity, even though I may not fully comprehend how God can be one yet three in perfect unity and equality at the same time. If a person rejects the trinity, it is because he wants comprehension rather than faith and belief."

Who Did Jesus Claim To Be?

He claimed great things about Himself....

Was He Mad?

Was He Bad?

Was He God?

Carefully Read and Think About The Following Bible Verses.....

John 3:13 NKJV *"No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.*

John 7:16 NKJV *Jesus answered them and said, "My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.*

John 14:6-10 NKJV *Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. (7) "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him." (8) Philip said to Him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us." (9) Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'? (10) "Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.*

What did Jesus claim about?

Where He came from (John 3:13)

What He taught (John 7:16)

What his role is in helping people get to know God (John 14:6)

The similarities between Him and God the Father (John 14:7, 10)

His authority and where it came from (John 14:10)

These are BIG claims to make! If they are true Jesus is much more than just a good person - He is God. If they are untrue He is either crazy or telling lies on a grand scale. There are only three main choices.....

1. They are not true and Jesus knew they were not true - that is He was a liar- He was BAD.
2. They are not true and Jesus did not know they were not true - that is He was deluded and crazy like someone who thinks they are a hamburger - He was MAD.
3. They are TRUE - Jesus was claiming to be God- therefore Jesus is God.

Let's line this up with the facts.....

Jesus was not bad!

When Jesus challenged his ENEMIES to find any sin in Him they could not do so! (**John 8:46 NKJV**) *"Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?"* In fact Jesus was always recognized as being someone who was without sin. Even Judas, Pontius Pilate and the guards that executed Him acknowledged this! (Matthew 27:4, 24, 54). The Bible records Jesus as being perfectly without sin. (**Heb 4:15 NKJV**) *For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.*

Jesus was not mad!

People who are insane do not give the world's greatest moral teachings such as the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) and they are not followed by people for very long. People soon detect when someone is crazy and they will not die with or for a madman like Jesus' disciples did. Mentally ill people with religious delusions are generally distressingly self-centered, loud and clamant and very ineffective in their lives. This is the opposite of Jesus who was loving, humble and lowly. (Matthew 11:28-30) The quality of Jesus' life and teaching that has stood the test of time as the world's best ethical system proves He was not insane - in fact He was very wise.

Jesus is God!

The Bible backs up Jesus' claim that He was God. Let's look at just three Scriptures:

Col 1:15-20 NKJV *He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. (16) For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. (17) And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. (18) And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. (19) For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, (20) and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.*

Col 2:9 NKJV *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily;*

Rev 5:6,13 NKJV *And I looked, and behold, in the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and in the midst of the elders, stood a Lamb as though it had been slain, having seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven Spirits of God sent out into all the earth...(13) And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: "Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!"*

From just these three Scriptures we see that:

Jesus is the image of the invisible God.
 All things were created through Him and for Him.
 He is before all things.
 All things "consist" in Him - He is the "glue of the Universe".
 He is above all things.
 All the fullness of the Father dwells in Him.
 He has reconciled all things to Himself.
 He is the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form.
 He dwells in the middle of God's throne.
 His "eyes" are the seven Spirits of God.
 He is worshipped in Heaven.
 He is praised "in the same breath" as the Father.

These 12 things back up Jesus' claim to be God and indicate that Jesus Christ is God. Jesus is not a mere human and He is not an angel (Hebrews 1:4-14). He is God's Son and the One all heaven worships. Since God says "I will not give my glory to another" (Isaiah 48:11) then if Jesus is worshipped in Heaven then He must be God.

Check out the following two Scriptures and write out what they say about Jesus' claim to be God.

John 1:1-3 NKJV *In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. (2) He was in the beginning with God. (3) All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.*

Heb 1:1-3 NKJV *God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, (2) has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; (3) who being the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high,*

What special name was Jesus called? (John 1:1)

List four things John 1:1-3 says about the Word?

What special name or title do Hebrew people call Jesus?

How much power and authority what kinds of power and authority does the Son have?

What do both verses tell us about Jesus' role in Creation?

What do both John and Hebrews tell us about the similarities between the nature and personality of Jesus and the nature and personality of God?

If someone is all-powerful and exactly like God in nature and is worshipped in Heaven - then who are they?

Conclusion

Do you think that Jesus' claims to be God are true or untrue? If untrue why do you think He is either mad or bad? If true - will you now follow Him?

Who Is "The Inner Man"? And What Is He Like?

Christ In Us The Hope of Glory

Let's start this journey with three of the most perplexing passages in the whole of Scripture.

1 John 3:9 NKJV *Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God.*

Romans 7:14-25 NKJV *For we know that the law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin. (15) For what I am doing, I do not understand. For what I will to do, that I do not practice; but what I hate, that I do. (16) If, then, I do what I will not to do, I agree with the law that it is good. (17) But now, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (18) For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. (19) For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practice. (20) Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me. (21) I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good. (22) For I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. (23) But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. (24) O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? (25) I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself serve the law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.*

Matthew 11:11-13 NKJV *"Assuredly, I say to you, among those born of women there has not risen one greater than John the Baptist; but he who is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he. (12) "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force. (13) "For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.*

The Eternal You

Ah you say...the editor has flipped! How can he possibly string these three passages into anything coherent? Well let's try! Firstly we will look at what it means to be "born of God". 1 John 3:9 tells us that when something is "born of God" it receives a nature that does not sin. In fact the "inner man"/"new nature" is unable to sin. In the spiritual realm the "new man" is a product of God, produced from His "seed" (Gk. "sperma") and bearing His likeness and thus behaving like Him. That which "behaves like God" does not sin. The 'new man' is "created in righteousness" and is righteous. It does not sin. This makes sense - that which is exactly like God in nature - will not and cannot sin. The "bit of you" that will inherit a resurrection body and that I will talk to in the Zion above in ten thousand years

time - that part of you, is sinless and always has been. The "real you", the "eternal character", that is you in Christ - is sinless. Let me be clear - I am not talking about sinless perfection. The inclusion of the Romans 7 quote above should give you a clue to that. I am not saying that true Christians do not sin, they do. I am saying that Christ in you does not sin. He didn't sin on earth and He doesn't sin now. The apostle John is no "sinless perfectionist", he knows his charges better than that! (1 John 1:7 NKJV) But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin." So we see that John did not believe in "sinless perfection" - the believers still needed the cleansing of the blood of Christ! However he saw the glory of the "seed of God"- the new nature that was being formed in them.

The Mystery

Though John writes extensively about the incorruptibility of our new natures he admits to having very little idea of what the end product would be like.. John says **(1 John 3:1-3 NKJV)** *"Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (2) Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (3) And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure."* The apostle John admitted "it has not yet been revealed what we shall be".

The full knowledge of who we really are in our "eternal character and destiny" is hidden from us. It is a marvelous and tantalizing mystery that awaits the Second Coming for its full revelation. There is one known amongst all the unknowns and John states it as "when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is". That is the purifying hope that frees us from the love of this world. John is not alone in his assessment of things. Paul reaches a similar conclusion when he says: **(Colossians 3:1-4 NKJV)** *"If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, and sitting at the right hand of God. (2) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (4) When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory."* Paul says that for now our true selves, our "life" is "hidden" - in Christ with God and that we shall only find out what it will be like when Christ returns and we appear with Him in glory..

Giving the Spirit the Whip Hand

In the Romans 7 quote at the beginning of this article Paul says "Now if I do what I will not to do, it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells in me.". He distinguishes between "himself" and "his sin" in what for years appeared to me to be a bit of a "cop-out". How could someone dare to say "It is no longer I who sin but sin that dwells in me." it sounded like a theological excuse for a lack of self-control? But Scripture is not like that - and everything is for a purpose. Paul is revealing to us here the difference between his flesh which was "born of woman" and is passing away with its lusts and the spirit which is "born of God" and abides forever. Paul concludes that "in my flesh is no good thing". The flesh, while not in its intrinsic nature corrupt. has become thoroughly corrupted by sin and

become a dwelling place for sin. Our bodies and our minds are huge data storehouses of multi-megabytes of sin, sinful thoughts, sinful habits, and sinful actions and so on.

The growing and forming Christ within us is opposed by the worldly treachery of the flesh in a two-way tussle (Galatians 5:16-18) This tussle is the subject of Romans 6-8. Romans 6 boldly state that we are "dead to sin". **(Romans 6:10-12 NKJV)** *"For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. (11) Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. (12) Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts."* The 'new nature' in us is "dead to sin". It does not communicate with sin. Just as a person sleeping heavily is said to be "dead to the world" so the new man, which has died and risen with Christ is "dead to sin' and not influenced by it. We are to reckon this as our true self. We are to write in the ledger of our minds. "The real, eternal me is dead to sin". We are to do our spiritual calculations as if we are dead to the influence of sin and living forever. Therefore we are not to let sin reign in our mortal body so as to obey its lusts. We are to give the whip hand to the new man. Instead of letting our flesh dominate our spirit we are to enforce the spirit's righteous lifestyle with its outcome - eternal life. When sin tries to tell us that we are its slave and must do its commands we are to look in God's ledger and reckon ourselves dead to sin. We are to call sin a liar!

Sin can claim to be our master - but it is not. It was, and we still fear its voice. But we are a "freed slave" we can walk away without fear. We have a new master to obey. **(Romans 6:20-23 NKJV)** *For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. (21) What fruit did you have then in the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. (22) But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life. (23) For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Freedom from Condemnation

Romans 7 analyses the desperate battle between the mind which wishes to obey God and the "body of death" indwelt by sin, that opposes it and ends with the cry "who will deliver me from this body of death"? Romans 8 supplies the answer. **(Romans 8:1-2 NKJV)** *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. (2) For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death."* The inner man is not under condemnation at all. Our true selves are free from guilt and free from any participation in the sins of the body. There is no "guilt by association". The new nature is holy even if the flesh is corrupt. **(Romans 8:10 NKJV)** *And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.* Romans 8 then develop the theme of how to maximize our life in Christ.

The Role of Our Thoughts

The mind is critical to the success of this venture as it is our "contact point" with the Spirit. **(Romans 8:5-13 NKJV)** *For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. (6) For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. (7) Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. (8) So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (9) But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he is not His. (10) And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. (11) But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. (12) Therefore, brethren, we are debtors; not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. (13) For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*

"Born Of Woman" vs. "Born Of God"

This leads us to the third of our opening bible passages - Matthew 11:11-13. John the Baptist who was the greatest of those "born of women" and the last of the prophets. Yet Jesus said that "the least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he." At first sight the proposition that some of the more annoying Christians we have met could be greater than John the Baptist is, to say the least, astonishing (your editor has a cynical streak). But consider...those "born of women" can have the Spirit upon them, worship God and be prophets but they are not "new creations". There is a huge qualitative difference between a "born again believer" and John the Baptist. The born again believer is "born of God" (not merely "born of women") and has a God-conceived nature that is eternal. They are not necessarily "better than" John the Baptist as viewed from outside. But when viewed from inside or from above they are "greater" inasmuch as the nature conceived within the Christian is far greater and can be said to dwell in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 2:6,7) This nature is Christ in us. **(Colossians 1:26-29 NKJV)** *the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints. (27) To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. (28) Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (29) To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily.*

The Maturing of Christ in Us

Notice Paul's concerns here - Christ in you is the hope of glory. It is the glorious indwelling nature, born of God, Christ in us, that gives us the hope of being sinless, immortal, imperishable and inheriting a resurrection body fit for "the saints"(hagioi- holy ones). Paul works hard to see that Christ in us is "perfected"(Col 1:28, above). It seems

that Jesus Christ 'grows in us'. Paul writes to the backslidden Galatians: **(Galatians 4:19 NKJV)** *My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you*". This at first may seem paradoxical. How can one have Christ and still need Him to be "formed"? Just as Jesus grew in wisdom and stature during his earthly ministry so it seems Christ in us "grows" into a "mature man" through the disciplines of the faith and the word of God. This forming of Christ in us involves ministering to one another and edifying one another. **(Ephesians 4:13-15 NKJV)** *"till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect (teleois - mature) man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; (14) that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, (15) but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ;"*.

Particularly important to this is "being filled with the Spirit" and encouraging one another in the Word...**(Ephesians 5:18-20 NKJV)** *And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, (19) speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, (20) giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" and (Colossians 3:16-17 NKJV)* *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. (17) And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.*

Suffering seems also to play a part in this. During His "earthly years", Jesus Christ was "perfected" through suffering. **(Hebrews 2:10 NKJV)** *"For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings."* and naturally this applies to us as well. **(1 Peter 5:10 NKJV)** *But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.*

The Old Man Is Dead, Live Like the New Man You Are

Paul called Christians holy because they were. Their inner nature, born of God, is holy just as God is holy. All that is inconsistent with this holy and new nature must be shed. Paul develops this at some length in both Ephesians and Colossians e.g. **(Colossians 3:1-10 NKJV)** *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. (2) Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. (3) For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. (4) When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory. (5) Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (6) Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, (7) in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them. (8) But now you yourselves are to put off all these: anger, wrath, malice, blasphemy, filthy language out of your mouth. (9) Do not lie to one another, since*

you have put off the old man with his deeds, (10) and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,"

Enemies of Your Soul

Finally to return to where we began in 1 John. **(1 John 2:15-17 NKJV)** *"Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. (16) For all that is in the world; the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; is not of the Father but is of the world. (17) And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever."* John lists here three decisive hindrances to the formation of Christ in us - the love of the world manifested as "the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life." The lust of the flesh centers us on that part of our nature that is mortal, indwelt by sin and perishing when we die. Its a sweaty word 'epithumia' and denotes the inordinate possessive desires in our flesh that war with God and holiness, these include sexual lusts, anger, alcoholism, drug addiction, gluttony and laziness. The "lust of the flesh" see the world as appetites to be satisfied and things to be consumed..

The lust of the eyes relates to greed self-gratification, money and material acquisition, getting, grabbing, cheating and coveting. The desire is generated by the material world outside and enters into the soul "through the eye gate." In the midst of Jesus' discourse on God and Mammon there is an "apparent interruption" **(Matthew 6:22-23 NKJV)** *"The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. (23) "But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!"* The 'lust of the eyes' is the basis of materialism and is a great danger to the development of Christ in us. It is so directly opposed that Jesus can say categorically that "You cannot serve both God and Mammon" and Paul calls the love of money "the root of all kinds of evil" (1 Tim 6:10).

The last of the enemies of the soul is "the pride of life" - status seeking, selfish ambition," megastar: behavior", concern about 'the pecking order', opulence, the sins of power and ruthless competition.. The Christian caught up in the "pride of life" see the world as consisting of empires to be built and monuments to be made. Unfortunately this can easily be channeled into building "Christian empires" and "Christian monuments". All these things are passing away.(see the article on the Kingdom of God in this issue). They will be of absolutely zero value to us after our death. Christ in us is not formed by glorious human achievements.

The epistle of James seems particularly directed at rebuking the "pride of life". Here are a couple of examples:

James 4:4-7 NKJV *Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (5) Or do you think that the Scripture says in vain, "The Spirit who dwells in us yearns jealously"? (6) But He gives more grace. Therefore He says: "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." (7) Therefore submit to God. Resist the*

devil and he will flee from you.

James 1:9-11 NKJV *Let the lowly brother glory in his exaltation, (10) but the rich in his humiliation, because as a flower of the field he will pass away. (11) For no sooner has the sun risen with a burning heat than it withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beautiful appearance perishes. So the rich man also will fade away in his pursuits."*

Stand Firm

The eternal part of us does not benefit from all our consuming, acquiring and achieving. To grow in Christ you must forsake these three enemies of your soul - the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life. You must ask God for a renewed mind (Romans 12:1, 2). This renewed mind will have a mindset that is fixed "on things above" (Colossians 3:1-4) which are of the Spirit - not the flesh (Romans 8:5-8). The outcome will be life and peace, a "harvest of righteousness" and the evidence of being a new creation in Christ Jesus.

The epistle of 1 John ends with an encouragement and an exhortation - **(1 John 5:18-21 NRSV)** *We know that those who are born of God do not sin, but the one who was born of God protects them, and the evil one does not touch them. (19) We know that we are God's children, and that the whole world lies under the power of the evil one. (20) And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know him who is true; and we are in him who is true, in his Son Jesus Christ. He is the true God and eternal life. (21) Little children, keep yourselves from idols." And with that encouragement and exhortation I will finish as well.*