


COLUMBIA COLLEGE



3 2711 00023 8445







Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2022 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

COLUMBIA COLLEGE LIBRARY  
600 S. MICHIGAN AVENUE  
CHICAGO, IL 60605

# JESUS IN THE GOSPELS

---

*Man, Myth, or God*

---

Revised

**John W. Sweeley**

University Press of America, ® Inc.  
Lanham • New York • Oxford

Copyright © 2000 by  
University Press of America, ® Inc.  
4720 Boston Way  
Lanham, Maryland 20706

12 Hid's Copse Rd.  
Cumnor Hill, Oxford OX2 9JJ

All rights reserved  
Printed in the United States of America  
British Library Cataloging in Publication Information Available

**Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data**

Sweeley, John W., 1943-  
Jesus in the Gospels : man, myth, or God / John W. Sweeley,--Rev. ed.  
p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Jesus Christ--Biography. I. Title.

BT301.2 .S94 2000 232—dc21 00-039289 CIP


ISBN 0-7618-1733-6 (cloth: alk. ppr.)

ISBN 0-7618-1734-4 (pbk: alk. ppr.)

232 J58s 2000

Sweeley, John W., 1943-

Jesus in the Gospels

™ The paper used in this publication meets the minimum requirements of American National Standard for Information Sciences—Permanence of Paper for Printed Library Materials, ANSI Z39.48—1984

To my wife, Barbara





# Contents

Commendatory Preface, Meri Louise Spruit, D.D.

Commendatory Preface, Raymond Eaton Sawyer, Ph.D.

Foreword

Acknowledgments

Abbreviations

Introduction

Chapter 1 Jesus:

Messiah to Triune God

Quest of the Historical Jesus	1
The Apostolic Age	4
Jesus the Man to Christ the God	12
The Doctrine of the Trinity	16
Metaphysical and Philosophical Categories	20
The Uncertainty of God in the 20 <sup>th</sup> Century	25
Summary	27

Chapter 2	Jesus and the Gospel Tradition: Who Do You Say I Am?	
	Exegetical Methodology	29
	Sitz Im Leben	33
	The Religious Heritage of Jesus	37
	Infancy Narratives	44
	Summary	50
Chapter 3	God's Plan for Jesus: The Message of his Public Ministry	
	John the Baptist	51
	Baptism of Jesus	53
	The Ethical Base of Jesus	57
	Marriage and Divorce	59
	The Lord's Prayer	62
	Parable of the Marriage Feast	66
	Command to Baptize	68
	The Human Knowledge of Jesus	72
	The Birth of Christianity	75
	The Petrine Ministry	77
	Summary	84
Chapter 4	The Passion of the Lord: The Will of God or Conspiracy to Commit Murder?	
	The Passion Narratives	85
	Entry into Jerusalem	87
	Anointing at Bethany	94
	The Betrayal of Jesus	96
	The Name Iscariot	97
	Motive: The Sin of Judas	99
	Motive: The Will of God	100
	Summary	107
Chapter 5	The Last Supper: Passover Meal or Mistaken Identity?	
	Preparation for Passover	109
	The Passover Meal	114
	Words of Blessing	117

Significance of the Words of Blessing	124
The Two Swords	126
The Garden of Gethsemane	129
Summary	135

Chapter 6 It Is Finished:  
The Death of Jesus

The Arrest of Jesus	137
Jewish Legal Proceedings	140
Dialogue of the Trial	142
Trial by Pilate	146
The Crucifixion	151
The Theophany	159
Summary	161

Chapter 7 The Resurrection of Jesus:  
Myth, Magic, or Miracle?

Mythic Resurrection in the Ancient Near East	163
The Promise of Salvation	172
Resurrection In Judaism	178
The Resurrection of Jesus	184
Summary	193

Epilogue	195
----------	-----

Bibliography	199
--------------	-----

Index	205
-------	-----



## Commendatory Preface

The author, John W. Sweeley, is a seeker of the truth and has spent many years in research and pondering the synoptic Gospels. The purpose of this study was to satisfy the requirements for a Doctorate of Divinity, and to find his own truth. It is evident that his passion for the truth has been a strong motivation in this work. This book is the third part of his dissertation.

Dr. Sweeley knows the Bible well and presents a method of analysis of its information along with a myriad of resource material. He offers the reader many comparative examples through exegetics as he clearly lays out his logic in diagrammatic form. He explains his method of deciphering the meaning which aids one in following his line of reasoning. If only one could think in the same context as in the time of Jesus, the language of the Jews and the language of the Greeks, there would still be unanswered questions. Does one use a literal or analogous interpretation of the Bible while building a body of evidence? John Sweeley explores the historicity of the Gospels as he describes how the Bible was written. His style of writing is easy to comprehend in its forthright presentation.

An interesting fact he shares is that of the *aorist* verb tense, no longer used in modern Greek, which was used to write the Lord's Prayer. This is an unlimited tense and was just what the gospel writers needed because the theology of the Lord's prayer was still evolving in early second century Christianity as it continues to evolve today. I found a similarity with our present day journalists and story tellers in that the slant of the gospel writers reflects their particular personal or political agenda. The discussion of the Doctrine of the Trinity identifies the attributes of God which Jesus brought, as well as those of the Holy Spirit, in fulfillment of his promise to reveal the Father through his words and deeds. The

life of Jesus was preached to offer the Church a basis of faith and morals.

A lengthy bibliography and copious notes are presented referencing his thorough research citing ancient documents as well as contemporary writings. The notes are detailed and contain pertinent information which illuminates the text. Sweeley's hermeneutics of the synoptic Gospels and passages of the Bible make this a good study for those interested in reaching their own truth.

We would do well to follow the example of Dr. John W. Sweeley. *Read yourself full, pray yourself hot, write yourself clear.*

Archbishop-Matriarch Meri Louise Spruit  
Rector, Sophia Divinity School  
August 3, 1998

## Commendatory Preface

As an examiner for his doctoral dissertation I became acquainted with both the soul and the writings of Dr. John W. Sweeley. I have come to respect this humble servant of God.

His singular ministry is to help others view the world, the Church, and history from a biblical point of view. His work is representative of the first fruits of a new movement of renewal within the Church, a movement which seeks to involve the whole of Christianity in a rediscovery of our common heritage in the creeds, worship, and life of the early apostolic Church. This new movement is about going back to our roots in order to go forward in this new millennium.

It all starts, I think, with the fact that he has no prejudice against catholic or reformed theologies. For him there is no artificial barrier between Eastern and Western Christianity. His only concern is for orthodoxy, the Truth.

We are today in need of modern-day John the Baptists crying in the wilderness for the reform and renewal of our Church who understand the catholic nature of the Reformation and the catholic nature of all subsequent reforms in the church. This can produce the convergent theology and faith of the third millennium.

Now, thousands and thousands of believers from the Body of Christ are experiencing a renewal in their worship and theology. This generation is moving away from doctrines and practices based upon fleeting feelings and emotions toward traditional faith which is based on study and reflection.

I think, most importantly, we are moving away from escapist versions of Christianity that tell us that everything will be made well only when we leave this world and arrive at heaven. We are moving toward a traditional Christian realism that engages the world as it is and seeks to build the Father's kingdom now, as his

son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, taught us.

It is a move away from a spirituality that seeks to enshrine a mystical experience of each individual's private truth. Instead, this new movement of God's spirit in the church submits itself to the truth given by Christ, through his chosen apostles, in scripture.

Dr. Sweeley represents a whole new generation of Christian thinkers who are now poised to provide a means of enlightenment in a time in which many churches are seeking to resolve their differences within and without their own religious tradition. I want to thank him for being bold, courageous and loving in this treatment of his subject. He has spoken the truth in the form of a servant, that is, with the love of Christ.

*In dilectioni Christi*

Raymond Eaton Sawyer, Ph.D.

Bishop of Arkansas, Retired

Catholic Apostolic Church in North America

July 12, 1998

Springdale, Arkansas



## Foreword

The renowned Neo-Thomist theologian Karl Rahner, his brother Otto, and their mother were sitting around the kitchen table when his mother asked Karl to tell her about the article he had just written. For the next thirty minutes Karl lectured his mother on the finer points of theology addressed by the article and ended with a well satisfied smile on his face. When he had finished his mother turned to Otto and asked, *What did your brother just say?* In less than ten minutes and using everyday language Otto explained the main points of the article to his mother at which time she turned to Karl and asked, *Now Karl, why couldn't you have said that?*

I have tried to write more like Otto than Karl using foreign words and technical theological language only when necessary. For ease of understanding I have included the translation or transliteration next to the foreign word or theological term. Additionally, I have placed most scriptural references in their entirety in the body of the text rather than simply citing chapter and verse numbers. Finally, I have chosen to use the *Revised Standard Version* of the Bible for all scriptural references as this translation is closest to the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.



## Acknowledgments

I am deeply indebted to many people for the creation of this book. First, I would like to thank the faculty of St. Mary's Seminary and University where I began my theological studies. Where I have accurately portrayed their wisdom and insight the credit is entirely theirs. Any misunderstanding or misrepresentation of their exegesis is mine.

A special note of gratitude is in order for the Very Rev. Meri Louise Spruit, Archbishop-Matriarch of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch-Malabar Rite and Rector of Sophia Divinity School, for her support and encouragement when the genesis of this book was a part of my doctoral dissertation. A special thank you is also in order for the Very Rev. Raymond Eton Sawyer, chairperson of my dissertation committee, for his cogent critique of the work.

I would like to thank Dr. Robert West, Editorial Director of University Press of America, who saw merit in the manuscript of an unpublished writer. I would also like to thank my editor, Ms. Helen Hudson, for her efforts in making the manuscript conform to publishing format.

I am also indebted to the playwright Timothy McCarthy not only for his encouragement but also his painstaking review and critique of the manuscript in all phases of its development. His comments often presented a new perspective which required investigation and many of his suggestions have been incorporated into the book.

I would like to thank Barbara Rae Sweeley for her expertise as a copy editor. Her efforts have transformed a dissertation into a book. I would also like to thank her for playing Devil's Advocate and forcing me to clarify obtuse phrases and concepts ill-defined.

I wish to thank the staff of the Enoch Pratt Free Library, especially Ms. Devon Ellis, for her patience in trying to make sense of my illegible notes and requests.

Most of all I would like to thank my wife Barbara and children: Kun Sun, Warren, and Samuel who have so often gone without my time or presence to give me time to research and write. This book would not have been possible without their many sacrifices.

## Abbreviations

Gospel Parallels	Throckmorton, Burton H. <i>Gospel Parallels: A Synopsis of the First Three Gospels.</i>
IBD	Bucke, Emory. <i>Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible.</i>
JBC	Brown, Raymond E. and Joseph Fitzmyer and Roland E. Murphy <i>The Jerome Biblical Commentary</i>
Peake's	Black, Matthew and H.H. Rowley <i>Peake's Commentary on the Bible</i>
RSV	<i>Revised Standard Version of the Bible</i>



## Introduction

We live in an exciting time. The Holy Spirit is moving powerfully among us. Theologians, clergy, and lay people are questioning, challenging, and in many instances discarding long held juridical mandates, faith assumptions and prescribed beliefs. There is an obvious tension between the new Fundamentalism on the right and those who wish to impose orthodoxy and orthopraxis to their limits on the left.<sup>1</sup> While uncertainty in dogma and ambiguity in ecclesiology has left many uncomfortable it is nothing new in the history of Christianity.

In the early Apostolic Age of the Church people were struggling with this same tension. The Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who were known as Judaizers led by Peter held serious reservations regarding Paul's mission to the Gentiles. The Judaizers perceived themselves as Jews and Christianity as a sect within Judaism.

---

1. These terms mean right belief and right practice respectively. Orthopraxis has not been a familiar term in Western religious discourse due to the stress upon the correctness of doctrine in Western culture. However, orthopraxis has come to the fore in recent Christian political theology where the stress is upon praxis or doing the will of God. Then it is argued that Christian truth and knowledge of God are gained by following the praxis of Jesus and not by detached contemplation of religious truths. Nevertheless, most denominations have found it necessary to test the assent of the individual to fundamental beliefs of the faith. Disputes over differing interpretations require a means of settlement. Although Protestants and Roman Catholics agree on the need for an absolute authority Protestants argue that scripture is the sole authority while Roman Catholics accord an equal role to the pronouncements of popes, the magisterium, and historic councils of the Church from the Council of Jerusalem found in Acts 15 to Vatican Council II.

They believed any pagan, defined as anyone not born a Jew, had to first convert to Judaism before they could practice Christianity. The situation became so divisive that Paul returned to Jerusalem to meet with Peter and the other leaders of the fledgling Church. During this first Council known as the Council of Jerusalem in 49 C.E. it was decided that Gentiles did not first have to accept Judaism to become Christians.<sup>2</sup> Although the Judaizers were forced to accept this decision the issue continued to be controversial until the next generation when the Jewish revolt against Rome was crushed in 70 C.E. and the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed. As a consequence of the apocalyptic nature of the Christian sect the Jewish leaders believed it had been in collusion with the Zealots in starting the revolt and expelled them from Judaism. Christians then felt a need to distance themselves from Judaism and this effort, together with conversion, became the main focal points of the Church as reflected in the synoptic Gospels and the Book of Acts.

Throughout the evolution of Christianity from its beginnings as a small sect within Judaism to its expansion throughout the Hellenistic world there continued to be tension as to exactly what constituted orthodoxy and orthopraxis as evidenced by the themes of the Apostolic writings in general and the Pauline epistles in particular. This ensuing tension eventually led to both the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. as well as the other great councils of the early Church. Additionally, the Protestant Reformation, the Catholic Counter Reformation, the development of the major denominations of Protestantism, and Vatican Councils I and II were also manifestations of this tension.

We should not be surprised by this continuing discord within Christianity. One of the primary difficulties facing those who follow Jesus is that we are faced with following a dichotomous Jesus: he is fully human and fully divine. Thus, the very foundation and existence of Christianity lies in the juxtaposed teachings of the man, Jesus of Nazareth, and the resurrected God, Jesus the Christ.

Christians in the first centuries after the death of Jesus did not have this problem because the question of his divinity did not exist. In this early period of the Church Jesus had only a human nature. The question of whether or not he had a divine nature and how it interfaced with his human nature did not evolve until about 300 C.E. and was not officially addressed by the Church until the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E..

The Apostolic fathers and Apologists<sup>3</sup> of the second and early third centuries

---

2. RSV, Acts 15:29.

3. The term Apostolic fathers was first used in the seventeenth century to identify five authors and as well as one anonymous treatise known as the *Didache* or *Teaching of the Twelve Apostles* which probably originated independently from a Hebrew source. The writings of the Apostolic Fathers include *I Clement*, *II Clement* (disputed), Clement, bishop of Rome; *Letters of Ignatius*, Ignatius of Antioch; *Epistle to the Philippians*, Polycarp;



were primarily concerned with defense of Christianity in the face of persecution and the question of Jesus's human knowledge; specifically, how much awareness he had during his public ministry of the final events of his life and to what degree he understood the impact his life, death and resurrection would have on his followers and the world.

The primary source the early Church historians utilized to answer these questions was the gospels. Originally bits and pieces of oral history about Jesus were collected by the Evangelists and woven into a complete story much like pieces of tile interconnected to make a complete mosaic. Each of the writers took the story pieces available to him and used them to create a work which was specific to a particular time, place, audience, and need. As people heard one and then another version a gradual fusion of four separate but related stories began to emerge which

---

*Epistle of Barnabas*, author unknown; *Shepherd of Hermes*, Hermes, and the *Didache*. The Apologists include Quadratus; Aristides; Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, *Second Apology*, *Dialogue with Trypho*; Tatian, *Diatessaron*, *Discourse to the Greeks*; Athenagoras of Athens, *Supplication for the Christians*, *On Resurrection* (disputed); Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, *Apology to Autolytus*; and Minucius Felix, *Octavius* which may have been borrowed from Tertullian's *Apology* which would make it contemporary with the *Epistle to Diognetus* with its final two chapters having been derived from another author possibly Hippolytus.

There is also another body of literature from this period which were accounts of the deaths of the early martyrs known as *acta* which were based on either the official minutes of the trial or upon descriptions given by eye-witnesses. These writings include *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, *Acts of St. Justin and his Companions*, *Letter of Churches at Lyons and Vienne*, and *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs*.

Apocryphal scriptures include the *Book of James*, *Gospel of Thomas*, *Coptic Gospel of Thomas* and *Gospel of Peter*. Additional acts include *Acts of Paul*, *Acts of John*, *Acts of Peter*, *Acts of Andrew* as well as *Epistle of the Apostles* and *Apocalypse of Peter*.

During this period there were also many schools of writings deemed as heretical known by the term *Gnostic*. Prior to the discovery of the Nag Hammadi library in 1945/46 there were only three extant copies of these works preserved in their original form: *Pistis Sophia*, conversations of the risen Christ with his disciples; *Letter of Ptolemy to Flora* transcribed by Epiphanius; and *Apocryphon of John*, a revelation of the risen Savior on the Mount of Olives. The Nag Hammadi collection comprises thirteen volumes and contains over one hundred treatise comprising about 1,000 pages.

The obvious question for the early Church arose as to which writings were orthodox so lists known as canons were compiled. The earliest was that of the heretic Marcion ca. 150 C.E. followed by the Muratorian Canon ca. 170 C.E. which, although mutilated, gives the major books accepted by Rome at that date. There was considerable agreement among canons; however, there were differences between local communities and between the East and the West i.e., the East long hesitated to accept the *Book of Revelation* and the West the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. However, in all of the canons the Apostolic writings assumed a position of authority as embodying a doctrinal norm. Agreement on the final canon was not reached until the third Council of Carthage in 397 C.E..

in time became understood as a single narrative known as the *Diatessaron*.<sup>4</sup>

However, there were significant problems with this amalgamated narrative. The first problem was the many duplications and contradictions of events. How was it possible for the same event to happen in different places at the same time? Even more difficult was the inability to reconcile the fact that if one event were true another must be false. This difficulty was particularly troubling as it was believed the narrative was written by God and was a photographically perfect image of the life of Jesus. The obvious unanswerable question was if God wrote the story why weren't the facts correct?

The second problem was that there were passages of text which did not make sense. Either the meaning of specific words was lost or the character of the text did not fit into Greek thought and culture.<sup>5</sup> These anomalies were explained away as Hebraisms because Jesus was a Jew and the text was written in Greek.

The theological pre-occupation with the human nature of Jesus was shattered with the advent of the Arian heresy which led to the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E.. From that time forward theological scholarship was centered on the divine nature of Jesus. The concept and dogma of the divinity of Jesus became central to the philosophy and theology of the Middle Ages, the Renaissance, the Enlightenment, and continued until the beginning of the 20th century.

In 1906, Albert Schweitzer published, *Von Reimarus ze Wrede: Em Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (The Quest of the Historical Jesus). Schweitzer's thesis struck theologians like an earthquake and its after shocks are still being felt today. Its impact has been felt on such diverse entities as existential philosophy, ethics, Protestant liberalism, Vatican Council II, and Fundamentalism. In contemporary scholarship if we want to know what it means to be Christian we must return to Palestine in its *Sitz im Leben Jesu* (setting in the life and time of Jesus) to discover the historical Jesus. With the advent of the modern tools of biblical criticism it has been possible to strip away centuries of myth and misunderstanding about the man, Jesus of Nazareth. However, as there is no first person source material written by Jesus or anyone who knew and followed him we are still in many ways no closer to finding the historical Jesus than before we began to search.

The ministry of Jesus was to reveal our relationship to God and our responsibility to actualize that relationship in our interactions with others. He did not create

---

4. A Latin term from the Greek to designate a continuous narrative of the four gospels to prove their agreement or harmony. The *Diatessaron* was written by Tatian (115-185 C.E.) founder of a Gnostic sect ca. 172-173. He wrote the *Diatessaron* between 173-185.

5. All Christian writings of the first and second century were written in Greek. Latin was added to Greek at the beginning of the third century by North African writers such as Tertullian, Cyprian, Arnobius, and Lactantius but it was not used in Rome until the middle of the century when it was used by Novatian, Cornelius, Stephen, and Dionysius.

Christianity or the Christian Church. He gave no guidelines and left no organizational charts initiating a hierarchal, juridical, or administrative church structure. He left no blueprints for the creation of buildings for worship. He initiated no new ceremonies or cultic practices. He asked only that the disciples remember him in the breaking of the bread, the seder meal, which was a Jewish tradition pre-dating the Exodus.

At Pentecost Jesus the Christ gave us the Holy Spirit to teach and explain, by means of divine revelation, that the kingdom of God exists in heaven and on earth. Divine revelation is a continuing process by which the kingdom of God is revealed a layer at a time much like the peeling of an onion. It is the task of each generation to ask the age old questions about the nature of God and human existence. It is also one of the primary paradoxes of Christianity that just as the elder generation's answers are finally made to conform as neat little stacking boxes the next generation knocks the boxes askew. Finite humanity as being, regardless of the power of its intellect or strength of its will, can never capture the infinite Being of God.<sup>6</sup> The more we believe we understand Jesus the more we realize how much we have to discover. Through this continuing search for the ultimate truth we transcend our separateness from God by being open to and accepting his grace. Through this process we create a unified Jesus, both God and man, and he becomes the core of our being.

This book attempts to provide a careful examination and exegesis of biblical text which will illuminate the words and deeds of the historical Jesus. Our method will be to examine specific events in the life of Jesus by comparing the event as written in each of the four gospels using the hermeneutic of modern biblical criticism.<sup>7</sup> From this process will emerge a better understanding of the historical Jesus in his *Sitz im Leben* of first century Jewish Palestine. Our reward will be a more personal and intimate knowledge and understanding of Jesus the man and Christ the God.

---

6. In medieval metaphysics big B (Being) stands for God and little b (being) stands for objects, reasons, and individuals.

7. Hermeneutics is the science of interpretation, or of finding the meaning of an author's words or phrases, and explaining it to others i.e., exegesis particularly applied to the interpretation of Holy Scripture.



## Chapter 1

---

# JESUS: MESSIAH TO TRIUNE GOD

## QUEST OF THE HISTORICAL JESUS

In recent years there has been an urgent attempt to discover the historical Jesus. The problem is that there is no primary source material with which to work. We have nothing written by Jesus or anyone who knew him and therefore have only the Gospels as our foremost source for information. The problem with the Gospels is that each has, as does The Acts of the Apostles, a specific ecclesiastical and political agenda relative to the time and place, the persecution of the Jews and other sects, as well as the relationship of Christians to the religious and political turmoil which comprised the Middle Eastern Roman world. Added to this problem is the fact that the earliest gospel was written two generations after the death of Jesus and the gospel writers relied on recollections handed down as oral history spanning at least 35-85 years. Additionally, there are several literary sources utilized by the gospel writers which are lost to us.<sup>1</sup> All of these circumstances make the verification and validation of specific data about Jesus largely undocumented and therefore enigmatic. However, we can discern a number of the elements of the historical Jesus from the Gospels.

---

1. For a brief but thorough review of the historicity of the synoptic Gospels as well as their interrelationship see C.S.C. Williams, "The Synoptic Problem" in *Peake's*, 748-755. Included are charts which identify those passages of Luke assigned to the L Source as well as matter peculiar to Matthew and Mark. For a more in-depth analysis see Frederick Gast, "Synoptic Problem" in *JBC*, 2:1-6. For a cogent exploration of John's Gospel see Bruce Vawter, "The Gospel According to John" in *JBC*, 2:414-421.

Figure 1.1: Gospel Elements of the Historical Jesus

1. Preached about the kingdom of God and not about himself.
2. Preached using parables and sayings not theological lectures.
3. Cast out demons and performed healing miracles.
4. Crucified as a political agitator but did not advocate revolution.
5. Reinterpreted the law (Torah) as ethics.
6. Acted prophetically (value reversal): ate with tax collectors and sinners.

Identification of these elements is important as they give us insight into the view of Jesus about God. The first is that Jesus did not teach new doctrines about God, but rather understood God as a sense of heightened presence. Jesus is born, lives, and dies fully a Jew and accepts Yahweh's self-revelation through Judaism as all that is required for salvation. Next, Jesus sees God as transcendent but recognizes the tension between transcendency and imminence. It will be the responsibility of those who will become the spiritual leaders of the Christian Church to maintain this tension without yielding to either extreme. Finally, Jesus addresses God as *Abba* (Father) which is an Old Testament salutation which reflects familiarity.<sup>2</sup> His use of *Abba* as a familiar name for God reflects his emphasis on the beneficence of God as expressed in symbolism drawn from filial relationships in which the father is generous, bountiful, and bounteous toward his son.

Jesus presents a view of God as one in which God is about to act. God is about to bring about his kingdom which is rooted in the monarchy metaphor. How does Jesus reinforce that God will act imminently? He uses parables which describe the temporality of the kingdom in paradoxical language. Jesus does not speculate about when God will act. This is in direct contrast to the proponents of the apocalyptic and prophetic movements who emphasize when the end will come. The paradox of Jesus is that the kingdom is already here and yet it isn't here; it's still in the distance. He casts out devils, and on five occasions recorded in the gospels, gives the disciples the power to cast out demons<sup>3</sup> thus heralding the

---

2. RSV, Mark 14:36. Paul also cites this relationship in Romans 8:15 and Galatians 4:6.

3. Jesus casts out demons in each of the synoptic Gospels. There are also five instances where he gives the disciples the power to cast out demons: Matthew 10:1, 8; Mark 3:14-15, 6:7; Luke 9:1.

advent of the kingdom of God on earth. By giving this power to the disciples Jesus is making a profound theological statement: man is now an active agent in his own salvation. This is a radical departure from both pre-Hebrew Ancient Near Eastern religions and historical Judaism in which man was the passive recipient of God's grace or wrath. However, the kingdom is not here yet as Jesus tells the disciples:

*But of that day or that hour no one knows,  
not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.  
Take heed, watch, for you do not know when the time will come.*<sup>4</sup>

Jesus reinterprets the law by using the formula:

*You have heard... (of old, it said, in the scriptures)  
but I say to you...*

Jesus sets aside the Torah as the only way to the Father; however, he constantly emphasizes the elements of truth within the Torah. The distinction between the concern of Jesus with adhering to the spirit of the law and the obsession of the Pharisees with living the letter of the law places Jesus at odds with the primary religious and political force in Judaism. The Pharisees attempt to prove their faith by fulfilling the smallest obligation of the law, but by so doing violate the essence of their religion. When one strives for righteousness and believes one has achieved it the human error is to become self-righteous. This flaw is universal to all religions and leads to what Robert Leavitt calls the *Damnation of Success in Religion*. Jesus is able to be above the law because he belongs to the fulfillment of the promise.<sup>5</sup> Jesus breaks the Sabbath to heal the woman who has been crippled for fifteen years. The Pharisees ask, *Why today?* and Jesus' answer is in the form of a question, *Have I done something wrong?*<sup>6</sup>

There are two theological conclusions to be drawn from this exchange. The first is that people are more important than religious custom, dogma, or law when the kingdom of God is breaking into human history. The second is that man is not made for the Sabbath but the Sabbath is made for man.<sup>7</sup>

4. RSV, Mark 13:32-33.

5. For an examination of the relationship between Jesus and culture see H. Richard Niebuhr, *Christ and Culture*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1951). Topics include: Christ against Culture, The Christ of Culture, Christ above Culture, Christ and Culture in Paradox, and Christ the Transformer of Culture.

6. The healing of the woman with a spirit of infirmity may be found in Luke 13:10-17 (verse 14 based on Exodus 20:9 and Deuteronomy 5:13) cf. Luke 14:1-6; Matthew 12:11-12.

7. RSV, Exodus 20:8-11. The noun Sabbath comes from the Hebrew verb *to cease, to abstain, to desist from, to terminate, to be at an end*. The connotation of *rest* for the noun as cited by Josephus (*Antiquities* 1.i.2; *Apion* 11.ii) is at best questionable and under any

## THE APOSTOLIC AGE

In order to understand the transition from Jesus the man to Christ the God we must examine our best source of information, the synoptic Gospels, and to a lesser degree the Gospel of John and The Acts of the Apostles. It is now generally accepted that Mark is the earliest gospel and that it was written in Rome by Mark who was an associate of Peter.<sup>8</sup> There is considerable debate as to whether or not he is the same Mark as in I Peter and the Book of Acts because in I Peter he is identified as *my son Mark* but in Acts as *John whose other name is Mark*:

*She who is at Babylon, who is likewise chosen,  
sends you greetings; and so does my son Mark.*<sup>9</sup>

*When he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the  
mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many were  
gathered together and were praying.*<sup>10</sup>

The Gospel of Mark was written after the death of Peter in 67 or 68 C.E. who was martyred during the Neronian persecution. It is not influenced by the final events of the tragic Jewish War which ended in the destruction of the Temple in 70 C.E. and was probably written between 67-69 C.E.. The gospel was used by Matthew and Luke and is directed primarily at the church in Rome and to the Gentile mission. The purposes are to meet a catechetical and liturgical need, provide vital inspiration to the church's missionary preaching, to nourish and sustain the faith of Christians under Roman persecution, and to strengthen and guide their adherence to new and radical Christian precepts.

Traditionally, Matthew was thought to be the first gospel. It is now certain that both Matthew and Luke are based on Mark and contain, somewhat reordered and reinterpreted, all of the Markan material. It is certain that Mark is older than Luke due to its formulation, analysis of problems within the Palestinian or Syrian church,

---

circumstances post-biblical. Therefore in the Hebrew sense the Sabbath is man's day, without any obligations, to do as he pleases. This understanding was also held by the early Jewish Christians who also celebrated the Sabbath on Saturday which is the last day of the week. Gentile Christians probably guided by Paul gradually shifted the Sabbath to Sunday the first day of the week. The most likely reasons for this shift were that God created light on the first day, Jesus is the Light of the World, and Jesus rose from the dead and was resurrected on Sunday. With this shift by the Gentile Christians also came a shift in understanding the purpose of the Sabbath. The Sabbath was no longer man's day but became God's day wherein man was to carry out prescribed cultic rituals to praise and worship God.

8. *JBC*, 2:21; *Peake's*, 770.

9. *RSV*, I Peter 5:13.

10. *RSV*, Acts 12:12.



and carefully arranged order of contents.<sup>11</sup>

Both Matthew and Luke were written between 90-115 C.E.. This position has been supported since the time of Irenaeus (180 C.E.). Recent archaeological evidence has been interpreted to identify the four beasts named in Revelation 4:6-7 as the four Evangelists: lion (Mark), ox (Luke), face of man (Matthew), and eagle (John).<sup>12</sup>

*And round the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind; the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like a flying eagle.*<sup>13</sup>

This description is based on Ezekiel

*As for the likeness of their faces, each had the face of a man in front; the four had the face of a lion on the right side, the four had the face of an ox on the left side, and the four had the face of an eagle at the back.*<sup>14</sup>

The origin of these symbols is found in Assyrian astral lore in which Nergal was a winged lion; Marduk, a winged bull; Nebo, a human being; and Ninib, an eagle. Additionally, a mosaic found in the mausoleum of Galla Placidia outside the Church of San Vitale at Ravenna dated 440 C.E. has the order of the gospels pictured as follows:

- |             |           |
|-------------|-----------|
| (1) MARCVS  | (3) LVCAS |
| (2) MATTEVS | (4) IOANN |

As this date is only one 115 years after the Council of Nicaea (325 C.E.) and nine

11. The revised order is accepted by all denominations which accept the historical critical method as well as non-Christian scholars; however, most Fundamentalists and Evangelicals support the traditional view.

12. Peakes, 1049. Jewish Pseudopigraphal literature is essential to understanding the imagery of Revelation (cf. 1 Enoch 71:7; 39:12; 61:11f; 2 Enoch 19:16 [cf. Ezekiel 1:5, 18]). See also *JBC*, 2:475. The creatures in the midst of the throng signify they are in immediate contact with God. Their position around the throne shows their universal action in the created world that they represent and govern in God's name. As such, they represent the whole of creation in which God is present.

13. *RSV*, Revelation 4:6-7.

14. *RSV*, Ezekiel 1:10.

years after the Council of Ephesus (431 C.E.) it is early enough to predate the traditionally held position of Augustine which was based on Papias and quoted by Eusebius in his *Church History* which stated that Matthew was the first gospel written.

Matthew and Luke are completely independent of one another as neither is influenced by the other's distinctive ideas, language, theological convictions, or unique sources (M for Matthew and L for Luke). Those elements of Matthew which are taken from the M source include the genealogy of Jesus, the birth and infancy of Jesus, the visitation of the Magi, the flight into Egypt, the return to Nazareth after Herod's death, and the foundation for the Doctrine of the Virgin Birth as found in Isaiah:

*Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and his name shall be called Emmanuel.*<sup>15</sup>

Luke's scenario of Jesus' conception is thought to be a textual conformation; that is, interpretative explanation of the prophesy of Isaiah:

*And Mary said to the angel, "How shall this be, since I  
have no husband?" And the angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit  
will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will  
overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called  
holy, the Son of God."*<sup>16</sup>

In the first or second century a virgin birth would be unquestioned as it was believed that many great men were the sons of virgin mothers or that their birth was accompanied by supernatural events. As there was no scientific proof to the contrary it was natural that Matthew believed Jesus was the Messiah and that Isaiah's prophesy had been fulfilled with a miraculous conception and birth. Additionally, as documentation Matthew makes explicit use of over sixty Old Testament quotations which are taken from the Septuagint.<sup>17</sup>

15. *RSV*, Isaiah 7:14.

16. *RSV*, Luke 1:34-35.

17. The Hebrew Bible, often abbreviated by the Roman numeral LXX, translated into Greek for Greek speaking Jews in Alexandria. The oldest manuscript is from Qumran and is dated to the second century B.C.E.. The Septuagint includes many writings not included in the Hebrew canon. Some are translations from Hebrew while some are Aramaic originals and others are composed in Greek. These writings are known as the Apocrypha and in general are accepted by the Roman Catholic Church and Orthodox Churches but are rejected by Judaism. Their position in Protestant churches varies greatly as they are rejected by Presbyterians, Lutherans ascribe some value to their use, and the Church of England makes considerable use of them in its lectionary and requires them to be included in all Bibles it

Both Matthew and Luke use material from the Q source, a collection of oral and written sayings about Jesus identified by modern scholars as *Quell* from the German for *source*, originally written in Aramaic but translated into Greek prior to Matthew and Luke.

The Judaism of Matthew is post bellum when the Jews were crushed and defeated by the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the Temple. It was a time of recession and retreat. Renewed study of the sacred scriptures and deeper devotion to prayer and temple worship took the place of the ancient sacrificial system with its attendant liturgical forms. The hierarchical party of the Sadducees disappeared. The popular lay leaders, the Pharisees with their scribal teachers, completely took over the religious leadership of the remnant of the nation. With this revival of Judaism was a renewed emphasis upon and a cultivation of apocalyptic thought: a movement which Matthew shares with the Pharisees and scribes.

The author of the Gospel According to St. Luke and The Acts of the Apostles is the same person.<sup>18</sup> He is known as a physician, beloved by Paul, Paul's fellow worker, a Gentile, Lucius of Cyrene at Antioch, and Lucius...my kinsman.<sup>19</sup> This position is supported by the virtual certainty that this is the same person who wrote the *we sections* of Acts, i.e., those passages written in the first person plural.<sup>20</sup> In Acts he begins:

*In the first book, O Theophilus,  
I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach,  
until the day when he was taken up.*<sup>21</sup>

Additionally, he cites his purpose for writing:

*That you may know the truth concerning the things of  
which you have been informed.*<sup>22</sup>

Luke uses both his own sources and oral tradition to tell the story of the life,

utilizes. The full name *Intrpretation secundum* (or *iuxta*) *septuaginta Seniores* was shortened to Septuagint, "seventy", and is based on the tradition that Moses took seventy elders with him on Mt. Sinai to receive the Law and that seventy Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew into Greek during the third century B.C.E.. The traditionally accepted account of its origin by Aristeas that Ptolemy II Philadelphus of Egypt requested a copy of the Jewish Bible for his library is dismissed as his letter to Philocartes contains many statements proven to be untrue by modern scholarship.

18. *IDB*, K-Q, 179.

19. Respectively Colossians 4:14; Timothy 4:1; Philemon 24; Acts 13:11; Romans 16:24.

20. *RSV*, Acts 16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-28.

21. *RSV*, Acts 1:1-2.

22. *RSV*, Luke 1:4.

ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus. It is obvious his interest is primarily historical although he may have intended to utilize the gospel to convert members of the Roman court from pagan worship to Christianity. This is consistent in that Acts describes the expansion of Christianity from Jerusalem to Rome with the concluding passage of Acts describing the preaching of Paul in Rome:

*And he lived there two whole years at his own expense,  
and welcomed all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God  
and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ quite openly and unhindered.<sup>23</sup>*

Luke's gospel contains eight distinctive characteristics:

Figure 1.2: Distinct Characteristics of Luke's Gospel

1. Universalism.
2. Relevance of social relationships.
3. Deep concern for outcasts, sinners, and Samaritans.
4. Stories about women.
5. Emphasis on joy, prayer, and the Holy Spirit.
6. Emphasis on the graciousness as well as the severity of the demands of Jesus.
7. Concept of the Lordship of Christ.
8. Detailed passion narrative.

It is difficult to give a precise date for the gospel; however, Luke's use of Mark places it in the decade of 70-80 C.E.. The use of the name *the Lord* for Jesus, which continues in Acts, and the account of the Apostolic Council<sup>24</sup> places the gospel near the end of the decade and many scholars accept 80 C.E. as a likely date. In addition to Mark, Luke's sources are Q, L, and the birth and infancy narrative

23. *RSV*, Acts 28:30-31.

24. *RSV*, Acts 15:6-21 known as the Council of Jerusalem.

which some scholars believe is borrowed from intertestamental apocryphal literature. The Acts of the Apostles is unique in that it reveals to the reader the generation following the resurrection of Jesus and thus is an invaluable resource for a deeper knowledge of the Apostolic Age. Luke begins Acts with an account of Jesus meeting and talking with his disciples after his resurrection. It both partly parallels and is partly independent from the writer's similar account in Luke 24. However, in Acts the relationship is ended after forty days with the Ascension of Jesus although the promise which he had made to send the Holy Spirit is fulfilled almost immediately at Pentecost. In Acts, Luke wrote:

*But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth.*<sup>25</sup>

While in the Gospel he wrote:

*And behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but stay in the city, until you are clothed with power from on high.*<sup>26</sup>

There is no question that Acts is an *apologia* for the Christian movement. The synoptic Gospels convincingly portray the grounding source, Jesus, while Acts follows the Christian movement's historic chronology. Both in Luke, but more significantly in Acts, Luke shows that God's favor had blessed and sanctioned Christianity. Acts clearly shows that the movement which became Christianity was a legitimate development within Judaism predicted by ancient Jewish prophecy regardless of any suspicion from Gentile authorities or attacks from the Jews. There is no doubt that the writer of Acts presents Christianity as the legitimate fulfillment of Judaism. Therefore, Luke and those to whom he wrote accepted Jesus on many levels: as the promised messianic prophet, David's heir, the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53, and the Christ.

The Gospel of John was first called the *Spiritual Gospel* by Clement of Alexandria and was perhaps the most influential book in defining early Christian dogma.<sup>27</sup> Since the beginning of the use of the historical critical method there has been much controversy about its authorship, place of origin, and theological bias as well as its historical value. However, controversy surrounding the Gospel of John is not new. In the late second century the Alogi were conservative, orthodox Christians who denied its apostolic authorship. Although no authentic alternative existed they judged it unorthodox on the grounds of its teaching. In modern times

25. RSV, Acts 1:8.

26. RSV, Luke 24:49.

27. IDB, E-J, 932.

dogmatic presuppositions have played a part in creating controversy about the gospel although conservative scholars now agree it is a tome of orthodoxy. However, some scholars still vehemently deny apostolic authorship.

It must be recognized that a resolution of the controversy which denied its apostolic authorship would not decrease its value. Even if it were proven that the author was not a first person witness to the events and personages as purported by the writer that would not make it intrinsically inferior to the synoptic Gospels.<sup>28</sup> To understand the origin, purpose, and value of John we must answer the question, *Why is John so different from the other Gospels?*

Our answer may be found in the following exegesis.<sup>29</sup> The theological ideas which underscore and pervade the Gospel are dictated by the necessity of an orderly development of doctrine rather than the relating of a strictly chronological sequence of events. The eschatology<sup>30</sup> of the synoptic Gospels and Acts is the

28. The historical critical method is the term used to describe the application of both physical sciences such as archaeology, astronomy, satellite imaging, geography, and social sciences such as sociology, anthropology, secular history, and linguistics to examine biblical events. Also of major importance are the methods of modern biblical criticism; specifically, the application of general literary critical methods to the biblical documents. There are eight elements which comprise biblical criticism. *Textual Criticism* once called *lower criticism* to distinguish it from the *higher criticism* of literary and historical investigation seeks to determine the original text from the thousands of variant manuscripts which exist. Next there are five elements to establish the sources of the present text: *Source criticism* is concerned with the literary sources preceeding the surviving manuscript; *tradition and form criticism* examine the stages and forms in which the tradition was handed down orally before being written down; *historical criticism* seeks to illuminate the historical context of documents and their sources; *redaction criticism* considers the editorial contribution of the authors in selecting from their sources. The final two elements assess the biblical text in its present form. *Structuralism* is the analysis of the literary structure of individual sections of scripture to establish how the writer seeks to communicate with the reader. *Canon criticism* encompasses a larger view evaluating biblical books as a whole, separately, and together as part of the Old Testament and New Testament canon.

29. Exegesis is the term used in biblical scholarship which means the exposition, critical analysis, or interpretation of a word or literary passage of the Bible. One who does so is an exegete.

30. The doctrine concerning the *last things*; that is, the final consummation of God's purposes in creation, and the final destiny of individual souls or spirits and of humanity in general. The expected imminent return of Christ to establish the kingdom of God on earth was not realized. This led to alternative, often symbolic, representations of the *last things*. This notion is sometimes represented as a present spiritual condition rather than as a future cosmic event. Others believe that the kingdom of God has been inaugurated by the coming of Christ and then give varying accounts of its future fulfillment. Some continue to adhere to the early belief in the literal second coming of Jesus. However, this second coming is not to be confused with the parousia which is a term used in classical and Koine Greek and

contrast between the present age and the age to come. John's eschatology is between two orders of existence: the temporal and the eternal. For John, God is unknowable and unknown unless and until he reveals himself through his *Logos* or Son. But this revelation is the fullest possible, so that to see the Son is to see the Father. The agent of God in all his dealings with the world, both in creation and in salvation, is his *Logos*. If the Son is to reveal the Father he must share not only his divine nature but also our human nature.<sup>31</sup>

According to John, the purpose of Jesus' ministry is to show us the Father by hearing his words and observing his ministry on earth. Central to the ministry of Jesus is the revelation of the Holy Spirit and gift of it to the disciples which fulfills his promise of mankind's infinite oneness with the Father-Creator. Jesus united flesh and Spirit in himself and brought the possibility that man could attain knowledge of and union with God which is the supreme object of man's existence.

---

means presence, arrival, or coming. It occurs four times in the LXX and twenty-four times in the New Testament and its eschatological usage may have been created by the Christian community. It is to be noted the term *Second Coming* does not appear until Justin Martyr ca. 150 C.E.. In Hellenistic Greek the related term epiphany was used for the manifestations of deities either in person or through their acts meaning epiphany and parousia are used interchangeably. In the New Testament epiphany is used with reference to Christ's earthly life in II Timothy 1:10 but elsewhere it is applied exclusively to his parousia. Roman Catholic and conservative Protestant scholars dissent from the general position presented above and insist that the New Testament writers did not teach an imminent parousia. The above discussion of the parousia has been concerned with the interpretation of the New Testament texts in their first century *Sitz em Leben*. However, there are three basic theological possibilities: the entire eschatological pattern of which the parousia is a part may be regarded as part of the eternal Word and hence accepted with comparative literalness; the eschatological pattern may be discarded on the grounds that it was the temporal garb in which the eternal gospel appeared; or the eschatological pattern may be translated into other terms. The first has been adopted by Roman Catholic and conservative Protestant scholarship; the second received the support of the extreme wing of late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century liberalism; and the third has commanded the attention of the various *neo-theologies* of the twentieth century. Although no single definite pattern has emerged it may be assumed that the main line of the Christian tradition will interpret the parousia to mean that God will bring to perfect completion the work begun through Christ and that same Christ who stands at the center of Christian faith will also stand at the final boundary of human experience in time, in space, and in eternity.

31. See Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 374. Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls has shown that before the common era a literary setting existed in which Jewish and Greek religious ideas were combined in a manner that was once thought to be unique to John and of a late second century C.E. date. The scrolls now make it clear that John may well have derived from Qumran itself his language of truth, knowledge, wisdom, and faith as well as his theological conviction that life is a struggle between truth and perversity, the sons of light and the sons of darkness, and good and evil in which God will ultimately prevail.

Flesh and spirit had been united in Jesus. He was able to communicate that spirit to others which enabled them to share in everlasting life. John compares the parable of the feeding of the multitude in which Jesus prays and bread is shared to the final meal with his disciples in which the bread and wine are blessed and shared.<sup>32</sup> John's context is the correct understanding of the parable as John also has Jesus speak of drinking his blood although this is not part of the parable.

John interprets the water of baptism as a vehicle of the Spirit. The purpose of the ministry of Jesus was to call together a body of believers whose destiny it was to unite through the Son with the Father. Poetically they are described as a flock which Jesus shepherds and the branches of a vine with the vine being Jesus. Both flock and vine are symbols of Israel in the Old Testament which uses both metaphors. In Jesus (the Christ) they are to come both from Israel and from the Gentiles whom John calls *children of God who are scattered abroad*.

It is not easy to date the Gospel of John. Much of its material, even in the discourses, may be primitive but it also may have been gradually refined during a lifetime of preaching. The traditional date for its publication is late in the first century which supports the evidence of its early use by Ignatius bishop of Antioch. Published at Ephesus, the Gospel must have been designated to remind the Church of vital truths about its Lord as well as to win from the mystery cults and Gnosticism those persons who sought salvation through Christ.

## JESUS THE MAN TO CHRIST THE GOD

We have introduced the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John as well as the Acts of the Apostles. What have we learned about the nature of the historical Jesus and Jesus the Christ? We must build our case by investigation of the minute bits of data we believe are descriptions of actual events moving developmentally from the particular to the general. Subsequently, we are confronted by three questions:

1. Who is Jesus in light of the resurrection?
2. What is the nature of the divinity of Jesus?
3. How did we develop the Doctrine of the Trinity?

The Gospels and Acts tell us that the nature of Jesus in light of the resurrection is answered differently by different people according to time and place. An examination of the gospels shows us that there was an ongoing developmental understanding of the theological transition from Jesus the man to Jesus the Christ. The understanding found in the Gospel of Mark (Jewish Palestinian Church) and in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke (Hellenistic-Jewish Church) is absorbed by

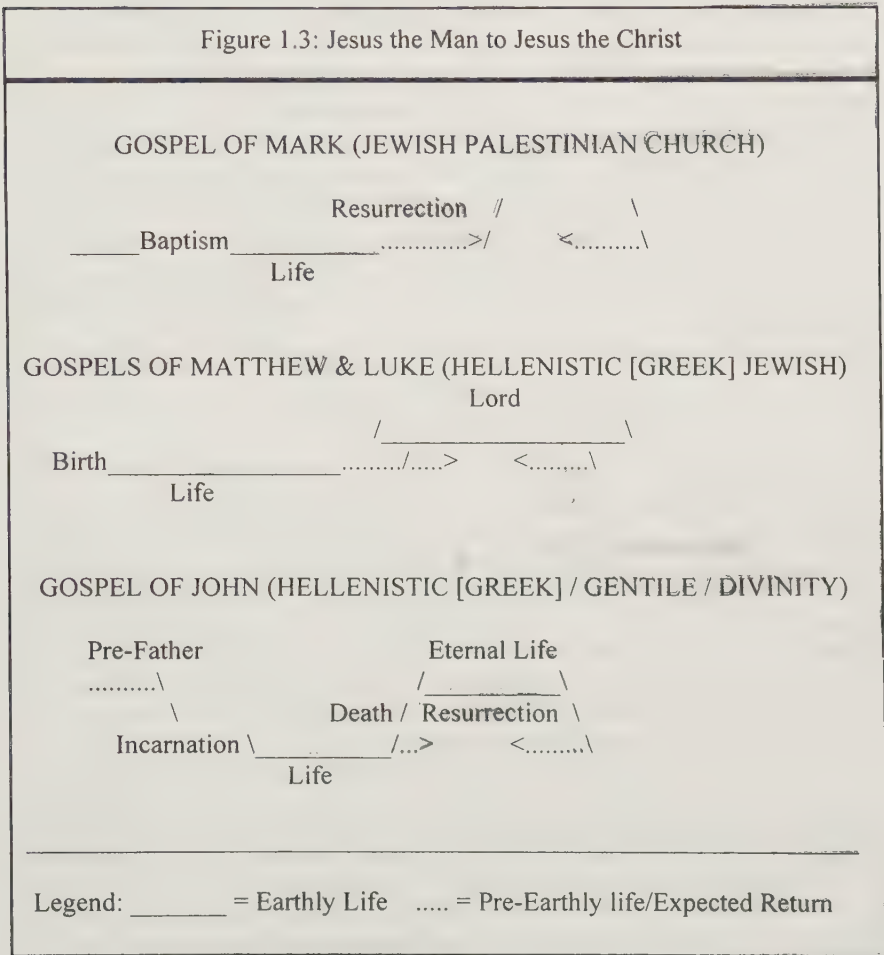
---

32. RSV, Luke 9:10-17.



the Hellenistic-Gentile Church by the time of the Gospel of John.

Figure 1.3: Jesus the Man to Jesus the Christ



Mark's text is the most simple in that Jesus dies, is resurrected, and there is the expectation that the same Jesus will return in a form much like the Son of man (*bar'enas*) in Daniel. In the Septuagint the term is *ben 'adam* which conveys a generic meaning synonymous with a human man. There is no Christ.

In Matthew and Luke, Jesus is transformed into *Lord* after his resurrection. He is identified with the Old Testament divine names *Yahweh* and *Adonai*. To Jewish Christians this expressed the divinity of Jesus without explicitly asserting his deification. To Hellenistic Christians it was representative of a cult god such as Serapes. However in either case the formula *Jesus is Lord*, probably used as a hymn or creedal statement, reflects a developing understanding of Jesus as the Christ.

John's text begins with the pre-earthly divine *Logos*<sup>33</sup> which is uniquely manifested in Jesus. After his death and post-resurrection appearances an understanding of the plan of salvation culminating in a union with the Father emerges. This understanding of Jesus the Christ as *Logos* is central to the development of the concept of the Trinity, but is replaced in the formula by *hypostasis*<sup>34</sup> and *person* because *Logos* appears to make Christ a second god.

Now that we have an outline of the interrelationship between who Jesus is in light of his resurrection, his divinity, and *Logos* we can compare this model of God's self-revelation with that of the Jewish model of God's self-revelation.

It is the triggering event of each religion which defines its origin and the parameters of its development. Judaism starts with the Exodus, Sinai, and Land events which are then interpreted to the present time, while Christianity begins and ends with Jesus.

---

33. *Logos* is the Greek word for *word* or *reason* applied in Hellenic Judaism to God's personified word or wisdom active in creation and in revelation which became a title for Christ in Christianity. John portrays Christ as the pre-existent *Logos* active in creation and becoming incarnate as a human being. The second century Christian Apologists use the *Logos* concept as a means of communicating with their Greek contemporaries but speculation about the relationship between Father and *Logos* sometimes led to the latter being considered secondary and subordinate. With the condemnation of Arianism and assertion of equality between the persons of the Godhead both Word of God and Son of God generally became interchangeable titles for Christ.

34. Lynwood Urban in *A Short History of Christian Thought* states: The Council of Chalcedon adopted the *hypostatic union* terminology of Cyril of Alexandria: *the distinction of natures being in no way annulled by the union, but rather the characteristics of each nature being preserved and coming together to form one person and subsistence (hypostasis) and, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and Only-begotten God the Word*. It is important to note that the key terms hypostasis and person are left undefined. They are used interchangeably and mean principal of unity or principle of individuality, the one meaning gleaned from the Nestorian and the other from the Trinitarian discussions. The Definition of Chalcedon is a reaffirmation of the decision against Nestorius; it is denying the *prosopon* of union is something other than the *Logos* or Son. The Definition of Chalcedon clearly holds that the principle of union is the second Person of the Trinity. It is God, not man or something neither God nor man. The Definition is in this way thoroughly biblical. In scripture God is depicted as the primary actor in the Incarnation; the human response is derivative. The bishops accepted the formula that there are in Christ two natures; God and man, united in such a way that they are: *without confusion, without change, without division, without separation; the difference of the natures being in no wise taken away by reason and union, but rather the properties of each being preserved and coming together into one person and one hypostasis not parted into two persons, but are one and the same Son and Only-begotten, the divine Logos, the Lord Jesus Christ*.

Figure 1.4: Jewish and Christian Models of Revelation

TRIGGER	JEWISH	CHRISTIANITY
EVENT	Exodus, Sinai, Land	Jesus 1. Incarnation 2. Resurrection
WORD	Series of Interpretations	Preaching 1. Son of man 2. Lord 3. God
TRADITION	Present	1. Early New Testament 2. Christology

The Christian model is problematic as the elements of the model do not mesh. We have two realities which stand independently of one another: Jesus has a dual nature; he is both fully human and fully divine. There is an immediate tension between incarnation and suffering in juxtaposition to birth and death.

1. Jesus is a man, he dies, he rises.
2. Jesus is from God, he lives among us, he is resurrected.

Resurrection is the key to understanding Christology which emerges after the resurrection. Therefore, the Christian model can be interpreted as:

- A. The Resurrection.
- B. A series of interpretations of Jesus (from lowest to highest).

1. Lowest - a man, a prophet in a long line of prophets.
2. Highest - as divine (highest Christology).

C. The key event: Incarnation (new event).

There is tension between resurrection and incarnation. For a god resurrection is not difficult; to die is difficult. Theologically we have on one hand incarnation and suffering and on the other birth and death as the key events of Christianity. The focus of Christology is on incarnation and suffering. The problem is that there is no place for resurrection, but resurrection is the triggering event. Our hope as mortals lies in the resurrection as we cannot become incarnate. This means that we are left with resurrection as the triggering event which leads to a Christology of the Incarnation which leaves us with a tension between resurrection and incarnation as the key events of Christology. Understanding the divinity of Jesus acts as a bridge between understanding the man Jesus in light of the resurrection and the development of the Doctrine of the Trinity.

There are two affirmations of the divinity of Jesus. The first is that Jesus was fully man. The second is that what is divine in Jesus is the *Logos*. The immediate question when these two aspects are juxtaposed is, *How is Jesus both divine and human at the same time?* Although the early councils of the Church emphasized the humanity of Jesus for most of Christian history the divinity of Jesus has overshadowed the humanity of Jesus. Today there are some such as Bishop John Shelby Spong who in an effort to find evidence of Jesus the man (the quest for the historical Jesus) question his divinity in an effort to illuminate his humanity. This leads us to the next question, *If Jesus is divine how do we preserve the unity of God?* The answer to this question is developmental and brings us to the necessity of understanding the Trinity because we now have the following progression of understanding:

*Jesus the man >>> Divinity >>> God >>> Trinity*

Our understanding of Christology has now become the Doctrine of the Trinity.

## THE DOCTRINE OF THE TRINITY

There are two definitions of the Trinity: the Economic Trinity and the Immanent Trinity. The Economic Trinity is the Trinity as expressed in history and in the world. It is not the Trinity itself but rather the expression of the Trinity in the

world.<sup>35</sup> Its elements are:

1. Father      God who reveals himself as absolutely hidden, transcendent, unimaginable, all powerful.
2. Son         God as revealed in Jesus; God manifest as human being; God dying for us.
3. Holy Spirit    God as remaining invisibly with us; God's presence with us and within us.

We may summarize the Economic Trinity as seeing the hidden God through Jesus and seeing Jesus in the Holy Spirit.

The Imminent Trinity is the Trinity seen in itself in its eternity. God is the divine substance or nature with three divine persons. The use of the word *person* is in the Greek sense: a relation of origin and not a personality. God has only one nature. There is only one divine being or reality which has three different origins. Its elements are defined as:

1. Father      Un-originated, Un-begotten, Un-generated  
No relation of origin.
2. Son         Begotten not made; not lower but equal with God,  
Generated; originated from the Father.
3. Holy Spirit    Proceeds from the Father and the Son; spiration.

All actions of God outside himself are actions of the nature. The one God (Father) creates; however, all persons are seen as appropriate to one or another person (natures). We can now see that the:

- |                        |                                      |
|------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| Father creates         | All are actions of one divine being; |
| Son redeems            | All are involved in each action;     |
| Holy Spirit sanctifies | None can be separated                |

The Imminent Trinity is the interpretation of the Trinity originally accepted by

---

35. Edmund J. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, (Grand Rapids: Baker House Books, 1982), 22, 32, 33, 49, 61, 113. This text traces the development of the Trinity from the time of Jesus through the twentieth century.

the Latin branch of Christianity and remains the creedal statement of the Roman Catholic Church and most Protestant denominations in the Western World.<sup>36</sup> However, it is important to note that in the early Christian Church there was no mutual agreement as to what constituted creedal statements and summaries of faith as they were local in character. For example the creedal statement known as the Nicene Creed which expresses the Imminent Trinity actually began in 318 or 319 C.E. when Alexander, bishop of Alexandria, gave a lecture on the mystery or unity of the Trinity. Arius, a priest, disagreed with Alexander's presentation because he felt Alexander obliterated the distinction of the Three Persons in the Godhead.<sup>37</sup> Arius refused to agree to the orthodox position and put forth his own explanation which exaggerated the elements implied in the sonship of the Second Person until he arrived at a point where sonship was reduced to creatural. Thus, the co-eternal and co-essential Deity of the Word was surrendered.<sup>38</sup> Arius was then excommunicated by Alexander and a council was held in Alexandria in 321 C.E. which condemned Arius' position and teachings.<sup>39</sup> Arius countered by publishing *Thalia* which presented his views.<sup>40</sup> Alexander responded with an encyclical letter

36. Not all so called Protestant churches are Trinitarian. Notable examples include The Religious Society of Friends, Holy Spirit Association for the Unification of World Christianity, American Unitarian Association, Universalist Church of America (the Unitarians and Universalists merged in 1961 to form the Unitarian Universalist Association), Jehovah's Witnesses, Seventh-Day Adventists, and the United Pentecostal Church, International. In general the Anabaptists hold a more fluid understanding of the Godhead but Trinitarianism is rejected by the Church of the Brethren. Most of contemporary scholarship does not accept the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints as a Protestant body but rather as a new religious movement emerging from Christianity as Christianity emerged from Judaism.

37. Bernard Lonergan, *The Way to Nicaea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976), 69. , i.e., Conn O'Donovan's translation of the first part of *De Deo Trino*. The roots of Arianism are traced back to Lucian of Antioch founder of the exegetical school at Antioch who favored subordinationism.

38. It is often difficult to see the difference between Lucian and Arius. A good source is B. Altaner, *Patrologie*, trans. Hilda C. Graef, (London: Nelson, 1960).

39. Lonergan, *The Way to Nicaea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology*, 69-70. Only the following of Arius' writings are extant: 1) a letter to Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, written about 318 C.E., 2) a profession of faith in the form of a letter sent to his bishop Alexander of Alexandria about 320 C.E., 3) a profession of faith presented to Emperor Constantine towards the end of 327 C.E., 4) a treatise entitled *Thaleia* of which only fragments have been preserved, and 5) some other writings recently discovered (cf. Altaner, *Patrologie*. 311).

40. Arius' letters and other relevant documents may be found in William G. Rusch, *The Trinitarian Controversy*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980). 1) letter to Eusebius of Nicomedia 29-30; 2) letter to Alexander of Alexandria 31-32; 3) letter to Constantine, 61-62.

but the heresy continued.<sup>41</sup> Emperor Constantine convened a synod in Alexandria in 324 C.E. but was unable to settle the argument. Constantine then summoned all the bishops to a general council which began on June 19, 325 C.E. at Nicaea. The clause in the Nicene Creed which specifically refutes the Arian heresy about the nature of the Son and clearly identifies the relationship between the Son and the Father is:

begotten not made (created)

of one substance (*homoousios* in Greek)

with the Father

*Homoousios* means *consubstantial*. Before Nicaea it generally meant of generically the same substance. However, for later theologians it meant of identically the same substance. Throughout the centuries after the Council of Nicaea it was widely assumed that the specific teaching of Nicaea was that the Son, as consubstantial with the Father, had identically the same substance as the Father. Thus the council had taught not only the divinity of the Son but also his numerical identity of substance with the Father. However, in recent years there has developed a growing tendency on the part of some theologians to question and/or reject this traditional assumption.

It is clear that the council did not explicitly affirm that the Son as consubstantial with the Father had the one same identical divine substance as the Father and hence this was not its specific or formal teaching. But when it said the Son was *consubstantial with the Father*, it meant at least that he is utterly like the Father in substance, utterly unlike creatures in substance, that he is of the Father's substance and of no other substance.<sup>42</sup>

However, even the Council of Nicaea wasn't able to eliminate Arianism and it continued to proliferate until the Council of Constantinople called by Emperor Theodosius I in 381 C.E. which restored orthodoxy by also including statements about the Holy Spirit and the Church. The final addition to the creed was the *filioque* which was introduced at the Council of Toledo in 589 C.E..

The *filioque* is the phrase and from the Son and is that clause in the creed which states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Son as well as from the Father. However, it wouldn't be until 858 C.E. that Pope Nicolas I finally accepted the creed in its entirety.

41. Socrates *i.6*.

42. Fortman, *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity*, 54.

Figure 1.5 Theology of the Imminent Trinity	
EASTERN THEOLOGY	WESTERN THEOLOGY
1. Emphasizes three persons	1. Emphasizes <i>oneness</i>
2. Unity of the Trinity grounded in the Father	2. Unity <del>of</del> the Trinity grounded in divine <del>nature</del>
3. Spirit proceeds from the Father <i>THROUGH</i> the Son	3. Spirit proceeds from the Father <i>AND</i> the Son

Etymologically, the Latin word, *substantia* corresponds to the Greek word *hypostasis*. However, where the Latins spoke of a single substance in God, the Greeks quite commonly acknowledged three *hypostasis*. This is certainly true of a later period but the usage goes back at least as far as Origen. Arius held that there were three *hypostasis* in God, but so did Alexander of Alexandria, who condemned him. It would seem that George of Laodicea is expressing the common view when he explains that the Eastern churches affirm that there are three *hypostasis* in order to safeguard the distinction of persons and not as if they were affirming that there were three gods.<sup>43</sup>

We are now able to make two observations about the Doctrine of the Trinity and Christ. The first is that within the Trinity we have a diversity; a multiplicity in unity. God is not static and not purely one as God is a multiplicity. The second observation is that Christ relates movement within God to stability in God. There is an inner dialectic of tension within opposition; diversity versus unity. The result is that the major social and psychological problem now is no longer that God is passive as put forth by the Deists<sup>44</sup> but rather God is an act.

## METAPHYSICAL AND PHILOSOPHICAL CATEGORIES

The metaphysical argument is clearly stated by John Duns Scotus:

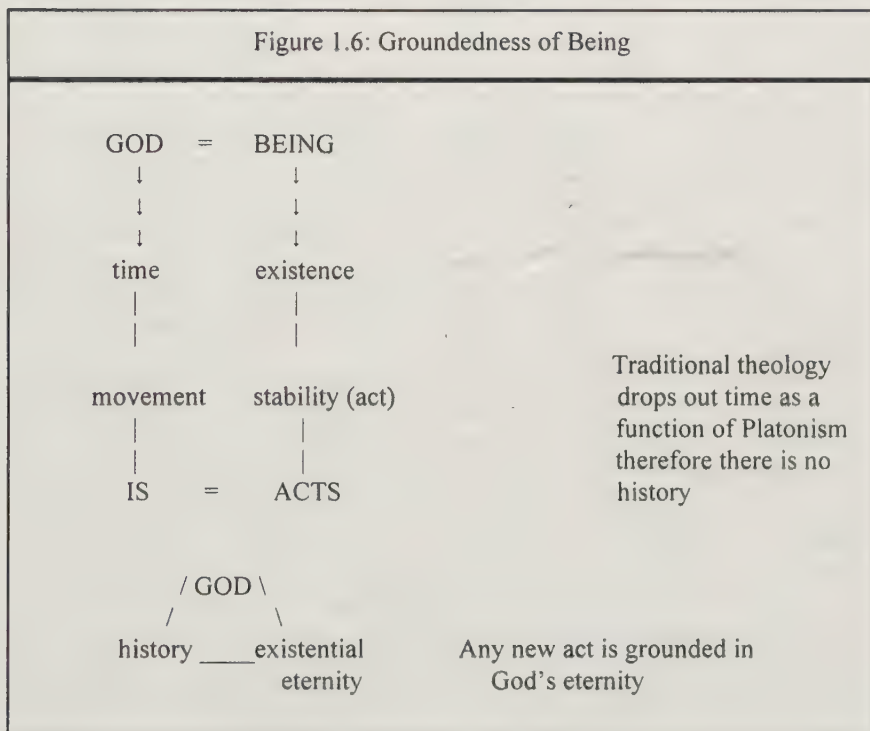
43. Lonergan, *The Way to Nicaea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology*, 54.

44. Deism is the belief in a supreme being who is the ground and source of reality but who does not intervene or take an active interest in the natural and historical order. It was largely a British 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century movement emphasizing natural religion as opposed to revealed religion and was most notably represented by Lord Herbert of Cherbury, Matthew Tindal, and Anthony Collins.



Now efficiency can be considered either as a metaphysical or as a physical property...in point of fact, however, (God's existence) can be shown more truly and in greater variety of ways by means of those metaphysical attributes which characterize being. The proof lies in this that the first efficient cause imparts not merely this fluid existence [called motion] but existence in an unqualified sense, which is still more perfect and widespread. Now the existence of a primacy in the higher class does not follow logically from the existence of a primary in the lower [or more specific] class, unless that member is the most noble. Hence, we omit the physical argument by which a prime mover is shown to exist and, using the efficiency characteristic of beings, we argue that among beings there is one which is a first efficient cause.<sup>45</sup>

Figure 1.6: Groundedness of Being



Metaphysically God is not a being beside other beings but is Being while beings are objects, reasons, and individuals. The God Being is always greater than the sum of all other beings. The function of Being is to enlighten or let be individuals.

45. John F. Whipple and Allan B. Wolter, *Medieval Philosophy from St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*. (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 403-404. Duns Scotus cites as his authority Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate* 1, c. 8 (PL 196, col. 894).

This means that all particulars as well as psychic energies are grounded in the source Being and that Being must have all the potentialities found in beings. The nature of Being is grounded in terms of:

1. Time (change) which is temporal
2. Existence (facility) which is existential

We can now identify four different attributes of God: 1) those related to God as mystery, 2) those related as overwhelming, 3) his dynamism, and 4) his holiness. There are two elements related to God as mystery. The first is that God is incomparable because there is nothing with which to compare him. If God is Being and all particular beings are grounded in God then it is logically impossible to compare God with beings as there is no rank order or range of Being as God is total Being. The second element related to God as mystery is that God is incomprehensible. The infinite nature and reality of God, Being, cannot be understood by the finite nature of man as being. The only tool that man has to comprehend God is human language as a symbolic medium; however, our symbols (Messiah, King, Son, Christ, Father, Spirit) are inadequate to articulate God's self-revelation. Yet, God must be named because to say we cannot is to categorize him which in fact is to name him. The greater the range any particular being displays the better it represents God. Thus, the most adequate symbols are those which contain the most meaning and application.

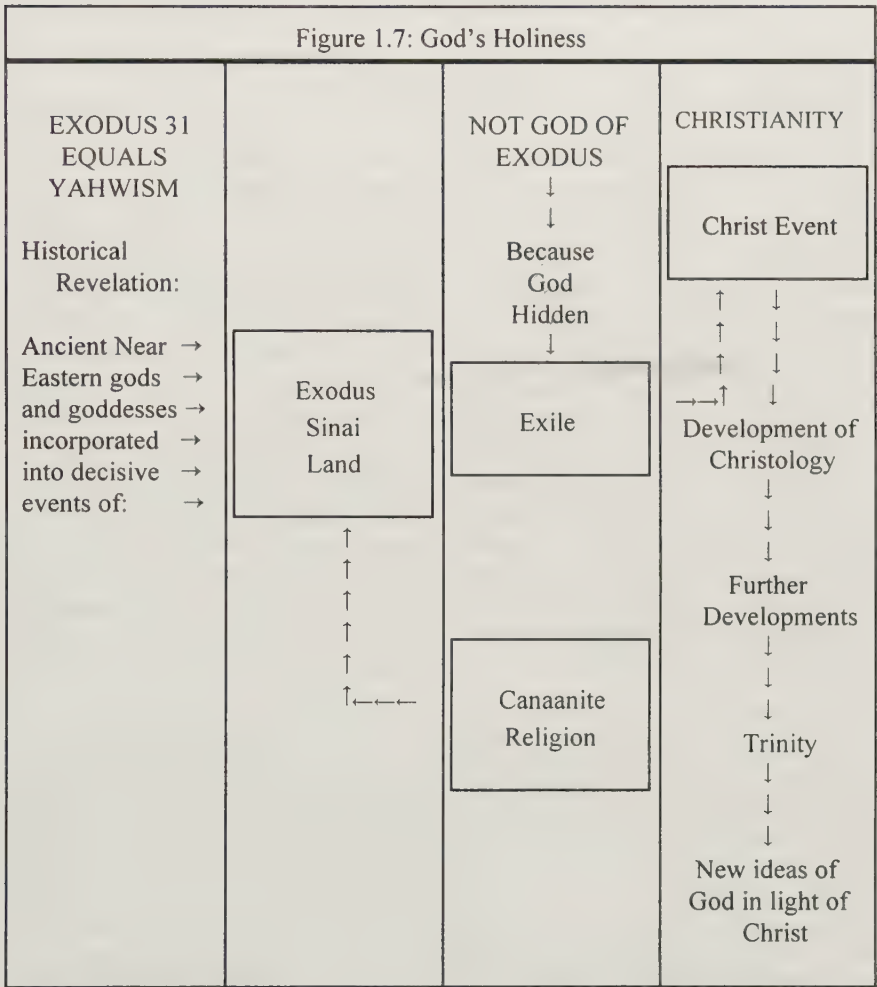
The second attribute of God is that of God as overwhelming and it is comprised of five elements which are applicable to the experience of God as Holy, *Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinocism*. The first element is infinity which means that God cannot be measured because there is no ruler or standard set of specifications that apply to God. Eternity, the next element, does not refer to God's timelessness but rather to the differentiation between our time, our relation to time, and God's relation to time. Eternity here means another way or another mode of relation to time. The third element of God's overwhelmingness is his omnipotence; that is, God as the ground of all possibilities. Only those possibilities that are inconsistent with his Being (which is logically impossible as God is the ground of all possibilities) are excluded. Therefore, it is an interesting theological observation to note that if all possibilities of particular beings are grounded in God than those particulars that are sin and evil must also be grounded in God. The fourth element, God's omnipresence, means that God is not tied to a particular physical or geographical location. Yet, in the history of revelation, God seems to reveal himself at some places more than others. It is inescapable that God's self-revelation appears to be tied to particular people, places, and things. The final element is God's omniscience which means that God is not limited to our perspectives and perceptions but has unlimited knowledge.

The third attribute of God is his dynamism. The classic theological understanding of God's dynamism is that God is immutable. His actions did/do not change

him from one kind of entity to another, i.e., from Being to a particular being. God is faithful and consistent with himself. All of his actions are consistent with his own nature.

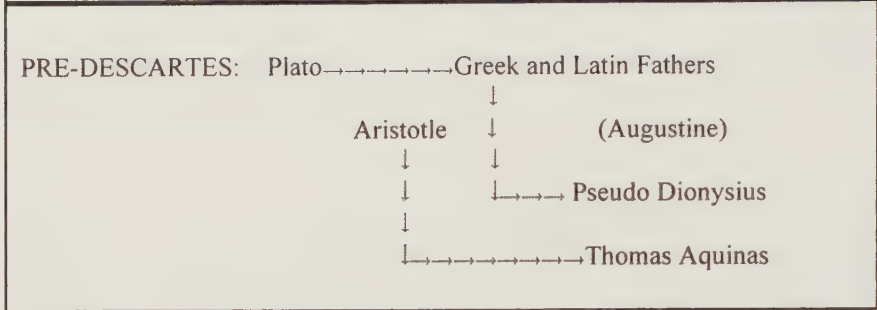
The fourth attribute is God's holiness. God is experienced simultaneously as a God of wrath and God of grace; demanding yet forgiving. Justice and mercy are in tension with one another. This is true in both Judaism and Christianity as well as some Ancient Near Eastern Religions.

Figure 1.7: God's Holiness



From historical revelation we move to philosophical categories. The first group of philosophers are classified as pre-Descartes as there is a dramatic shift in philosophical methodology with the breakdown of the medieval world and the beginning of modern philosophy.

Figure 1.8: Pre-Descartian Philosophical Categories



Modern philosophical categories begin with Descartes and the Enlightenment. The dramatic shift is from looking to God as the origin of man's existence to man as the origin of what it means to be human. This occurred because the perfectly balanced medieval model of a three-tiered universe with God on top, the church in the middle, and man on the bottom was no longer credible. The church had no answer to the burgeoning scientific discoveries opposed to church teaching, development of mercantilism and a middle class it could not control, and the emergence of powerful nation states. This shift in paradigm means that man is no longer an agent with God of his salvation. Man is now the sole means of his salvation.

With the yoke of the church lifted from philosophical thought man is now free to explore previously forbidden avenues of inquiry into the human condition. Creation is no longer the domain of God as through reason man can not only understand the dynamics of nature but effectively manipulate them to his advantage. The paradigm shifts from man as obedient servant of God to one of man as creator. With man as subject, the epicenter of the universe, there is no longer a need for a supernatural God: God is dead. The new god is man and his future is without limit.<sup>46</sup>

46. A preliminary list of the classical texts for a start in understanding this shift in philosophy include the following: Rene Descartes, *Discourse on the Method of Rightly Conducting the Reason, and Seeking Truth in the Sciences*, (La Salle: Open Court Publishers, 1945). Emmanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1966). Soren Kierkegaard, *Letters and Documents*, a translation of *Breve og Aktstykker*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978). Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, translation of *Der Wille Zur Macht*, (New York: Random House, 1967). Georg F.W. Hegel, *Faith and Knowledge*, translation of *Glauben und Wissen* "Critical Journal of Philosophy", vol. 2, part 1, 1802, (Albany: State University of New York, 1977). Georg F.W. Hegel, *The Essential Writings*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1974). Georg F.W. Hegel, *Early Theological Writings*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948). With the exception of the *Speech on Classical Studies* this translation has been made from Herman Nottl's, *Hegel's Theologisch Jugendschriften*, (Tubingen, 1907). James Brown, *Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Buber, & Barth: Subject and Object in Modern Philosophy*, trans. Hilda C.

Figure 1.9: Modern Philosophical Categories

Descartes	God as Divine Cognito; God will think of himself as Self-Subsistence thought; subjectivity
Kant	Omnicompetent reason; world as a human product
Nietzsche	All values are made by man; God is dead
Kierkegaard	Personal existentialism; man as subject; emphasis on freedom and choice
Hegel	Social existentialism; historical sense of freedom; Process: thesis→anti-thesis→synthesis→new thesis

## THE UNCERTAINTY OF GOD IN THE 20th CENTURY

In all creative periods man's conception of God is re-examined. It is unfortunate but some spiritual leaders we look to for guidance and spiritual direction are unaware of new views and propositions about God that may radically change the way in which we perceive and relate to him. This is always a particularly difficult problem to address but especially so in those denominations that are extremely hierarchal and juridical as well as those that are fundamentalistic and evangelical. Even when clergy are cognizant of what contemporary theologians are writing, especially in the areas of social justice and personal morality, they may well be discouraged from disseminating or acting on this knowledge because it disagrees with official church pronouncements on subjects; or, it is declared non-biblical and therefore irrelevant or innately evil. The laity allow themselves to be ill-informed as some clergy are not open to alternative interpretations of traditional doctrine and dogma which may be harsh, unrealistic, and often a painful imposition upon their congregations. Therefore, the laity must take the responsibility to interpret, understand, and act on Church doctrine and dogma via the hermeneutic of an informed conscience as they confront the insurmountable problems of daily life.<sup>47</sup>

---

Graef, (London: Nelson, 1960).

47. As a response to Vatican Council I and its declaration of the Doctrine of Papal Infallibility William Gladstone, Prime Minister of England, confronted Roman Catholics in 1847 with his pamphlet, *The Vatican Decrees in their Bearing on Civil Allegiance*. Even more troubling than the doctrine itself was that the Pope mandated *Absolute Obedience* in matters of *Faith and Morals* at the cost of one's salvation. The Catholic response fell to Cardinal John Henry Newman who ironically was a convert from the Church of England. Newman's response took the form of a letter to the highest ranking Catholic peer entitled,

The upheaval of the traditional modern view of God began in the late 1960's within the left wing of Christianity; especially in the more progressive European countries and the United States. The primary question asked was, does the word *God* make any sense and if it does what does it mean? One of the earliest texts that explored the question was *Honest To God* in which John A. T. Robinson challenged the generally accepted view of most Christians that God is someone else only bigger and stronger.<sup>48</sup> What became known as the Death of God Movement ensued and it was comprised of three philosophical currents.

The first current took its meaning and view from Nietzsche. Nietzsche's argument was that God was no longer real and prevalent within culture. Nietzsche presented God as an absolute and as there are no absolutes in culture because culture is always in the process of changing culture did away with God.

The second was linguistic analysis. Proponents of linguistic analysis claimed that *God-Talk* or *God-Language* is nonsensical. Statements such as, God loves me, God protects me and If I am killed God will take me home have no meaning in fact as they are not provable; that is, there is no way to show the negative possibility: God does not love, does not protect, does not take one home; therefore, the positive statement must be without value. In other words, it is not possible to have one side of the linguistic coin if it is not possible to have the other. The third position is that God became man in Jesus, but we killed him on the cross. The assumption is that God is not able to survive among people because when he manifested himself we killed him and would do so again if he reappeared as human.

There are three primary elements which led to the Death of God Movement. The first is that Protestantism developed an extremely transcendent view of God exemplified by Karl Barth's view of God as wholly or totally other. The result of this position is that there is no room left for a tangible relationship between God and man. This group also critiqued religion; by religion they meant the human enterprise of creating a God of our own. Barth wanted to make a distinction between true faith and human religion. Therefore people must ask themselves whether their faith is grounded in true faith or whether they have emphasized one view of God, invested it with ultimacy, and thus created a false God. The problem with this exercise is that it is not possible to see someone else's picture of God; it is not something immediately available. When we speak of God we are not evoking the view of the prophets, the early Christians, the great councils of the Church, or even current theologians but rather the views of our own socialization

---

*A Letter Addressed to his Grace The Duke of Norfolk on Occasion of Mr. Gladstone's Recent Expostulation.* After an extensive argument relevant to today's ethical and moral issues Newman concluded that an informed conscience is the final arbiter of ethical and moral decision making and behavior. For Newman, one must follow one's informed conscience even when it is diametrically opposed to church law and doctrine or civil law.

48. John A.T. Robinson, *Honest to God*, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1963).

and understanding of the meaning of God.

The next element is that there was a feeling that religious language was disintegrating and becoming meaningless. There was a loss of confidence in religious language in that it was believed that religious language was no longer the language of holiness. Religious language became trite and secular. This led to theologians engaging in obscure doctrinal theories by using highly specialized and technical language which excluded the laity from their dialogue.

The third element was nineteenth century atheism. Eighteenth century atheism tried to show that God did not exist; nineteenth century atheists such as Marx, Nietzsche, and Feuerbach did not say God didn't exist but rather that religious discourse disguises something else. They proposed the Christian promise of salvation was designed to make people pious, quiet, and docile. They believed religion was a mechanism used by those in power to make the disadvantaged accept suffering when they should have been undertaking the means to change those social circumstances which were the cause of their suffering. This nineteenth century atheist critique showed us that it is necessary to distinguish between Christian concepts and how they can be misused by less than Christian individuals.

There is also biblical tension which underlies our uncertainty with God. God is first viewed in the Bible as *Thou*. He is viewed on the level as one man cares about. Then in Job, God becomes an *It*. God is no longer seen in a personal relationship with man but as a transcendent *It* that no longer intervenes but speaks out of a whirlwind. In Job, God comes to be seen as nature; God reveals himself in and through the world and man. It is part of the tension of our faith that God on one hand speaks and on the other is silent. In the words of Robert Leavitt, these are the polarities of *The Lyric Theology of Love* and *The Tragic Theology of Silence*.

We might speculate that if God is answering prayers we should not be praying for minor things in our own lives but rather ask him to speak to the larger question of man's inhumanity to man. If we truly believe God answers prayers we should not pray for ourselves but rather for the multitudes of others who suffer alienation and oppression as a result of their government's political, economic, social, and religious policies. If this is the case we should take back our everyday prayers and revise them to make them really count. It is interesting to speculate that perhaps the events of the twentieth century have revealed that what we need is a communal rather than a personal view of salvation.

## SUMMARY

The recent trend in Christianity to discover the historical Jesus has been largely unsuccessful as there are no first hand accounts of his works or words. The best that can be done is to extract those events and words from the gospels and Acts which appear to be authentic. When we do this we find that the gospels contain six authentic elements of the historical Jesus. Jesus expects God to act imminently.

The paradox is that the kingdom is already here yet it is still in the distance. By giving the disciples the power to cast out demons he is making a profound theological statement: man is now an active agent in his own salvation.

Both Matthew and Luke contain all the Markan material while Matthew also uses the M source and Luke uses the L source. Both Matthew and Luke use the Q source. Acts is an *apologia* for the Christian movement and clearly shows that Christianity is the fulfillment of Judaism. Since its inception there has been controversy regarding the authenticity of the Gospel of John. Regardless of its differences from the synoptic Gospels it is profoundly orthodox. For John, God is unknowable unless he reveals himself through his *Logos* or Son. According to John the purpose of the ministry of Jesus is to reveal the Father through his words and deeds. Jesus brings the Holy Spirit in fulfillment of this promise.

There was an ongoing developmental understanding of Jesus from Jesus the man to Christ the God. The understanding found in Mark (Jewish Palestinian Church) and in Matthew and Luke (Hellenistic-Jewish Church) is absorbed by the Hellenistic-Gentile Church of John. There is a tension between resurrection and incarnation. Incarnation and suffering are juxtaposed to birth and death as the key elements of Christianity.

Understanding the divine nature of Jesus leads to the development of the Doctrine of the Trinity. The progression is: *Jesus the man* >>> *Divinity* >>> *God* >>> *Trinity*. However, the early Church did not always agree on doctrine. The first split between the Eastern and Western branches of Christianity was over the interpretation of the Trinity. From the time of the Arian heresy and Council of Nicaea the controversy centered on understanding the relationship between the Father and Son. The Council determined that the relationship was one of *homoousios*; that is, of identically the same substance. The Council of Toledo in the *filioque* determined that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and* the Son (Alexander's and Western belief) and not from the Father *through* the Son (Arius' and Eastern belief).

Christianity continued to develop and by the Middle Ages the metaphysical and physical were seen as God (Being) and particulars and humans (beings). It was axiomatic that Being was always more than the sum of beings and that there was an inter-connectedness between beings and Being. This inter-connectedness was made manifest in the three tiered model of the universe with God on the top, the church in the middle, and man on the bottom. In this model we can identify four attributes of God: mystery, overwhelmingness, dynamism, and holiness.

Philosophical categories can be divided into two categories: Pre-Descartes and Modern. Pre-Descartes describes the relationship between Plato, the Greek fathers, Aristotle, Pseudo Dionysius, and Thomas Aquinas. The modern category includes both the Enlightenment philosophers and existential philosophers. By the 1960's the left wing of Protestantism had evolved into the Death of God Movement.



## Chapter 2

---

# JESUS AND THE GOSPEL TRADITION: WHO DO YOU SAY I AM?

## EXEGETICAL METHODOLOGY

For the first two hundred years after the death of Jesus, Christians tried to understand him, to find his essence, primarily in the context of trying to understand the historical human person called Jesus. Although there was also a growing body of revelation illuminating his divine nature it was of little concern. The catalyst for the change from an emphasis on finding Jesus the man to understanding Jesus the Christ and the commensurate development of the theology of the Trinity was the Arian heresy which reduced the divinity of the Second Person, the sonship Jesus, to a status of creatural.<sup>1</sup> Beginning with the Council of Nicaea in 325 C.E. which was called to refute the Arian heresy until the twentieth century, Christianity focused on the divine nature of Jesus to the near exclusion of his humanity. However, with the advent of Albert Schweitzer's, *Von Reimarus ze Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung* (The Quest of the Historical Jesus) published in 1906, there has been an escalating interest in the quest to find the historical Jesus in the twentieth century. Paradoxically, there are now some scholars who in an effort to discover the human Jesus have set aside or obliterated his divine nature. Although this extreme shift in paradigm is outside mainstream scholarship it has rekindled serious research regarding first and second century issues about the nature of the historical Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

---

1. For a full discussion of Arianism see Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 1, (New York: Harper & Row, 1975), 151.

2. The search for the Jesus of history as an activity distinct from faith in Jesus Christ began with the Enlightenment and dominated critical theology throughout the nineteenth century. The twentieth century debate of the issue is a debate with mainstream nineteenth century theology. Schweitzer analyzed the primary personages and theories of nineteenth century scholarship.

Obviously we need some objective guidelines, especially when we try to exegete Jesus as portrayed in the the gospels, which will avoid the human nature versus divine nature controversy. In 1964 the Pontifical Biblical Commission article, "Instruction Concerning the Historical Truth of the Gospels" published in *Theological Studies* set the necessary guidelines for exegesis and finding the historical truth of the gospels. Although the article was written for Roman Catholic scholars the guidelines given are of universal value as they give objective parameters by which to exegete the scriptures. Excerpts from "Instruction Concerning the Historical Truth of the Gospels" highlight its six major points:

*1. The exegete will diligently employ the new exegetical aids, above all those which the historical critical method, taken in its widest sense offers...a method which makes use of textual criticism, literary criticism, and the study of languages. Examination of the literary form used by the sacred writers makes a true and genuine interpretation. The exegete will use all the means available to probe more deeply into the nature of Gospel testimony, into the religious life of the early churches, and into the sense and value of apostolic tradition.*

*2. The exegete may examine what reasonable elements are contained in the Form Critical method that can be used for a fuller understanding of the Gospels. A warning is given against false philosophical and theological speculative principles which make their conclusions invalid: prejudiced views of rationalism, denial of a personal God through revelation; that is, denial of the historical value and nature of revelation, refusal to admit the existence of a supernatural order, denial of the possibility and existence of miracles and prophecies, and the devaluation of the authority of the apostles as witnesses to Christ.*

*3. The interpreter should pay diligent attention to the three stages of tradition by which the doctrine and the life of Jesus have come down to us. The words, miracles, and other events of the life of Jesus as performed by him that men might believe in Christ through them, and embrace with faith the doctrine of salvation.*

*4. The apostles faithfully explained his life and words while taking into account in their method of preaching the circumstances in which their listeners found themselves. After Jesus rose from the dead and his divinity was clearly perceived they passed on to their listeners, by interpreting his words and deeds according to the needs of their listeners, what was really said and done by the Lord with that fuller understanding which they enjoyed. They preached and used various modes of speaking: catecheses, stories, testimonies, hymns doxologies, prayers, and other literary forms.*

*5. The sacred authors in the four Gospels wrote for the benefit of the churches*

with a method suited to the peculiar purpose which each (author) set for himself. They selected some things, reduced others to a synthesis, and explicated as they kept in mind the situations of the churches. Since the meaning of a statement also depends on the sequence, the Evangelists, in passing on the words and deeds of our Savior, explained these now in one context, now in another, depending on their usefulness to the readers. Consequently, let the exegete seek out the meaning intended by the Evangelists in arranging a saying or a deed in a certain way or in placing it in a certain context. For the truth of the story is not at all affected by the fact that the Evangelists relate the words and deeds of the Lord in a different order, and express his sayings not literally but differently, while preserving (their) sense.

6. The doctrine and life of Jesus were not simply reported for the sole purpose of being remembered, but were "preached" so as to offer the Church a basis of faith and of morals. Those who instruct the Christian people in sacred sermons have need of great prudence. Let them above all pass on doctrine, mindful of St. Paul's warning: "Look to yourself and your teaching; hold on to that. For by so doing you will save both yourself and those who listen to you." They are to refrain entirely from proposing vain or insufficiently established novelties. As for new opinions already solidly established, they may explain them, if need be, but with caution and due care for their listeners. When they narrate biblical events, let them not add imaginative details which are not consonant with the truth. This virtue of prudence should be cherished especially by those who publish for the faithful.<sup>3</sup>

Until the second century there were two pre-suppositions about the gospels. The first was that the gospels were almost photographically accurate. It was believed they were not only inspired by God they were dictated by God to the writers. The second pre-supposition was that their literary form was basically a biography of Jesus. In 170 C.E. a harmony of the gospels called *Diatessaron* (by means of the four) was prepared by Tatian.<sup>4</sup> The obvious conflicts found in the narrative were

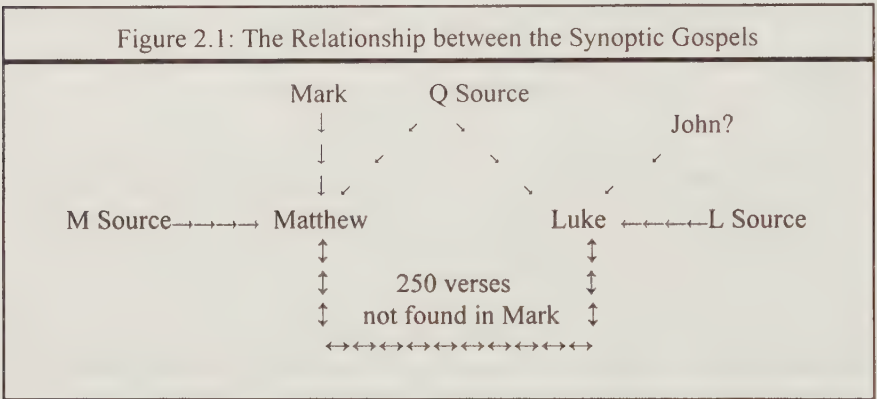
---

3. For a more complete discussion on the 1964 instruction of the Pontifical Biblical Commission see Frederick J. Cwiekowski, *The Beginnings of the Church*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 17. A synopsis of this teaching was incorporated into *Die verbum*, article 19 (Dogmatic Constitution On Divine Revelation, 1955) in Austin Flannery, *Vatican Council II: The Conciliar And Post Conciliar Documents*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1975), 761.

4. The *Diatessaron* was widely circulated in Syria until copies were systematically destroyed after some of Tatian's views were adjudicated as heretical. The only remaining copy of the *Diatessaron* is a tiny Greek fragment dating from ca. 220 C.E.. The only extant text of the *Diatessaron* is in the form of quotations preserved in *Ephraem's Syriac Commentary* on the *Diatessaron* and an Arabic translation of a form of the *Diatessaron* the text of which has been partially conformed to the *Peshitta Syriac Version*.

explained as either having hidden meaning or the event in question happened more than once.

In 1776 Johann Griesbach published *Gospel Parallels* and determined that Matthew was the first of the synoptic Gospels written and was the source material for both Luke and Mark.<sup>5</sup> By the end of the nineteenth century the tools of modern biblical criticism were firmly in place and the relationship of the Gospels to one another had been dramatically changed.<sup>6</sup>



It was recognized early in the history of the Church that the gospel attributed to John was quite different from the synoptic Gospels. For it to be credible it must be able to pass the test of orthodoxy. Although today there are some scholars who question its authenticity, whether it was written by John or one of his disciples, or is the redaction of a later editor we must not forget that in spite of its controversies the fathers of the early Church felt compelled to include it in the canon.<sup>7</sup>

Today it is accepted that John either had an unknown source or that he constructed large segments of the Gospel to support his theological views and to meet the needs of his audience. Some elements of Luke not source material from Mark or Q are common to John and therefore Luke is to some extent dependent on John. The precise nature of the relationship between John and Luke is unknown but we believe that John had heard of Mark and possibly read his gospel. Even though Mark and John present similar material, it is not generally believed that Mark is a direct source as John has different settings for the events, a different

5. For a discussion of two and four source theories see Robert Funk and Roy W. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus: New Translation and Commentary*, (New York: Macmillan, 1993). For a review of biblical criticism from 150 C.E. to the present see, "Modern New Testament Criticism", *JBC*, vol.2, 7-20.

6. Robert Funk and Roy W. Hoover, *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus: New Translation and Commentary*, (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 1.

7. Scholarship identifies the writer as the Evangelist John and not the Apostle John.

order of events, a different style, and was writing for a different purpose and audience. Therefore, the crossovers between Mark and John are seen as the work of a later editor of John's work.<sup>8</sup>

Figure 2.2: John in Relationship to the Synoptic Gospels

I. INCIDENTS CITED IN JOHN WITH NO SYNOPTIC PARALLEL

1. Beginning of signs in Cana.
2. Baptism by Jesus and his disciples.
3. Conversations with Nicodemus and the Samaritan woman.
4. Frequent visits to Jerusalem; his preaching and miracles there.
5. Raising of Lazarus.

II. EVENTS NOT MENTIONED BY JOHN WHICH ARE IMPORTANT IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

1. Birth and baptism.
2. Temptations.
3. Exorcisms.
4. Transfiguration.
5. Blessing and distribution of the bread and wine at the Lord's supper.

## SITZ IM LEBEN

Modern biblical scholarship understands that the synoptic (Greek *synoptkois*: a viewing together) Gospels and the Gospel of John are made up of individual small units which were arranged by the Evangelists like mosaics with each Evangelist arranging his mosaic differently from the others to meet to the social, political, and religious needs of his audience. Each unit has come down to us in three stages:

1. *Sitz im Leben Jesu* (setting in the life of Jesus)
2. *Sitz im Leben der Kirche* (setting in the life of the early Church)
3. *Sitz im Leben Evangelium* (setting in the life of the Evangelists)

---

8. John's point of view is Judean rather than Galilean. Judea is Jesus' *own country* in John 4:43-45 in contrast to Galilee in Mark 6:4. (cf. Matthew 13:57 and Luke 4:24) A good starting point for a discussion of the relationship between John's gospel and the synoptic Gospels is found in the *JBC*, 2:417, *Peake's*, 844, and the *IDB*, E-J, 935.

An example of these *Sitz* is seen in the parable of light.

1. *Sitz im Leben Jesu*: Jesus opens the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew with this parable <sup>9</sup>
2. *Sitz im Leben Kirche*: *You are the light of the world* meaning the disciples
3. *Sitz im Leben Evangelium*: According to Luke the light is the inner light from Christ

With the Gospels no longer viewed as biographies they should be interpreted as the preaching of the early church about Jesus. A biography requires that the author give utmost care to present with accuracy the facts of time, place, and event; however, it is the expectation that preaching will expand on historical facts to make them meaningful for different people at different times who have different needs. There is no doubt that the writers of the Gospels recognized this distinction and it is the reason that, when possible, the quotations attributed to Jesus are taken from the Septuagint. Thus the gospel writers were able to add editorially to the narrative when clarifying a theological point. The meaning of a parable depends on its *Sitz*; that is, what came before it and what comes afterward. An illustration of how the three *Sitz im Leben* were used by the gospel writers to place specific words on the lips of Jesus is exemplified by applying the historical critical method to the parable of the wicked tenants. Before we exegete the text we must keep in mind two points. The first is that Matthew 21:33 = Mark 12:1 = Luke 20:9 and all three are based on Isaiah 5:2. The second is that Matthew 21:42 = Mark 12:10-11 = Luke 20:17 and that all three are based on Psalm 118:22-23.

*He digged it and cleared it of stones, and planted it with choice vines; he built a watchtower in the midst of it, and hewed out a wine vat in it; and he looked for it to yield grapes, but it yielded wild grapes.* <sup>10</sup>

and

*The stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner. This is the Lord's doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.* <sup>11</sup>

---

9. *RSV*, Matthew 5:14.

10. *RSV*, Isaiah 5:2.

11. *RSV*, Psalm 118:22-23.

Figure 2.3: Parable of the Wicked Tenants

Matthew 21:37-46	Mark 12:6-12	Luke 20:13-19
<p>37. Afterward he sent his son to them, saying, <i>They will respect my son.</i></p> <p>38. But when the tenants saw the son, they said to themselves, <i>This is the heir; come, let us kill him and have his inheritance.</i></p> <p>39. And they took him and cast him out of the vineyard, and killed him</p> <p>40. When therefore the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those tenants?</p> <p>41. They said to him, <i>He will put those wretches to a miserable death, and let out the vineyard to other tenants who will give him the fruits in their seasons.</i></p> <p>42. Jesus said to them, Have you never read in the scriptures: <i>The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner;</i></p>	<p>6. He had still one other, a beloved son; finally he sent him to them, saying, <i>They will respect my son.</i></p> <p>7. But those tenants said to one another, <i>This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.</i></p> <p>8. And they took him and killed him, and cast him out of the vineyard.</p> <p>9. What will the owner of the vineyard do?</p> <p>He will come and destroy the tenants, and give the vineyard to others.</p> <p>10. Have you not read the scripture: <i>The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner;</i></p>	<p>13. Then the owner of the vineyard said, <i>What shall I do? I will send my beloved son; it may be they will respect him.</i></p> <p>14. But when the tenants saw him, they said to themselves, <i>This is the heir; let us kill him, that the inheritance may be ours.</i></p> <p>15. And they cast him out of the vineyard and killed him.</p> <p>What then will the owner of the vineyard do to them?</p> <p>16. He will come and destroy those tenants, and give the vineyard to others. When they heard this, they said, <i>God forbid!</i></p> <p>17. But he looked at them and said, <i>What then is this that is written: The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner.</i></p>

<p><i>this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.</i></p> <p>43. Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.</p> <p>[v.44 not in Matthew]<sup>12</sup></p> <p>45. When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard his parables, they perceived that he was speaking about them.</p> <p>46. But when they tried to arrest him, they feared the multitudes, because they held him to be a prophet.</p>	<p>11. <i>this was the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes.</i></p> <p>12. And they tried to arrest him, but feared the multitude, for they perceived that the had told the parable against them; so they left him and went away.</p>	<p>18. <i>Every one who falls on that stone will be broken to pieces; but when it falls on anyone it will crush him.</i></p> <p>19. The scribes and chief priests tried to lay hands on him at that very hour, but they feared the people; for they perceived that he had told this parable against them.</p>
--	---	---

At first reading the parable seems to be about a man who plants a vineyard, hires tenants to tend the vineyard, and sends his servants to bring back the harvest. The servants are mistreated and put out of the vineyard so the man sends his own son whom he expects they will respect. The son is driven from the vineyard and killed by the tenants who believe they will be given his inheritance. There is a passage about a stone which does not seem relevant in a story about growing grapes.

---

12. This is an example of the *Western non-interpolations*. The Gospel of Matthew is a translation of the *Codex Bezae*, a late 5<sup>th</sup> or early 6<sup>th</sup> century bilingual manuscript of the Gospels and Acts. It is written in Greek on the left page and Latin on the right and is the oldest known manuscript written in two languages. The "Western non-interpolations" are found in those works designated as *Western Texts* once used to refer to all pre-Byzantine and non-Alexandrian manuscripts but now more properly refers to the Graeco-Latin manuscripts



During Jesus's earthly life there was no prediction of the resurrection.<sup>13</sup> The first stage of the parable as recited by Jesus, *Sitz im Leben Jesu*, is a parable about the kingdom of God. The dilemma facing the early Church was that they didn't know what to do with the empty tomb. Jesus is dead and his body is missing but the story cannot continue to be told that way in light of the resurrection. Therefore early in the second stage, *Sitz im Leben Kirche*, Psalm 118 is added to the lips of Jesus to reflect the resurrection and the parable is changed from a kingdom parable to a parable to identify Jesus as the Son of God. However, the writer of Matthew is not satisfied with the change to a Son parable and wants it to be a kingdom parable as in the original setting. In the third stage, *Sitz im Leben Evangelium*, he returns the parable to its original intent by placing verse 43 on the lips of Jesus:

*Therefore I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a nation producing the fruits of it.*<sup>14</sup>

Mark represents the more original form of the parable as the son is killed inside the vineyard. The reference in Matthew and Luke to the son being cast outside the vineyard and killed is a later development as it foreshadows the crucifixion of Jesus outside Jerusalem with the vineyard serving as a symbol for Jerusalem. The reference of Mark and Luke to the *beloved son* is a later redaction. A careful reading reveals that for Mark and Luke the parable is christological. For Matthew it is a multipurpose kingdom, salvation, and historical parable.

## THE RELIGIOUS INHERITANCE OF JESUS

Throughout the ages Christians have made two serious mistakes in their attempt to understand Jesus against the backdrop of his religion. The first is that Christians have read the gospels as a chronology of Jesus. Secondly, Christians have read the Gospels against the wrong background; that is, the background of Christianity, modern church dogma, and our contemporary psychological needs.

---

of western Europe such as the *Codex Bezae*, the Old Latin version, and quotations from western Church fathers such as Cyprian. These manuscripts are marked by omissions and insertions sometimes the length of several verses and by eccentric readings. The text originated in the middle of the second century. The *Western non non-interpolations* are believed to be later additions to the text therefore they were not interpolated, or added into, Western manuscripts. See Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, v-xiv for a discussion of types of text, Greek manuscripts of the New Testament, the Papyri, and versions of the New Testament.

13. See Chapter 7. Jesus saw himself as the Son of man described by Deutero-Isaiah who after suffering would receive redemption. This should not be construed to mean that Jesus had foreknowledge of his resurrection.

14. *RSV*, Matthew 21:43

Jesus must be read against the Old Testament and first century Judaism. Any attempt to understand him without a thorough understanding of the Judaism of his time is doomed to failure as Jesus is the culmination and fulfillment of this Judaism. When we do this there are four primary elements which combine to comprise the religious milieu in which Jesus lived.

The first element is the development of Yahwism from the time of Moses to Joshua and the creation of the Tribal League. The theological underpinning which will sustain Israel through the centuries is found in Joshua in the Covenant Renewal. Joshua gathered all the tribes at Shechem where he recounted their history in other lands serving other gods and the benevolence of Yahweh who had led them to Canaan and vanquished all of their foes. He then challenges them:

*Now therefore fear the Lord, and serve him in sincerity and in faithfulness; put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. And if you be unwilling to serve the Lord, choose this day whom you will serve, whether the gods your fathers served in the region beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you dwell; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.<sup>15</sup>*

The people tell Joshua they will serve the Lord but Joshua warns them that the Lord is jealous and will not forgive their transgressions or sins. He then warns them that if they forsake the Lord and serve foreign gods Yahweh would turn on them and destroy them.<sup>16</sup> The people reply that they will serve the Lord.

*So Joshua made a covenant with the people that day, and made statutes and ordinances for them at Shechem. And Joshua wrote these words in the book of the law of God; and he took a great stone, and set it up there under the oak in the sanctuary of the Lord. And Joshua said to the people, 'Behold, this stone shall be a witness against us; for it has heard all the words of the Lord which he spoke for us; therefore it shall be a witness against you, lest you deal falsely with your God.' So Joshua sent the people away, every man to his inheritance.<sup>17</sup>*

---

15. RSV, Joshua 24:14-15.

16. The warning is fulfilled when Solomon committed apostasy by worshiping the gods of his foreign wives. Upon his death the kingdom is divided into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Throughout the ensuing centuries the prophetic call is for each to return to the ways of Yahweh or destruction will follow. Thus, the reason for the fall of the two kingdoms is not foreign invasion but rather breaking the covenant.

17. RSV, Joshua, 24:25-28.

The covenant sets the parameters of Yahwism and differentiates it from the pagan religions of Palestine. In Yahwism the proper function of religion is not for political and economic purposes but rather for ethics. The pagan religions emphasized both the political, exemplified by kingship and city states, and the economic exemplified by fertility factors, where Yahwism centered on ethics or values relating to others. Thus, we find in the Decalogue a duty to God and a duty to man. It is an ethical concern with a social dimension. Israel is egalitarian and Yahweh gives land to each person. Paganism is feudal with a king owning all the land worked by the peasants. In this setting the Ten Commandments are not a private checklist or the privatized religion of the Jews but rather a call out of paganism to worship the one true God.

The kingship period, from Saul to the Babylonian Exile, is viewed as a period in which Israel paganized its religion.<sup>18</sup> The people professed one ideal but did not actualize that ideal in daily life. Religion was put to the service of the state and the goal of worship was to keep the monarchy viable. The legacy of the Davidic dynasty was that the people could worship the true God in a pagan fashion and still remain the chosen people.

Post Exilic Yahwism became historical Judaism under the reforms of Ezra and Nehemiah within the covenant relationship expressed by the Torah. Israelite religion is now lived by a book of law which codifies the stipulations set forth in the Pentateuch. The law becomes separated from the covenant and we now have a new relationship: Yahweh is the law giver and Israel is the law keeper. The trap is that with the law there is a potential for legalism and minimization of performance and the loyalty required by a covenant relationship is not achieved. The 613 precepts of the Torah can be seen as co-equal since they are all laws and obedience to them becomes more important than relationships with people.

The second element is that of rule and reign exemplified in: Repent! The kingdom of God is at hand! When they reached Palestine, Israel was a theocracy with Yahweh ruling over the Tribal League through the Judges. However, after Deborah the pressure for a monarch cited in I Samuel results in the kingship of Saul.<sup>19</sup> The ensuing tension between kingship and the rule of Yahweh will continue

18. From the time of Judges the Israelites had *de facto* kings and at least one *de facto* queen, Deborah. Yahweh was Israel's king as the Judge was chosen by Yahweh and acted in Yahweh's name. As the Israelites spread throughout Canaan and interacted with the indigenous peoples it became increasingly difficult for the Tribal League to govern without a temporal king. Israel's need to conduct affairs of state with the kings of indigenous peoples required a commensurate person as head of state. True kingship is foreshadowed in I Samuel 10:1 when Samuel anoints Saul and says, *Has not the Lord anointed you to be prince over the people of Israel?* In I Samuel 10:17 the people are called to Mizpah by Samuel and Saul is made king in I Samuel 10:24. With Saul as king the Israelites immediately began to fall away from Yahweh with Saul's disobedience (I Samuel 15). The chapter ends with verse 35b, *And the Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel.*

19. *RSV*, Judges 6 and *The Song of Deborah*.

in both Israel and Judah until the destruction of both states and the Exile.

After the death of Saul, David is made king and the capital is moved to Jerusalem. The ark is no longer the focal center of Yahwism as David builds the Temple and moves the ark into the Temple. David realizes the process for choosing a king must change or the kingdom will splinter. Therefore, he instituted the dynastic principle of succession as a political necessity. The change from anointing by the prophets to the creation of a traditional monarchy removed God from the decision making process.<sup>20</sup> Both of these changes signal a theocracy becoming a monarchy.

However, by the end of Solomon's reign the kingdom splits into Israel and Judah with the Davidic theology of the Southern kingdom continuing to the time of Jesus. It is in this Davidic theology one finds the origin of the expected Messiah, anointed one of David, through whom God will extend his rule through his Davidic king. Succession in Israel can now be divided into three stages: 1) the dynastic hope of David, 2) the hope of a rebirth of David's dynasty through a messianic figure, and 3) the hope projected to the final age in which a Davidic king would restore Jewish power: Zionism.

The monarchy became an over-theologized human institution culminating in the *Theology of the Messiah*. Therefore, when we read in the gospel message of Jesus about the rule of God we are not quite sure what the writer means. This is particularly true when we remember that Messianic Judaism was only one among many movements in Judaism. By the time of Jesus many Jews had accepted the apocalyptic concept of the Son of man first found in Daniel. Additionally, Essene materials found at Qumran refer to two messiahs: one Davidic and the other the Messiah of Aaron which clearly indicates there were several divergent expectations of messianic salvation within Judaism.<sup>21</sup>

The third element is the phenomena of the *apokalypsis* which is a variant on the kingdom of God theme. It means revelation and is the first word of the last book of the New Testament written by John and to which the early Church gave the title, *The Revelation to John*. However, the concept is first used in Isaiah and by the Chronicler<sup>22</sup> and becomes a literary genre in Daniel. Although unique to Israel the concept became a theology and a world view from the second century B.C.E. through the first century C.E. during which the apocalyptic movement, with an attendant body of apocalyptic literature, was developed.

20. *RSV*, II Samuel 7 known as The Davidic Covenant.

21. For a cogent discussion on the messiahs of Aaron and Israel as seen by the Essenes see John Joseph Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Ancient Literature*, (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 74. See also Raphael Patai, *The Messiah Texts*, (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979).

22. The writer of I and II Chronicles which is a reinterpretation of I and II Kings. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah are also considered to be his work as a continuation of Chronicles.

The primary characteristic of the apocalypse is that it is eschatological; that is, there is a sense of urgency that the end is near and the kingdom of God is about to be manifested. The perception is the present age is evil, given over to evil powers, and life will continue to deteriorate before the cataclysmic clash between the powers of evil and God. There is a dualistic simplicity between the *Sons of Light* and the *Sons of Darkness* with no middle ground.<sup>23</sup> Evil will find its leaders among men in the guise of Paul's Man of Lawlessness, the reference of Jesus to false messiahs, and John's anti-Christ. However, in the end God triumphs over evil and the new age, the reign of God on earth, is established with the remnant of the faithful spared to rebuild humanity.

Although much of mainstream Judaism did not accept the apocalyptic movement there were many sects of apocalyptic believers as represented by John the Baptist, the Essenes, and the Zealots. Jesus also was seen as presenting an apocalyptic view as he said many times that the kingdom of God is at hand. His followers, the first Jewish Christians, were certainly apocalyptic as they believed that just as Christ had risen the same glorification would be theirs.<sup>24</sup>

The problem with the apocalyptic movement was that the great war expected after the resurrection of Jesus between the forces of good and evil never happened. By the third century Christianity realized the timing for the expected apocalypse was wrong and accepted this as one argument that Jesus knowledge was limited.

The fourth element is represented by a collection of religious groups which shared some of the characteristics cited in the first three elements. The Sadducees were a non-apocalyptic conservative group which accepted as valid only the Torah.<sup>25</sup> They constituted a worshiping community living under the 613 written

23. The origin of Cosmic Dualism is found in Persian Zoroasterism.

24. A central tenet within Pauline theology exemplified in II Thessalonians.

25. The Hebrew Bible is called the *Tanach* and is created by taking the first letter of each of the three sections of the Bible: the *Torah* (the first five books of the Christian Old Testament), the *Nevi'im* (the Prophets), and the *Ketuvim* (Writings). The *Torah* (instruction) also called the *Pentateuch* is comprised of: *Bereshit* (Genesis), *Sh'mot* (Exodus), *Vayikra* (Leviticus), *Bamidbar* (Numbers), and *Devarim* (Deuteronomy). As they were attributed to Moses since ancient times they are sometimes called the *Five Books of Moses* however contemporary scholarship recognizes they are made up of a combination of four major separate and distinct traditions. The traditions are: (J) which is an early Judean source identified as the Yahwist, (E) which is a northern Israelite source known as the Elohist, (P) associated with the Exile known as the Priestly Writer, and (D) known as the Deuteronomist who is responsible for the book of Deuteronomy. Together they trace Israel's origins from the earliest times through the patriarchs to the Exodus and Sinai periods prior to the entry to Canaan. They also contain much cultic and legal instruction. The Prophets are divided into two sections. The first is called the *N'evi'im Rishonim* (Early Prophets also called the First or Former Prophets) made up of *Y'hoshua* (Joshua), *Shoftim* (Judges), *Shmuel* (Samuel), and *Melachim* (Kings). The second is called *N'evi'im Acharonim* (Later Prophets) which is divided into two sections known as the Major Prophets and the Minor Prophets.

laws and were the direct descendants of Ezra and Nehemiah. As their prime concern was to maintain the Temple and cultic ritual until God acted they acquiesced to whatever secular political leader was in power.

The Pharisees were a lay group who insisted that everyone had the right to study and interpret the scriptures. They believed in angels and demons, resurrection and future life, and were somewhat apocalyptic. In addition to the Torah, including oral interpretations, they accepted as valid the Prophetic Writings and some pseudopigraphical<sup>26</sup> works. They believed that the nation of Israel must be a holy community, not just a worshiping community, living out the teaching of Yahweh by individual piety and as such were apolitical.

It is recognized there were many holy men and even some claiming to be the Messiah throughout Palestine at the time of Jesus who were not harassed or persecuted by the Pharisees. Therefore, it may be construed that the Evangelists made the Pharisees the literary villains so that readers of the gospels would have a point of comparison to the teaching of Jesus as to the virtues needed to enter the kingdom of God.<sup>27</sup>

The Essenes were an apocalyptic group with an intensified sense of ethical and religious practices. They separated themselves at Qumran to wait for a great war between good and evil which would vindicate their austerity and sweep away all other manifestations of Judaism. Qumran was destroyed by the Romans in the

The three Major Prophets are *Yeshayahu* (Isaiah), *Yirmiyahu* (Jeremiah), and *Yechezkel* (Ezekiel). The twelve Minor Prophets are *Hosheah* (Hosea), *Yoel* (Joel), *Amos* (Amos), *Ovadyah* (Obadiah), *Yonah* (Jonah), *Michah* (Micah), *Nachum* (Nachum), *Chabakuk* (Habakkuk), *Zephanyah* (Zephaniah), *Chaggai* (Haggai), *Zeharyah* (Zechariah), and *Malachee* (Malachi). The Writings (*Ketuvim*) contain wisdom literature, poetry, songs, narrative, history, and religious philosophy. It consists of twelve books of which the first three are: *Tehillim* (Psalms), *Mishlei* (Proverbs), and *Iyov* (Job). The next five books are known collectively as *megillot* or scrolls and are read in the synagogue on a particular Jewish holiday or commemoration: *Shir Hashirim* (Song of Songs), *Rut* (Ruth), *Eichah* (Lamentations), *Kohelet* (Ecclesiastes), and *Ester* (Esther). The four concluding books tell of the return from Exile, the re-establishment of independence, and the rebuilding of the Holy Temple: *Daniel* (Daniel), *Ezra* (Ezra), *Nechemyah* (Nehemiah), and *Divray Hayamim* (Chronicles).

26. A Jewish and sometimes Christian body of literature not part of the Jewish or Christian canon but is similar to the Old Testament in character and ideas. Written between 200 B.C.E. and 200 C.E. it includes apocalypses, testaments, wisdom literature, prayers and psalms, and additions to Old Testament stories.

27. This is not an absolutist statement but should be read in shades of gray. Jesus certainly did and said many things which angered the Jewish religious leaders and was perceived as a threat to the fragile relationship between the Jewish religious leaders and the Romans. However, it may be assumed that others who preached repentance, that the Messiah's coming was imminent (in fact there were men who called themselves the Messiah), and that the present age was coming to an end were perceived as much a threat as was Jesus. However, there is no record that they were singled out for persecution as was Jesus.

revolt of 66-70 C.E. and it is believed by some scholars that those Essenes who survived the war eventually were assimilated by the Christian movement.

The resistance movement was led by the apocalyptic Zealots. They had a relaxed ethical view, were characterized by an intense legalism and were very selective about who would constitute the new Israel after they successfully defeated the Romans in battle. They were responsible for the first revolt which destroyed the Temple in 70 C.E. as well as the final revolt in 132-135 C.E..

The final element was the emergence of prophets characterized by John the Baptist which leads us directly to Jesus. Our understanding of Jesus must start with an understanding of John the Baptist. These two men were not only related genealogically but also theologically as John the Baptist's ministry provided the theological base for the ministry of Jesus.

John the Baptist preached and baptized not only at the Jordan River but also East of the Jordan near the main highway which ran between Jericho and Trans-Jordan. He also went into Samaria and baptized within a few miles of large towns. Many of the men whom John the Baptist had baptized were contemporaneously baptizing in other parts of the wilderness. Jesus was one of these men.

The arrest of John the Baptist had a profound effect on many he had baptized including Jesus. After John's arrest Jesus immediately returned to Galilee and began to preach in the synagogues. While in prison John maintained contact with Jesus through his disciples. His question to Jesus, *Are you he is to come, or shall we look for another?*<sup>28</sup> indicates that John had not relinquished his role as a guiding hand in Israel's preparation for the eschatological struggle.<sup>29</sup>

The decision made by that he must suffer and die at the hands of wicked men may well stem from the execution of John the Baptist. There is no doubt that Jesus closely identified himself with John's ministry throughout his life. Their ministries were so closely related that many people thought Jesus was John the Baptist raised from the dead. At the end, as well as the beginning, Jesus saw his ministry in light of that of John the Baptist because when the chief priests and elders challenged his authority Jesus confounded them by asking:

*And when he entered the temple, the chief priests and elders came up to him as he was teaching, and said, "By what authority are you doing these things, and who gave you this authority?" Jesus answered them, "I also will ask you a question; and if you tell me the answer, then I also will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John whence was it? From heaven or from men?" And they argued with one another, "If we say, 'From heaven,' he will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we are afraid of the multitude;*

---

28. RSV, Luke, 7:19.

29. IDB, E-J, 962.

for all hold that John was a prophet." So they answered Jesus, "We do not know." And he said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things." <sup>30</sup>

## INFANCY NARRATIVES

The only synoptic Gospels which contain an infancy narrative are Matthew and Luke. Non-canonical sources, such as the Gospel of Thomas, are not considered credible.<sup>31</sup> Additionally, most contemporary scholars view the narratives in Matthew and Luke as creations by the respective writers to provide followers information about a period of time when little or nothing was known about Jesus. We see clearly in Matthew that the narrative is *Sitz im Leben Evangelium* as it is divided into five episodes which are built on five Old Testament episodes which makes this a theological work and not a biography. The Old Testament episodes are: the virginal conception, visitation of the Magi, flight into Egypt, massacre of the children, and return to Nazareth.

### 1. The virginal conception of Jesus fulfills the prophesy of Isaiah:

*Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, a (young woman <sup>32</sup>) shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.* <sup>33</sup>

compared to Matthew:

30. RSV, Matthew 21:23-27. Cf. RSV, Mark 11:27-33

31. Perhaps the best known non-canonical infancy narrative is *The Gospel of Thomas*. It is an early apocryphal gospel and together with the *Protevangelium of James* which is an infancy narrative about Mary became the basis for other works such as *The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew*, *The Gospel of the Birth of Mary*, *The History of Joseph the Carpenter*, and *The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy*. The date of origin is unsure but the first mention of it is found in Hippolytus (170-235) *Heresies* V.2. It is also cited by Origen (*Homily on Luke* 1), Eusebius (*Hist.* III.25.6), Cyril of Jerusalem (*Catechetical Instructions* V. 36), and Irenaeus (*Against Heresies*. I.20.1). The original form of the gospel has been lost but the discovery of a manuscript at Chenoboskion containing three writings (the *Gospel According to Thomas*, the *Gospel According to Philip*, and the *Book of Thomas*) have been conjectured as a possible copy of the gospel. The gospel is filled with stories of Jesus exercising supernatural powers as a child and some have determined it was written by orthodox Christians to counter the Gnostic belief that it was not until baptism that he acquired miraculous power.

32. Some translations use virgin.

33. RSV, Isaiah 7:14.



*Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son,  
and his name shall be called Emmanuel (which means,  
God with us).*<sup>34</sup>

A difficulty for scholars lies in the use of the word virgin. The original Hebrew and Aramaic texts for Isaiah used the word for young girl but when the Septuagint was created a mistake in translation was made in the Greek edition which changed young girl to virgin. When Jerome used the Septuagint as the basis for his translation of the Old Testament from Greek to Latin for the Vulgate version of the Bible the mistaken term virgin became the authentic word for Christians.<sup>35</sup> The mistaken change from the Hebrew young girl to the Greek virgin was not discovered until the advent of the historical critical method in the late nineteenth century.

2. The appearance of the Magi fulfills the prophesy of Micah:

*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to  
be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for  
me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old,  
from ancient days.*<sup>36</sup>

compared to Matthew:

*And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by  
no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall  
come a ruler who will govern my people Israel.*<sup>37</sup>

The significance of the Magi is uncertain. For Matthew they may have represented the Gentiles or even been descendants of Balaam.<sup>38</sup>

---

34. RSV, Matthew 1:23.

35. JBC, 2:67. The Septuagint uses the Greek word *parthenos* (virgin) to translate the Hebrew word *'almah* (young girl) in Isaiah 7:14.

36. RSV, Micah 5:2.

37. RSV, Matthew 2:6.

38. Balaam is a non-Israelite prophet primarily identified in Numbers 22-24. He is portrayed as an evil diviner who will sell his prophetic powers to the highest bidder often in conflict with God's will. However, when the Moabite king Balak hires him to curse Israel, Balaam replies that he can only speak the words that God gives him. King Balak asks him four times to curse the Israelites but instead Balaam obeys God and blesses Israel. The most famous of these oracles of blessing includes a prophesy about a great future king of Israel. The oracle most probably was meant for David but was later interpreted as the promise of a ruler who would come as a deliverer in the end time. Using royal images, Balaam proclaims, *A star shall come out of Jacob, and a scepter shall rise out of Israel*

## 3. The flight into Egypt fulfills the prophesy of Hosea:

*When Israel was a child, I loved him, and out of Egypt  
I called my son.*<sup>39</sup>

compared to Matthew:

*And he rose and took the child and his mother by  
night, and departed to Egypt, and remained there until  
the death of Herod. This was to fulfill what the Lord had  
spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt have I called my son."*<sup>40</sup>

This is an historical statement which is supported by two footnotes in Throckmorton's *Gospel Parallels: A Synopsis of the First Three Gospels*:

*Out of Egypt have I called my son; and, since he has  
been called, Nazarene.*<sup>41</sup>

while the second is found on the margin of codex 1424:

*This was to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet,  
"Out of Egypt have I called my son."*<sup>42</sup>

## 4. The massacre of the children fulfills the prophesy of Jeremiah:

---

(Num. 24:17) which probably underlies the account of the star followed by the Magi. The connection to Matthew and the fulfillment of Jesus as the Messiah is made clear when Micah says that the Davidic ruler of Israel will rise from the district of Ephrathah and spring from the royal line of Jesse and his son David. Jesse and David both come from Bethlehem. Bethlehem appears to be a gloss in the *Masoretic Text*; it is lacking in the Greek text. (The *Masoretic Text-MT* refers to the textual product elaborated by schools of scholars known as Masoretes who in the early Middle Ages integrated vowel signs, accent markings, and marginal notes into the Hebrew Bible) The original text probably read *bet 'epratah* i.e., *house of Ephrathah* and Bethlehem would be an explanatory gloss on Ephrathah. After the conquest of Canaan, Bethlehem was settled by the Ephrathah clan of the tribe of Judah. Therefore in Joshua 15:59 and Ruth 4:11 Bethlehem is also called Ephrathah. Until the new king re-establishes the monarchy, Israel will be subject to other nations. The Israelites anxiously awaiting deliverance are likened to a woman in labor. There is an allusion to Isaiah 7:14 in this verse which shows that Micah was influenced by the Emmanuel oracle.

39. RSV, Hosea 11:1.

40. RSV, Matthew 2:14-15.

41. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 3. *Gospel According to the Hebrews* in Jerome, *On Illustrious Men* 3.

42. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 3.

*Thus says the Lord: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refused to be comforted for her children, because they are not." 43*

compared with Matthew:

*A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they were no more. 44*

This is a reference to Rachel who as mother to the Rachel tribes is the mythological mother of the tribes of Israel.<sup>45</sup>

5. The return to Nazareth fulfills the prophesy of Isaiah:

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. 46*

compared to Matthew:

*And he went and dwelt in a city called Nazareth, that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, "He shall be called a Nazarene." 47*

Jesse was the father of King David and David was called, *son of Jesse* while

---

43. RSV, Jeremiah 31:15.

44. RSV, Matthew 2:18.

45. JBC, R-Z, 4. Some of those who see no evidence of real personal history in the Rachel stories think it is possible there was originally a Rachel tribe or clan. More certain is the historical situation of the tribes of Israel, reflected by the family of which Rachel was a member. The sons of Jacob-Israel by Rachel; Joseph and Benjamin, represent the twelve-tribe amphictyony which flourished during the period of the judges. Thus the sons of Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin, were prominent members of this Israelite confederation of tribes which were united by their common worship of Yahweh. However, contemporary scholarship questions whether the Tribal League was organized to the degree of a true amphictyony in the ancient Greek sense; that is, a confederation of states established around a religious shrine or center as at Delphi. For a criticism of the amphictyony see Van Seters, *In Search of History*, 231-232 and n. 81; idem, *Abraham in History and Tradition* (New Haven, 1975), 143-148; N.P. Lemche, *Studies Theologica* 38 (1984).

46. RSV, Isaiah 11:1.

47. RSV, Matthew 2:23.

similar expressions such as *shoot from the stump of Jesse* and *the root of Jesse* (Isaiah 11:1, 10 parallels Romans 15:12) became symbols of messianic prophesy.

*In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious.* <sup>48</sup>

*And further Isaiah says, "The root of Jesse shall come, he who rises to rule the Gentiles; in him shall the Gentiles hope."* <sup>49</sup>

The infancy narrative of Luke is made up of two diptychs <sup>50</sup> which may be viewed as opposite pages in a book.

Annunciation John the Baptist	Annunciation Jesus
Nativity John the Baptist	Nativity Jesus

The Lukan narrative is anthological; that is, it is made up of bits and pieces of other writings. The effect of this is that John the Baptist becomes the new Samuel; Elijah represents Anna, Samuel's mother; Mary represents the Daughter of Zion from the Ark of the Covenant and is the Queen Mother; and Jesus is the new David.<sup>51</sup>

It will be useful if we place Luke's infancy narrative in the larger context of his doctrinal scheme for both his gospel and Acts. The Gospel of Luke presents the Galilean ministry of Jesus and his journey to Jerusalem. Acts subsequently relates the early ministry of the apostles which is primarily directed toward Judaism. Next is Paul's journey to Rome which was the center of the Ancient Near Eastern world. Each episode ends with a rejection of Jesus by the Jews which leads to a worldwide apostolate. Luke's Gospel and Acts should be read as a continuum of events as Acts begins where the gospel ends. In Luke's Gospel Jesus never preaches directly to the Gentiles nor is the kingdom fully established with Jesus. It is clear the kingdom must include the Gentiles but this universal scope is realized only after

48. RSV, Isaiah 11:10.

49. RSV, Romans 15:12.

50. An ancient writing tablet made up of a hinged pair of wooden or ivory pieces folding to protect the inner waxed writing surfaces.

51. It is possible that Luke represents a common and widespread understanding of the Christian faith in the early Church or was not influenced by the advanced peculiarly profound insights of Paul and John.

the Ascension. Luke repeatedly reminds his readers that the timing of the parousia is quite indefinite. The parousia, the kingdom of God, did not appear either with the resurrection of Jesus or the fall of Jerusalem. It is within the work of the church that the parousia is gradually but surely being revealed in anticipation of the final fulfillment of all the promises and hopes.<sup>52</sup>

The question to be asked is, are the infancy narratives of either Matthew or Luke historically accurate. The majority of contemporary scholars interpret the stories of Jesus birth and infancy as myth.<sup>53</sup> There are two major reasons given to support this position. The first is that the narratives do not fit with the other gospels which begin at baptism and end at resurrection. It would seem obvious from literary criticism that the birth and infancy narratives are nothing more than a prologue constructed *Sitz im Leben Evangelium* and are not part of the original gospel events. The second reason is that there is no public testimony from anyone other than Matthew and Luke. If the birth of Jesus had happened as portrayed in Matthew and Luke it is to be expected there would have been mention of it in Mark or John, the Pseudopigrapha or other extra-Biblical writings of the time. Additionally, Matthew and Luke have only three major commonalities: the Annunciation, the site of his birth as Bethlehem, and that his early life was spent in Nazareth.

There are several statements in the Gospel of Matthew which detract from its credibility. Matthew speaks much about troubles of the time. An example of this is when the Magi arrive at Jerusalem. Matthew states that Herod and all of Jerusalem are troubled. The problem is that none of these troubles are mentioned by any other gospel writers. Matthew also reports a star over Bethlehem. Not only is he the only writer to mention a star there is no evidence of a notable star in either astronomy or legend. Matthew is the only writer to include the Magi in the story. The picture of Herod is one of an inept and bungling man who let the Magi escape. He summoned the chief priests and scribes to verify the Magi's prophesy when in fact he was not a Hebrew or religious man and would not have believed Hebrew prophesy. Herod then ordered the death of all male children under the age of two but Josephus does not mention the massacre of the children which, as an historian, he would have if it had occurred.

There are similar difficulties in the narrative presented by Luke. Luke cites a census but this is not an historical fact according to Roman legal records. Luke identifies Gabriel as the angel at the annunciation probably because of his role in Daniel.<sup>54</sup> Like Matthew, Luke is a dialogue, a national history, and an anthology;

---

52. *JBC*, II, 117.

53. The term contemporary scholarship refers to those scholars who accept the historical critical method of modern biblical criticism.

54. In Daniel 8:15-26 Gabriel explains Daniel's vision while in Luke 1:1317 he tells Zechariah that Elizabeth will conceive and explains all that John will accomplish.

not a biography. Both Matthew<sup>55</sup> and Luke<sup>56</sup> have messiahship connected with the birth of when in fact messiahship was not ascribed to Jesus until after his resurrection.

## SUMMARY

Since the Arian heresy, Christianity has focused its attention on Jesus' divine nature to the near exclusion of his human nature. However, beginning with Albert Schweitzer's *Von Reimarus ze Wrede: Eine Geschichte der Leben-Jesu-Forschung*, there has been a renewed attempt in scholarship to extract the man Jesus from the gospel accounts. Guidelines for an exegetical method are found in *Instruction Concerning the Historical Truth of the Gospels* published by the Pontifical Biblical Commission. This method allows us to exegete each gospel and compare all four gospels with one another. One of the keys to this method is to understand the words attributed to Jesus in their original *Sitz im Leben*.

When the tools of modern biblical criticism are applied to the gospels it is obvious the formerly held beliefs that the gospels were dictated verbatim by God and that they were a biography of Jesus were in error. With this in mind and given the fact that most often the words attributed to Jesus by the gospel writers are quotations from the Septuagint it is imperative, if we are to have any understanding of the man Jesus, we begin with an understanding of the cultural milieu in which he was born. Therefore, in order to understand Jesus we must understand him through the milieu of the Old Testament and first century Judaism *Sitz im Leben Jesu*.

Contemporary scholarship understands the infancy narratives of Matthew and Luke not as fact but as myth. Exegesis of Matthew clearly shows it is a series of five events created by Matthew which fulfill five Old Testament prophecies. The infancy narratives of both Matthew and Luke are a dialogue, a national history, and an anthology but are in no way a biography of Jesus.

---

55. *JBC*, II, 64. Matthew is comfortable in the world of rabbinical discussion and argument and more than any other of the Evangelists places Jesus within this context. He does so to make a point to the Jews: the thesis is that Jesus Messiah is the new Moses, the new Israel, and the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets.

56. *JBC*, II, 116-117. An overarching plan reaches from the Gospel of Luke into the Acts of the Apostles. Each begins in messianic Jerusalem with the imparting of the Spirit (Luke 1:5-2:52; 3:21f; Acts 1-2).

## Chapter 3

---

# God's Plan for Jesus: The Message of his Public Ministry

## JOHN THE BAPTIST

God's plan for Jesus begins with the promise of John the Baptist's birth and the miraculous conception of John given that his mother Elizabeth was barren and too old to conceive.<sup>1</sup> Zechariah is visited by the angel Gabriel who tells him Elizabeth will bear a son who is to be called John:

*For he will be great before the Lord, and he shall drink no wine nor strong drink, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb. And he will turn many of the sons of Israel to the Lord their God, and he will go before him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready for the Lord a people prepared.*<sup>2</sup>

The reference to Elijah is interesting as it appears not only here but also when the priests and Levites from Jerusalem approached John and asked if he was Elijah.<sup>3</sup> In his answer John identifies his ministry and relationship to Jesus:

*He said, "I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,' as the prophet Isaiah said."*<sup>4</sup>

---

1. RSV, Luke 1:5-25.

2. RSV, Luke 1:15-17.

3. RSV, John 1:19-22.

4. RSV, John 1:23.

We know the references linking John the Baptist to Elijah are *Sitz im Leben Evangelium* because Elijah's return is expected in both *The Wisdom of Jesus the Son of Sirach*, which is known as Ecclesiasticus, and the book of Malachi.

Some scholars question if John the Baptist is looking for Elijah to fulfill the prophesy since John's sayings echo the prophesy found in Malachi:

*Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes.*<sup>5</sup>

Another question to be considered is whether Jesus was perceived as Elijah after the death of John the Baptist.

*Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God".*<sup>6</sup>

*And Jesus went on with his disciples, to the village of Caesarea Philippi; and on the way he asked his disciples, "Who do men say I am?" And they told him, "John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and other one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ".*<sup>7</sup>

*Now it happened that as he was praying alone the disciples were with him; and he asked them, "Who do the people say that I am?" And they answered, "John the Baptist; but others say, Elijah; and others, that one of the old prophets has risen." And he said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" And Peter answered, "The Christ of God".*<sup>8</sup>

Clearly the disciples knew Jesus wasn't Elijah but in the minds of the common people he may have appeared to be a reincarnation of Elijah.

Each of the synoptic writers presented John the Baptist differently. Mark begins his story of John the Baptist with a quotation from Isaiah regarding the messenger

5. RSV, Malachi 4:5.

6. RSV, Matthew 16:13-16.

7. RSV, Mark 8:27-29.

8. RSV, Luke 9:18-20.



who is clothed in camel's hair with a leather girdle around his waist<sup>9</sup> which are the symbols of Elijah. He also makes reference to Malachi. The only reference to John's preaching is found in verse seven where Mark says, *And he preached*<sup>10</sup> then John states:

*I have baptized you with water; but he will  
baptize you with the Holy Spirit.*<sup>11</sup>

We know John's reference to the Holy Spirit is not original and was placed on his lips during *Sitz im Leben Kirche* because when Paul visited Corinth he asked the Corinthians:

*"Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" And  
they said, "No, we have never even heard that there is a Holy Spirit."  
And he said, "Into what then were you baptized?" They said,  
"Into John's baptism".*<sup>12</sup>

According to Matthew, John the Baptist has the same message as Jesus, *Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!* This is a reference in which John acts to compliment the message of Jesus. There is no mention of the forgiveness of sins at the end of John's speech as this is a part of the teaching of Jesus.

The gospel of Luke portrays John the Baptist as an itinerant preacher. Although he quotes Isaiah there are no references to the dress of Elijah or to references from Malachi.<sup>13</sup> Luke contains more of John's preaching and senses the shift to the new age which comes from the Q source.<sup>14</sup>

## BAPTISM OF JESUS

Each gospel writer has a different perspective about the voice of God after the baptism of Jesus. Mark states only Jesus sees the heavens open and the Spirit descended on him like a dove and only Jesus hears a voice.<sup>15</sup> This is a private matter between God and Jesus. Luke places John the Baptist in prison<sup>16</sup> when Jesus came to be baptized. The Spirit descends in the bodily form of a dove, the heavens opened which is more public than Mark, but still the voice is only heard

9. RSV, Mark 1:2-3, 6; cf. Matthew 3:3-4.

10. RSV, Mark 1:7.

11. RSV, Mark 1:8.

12. RSV, Acts 19:2-3.

13. RSV, Luke 3:2-6.

14. RSV, Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:3, Luke 3:4. cf. Matthew 11:10 which is from Isaiah 40:3.

15. RSV, Mark 1:10-11.

16. RSV, Luke 3:20.

by Jesus.<sup>17</sup> According to Matthew Jesus sees the Spirit descend like a dove and rest on him and all present hear a voice.

The Gospel of John has a different schema in which a voice speaks to John the Baptist. John the Baptist sees Jesus coming:

*And John bore witness, "I saw the Spirit descend as a dove from heaven, and it remained on him. I myself did not know him; but he who sent me to baptize with water said to me, 'He on whom you see the Spirit descend and remain, this is he who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.' And I have seen and born witness that this is the Son of God."*<sup>18</sup>

It is interesting to compare the accounts given in the canonical gospels of the baptism of Jesus and the voice of God with the extra-biblical *Gospel According to the Hebrews*, *Gospel of the Ebionites*, manuscripts of the *Itala*, and *Justin*. The following citations appear as footnotes in Throckmorton's *Gospel Parallels: A Synopsis of the First Three Gospels*.

In regard to Matthew 3:15 two manuscripts of the *Itala* state:

*Then he consented; and when he was baptized a huge light shone from the water so that all who were near were frightened.*<sup>19</sup>

To Matthew 3:13 cf: *Gospel According to the Hebrews* in Jerome (*Against Pelagius III.2*):

*The mother of the Lord and his brothers said to him, "John the Baptist baptizes for the forgiveness of sins; let us go and be baptized by him." But he said to them, "In what have I sinned that I should go and be baptized by him? Unless, perhaps, what I have just said is a sin of ignorance."*<sup>20</sup>

To Matthew 3:13-17 cf: *Gospel of the Ebionites* in Epiphanius (*Against Heresies, XXX,13.7-8*):

*After the people were baptized, Jesus also came and was baptized by John. And as he came up from the water, the heavens were opened, and he saw the Holy Spirit descending in the form*

17. RSV, Luke 3:20.

18. RSV, John 1:32-34.

19. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 10.

20. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 10.

of a dove and entering into him. And a voice from heaven said, "Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased." And again, "Today I have begotten thee." And immediately a great light shone around the place; and John, seeing it said to him, "Who are you, Lord?" And again a voice from heaven said to him, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased." Then John, falling down before him, said, "I beseech you, Lord, baptize me!" But he forbade him, saying, "Let it be so; for thus it is fitting to fulfill all things." <sup>21</sup>

To Matthew 3:16-17 cf: *Gospel According to the Hebrews* in Jerome, (*Commentary on Isaiah 11.2*):

*When the Lord ascended from the water, the whole fount of the Holy Spirit descended and rested upon him, and said to him, "My son, in all the prophets I was waiting for you, that you might come, and that I might rest in you. For you are my rest; and you are my first born son, who reigns forever." <sup>22</sup>*

Additionally, compare Justin, *Dialogue* 88.3:

*When Jesus went down to the water, fire was kindled in the Jordan; and when he was rising from the water, the Holy Spirit came upon him like a dove, as the apostles of our Christ have written. <sup>23</sup>*

Thus it is evident there was a general agreement among the writers of the time as to John's role in Jesus' ministry. The theological meaning of the baptism of Jesus and the theophonic opening of the heavens, the dove, and the voice of God must be read against the Old Testament and not Christology. There is an unmistakable similarity between the phrase, *You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased* and the beginning of the Servant Song in Isaiah:

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations. <sup>24</sup>*

which we may paraphrase as:

21. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 11. To Matthew 3:17 cf. Mark 1:11 and Isaiah 42:1; 44:2.

22. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 11.

23. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 11.

24. *RSV*, Isaiah 42:1.

*This is my servant whom I have called,  
My chosen one of whom I am well pleased,  
I have put my spirit on him  
he will bring forth righteousness to the nations.*

When juxtaposed against this backdrop the baptism and attendant theophany are the new Exodus. This is because God's revelation to the Jews had three aspects: past, present, and future. They passed through the Red Sea (creation event in the past), wandered forty years in the desert (present), and then entered the promised land (future). Christian revelation also has three aspects: Jesus is baptized in the Jordan River (creation event in the past), his ministry and our waiting (present), our resurrection and the parousia (future).

Did it really happen as portrayed by the gospels and the extra-biblical sources? Although each source records the events differently it is thought by most scholars that Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist. Therefore, Jesus was part of the greater Baptist movement in which men were baptizing, preaching repentance, and calling for forgiveness of sin.

The voice out of heaven is enigmatic. The biggest problem is that God borrows his words from Isaiah and Malachi and as such there is nothing theologically new presented. If Jesus represents the new age one would expect God to have a new message on this momentous occasion. However, it is left to the Evangelists to find words for God to speak and they chose to reference Isaiah and Malachi.

Another major issue is that Jesus has no response to God's acclamation. We would expect that at such an important moment, the dawning of a new age, Jesus would have responded verbally or symbolically as did the Old Testament prophets when they were called. Instead, he came out of the water and simply walked away into the desert.

Using the hermeneutic of Old Testament prophecy there are three reasons why Jesus was baptized. The first is to fulfill Isaiah's prophecy of the Suffering Servant. Jesus took our sins upon himself and into the water where they were washed away which prepares us to enter the new age. Secondly, his baptism is a call narrative similar to the call narratives of the Old Testament prophets.<sup>25</sup> Finally, his baptism provides for the formation of the nucleus for the new age.<sup>26</sup>

25. A call narrative is a summons by God to perform a particular function or to occupy a particular status. Since Deutero-Isaiah the religious concept has become almost synonymous with election. By far the most important usages have to do with kings and priests, the fathers of Israel, and the city of Jerusalem. The first two usages are continued in the New Testament with the election of Jesus and of the Twelve as well as the church as a religious community.

26. Ablution or bathing in a *mikveh* or ritual pool was common in ancient Israel as a preparation for prayers and sacrifice or as expiation of sin. One cannot miss the relationship between the immersion of today's Jewish converts in a *mikveh* as a symbolic act of ritual

## THE ETHICAL BASE OF JESUS

The message of Jesus is that God will act imminently and radically in human history. His ministry of repentance and forgiveness of sins is designed to give us time to reflect on our present lifestyle and return to the ways of God as the end of human history is close at hand. His message is universal as he reveals that everyone, not just those traditionally seen as sinners, need to repent and lead a new life. Man becomes an agent of his own redemption by his actions which is in direct contrast with the passive nature of the apocalyptic movement whose members believed the righteous should do nothing and wait for God to act.

Throughout his ministry Jesus taught that in the age to come God would favor the poor over the rich, the weak over the strong, and the powerless over the powerful. He did this by refocusing the reverence given the 613 laws of the Torah which had become a form of idolatry as it was the laws which were worshiped and not God. Jesus taught that salvation was judged not only by observance of the law but by one's interaction with others. Jesus returns to the Mosaic Covenant which emphasized a relationship of ethical behavior between God and man as well as neighbor to neighbor and makes that relationship paramount to salvation as described in the last judgement of Matthew.<sup>27</sup> Thus, his methodology was to teach in parables which featured the reversal of the social order.

There are three general elements to the concept of ethics taught by Jesus and five specific applications of ethical living in daily life. The three general elements are:

1. The central element is on loving God and your neighbor. This is a reflection of covenant loyalty and allegiance. This simple but powerful message is contained in Jesus' response to the scribe who asked, *Which commandment is the first of all?*

*Jesus answered, "The first is, 'Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.' The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as your self.' There is no other commandment greater than these."* <sup>28</sup>

which is based on Leviticus:

---

purification wherein the proselyte is spiritually *reborn* while the proper blessings are recited making the immersion a ritual act of conversion with baptism as introduced by John the Baptist and Jesus.

27. RSV, Matthew 25:31-46.

28. RSV, Mark 12:29-31. This is based on Leviticus 19:18

*You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people; but you shall love your neighbor as yourself.*<sup>29</sup>

2. The second element is the redefinition of the love motif of Wisdom literature:

*forget evil; do good and forgive your enemy; love your enemy*

3. The third element widens the concept of neighbor: In the parable of the good Samaritan, Jesus' meaning is greater than simply loving Samaritans. It is easier to understand the parable if we title it, *the parable of the wounded traveler*. We can now understand that the concept of loving one's neighbor is expanded so that the one wounded is to love anyone who stops to help and the one giving aid is to love anyone who needs help. Additionally, Jesus is making a theological statement with the parable. The priest and Levite do not stop because if the traveler is dead they will be unclean and have to pay a tithe as they may be on their way to Jerusalem for worship. Jesus is saying in the parable that loving one's neighbor, doing God's work on earth, is more important than strict observance of the Torah.

The five specific applications to ethical living in daily life are:

1. We must be doers of the Word and not just hearers of the Word.
2. We must be doers of the Word and not just speakers of the Word.
3. Our ethic must become our interior self.
4. We must possess a purity of intention.
5. We must always strive for the perfection of the ethic.

Jesus' concept of ethics offers us ideals with which to live our lives. However, our life is not ideal. Therefore, regardless of how difficult it is, we must set aside the values of this age and focus on the values of the kingdom of God. As followers of Jesus we must become the suffering servant steeped in love and humiliation. This is the antidote for legalism. When one achieves this state there are two benefits. The first is that the legalism of Pharisaic Judaism is elevated and purified and the second is that the kingdom of God is opened to all.

Although the Beatitudes stem from the ethical teaching of Jesus they are not a summation of his teaching. Most scholars doubt if Jesus ever spoke them as they

---

29. RSV, Leviticus 19:18.

are seen simply as a literary device to begin the Sermon On The Mount. Not only are there different numbers of Beatitudes in Matthew and Luke but they have different meanings for each Evangelist and Jesus.<sup>30</sup> For Matthew the Beatitudes are a spiritual disposition. In Luke they are hopeful words for an eschatological reversal. Jesus uses them as an instructional device. However, although each uses them in his own way the reward is the same for all: the kingdom of Heaven.

## MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

We must examine how Jesus applies his ethical base to marriage and divorce.<sup>31</sup> Divorce was permitted in Judaism. Although a man was expected to remarry he could not marry a divorced woman as this was defined as adultery. Thus, a divorced woman could not remarry without committing adultery.

*When a man takes a wife and marries her, if then she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house and she departs out of his house, and if she goes and becomes another man's wife, and the latter husband dislikes her and writes her a bill of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies, who took her to be his wife, and then her former husband, who sent her away, may not take her again to be his wife, after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before the Lord, and you shall not bring guilt upon the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance.*<sup>32</sup>

There are also prohibitions against marriage to a divorced woman in both Leviticus and Ezekiel.

By the time of Jesus the Pharisees were divided as to the grounds for divorce. One group believed that divorce could only be granted in the case of *shami* (adultery) while the other believed that divorce could be justified by *hitilel* (any reason at all). By Deuteronomic law as well as in Pharisaic Judaism only the husband could initiate divorce and only the husband could remarry without being an adulterer.<sup>33</sup>

30. *RSV*, Luke has four; Matthew has nine.

31. *RSV*, Matthew 19:1-2; Mark 10:1-12.

32. *RSV*, Deuteronomy 24:1-4.

33. See Joseph Telushkin, "Problematic Laws: Regarding Bastards and Rape" in *Biblical Literacy*, (New York: William Morrow and Company, 1997), 503-506. The emphases on marriage and divorce is so great because according to Torah law a child's status as a *mamzer* (bastard) is determined solely by the marital status of the mother. If the child is the result of pre-marital sex and she has either married the father or is still single at the time of birth

When the Pharisees asked Jesus if it was lawful to divorce one's wife his response was the opposite of traditional practice:

*What therefore God has joined together, let not man put asunder.* <sup>34</sup>

Jesus continues according to Matthew:

*And I say to you: whoever divorces his wife, except for unchastity, and marries another, commits adultery.* <sup>35</sup>

Jesus also makes it clear that divorce may make both the man and woman adulterers:

*But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.* <sup>36</sup>

Divorce on the ground of unchastity is known as the *Except Clause* because it is the only legitimate reason Jesus gives for divorce. However there is a difficulty presented by the translation of the Greek word *porneia* in the Greek New Testament to the English word unchastity as *porneia* does not mean adultery. There is another word in Greek, *moicheia*, which means adultery. The key to understanding this use of *porneia* is that Matthew is writing for the Gentile church most probably in Syria (*Sitz im Leben Evangelium*; not *Sitz im Leben Jesu*) but from the context of Mosaic Law which considers marriage with a divorced person to be an incestuous relationship.<sup>37</sup> This understanding was supported by the

the child is not a *mamzer*. However, if a woman is divorced and single or has re-married and has a child that child is a *mamzer* even if the child is the progeny of a re-marriage to her first husband after her divorce from her second husband. The seriousness of being born a *mamzer*, thus the sanctity of marriage, is that a *mamzer* is forbidden to marry any Israelite except another *mamzer*. All progeny of a *mamzer* are considered to also be *mamzers* and none of his descendants, even to the tenth generation, shall be admitted into the congregation of the Lord (Deuteronomy 23:3).

34. RSV, Matthew 19:6 = Mark 10:9.

35. RSV, Matthew 19:9.

36. RSV, Matthew 5:32.

37. St. Paul in I Corinthians 7:10-11 says, *To the married I give charge, not I but the Lord, that the wife should not separate from her husband (but if she does, let her remain single or else be reconciled to her husband) and that the husband should not divorce his wife.* However, in I Corinthians 7:8-9 he speaks to the undesirability of marriage in general.

8. *To the unmarried and the widows, I say that it is well for them to remain single as I do.*  
 9. *But if they cannot exercise self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.*



Council of Jerusalem in 49 C.E. which decided upon the obligations of Gentiles to the law of the Torah.<sup>38</sup>

Gentiles must observe these four precepts of the Torah:

*That you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols;  
and from blood;  
and from what is strangled;  
and from porneia (unchastity).<sup>39</sup>*

Figure 3.1: Decree to the Church in Syria

GREETINGS TO THE BRETHREN IN SYRIA

THE BRETHREN, BOTH THE APOSTLES AND THE ELDERS,  
TO THE BRETHREN WHO ARE OF THE GENTILES  
IN ANTIOCH AND SYRIA AND CELICIA  
GREETINGS:

ACCORDING TO THIS DECREE YOU MUST:

1. *Abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols.*
2. *Abstain from blood.*
3. *Abstain from what is strangled.*
4. *Do not divorce your wife except in a porneia (incestuous) relationship. If your wife is unchaste (a divorced woman) it is permissible to divorce her.*

Luke supports Matthew and Mark:

*Every one who divorces his wife and marries another  
commits adultery, and he who marries a woman divorced from  
her husband commits adultery.<sup>40</sup>*

38. RSV, Acts 15:19.

39. RSV, Acts 15:29

40. RSV, Luke 16:18.

However Jesus' objection to divorce is based on Genesis:

*Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and cleaves to his wife, and they become one flesh.* <sup>41</sup>

His prohibition of divorce is connected with the greater body of his ethical teaching which is that we should forgive evil done to us by anyone. From this context, when a husband or wife commits evil against their spouse, the marital relationship demands that an even greater effort be made for forgiveness. What Jesus is saying is that the greater the love the greater the forgiveness as our heavenly Father in his infinite love forgives all of our sins. Because God has joined them together into one, *one flesh* in Greek, even in the case of divorce the parties are expected to try to reconcile their differences and re-unite. The penalty for remarriage, the crime of adultery, is so great because remarriage cuts off the possibility of reconciliation.

## THE LORD'S PRAYER

The Lord's Prayer is the definitive revelation of the teaching of Jesus regarding forgiveness. There is no doubt that both Jesus and the gospel writers intended this prayer to teach us how to pray. The prayer has been used for liturgical purposes since the beginning of Christianity and continues to hold a prominent place in liturgy. <sup>42</sup>

The Lord's Prayer was presented as a guide and plan upon which to base prayer and the values of a Christian life. Matthew offers it as a substitute for the wrong kind of prayer while Luke presents it as an answer to a plea to be taught how to

41. *RSV*, Genesis 2:24.

42. In the early church the *Discipline of the Secret* required that certain sacred rites and formulas, especially the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, and the words of consecration, should be kept hidden from those who were not baptized. They were not to be committed to writing but communicated only by word of mouth among those accepted as believers. While there were pedagogical reasons for the discipline to become part of the liturgical formation of the third and fourth centuries an analysis of the words of the Lord's Prayer as interpreted by the pagan environment surrounding the early community also reveals a practical reason for its secrecy. It represented a point of view and ideology counter to that which legitimized the institutions of that day. Documents between Pliny and Trajan attest that allegiance to the empire was determined by proclaiming the kingship of the emperors, the holiness of their name, and submission to their will. To pray the Lord's Prayer was to act subversively toward those powers and principalities. Thus there was a practical reason for the *disciplina arcana*, the ancient discipline, of the early church which required the formulas of the sacred rites be hidden from those who were not baptized.

pray rather than to be taught how to say a prayer. The Lord's Prayer is based on traditional Jewish prayer and forms a summary on the matter of prayer:<sup>43</sup>

The Lord's Prayer is in many respects a summary of the *Shemoneh Esrei* (Eighteen Benedictions) found in the Jewish prayer book. It follows the form of the *Shemoneh Esrei* and was designed to cover in brief both an outline and order for the matter of prayer. Thus, the Lord's Prayer is both an example of how to pray as well as a short comprehensive prayer in itself.

Figure 3.2: The Lord's Prayer

Matthew 6:9-15	Luke 11:1-4
<p>9. Pray then like this:</p> <p><i>Our Father who art in heaven Hallowed be thy name,</i></p> <p>10. <i>Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven,</i></p> <p>11. <i>Give us this day our daily bread; (s)</i></p> <p>12. <i>And forgive us our debts, As we have forgiven our debtors;</i></p> <p>13. <i>And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil (t,u)</i></p> <p>14. <i>For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father also will forgive you;</i></p> <p>15. <i>but if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespass.</i></p>	<p>1. He was praying in a certain place, and when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, <i>Lord, teach us to pray, as John taught his disciples.</i></p> <p>2. And he said to them,</p> <p><i>When you pray, say: Father, hallowed be thy name, Thy kingdom come,</i></p> <p>3. <i>Give us each day our daily bread; (s) and forgive us our sins for we ourselves forgive everyone who is indebted to us; and lead us not into temptation.</i></p>

43. See Michael H. Crosby, *Thy Will Be Done*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977).

There are several Greek manuscripts (s) as well as two Syriac versions (s) which substitute *our bread for the morrow* for bread as well as (t) *the evil one for evil*. Likewise, there are some which add (u), *for thine is the kingdom and the power and the glory, forever. Amen*. Additionally, some Markan forms of 11:25 add, *But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your trespasses*.<sup>44</sup>

In the *Gospel According to the Hebrews* it states:

*In the gospel called according to the Hebrews, for "substantial bread" I found "mahar", which means "of the morrow"; so that the sense is: our bread of the morrow, that is, of the future, give us this day.*<sup>45</sup>

and continues

*The words from thine is the kingdom to Amen are not found in some copies.*<sup>46</sup>

Luke's version is more primitive and is an attempt to cite the prayer as closely to the words of Jesus as possible while Matthew's has been theologized in that it's now an eschatological prayer for the coming of the kingdom. The words of the Lord's Prayer are so familiar to us that many have lost the theology in which it is grounded. However, it is possible to recover a more complete meaning predicated on the Jewish *Amidah*.<sup>47</sup>

44. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 25.

45. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 25. For Matthew 6:11 cf. *Gospel According to the Hebrews*: (in Jerome, *Commentary on Matthew 6:11*)

46. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 25. For Matthew 6:13 cf. *Gospel According to the Hebrews*

47. See Ronald H. Isaacs, *Every Person's Guide to Jewish Prayer*, (Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1997), 124-128. The *Amidah* also known as the *Shemoneh Esrei* is the central element of the three daily services. It is spoken of in the Talmud as *Hatefillah*, the prayer par excellence, because of its importance and antiquity. A nineteenth benediction concerning the slanderers and enemies of the Jewish people was added toward the end of the first century C.E. at the direction of Rabban Gamaliel II who was the head of the Sanhedrin at Yavneh. The nineteen blessings are: *Avot* (ancestors), *Gevurot* (power), *Kedushah* (sanctification), *Da'at* (knowledge), *Teshuvah* (repentance), *Selicha* (forgiveness), *Ge'ulah* (redemption), *Refu'ah* (healing), *Birkat Ha Shanim* (blessing the years), *Kibbutz Galuyot* (ingathering of Exiles), *Tzedakah U' Mishpat* (justice and mercy), *Malshinim* (maligner), *Tzaddikim* (righteous ones), *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem), *Dovid* (David), *Shome'ah Tefillah* (hears our prayers), *Avodah* (worship), *Hoda'ah* (thanksgiving), *Shalom* (peace).

Figure 3.3: The Theology of the Lord's Prayer

*OUR FATHER WHO ART IN HEAVEN*

There is one God for all people, he is universal, and is approachable.

*HALLOWED BY THY NAME*

The phrase is a circumlocution to avoid saying and/or naming God  
God sanctified his own name once by glorifying his people.

*YOUR KINGDOM COME*

A recognition and expectation that God is about to act in human history;  
the new age is imminent.

*YOUR WILL BE DONE ON EARTH AS IN HEAVEN*

God's will is an act done only once;  
the divine plan is done on Earth and Heaven.

*FORGIVE OUR DEBTS AS WE FORGIVE OUR DEBTORS*

God's forgiveness is one continuous act;  
therefore, we must continually forgive others.

*LEAD US NOT INTO [Greek: *peirasmās*] TEMPTATION*  
*our final trial**DELIVER US FROM [the] EVIL*

The evil one

*GIVE US TODAY OUR [Greek: *epiousion*] BREAD*

For existence today  
Future bread (the messianic banquet)

For Luke the breaking of the bread plus forgiveness are continuing actions necessary for meeting our daily needs. Although Matthew's form of the Lord's Prayer reflects more of the original quality Luke's form reflects more of the original quantity. Our basis for interpreting both forms of the prayer is an analysis of the Greek, especially verb tenses, while reading it with a knowledge of first century Jewish prayer vocabulary. When we do this we find that the words are oblique; that is, not in the nominative case, and represent one short action. The verbs are in the *aorist* tense (no longer used in modern Greek) which denote an action without indicating whether that action is completed, continued, or repeated. The indefiniteness of the *aorist* tense is difficult for us to understand today,

especially with our emphasis on specificity of language and tense, but it was the ideal tense for Matthew and Luke because the theological interpretation of the Lord's Prayer was still evolving during *Sitz im Leben Evangelium* and *Sitz im Leben Kirche* in early second century Christianity.

## PARABLE OF THE MARRIAGE FEAST

The parable of the marriage feast, one of the best known parables, speaks to the qualities necessary to enter the kingdom of God. Before we examine the parable, we must remember the probability that the Evangelists have altered the wording of the parables taught by Jesus as well as the context in which they were originally spoken. Recognition of this circumstance requires us to observe the significant details which the Evangelists used as well as their motives for the transformation of the text. The Gospels were written by Christian believers to preserve their reminiscence, not a precise recitation, of things said and done by Jesus. Not only were the precise words and context of Jesus' speech as well as his actions unavailable to them their recollection of oral history about Jesus was also influenced by the prism of their faith and the needs of their intended audience.

The parable genre is a story from life. The parable of the marriage feast as found in Matthew and Luke is a story about a man/king who prepares for a great banquet/wedding feast but the invited guests all have excuses for not attending.<sup>48</sup> In the Lukan version when the servant reports the invited guests refuse to attend he is told to go out and bring in the disadvantaged so that the house will be full. Luke ends by having the master say,

*For I tell you, none of those men who were invited  
shall taste my banquet.*<sup>49</sup>

In Matthew's version the servants are killed by the invited guests and the king destroys the murderers and their city. He then instructs other servants to fill the hall with whomever, good or evil, they are able find on the streets. However, upon seeing the new guests he expels one who does not wear a wedding garment. Matthew ends by having the king say:

*For many are called, but few are chosen.*<sup>50</sup>

*The Gospel of Thomas: Logion 23* expands the meaning of Matthew 22:14:

48. RSV, Matthew 22:1-14; Luke 14:16-24.

49. RSV, Luke 14:24.

50. RSV, Matthew 22:14.

Jesus said, "I will choose you, one out of a thousand, and two out of ten thousand, and they will stand as a single one." <sup>51</sup>

The material for both versions comes from the Q source. In Matthew the parable occurs in Jerusalem during the final week before the crucifixion while in Luke it occurs during the journey to Jerusalem. Their distinctive features are:

Figure 3.4: Parable of the Marriage Feast	
Matthew 22:1-14	Luke 14:16-24
1. A king gives a marriage feast for his son.	1. A man gives a banquet and invites many people.
2. The servants are sent out twice.	2. One servant goes out and collects three refusals.
3. The excuses are given in the third person.	3. The excuses are given in the first person.
4. The servants are killed.	4. Servant is sent out twice.
5. The city is destroyed.	

The destruction of the city in Matthew is a metaphor for the fall of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. and represents an addition to the original parable. Luke has the servant go out twice. The first time he is to go out into the city to invite the poor, maimed, blind, and lame. The second time he is to go to the highways and hedges. Do these two groups represent the Jews and Gentiles? If so, this is an unusual motif for Luke. Both writers theologize at the end of the parable providing the reader with an interpretation that Christianity belongs to the Gentiles as well as the Jews. However, there is the admonition that simply being invited to the kingdom of God does not guarantee admission as one must work at being worthy for admittance. It is curious that Matthew has both the pious and evildoers invited to the feast. The theological statement being made is that at the final stage of God's kingdom we need to know that some who are initially called will be rejected.

The same parable appears in the *Gospel of Thomas*.

---

51. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 144.

*Jesus said, "A man had received visitors. And when he had prepared the dinner, he sent his servant to invite the guests. He went to the first one and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said, 'I have claims against some merchants. They are coming to me this evening. I must go and give them my orders. I ask to be excused from the dinner.' He went to another and said to him, 'My master has invited you.' He said to him, 'I have just bought a house and am required for the day. I shall not have any spare time.' He went to another and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said to him, 'My friend is going to get married, and I am to prepare the banquet. I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused from the dinner.' He went to another and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said to him, 'I have just bought a farm, and I am on my way to collect the rent. I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused.' The servant returned and said to his master, 'Those whom you invited to the dinner have asked to be excused.' The master said to his servant, 'Go outside to the streets and bring back those whom you happen to meet, so that they may dine.' Businessmen and merchants will not enter the Places of my Father." <sup>52</sup>*

The features of this version are: one servant is sent; there are four rejections; and the servant is sent one more time.

Although the Thomas form of the parable, especially its emphasis on buying and selling, reflects Gnosticism it does affirm Luke's version as the more primitive and probably closer to Jesus' own words. This is because in both Luke and Thomas we have one man, one banquet, and one servant.

Another sign that Luke's version is probably closer to the words spoken by Jesus is that it reflects his classical ethical framework. The excuses given by Luke's guests who represent Israel are reasonable and rational as they come directly from Deuteronomy. However, no matter how legalistically correct the excuses, Israel is not up to God's expectations. It is those whom Israel despises personified by the poor, maimed, blind, and lame and who in the old order of things have no chance of attending the banquet are the very ones called to enter the new age of the kingdom of God. Thus the parable foreshadows the realized eschatology of both Jesus and those who follow him.

## COMMAND TO BAPTIZE

We began Jesus' ministry with his baptism and will end our review of his

---

52. Willis Barnstone, *The Other Bible: Ancient Alternative Scriptures*, (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1984), 304-305.



ministry with his command to baptize others found only in Matthew: <sup>53</sup>

*Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him; but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age." <sup>54</sup>*

The first thing to recognize about this powerful command to baptize is that it is not *Sitz im Leben Jesu*. Jesus probably never said these words. Scholars believe it isn't even all *Sitz im Leben Evangelium*. Matthew probably didn't write all of these words. Part of it is definitely *Sitz im Leben Kirche* because the church was making a political as well as theological statement about the mission to the Gentiles. We may exegete the command to baptize as follows:

#### 1. *The Trinitarian or Triadic Formula: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit* <sup>55</sup>

The first problem is that this is the only place the triadic formula appears in the New Testament. If Jesus used it or if it was commonly known, understood, or believed why didn't it find its way into the other gospels or writings of this period? The answer is it isn't there because it didn't exist during the lifetime of the Evangelists. The second problem is that this is the only place it is used in connection with baptism. Both Acts and Paul state, *Baptize in the name of Jesus*. The gospel writers and Paul couldn't connect baptism with the triadic formula because the concept didn't exist during their lifetime. However it is accepted that the Trinitarian Formula was an early feature added to Matthew's Gospel as it appears in all extant copies of the text. Also Eusebius, Bishop of Caesarea (315-340), uses the formula in his text *Church History* and *Theophany* in the sense of: *Make disciples in my name--teaching them all I have told you.*

---

53. Although the command to baptize is implicit in Mark 16:16 it is not an explicit command. Also of significance is that there is no triadic formula

54. RSV, Matthew 28:16:20.

55. RSV, Matthew 28:19. *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.*

## II. *Go therefore and make disciples of all nations:*

The phrase *all nations* refers to the Gentiles. The Church was trying to legitimize the mission to the Gentiles which was still opposed by the Judaizers. We know this is *Sitz im Leben Kirche* because the practice of Christianity in the first third of the Book of Acts is strictly a Jewish phenomenon. Bringing the Gospel to the Gentiles as a mission of the church does not begin until Acts 10 when Peter tells those gathered at the house of Cornelius about Jesus. As Peter talked the Holy Spirit descended upon both the Jews and Gentiles. Thus, the initial mission to the Gentiles did not originate with the Church but is attributed to the work of the Holy Spirit.

## III. *I am with you always, to the close of the age:*

It is unlikely Jesus made this statement. During his lifetime and shortly thereafter it was the expectation of the disciples and first generation Christians that the end was near and would occur during their lifetime. However, with the passing of several generations the Church needed to find an explanation for why the present age had not ended. As there was no way for the church to explain the lack of knowledge of Jesus the Church avoided confronting this difficult issue by having him speak these words.

## IV. *Matthew's unique vocabulary:*

### A. *Close of the age:*

Appears four times in the New Testament all in Matthew.

### B. *Make disciples:*

Appears four times in the New Testament with three in Matthew.

### C. *I am with you to the end of the age:*

Appears only in Matthew.

### D. *Teach them; observe all I have commanded:*

Is a Deuteronomic feature not found in the other gospels.

A close reading of the text in the post-resurrection appearances sounds remarkably like the words of the Evangelists. The style, meter, and word selection are those of the Evangelists so the words of Jesus sound like those of the Evangelists. There are two explanations for this phenomena. The first is that Jesus never spoke these words; the verbal exchange never happened. The second and more provocative is that perhaps his appearances were non-verbal. If his countenance was so changed even his closest followers didn't recognize him unless he gave a specific sign it is quite possible he didn't communicate in human language at all.

The question is, if he did not use human language how did the disciples hear Jesus speak. One answer may be found if we equate his words to the disciples to the call narrative of Old Testament prophets which were often non-verbal yet were spoken to them. Gerhard von Rad states:

*It is impossible exactly to separate out visionary experiences which were genuinely ecstatic from other forms of the reception of revelation. Yahweh had assuredly more ways than one of communicating with the prophets, but it is hopeless to try to gain clear ideas about the physical side of the process. Isaiah says that Yahweh revealed himself in his ears (Isaiah 5:9; 22:14; so, too, Ezekiel (Ezekiel 9:1; 5), and elsewhere.*

[von Rad inserts the footnote: Yahweh uncovers or wakens the ear (I Samuel 9:15; Isaiah 50:40)] von Rad continues:

*Thus there were also revelations which took the form of an auditory experience and nothing more. The experience of receiving a word also occasionally attained a high degree of excitation.... On the other hand, we have good reason to believe that the prophets were also given inspiration in which no kind of change came over their ordinary consciousness, that is to say, in which the revelation was a mental process. This is probably so in the great majority of those cases in which the prophet speaks only of the word of Yahweh which had come to him. Nevertheless, even here the element of event which the revelation had for the prophet ought not to be overlooked. It is not simply a matter of mental perception, but of the coming of the word of Yahweh, and, consequently, even with this quite unsensational form of revelation the prophets never lost the feeling that there was something strange in the experience.<sup>56</sup>*

If we read von Rad's statement substituting disciples for prophets the words of Jesus during the resurrection appearances are tantamount to a call narrative. His

---

56. Gerhard von Rad, *The Message of the Prophets* (New York: Harper and Rowe, 1965), 46-47.

words would be *Sitz im Leben Kirche* material presented as his commission to the disciples to do the work of the church which had already developed during the transition from the Apostolic Age to that of the second century. The call by Jesus commissioning the disciples parallels Yahweh's call to the prophets. The call of Jesus to the disciples to make disciples of all nations and to baptize (Matthew 28:19-20), to preach the gospel (Mark 16:15), to forgive or retain sins and to feed my sheep (John 22:23; 15:17) replaces the prophetic call formulas

*The word of the Lord that came to...*

*Thus says the Lord...*

*Hear the word of the Lord...*

If this is the case the early church has the Evangelists preach what they believed Jesus would have said to them. This process does not invalidate the intent of Jesus as it is not necessary for the Evangelists to quote him verbatim to have valid scripture.

## THE HUMAN KNOWLEDGE OF JESUS

During the earliest period of the church, Jesus was perceived as fully human with fully human knowledge, not greater or lesser than other persons, although his persona was supplemented by his holiness. There was no question of divinity to cause confusion as an understanding of his divine nature was a slowly developing process. The matter of the relationship between Jesus' human and divine nature was first addressed at the Council of Chalcedon in 451 C.E..

Frederick J. Cwiekowski in *The Beginnings Of The Church* states:

*The Council of Chalcedon taught that the humanity and divinity of Jesus were united in a single person (hypostasis). Human attributes, such as emotions, knowledge, the various capacities which enable one to reflect, to remember, to plan for the future, to make choices and decisions, were ascribed to Jesus because of his human nature. Divine qualities, such as being eternally one with the Father, having the power to forgive sins or to be an agent of creation were ascribed to Jesus because of his divine nature.*<sup>57</sup>

---

57. Frederick J. Cwiekowski, *The Beginnings of the Church*, (New York: Paulist Press, 1988), 62.

The deduction to be drawn from the Council of Chalcedon is that the human knowledge of Jesus is beatific; his public ministry exemplified extraordinary virtue and excellence and is to be regarded as blessed. This does not mean that Jesus was infused by a special gift of perfection as there was imperfection in the human person Jesus. Jesus did not have perfect knowledge but rather his knowledge was experiential. We know this because Luke says:

*And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature,  
and in favor with God and man.*<sup>58</sup>

Another reason which indicates that his human knowledge was limited is that he accepted the apocalyptic belief that the end was near. After describing many signs in Matthew that would indicate the end is near Jesus says:

*Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away till  
all these things take place.*<sup>59</sup>

Jesus also says in Matthew:

*Truly, I say to you, there are some standing here who  
will not taste death before they see the Son of man coming in  
his kingdom.*<sup>60</sup>

However, his belief that the apocalypse was near is also contradicted in Matthew:

*But on that day and hour no one knows,  
not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only.*<sup>61</sup>

Although there are still some who want believe that his human knowledge was unlimited this position is sharply contradicted by the gospels. Even at the very end in the Garden of Gethsemane he prays:

*My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me;  
nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.*<sup>62</sup>

After finding the disciples asleep he prays again:

58. RSV, Luke 2:52

59. RSV, Matthew 23:24 = Mark 13:20.

60. RSV, Matthew 16:28.

61. RSV, Matthew 24:36; Mark 13:32.

62. RSV, Matthew 26:39.

*My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done.*<sup>63</sup>

When Jesus returned he again found them asleep.

*So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time saying the same words.*<sup>64</sup>

Mark describes his prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane in almost the same words:

*Abba, Father, all things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt.*<sup>65</sup>

As in Matthew when Jesus returns from praying the disciples had fallen asleep. Verse 39 tells us he went away and prayed saying the same words. Luke's phrasing is slightly different but the substance of the prayer is the same:

*Father, if thou art willing, remove this cup from me; nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.*<sup>66</sup>

In Matthew's version of the prayer there is no clear foreknowledge by Jesus of what was going to happen. The use of the preposition *if* opens the door to more than one outcome. In Mark, Jesus prays the same prayer twice, *all things are possible in thee* which again leaves the door open for more than one outcome. Although more theologized Luke's version still includes the preposition *if*. There is consensus among all three Evangelists that even in the Garden of Gethsemane Jesus did not know with absolute certainty what was going to happen to him.

All three of the gospel writers elevate the cup to a place of prominence in the prayer. It is important that we understand the symbolic significance of the cup in the Old Testament so that we may place its use in the prayer in context. In the Old Testament *cup* was symbolic of God's anger against those who opposed or blocked his plans of salvation for his people. However in John 18:11 and Mark 10:38 *cup* seems to take on a general meaning of a fearsome and difficult task. Both ideas may be combined because in both the Old and New Testament the sorrowful effects of sin, which Jesus is enduring, are the means of purification and redemption.

We must also remember that in Matthew as well as in Mark and Luke the prayer is not *Sitz im Leben Jesu* but rather these words, a reconstruction of what Jesus

63. RSV, Matthew 26:42.

64. RSV, Matthew 26:44.

65. RSV, Mark 14:36

66. RSV, Luke 22:42.

might have been praying, were put on his lips by the Evangelists. The source for the Garden of Gethsemane scene is usually considered to be Peter. As the scene is so humiliating for the disciples it is unlikely that it is a fabrication. Also, as all three accounts have the disciples falling asleep it is obvious at least portions of the account are an imaginative reconstruction. Highly eschatological the prayer of Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane is the climax of his earthly ministry.

The key to understanding the Passion for the ancient church was the obedience of Jesus to the will of the Father found in the Lord's Prayer. The Evangelists make a theological statement in their versions of the Lord's Prayer: the obedience of Jesus to the Father's will contrasted against the slumbering disciples who were unaware that the hour had come.

## THE BIRTH OF CHRISTIANITY

Coupled with the question of the human knowledge of Jesus is the question of whether or not he intended to start a new religion. It is obvious his followers during his lifetime did not envision a new religion as they saw Jesus as a leader of one of many reform movements within Judaism. After his death the early Christian community saw themselves as a sect within Judaism as they kept the Torah and prayed at the Temple. However, they were called *The Way* and *The Nazarene* as they proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, believed he had risen from the dead, and lived according to the principles of his teaching. They accepted the leadership of the apostles, had their own prayers, broke bread together, had fellowship, had voluntary community property, and practiced the baptismal rite of initiation. They remained a sect within Judaism until 70 C.E. when the Temple and Jerusalem were destroyed. As the Christian sect was apocalyptic the Jewish leaders believed the sect had conspired with the Zealots to start the disastrous revolt and as a consequence the Christian sect was expelled from Judaism.

However, tension and animosity between the Christian sect and other Jews in the Temple had been long standing. Chapter 6 of Acts begins:

*Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, the Hellenists murmured against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.* <sup>67</sup>

The council appointed Stephen, Philip, Prochorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolaus to serve those in need. Soon after some in the Synagogue of the Freedmen disputed Stephen and falsely accused him of blasphemy. Stephen's defense so enraged the assembly when he looked to heaven and said, *Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing at the right hand of God*<sup>68</sup> they

---

67. RSV, Acts 6:1.

68. RSV, Acts 7:56.

rushed him out of the city and stoned him to death.

Acts 15 recounts the Council of Jerusalem. Paul and Barnabas were preaching to the Gentiles but the Gentiles were told by other Jews from Judea they could not be saved unless they were circumcised. There was great dissension about the necessity of circumcision for salvation and Paul and Barnabas were sent to Jerusalem to meet with the apostles and elders. The issue was decided when Peter rose and said:

*Brethren, you know that in the early days God made choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles should hear the word of the Gospel and believe. And God who knows the heart bore witness to them, giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us; and he made no distinction between us and them, but cleansed their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you make trial of God by putting a yoke upon the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.* <sup>69</sup>

One way to understand the tension between traditional Judaism and Jewish Christians is not to see them as different political and social groups (Hellenists and Gentiles verses Hebrews and Palestinians) but rather by using scripture as a model to illustrate the relationship between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Old Testament = Promise      New Testament = Fulfillment

In this model the Old Testament is the basic scripture while the New Testament is comprised of sectarian writings which add a new revelation to traditional Jewish understanding in the manner of an addendum. The crux of the problem is that Judaism accepted Jesus as a man of both supreme wisdom and as a prophet. However, his life and ministry did not fulfill the promise of a Davidic messiah who by military force would unite Israel, expel the Roman occupation forces, liberate Palestine making it a theocracy headed by a king, and convert all nations to Judaism (the Yahwistic *good life*). Without Davidic militarism the Jews could not accept Jesus as the Messiah. If Jesus was not the Messiah his teachings were heresy and he posed a severe threat to the stability of the established religious order. Judaism was already splintered into many sects and was under scrutiny by Roman authorities as the source of possible dissidents and revolutionaries.

We cannot consider the issue of whether Jesus intended to start a new religion without consideration of how such a new religion might be organized. We know from the Gospels, Acts, the letters of Paul, and historians of the time that even before being expelled from Judaism the Christian sect had a loose confederation

---

69. RSV, Matthew 15:7-11.



of apostles and elders. This was sufficient for Jerusalem and Palestine but as the mission to the Gentiles progressed it became obvious a more formal organization was necessary. This was accomplished by the development of the roles of elders, presbyters, priests, and eventually bishops who were responsible for the governance of specific local areas. As Peter was crucified in Rome and Rome was the center of the empire as early as the beginning of the second century conflicting interpretations of scripture and differences in the burgeoning body of Christian theology were submitted to the bishop of Rome for his advice. In time the bishop of Rome's word became authoritative and quasi-binding on the other bishops.<sup>70</sup>

## THE PETRINE MINISTRY

The relationship between the bishop of Rome and his authority to speak relating to matters of scripture and doctrine leads us to a consideration of *The Confession of Peter*<sup>71</sup> and the papacy. Although the Gospel of John reports that Andrew was the first disciple to recognize Jesus' messiahship it occurs too early in Jesus's ministry to be accurate.<sup>72</sup> Even in Matthew, Peter's confession is in all likelihood misplaced and occurred nearer to the time of the crucifixion as he was talking about what was going to happen.<sup>73</sup> Regardless of the timing the Petrine ministry is based on Matthew with Peter's answer to the question, *Who do you say I am?*<sup>74</sup> Simon Peter replied,

*You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*<sup>75</sup>

And Jesus answered him:

*Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood  
has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.  
And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church.*<sup>76</sup>

---

70. The Pope's claim to be the *vicar of Christ* on earth and head of the whole Christian Church was rejected by the churches of the East in 1054 and by Anglicanism and Protestant churches at the Reformation. Papal authority over the church in France was regularly questioned between the 13<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Uniate Churches of the East are in communion with Rome but maintain their own order and practice. Some Anglo-Catholics, Autocephalic Independent Catholic Churches, and other supporters of ecumenism would allow the Pope a modified authority of honor, but not jurisdiction, as a center of unity for the world church which is a status similar to that of the Archbishop of Canterbury.

71. RSV, Matthew 16:13-23.

72. RSV, John 1:41.

73. JBC, IV, M.

74. RSV, Matthew 16:16-9.

75. RSV, Matthew 16:16.

76. RSV, Matthew 16:17-18. Peter's original name was Symeon in Aramaic which is

Jesus then says:

*I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.* <sup>77</sup>

These passages have been incorrectly interpreted to mean that Peter was the first pope of the Roman Catholic Church.<sup>78</sup> Peter was the most prominent of the twelve disciples during the ministry of Jesus and was also the leader of the Christian community after the crucifixion although later he would share the leadership role with James and Paul.

Did Jesus actually speak these words? Many scholars deny that Jesus could have spoken these specific words. There are three reasons given:

1. They have no parallel in any other gospel.
2. Throughout his ministry Jesus showed no interest in ecclesiastical organization.
3. Apart from Matthew 18:17 the word *ekklesia* does not appear anywhere in the four gospels.<sup>79</sup>

If we are to understand Peter's designation as *rock* in Matthew we must put aside contemporary Christian misconceptions; we must see this passage in its *Sitz im Leben Jesu*. These misconceptions are:

---

Simeon in Greek. Jesus gave him the Aramaic name Cephas which translated to Greek means Peter. Peter comes from the Greek *petros* which is the masculinized form of the feminine noun *petra* which means rock and represents the Aramaic *Kepha*. The Greek form *Kephas* appears once in the Gospel of John, four times in I Corinthians, and four times in Galatians. The only time Paul used *Petros* is in Galatians 2:7-8 in the phrase, *upon this rock*.

77. RSV, Matthew 18:19 cf. John 20:23.

78. The Eastern Orthodox Churches, Anglican Communion, and Independent Catholic Churches view these passages as the beginning of apostolic succession while Protestants deny the legitimacy of both the office of pope and apostolic succession.

79. Although *ekklesia* is translated as the word *church* this is misleading. In Greek *Ekklesia* by definition means "the assembly of the people" and is taken from *ekkletos* "summoned" which in turn is taken from the verb *ekkalein* "to summon; call out." Twenty-first century Christians may look back and perceive the followers of Jesus as the assembly of the people who he had summoned or called out; however, such summoning or calling out of the assembly in no way represented those called as a new religion much less a Christian church in the sense of our understanding of Christian denominations.

1. The word *church* did not have the same meaning in the time of Jesus as in contemporary Christianity. Jesus was not speaking of an hierarchal organization separate from Judaism but rather that small group of people which were centered around him. The Aramaic words he would have used for group, *qah'la* or *k'nishta*, in no way denote a church or administrative organization.
2. Peter is given a commission to do specific work: the keys to the kingdom of heaven will enable him to *bind or loose on earth* and it shall be the same in heaven. Jesus says nothing about the need or right to convey his authority and role to successors.
3. The power to *bind or loose* is not exclusively given to Peter. In Matthew 18:18 Jesus gives all of the disciples the same power.<sup>80</sup>
4. Form criticism has made clear that the gospels were at first short essays or stories which were remembered, cited, and used as single units. Each of gospel writers had to weave a cogent story from many fragments. It is obvious each did this in his own way. Thus, specific words attributed to Jesus may fall within a range from actual words to paraphrase to creations created by the Evangelists or the early church. Their context and location within the larger body of the gospel may not necessarily be historically accurate. This fluidity of the words of Jesus as well as the gospel text in general obscures his specific intent and any conclusions drawn are tentative and speculative at best.

With these thoughts in mind we are ready to exegete these passages. According to Matthew the conversation occurs at Caesarea Philippi which is the modern city of Baniyas located just north of the Sea of Galilee which was founded by Philip the Tetrarch who was the brother of Herod Antipas. The question to the disciples has the hard edge of a challenge. In both Matthew and Mark, Simon Peter answers that Jesus is the Messiah. However, Matthew adds, the son of the living God.<sup>81</sup> Although this additional title for Jesus does not mean Matthew understood the full sonship of Jesus in the Trinitarian sense it does reflect a developing theology of his special relationship to the Father within the Christian community which would make Mark the more original version.

Verses 17-20 in Matthew have no parallel in Mark or Luke. Raymond E. Brown in the *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 23, 1961 in a minority opinion argues that these verses have been removed from their original context which was post-resurrectional. If this is the case they can be compared to the post-resurrectional appearance to Peter where Peter is given a special position:

---

80. Context 18:15-20 (reproving one's brother).

81. *RSV*, Matthew 16:16.

When they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him, "Feed my lambs." A second time he said to him, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" He said to him, "Yes, Lord; you know that I love you." He said to him the third time, "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" And he said to him, "Lord, you know everything; you know that I love you." Jesus said to him, "Feed my sheep. Truly, truly, I say to you, when you were young, you girded yourself and walked where you would; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish to go." (This he said to show by what death he was to glorify God). And after this he said to him, "Follow me".<sup>82</sup>

There are three thoughts combined in John 21:17: the name Simon Bar-Jona to identify Peter and two statements about the source of revelation of the messiahship of Jesus. In Hebrew/Aramaic *Bar* means son of so Jesus identifies Peter using the context of his father, Jona.<sup>83</sup> Jesus then states that Peter's knowledge did not have a human source but rather was revealed by the Father in heaven. The two statements about recognizing Jesus as the Messiah are quite interesting as they demonstrate the early Christian community did not perceive that this revelation was anthropocentric; that is, by human reason and initiation but rather had a divine source.

Next, Jesus gives Simon the name Peter as well as his commission. As there is no theological justification in first century Judaism for Jesus to give Simon a new name there are many scholars who view this passage as the work of a later editor to justify the Petrine ministry and apostolic succession *Sitz im Leben Kirche*. However, it is also to be recognized that no other name change in the New Testament is explained as is Simon Peter.

With Peter as rock Jesus then says *on this rock I will build my church*. There is no question that Jesus intended for Peter to be the rock of foundation upon which the *ekklesia*, the assembly of followers, would find leadership but he did not specify in exactly what sense he meant foundation. Again, we must remember the word *ekklesia* does not appear in any other place in the gospels.<sup>84</sup> Therefore most scholars believe that it is highly unlikely Jesus used this word as he taught in Aramaic and not Greek. As with the phrase, son of the living God, there are many scholars who believe this is again the early Christian community theologizing the words of Jesus from the perspective of their own *Sitz im Leben*.

82. RSV, John 21:15-19.

83. cf. Gospel According to the Hebrews: has *Son of John*.

84. RSV, Matthew 18:17.

Verse 19 is comprised of the two inter-related gifts Jesus gives to Peter. The first, the keys of the kingdom, are an obvious sign of his authority and leadership and are taken from Isaiah 22:22 when Shebna receives the keys of the royal palace. Seen in this light Peter is the master of the palace of the *ekklesia*. The phrase kingdom of heaven in this sense does not mean eternal afterlife or the age to come but rather the community established by the reign of the Father on earth. The power to bind and loose is ambiguous, obscure, and is not part of the general pool of biblical language. In rabbinical Judaism to bind and loose signifies rabbinical decisions. To bind means to make a decision that imposes an obligation on a person or group while to loose means a decision which removes an obligation. With bind and loose we again have a phrase which signifies an exercise of authority but Jesus does not spell out the specific nature and use of this authority. We find a major difference in the bestowal of these gifts to all present in John:

*And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."* <sup>85</sup>

Peter was the leader of the apostolic Church as documented in the first third of the Book of Acts accepting the commission to take the lead among his fellow disciples following the instructions of Jesus to strengthen his brethren. Peter's later sharing of power and leadership with James and Paul clearly indicates he was not above or greater than them in either an hierarchal or spiritual sense but rather all three were co-equal leaders. The later development of the papacy by the Christian community is not supported by scripture but this in no way takes away the arduous position of basic leadership exercised by Peter in the crucial days of the fledgling Christian sect.

Clearly from the exegesis of scripture Jesus did not intend for Peter to form a hierarchal administrative organization or the institution of the papacy. If Peter had held such an office by the time of the Council of Jerusalem in 49 C.E., sixteen years after the death of Jesus, it is not recorded in Acts 15. Also there is no documentation during the lifetime of Paul who was beheaded by Nero in 67 or 68 C.E. that there was such an organization or office or it would have been recorded in Paul's letters.

It is not until the third successor to Peter, Clement of Rome, writing to the Corinthians in 96 C.E. that there is any documented mention of the primacy of the bishop of Rome. The Corinthians were near schism and Clement addressed four issues in his letter: 1) ecclesiastical jurisdiction, 2) apostolic succession, 3) recognition of Roman primacy, and 4) the distinction between the hierarchy and laity in divine worship. It is significant to note that when Clement writes of the recognition of Roman primacy he does so in the context of the bishop of Rome

---

85. RSV, John 22-23.

being *primus inter pares*, first among his equals, and does not equate primacy with a position of superiority or the papacy. Clement writes:

*Special functions are assigned to the high priest;  
a special office is imposed upon the priests; and special  
ministrations fall to the Levites. The layman is bound by  
the rules laid down for the laity....*<sup>86</sup>

It is clear from his use of the terms high priest and Levites that at the time Clement was writing, which was more than sixty years after the death of Jesus, the church had not created its own organizational structure but was a hybrid between the traditional structure of Judaism and Christian holy orders. Clement does not see the bishop of Rome, Peter's successor, differently from other bishops. Although the bishop of Rome is responsible for certain functions Clement clearly recognizes that all bishops are of the same order. If his reference to the high priest is to the bishop of Rome he would understand its meaning in the Jewish sense: one selected to lead for a short period of time, one whose word was not binding on others, and one who would pass his leadership role to another returning to his original position and duties. It is clear that the early church fully recognized the unique contribution of Peter and gave primacy to the bishop of Rome but in no way ascribed to Peter or his successors the office of pope.

We will close this chapter with a short review of the use of the term *catholic* to describe the early church as both universal and orthodox. It is this designation which sets the church apart from both Judaism and the non-canonical Christian movements of the second century. The term *catholic* is first found in the letter of Ignatius (Bishop of Antioch 110-117 C.E.) to the church in Smyrna where he declared:

*Wherever Jesus Christ is, there is the Catholic Church.*<sup>87</sup>

The use of the term developed slowly and is next recorded in a letter (ca. 155 C.E.) from the church in Smyrna describing the martyrdom of Polycarp.<sup>88</sup> In the letter

86. Colman J. Berry, ed., "Pope St. Clement: The Epistle to the Corinthians, c. 96" in *Readings in Church History*, vol. 1, (New York: Newman Press, 1960), 18. The use of the term "Pope" in the title is misleading as this letter is known in scholarship as I Clement. Berry's title and designation of Clement as Pope is his own creation. Berry's abbreviated version of the letter is taken from *The Epistles of St. Clement of Rome and St. Ignatius of Antioch*, trans. James A Kleist, S.J. ("Ancient Christian Writers"; Westminster, Maryland: The Newman Press, 1946), I, 9-46.

87. Kenneth Scott Luterette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 1, (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1975), 130.

88. Kenneth Scott Luterette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 1, (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1975), 130.

*Catholic* is used twice meaning *universal* but once the connotation is definitely *orthodox*. By the end of the second century the term had become technical meaning both universal and orthodox.<sup>89</sup>

As a consequence of the claims and teachings of the Gnostics, the Marcionites, and the Montanists, those Christians who considered themselves orthodox had to find a way to determine and make unmistakably clear exactly what Jesus had taught and the truth of the gospels. They utilized three methods:

1. By ascertaining lines of bishops who were in direct and uninterrupted succession from the apostles and could, therefore, be assumed to be transmitters of the apostolic teachings.
2. By determining which writings were written by the apostles or clearly contained their teachings and bringing them together in a fixed and authoritative collection.
3. By formulating as clearly and briefly as possible the teachings of the apostles so that Christians, even the ordinary unlettered ones among them, might know what the Christian faith is, especially on the points in which the Catholic Church differed from Gnostics, the Marcionites, and the Montanists.

Gnosticism originated late in the first century C.E. and spread from Syria and Egypt to the Greco-Roman world. Theologically syncretistic in character it claimed to hold a hidden knowledge, *gnosis*, that would bring salvation. It affirmed a complete antithesis of spirit and matter with the soul being the unfortunate prisoner of the body and postulated a primordial catastrophe in heaven when the original man fell and his being was shattered into a myriad of fragments. These elements were seized upon by demons as nuclei to create a world out of the chaos and darkness and they still survive as the souls of men. The supreme deity takes pity on these imprisoned sparks of light and sends a savior to overcome the demons and release the captive spirits. One's means of salvation was through learning the esoteric and secret knowledge held by the sect.

In 144 C.E. Marcion constructed a list of contradictions of numerous passages in the Old Testament and statements in the Apostolic writings and approached the presbyters with a request for an explanation. When their reply failed to satisfy him he founded a new sect, predicated on his work *Antitheses*, which continued until the Middle Ages. In *Antithesis* he affirmed the existence of two gods: one, an inferior being who was the creator of the Jews and the other the Supreme God first revealed through Jesus Christ. To support his beliefs Marcion produced a canon of Christian scriptures comprising ten of the Pauline Epistles, with the omission of anything that seemed to favor Judaism, and a truncated text of Luke leaving out

---

89. Kenneth Scott Lauerette, *A History of Christianity*, vol. 1, (New York: Harper & Rowe, 1975), 130.

similarly anything that did not agree with his theology. His dualism was not that of one good and one evil god but of a legalistically righteous demiurge, harshly and cruelly demanding obedience to his law, and of a forgiving Father revealing himself in loving action instead of in hate and retribution.

Montanus is said to have been a priest and convert from the goddess Cybele and first came to notice between 156-157 C.E. (Epiphanius) or 172 C.E. (Eusebius). He was famous for his *transports* in which he uttered strange sayings and as a consequence was considered a prophet. Two women, Maximilla and Priscilla, were associated with him and the main impetus of the movement seems to have derived from these prophetesses. The basis of the Montanist teaching was the claim to a fuller revelation of the divine will, in virtue of their inspiration by the Spirit, than that possessed by the Church at large. The promises of Jesus at the Lord's supper that he would send the *Paraclete* (Holy Spirit) had now been fulfilled and the age of the *Paraclete* had dawned. The Montanists believed that the *Paraclete* was speaking directly through Montanus, Maximilla, and Priscilla who were its passive instruments not unlike the Holy Spirit speaking through those who had been given the gift of tongues.

It is the response to the heresies of the Gnostics, Marcionites, and Montanists which melds the loose confederation of orthodox Christian communities into one body creating the Christian Church. From this time until the Reformation all those who called themselves Christian bore the orthodox marks of the Catholic Church: apostolic succession of the episcopate, the integrity of the New Testament, and the statement of faith and belief known as the Apostles' Creed.

## SUMMARY

God's plan for Jesus begins with John the Baptist. Each gospel writer views John the Baptist in his own way; however, there is little doubt that John the Baptist baptized Jesus. Not only were John and Jesus of the same family John's ministry of calling for repentance and forgiveness also provided the base for Jesus' ministry.

The ethics which Jesus taught, similar to those of John, are based on the premise that God is about to do something imminently radical in human history. The ethical teachings reversed the existing social, political, and religious values which gave privilege to a few so that the disadvantaged became equal.

Jesus gave us the Lord's Prayer so that we might pray directly to the Father. The central feature of the prayer is forgiveness which is the paramount value of a Christian life. It is based on the form of traditional Jewish prayer and in many respects is a summary of the *Shemoneh Esrei*.

According to the gospels Jesus did not intend to start a new religion. He was born, lived, and died a Jew fully believing that all the means of salvation were to be found in Judaism. After the Jewish Christians were expelled from Judaism and Christianity moved into the Hellenistic world holy orders were instituted with the bishop of Rome eventually being designated *primus inter pares*.



## Chapter 4

---

# The Passion of Jesus: God's Will or Conspiracy to Commit Murder?

## THE PASSION NARRATIVES

The Gospel of John begins with the arrest of Jesus which was the original event which began what is known as the Passion narrative while the synoptic Gospels begin with the plot by the chief priests and scribes to kill him. We can determine that John is the earlier form for two reasons:

1. It does not have many of the events found in the synoptic Gospels.
2. According to John, Judas is identified as the traitor at the Lord's supper. In the synoptic Gospels Judas is not identified as the traitor to the disciples until he kisses Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane.<sup>1</sup>

A careful reading of John shows that he had a source or source materials to work from which were an older and shorter form. The Passion narratives as we read them are not an actual account of events but rather a hypothetical reconstruction of the betrayal, trial, and crucifixion of Jesus.

This reconstruction has several events after the arrest of Jesus which were not in the source text; that is M and L, and John's unknown sources: the trial before the Sanhedrin as found in Matthew and Mark, the denial of Peter, the release of Barabbas, and the mockery of the soldiers. We know these events were added by

---

1. Mark and Luke do not identify Judas until the Garden of Gethsemane. Matthew 26:25 states: *Judas, who betrayed him, said, Is it I, Master? He said to him, You have said so.* This is not to be construed as a general revelation to the other disciples that Judas will betray Jesus. Rather Matthew adds an expansion of his own in which Jesus expressly discloses to Judas alone that he knows who the traitor is. This is a step in the development that is completed in the account of John.

the gospel writers both because of their linguistic differences and because events appear at different times and in different locations in the different gospels. If they were original events the writers would have demonstrated consistency of time and location. As we do not know exactly when or where the original account was written we do not know to what degree oral history was changed.

The writing of the Passion narratives served four purposes. The first is to show that Jesus was innocent of the Roman charges against him. The second reason is to place the blame for Jesus' trial, conviction, and crucifixion on the Jews. The third purpose is a political one to convince the early Christian community that they had no quarrel with the Romans. Although it was the Roman legal machine which carried out the mechanics of the process the driving force was the hatred and fear of Jesus held by the Jewish religious leaders. The fourth purpose was a theological one to answer the questions: why did Jesus die and why didn't God intervene. The answer is that it was not God's will to intervene. Jesus had to die to fulfill Old Testament prophesy which was to bear unjust humiliation, torture, ridicule at the foot of the cross, and a dishonorable death:

*Let us lie in wait for the righteous man, because he is inconvenient to us and opposes our actions; he reproaches us for sins against the law, and accuses us of sins against our training. He professes to have knowledge of God, and calls himself a child of the Lord. He became to us a reproof of our thoughts; the very sight of him is a burden to us because his manner of life is unlike that of others, and his ways are strange. We are considered by him as something base, and he avoids our ways as unclean; he calls the last end of the righteous happy and boasts that God is his father. Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God's son he will help him and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries. Let us test him with insult and torture, that we may find out how gentle he is, and make trial of his forbearance. Let us condemn him to a shameful death, for, according to what he says, he will be protected.<sup>2</sup>*

Therefore, the Passion narratives are to show that Jesus is innocent of Roman charges against him and to transform his death from a purely human act to a theological necessity. As such, the narratives are not a psychological study of Jesus. In fact Jesus speaks little in the synoptic Gospels and when we hear his words in John we hear them in the style of the Evangelist.

The four extra-biblical sources which comment on the death of Jesus do not add to what is found in the scripture:

---

2. RSV, Wisdom 2:12-20.

1. There is a reference to his death in the Babylonian Talmud but it is probably from an older source. It states that Jesus was put to death by the Jewish leaders as a false prophet.
2. Flavius Josephus in *Antiquities* states that Pilate's actions were based on what the Jewish leaders demanded; however, the common people still loved Jesus.
3. Tacitus (150 C.E.) places Pilate in the reign of Tiberious but is not an independent statement as he had other sources.
4. A letter of advice from Mara Bar-Sacapon (Assyrian 2nd century) to his son in Odessa asks the question: *What good did it do to kill Socrates, Pythagoras, and Jesus? Their countries have been destroyed but their ideas live on.*

## ENTRY INTO JERUSALEM

The key to understanding the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem according to John is found in the phrase *the next day*.<sup>3</sup> The next day is a remembrance back to *six days before the Passover Jesus came to Bethany*.<sup>4</sup> Six days before Passover minus the next day equals five days before the Passover. Passover begins on Friday night therefore Jesus entered Jerusalem on Sunday. However, the text may be read differently. If the count is inclusive from Friday, the next day becomes Monday so Jesus could have entered on either Sunday or Monday.

Mark's understanding of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem differs from John's version. Mark has Jesus both curse the fig tree and cleanse the Temple on the second day. However, the fig tree does not wither away until the third day. On the fourth day Mark states that it is two days before the Passover. Mark then has the first day of Unleavened Bread and the sacrifice of the Passover lamb on the fifth day Jesus is in Jerusalem.

Not only is Mark's account different from John there is a serious problem when one examines the relevant verses as the days when specific events occurred do not add up to the proper number. Mark begins chapter 14 by stating, *It was two days before the Passover and the feast of Unleavened Bread*.<sup>5</sup> However, in 14:12 he states, *And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb*. The problem is that if it was two days before the Passover on the fourth day then it cannot be the first day of Unleavened Bread on the fifth day.

---

3. RSV, John 12:12.

4. RSV, John 12:1.

5. RSV, Mark 14:1.

Figure 4.1: Mark's Chronology  
Entry into Jerusalem until Passover

A. Jesus enters Jerusalem (11:11).....	Day 1
B. Curses fig tree/Cleanses the Temple (11:14; 11:15-17).....	Day 2
C. Fig tree withered away (11:20).....	Day 3
D. Now it was two days before the Passover (14:1).....	Day 4
E. And on the first day of Unleavened Bread when they sacrificed the Passover lamb (14:12).....	Day 5

If it was two days before the Passover on the fourth day then  
it cannot be the first day of Unleavened Bread on the fifth day

Another way to determine when Jesus entered Jerusalem is to compare the chronology of the Feast of Weeks with the Gospels.<sup>6</sup> The Feast of Weeks is a harvest festival but is also known by several different names as found in Jeremiah 5:24, Numbers 28:26 (*Day of First Fruits*), Exodus 34:22 (*Feast of Wheat*), and Leviticus 23:17. The date was set as the fiftieth day

*From the morrow after the Sabbath, from the day that you  
brought the sheaf of the wave offering.*<sup>7</sup>

This means that the Feast of Weeks would always fall on Sunday which was the day adhered to by the Sadducees and the literalistic Karaites.<sup>8</sup> This parallels the

6. RSV, Exodus 23:16.

7. RSV, Leviticus 23:15.

8. The Karaites known in Hebrew as *Kra'im* can be traced back to the misrepresentation of the teachings of Antigonus Ish Socho (231 B.C.E.) by two of his students Tzadok and Baytuss. From these false teachings came a movement called Tzedukim which Josephus described as a secularist movement believing only in the here and now. With the success of the Maccabees and rededication of the Temple the Tzedukim could no longer be atheists. Therefore they claimed to adhere only to the written law of the Bible and became known as *Kra'im*. Their interpretation of the written law was free and varied which set the *Kra'im* in opposition to mainstream Judaism. This distinction was recognized by Czar Nicholas I in 1853 when he exempted the settlement of *Kra'im* in the Crimea from anti-Jewish laws and the Nazi's in 1942 when they declared the Crimean Peninsula to be *Judenrein* (free of any

Christian day of Pentecost although the *morrow after the Sabbath* which began the count of days was the *first day of the week* which would make it Easter Day rather than the Day of the Sheaf. Therefore according to the rabbis this sabbath fell in the week of the *Feast of Unleavened Bread* which made it the first day of the feast which always fell on the fiftieth day of the month of Nisan.<sup>9</sup>

Greek speaking Jews called the feast the Day of Pentecost *the fiftieth day* as the culmination of the seven weeks of harvest. However, working backward from this day and adjusting for the difference between the Jewish and Christian Sabbath we cannot be certain of the precise day Jesus entered Jerusalem

It is not possible to determine exactly when Jesus entered Jerusalem because John can be read two different ways, Mark's scenario is different from John, and Matthew and Luke dilute the clarity by having Jesus cleanse the Temple and enter the city on the same day. Matthew also has Jesus curse the fig tree and it withers on the same day. However, we can conclude Jesus was in Jerusalem within a week of his crucifixion.

We do not have much information about that last week in Jerusalem from the gospels and there is no independent information from Jewish or Roman sources. Although different in details all four gospels connect Jesus' entry into Jerusalem with an ass or colt. The origin of these accounts is Zechariah:

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud,  
O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you;  
triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass,  
on a colt the foal of an ass .<sup>10</sup>*

According to Matthew 21:1-2 Jesus asks the disciples go to Bethphage, find an ass and a colt, and bring them both back. In Mark 11:2 Jesus sends two disciples to Bethphage to bring back a colt which has not been ridden. Luke 19:28-31 parallels Mark. The theological purpose of the colt that has never been ridden is that it is a symbol that the new age has come in Jesus. John 12:14 cites Jesus finding the ass and sitting on it as he begins to speak to the crowd.

The synoptic Gospels and John present different explanations as to those who entered Jerusalem with Jesus. In all of the synoptic Gospels the disciples placed garments on the animal for Jesus to sit upon and some also placed them on the road. None of these texts states exactly how many people entered Jerusalem with Jesus but each may be read as the disciples or some part of the twelve plus others (Matthew 21:8-9, Mark 11:8-9, Luke 19:37). Although Matthew uses the word *crowd*, Mark uses the words *many* and *others*, and Luke the phrase *the whole multitude of the disciples*. Most probably the majority were made up of the twelve

---

Jews). The Nazi's did not consider the *Kra'im* living there to be Jews.

9. *RSV*, Mark 16:2.

10. *RSV*, Zechariah 9:9.

disciples while others stood on the side of the road as if watching a parade with perhaps a few joining the entourage.

John 12:14 states that Jesus found the ass and sat upon it. There is no mention of clothing for Jesus to sit upon or clothing spread on the road. Verses 12-13 clearly state that a crowd came from Jerusalem cutting palm branches to bring with them. As John is the only writer to specify palm branches while Matthew has *cut branches from the trees* and Mark has *leafy branches from the fields* we may question whether or not palms were available in Jerusalem during the time of Jesus. However there is documentation palms were found in Jerusalem during the time of I and II Maccabees (110-63 B.C.E.).<sup>11</sup> Therefore, it may be presumed John's recitation of palms is accurate especially if the *tree branches* in Matthew allude to palms. However, there is no other documentation of palm trees until a second century C.E. letter from the revolutionary Simon Ben-Koseb, who was renamed Bar-Kokhba (Son of a Star) by Rabbi Akiva<sup>12</sup> who thought he was the Messiah that he had to go outside Jerusalem to find palms.

The synoptic Gospels and John also disagree as to how Jesus spent the week before the Passover meal. The synoptic Gospels present a scenario in which Jesus teaches and moves about in public from the time he enters Jerusalem until his arrest. John relates that Jesus retreats into hiding immediately after entering the city. Since this entrance is only one of many times Jesus visits Jerusalem, John's view of a week with Jesus in hiding is quite possible. The nature of Judas's betrayal in the synoptic Gospels supports these writers' position while his betrayal in John supports John's position. In the former Jesus is in public view mingling with the people in Jerusalem the week before Passover and Judas identifies him with a kiss. John portrays a much more reclusive Jesus until he is betrayed by Judas at the Lord's supper.

To understand the hosannas of the crowd we will make a comparison of the texts as well as place them in historical perspective. Hosanna is a transliteration of the Hebrew *hosia' na'* and means *Save us, we beseech thee*. In Psalm 118, where it forms part of the *Hallel*,<sup>13</sup> a pilgrim who was rejected is now recognized to be a righteous man. He enters the Temple to thank Yahweh for his goodness and is greeted by the priests as coming in the name of Yahweh. Verse 25 was sung in the liturgy of the Feast of Tabernacles by the priests during their procession around the altar. When they did so the congregation waved their *lulav*<sup>14</sup> to purify the

11. *RSV*, I and II Maccabees, 122-174.

12. Rosemary Goring, *The Wordsworth Dictionary of Beliefs and Religions* (Ware: Wordsworth Reference, 1995), 58.

13. The *Hallel* are psalms of praise to God that are recited on Jewish holidays. The specific psalms in the *Hallel* are numbers 113-118.

14. The palm branch used during the festival of Sukkot which is one of three pilgrimage festivals recalling booth like structures in which the Jews dwelled during their wandering in the desert.

sanctuary which consisted of branches of myrtle, willow, and a palm leaf.<sup>15</sup> These branches themselves were sometimes called hosanna. In Jewish post-biblical texts hosanna is connected with messianic hopes; the man coming in the name of Yahweh is understood as the Messiah. But this interpretation seems to be much older. The combination of the *lulav* and the *hosanna* would best explain the people's greeting of Jesus's entrance into Jerusalem as the Son of David.

The concept of the Son of David originated during the Babylonian Exile. The concept of the Messiah originated after the Exile and return to Jerusalem when the expected new Davidic Kingdom failed to materialize. Subsequently, eschatological hope had to be projected into the future in the person of a deliverer or Messiah.

Figure 4.2: Hosannas of the Crowd

Matthew 21:9	Mark 11:9-10	Luke 19:38	John 12:13
And the crowds that went before him and that followed him shouted, <i>Hosanna to the Son of David! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!</i>	And those who went before and those who followed cried out, <i>Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom of our father David that is coming! Hosanna in the highest!</i>	<i>Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the Lord! Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!</i>	So they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him, crying, <i>Hosanna! Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!</i>

These verses from Psalm 118 were often sung as a Messianic hymn.

*This is the day which the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it. Save us, we beseech thee, O Lord! O Lord, we beseech thee, give us success! Blessed be he who enters in the name of the Lord! We bless you from the house of the Lord.*<sup>16</sup>

15. Josephus, *Antiquities* III.x.4; cf. II Maccabees 10:6-7.

16. *RSV*, Psalm 118:24-26.

The entrance into Jerusalem in no way identifies Jesus as the Messiah. In the Gospel of John we gain significant insight into the understanding of the disciples about the meaning of his entrance into Jerusalem and what was going to happen when John quotes Zechariah:

*Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!  
Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Lo, your king comes to you;  
triumphant and victorious is he,  
humble and riding on an ass,  
on a colt the foal of an ass.*<sup>17</sup>

Predicated on Zechariah, John says:

*15 Fear not, daughters of Zion;  
behold, your king is coming,  
sitting on an ass's colt!*<sup>18</sup>

*16 His disciples did not understand this at first;  
but when Jesus was glorified then they remembered that  
this had been written of him and had been done to him.*<sup>19</sup>

Verse 15 is an obvious reference to Zechariah 9:9 as cited above. However, it is verse 16 which is most illuminating. What it means is that at the time of the events from the entrance into Jerusalem until his post-resurrection appearances the disciples didn't understand what was happening to Jesus. They saw what was happening in terms of Old Testament prophesy in light of specific prophets. Thus when Jesus sat on the ass they were thinking of Zechariah and not Jesus as the Messiah. Jesus as Messiah could only be recognized after the resurrection because Jesus had never made the statement that he was the Messiah.

There is no doubt that there was a conspiracy to kill Jesus. There is also no doubt that Jesus did and said many things which infuriated and frightened the Jewish religious leaders: cleansing the Temple, predicting the destruction of the Temple and Jerusalem, and teaching in parables such as the parable of the wicked tenants and the parable of the marriage feast which the religious leaders identified as directed against them. Additionally his *Woes Against the Pharisees* as well as performing miracles and signs, especially the raising of Lazarus, challenged the traditional leadership of the Jews. However, in the synoptic Gospels there is ambiguity as to when the conspiracy began, how formal the interrogations were,

---

17. *RSV*, Zechariah 9:9.

18. *RSV*, John 12:15.

19. *RSV*, John 12:15-16.



and what charges against Jesus resulted in a condemnation of death.

Matthew places the conspiracy in a formal meeting of the Sanhedrin in the palace of the high priest Caiaphas.<sup>20</sup> Those in attendance were the chief priests, elders, and Caiaphas. There is no charge stated at the time of the arrest. It is only when Jesus is brought before Caiaphas that he is charged with blasphemy. Mark sets the time as two days before the Passover and cites the chief priests and scribes as the conspirators. As there is no mention of the high priest or the palace the implication is that this was an informal meeting. There is no motive given for the arrest. Luke also cites the chief priests and scribes as conspirators and again there is no motive given as to why they wanted to put Jesus to death. Only in John with the raising of Lazarus from the dead as the immediate catalyst do we find a specific reason for the conspiracy and reason Jesus must die:

*So the chief priests and the Pharisees gathered the council, and said, "What are we to do? For this man performs many signs. If we let him go on thus, every one will believe in him, and the Romans will come and destroy both our holy place and our nation." But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." He did not say this of his own accord, but being high priest that year he prophesied that Jesus should die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. So from that day on they took counsel how to put him to death.*<sup>21</sup>

Although the exact sequence of events is unknown or precisely who participated it is unquestioned that Caiaphas, speaking for the assembly, defined the theology that it is ethically, morally, and religiously just that one person be sacrificed for the good of the nation. There are two points of interest in this passage. The first is that it is not Isaiah but Caiaphas who places the mantle of sacrificial lamb on Jesus.<sup>22</sup> The second is the redaction by John who links the decision not only to the existing nation of Israel but expands the meaning to include the Gentiles. John's

---

20. The citations for the conspiracy against Jesus are Matthew 26:1-5, Mark 14:1-2, Luke 22: 1-2, and John 1:47-53.

21. RSV, John 11:47-53.

22. One understanding of the role of Jesus at the Lord's supper is taken from the suffering servant material of Isaiah 53:7. The church has made Jesus the sacrificial lamb, the *Agnus Dei* or Lamb of God, and this understanding has been incorporated into the liturgies of catholic rite churches. Contemporary scholarship rejects the position that Isaiah 53:7 in any way predicts Jesus as a sacrificial lamb because at most Isaiah was writing as a *sensus plenior*; that is, he did not know how what he wrote would be interpreted in the future.

theological statement is that Jesus is the new Israel, the new representative of God's kingdom on earth, and that all are welcomed to sit at the table of the Lord.

## ANOINTING AT BETHANY

Jesus and his disciples stayed in the outskirts of Bethany when attending Temple ceremonies at Passover. One route to Jerusalem from the east is through Bethany and over the ridge of the Mount of Olives and this may have been the route followed by Jesus when he arrived for Passover and made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. In the eleventh century a basilica was erected to mark the site for the anointing of his feet which is possibly the same structure later reported by the Abbot Daniel. However, this is also the same spot as given for the crypt of Lazarus reported by the Bordeaux Pilgrim in 333 C.E. which had a church built over the crypt as well as the *spot where Mary met the Lord*. Before 385 C.E. another church had been built on the same spot (Jerome *Onomasticon*) and according to Arculf a monastery was added ca. 670 C.E.. An underground chamber is still honored as the crypt of Lazarus. All other ancient structures have suffered decay but excavations of three successive churches on a site east of the crypt may possibly expose one of the churches reported by medieval pilgrims.<sup>23</sup> All these and other traditional stories reveal a confusing picture of gospel events.

The anointing at Bethany, possibly by Mary Magdalene, must be put into historical perspective. Anointing in the Ancient Near East was a common cultic practice for the consecration of both objects and people. The act of consecration served as a rite of passage separating the anointed from the secular. Among those anointed and consecrated to the Lord included Aaron and the high priest. Sometimes prophets were anointed such as Elisha by Elijah while the patriarchs were referred to as anointed prophets.

The anointing of a king was of primary importance because it conveyed the power for the exercise of royal authority. The king became the theocratic vassal of the Lord. The theocratic character of the anointment is also exemplified by the fact that the king was the Lord's anointed and servant of God who reigned in God's stead over his people. The title *Lord's anointed* was later shortened to *anointed* in the Hebrew/Aramaic form *mashi'h* (Messiah) and was translated into Greek as Christ. Thus, the anointing at Bethany is symbolic of Jesus' being anointed by God with the power of not only a king but also the Holy Spirit.

Although at first reading the anointing at Bethany appears to be one continuous narrative of one encounter a closer analysis supports the view that in fact it is the amalgamation of two separate episodes.

---

23. *IDB*, A-D, 388.

A. FIRST EPISODE

The first episode occurs in Galilee in the house of Simon the Pharisee. The woman who is a sinner weeps on the feet of Jesus and dries them with her hair. Simon is indignant that Jesus let a woman touch him and there is no perfume or ointment.

B. SECOND EPISODE

The second episode occurs at Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper. A woman (possibly Mary Magdalene) uses expensive perfume and anoints Jesus' head

Figure 4.3: The Anointing at Bethany

	Matthew and Mark	Luke	John
Time	2 days before Passover	Public ministry	6 days before Passover
Place	Bethany	Galilee	Bethany
Location	House: Simon the Leper	House: Simon the Pharisee	
Person	Woman not named	Woman who is a sinner	Mary of Bethany
Container	Alabaster jar	Alabaster jar	1 pound of perfume
Element	Valuable perfume	Ordinary perfume	Valuable perfume
Action	Pours on head	A. Weeps on feet B. Dries with hair	Anoints feet
Response of others	Some disciples angry	Pharisee annoyed; Jesus criticizes him	Judas angry
Value	Value over 300 denarii		Value is 300 denarii
Jesus Reaction	Defends woman	Forgives woman	Defends Mary

Matthew and Mark are an almost pure form of B. Luke is closer to A but has taken anointing and perfume and placed them with tears and feet. John is close to B but identifies feet as the object of anointing. There are no tears which have the hidden significance of burial as in A. It is possible that the woman is Mary Magdalene and the complainer is Judas but this is only speculation.

In Matthew, Mark, and John, Jesus connects the ointment with his burial. Most likely this is not part of the original story. If it is true the statement that the woman would be remembered wherever the gospel is preached is also a later addition as it can only be original if the connection between the ointment and the burial is original. It is difficult to determine whether John had knowledge of this part of the story from Matthew and Mark, it may have been part of John's other source, or by the time John wrote the gospel it was considered common knowledge. The statement about *the poor always being with you* in Matthew and Mark creates the distinction between the works of mercy and the works of justice. The point is that mercy has a higher value than justice. Luke ends the story with a statement of the focal point of Jesus' ministry: to love others as your heavenly Father loves you. While Matthew, Mark, and John interpret the events in a concrete manner Luke sees beyond the specific events. By raising his interpretation to the abstract level of love Luke speaks directly to the heart of the message and ministry of Jesus.

## THE BETRAYAL OF JESUS

Who was Judas and what were his motives in betraying Jesus? Unfortunately, there is very little in scripture to clarify his motive or tell us who he was. The synoptic accounts are completely different from that of John. The synoptic writers all agree that money was involved. In Matthew Judas asks, *What will you give me* but in Mark and Luke the chief priests make the offer of compensation. There is no mention of money in John as the focus is on the significance of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. Additionally, John's account is much different as it identifies Judas as the traitor at the Lord's supper.

The betrayal of Jesus by Judas raises two questions: first, what was the nature of Judas that he could betray Jesus, and secondly, what were his motives. To answer these questions we must have a clear understanding of both the scriptures and extra-Biblical sources.

We do not have any knowledge about Judas before he came to Jesus other than his father is known as Simon Iscariot.<sup>24</sup> The only information we have about his discipleship, other than his betrayal of Jesus, is that he functioned as treasurer for the disciples and was responsible for disbursements from the common purse.<sup>25</sup> After his betrayal of Jesus he committed suicide and holds that dubious distinction with Ahithophel who betrayed Absalom as the only two persons recorded in

---

24. RSV, John 6:71.

25. RSV, John 12:6; 13:29.

biblical history to commit that act.<sup>26</sup>

As both suicides are the result of betrayal and the suicide of Judas is only mentioned in Matthew 27:3-10 and Acts 1:18-19 we may speculate whether Judas actually committed suicide or whether Matthew and [Luke] Acts borrowed this form of self-punishment from II Samuel 17:23 to make a theological statement vilifying Judas. We may also question why Luke included the suicide in Acts but not in his gospel. The only conclusion to be drawn is that Luke didn't know about the suicide of Judas at the time he wrote his gospel ca.70-80 C.E. but had learned of it by the time he wrote Acts shortly afterward.<sup>27</sup>

It is interesting to note that the word suicide does not appear in the Bible as written in its original languages. Likewise, there is no prohibition or condemnation of suicide. This is explained by the sacredness of the religious tenet in both the Old and New Testament that God alone has the power to give life and take it away. This understanding is brought forward in Rabbinic literature which specifically prohibits suicide.<sup>28</sup> Josephus critiques suicide situationally as an *impious act against God our Creator*<sup>29</sup> but tacitly approves it for the mass suicide of the Jews at Masada.<sup>30</sup> In Acts 16:27-28 Paul prevents the jailer from committing suicide and converts him to Christianity.

## THE NAME ISCARIOT

Much has been written about the surname Iscariot. Even though John cites Simon Iscariot as his father there are enough problems and inconsistencies with the name that some scholars do not believe it is a family name but rather a name given to him because of certain characteristics unique to him. Among the many interpretations of the name are: man from Kerieth, the assassin, man from Sychar (a Samaritan), man of Issachar, man from Jericho, carrier of the leather bag (from scortea), and false one, liar, hypocrite.<sup>31</sup> All can be linked to Iscariot with man from Kerikoth at first appearing most likely.

Another way of deciphering the name Iscariot is by linguistic analysis. There are compelling arguments which both support and refute the linguistic meaning of Iscariot. Arguments which support the meaning are the Deuteronomic reading in John,<sup>32</sup> comparable names in Josephus and the Talmud, and John's reference to Judas' father as Simon Iscariot. Arguments against this interpretation include the uncertain location of Kerieth which is identified with modern Qaryatein in

26. *RSV*, II Samuel 17:23.

27. After Josephus 93-95 C.E. or possibly during the early years of the second century.

28. *General Rabbah* 24.21b.

29. Flavius Josephus, *War III.viii.5*.

30. Flavius Josephus, *War III.viii.6-7*.

31. *IDB*, E-J, 1006.

32. *RSV*, John 12:4; 13:2; 14:22; 26.

Southern Palestine which would make Judas the only disciple from Judea,<sup>33</sup> the fact that the term “man” is not translated in the Greek texts, and the fact that the popular language was Aramaic and not Hebrew. If the term is Aramaic and is taken from the root meaning *false one, liar, hypocrite* it certainly fits the betrayer of Jesus for Aramaic speaking Christians.

Figure 4.4: Linguistic Analysis of the Surname Iscariot

WORD	LANGUAGE	COMMENT
<i>Ish gerioth</i>	Hebrew	man from Gerioth, the South of Judea. If so Judas is the only disciple from Judea.
<i>sgr</i>	Aramaic	Liar, lie Possible only after betrayal. Surname was never translated: means cut throat or bandit.
<i>oikapios</i>	Greek	i = long i Never dropped but it is not found in Hebrew or Aramaic forms.
<i>s'quortuga/scortea</i>	Hebrew/Latin	Means leather from leather bag.
<i>sqr</i>	Aramaic	Means ruddy, possibly with red hair. No linguistic problem.

It is unlikely that Iscariot is taken from either the Greek *oikapios* or the Hebrew/Latin *s'quortuga/scortea*. In rank order the most likely origin for the term is the Aramaic *sqr* followed by the Hebrew *Ish gerioth* and the Aramaic *sgr*. It is easy to see that all of the possibilities except the Aramaic *sqr* have attendant

33. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael P. Coogan. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 395. According to John 13:18 Jesus chose Judas so that scripture (Psalm 419) would be fulfilled.

linguistic problems. *Sqr* also best fits the hypothesis that Iscariot is a nickname for a man with red hair and a ruddy complexion. However, it must be noted that although *Sqr* is the best linguistic choice there is still no certainty as to the precise meaning of Iscariot as it would be difficult to find a Jew with a ruddy complexion and red hair in first century Palestine.

## MOTIVE: THE SIN OF JUDAS

The most commonly given reason for betrayal of Jesus is money. This is the reason cited by Matthew when Judas asks, *What will you give me if I deliver him to you?*<sup>34</sup> but it is secondary for Mark as Judas goes to the chief priests to betray Jesus and they *promise to give him money.*<sup>35</sup> Both Luke and John propose a supernatural reason, the devil,<sup>36</sup> as the primary motive but it is to be recognized this is a theological interpretation which cannot be supported by empirical evidence.

We will now examine the most commonly believed reasons for Judas's betrayal of Jesus. Matthew presents the motive that Judas was eager for the money and acted as a consequence of greed. Even if we accept Matthew's motive of greed it is hard to believe that given the disruption Jesus caused and the fear of the Jewish leaders that the Romans would close the Temple and persecute them because of what he said and did that his life was worth only thirty pieces of silver. Likewise greed on the part of Judas would not have been satisfied by a mere thirty pieces of silver.

We shall now consider the most common reasons given for Judas' betrayal of Jesus. Many support the hypotheses that Judas saw Jesus as a false prophet who should have been stoned to death. It is not reasonable to think that it would take Judas almost three years to decide that Jesus was a false prophet when he was his daily companion and trusted disciple. Did Judas reject the message of Jesus which favored the disadvantaged over the privileged as well as his association with outcasts such as prostitutes, Samaritans, and tax collectors? It is true that Judas did not appear to like the ministry of Jesus to the outcasts but if he felt strongly enough to betray Jesus to the Romans how could he have participated in this ministry for so many years? The same question must be raised regarding the message of Jesus. His teaching of repentance over retribution may not have represented the Messiah Judas envisioned. However, if he did not believe in the teaching of repentance and forgiveness how could he have been a part of that ministry for so many years? The same argument is raised in respect to the position of Jesus on the Torah. Another motive often put forth is that Judas had stolen money from the common purse and somehow this led to his betrayal of Jesus. It is documented that Judas had stolen money from the common purse but he had been forgiven and according to the

---

34. *RSV*, Matthew 14:15.

35. *RSV*, Mark 14:11.

36. *RSV*, Luke 22:3; John 13:2.

words of Jesus at the Lord's supper still held the position of purser. Thus, there cannot be a connection between his theft from the common purse and his betrayal of Jesus.

With the above reasons discounted the most plausible reason for his betrayal of Jesus is that he wanted to force Jesus into bold action against the Romans and Jewish leaders. This is the only reason that makes sense *Sitz Im Leben Jesu*. It is not difficult to imagine Judas as a man whose view was apocalyptic and who believed Jesus to be the long awaited Messiah. Judas would have perceived the Messiah in the role of the Davidic Messiah who would lead the overthrow of the oppressors and restore a theocratic government with Yahweh, tempered by his unique insight into the Father, as king of Israel. The problem was that although Jesus talked about the kingdom of God, the New Age, being manifest in the present time he did nothing expected of the Davidic Messiah to bring about the cataclysmic confrontation between the powers of good and evil which would usher in the fullness of God's kingdom on earth. Given this reality and the frustration of Judas that Jesus refused to act it is possible that Judas's motive in betraying Jesus was to put him in a situation where he would be forced to act the role of the Davidic Messiah, lead the revolt against Rome, and restore Yahweh and Israel to their rightful place as a light to all nations.

## MOTIVE: THE WILL OF GOD

There is another possible motive for the betrayal of Jesus by Judas and that is he was doing the will of God. Although rarely considered because it is diametrically opposed to the traditional view of Christianity it is the theological explanation which makes the most sense. The following argument is derived from Thomas Aquinas' treatise on the *Will of God* as found *The Summa Theologica*. This argument supports the contention that Judas betrayed Jesus not of his own free will but rather because it was the will of God.

### 1. The vilification of Judas

When a loved one dies we not only feel a sense of loss but often anger that they are being taken away from us. This is especially true when the reason seems capricious or unjust. The questions we ask ourselves are how and why did this happen. The disciples didn't understand why Jesus had to die but they had a ready scapegoat for the how in Judas. Judas was responsible for the murder of the one they not only loved but who gave purpose to their lives. Although Jesus had taught forgiveness of sins and that one should forgive one's brother seventy times seven the disciples were consumed with anger and rage and could not apply Jesus' teaching of forgiveness to Judas.



## 2. The early Christian community

The early Christian community, especially after the Apostolic Age, was built upon oral tradition passed down by the disciples by theologizing the betrayal of Jesus. This codification of the betrayal and scapegoating of Judas, although not dogma or doctrine, became an unquestionable part of the history of the Church. As codification of the events of Jesus' death became dogma an integral part of the story was the betrayal by Judas. History then defined Judas the ultimate villain. With each succeeding generation it became more difficult to see Judas in any other way.

## 3. The foundation for a reconsideration of the betrayal of Jesus is firmly rooted in the metaphysical teaching of the church<sup>37</sup>

The church teaches that Being represents God and that all things in the form of particulars, actions, and human beings are represented by being. All beings are connected to one another and all beings are connected to Being as the generative agent. The church also teaches that Being is responsible for all possibilities, both good and evil, performed by being; thus, if Being does not provide the possibility for an act, even an evil act, being cannot perform that act.<sup>38</sup>

## 4. The possibility of the Being of God in evil

It is generally believed that God is present in all good and that God is absent in all evil. However Thomas Aquinas responds to the conclusion *Therefore God is not in all things* as follows:

*I answer that, God is in all things; not, indeed, as part of their essence, nor as an accident, but as an agent is present to that upon which it works. For an agent must be joined to that wherein it acts immediately, and touch it by its power; hence it is proved in the Physics (Aristotle, VII, 2) that the thing moved and the mover must*

37. The philosophy of Medieval Metaphysics is the culmination of the development of Plato's concept on "oneness" and "unity" which is carried forward by the Scholastic Philosophers.

38. To better understand the link between Plato and Medieval Metaphysics see John Scotus Erivgena's masterwork *On The Division Of Nature*. Excerpts with Erivgena's notes may be found in John F. Whipple and Allan B. Wolter, *Medieval Philosophy: From St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*, (New York: The Free Press, 1969), 118. Erivgena was commissioned by Charles the Bald in the middle of the ninth century to translate into Latin the works of Dionysius the Areopagite and the *Ambluga* of St. Maximus, Confessor, wherein certain statements of St. Gregory Nazianzus are clarified in light of Pseudo-Dionysius. Erivgena correctly identifies God and specifically the *Logos* or second person of the Trinity as the locus of Platonic ideas and Stoic *logio spermatikoi*.

*be together. Now since God is Being itself by his own essence, created being must be his proper effect; just to ignite is the proper effect of fire. Hence, it must be that God is in all things, and most intimately.*<sup>39</sup>

## 5. The will of God as cause of things

Ascribing the will of God to all of those things which are good and beneficial is both easy and superficially logical. It is difficult to ascribe to God all of those things which are evil and destructive. Is the will of God the cause of all things both good and evil? Thomas Aquinas responds as follows:

*The will of God as the cause of all things is shown by the relation of effects to their cause. For effects proceed from the agent that causes them, in so far as they pre-exist in the agent, since every agent produces its like. Now effects pre-exist in their cause after the mode of the cause. Therefore since the Divine Being in his own intellect effects pre-exist in him after the mode of intellect, and therefore proceed from him after the same mode. Consequently, they proceed from him after the mode of will, for his inclination to doing what his intellect has conceived pertains to the will. Therefore the will of God is the cause of all things*<sup>40</sup>

Aquinas continues in Article 6:

*The will of God must always be fulfilled. In proof of this we must consider that since an effect is conformed to the agent according to its form, the rule is the same with active causes as with formal causes. Since, then, the will of God is the universal cause of all things, it is impossible that the divine will should not produce its effect. Hence that which seems to depart from the divine will in one order, is brought back to it in another order.*<sup>41</sup>

## 6. Does God will evil?

Now we come to the crux of the issue. If we as human beings believe that the betrayal of Jesus by Judas was an evil act and the subsequent events were also acts of evil and that each and every one of these acts were conceived and implemented

39. Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologica," in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, 54 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952), First Part, Q. 8, Art. 1, 35.

40. Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologica", in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, 54 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1954), First Part, Q. 19, Art. 4, 112.

41. Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologica" in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, 54 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1954), First Part, Q. 19, Art. 6, 113-14.

solely by the human will of Judas there is no defense for him. However, if we come to the conclusion that his betrayal, while an act of evil, was also the will of God and all the evil acts that followed were also the will of God we must reconsider our judgement of Judas. In order to reach our conclusion we must determine whether or not God wills evil. Although Thomas Aquinas disagrees with the theology of Augustine and Dionysius concerning whether or not God wills evil their thoughts are germane to our inquiry:

Objection 1:

*For every good that exists, God wills. But it is a good that evil should exist. For Augustine says (Enchir. 96) "Although evil in so far as it is evil is not a good, yet it is good that not only good things should exist, but also evil things." Therefore God wills evil things.*<sup>42</sup>

Objection 2:

*Further, Dionysius says (Div. Nom. iv, 19) "Evil would conduce to the perfection of everything," that is, the universe. And Augustine says (Enchir. 10, 11): "Out of all things is built up the admirable beauty of the universe, wherein even that which is called evil, properly ordered and disposed, commends the good the more evidently in that good is more pleasing and praiseworthy when contrasted with evil." But God wills all that pertains to the perfection and beauty of the universe, for this is what God desires above all things in his creatures. Therefore God wills evil.*<sup>43</sup>

Objection 3:

*Further, that evil should exist, and should not exist, are contradictory opposites. But God does not will that evil should not exist: otherwise, since various evils do exist, God's will would not always be fulfilled. Therefore God wills that evil should exist.*<sup>44</sup>

42. Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologica", in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed Robert Maynard Hutchins, 54 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1954), First Part, Q. 19, Art. 9, 116.

43. Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologica" in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, 54 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1954), First Part, Q. 19, Art.

44. Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologica" in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, 54 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1954), First Part, Q. 19, Art. 7, 117.

Although Aquinas disagrees with specific statements within each objection cited he responds with the following paragraph. We shall number the sentences as we will interpret each one in light of our hypothesis.

1. *Now the evil that accompanies one good, is the privation of another good.*
2. *Never therefore would evil be sought after, not even accidentally, unless the good that accompanies the evil were more desired than the good of which the evil is the privation.*
3. *Now God wills no good more than he wills his own goodness; yet he wills one good more than another.*
4. *Hence he in no way wills the evil of sin, which is the privation of order towards the divine good.*
5. *The evil of natural defect, or of punishment, he does will, by willing the good to which such evils are attached.*
6. *Thus in willing justice he wills punishment; and in willing the preservation of the natural order, he wills some things to be naturally corrupted.*<sup>45</sup>

We are now ready to interpret Aquinas' last paragraph and will use it as a summary to see if it is possible in light of items one through six that Judas' betrayal of Jesus was not a decision of his own free will to commit sin but rather was the will of God. We shall do this by examining each sentence in turn to see how it applies to the betrayal of Jesus.

1. *Now the evil that accompanies one good, is the privation of another good.*

INTERPRETATION: We accept *a priori* that Jesus was sent into the world by the Father to be the propitiation of our sins. By his death and resurrection he provided the means of man's redemption and salvation. Theologically, it was necessary for man to commit the ultimate sin against God; that is, the murder of his son. It is the murder and death of God's son, Jesus, which gives meaning to the resurrection and it is the resurrection which is the cornerstone of Christianity as without it Christianity would not exist. Therefore, the evil that accompanied the betrayal of Jesus leads directly to the good of his death and resurrection which are seen as three parts of one continuous event which are necessary for man's redemption and

---

45. Thomas Aquinas, "Summa Theologica" in *Great Books of the Western World*, ed. Robert Maynard Hutchins, 543 vols. (Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1954), First Part, Q. 19, Art. 9, 117.

salvation. The mechanism God used to carry out his will to provide man's redemption and salvation is the evil willed by God contained in the betrayal of Jesus. The evil which accompanied this good is also the privation of another good: the earthly life of Jesus.

*2. Never therefore would evil be sought after, not even accidentally, unless the good that accompanies the evil were more desired than the good of which the evil is the privation.*

INTERPRETATION: The issue here is not to weigh good versus evil but to weigh good versus good. The key to understanding is that the good that accompanies the evil must be a greater good than the good which will become the privation. In this instance the greater good caused by the evil of the betrayal, the possibility of man's redemption and salvation, outweighs the good which becomes the privation, the earthly life of Jesus.

*3. Now God wills no good more than he wills his own goodness; yet he wills one good more than another.*

INTERPRETATION: The ultimate good that God can will is the infinite good of himself. The kingdom of God is a metaphor for the infinite good of himself which stems from the core of his being and which encompasses all creation except man who is separated by sin. However as part of God's creation man was made by and is infused with God's infinite goodness which we call the soul and which may be understood as man's innate goodness. However, although man contains goodness because of sin he does not fully share the infinite goodness of God: the kingdom of God on earth. God's will that Judas betray Jesus is the first necessary step for man's redemption and salvation which enables him to become one with the infinitely greater good of God's entire creation. Thus God wills the infinite goodness of his entire creation more than he wills the goodness of one man.

*4. Hence, he in no way wills the evil of sin, which is the privation of order towards the divine good.*

INTERPRETATION: The only absolutely necessary element for a person to commit sin is *mens rea*; that is a guilty mind. The concept applies to thought, word, and deed. By this definition one may commit an evil act but it is not a sin if there is no intent to commit evil. It is the thesis of this argument that it is God who wills the death of Jesus and therefore Judas is simply God's instrument with no will or intent of his own. Therefore, Judas does not have a guilty mind. The betrayal of Jesus, although an act of evil, is not sin and is not an act of privation of order towards the divine good. In fact, it is an absolute necessity which allows the divine order to encompass man in the greater divine good of God's infinite divine goodness: the kingdom of God.

5. *The evil of natural defect, or of punishment, he does will, by willing the good to which such evils are attached.*

INTERPRETATION: The key to understanding this sentence is the concept of *defect* which comes from the Latin *defectus* and means to fail, to lack or an imperfection, fault, or flaw. The defect of Judas was his moral character demonstrated by the fact he stole money from the common purse of the disciples. The gospels disagree if money was the primary or secondary reason Judas betrayed Jesus but that is a moot issue for us. The real issue is that God created Judas with a flawed moral character which is the evil of a natural defect that allowed him to betray Jesus. The good which is attached to this evil is that by the death and resurrection of Jesus the kingdom of God is opened for man.

6. *Thus in willing justice he wills punishment; and in willing the preservation of the natural order, he wills some things to be naturally corrupted.*

INTERPRETATION: The natural order in its fullness included everything as a part of God's creation of infinite goodness including man. God's will is the preservation of this natural order as created and therefore he desires that man be reunited with that greater goodness of the infinite goodness of God's creation. To accomplish this he sent his son, Jesus, into the world to teach repentance and forgiveness of sins. However, it was necessary that Jesus die at the hands of man to be a full and living sacrifice for our sins. As this would not have happened in the normal course of events God used the natural corruption of the moral character of Judas as the implement to accomplish his purpose. Without Judas there would be no betrayal, without betrayal there would be no death, without death there would be no resurrection. It was not only necessary but God's will that Judas betray Jesus as it is through the death and resurrection of Jesus that man receives redemption for his sins and the ability to again become one with the greater infinite goodness of God's creation.

Was Judas's betrayal of Jesus the consequence of his own sin or the will of God? The answer to this question is not as simple as it might seem. On the one hand it is easy to take the position that God would not intentionally subject his Son to betrayal by one of his trusted followers to be crucified as a common criminal. Thus, Judas's betrayal of Jesus must be the consequence solely of his own sin although the reason for that act is less than certain. On the other hand when considered from the larger theological perspectives of creation and salvation it was necessary in God's plan of salvation that Jesus be betrayed. Without the betrayal, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus salvation of mankind is not possible. From this perspective the betrayal of Jesus by Judas is the will of God in that God chose Judas to perform a specific task much like he did the Old Testament prophets.

## SUMMARY

The Passion narratives as portrayed in the gospels are reconstructions from earlier sources which no longer exist. Although there are four purposes generally accepted for the writing of the narratives the two paramount reasons were to show Jesus innocent of the Roman charges and to theologize the necessity of his death.

We cannot be certain when Jesus entered Jerusalem because Matthew and Luke fuse events, there is a flaw in Mark's chronology, and John can be read in two different ways. Another way to determine Jesus' entrance is by comparing the Feast of Weeks with the gospels. However, once again there is a discrepancy as Easter Day and the Day of the Sheaf are not the same.

Although all three synoptic Gospels relate the anointing at Bethany to Psalm 118 a careful reading suggests that this is not one event but rather an amalgamation of two separate events. The first episode occurs in Galilee in the house of Simon the Pharisee while the second occurs at Bethany in the house of Simon the Leper.

There is no doubt that there was a conspiracy to kill Jesus; however, the synoptic accounts give no specific reason, how, or when the decision was made. John cites a meeting of the leaders of the Sanhedrin is held after Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. At this meeting Caiaphas makes the statement that it is appropriate that one should die for the good of the nation.

Judas Iscariot is the enigma of Christianity as it is as difficult today as it was for the disciples to understand how one of the twelve could have betrayed Jesus. In fact, we do not even really know who he was as there is considerable debate about the meaning of the name Iscariot. There have been many suggestions as to its meaning but the most likely is the Aramaic *sqr* which refers to the color red thus suggesting that Judas was a ruddy complected man with red hair.

The synoptic accounts of the betrayal of Jesus are quite different than that found in John. As portrayed in the synoptic Gospels Judas goes to the chief priests before the Passover. All three present the issue as one of money and in Matthew Judas asks how much they will pay him if he hands Jesus over to them. In both Mark and Luke the chief priests offer Judas money after he tells them he will betray Jesus. In John, Judas does not go to the chief priests and there is no mention of money.

The traditional answer given to the question, how could Judas betray Jesus is that he did it for money. However, it is provocative to consider that Judas was simply doing the will of God and had no other choice. It is possible to construct an argument using articles from questions eight and nineteen of Thomas Aquinas's *Summa Theologica* which support the hypothesis that the betrayal of Jesus was God's will and that Judas had no other choice.

The foundation for the answer that Judas was doing the will of God is firmly rooted in the metaphysics of the church. As Being, God, represents all beings in the form of particulars, actions, and human beings. God is responsible for all possibilities both good and evil performed by them. How is this possible? Aquinas states that the will of God as the cause of all things is shown by the relation of

effects to their cause. The will of God must always be fulfilled since an effect is conformed to the agent according to its form. Aquinas argues that God may will an evil act if the evil that accompanies that good is greater than the privation of another good. Thus, the good which accompanies the evil inherent in the betrayal and death of Jesus, the good of man's redemption and reunification with the fullness of God's divine goodness, is greater than the goodness of Jesus. Although not the traditional answer to the question, how could Judas betray Jesus it is the answer which is most theological sound.



## Chapter 5

---

### The Lord's Supper: Passover Meal or Mistaken Identity?

#### PREPARATION FOR PASSOVER

As Passover nears and preparations must be made the disciples ask Jesus where they should prepare for the meal. Matthew states:

*Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus , saying, "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" He said, "Go into the city to a certain one, and say to him, 'The Teacher says, My time is at hand; I will keep the Passover at your house with my disciples.'"*<sup>1</sup>

The question is answered in Mark and Luke by telling the disciples to go into the city and find a man carrying a jar of water. Mark writes:

*And on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they sacrificed the Passover lamb, his disciples said to him, "Where will you have us go and prepare for you to eat the Passover?" And he sent two of his disciples, and said to them, "Go into the city and a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him, and wherever he enters, say to the householder, 'The Teacher says, Where is my guest room, where I am to eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room furnished and ready; there prepare for us."*<sup>2</sup>

---

1. RSV, Matthew 26:17-18.

2. RSV, Mark 14:12-15.

Luke's account is similar:

*Then came the day of Unleavened Bread, on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed. So Jesus sent Peter and John, saying, "Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat it." They said to him, "Where will you have us prepare it?" He said to them, "Behold, when you have entered the city, a man carrying a jar of water will meet you; follow him into the house which he enters, and tell the householder, 'The Teacher says to you, Where is the guest room, where I am to eat the Passover with my disciples?' And he will show you a large upper room furnished; there make ready." And they went, and found it as he had told them; and they prepared the Passover."*<sup>3</sup>

The direction that *they should go into the city where they shall find a man carrying a jar of water and follow him to the householder who will direct them to an upper room* is a difficult passage to interpret. If interpreted literally the instruction of Jesus pre-supposes a special knowledge beyond human understanding of place, time, and events. This prediction of future events is not found anywhere else in the gospels. It is likely this story is a legend created by the early church to explain the lack of knowledge about the last day of his life. The story is either unknown or considered unreliable by some writers as it does not appear in Matthew or John.

It is interesting to compare Matthew and Luke's description to the *Gospel of the Ebionites*:

*They made the disciples, indeed say: "Where will you have us prepare for you to eat the Passover?" and (they made) him say: "Have I not earnestly desired to eat the flesh of this Passover with you?"*<sup>4</sup>

We shall note the use of the word *flesh* and examine it when we consider the words of blessing at the Lord's supper. The additional preparation stories of Jesus washing the disciples' feet in John<sup>5</sup> and the synoptic reference regarding who is the greatest<sup>6</sup> are central to understanding the true meaning of the crucifixion and resurrection.

---

3. RSV, Luke 22:7-13.

4. In Epiphanius, *Against Heresies*, xxx.22.4.

5. RSV, John 13:1-20.

6. RSV, Luke 22:24-27.

Figure 5.1: The Relationship between John 13:1-20 and Luke 22:24-27

John 13:1-20	Luke 22:24-27
<p>1. Now before the feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that his hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end. 2. And during supper, when the devil had already put it into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, to betray him, 3. Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into his hand, and that he had come from God and was going to God, 4. rose from supper, laid aside his garments, and girded himself with a towel. 5. Then he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which he was girded. He came to Simon Peter; and Peter said to him, <i>Lord, do you wash my feet?</i> 7. Jesus answered him, <i>What I am doing you do not know now, but afterward you will understand.</i> 8. Peter said to him, <i>You shall never wash my feet.</i> Jesus answered him, <i>If I do not wash you, you have no part in me.</i> Simon Peter said to him, <i>Lord, not my feet only but also my hands and my head!</i> 10. Jesus said to him, <i>He who has bathed does not need to wash, except for his feet, (a) but he is clean all over; and you (b) are clean, but not every one of you.</i> 11. For he knew who was to betray him; that was why he said, <i>You are not all clean.</i> 12. When he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and resumed his place, he said to them, <i>Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am.</i> 14. <i>If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet.</i> 15. <i>For I have given you example, that you also should do as I have done to you.</i> 16. <i>Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant (c) is not greater than those who sent him.</i> 17. <i>If you know these things; blessed are you if you do them.</i> 18. <i>I am not</i></p>	<p>24. A dispute also arose among them, which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. 25. And he said to them, <i>The kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them; and those in authority over them are called benefactors.</i> 26. <i>But not so with you; rather let the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as one who serves.</i>  cf. 9:48b = Mark 9:35  27. <i>For which is the greater, one who sits at table, or one who serves? Is it not the one who sits at table. But I am among you as one who serves.</i> 28. <i>You are those who have continued with me in my trials;</i> 29. <i>as my Father appointed a kingdom for me, so do I appoint you</i> 30. <i>that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on</i></p>

<p><i>speaking of you all; I know whom I have chosen; it is that the scripture may be fulfilled, "He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." 19. I tell you this now, before it takes place, that I am he. Truly, truly, I say to you, he who receives any one whom I send receives me; and he who receives me receives him who sent me.</i></p>	<p><i>thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.</i></p>
--	--

Text notes:

(a): Some ancient authorities omit *except for his feet*.<sup>7</sup>

(b): The Greek word for you is plural.<sup>8</sup>

(c): Or slave.<sup>9</sup>

Luke 9:48b: *for he who is least among you all is the one who is great*.<sup>10</sup>

Mark 9:35: And he sat down and called the twelve; and he said to them,  
*If any one would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all*.<sup>11</sup>

The culture of Jewish Palestine at the time of Jesus dictated that washing a guest's feet before dinner was an act of hospitality performed by a slave and not a house servant. The washing of the feet of the disciples is grounded in this cultural ritual and is an act of humble love which Jesus expected his disciples to follow. Peter, guided by a false sense of moral values, objects to the Jesus washing his feet and when given an explanation also wants his hands and face washed. Thus, Peter completely misunderstands the point Jesus was making.

The symbolic act of foot washing by Jesus foreshadows the crucifixion and has three meanings. First, it is a demonstration of the love of Jesus has for his disciples because he performs this humble act of service commonly relegated to a slave. Second, it is an act of love as it serves as an example of how we are to act with one another. Finally, it is an act of love which is an act of cleansing which is essential to fellowship with Christ.

John de-emphasizes the importance of cleansing, either by foot washing or baptism, and goes directly to the core of the parable with his concern for the

7. RSV, note, 102.

8. RSV, note, 102.

9. RSV, note, 102.

10. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 167.

11. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 167.

historic and universal act of redemption which underlies and gives significance to the act. This suggests that the reading of verse 10 should be that of the marginal reading and not that of the Revised Standard Version.

*You are already made clean by the word which I have spoken to you.*<sup>12</sup>

Jesus makes it very clear in John that it is not through ritual washing that we are made clean but rather by the Word of God. This is because once one participates in the redemptive work of Christ we are clean. His servants or disciples are not greater than he; yet as his envoys, they represent him. That is because in the Christian mission it is God as revealed by his followers that others will encounter.

The origin of the conversation in Luke about who is the greatest is probably from Mark with an introduction by Luke. The quarrel and response parallel the story of the sons of Zebedee:

*And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him, and said to him, "Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you." And he said to them, "What do you want me to do for you?" And they said to him, "Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" And they said to him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." And when the ten heard it, they began to be indignant at James and John. And Jesus called them to him and said to them, "You know that those who are supposed to rule over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you; but whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." <sup>13</sup>*

It is here the nature of Christ's kingdom, now covenanted to the disciples with the pledge of the Messianic banquet, can be most effectively contrasted with the nature of worldly sovereignty. Therefore Luke omits the story of the sons of Zebedee at verses 18:34 and verse 22:24 follows naturally after verses 15-18 which may be a

---

12. RSV, John 15:3.

13. RSV, Mark 10:35-45.

resumption of a non-Markan source after the preceding Markan verses.<sup>14</sup> The term the youngest is not defined but it probably does not mean the youngest in age but those who are young in the Lord and who are new to the faith.

Verse 28 expands a version of a saying paralleled in Matthew:

*Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world, when the Son of man shall sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." <sup>15</sup>*

The kingdom covenanted to Jesus by the Father is covenanted to the disciples. As its inheritors they are to share in the kingdom and join with Jesus in the eschatological feast. It is this feast which the Lord's supper represents and when we participate in the Eucharistic ritual we also share in the eschatological feast. According to Luke the covenanting of the kingdom and the promise of sharing in the eschatological feast are the most significant events at the Lord's supper.

The nature of the kingdom and of the thrones of the disciples is explained in Acts:

*So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." <sup>16</sup>*

## THE PASSOVER MEAL

There are three questions in our consideration of the Lord's supper:

1. Was it a Passover meal?
2. What were the words spoken by Jesus?
3. What did the words mean?

---

14. Luke seldom incorporates an incident after he has rejected its placement parallel to Mark and Matthew. In this instance Luke may have used a third independent tradition. See H. Schurmann, *Jesu Abschiedsrede*, (Paderborn, 1957), 63.

15. *RSV*, Matthew 19:28.

16. *RSV*, Acts 1:6-8.

Trying to determine if what we now refer to as Lord's supper was the Passover meal or not requires one to remember that the Jewish day begins at sunset and continues to sunset the next day.<sup>17</sup> When we read the gospel accounts we find that for the synoptic writers the Lord's supper is the Passover meal but for John it is a meal prior to the Passover.

Thus for the synoptic writers Wednesday evening to Thursday evening was the preparation day and Thursday evening to Friday evening was the Passover. For John, Thursday evening to Friday evening was the preparation day and Friday evening to Saturday evening was the Passover. Subsequently, the gospels are not specific enough to give us enough information to determine whether the Synoptic account of that of John is the correct time line.

Figure 5.2: Passover according to the Synoptics and John			
FROM TO	WEDNESDAY EVENING TO THURSDAY EVENING	THURSDAY EVENING TO FRIDAY EVENING	FRIDAY EVENING TO SATURDAY EVENING
SYNOPTICS	Preparation Day	Passover Day	
JOHN		Preparation Day	Passover Day

Another approach to determine if this was the Passover meal or not is the use of astronomy. The Jews in Palestine at the time of Jesus used a lunar-solar calendar and proclaimed the new month by citing new light on the Western horizon.<sup>18</sup> There are two problems with this method which preclude a definite answer to our question. The first is the factor of atmospheric conditions such as rain, clouds, or other disturbances in the atmosphere which would prohibit a precise revelation of the dawn of the new month. The second is that we do not know by the Jewish

17. The instructions for when and how the Passover is to be celebrated are found in Numbers 28:16-31 with verse 16 setting the time: "And in the first month, on the fourteenth day of the month, is the Lord's Passover." *The Holy Scriptures According to the Masoretic Text*, (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1955).

18. *IDB*, A-D, 485. The primitive Hebrew for "month" *yerah*, like cognates in other Semitic languages, was related to the word for moon *yare<sup>o</sup>h* which is related to the old Canaanite month names in I Kings 6:37-38; 8:2. *Abib* is a consistent exception (Exodus 13:4 *etalii*), this word continued to be used mainly in poetic (Job 3:6; 7:3) and archaizing (Zechariah 11:8) texts. Perhaps because of polytheistic associations (cf. Ugaritic *yarih*, the moon-god), it was gradually supplanted by the word *hodhesh* (literally new moon), particularly in texts where reference is made to the religious year, in which the new moon played so important a role.

calendar or any other calendar precisely which year relative to our own calendar the Lord's supper occurred. Neither the Jews or the Romans considered the crucifixion of Jesus to have any special meaning therefore none of the events of his last week in Jerusalem were chronicled in either Jewish religious or Roman governmental records.

An examination of the possible dates which indicate the Lord's supper occurred on the day of Passover and therefore was the Passover Meal according to the Jewish calendar is quite interesting. Of the possible years, twenty-nine to thirty-three, the years twenty-nine and thirty-two are discounted as the Passover could not have fallen on Friday or Saturday. Of those remaining years two favor John's account and two favor the synoptic Gospels. However, given the ambiguity of specifically which day new light was observed on the horizon to begin the month it is impossible to determine exactly when Passover occurred for these years. The best we can do is to calculate probable and possible dates. This process leads to the conclusion that Passover could have been on either a Friday or Saturday.

Figure 5.3: Possible Traditional Passover Dates

DATE	NEW LIGHT	NEW LIGHT PLUS ONE DAY
14 Nisan 30	Thursday April 6th	Friday April 7th
15 Nisan 30	*Friday April 7th NOT PROBABLE	*Saturday April 8th PROBABLE
14 Nisan 31	Wednesday April 25th	Thursday April 26th
15 Nisan 31	Thursday April 26th	*Friday April 27th POSSIBLE
14 Nisan 33	Friday April 3rd	Saturday April 4th
15 Nisan 33	*Saturday April 4th PROBABLE	Sunday April 5th

There is another issue which must be considered with the use of astronomy to determine whether or not the Lord's supper was a Passover meal. With recent revelations from the Dead Sea Scrolls we must consider whether or not Jesus was in communication with the Essene community at Qumran and if so to what degree



was he influenced by them.<sup>19</sup> Although there is no documentation that Jesus ever visited Qumran recent translations and commentaries on the Dead Sea Scrolls show a remarkable parallelism between many of the religious tenets and lifestyle values held by Jesus and the Essene community.<sup>20</sup> It is certainly within the realm of possibility that there were open lines of communication between the Essene community and Jesus. If this was so it is significant to recognize that the Essenes used a solar calendar and that Passover always fell on Tuesday. If Jesus did use the Essene calendar then John's statement at the beginning of John 13 that the Lord's supper occurred before the Passover is correct. However, there is a problem with this assumption. If Jesus followed the Essene calendar he probably would have also followed their dietary laws. However, the Lord's supper has the participants eating meat and drinking wine while the Essenes were vegetarians and did not drink wine.

Therefore despite the use of multiple references and disciplines we must acknowledge the exact date of the Lord's supper will remain a mystery.

## WORDS OF BLESSING

The earliest description of Christian worship is from Justin Martyr's<sup>21</sup> second century description of Christians gathering from town and country on the first day of the week which is the day celebrated as the resurrection. In light of this description it may be possible already to see the reflections of a service of word and sacrament in such passages as Luke 24:13-32 where the risen Jesus relates the scriptures to the two travelers on the road to Emmaus and is made known to them in the breaking of the bread.<sup>22</sup> Luke's version is the short form from the D source.<sup>23</sup> The omissions in this text compared to other Greek texts are known as the Western Non-Interpretations.

Before we exegete Jesus words at the Lord's supper it will be helpful to review them in parallel form including a discussion of the text notes.

19. A Jewish sect renowned for its asceticism and community life style. The Essenes are credited with creating and hiding the Dead Sea Scrolls. There is a lively debate in scholarship today as to the exact nature of the community at Qumran.

20. See Robert Eisenman and Michael Wise, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered*, (New York: Element, 1974) and Hershel Shanks, ed, *Understanding The Dead Sea Scrolls*, New York: Random House, 1992).

21. Justin Martyr, *First Apology* (66:1-3; ca. 150).

22. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 820.

23. *Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis*, 5<sup>th</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> century.

Figure 5.4: The Lord's Supper

MATTHEW 26:26-29	MARK 14:22-25	LUKE 22:15-20
<p>See below, v. 29</p> <p>26. Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, <i>Take, eat; this is my body.</i> 27. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, <i>Drink of it all of you;</i> 28. <i>for this is my blood of the (u) covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (*)</i> 29. <i>I tell you I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.</i></p>	<p>See below, v. 25</p> <p>22. And as they were eating, he took bread, and blessed, and broke it, and gave it to them and said, <i>Take; this is my body.</i> 23. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, and they all drank of it. 24. And he said to them, <i>This is my blood of the (v) covenant, which is poured out for many. (*)</i> 25. <i>Truly, I say to you, I shall not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.</i></p>	<p>15. And he said to them, <i>I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer;</i> 16. <i>for I tell you I shall not eat it (s) until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God.</i> 17. And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he said, <i>Take this, and divide it among yourselves;</i> 18. <i>for I tell you that from now on I shall not drink of the fruit of the vine until the kingdom of God comes.</i> 19. And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, <i>This is my body.</i> (*,t) (See vs 16, 18)</p>

Text notes:

(a): (\*) Paul adds: For I received of the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, *This is my body which is broken for you. Do this in remembrance of me.* In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, *This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.*<sup>24</sup>

Paul had stayed in Corinth for eighteen months during his second missionary journey (50-51 C.E.).<sup>25</sup> As Paul uses the past tense delivered in I Corinthians 11:23-26 written in 55-56 C.E. we may assume Paul's reference to the practice of the Lord's supper using both bread and wine was taught to the Corinthians during his visit in 50-51 C.E.. Therefore, from the earliest days of the church the practice of the celebration of the Lord's supper included both bread and wine.

To fully understand and appreciate the words of Jesus at the meal which the early church called the Lord's supper we must see the variant versions in their broadest cultural setting as they appear in different ancient documents.

(b): t Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis and Itala (Old Latin) [some MSS] add verses 19b-20: *which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.* And likewise the cup after supper, saying, *This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.*<sup>26</sup>

Many Greek manuscripts, the Vulgate, and Egyptian manuscripts add verses 19, 20a (after supper), and 17, 20b *This blood of mine is the new covenant*<sup>27</sup>

(c): u and v: Many Greek manuscripts, the Vulgate, and Egyptian manuscripts add: new<sup>28</sup>

To Matthew 26:27-28 cf. Justin, *Apology* I.66.3:

*For the apostles, in the writings composed by them which are called gospels, have thus delivered what was demanded of them: that Jesus took bread, gave thanks and said, "Do this in remembrance of me; this is my body." And likewise he took*

24. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 166.

25. RSV, I Corinthians 11:23-25. See the Gallio inscription in A.H. McNeile, *St. Paul, His Life, Letters and Christian Doctrine*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920).

26. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 166.

27. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 166.

28. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 166.

*the cup and when he had given thanks he said, "This is my blood." 29*

We will now exegete the words spoken by at the Lord's supper. The first issue is that in Matthew and Mark the words of blessing are symmetrical while in Luke and Paul they are asymmetrical. Matthew and Mark write:

*This is my body*

*This is my blood*

while Luke and Paul write:

*This is my body*

*This cup is the new covenant in my blood*

Although the symmetrical form is stronger from a literary sense, the asymmetrical form is the more primitive form. If Jesus spoke these words in the context of a meal then it is likely there was an interval between the eating of the bread and the drinking of wine. In this context the asymmetrical form makes sense as the eating of the bread and drinking of the wine are not related actions.

The crux of the problem has to do with linguistics as the gospel writers and Paul wrote in Greek while Jesus spoke in Aramaic. The Aramaic words that Jesus used were either *fisra'* or *qupha'*

*fisra'*      This is me in my totality

*qupha'*      This is I in my totality

while the Synoptic writers and Paul used the Greek word *soma* which means body while John used the Greek word *sarx* which means flesh. John cites that Jesus told the multitude at Capernaum:

*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him.*<sup>30</sup>

---

29. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 166.

30. RSV, John 6:52-56.

The gospel writers and Paul had difficulty conveying the conceptual understanding of Jesus speaking in Aramaic when translating his words into Greek. This is because it is not possible to precisely translate a cultural nuance from Aramaic which is a Semitic language to Greek which is an Indo-European language. Therefore, they Hellenized Jesus's understanding of himself by using the language of Platonic philosophy. The use of *soma* and *sarx* in Greek to express the cross cultural essence of Jesus makes sense in Greek as flesh and blood would appear as a normal Semitic pair. The problem is that they are not in fact a normal Semitic pair linguistically as it is impossible to translate *soma* and *sarx* back into Aramaic with the original Aramaic meaning of *fisra'* and *qupha'*.

When we overcome these linguistic difficulties and read Paul's first letter to the Corinthians we find that the true meaning of Jesus's words at the Lord's supper was unity.

*The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread.*<sup>31</sup>

In these few words of instruction Paul captures the true meaning of the Eucharist. However the understanding and expression of what Jesus meant at the Lord's supper was not universally understood or practiced. This is easily seen in chapter 11 when Paul rebukes the Corinthians not only for their misunderstanding but also for their profaning of the body and blood of the Lord:

*When you meet together, it is not the Lord's supper that you eat. For in eating, each one goes ahead with his own meal, and one is hungry and another is drunk. What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and humiliate those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I commend you in this? No, I will not.*<sup>32</sup>

In I Corinthians 11:23-26 Paul again instructs the Corinthians using the words of blessing. He then continues:

*Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of profaning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a man examine himself, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For any one who eats and drinks*

---

31. RSV, I Corinthians 10:16-17.

32. RSV, I Corinthians 11:20-22.

*without discerning the body eats and drinks judgment upon himself.*<sup>33</sup>

Paul is saying that when we partake of the Eucharistic elements without discernment and reverence we have no business to be at the Eucharist. One should not come to the table of the Lord without proper spiritual preparation because this profanes the memorial ritual. We have a responsibility to approach the Lord's table only after prayer, reflection, and self-examination which will prepare us to receive the gifts of God in a manner which promotes unity. It is in this corporate act of remembrance that we are transformed from a group of many individuals into a single body with one another and with God.<sup>34</sup>

In I Corinthians 10 the vocabulary associated with the Passover memorial is sacrificial language. The reverence of the gift and the giving is the sacrifice of ourselves. John sees the Eucharist as a meal symbolizing life, unity, and membership in the kingdom of God. The Eucharist is a bearer of life. Life is to know God, and Jesus the Christ, son of God. To know God and Jesus is to acknowledge and follow the teachings of Jesus.

In addition to the words of blessing there are several other words and phrases which illuminate a more complete meaning of the Eucharist.

### 1. *for you or for many*

In a choice between these two phrases the phrase for many is preferred. This is because it makes reference to a larger community which is symbolic of the covenant community of the Jews.

### 2. *new*

This adjective in all probability was not present in the more original forms. However the sense of the word as origin of the unknown before reality is evident therefore new is implied. Thus: *This is my body; This cup is the (new) covenant in my blood* (poured out for many).

### 3. *Do this in memory of me*

The command to repeat the ritual of the bread and cup of the Lord's supper appears in Luke and Paul but not in Matthew and Mark. Did Jesus actually say this or is this an addition of the church who saw it as necessary to re-enact or commemorate

33. RSV, I Corinthians 11:27-29.

34. This is why it is necessary for Christians to be present and participate in church services. The body of Christ needs all of its members to be complete and to the extent of those absent it is diminished.

Jesus in this manner? Jesus may or may not have said this but there is no way we can intelligently decide the issue. It could be that Matthew and Mark saw this phrase as a rubric, an instruction, not something to be quoted as part of the words of Jesus. In this sense we are to remember Jesus and therefore praise God. In the Jewish sense it would be a call from us to God as king invoking that God remember the promised Messiah and bring in the new age. Consequently, proclaiming the mystery of faith during the rite of modern day Eucharist is calling upon the Father to remember his promise and praying for the coming of the new age.<sup>35</sup>

#### 4. *A vow of abstinence*

In Matthew and Mark the phrase stating Jesus will not drink wine again until he is in the kingdom of God comes before the blessing of the bread and wine. However in Luke those words are spoken after the blessing and we have the impression that Jesus was acting as a host who serves his guests but does not eat the meal with them. In both cases the vow of abstinence has a significant degree of eschatological expectation. The offering of the cup can easily become a symbol of the cup of the new age. Bread in ancient Hebrew culture was synonymous with sustenance. In the blessing of the bread Jesus makes the connection between himself and the Exodus. Manna, the bread of life, was provided by God during the forty years in the wilderness. It came as a small seed which had to be gathered before the sun became hot and it melted. Once gathered the seeds were ground into flour and baked like bread. The blessing of the bread is highly eschatological as Jesus means it not only as sustenance for the here and now but also as the symbol of the heavenly banquet when all shall sit at the Lord's table.

#### 5. *The aphigomon*

The Passover meal starts with the *aphigomon*. The *aphigomon* is a piece of unleavened bread which is taken away and hidden until the meal is finished and then returned to the table as dessert. The word *aphigomon* is not Semitic and is a mystery word to the Jews. It is most likely of Greek origin and if so the most likely candidates for translation are *epherchomenos* or *apherchomenos* which means coming one. In this context the words over the bread at the Lord's supper could mean: *This is the bread of the coming one*; that is, *This is my body*.

We may now draw three conclusions about the words of blessing:

---

35. There are liturgists who feel that proclaiming the mystery of faith is a catechetical statement.

1. The asymmetrical form is the original form.
2. There is an interval between the bread and the cup.
3. There is an independent significance of each phrase.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORDS OF BLESSING

We will now consider the significance of the words spoken by Jesus and to those who heard them. We will cite specific meanings for three *Sitz im Leben*:

1. The meaning of the words the night of the Passover meal.
2. Their development after the Lord's supper.
- 3 Their theological development after the Lord's supper.

On the night of the Lord's supper Jesus and the disciples partake of a common meal which would have created a bond of unity even if there were no words spoken. All that share in the meal also share in the blessings over the food. Jesus says, *this is me* of the bread which creates additional unity between him and the disciples. After the meal he says of the cup, *this cup is the new covenant*. This makes it a fellowship cup, a new age cup, and a kingdom cup. If Passover, the cup symbolizes the eschatological new age which has already begun in Jesus. The words, *I will not taste* are eschatological and represent the promise of the new age to come. If Jesus said, *in my blood* it represents an element of death. This blood covenant recalls the Mosaic Covenant at Sinai which is replaced by the new covenant of Jesus. *For the many* is II Isaiah servant material or possibly is from Daniel. *For the many* reflects apocalyptic thought.

The difficulty in understanding the words of blessing on the night of the Lord's supper is that we do not know the specific intent. Scholarship agrees that Jesus did not intend to initiate a new cultic rite. However, it is also clear that this was more than just an ordinary Passover or seder meal. The unanswerable question is: *to what degree was Jesus aware of the meaning of his coming death and resurrection?*

The evolution of the Lord's supper which Jesus shared with his disciples to a community ritual developed gradually. From the gospels it is clear that other than saying the words of blessing Jesus gave little explanation of his actions and even less as how the disciples were to continue after his death. It is the mystery of the resurrection and need of early Christians to understand the prophet Jesus during that time which propels the need to develop an understanding of the meaning of the Lord's supper and words of blessing. As successive generations heard and read what they believed to be his intent at the Lord's supper there came a birth of ritual



and ceremony not only as a remembrance but as a christological elevation of the Lord.

The development of the Lord's supper as a cultic ritual begins with an understanding that since Jesus did not institute a cultic rite his followers certainly did by the time of I Corinthians. Its prior use by the time of I Corinthians presupposes that a memorial meal was established soon after his death. If Jesus did not mention his blood during the Lord's supper and equate it to his death by I Corinthians his followers had that understanding. The context of the rite changed dramatically so that by the time Paul wrote I Corinthians at least in some places it was a picnic type of meal and not a memorial of Jesus.

The action of the bread and cup are brought together in symmetrical form. In Matthew and Mark the words of blessing are brought together with no mention of an interval between; therefore, body and blood are symmetrical. John states *eats flesh and drinks blood* which is symmetrical in form with *sarx* for flesh.

Is the *breaking of the bread* in Acts the same as that found in Corinthians? It is likely but no one knows for sure.<sup>36</sup> The Ebionites celebrated a meal once a year at Passover but in other places there were celebratory meals similar to the Passover meal several times a year. If the Lord's supper was not the Passover meal one may question if the early church fused the Lords's supper to another culture's ceremony.

The words of blessing were changed from an asymmetrical form to a symmetrical form as the Christian community's language changed from Aramaic and Hebrew to Greek. This was necessary because the mechanics of Aramaic and Hebrew which are Semitic languages are quite different from that of Greek which is an Indo-European language.

The theological development of the Lord's supper began after the resurrection. The church's understanding is extended so that the Lord's supper refers to both the death and resurrection of Jesus. Subsequently, Paul teaches that the goal of the Eucharist is unity among all present and with God when we participate in the body of Christ and fellowship in the body and blood of Christ. Conversely, he teaches that profaning the body and blood of the Lord results in disunity. The words of blessing change from the asymmetrical form to the symmetrical form of *chewing flesh; drinking blood*. The meal and its key elements of bread and wine are identified with the body and blood of the risen Lord. This identification is not strictly symbolic but developmentally becomes the real presence of Jesus which later evolves into the Doctrine of Transubstantiation.<sup>37</sup> However, we do not know

---

36. The phrase *breaking bread* is used in Acts 2:42; 46 in conjunction with Pentecost.

37. The Doctrine of Transubstantiation is the belief that the bread and wine used in the sacrament are converted into the actual body and blood of Christ who is therefore truly present. The doctrine was rejected by the Protestant reformers. The Council of Trent (1545-1569) called to combat Protestantism and to reform the discipline of the Roman Catholic Church re-affirmed the Doctrine of Transubstantiation. The penalty for disbelief was eternal damnation of one's soul. Today many Roman Catholics as well as Protestants have adopted

the origin, sense, or context that John and Paul mean when they speak the presence of Jesus.

## THE TWO SWORDS

When the Lord's supper had been completed but before the disciples left for the Garden of Gethsemane there is the curious story of the two swords found only in Luke.

Figure 5.5: The Two Swords

And he said to them, *When I sent you out with no purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?* They said, *Nothing.* He said to them, *But now, let him who has a purse take it, and likewise a bag. And let him who has no sword sell his mantle and buy one. For I tell you this scripture must be fulfilled in me, "And he was reckoned with transgressors" for what is written about me has its fulfillment.* And they said, *Look, Lord, here are two swords.* And he said to them, *It is enough.*<sup>38</sup>

At first reading it appears little more than a transitional paragraph between the Lord's supper and the arrest of Jesus at Gethsemane. However, it is difficult to trace the origin of these words. There are several possible explanations for their insertion by Luke which include the fulfillment of Isaiah 53,<sup>39</sup> a story about misunderstanding, an explanation for the sword in the Garden of Gethsemane, or Luke making a theological statement which is not based on an historical event.

The easiest way to understand Luke's meaning in this episode is to examine its key words and phrases. However, first we must exegete Luke 22:28-30 as the meaning of the two swords episode must be juxtaposed against the background of the teaching which is its immediate predecessor.

---

the concept of consubstantiation which Martin Luther described as the presence of Christ in the Eucharist *under or with the elements of bread and wine.*

38. RSV, Luke 22:35-38.

39. Isaiah 53 is the Suffering Servant material often believed to predict Jesus, his passion, and crucifixion. Contemporary scholarship rejects this position and holds that Isaiah was writing as a *sensus plenior*; that is, he did not know the meaning his writing would have in the future. It is important to note that Isaiah could not predict Jesus as Messiah because there was no concept of Messiah when Isaiah was writing during the Exile. It is not until after the Jews returned from the Babylonian Exile and the expected new Davidic kingdom centered in Jerusalem did not happen that the concept of a deliverer to come in the future in the form of the Messiah developed.

28. *You are those who have continued with me in my trials;*
29. *and I assign to you, as my Father assigned to me, a kingdom, 30. that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*

Upon examination verse 28 is reinforced in recognition of the opposition to the church during the long and indefinite time between Jesus' passion, ascension, and the parousia.<sup>40</sup> Most commentators recognize the very archaic character of this *logion*,<sup>41</sup> echoing the sound of Jesus's speech quite distinctly. Luke probably introduced verse 28 because of the theme of quarrels between the disciples. Until his death Jesus had borne the full brunt of the opposition and shielded his disciples from harm. However, as the apostles share in the mission of Jesus which reaches its glory through the cross they must now face similar trials.

V. 28. *having continued:*

The use of the perfect tense of the Greek verb, *memenekotes*, informs the apostles that the condition of this moment of trial persists for a long time.

---

40. A word used in classical and Koine Greek which means *presence* but also means *arrival* and *coming*. It is found four times in the Septuagint and twenty-four times in the New Testament. In Hellenistic literature the term was frequently used in connection with the official visit of a ruler or the epiphany of a deity. In Christianity the term refers to the coming of Christ at the end of history and this eschatological usage may have been created by the Christian community if the *Testament of Levi* (8:15) and *Testament of Judah* (22:2) are of Christian origin. The term does not occur in Philo and is not used eschatologically by Josephus although he does use it with reference to divine manifestations (*Antiquity*.III.v.2). It is to be noted that the term *parousia* is often interchanged with the *Second Coming of Christ* however the term *Second Coming* does not occur until Justin Martyr in the second century. See *IDB*, K-Q, 658-661.

41. A transliteration of the term *Agrapha* which means *unwritten things* was coined in the 18<sup>th</sup> century by J.G. Korner for sayings purporting to be by Jesus but not recorded in the canonical gospels. The term *logia* is of special interest because of its use by Papias in the early second century and quoted by Eusebius to the effect that Matthew was responsible for the arrangement or writing down of the *logia* of Jesus in Hebrew/Aramaic. Some have suggested that Papias was referring to the Gospel of Matthew or a lost Aramaic gospel such as the Gospel of the Hebrews. This position is refuted by the fact that Matthew's gospel was composed in Greek. The most popular hypothesis today is that the *logia* of Papias are to be identified with a sayings source such as the Q source. This position is supported by the restricted meaning the word usually has in the Septuagint, New Testament, Clement of Rome, Polycarp, and Justin Martyr. See *IDB*, A-D, 56 and K-Q, 149.

V. 29. *appointed:*

Literally, disposed, the Greek root being the same as that from which *diatheke* (covenant) is derived. Jesus implies: we have been covenanted in a kingdom; the same kingdom with which I am covenanted with the Father.

V. 30. *judging the twelve tribes:*

Judge is to be understood in the sense of the Old Testament judges, men chosen by God and endowed with a charism, either to vindicate God's will which had been compromised by sin, or to take an active role in proclaiming that God's promises of salvation are fulfilled. The twelve tribes symbolizes the new Israel, the Christian community.<sup>42</sup>

Now we can exegete the episode of the two swords.

1. *Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals; and salute no one on the road*

This is a reference to Luke 10:4; also see Luke 9:1-11. This verse is a definite reference to Jesus' instructions to the seventy-two disciples.<sup>43</sup> Most commentators take the references to purse, wallet, and sword figuratively. According to H. Schurmann in *Der Abendmahlsbericht* these words may stem from a departure ceremony for missionaries in the early Church.<sup>44</sup>

2. *was reckoned with the lawless*

Jesus refers to himself as the suffering servant of Isaiah 53:12. The quotation is introduced by the Greek particle, *gar*, which links what follows with what preceded. Thus, Jesus and the disciples are associated in common suffering and trial.

3. *Contrast between Jesus and the disciples*

Luke skillfully delineates the contrast between Jesus and the disciples and also sets

42. *JBC*, II, 158.

43. *RSV*, Luke 10:1-12. The details of this account comes from the Q Source. Some manuscripts have 70 as the number and evidence supporting either number is about equal. See B.M. Metzger, "Seventy or Seventy-Two Disciples" in *New Testament Studies*, 5, 1958-1959), 299.

44. H. Schurmann, *Der Abendmahlsbericht*, (Paderborn, 1957), 60.

up a contrast between verse 38 and verse 37: *But they said...but he said on the contrary...*

#### 4. *two swords*

The disciples understand Jesus literally and fail to see the hidden depth of meaning in his figurative language about opposition from others and service to those who oppose them within the long period before the parousia.

#### 5. *it is enough*

This is a formula of dismissal from Deuteronomy 3:26 as found in the Septuagint. It appears Jesus speaks this sentence with a sigh of sadness; almost failure.

We are still left with the question of whether these are the historical words of Jesus or Luke's creation. If they are the historical words of Jesus then all that has gone before is canceled. The lives of the disciples are altered and they must now guard themselves by worldly means in view of the crisis of the arrest of Jesus. However, the more plausible explanation is that the story of the two swords is Luke's creation written in retrospect to explain how/why one or more disciples had a sword in the Garden of Gethsemane. Neither explanation is satisfactory because it is unlikely that Jesus wanted swords to be carried to prevent his arrest or assassination. Additionally, the swords would identify him and his followers as revolutionaries to the Jewish leaders and Romans which was the antithesis of Jesus' message. Whether the story was told by Jesus or is Luke's invention the disciples unperceptive literalism evokes an ironical dismissal of the subject and we are left with the feeling that we have only heard half the story.

## THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE

The gospel writers state the disciples conversation on the way and the prophesy of Peter's denial in a similar manner; however, Luke is significantly silent about the statement that they all would fall away. The writers relate that Jesus and the disciples went directly from the meal to the Mount of Olives and in Matthew and Mark they sing hymns along the way. Matthew and Mark are based on Zechariah:

*"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me," says the Lord of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, that the sheep may be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones."*<sup>45</sup>

---

45. RSV, Zechariah 13:7.

Luke recounts the episode differently:

*And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.*<sup>46</sup>

which is based on Psalm 38:

*My friends and companions stand aloof from my plague, and my kinsmen stand afar off.*<sup>47</sup>

At this point both Matthew 26:32 and Mark 14:28 have a prediction of the resurrection and a post-resurrection appearance in Galilee:

*But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee.*

This verse does not appear in Luke or John nor does it appear in the *Fayum Fragment* and is therefore thought to be anachronistic in Matthew and Mark.<sup>48</sup>

All four gospel writers have the prophesy of Peter's denial which will occur before the end of the Roman military's third watch.<sup>49</sup> In Matthew and Mark the prophesy occurs on the way to Gethsemane while in John it occurs at the Lord's supper. In Matthew and Luke it is a tri-fold denial while in Mark it occurs twice.

Luke has a prediction of Peter's denial. It occurs during the Lord's supper<sup>50</sup> as part *c* of the *last words* wherein part *a* is *the betrayal foretold*, part *b* is *the greatness in the Kingdom of God*, part *c* is *Peter's denial prophesied*, and part *d* is *the two swords*, i.e., Luke 22:21-38.<sup>51</sup> Luke's version is unique in that the pronoun you found twice in verse 31 is plural while in verse 32 it is singular.

31. *Simon, Simon, behold, Satan demanded to have you* [Greek plural you], *that he might sift you* [Greek plural you] *like wheat,*  
 32. *but I have prayed for you* [Greek singular you] *that your faith may not fail; and when you have turned again, strengthen your brethren.*  
 33. *And he said to him, "Lord, I am ready to go with you to prison and to death."* 34. *He said, "I tell you, Peter, the cock will not crow this day,*

46. RSV, Luke 23:49.

47. RSV, Psalm 38:11.

48. The *Fragment Fajjumense* (*Fayum Fragment*) is parallel to Mark 14:27-30 but omits verse 28. Dating from the 3rd century C.E. it was discovered in Vienna in 1885 in the collection of Archduke Rainer. It is not known if it comes from a gospel text or is a homiletical paraphrase of the passage.

49. Roman Third Watch: 12:00 Midnight to 3:00 A.M..

50. RSV, Luke 22:21-23.

51. RSV, 102; Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 167.

*until you three times deny that you know me.”*<sup>52</sup>

In Matthew and Mark both Peter and the disciples reject the prediction. In John neither Peter nor the disciples make a response. The prophesy of Peter's denial looks forward to his restoration and leadership of the apostles. Luke sets the context at the Lord's supper and the teaching about the kingdom of God. Mark's setting is on the way to Gethsemane. Satan has gained power over all the disciples to divert them from their mission. Jesus prays for Peter as the apostolic leader that his steadfastness may not permanently fail. Peter prefers to trust in himself and asserts his devotion in words recalling Ittai's devotion to David.<sup>53</sup>

Figure 5.6 Jesus in Gethsemane

Matthew 26:36-46	Mark 14:32-42	Luke 22:40-46
<p>36 Then Jesus went with them to a place called Gethsemane, and he said to his disciples, <i>Sit here, while I go yonder and pray.</i>" (a)                      37 And taking with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, he began to be sorrowful and troubled. 38 Then he said to them, <i>My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch with me.</i>"(b)                      39 And going a little farther, he fell on his face and prayed, <i>My</i></p>	<p>32 And they went to a place which was called Gethsemane; and he said to his disciples, <i>Sit here, while I pray.</i>" 33 And he took with him Peter and James and John, and began to be greatly distressed and troubled. 34 And he said to them, <i>My soul is very sorrowful, even to death; remain here, and watch.</i>"                      35 And going a little farther, he fell on the ground and prayed that,</p>	<p>40 And when he came to the place he said to them,"  <i>Pray that you may not enter into temptation</i>                      41 And he withdrew from them about a stone's throw, and</p>

52. RSV, Luke 22:31-32.

53. The story of Ittai the Gittite is quite interesting. A Gittite is a native of Gath and a Philistine. Ittai was a member of David's army and appears during the revolution of Absalom in 1032 B.C.E.. He is first mentioned in II Samuel 15:19-22. David is preparing for battle and urges him to return camp as he arrived only the day before. Ittai tells David he is the king's slave and where ever his master goes so will he. Ittai again appears in II Samuel 18:2, 5, 12 when the army is numbered and organized by David at Mahanaim. Ittai is now in command of one-third of David's army.

<p><i>Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.”</i> (c)</p> <p>40 And he came to the disciples and found them sleeping; and he said to Peter,</p> <p><i>So you could not watch with me one hour?</i></p> <p>41 <i>Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.</i> 42 Again for the second time, he went away and prayed, <i>My Father, if this cannot pass unless I drink it, thy will be done.</i> 43 And again he came and found Them sleeping, for their eyes were heavy. 44 So, leaving them again, he went away and prayed for the third time, saying the same words. 45 Then he came to the disciples and said to them, <i>Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? Behold, the hour is at</i></p>	<p>if it were possible, the hour might pass from him. 36 And he said, <i>Abba, Father, all Things are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what thou wilt.”</i></p> <p>37 And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, <i>Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour?</i></p> <p>38 <i>Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.</i> And again he went away and prayed, saying the same words.</p> <p>40 And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him.</p> <p>41 And he came a third time, and said to them, <i>Are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour</i></p>	<p>knelt down and prayed, <i>Father, if thou art</i></p> <p><i>willing, remove this cup from me, nevertheless Not my will, but thine, be done.”</i></p> <p>43 And there appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him. 44 And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly; and his sweat became like great drops of blood falling down upon the ground. 45 And when he rose from prayer, he came to the disciples and found them sleeping for sorrow, 46 and he said to them, <i>Why do you sleep?</i></p> <p><i>Rise and pray that you may not enter into temptation</i></p>
--	---	--



<p><i>hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand. (d)</i></p>	<p><i>has come; the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand.</i></p>	
---	---	--

Text notes:

(a): To Matthew 26:36 and parallels cf. John 18:1.

(b): To Matthew 26:38 = Mark 14:34 cf. John 12:27 *Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? "Father, save me from this hour?" No, for this purpose I have come to this hour.*"

(c): To Matthew 26:39b and parallels cf. John 18:11 *Jesus said to Peter, "...shall I not drink the cup which the Father has given me?"*

(d): To Matthew 26:46 = Mark 14:42 cf. John 14:31 *Rise, let us go hence.*

John 18:1 is parallel to the synoptic account as it states Jesus and the disciples crossed the Kidron valley to Gethsemane but John has no additional information until the arrest. Also included is John 12:27 where the explanation of Jesus about the cup passing him paints a picture opposite that of the synoptic Gospels as well as John 18:11 in which Jesus refers to the cup in his response to Peter after he strikes the High Priest's slave with a sword.

In the synoptic account of Matthew and Mark the disciples Peter, James, and John form a separate group of three while Luke cites only Peter and John as the disciples Jesus takes with him when he goes to pray. Each of the three times Jesus goes a short distance away to pray alone he tells them to wait, watch, and pray that they do not fall into temptation.

The Synoptic account of the prayer of Jesus in Gethsemane is twofold and the future is open. In the first part of the prayer Jesus recognizes that all things are possible with the Father and asks that the cup pass; be removed from him. In the second part of the prayer Jesus states that not his will be done but rather that his Father's will be done.<sup>54</sup> Thus in the synoptic account there is no absolute outcome

---

54. In Luke 22 verses 43 and 44 are missing from some of the most important manuscripts, i.e., P<sup>75</sup> (*Geneva Papyrus*); B (*Codex Vaticanus*); S<sup>c</sup> (*Syriac Version*); A (*Codex Alexandrinus*); W (*Washington [Freer] MS*); and T (*Korldeithi Gospels*). Also, many Patristic writers noted their absence as documented in J.A. Fitzmyer, "Miscellanea Biblica: Saint John Chrysotome On History In The Synoptics," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 24

that must occur. This is in direct contrast to John 12:27 where Jesus says:

*Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say?  
"Father, save me from this hour? No, for this purpose I have  
come to this hour."* <sup>55</sup>

After Simon Peter cuts off the ear of Malchus the High Priest's slave John, Jesus says to Peter:

*Put your sword into its sheath; shall I not drink the  
cup which the Father has given me?* <sup>56</sup>

There is little if any difficulty understanding the synoptic and John's accounts of this prayer. There is difficulty understanding his instruction to watch and not be drawn into temptation as these are ambiguous words. For what, specifically, are the disciples to watch? Are they to watch for Jesus, his enemies, to stay awake, or perhaps something seemingly unrelated to the immediate circumstance? Also, what kind of temptation are they apt to fall into? Is it to flee, to deny the sense of Jesus' prayer, fall asleep, or again some evil seemingly unrelated to the immediate circumstance?

Although there is no correlative material on which to base a response one possible explanation is given by C.K. Barret in *Jesus and the Gospel Tradition* who suggests that we read watch and temptation in their New Testament sense. In this connotation to watch means to watch for the eschaton, the New Age, the kingdom of God about to break into human history. This is especially so if this is the Passover; therefore, Jesus prays that the Father will bring about the eschaton in the manner of praying the Lord's Prayer,

*Thy kingdom come; thy will be done; on earth as it is in heaven;  
lead us not into temptation; but deliver us from evil. [the evil one]*

Temptation then refers to a messianic trial and is apocalyptic in nature. Jesus and the disciples will share in some great task in which evil is destroyed and the eschaton, the New Age, the kingdom of God, is made manifest on earth in our time.

---

(1962): 177-179. The reason for the omission of these verses is found in the *JBC*, 159: The lines constitute a problem for anyone *defending* the divinity of Jesus. The angel strengthens Jesus, perhaps reminding him of the full effects of his passion-glorification; and in the agony of what lay ahead (cf. 13:24), Jesus placed his thoughts and desires in those of the Father and there found acceptance.

55. *RSV*, John 12:27.

56. *RSV*, John 18:11.

## SUMMARY

As the Passover nears Jesus tells the disciples to go into the city and make preparations. There are three acts connected with preparation for the Passover which are of considerable significance: an apparent prediction of the future beyond human capability, the washing of the disciples feet, and the anointing of Jesus.

It is impossible to determine whether or not the Lord's supper was the Passover meal. The synoptic writers support the belief it was the Passover meal while John states the meal occurred prior to Passover. However if Jesus, like the Essenes, used a solar calendar the Passover would have been on a Tuesday and the synoptic version would be incorrect while John's account would be correct.

There is also a significant difference in the way the words of blessing are presented in the synoptic Gospels and John. It is most likely that in the original text there was an interval between the bread and wine and the words spoken were in asymmetrical form. However, John makes the text symmetrical by using the Greek words *soma* and *sarx* for flesh and blood. Although this dualism is commensurate with Greek language and culture it cannot be translated back into either Hebrew or Aramaic with the same meaning as these concepts do not exist in Semitic languages or culture.

Regardless of the linguistic problems a remembrance ceremony which included the words of blessing was taught to the Corinthians by Paul during his visit in 50-51 C.E.. As this was certainly not the origin of the breaking of the bread it is likely a remembrance ceremony encompassing both the bread and wine occurred shortly after the resurrection. Eating bread and drinking wine during the ceremony was seen as a visual reminder of the unity of Christians with one another and with God.

The understanding of the significance of the words of blessing changed as the early church developed. At the Passover meal the cup was a cup of fellowship, a new age cup, and a kingdom cup. It symbolized the new age had begun in Jesus. After the Lord's supper the words of blessing and ceremony become a cultic rite. The words of blessing are brought together in symmetrical form. With a developing understanding of the resurrection the ceremony is extended to include a memorial to his resurrection as well as his death. The elements of bread and wine became to be understood as the actual presence of Jesus which later would become the Doctrine of Transubstantiation.

The episode of the two swords does not seem to fit into the rest of the gospel account and is found only in Luke. The episode begins with a commissioning ceremony which is a reference to the instructions given the seventy-two disciples and ends with the formula dismissal from Deuteronomy 3:26. It may well be that this is a literary device to act as a transition between the scenes of the Lord's supper and the Garden of Gethsemane to explain that the road between Jesus' death and the parousia would be long and difficult. However, its intent is the same as the words of blessing in that Jesus is making the point of unity between himself and the Father and the disciples and himself. This relationship is to be understood in

terms of the Suffering Servant material of Isaiah 53.

In the Garden of Gethsemane episode Matthew and Mark include a prediction of the resurrection and post-resurrection appearance in Galilee but as this does not appear in Luke or John it is thought to be anachronistic. All four gospel writers include Peter's denial; however, in Matthew and Luke it is a tri-fold denial while in Mark it occurs twice.

The tableau of the Lord's supper ends in the Garden of Gethsemane when Jesus is praying. His prayer is one of openness to the will of the Father including suffering and death. However, there is a significant difference in the prayer as it is found in the synoptic Gospels and John. In the Synoptic account the prayer is twofold and the future is open. But in John the outcome is absolute: Jesus must die.

## Chapter 6

---

### It Is Finished: The Death of Jesus

#### THE ARREST OF JESUS

The bias in the synoptic account of the actions of the Romans and Jews at the arrest of Jesus is pro-Roman and anti-Jewish. This is necessary as the primary goals of the synoptic writers were political: first to distance Christianity from Judaism and secondly, to show that Christians should have nothing to fear from the Romans as long as they did not openly challenge the Roman establishment. The explanation of why John would have the Romans present is quite different: he wanted to document their presence or he wanted to use their involvement for a symbolic reason. As no one has found a symbolic reason for the presence of the Romans in John's account its contrast with the Synoptics gives his record of events a certain degree of respect and credibility and is the more likely scenario.

There are three questions to be addressed in the arrest of Jesus.

1. Were the Romans really present at the time of arrest?
2. Were the Pharisees involved in the arrest or present at the time of arrest?
3. Who is the young man portrayed in Mark who runs away naked?

In each of the synoptic accounts Pontus Pilate is prepared for the trial at dawn Friday morning. This account lacks credibility as there are no extra-biblical historical documents describing the Roman legal system which include a reference to trials at dawn. We must ask the following questions: how ready for trial was Pilate, was there a warrant issued for the arrest and was the trial on the docket. As there is no record of these legal proceedings against Jesus in Roman legal documents or extra-biblical material the answer is most likely no. The word cohort is problematic when describing the number of men who came to arrest Jesus

a Roman cohort was made up of six hundred men.<sup>1</sup> The only way this term has validity is if Jesus was part of a general arrest of troublemakers and part of the cohort was sent to arrest him. The Romans did not want trouble at the Passover therefore they increased security and arrested suspected dissidents. However, these dissidents were disruptors who the Romans feared would incite the masses to riot. As Jesus was not perceived as a violent insurgent the Romans had little reason to fear him and it is highly unlikely that any part of a cohort was sent to arrest him.

The involvement of the Pharisees has caused considerable debate among scholars but tends to support the anti-Jewish bias leading one to ask, why would the Pharisees be involved in the arrest of Jesus. The answer lies in the fact that all Jewish religious leaders had to maintain a balance between keeping the essentials of the faith and placating the Romans. Although Jesus was perceived as a nuisance he was not seen as a threat to their power or authority. However their view changed dramatically when he said he could rebuild the Temple in three days and subsequently appeared to raise Lazarus from the dead.<sup>2</sup> The issue for the Jewish religious leaders was not only a threat to their power and authority but also a fear that Jesus would disrupt the delicate relationship between themselves and the Romans. It is at this point that the decision was made by the High Priest Caiaphas, leader of the Sanhedrin, that the sacrifice of one person for the good of the nation was justified.<sup>3</sup> Jesus must be killed so that Judaism could continue unimpeded by a Roman persecution in response to what Jesus might say or do in the future. The name Sanhedrin is a Hebraist form of the Greek *synedrion* which means sitting together, session, or council. The Hebrew name, Sanhedrin, is used in the *Mishnah*<sup>4</sup> for the body of seventy-one chief priests, elders, and scribes who met under the leadership of the ruling high priest to decide Jewish religious, legal, and civil matters that did not pertain to the Roman governor.

The arrest of Jesus as reported by John is the only place in the four narratives where the Pharisees are identified in addition to the scribes.<sup>5</sup> This is an obvious bias against the Jews. However, all of the synoptic accounts speak of scribes at the arrest and at least some of them would be a part of the Sanhedrin.

It is significant that Luke mentions the involvement of rulers in the arrest as this term encompasses not only the Sanhedrin but secular leaders as well.

1. Each cohort consisted of three *maniples* (companies) and each *maniple* of two *centuries* for a total of 600 men. Ten cohorts (6,000 men) constituted a legion.

2. *RSV*, John 2:19; 11:1-44.

3. *RSV*, John 11:50.

4. The *Mishnah* is the collection of Jewish law compiled and edited by Judah the Prince in the early third century. It contains sixty-three tracts and has six divisions: *Zeraim* (Agriculture), *Moed* (Festivals), *Nashim* (Marriage), *Nezikin* (Damages), *Kodashim* (Sacrifices) and *Tohorot* (Purity).

5. *RSV*, John 18:3.

*Pilate then called together the chief priests and the rulers and the people...<sup>6</sup>*

Mark 14:51-52 is the only place in the New Testament which mentions the young man who runs away naked at the time of the arrest. There has been much speculation about who this young man was, why he was wearing only a linen garment, and why only Mark includes this rather obscure incident when relating the arrest of Jesus. No one has been able to absolutely identify this young man but idle conjectures have named various possible candidates: John the Apostle (by Ambrose, Chrysostom, and Bede); James the brother of the Lord (by Epiphanius); and John Mark in many contemporary commentaries.<sup>7</sup> It is not possible that Mark, the author of the gospel, who has been a popular choice of the laity was the young man considering the tradition of the early Church which ascribed the second gospel to Mark the disciple of Peter. The earliest statement is from Papias of Hierapolis who writing in the early second century quotes a still earlier source:

*This also the Elder said: Mark, who became Peter's interpreter, wrote accurately, though not in order, all that he remembered of the things said and done by the Lord. For he had neither heard the Lord nor been one of his followers, but afterward, as I said, he had followed Peter, who used to compose his discourses with a view to the needs [of his hearers], but not as if he were composing a systematic account of the Lord's sayings. So Mark did nothing blameworthy in thus writing some things just as he remembered them; for he was careful of this one thing, to omit none of the things he had heard and to state no untruth therein.<sup>8</sup>*

The fact that Mark's gospel was universally accepted may be taken as an index of the soundness of this tradition.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, Eusebius, Irenaeus, Tertullian,

6. RSV, Luke 23:13.

7. JBC, vol. 2, 55.

8. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, III.39. Papias was Bishop of Hierapolis and author of *Interpretation of the Lord's Oracles* (5 vols.). Only fragments exist in the works of Irenaeus, Eusebius, and medieval Byzantine exegetes and historians. The remarks of Papias about Mark and Matthew (as found in Eusebius) cannot be connected to gospel origins to their precise meaning or significance. Although Eusebius had a low opinion of Papias' scholarship (Papias valued oral stories about Jesus and the apostles told by the elders over written statements) he stated that Papias used I John and I Peter whereas others did not know of and/or use these sources.

9. Justin Martyr's reference (*Dialogue 106*) to Peter's *memoirs*. The Anti-Marchionite Prologue to Mark (ca. 160-180) states that the gospel was written after Peter's death. Irenaeus (ca. 180) in *Heresies* III.1.2 also states that Mark, the disciple and interpreter of

Clement of Alexandria, and Origen supported this understanding.

There are only two persons in Mark's gospel who are identified as young men: the one in the Garden of Gethsemane and the one at the tomb. Mark is saying that these figures represent a symbolic shedding of our garments at the Passion as we will be newly clothed at the resurrection. However, Flettermann rejects this interpretation as it does not relate to any known Markan motif and offers that these men are a personification of typical disciples.

## JEWISH LEGAL PROCEEDINGS

The discussion of the Jewish legal proceedings after the arrest of Jesus are similar in Matthew and Mark; however, Luke and John vary considerably. Each of the narratives includes two additional events: the denial of Peter and the abuse suffered by Jesus. However, before we exegete specific details of each Evangelist's version it will be helpful to view a synopsis of each Evangelist's narrative in synoptic form.

Figure 6.1: Synopsis of the Evangelists View of Jewish Legal Proceedings

MATTHEW 26:57-27:2 MARK 14:53-15:1	LUKE 22:54-23:1	JOHN 18:12-40
Jesus is lead to the house of Caiaphas. There is a night session of the Sanhedrin. Details are given, there is dialogue, there are witnesses, a trial, and Jesus is condemned. In the morning there is another session of the Sanhedrin for consultation and Jesus is sent to Pilate.	Jesus is brought to the house of Caiaphas at night. There are no proceedings. In the morning there is a session of the Sanhedrin with details similar to the account in Matthew and Mark. However, there is no indication of witnesses or condemnation. Jesus is sent to Pilate.	Jesus is brought to the house of Annas for interrogation. There are details and dialogue. Jesus is sent to Caiaphas. There are no details and no Sanhedrin. Jesus is sent to Pilate.

There are also a number of other sources in Old Testament literature which speak

---

Peter, wrote down those things preached by Peter. Also, the first line of the *Muratorian Canon* (ca. 200) supports this understanding.



to these passages.

1. For Matthew 26:64 (24:30) = Mark 14:62 (13:26) = Luke 22:69 (21:27) see Psalm 110:1 and Daniel 7:13:

*The Lord says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand,  
till I make your enemies your footstool."*<sup>10</sup>

*I saw in the night visions, and behold,  
with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man,  
as was presented before him.*<sup>11</sup>

2. For Matthew 26:65f = Mark 14:64 see Leviticus 24:

*He who blasphemes the name of the Lord shall  
be put to death; all the congregation shall stone him;  
the sojourner as well as the native, when he blasphemes  
the Name, shall be put to death.*<sup>12</sup>

3. For Matthew 26:74 see the *Gospel According to the Hebrews*:

*According to a marginal note in some manuscripts  
The Jewish gospel has: "and he (Peter) denied, and he swore  
and he cursed."*<sup>13</sup>

According to P. Benoit writing in *Exegese* the interrelationship of the gospels in the trial scenes is one of the major discrepancies in the history of the Passion. Not only are there major additions and omissions of events among the four writers which disrupt the flow and continuity of the narratives but Mark and Matthew give more attention to the trial before the Sanhedrin while Luke and John emphasize the judicial process before Pilate. Additionally, J. Blinzler in *The Trial of Jesus* and P. Winter in *On the Trial of Jesus* identify a crucial problem: did the Sanhedrin possess the *isu gladii*; the power to impose capital punishment. Extra-biblical sources do not discuss this question but when Pilate tells the Jews to take Jesus and judge him by their own law they reply, *It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.*<sup>14</sup>

It is important to consider the question of whether a night or day proceeding was

10. RSV, Psalm 110:1.

11. RSV, Daniel 7:13.

12. RSV, Leviticus 24:16.

13. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 175.

14. RSV, John 18:21.

held against Jesus. In most cultures night sessions of legal proceedings are viewed with great caution and mistrust because they are perceived either connected to the power of evil or as an irregular event. In the case of the Jews a night proceeding would have been extremely irregular. It is probable that the night session found in both Matthew and Mark is a result of each having two different traditions from which to work. Consequently, Matthew and Mark rearranged and synthesized data from these sources to create one narrative. Subsequently the informal verbal gathering during the night became exaggerated and was escalated into the formal written form; for example, *The high priests met* became *the whole council met*. The more likely scenario is that of Luke who describes a state of detention and John who describes an interrogation possibly conducted by Annas.

There are also difficulties with a morning session with or without the evening session. Matthew, Mark, and Luke use the term *their* Sanhedrin. Exactly what do they mean? When the word *there* is used in this manner today it usually means the person speaking sees himself as separate from the antecedent, in this case the Sanhedrin, that the pronoun *their* represents. Was the grammatical concept of antecedents used the same way in Aramaic two thousand years ago? The truth is we don't know what Matthew, Mark, and Luke meant by the use of the word *their*. Were any Jewish legal proceedings, if held that morning, legal? They would be illegal by later standards because they occurred on the eve of Passover but did this standard exist at the time of Jesus? Again, we do not know. Also, could the Sanhedrin pass a death sentence in one day when later documents state that they would have to meet on successive days to pass this sentence? The final question is one of logistics: How was it possible to assemble the whole body of the Sanhedrin within a period of a few hours in the middle of the night?

The problem in interpreting this data and formulating answers to the questions it raises is that throughout the Old Testament the punishment for false prophets is severe, mandatory capital punishment, and one of the charges against Jesus was that he was a false prophet.<sup>15</sup> This charge could have made the legality of any Jewish legal proceedings moot as the historian Jeremais tells us a false prophet should be brought before the people particularly at the time of a feast. We may assume if Luke had meant brought before the high priest, chief priests, or the Sanhedrin he would not have used the words *elders of the people and crowd*.

## DIALOGUE OF THE TRIAL

The gospel accounts of the Jewish legal proceedings against Jesus are disjointed but will become clearer as we examine the conflicting dialogue when Jesus was before Annas, Caiaphas, and the Sanhedrin. In John's account Jesus is interrogated by Annas who questions him about his disciples and his teachings.<sup>16</sup> Jesus replies

---

15. *RSV*, Deuteronomy 13:1-11.

16. *RSV*, John 18:13-28.

that he has always taught openly in the synagogues and that Annas should ask those who had heard him speak. An officer then struck Jesus for insolence toward the high priest at which time Annas sent him to Caiaphas.

In the synoptic account both Matthew and Mark have witnesses brought in to testify against Jesus. It is clearly stated in Mark that many bore false witness against him saying:

*We heard him say, "I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and in three days I will build another, not made with hands." <sup>17</sup>*

The high priest then asks Jesus if he has any answer to make but Jesus remains silent. The high priest then asks in Mark, *Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?* <sup>18</sup> Jesus answers,

*I am; and you will see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven. <sup>19</sup>*

At this the High Priest tore his mantle, asked why more witnesses are needed in light of this blasphemy, and asks for a decision. Then according to Mark Jesus is physically abused and told to prophesy. <sup>20</sup>

There are four issues which are the focus of the above dialogue.

1. Under Jewish law more than one witness was needed for condemnation.

At least two collaborating witnesses were necessary for a guilty verdict and the testimony of the witnesses against Jesus did not agree. The veracity of those witnesses who made the Temple accusation in Matthew and Mark, given the context within which the accusation was made, would have been seen by experienced jurists as fallacious. Therefore, based on the testimony of witnesses Jesus should have been found not guilty.

17. *RSV*, Mark 14:56; cf. Matthew 26:63; Luke 22:67. This is known as the Temple Saying of Jesus. The witnesses are false because they were not present when Jesus spoke those words. (*RSV*, Matthew 26:57-75; Mark 14:53-72; Luke 22:54-71)

18. *RSV*, Mark 14:61; cf. Matthew 26:63; Luke 22:67.

19. *RSV*, Mark 14:62.

20. *RSV*, Mark 14:65; cf. Matthew 26:68; Luke 22:67. The challenge to prophesy is the crux of the interrogation because no matter how Jesus answers he will be wrong and condemned to death. If he does not prophesy he will be *de facto* guilty of being a false prophet because he can't prophesy. However, if he does prophesy he will be guilty because the assembly will consider his prophesy false.

## 2. The question, *Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?*

This is an anachronism as there is no word for *Christ* in either Hebrew or Aramaic. The origin of the word *christ* is found in the Latin *christus* and the Greek *christos* which means the anointed from *chrinein*; to anoint. Therefore what we have in Mark is a Christian confusion in terminology *vis-a-vis* time as the title *Jesus the Christ* is a post-resurrectional Christian title given to Jesus by the Christian Church.

## 3. The use of the term *The Son of man* by Jesus to identify himself in answer to the High Priest's question.

Once again we have an element of confusion, blurring of titles, and historicity. Within the Jewish context at the time of Jesus there were two different figures who were expected to come in the future and bring blessings to Israel. The first was the Messiah, a Davidic figure taken from 2 Samuel 7, who was to come at the end of the present era and establish a Jewish empire. The second was the Son of man taken from Daniel 7 who would come on a cloud and would be not only the symbol of Israel but was a human person. Some Jews looked for the Messiah, some looked for the Son of man, and some looked for an amalgamation of both figures.

## 4. Jesus is told to prophesy.

This is the most significant dialogue in the entire narrative because no matter what the response of Jesus he will be found guilty of being a false prophet. If he does not prophesy he would be found guilty of having impersonating a prophet when in fact he was not; therefore, he would be guilty of being a false prophet. If he did prophesy he would not be believed and therefore he would be guilty of being a false prophet. In this manner the implicit charge of being a false prophet is made explicit thereby making Jesus' condemnation and sentence of death mandatory under Jewish law.

When we evaluate the dialogue we find the Sanhedrin at a loss for witnesses. At best this is poor jurisprudence. The synoptic Gospels give the impression that Jesus never made the Temple Saying but the consensus of scholars is that he did make such a statement. Stephen speaking in Acts brings this issue forward to re-enforce his anti-Temple stand which condemns him to death:

*You stiff-necked people, uncircumcised in heart and ears, you always resist the Holy Spirit. As your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did not your fathers persecute? And they killed those who announced beforehand the coming of the Righteous One, whom you have now betrayed and murdered, you who receive*

*the law as delivered by angels and did not keep it.*<sup>21</sup>

Jesus's answer, *I am*, to the question of messiahship in Mark is not believable because he had never referred to himself as the Messiah. The answer in Matthew and Luke, *You have said so*, is much more believable. There are no reliable witnesses against Jesus; so, what is the basis for his condemnation? Finally, there is the confusion between the terms Messiah and Son of man with the images presented in Psalm 110 and Daniel 7.

It is now clear that the gospel accounts are disjointed because the dialogue in the gospels never happened as presented. The gospels were written long after the events by people who were not witnesses to the events and did not hear the dialogue. The gospel writers manufactured the dialogue with the specific agenda to explain how Jesus was given a Roman trial and a Roman sentence of death for being found guilty by a Jewish court of being a false prophet under Jewish law. Therefore, the dialogue was manufactured to support the anti-Jewish and pro-Roman bias of the early Christian Church and could not be made to fit the facts of the case.

Haim Cohn, former Deputy President (1960-1981) on the Supreme Court of Israel, draws a very different conclusion from his study of the dialogue. After agreeing that historically the Jews have admitted taking part in these proceedings Cohn reverses the Christian interpretation of the events and says that the intent of the Jews was to spare Jesus a Roman trial and punishment. He contends that it was the Roman soldiers who came to arrest Jesus and the goal of the Jews was to intervene and thwart their mission. This was accomplished by the presence of the temple police who maintained that Jesus must have kosher lodging for the night; therefore, he was taken to the house of Annas or Caiaphas rather than to a Roman prison. He discredits the testimony of the witnesses as it would not stand up under the scrutiny of anyone trained in the law. There is some difficulty in the statement that he is the Messiah in Mark but Cohn discredits this dialogue based on the assumption that as Jesus avoided any reference to himself as the Messiah during his public ministry it would serve no purpose to do so during the trial. He contends that the High Priest's tearing of his garment at Jesus' blasphemous answer is bogus because if the answer were truly blasphemous not only would the high priest have to do so but all present would also have done so. Cohn suggests that the issue of messiahship (in the sense of a Jewish king) was much more of a Roman concern than a Jewish concern. As Jesus avoided messiahship during his public ministry Cohn also suggests the charge against him most likely is the result of misrepresentation by his followers as well as his enemies. It is also possible that Jesus was mistakenly believed by Rome to be involved in some other movement in opposition to Rome. Cohn's answer to the question, If this is all true how did Jesus end up before Pilate is that Jesus must have said or done something which is

---

21. RSV, Acts 7:51-53.

not recorded that provoked and angered the Sanhedrin so much they turned him over to Pilate. According to Cohn it was not the Jews who condemned Jesus but Jesus himself by not accepting the religious leader's attempt to save him.<sup>22</sup>

## TRIAL BY PILATE

The best way to understand Pontius Pilate and his interaction with Jesus is to have an understanding of the context within which he governed. Pilate was the Prefect of the Province of Judea where the apocalyptic movement was alive and flourishing. Galilee was a center of the apocalyptic movement and Pilate had already experienced difficulties with apocalyptic Jews from that region. These difficulties were exacerbated because Galilee was outside of Pilate's direct control and he was therefore tense about apocalyptic Galileans fermenting problems for him in Judea. As Jesus was both a Galilean and an apocalyptic he was a double threat to Pilate. Pontius Pilate was the Procurator of Judea from 26-36 C.E. holding the title of Prefect which made him a Knight of the Roman Empire. There are references to Pilate by Tacitus, Philo, Josephus, and the gospels which give us an insight into Pilate the man and Pilate the administrator.

It is difficult to understand the man Pilate because the only sources we have about him conflict with one another. Tacitus is the only Roman source and he states that Jesus was executed in the reign of Tiberius. As Tacitus wrote ca. 115 this may not be an independent statement but a reference from Christian sources.<sup>23</sup> Philo states that Pilate set up votive shields with the emperor's name in the palace of Herod Antipas in Jerusalem. Herod complained to the emperor and Pilate was told to take them down.<sup>24</sup> Also according to Philo, Pilate was a protege of Sejanus (the Supreme Prefect) and therefore a *Friend of Caesar*. Sejanus was anti-Semitic but there is nothing in writing to identify Pilate's view toward Jews.

Josephus states upon Pilate's arrival in 26 C.E. his troops bore standards with the picture of the emperor. No prefect had done this before. The Jews were incensed and they surrounded Pilate's house in Caesarea for five days in protest. On the sixth day Pilate had his troops surround the Jews in the race course but acceded to their wishes.<sup>25</sup> He then cites that Pilate's use of funds from the temple treasury to construct an aqueduct into Jerusalem resulted in a protest from the Jews. Pilate dressed soldiers in civilian clothing, armed them with clubs, and directed them to

---

22. See Haim Cohn, "Reflections on the Trial and Death of Jesus" in *Jewish Law In Ancient And Modern Israel*, (Hoboken: KATV, 1971), 83-130. Other books on Jewish law by Cohn: *Concept of Justice in Jewish Law*, (Santa Barbara: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1974) and *Human Rights and Jewish Law*, (New York: KATV, 1984).

23. Tacitus, *The Annals*, XV.44.

24. Philo, *Legation to Caius* 38.

25. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII.iii.1; *War*, II.ix.2.

kill the protesters until the survivors dispersed in fear.<sup>26</sup> Josephus also relates that the Samaritans, led by a false prophet who promised to reveal the place of concealment on Mount Gerizim of sacred vessels from the time of Moses, were slaughtered by Pilate's soldiers at the mountain and Samaritan leaders were executed. The Samaritans complained to Vitellius who was the Roman legate to Syria and Pilate was recalled to Rome to face charges.<sup>27</sup>

The historians Philo and Josephus, as well as the early church, attribute other horrific deeds to Pilate. However, later literature including that of the Christian Church evaluates him more favorably. It must be remembered that neither the Jewish or Christian depiction of Pilate is historically sound as each is a product of various biases.<sup>28</sup> The fact that his procuratorship lasted for ten years is used by some historians as an indication that he was a skillful and successful administrator. The Eastern Church accepts his alleged conversion to Christianity with that of his wife Procula or Procia to be valid. Procula or Procia was later beatified.<sup>29</sup> The Coptic Church honors them both on June 25 marking Pilate as both a saint and a martyr.

In any consideration of Pilate's role in Jesus' trial we must understand the Roman statute under which Jesus was charged. Roman law required the death sentence for any person found guilty of:

*Causing injury to his majesty the Emperor, treason,  
insurrection, desertion, usurping of power, an act threatening*

---

26. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII.iii.2; *War*, II.ix.4.

27. Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII.iv.2.

28. Modern scholarship holds Pilate's role in the New Testament as depicted in the canonical gospels to be largely legendary. Character studies of Pilate found in earlier scholarship are discounted as not being historically accurate. Examples include: 1) Eusebius (*Hist.* II.7) cites an unnamed earlier writer who states Pilate committed suicide in the reign of Caligula, 2) The *Gospel of Peter* implies Pilate completely withdrew from the proceedings and trial against Jesus, and 3) Tertullian (*Apol.* 21) depicted Pilate as a Christian at heart (*pro sua conscientia Christianus*) making explicit what the *Gospel of Peter* implies. Tertullian (also *Apol.* 21) refers to a report from Pilate to the emperor. See M.R. James, *The Apocryphal New Testament* (1924), 146 for these citations. Other sources include a written text about Pilate known by several different names: *The Gospel of Nicodemus*, *Gesta Pilati*, and *Acta Pilati*. When Justin Martyr refers to the "Acts of Pilate" (*Apology* I.35; 48) when referencing the *Gospel of Nicodemus* he is referring to an earlier unknown document as the extant *Gospel of Nicodemus* was written in the fourth or fifth century. There is also a letter of Pilate to Herod and a letter from Herod to Pilate appended to the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.

29. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 594-595.

*the security of Rome or a Roman Provence.*<sup>30</sup>

In consideration of the charges and evidence the judge had three choices: 1) a verdict of guilty, 2) a verdict of not guilty, and 3) ordering a further investigation of the matter.

The writers of the synoptic Gospels and John provide different backdrops for the trial before Pilate. In the synoptic account the trial is held in public which was the Roman custom. There is little content given and Jesus was silent. John speaks of a trial held both inside and outside, more detail is given, and Jesus speaks. The location given is the Fortress Antonia which was in the northwest corner of the Temple precinct. Archaeologists have found a first century Roman pavement in this area so the trial being held in this area is a possibility. There is also mention of an interrogation or trial held at Herod's palace which is on the other side of the city. According to Josephus procurators after Pilate used this palace as their headquarters therefore this is also a possible location for the trial.

The Jews in Matthew and Mark present no charges when Jesus is brought to Pilate; however, the charge is implicit in Pilate's question, *Are you the king of the Jews?* The Jews in Luke present the charges: *perverting the nation, forbidding tribute to Caesar, and Jesus saying he is Christ the king.*<sup>31</sup> Pilate's response in Luke is to ask again, *Are you the king of the Jews.*

John reports Pilate going out to meet the Jews and asks, *What accusation do you bring against this man?*<sup>32</sup> The Jews reply, *If this man were not an evildoer, we would not have handed him over.*<sup>33</sup> This is at best a vague charge and perhaps reflects a disagreement among those persons bringing Jesus to Pilate that he was guilty of any crime. Pilate tells them, *Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.*<sup>34</sup> The Jews tell Pilate, *It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.*<sup>35</sup> This exchange tells us the intent of the Jews was to have Jesus put to death by the Romans for a crime against Jewish religious law cloaked as an offense against Rome. John reports that this interaction between Pilate and the Jews is discordant and that Pilate is negotiating with the Jews. The transaction makes more sense if we broaden our interpretation of the dialogue.

30. See *JBC*, R-Z, 106: A-D, 747. The law was concerned not only with protecting the state, the citizen, and private property, but also with social conditions related to all three. In Palestine crucifixion was used to punish robbery, tumult, and sedition. Also see Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 659.

31. *RSV*, Luke 23:2.

32. *RSV*, John 18:29.

33. *RSV*, John 18:30.

34. *RSV*, John 18:31.

35. *RSV*, John 18:31.



Pilate: *What accusation do you bring against this man?*

This begins the formal proceeding and implies Jesus has been arrested based on a Roman warrant. However, Pilate wanted a Jewish formal statement of the charges against him.

Jews: *If this man were not an evildoer, we would not have handed him over.*

Pilate is not satisfied with this answer as it is non-specific and does not conform to a charge under Roman law.

Pilate: *Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law.*

This is Pilate's way of focusing the charges. If the charges are not civil and Jesus has committed no crime against Roman law the charges must be religious and outside of Roman jurisdiction.

Jews: *It is not lawful for us to put any man to death.*

Although not explicitly stated in this response it is implicit that the charge against Jesus is not religious but civil or criminal and therefore under the jurisdiction of Pilate.

The charge is now clear when Pilate re-enters the praetorium and asks Jesus, *Are you the king of the Jews?*<sup>36</sup> The implicit charge in this question meets all the criteria of Roman law because it identifies Jesus as attempting to overthrow the legitimacy of Roman government in Palestine and a verdict of guilty would require capital punishment. However, Pilate is still not satisfied that Jesus has committed a crime under Roman law and when he finds out that Jesus is a Galilean he sends him to Herod.

Only Luke records the Herod episode and it is in two parts.<sup>37</sup> In the first part<sup>38</sup> Jesus is sent to Herod. Herod questions him and Jesus is silent. Jesus is abused and mocked and then sent back to Pilate. In view of the fact this account occurs only in Luke some scholars question if this episode really happened. They hypothesize that in the period between the events and when Luke wrote his gospel there developed a variant version, perhaps from Luke's other source, which he included in the gospel. In the second part<sup>39</sup> Pilate tells the Jews that both he and Herod find Jesus innocent of any of the Jewish charges. Pilate says he will chastise

---

36. RSV, John 18:33.

37. RSV, Luke 23:6-16.

38. RSV, Luke 23:7-11.

39. RSV, Luke 23:15.

Jesus and release him.

Many scholars speculate that the Barabbas story did not happen as portrayed in the gospels. This is because there was a Roman law which said if a judge took a bribe or succumbed to the pressure of mass opinion in a capital case the judge would also be open to a capital charge. It is unlikely that a man as experienced and capable as Pilate would leave himself open to such a charge in a public trial. In the Synoptic accounts we see a revelation of the events in light of a constant theme: Christians would be able to continue a comfortable alliance with the Romans as it was the Jews who were the true perpetrators of the crucifixion of Jesus.

As recorded in John, the Barabbas episode happens but it is not the central focus of the trial. After Jesus is scourged Pilate twice tells the priests and scribes that he found no crime in him. Finally the Jews charge, *If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend; every one who makes himself a king sets himself against Caesar.*<sup>40</sup> It is this charge of kingship, as it was in the synoptic account, that seals Jesus's fate. After his trial Jesus is taken away and abused by Pilate's soldiers. It is interesting to compare Matthew with Mark's account<sup>41</sup> of the soldiers abusing Jesus with the account found in the *Gospel of Peter*:

*And he delivered him to the people before the first day of Unleavened Bread, their feast day. And having taken the Lord, they pushed him as they ran and said, "Let us drag around the Son of God now that we have power over him," And they put a purple robe on him, and made him sit on the seat of judgment, saying, "Judge justly, king of Israel." And one of them brought a crown of thorns and put it on the Lord's head; and others stood and spat in his eyes and still others slapped his cheeks; others pricked him with a reed, and some of them scourged him, saying, "With this honor let us honor the Son of God."*<sup>42</sup>

We may draw five conclusions from the Jewish legal proceedings and trial before Pilate:

1. If the Romans were present or involved in any part of the events and the purpose was to put Jesus to death there would be no need for Jewish legal proceedings because the Jews did not possess the *isu gladii*.
2. There was no formal night session but possibly an interview or interrogation.
3. Matthew and Mark have a full morning session, John has no morning session,

---

40. RSV, John 19:12.

41. RSV, Matthew 27:26b-32 = Mark 15b-20.

42. *Gospel of Peter*, IV.10.

and Luke's account is in the middle of these extremes with a grand jury indictment proceeding which seems to suggest an evening interrogation followed by a morning session.

4. The popular view is that the events were a Jewish initiative comprised of an arrest, a trial, and a sentence which the Romans then validated.

5. The probable view of scholarship is that the events were a Roman initiative with Jewish collaboration and a Roman verdict and sentence.

After being abused Jesus was led from the Praetorium for execution. Each of the synoptic accounts reports that Simon of Cyrene carried Jesus's cross. This is a curious act because it was required of the condemned that they carry their own cross if physically able and the physical punishment Jesus suffered would not have left him disabled. Luke and John mention that two criminals were also led away to be put to death with Jesus.

## THE CRUCIFIXION

Crucifixion as a form of capital punishment was invented by the Persians. It was used by the Romans as the standard means of execution for the crime of murder, for slaves, and for revolutionaries but not for a crime committed by a Roman citizen. The use of crucifixion is attested to by Josephus, Cicero, Tacitus, and Stauros a Greek historian who said it meant *stake*.

Most of our information about crucifixion comes from literary sources. The condemned man was usually naked or wore a loincloth. He was tied to the cross and sometimes nails were used to pierce the wrists and ankles. Some crosses had a second horizontal bar used by the victim as a saddle to sit astride or as a footrest. However, there is no documentation of this saddle or footrest until the second century and its presumed use prior to that time may be an anachronism. This arrangement appeared to lessen the pain as it helped support the weight of the body but delayed death which prolonged the agony.

There were several methods of securing the victim to the cross. One is the method used for Jesus with the victim upright and the hands secured by ropes and/or nails and the feet fastened by a nail through the ankles. Another popular method was to drop the victim upside down hanging by his knees from the top bar and attach the arms by ropes or nails to the bottom bar. Additionally, in some instances the legs were broken and the feet amputated.

Death by crucifixion occurred very slowly and there were many causes of death. The victim slowly suffocated as the chest muscles either went into spasm or were no longer able to expand the diaphragm due to fatigue. Heart failure often occurred with those who had existing heart problems. Exposure, especially in cold or rainy weather, combined with shock caused blood pressure to drop and respiration and

heart rates to fluctuate erratically until death occurred. Extreme heat combined with shock led to heatstroke, brain damage, and eventually death. Those persons strong enough to withstand crucifixion for several days eventually died of dehydration. As the body was deprived of water the tongue slowly began to swell until it blocked the throat strangling the victim.

When they got to Golgotha Jesus and the two criminals were crucified. There is no documentation that nails were used to crucify Jesus as all four gospels say only, *There [or] And they crucified him.*<sup>43</sup> However, in the resurrection appearances in John and Luke there is the implication that nails were used when Jesus tells the disciples to see his hands and feet.<sup>44</sup> Even if it is not true that nails were used the story was preached and believed strongly enough that the belief survived the Dark Ages and is seen in the art of the Renaissance which conveyed this belief throughout the world to the our present day.

Before being crucified Jesus is offered wine and gall<sup>45</sup> or wine and myrrh<sup>46</sup> to drink. It is conjectured that this drink was a bitter element or poison. In either case the effect was that of an opiate or narcotic. The origin of this offer is found in Proverbs:

*Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those in bitter distress; let them drink and forget their poverty, and remember their misery no more.*<sup>47</sup>

According to Matthew and Mark Jesus refuses to drink the mixture. None of the canonical gospels comment on Jesus's countenance or how he reacted to the pain of crucifixion. However, there is a very interesting passage in the *Gospel of Peter*:

*And they brought two criminals and crucified the Lord between them; and he was silent, as one having no pain.*<sup>48</sup>

Verses 12-13 continue:

*And they laid his garments before him, and divided them, and cast lots for them. But one of those criminals reviled them, saying, "We have suffered in this way for the evils we have done; but in what way has this man injured you, who has become the Savior of men?"*<sup>49</sup>

43. RSV, Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:33; John 19:23.

44. RSV, John 20:20; 25, 27; Luke 24:39.

45. *Gospel of Peter*, IV.10.

46. RSV, Mark 15:23.

47. RSV, Proverbs 31:6-7.

48. *Gospel of Peter*, VI.10.

49. *Gospel of Peter*, IV.12-13.

This is quite different from the Lukan version where one thief rebukes the other for mocking Jesus.<sup>50</sup> In Luke's gospel the soldiers respond to the thief's criticism of them in verse 14:

*And they were angry with him and commanded that his legs should not be broken in order that he might die in agony.*<sup>51</sup>

However, according to John the soldiers broke the legs of both criminals but not those of Jesus as he was already dead.<sup>52</sup> As all three of these accounts are single traditions there is no way to know what actually happened. It may be that one or the other happened or it may be that all happened and became separated in the oral tradition before the gospels were written.

It was the custom of the Romans to put the title of the crime on the top of the cross and all four gospels agree that the cross of Jesus was titled. The titles are: *This is Jesus the King of the Jews* in Matthew; *The King of the Jews* in Mark; *This is the King of the Jews* in Luke, and *Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews* in John.<sup>53</sup> The inscription was made in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek and such a sign was often carried through the streets in front of the victim on the way to his execution. This form of humiliation is plausible for mocking Jesus; however, the chief priests perceived that Pilate was mocking them which may well have been possible. John reports they complained to Pilate:

*Do not write, "The King of the Jews" but "This man said, I am King of the Jews."*<sup>54</sup>

Pilate answers,

*What I have written I have written.*<sup>55</sup>

All four gospels have two criminals crucified with Jesus. Likewise all four accounts have some combination of soldiers, priests, scribes, and others in attendance. Luke considerably expands this number by saying that multitudes, all his acquaintances and the women who followed him from Galilee stood at a distance.<sup>56</sup>

In reading John we have a highly theologized version of those present:

50. RSV, Luke 23:39-41.

51. *Gospel of Peter*, IV.14.

52. RSV, John 19:32.

53. RSV, Matthew 27:37; Mark 15:26; Luke 23:38; John 19:19.

54. RSV, John 19:21.

55. RSV, John 19:22.

56. RSV, Luke 23:49.

*When Jesus saw his mother, and the disciple whom he loved standing near, he said to his mother, "Woman, behold, your son!" Then he said to the disciple, "Behold, your mother!" And from that hour the disciple took her to his own home.* <sup>57</sup>

John is the only gospel to have Mary or the beloved disciple at the cross. If in fact she had been there it seems odd that Luke does not include her in his more inclusive listing of those present. In fact, Mary is not even mentioned by Luke. Mary's presence at the cross at the end of Jesus' public ministry mirrors the Cana episode wherein Mary is present at the beginning of his public ministry. This juxtaposition of opposites is a favorite literary device used by John to make a theological point. The joining of his mother with the beloved disciple foreshadows the type of church found in Acts and the story of Stephen.

The derision of Jesus on the cross is an exclusively synoptic feature. All three gospels have the chief priests and at least one criminal mock Jesus. Luke adds soldiers while Matthew and Mark include onlookers in their derision. Some of these people were presumably part of the crowd at the trial but it is likely that there were others who heard of the sentence and came to observe the execution much as persons today gather at a prison when an execution is scheduled. The vocabulary used to deride Jesus and which clarified the development of the narrative is found in the 22nd Psalm:

*All who see me mock at me, they make mouths at me, they wag their heads; "He committed his cause to the Lord; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, for he delights in him!"* <sup>58</sup>

Likewise Matthew 27:42-43 is based on Wisdom:

*Let us see if his words are true, and let us test what will happen at the end of his life; for if the righteous man is God's son, he will help him, and will deliver him from the hand of his adversaries.* <sup>59</sup>

The words of Jesus from the cross are problematic for two reasons. First, each gospel is a single tradition and each is a climax unto itself. Secondly, although Matthew and Mark are similar Luke and John are quite different but they are all true to Jesus and the situation.

The answer given to the thief who asked to be remembered when Jesus came into his kingly power leaves us with more questions than answers:

57. RSV, John 19:26:27.

58. RSV, Psalm 22:7-8.

59. RSV, Wisdom, 2:17-18.

*Truly, I say to you, today you will be with me in Paradise.* <sup>60</sup>

Luke puts the word *lestai* which is transliterated as *Paradise* on the lips of Jesus to identify a specific location or perhaps a state of non-human existence. <sup>61</sup> Why didn't Luke use the word for heaven? Is this a recognition on the part of Luke or the church of Luke's time that Jesus had restricted knowledge and didn't know exactly what was going to happen or where or how it would happen? Is *lestai* a reference to the Garden of Eden or metaphysically Abraham's bosom? <sup>62</sup> Or perhaps it is a reference to Joel:

*And I will give portents in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass that all who call upon the name of the Lord shall be delivered.* <sup>63</sup>

Perhaps Luke is using opposites to make a greater theological statement by using *lestai* in opposition to Hades. In Acts, Luke has Peter address the crowd speaking of David:

60. RSV, Luke 23:43.

61. In John 20:14 Mary Magdalene does not recognize Jesus. Cf. John 20:17a when Jesus calls her by her name and she recognizes him and calls him *Rab-bo-ni*. Jesus says to her, *Do not hold me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father*. This statement tells us that to John if Mary had touched Jesus in his state of *lestai* he would somehow become contaminated. The obvious unanswerable questions are *how* and *why* would a human touch have this effect on Jesus and what would have been the ramifications if she had touched him. It may be conjectured that John is concerned with the laws of ritual purity. Jewish purity laws forbid a man from touching a woman during menstruation and the following week until she has been cleansed by a *mikveh*. To do so results in defilement. Therefore as one never knows when a woman is unclean casual touching is forbidden. In John 20:17b Jesus continues, *but go to my brethren and say to them, I am ascending to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God*. Jesus appeared to the disciples that night but Thomas was not present. Eight days later (John 20:26) Jesus again appears and tells Thomas in verse 27, *Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing*. John does not have a specific ascension scene as in Luke 24:50-53. However, the implication is clear from the verb tense in 17b that Jesus' ascension was imminent. As he invites Thomas to touch him the denial to Mary Magdalene was predicated on laws of ritual purity.

62. Abraham's bosom commonly means the repose of bliss and peace after death.

63. RSV, Joel 2:30-32a.

*Being therefore a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that he would set one of his descendants upon his throne, he foresaw and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to Hades, nor did his flesh see corruption.* <sup>64</sup>

All that we can conclude from the passage is that the use of *lestai* by Luke is that *lesti* is not heaven as we understand the term nor is it our earthly existence. There is a perception of movement beyond natural phenomena toward a more complete union with God in which the state of *lestai* is an intermediary or transitory state for Jesus.

In the gospel of Luke, Jesus says:

*Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do.* <sup>65</sup>

This phrase seems curiously out of place in that it would more likely have been spoken just before Jesus died rather than at the beginning of the crucifixion. Additionally, it does not fit in the literary style of the rest of the synoptic narratives of the crucifixion. This phrase may have been a later addition by the church to show that Jesus did in fact have understanding beyond human knowledge. Regardless of whether it came from Luke or the early church there is an interesting comment on it found in the *Gospel According to the Hebrews*:

*For as is contained in the gospel of the Nazarenes: at this word of the Lord, many thousands of Jews standing around the cross, believed.* <sup>66</sup>

The allusion to *many thousands* standing around the cross is most likely an anachronism. It is clear from its location and topography that there wasn't enough physical space at Golgotha for thousands to stand. While John states that Jesus' mother, her sister, and Mary Magdalene were in attendance Matthew and Mark have the chief priests, scribes, elders, and some bystanders present. It is only in Luke there is mention of multitudes. <sup>67</sup> We do not know what number constituted multitudes for Luke but it is significant that he concludes:

*And all his acquaintances and the women who had followed him from Galilee stood at a distance and saw these things.* <sup>68</sup>

64. RSV, Acts 2:30-31.

65. RSV, Luke 23:24.

66. In Haimo of Auxerre, *Commentary on Isaiah*, 53:12.

67. RSV, Luke 23:27, 48.

68. RSV, Luke 23:49.



It seems strange that those people closest to Jesus should be the farthest away from him at his crucifixion. One possibility is that those mentioned as being in attendance at Golgotha, both those specifically identified and those who were not, were Jewish and Roman officials who were present as an obligation and duty. If space were limited this explains why Matthew, Mark, and possibly John are not more specific as to those in attendance and Luke's multitudes, especially those persons closest to Jesus, were at a distance.

Other than John's beloved disciple at the foot of the cross Christianity has assumed that the remainder of the twelve ran away or did not follow him to the cross out of fear. Although not documented it is more likely that the remainder of the twelve were in fact a part of Luke's multitudes standing at a distance; faceless people in a crowd of thousands as cited in the *Gospel according to the Hebrews*.

Matthew and Mark both have Jesus say:

*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?*  
My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? <sup>69</sup>

The origin is the 22nd Psalm:

*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning?* <sup>70</sup>

We are told that many bystanders thought Jesus was calling Elijah and this is the crux of a problem. Was Jesus speaking Hebrew or Aramaic? If he was speaking Aramaic there would be no confusion as to what he said. However, if he was speaking Hebrew it is likely that many of those in attendance did not understand what he said and assumed he was calling Elijah. This is because it has been generally accepted by scholars that the common language of Palestinian Jews at the time of Jesus was Aramaic and that Hebrew, other than in religious texts and formal written discourse, was nearly a dead language. However, discoveries at Qumran show extensive use of Hebrew long past the time of Jesus and this perhaps explains the extensive use of Psalm 22 in understanding these words. If Jesus did not utter these words on the cross the oral history was so firmly in place the writers of Matthew and Mark felt secure in utilizing them.

After Jesus calls out, *Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?* in both Matthew and Mark someone from the crowd rushes out and offers him a second drink of vinegar which was often used as wine by Roman soldiers. The meaning of this offer in Matthew and Mark is obscure as it does not fit the rest of the narrative. Additionally, this offer is perplexing as it does not occur in either Luke or John. We gain insight

---

69. RSV, Matthew 27:47; Mark 15:34.

70. RSV, Psalm 22:1.

when we see this offer in the broader context of the *Gospel of Peter*:

*Now it was noonday and the darkness prevailed over all Judea, and they were afraid and distressed for fear the sun had set while he was still alive. For it is written for them that the sun should not set upon one put to death. And one of them said, "Give him gall with vinegar to drink." And they mixed them and gave it to him.*<sup>71</sup>

It is assumed from this context that this mixture was some kind of poison designed to induce a relatively quick death. There is no way to know if this is the same drink offered at the beginning of the crucifixion; however, we are left with the conclusion that the offer of a second drink in Matthew and Mark was not an act of compassion but rather a self-serving one of hastening death because the Sabbath began at sundown and the dead body could not be prepared for burial on the Sabbath.

John writes that after Jesus commits the beloved disciple and his mother to each other he says, *I thirst*. A sponge is immediately dipped in vinegar and put to his mouth on the end of a hyssop. As hyssop is a leafy, bushy plant it is an unusual implement to use and we may question whether or not it could hold the weight of a saturated sponge. Additionally, there are two problems with the use of the word hyssop. The first is that there may well be a mistake in the original Greek as the words for javelin and hyssop are similar. This possible mistake is accentuated when we remember that in many of the Greek manuscripts of Matthew as well as other versions there is an addition to Matthew not found in versions B, C, and S:<sup>72</sup>

*Verse 49: But the others said, "Wait, let us see whether Elijah will come to save him."*

*Addition: and another took a spear and pierced his side, and there came out water and blood.*<sup>73</sup>

There can be no mistake that a spear is much closer to a javelin than a hyssop. Additionally, John says:

*But one of the soldiers pierced his side with a spear, and at once there came out blood and water.*<sup>74</sup>

The Greek word John used which is translated to *spear* in English is *javelin*.

71. *Gospel of Peter*, 5:15-16.

72. Greek manuscripts: *Codex Vaticanus*, *Codex Ephraemi*, *Codex Sinaiticus*.

73. Throckmorton, *Gospel Parallels*, 250, note P.

74. *RSV*, John 19:34.

Finally, there is an eleventh century manuscript of Matthew which uses the specific word for javelin to replace hyssop.

The second problem is why was an inferior instrument like a hyssop used when there was a superior instrument such as a javelin present? Some scholars have suggested that a hyssop was used for symbolic purposes as a remembrance of the covenant; that is, a connecting of the sprinkling of the blood of the old covenant with that of the new covenant. If so this seems to be a desperate attempt on the part of the early church to try to connect the Old Testament sprinkling of the blood of the Mosaic Covenant with that of the theology of Jesus as the new David. The problem is that if this is the intent the use of hyssop is an inappropriate symbol as the blood of the covenant wasn't sprinkled but thrown on the altar and the people:

*And Moses took half of the blood and put it in basins, and half of the blood he threw against the altar. And Moses took the blood and threw it upon the people, and said, "Behold the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you in accordance with all these words."*<sup>75</sup>

## THE THEOPHANY

The theophany or nature phenomena which occur at Jesus' death are an exclusive feature of the synoptic Gospels as they do not appear in John.<sup>76</sup> All three state that it was dark all over the land from the sixth to the ninth hour. All three also have the curtain of the temple torn in two while in the *Gospel According to the Hebrews*:

*In the gospel that is written in Hebrew letters, we read, not that the curtain of the temple was torn, but that the astonishingly large lintel of the temple fell down*<sup>77</sup>

---

75. RSV, Exodus 24:6, 8.

76. A theophany is a deity's physical manifestation that is seen by human beings. The appearance of gods and their involvement with humans are common motifs in Ancient Near Eastern and classical mythology. However, there is a tradition in the Hebrew Bible that whoever sees the face of God will die. The problem of how God can adequately show himself to humankind without harm is a conundrum that is never really resolved in the Old Testament. Thus, the Old Testament is replete with theophonic phenomena however the New Testament affirms that Jesus is the only adequate manifestation of God (John 1:1, 14-18; Colossians 1:15; 2:9). The transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8) and ascension (Acts 1:9-12) correspond to theophanies of the Old Testament (a mountain, voice from a cloud, burning bush, radiance) in order to stress the continuity of God's self-revelation.

77. In Jerome, *Letter to Hedibia* 120.8.2 and *Commentary on Matthew* 27.51.

Matthew adds that the earth shook and rocks were split, possibly an earthquake, and that tombs were opened and many saints were raised.

There is no historical documentation that there was any kind of eclipse of the Sun in the possible years of the crucifixion. Therefore, between the sixth and ninth hours the most that could have occurred is that there were dark clouds but these would not have been sufficient to make, darkness over the whole land. The more likely scenario is that the darkness is used symbolically by the gospel writers and the text is taken from the prophet Amos:

*And on that day, says the Lord God, I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning of an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day.*<sup>78</sup>

It is also to be remembered that throughout the history of the Hebrews some display of natural phenomena always accompanied the death of an important person. In that context it would be almost mandatory that the Evangelists, looking back on the death of Jesus, would include such phenomena at the time of his death.

Although Josephus states that the east side of the temple mysteriously opened forty years before its destruction by the Romans this is an unsubstantiated statement. Also, there is no way of knowing if this alleged opening had anything to do with the death of Jesus. It is possible, by the time of Josephus, the Christian assertion that the curtain had split in two at the hour of Jesus' death had become connected with a crack which had been subsequently found in the wall of the temple.

However, it is more likely that the allusion to the curtain of the temple splitting in two has a symbolic meaning. The first possibility is that there was a veil before a holy place, possibly a courtyard, where Gentiles had access to worship with Jews. After Jesus's death his followers, known as Jewish Christians, became a sect within Judaism thereby rendering the veil or curtain of separation null and void. Another symbolic possibility is that the veil to the holy of holies no longer existed as the ascent to God is now possible through Jesus.

The shaking of the ground or earthquake is most probably taken from Amos and embellished by Matthew:

*Shall not the land tremble on this account, and every one mourn who dwells in it, and all of it rise like the Nile,*

---

78. RSV, Amos 8:9-10.

*and be tossed about and sink again, like the Nile of Egypt?*<sup>79</sup>

Some of the saints that have risen are seen in Jerusalem. Most scholars do not believe they were seen in the physical sense. The Jerusalem of Matthew is the heavenly Jerusalem. The Book of Revelation, drawing heavily on Ezekiel's vision of the new Jerusalem and very reminiscent of contemporary Jewish apocalyptic texts, describes the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God.<sup>80</sup> Unlike Ezekiel's city, however, this Jerusalem has no Temple, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb.<sup>81</sup>

Speculation concerning God's future kingdom on earth with Jerusalem as its center dominated Christian eschatology of the first and second centuries as witnessed by the writings of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus. However, later church fathers such as Origen, who spent more than twenty years in third century Caesarea, disputed the teachings of Justin Martyr and Irenaeus as well as Jewish belief in the future restoration of some kind of earthly Jerusalem.

The third century Apostolic Fathers spoke exclusively of the heavenly Jerusalem which remained above and entirely separate from the earthly city. The symbolism is an affirmation of what Jesus achieved. The heavenly Jerusalem is the personification of the parousia.

## SUMMARY

The Passion narratives were written as an *apologia* to make a theological statement that Jesus was innocent of all charges against him. Many people read the narratives to discover the psychology of Jesus; a psychology they hope to use in their own life. The problem is that such a goal is at cross purposes with the intent of the authors of the narratives as well as the persons within the narratives. The fact of the matter is we learn very little of the nature and personality of Jesus and even less of his psychology from the Passion narratives.

There are two extreme views on the authenticity of the words spoken by Jesus: one they were passed by word of mouth from those who heard them from his lips to others who in turn passed them on to others until they were eventually written down by the writers of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, or two they were a creation of the Evangelists who, through a reading back into the events from a Christian perspective, wrote what they thought would have been the appropriate words for Jesus to speak. Regardless of which option one chooses or even if one borrows from both traditions we have nothing with which to ascertain certain knowledge.

The dialogue between Jesus and the Jewish leaders and the Jewish leaders and

79. *RSV*, Amos 8:8.

80. *RSV*, Revelation 21:2.

81. *RSV*, Revelation 21:22.

Pilate is disjointed. There is confusion and contradiction in each from the time of the arrest to his condemnation by Pilate. The key to understanding the dialogue is that the Jewish leaders had to find Jesus guilty of a crime under Jewish law that required capital punishment. Finding him guilty of being a false prophet met this requirement but the problem for the Jewish leaders in Palestine under Roman control was that they did not have the power to impose the death penalty. Therefore, it was necessary to present Jesus to Pilate as being guilty of a crime against Roman law which required the death penalty. They did this by shifting the crime from one of being a false prophet to that of messiahship which the Romans would interpret as Jesus proclaiming himself king of the Jews which would be a direct threat to Roman control of Palestine and require the death penalty. The dialogue is disjointed because it was created to meet the agenda of the early church which did not fit the facts that the Jews were not responsible for the crucifixion of Jesus and that the church should fear the Romans.

There are several inconsistencies in the accounts of Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus words asking the Father to forgive appear to be misplaced, whether the disciples were present is unknown, Jesus' reference to Paradise, and an attempt on the part of the early church to equate the blood of Jesus with the blood of the Mosaic Covenant. Additionally, it is unlikely that the theophonic events occurred. The more likely explanation is that as it was common to believe that these events occurred at both the birth and death of an important person the writers of the gospels included them to fit the cultural belief and literary style of the day.

## Chapter 7

---

### The Resurrection of Jesus: Myth, Magic or Miracle?

#### MYTHIC RESURRECTION IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Prior to examining the resurrection of Jesus we must review the concepts of the afterlife and resurrection as they are found in the pre-Christian Ancient Near East. It is often assumed by those in the modern Western world that the belief in an afterlife and resurrection began with Christianity. Nothing could be further from the truth as belief in an afterlife and resurrection, although nuanced differently in diverse cultures and myths, was a major part of all Ancient Near Eastern Cultures. We will examine the cultures of Mesopotamia, Egypt, the Canaanites, the Greco-Roman world and the Persians whose beliefs most directly influenced the Jewish, Christian, and Islamic understanding of afterlife and resurrection.

In Mesopotamia it was believed that immortality was reserved for gods and goddesses. The conception of an afterlife in Mesopotamian cultures was one of a bleak existence for human beings who were relegated to *the land of no return* which was the realm of Nergal and Ereshkigal. Nergal was the Sumerian and Babylonian-Akkadian chthonic <sup>1</sup> god and was worshiped from 3500 B.C.E. to 200 B.C.E.. Born the son of Enlil and Ninlil and the consort of the underworld goddess Ereshkigal, Nergal was depicted as a god of war and sudden death as well as being the ruler of the underworld. Early writers described him as a bearded figure carrying a double-edged mace-scimitar embellished with lion heads. By the

---

1. The god of the underworld.

Hellenic period he was identified with Herakles.<sup>2</sup>

Ereskigal was the queen of the underworld and the mother of Ninazu. According to some texts she was once a sky goddess whose role was the same as Persephone.<sup>3</sup> In legend she was challenged by Inanna but after judgment by the seven Anunnaki Ereskigal rendered Inanna a corpse for three days until she was revived through the intervention of Enki the god of wisdom.<sup>4</sup>

In the mythological legend of Ereskigal and Inanna we find the first recorded instance of resurrection. The most common variation of this theme found throughout the Ancient Near East is an agricultural one in which the goddess of fertility either accidentally or on purpose kills her male consort who is then banished to the underworld. The goddess laments her action and engages the god or goddess of the underworld either in battle or by guile. In victory she restores (resurrects) her consort to life and the cycle begins again. These actions are keyed to the agricultural seasons: winter during which the consort is dead and in the underworld and the fields are fallow; spring when the goddess cries bringing the spring rains and she resurrects her consort; during the summer the goddess and her consort reign in harmony and the crops grow guaranteeing another year of prosperity and survival for the supplicants; and fall when the crops are harvested after which the consort dies and the cycle begins again.

*The land of no return* was considered a dusky city on the other side of the world not unlike the Israelite Sheol.<sup>5</sup> There is some evidence of a judgement of the dead by the Assyro-Babylonian sun god, Shamash. He was responsible for punishment of sins but a favorable judgement made the afterlife a little more tolerable.

The Hittites and Canaanites appeared equally pessimistic about the prospects of the dead although the Hittites considered their kings divine after death and there

2. One of those classified as heroes such as Achilles. The heroes were not divine but were nearer to the gods than humans. It was believed that some were the progeny of gods and some attained immortality. The relationship between Nergal and Herakles is that they are both identified with lions.

3. Persephone is the daughter of Demeter and is central to the Eleusis Mysteries.

4. This is the origin of the sacredness of the number three. In Judaism there are three: patriarchs; angels visiting Abraham; musical sounds: shofar-tekiah, shevarim, teruah; pieces of matzah at the Passover Seder; floors of Noah's Ark; sections of the Bible; walls required for building a sukkah; traditional meals on the Sabbath; threefold priestly benediction; categories of Jews: Kohanim, Levites, Israelites; judges required for a Jewish court of law. In Christianity Jesus states he will tear down the Temple and rebuild it in three days; Jesus was resurrected on the third day; there are three persons in the Trinity; medieval metaphysical cosmology portrays God at the top, the church in the middle, and man on the bottom with three choirs of three angelic beings each of which correspond to three sets of three temporal entities.

5. The subterranean place where the dead are gathered in a shadowy existence.



was a royal funerary cult at Ugarit. The Hittites had an Indo-European origin and by the second millennium B.C.E. had built an empire in Asia Minor in Anatolia now modern Turkey. Clay tablets found at Hattushah<sup>6</sup> identify over 600 gods who were not omnipotent or omniscient and thus shared human attributes such as eating, drinking, sleeping, and sexual intercourse. They were arranged in an hierarchal pantheon and each had their own sphere of influence. The relationship of humans to gods was one of slavery. Hittite mythology included stories about struggles between gods and vanishing god myths. A god was known to have vanished when a natural disaster occurred which required that it be located, appeased and returned. The Hittites believed the vanished god would be returned by oracular and ritual activity. Their cultic rituals included prayer, sacrifice and the recitation of myths. Divine-human communication took place through oracles, prophet like men and kings. As there is some evidence for a belief in an afterlife the disappearance and return of gods may loosely be construed as a variation of mythic resurrection.

The Hurrians were a non-Semitic, non-Indo-European people present in Northern Syria and Northwestern Mesopotamia ca. 2300 B.C.E.. By the mid second millennium B.C.E. the Hurrian kingdom of Mitanni had formed in what is now Northern Syria and Iraq. Tesub was a weather god and known as *The King of Heaven and Lord of Hatti*. He had a consort Hebat and a son Sharruma. According to legend Tesub did battle with the dragon Illuyankas who represented the forces of disorder. Tesub defeated Illuyankas which symbolized the re-invigoration of the earth after winter and the triumph of life over death.

The Babylonians and Assyrians were the inheritors of the Sumerian pantheon often translating the Sumerian names of gods into Akkadian and Syrian forms. Important Babylonian deities with their Akkadian forms included Anu (An), Enlil, Ea (Enki), Sin (Nanna), Shamash (Utu), Ishtar (Inanna), and Tammuz (Dumuzi).

Inanna, known in Akkadian as Ishtar and in Assyrian as Astarte was a fertility goddess associated with rain and thunderclouds and worshiped as a goddess of war. She was a harlot and was served by harlots. Some sources see her as queen of heaven and the consort of An although she is usually depicted as the wife of Tammuz. In one myth she wished to depose the queen of the underworld but was defeated and killed by the reigning deity who transformed her into a piece of rotting meat. When she failed to return from battle her maid sought aid from Enki who sent two creatures to the netherworld to ask one wish from its queen. They asked for a piece of meat and when it was given to them they sprinkled it with grass and water which restored Inanna to her pristine form. In a further development of the myth Tammuz is banished to the underworld to take Inanna's place for six months each year which again reflects the fertility cycle myth.

These types of myths are often classified by scholars as *myth and ritual myths*

---

6. Bogazkoy in modern Turkey.

because there was a dramatic re-enactment of the narrative in great spring celebrations each year. It is from these myths that we find the origin of such practices as cultic prostitutes, sacrifices, and the king or queen as the personification and epiphany of the god or goddess.

The prototype for the male dominant religions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam is found in the Babylonian creation myth. In the Babylonian creation myth, the *Enuma elish*,<sup>7</sup> a male god, Marduk, engaged in a primordial cosmic battle with a female goddess Tiamat. The gods were threatened by the dangerous chaos represented by the female deity. The chief gods Ea and Anu were ineffective against her and it was believed that only the fierce Marduk could be successful in combat against her. Marduk demanded complete authority and if successful would require all other gods to bow down to him. In combat Tiamat opened her huge jaws to swallow Marduk but Marduk drove the winds, given to him by his uncle the god of the winds, into her mouth to keep it open so that he could shoot her with his arrows. Marduk killed Tiamat, cut her body in half creating heaven and earth, and used her eyes to create the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. From the remains of her body he created Babylonia, Babylon and human beings. The king of Babylonia was Marduk's vassal and both gods and humans bowed down and worshiped Marduk. The theme of resurrection is present in the myth as the dead goddess gave rise to new life and lived again through the new creation Marduk made of her dead body.

The greatest text of ancient Egypt is *The Book of Going Forth by Day* better known as *The Book of the Dead*. Much of it is based on the very ancient *Coffin Texts* and represents the common view of the nature of death and how one could survive beyond death. The book was placed in the tomb of the deceased to help them pass through judgement to the afterlife. Except for the sun god Re, Osiris was the most important deity in the Egyptian pantheon. By the Middle Kingdom period (about 2050-1750 B.C.E.) when *The Book of Going Forth by Day* was assembled a sacred drama at Abydos, Osiris' burial ground, was the focus of much piety. Sacred dramas in which participants identified with Osiris were still popular in the Roman period. The living Pharaoh was identified with Osiris' son Horus, as the *living Horus*, and dead Pharaohs were identified with Osiris himself.

The mythic scene which underlays the passing through judgment and entry into the afterlife was the life, death, and resurrection of the god Osiris. This influential story prepared the way for the acceptance of the gospel account of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus.<sup>8</sup>

The myth begins when Seth, the brother of Osiris, ordered a beautiful coffin

7. The name of the epic, *Enuma elish*, is taken from the first three words of the myth: *From on high*.

8. Ninian Smart, *The World's Religions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 203.

constructed. Seth prepared a banquet and told the assembly that the coffin would be given to the guest it fit. Only Osiris was a perfect fit for the coffin but as soon as he entered it Seth sealed the lid with lead and threw it into the Nile. The coffin washed ashore where it was found by Osiris' wife Isis. She had Osiris' body returned but Seth chopped it into little pieces and scattered them throughout Egypt. Isis recovered all the fragments of Osiris' body except his penis for which she made a wooden substitute. Before embalming Osiris, Isis gave him new life, they had sexual intercourse, and their son Horus was conceived.

Having overcome death Osiris was the presiding deity of death and patron of mummifying the dead. *The Book of Going Forth by Day* gives considerable detail about Osiris judging the dead.<sup>9</sup> The soul of the deceased was weighed against the Feather of Truth and the image of the scales of justice became a paramount motif and metaphor throughout the Ancient Near East and was often seen in early Christian iconography with Jesus holding the scales.

The Canaanite pantheon was complex and is often seen as a counterpoint to Israelite religion. Little has been found of the Canaanites except their religious system which was detailed in the texts found in excavations at Ras Shamra near the city of Ugarit on the coast of Syria. The chief deity was El (God) but the most vital force was Baal (Lord), who was associated with weather and rain which brought fertility not only to the crops but to men and women. Baal was continually in an adversarial relationship with Yamm who was accompanied by great sea monsters; Tunnan, and Litan who is the Leviathan of the Bible.<sup>10</sup>

One of the primary myths about Baal is similar to the myth of Osiris. Baal fought the sea monsters and with a magic club struck them dead. Baal's victory over the sea is representative of order over chaos. However, there was still one enemy to overcome and that was Death. Baal sent messengers to Death who are sent back with the message that Baal, like all other beings, must die. Baal agreed to die but took his lightning bolts, rain, and clouds with him to the underworld. Anat, his sister as well as the goddess of war, buried him. She then ferociously attacked Death with a sword, put him through a sieve, set him on fire, ground him with a millstone, and sowed him in the fields. With the demise of Death, Baal was restored to his original power. The myth again reflects the great Ancient Near Eastern story of a dying and rising god whose death and resurrection corresponded with the agricultural seasons.

---

9. The ethics of ancient Egypt are found in the formulaic protestation of innocence addressed to the forty-two judges in chapter 25 of *The Book of Going Forth by Day*. The formula states among other things that the person has not stolen, been covetous, killed a human being, damaged a grain measure, told lies, trespassed, practiced usury, gossiped, committed adultery, had sex with a boy, or been abusive to a king.

10. Leviathan is found in Job 41:1; Psalm 74:14; Psalm 104:26; Isaiah 27:1.

The Phoenicians were late comers to the Levant <sup>11</sup> and their religion developed and often copied similar themes to those of their predecessors. The chief female goddess was Astarte who was both a goddess and a fertility figure and was a reflection of the Mesopotamian Ishtar and Canaanite Anat. There were diverse dying and rising Phoenician gods but perhaps the best known myth is that of Adonis whose name means *Lord* which is the same title used in Yahwism in ancient Israel in the form of *Adonai* which was later applied to Jesus.

Adonis was modeled after the Mesopotamian dying vegetation god Dumuzi also known as Tammuz. Adonis was usually portrayed as a beautiful youth. The myth of Adonis was that he was killed by a wild boar while hunting and condemned to the underworld for six months of each year. During this time the earth's vegetation withers and dies under the summer sun and drought. During the spring festival honoring Adonis the priests of the cult dressed in effeminate costume and gashed themselves with knives. This was because the waters of the river Adonis (Nahr Ibrahim) were sacred and appeared to run red after heavy winter storms because it is saturated with ferrous oxide.

There were many cults in the Greek world which reflected the extensive pantheon of Greek gods and goddesses. Only a few of these cults grew into what we would consider religions. The best known of these was found at Eleusis and is known as the Eleusian Mysteries. The annual rites or mysteries celebrated there centered on the transformation of the traditional agricultural myth to one of higher meaning. This occurred through the re-enactment of the myth in which Persephone is abducted by the god of the underworld Hades. Demeter, her mother, goes to the underworld after her. Eventually Zeus imposed a solution. Persephone is to spend two thirds of the year in the world and one third with Hades. It was documented by Aristotle that initiates to the cult of Eleusis went to partake of the Eleusian Mysteries not to learn but rather to experience religious ecstasy. <sup>12</sup> Through participation in the rites and rituals of the mysteries initiates were able to develop additional depth in their religious life.

Pythagoreanism is one of the early bridges between religion and philosophy. Pythagoras founded a religious order in Croton which was a Greek colony in southern Italy. Pythagoras believed that the ultimate elements of the world were made up of numbers and taught various spiritual, practical, and philosophical ideas predicated on this belief. In the Pythagorean scheme of things the world flowed from the relationship between the *bounded*, symbolized by numbers, and the *unbounded* which he based on the mathematical ratio found in musical harmony. The soul was believed to be in a cycle of reincarnation but by following the precepts of Pythagoras could be purified and freed from the cycle. The Pythagorean

11. The regions on the Eastern Mediterranean and Aegean Seas from Greece to Egypt including Syria, Lebanon, and Palestine.

12. Aristotle makes this statement as a rhyming jingle (in Greek *ou mathein alla pathein*).

message was a blend of mathematical theory and practical spirituality.

In the *Phaedo* Plato argued for the doctrine of reincarnation. He believed that originally souls were immortal but were unable to maintain their original state so they descended into human bodies. Souls would go through life from existence to existence. Knowledge would enable the soul again to rise to a state of liberation. Knowledge came from the World of Forms which humans imitate so acquiring knowledge is really a process of remembering. The World of Forms was a hierarchy with the Form of the Good at the top which engenders all other Forms because each is ideal. The soul could ascend to the Form of the Good and perceive it in a vision.<sup>13</sup> Platonism provided a unified philosophical vision which was commensurate with the Ancient Near Eastern religions, cults, mysteries, and eventually the new movement called Christianity.

By the time Pompey organized the east as far as the Persian border into Roman provinces in 66 B.C. E. and Octavian, Caesar's adopted son, took the title of emperor in 27 B.C.E. religion became more individualized and was seen more as a matter of choice as opposed to a form of political-religious unity. There were many mystery movements like that of Eleusis in the Roman world in which one could participate to pursue purity, immortality and experience the power of the god or goddess.

One of the most prominent of the Roman mystery cults was that of Mithras. In legend Mithras was credited with killing the bull which would renew life. The

13. The *Phaedo* is considered to be the first work of Plato's middle period and as such represents much of his own thinking as opposed to that of Socrates which characterizes his first period. Socrates had insisted that we must be able to answer the question, *What is X?* before we can say anything about X. He understood this question as asking for the one thing common to all the many instances or examples of X; however, he never found a satisfactory answer. This led Plato to ask *why* and from which he drew the conclusion that the supposed instances and examples of X were unreliable. From this he deduced that in every instance of cases such as justice, beauty, goodness, X will also be an instance of the opposite of X. Thus the problem became one of language wherein one could not understand X if there were no examples of X things nor if every example of X were at the same time an example of non-X. If this is so the question becomes, *How do we manage to attach any meaning to words such as justice, beauty, and goodness?* This problem led Plato to believe there must be an unambiguous example of justice, beauty, and goodness in another world with which we must have been acquainted. This is what Plato called the Form of Justice, the Form of Beauty, and the Form of Goodness. Plato hypothesized we were born into this world with a dim recollection of the Forms and that is why we have some conception of the nature of justice, beauty, and goodness. In *Phaedo* 73-7 Plato introduces the idea of what must be known or recalled. This is a paradigm example of X, a reliable and unambiguous guide to what X is, which the perceptible things of this world *incarnate* but always *fall short of*. These are the Forms. Yet at the same time and inconsistently the Forms are thought of as themselves *being* the answers to the question, *What is X?* In other words the Forms are *both* perfect paradigms *and* universals.

participants reenacted Mithras' act by killing a bull and having a great feast. The cult of Mithras had great popularity among Roman soldiers as it gave them a feeling of renewed life and comradeship.

As the early Christian church in Palestine began to reach into the Hellenistic world it was confronted with the philosophies of Plato and Plotinus. In order to become credible in this world the church had to reconcile the philosophical systems of Plato and Plotinus with the belief systems of Christianity and did so by transforming them into Christian beliefs making them central to the development of Christian doctrine.

Plotinus lived from 205-269 C.E. and directly influenced early church fathers including Origin, Augustine, Gregory of Nazianzen, Cyril of Alexandria, Basil, John Chrysostom, Ephrem, Ambrose, and Jerome. As Plotinus' Neoplatonism incorporated and expanded upon much of Plato's work and his system influenced the religious worlds of Christianity, Judaism, and Islam more than any other philosopher we will examine Plotinus' system in detail.

Plotinus probably was raised in Egypt and studied with Ammonius Saccas. Portions of Plotinus' system reflect his interest in Eastern thought, particularly Indian philosophy. After a period in Antioch he settled in Rome where he taught and wrote his massive work *Enneads* which was edited by his pupil Porphyry.<sup>14</sup>

Plotinus was a mystic in that he had an inner experience of the divine in which he saw the world as a reflection of the Good, the One which was synonymous with Plato's Good. Although the One was beyond definition or description by human words a person could reunite with the One through contemplation. One represented the supreme God emanating and flowing forth in the Form of the Intellect or *Nous* which was contained within the intelligible Forms of Plato's system. The Intellect has a further emanation, the soul, in which the Forms are seen in space and time. Thus, the soul is on the brink of becoming the material world into which the human soul descends. In this model the soul becomes a prisoner trapped in the human body. The idea of resurrection of the soul is contained in the process whereby the One spreads love or passion, *eros*, for itself to the souls of human beings who begin the ascent back to the One through intellectual, ethical and mystical endeavor.

Plotinus' Neoplatonism constituted the beginning of a tradition which formed another stream in the intellectual and practical formation of Christianity. His system became the source for the negative way in which God is defined through what he is not which became extremely influential in medieval Christian

---

14. The *Enneads* were originally a series of essays and shorter pieces written by Plotinus enriched with superb similes. After his death Porphyry divided them into six groups of nine and gave them the name *Enneads*.

thought.<sup>15</sup> The magnitude of Plotinus' thought and the impact of his system is best seen in his final words spoken on his deathbed, *I am trying to bring the divine in myself to the divine in the All.*

Now we will examine the Persian model as found in Zoroasterism as Zoroasterism is a direct link to the concepts of afterlife, resurrection, and the age to come as found in Pharisaic Judaism. Zoroastrian scriptures can be divided into three phases. The first phase is the original poems of Zarathustra, the *Gathas*, from which the religion derives its name. The second phase is the rest of the *Avesta* which was compiled around the sixth century C.E. but is based on materials dating from the fourth century B.C.E.. The third stage is those texts written in Pahlavi during the ninth century C.E. during the Islamic period. The Pahlavi texts included rebuttals to Christian, Islamic, and other religious doctrines.

In the cosmology of Zarathustra, Ahura Mazda is perfect goodness. Thus evil must come from both a source dependent on Ahura Mazda as he was the creator of all things but also independent of him as he was absolute goodness. The solution to the problem is that evil, Angra Mainyu, was evil because of a negative choice. There is a continuing struggle between good and evil and humanity must choose Ahura Mazda because there will be a third age when good and evil will be separated and the good will be rewarded with immortality. In this future age human beings will be judged and those choosing the good will have pure bodies in a state of resurrection. It is easy to see that the roots of what will become the Jewish apocalyptic movement with the sons of light eventually defeating the sons of darkness, Pharisaic belief in resurrection, final judgement and the Christian belief in a bodily resurrection in the age to come can be found in Zoroasterism.

The question often asked is, how did a small sect of Jews who followed a convicted criminal, executed by crucifixion, in a matter of a few hundred years

---

15. The essence of Plotinus' metaphysics is that it is only possible to make things by thinking them, and to think things as a maker by being them. Thus, it is backwards to regard thinking as *imagining*; it is *realizing* what the manufacturer then makes an image of. Bodies are phantoms, which Plotinus called *idols*, present in matter as an image is in a mirror and the realities behind them are Forms. Original thought, which does not reason from previous thoughts, is called Intellect and therefore Intellect is a maker. But there is no process in its making; only the timeless activity of thinking the intelligible Form that it is. Everything that has power must exercise it by what Plotinus calls emanating or *beaming* something less powerful. Such *procession* accounts for the existence of the perceptible *here* beamed from the intelligible *there*. *Here* contains souls and bodies because many bodies, including the perceptible universe itself, are alive or *ensouled* and their souls have spontaneously descended from and can return to *there*. Soul is the lowest of Plotinus' three universal principles or *hypostases*. It depends on Intellect, which in turn depends on the One, or Good. The One himself is *beyond being* because attribution of being or any other predicate would make him more than One. The other *hypostases* are multiple. For example, the thought that Intellect is composite and therefore could not exist independently of this Unity.

become a dominant Near Eastern religion called Christianity? The problem with this question is that it presupposes that Christianity sprang full blown, like Athena from the forehead of Zeus, as a new religion independent of the extant religions of the time. However, a careful reading of the above clearly shows that Christianity was an opportunistic religion; it was at the right place at the right time professing cross cultural religious elements already familiar to the peoples, cultures and civilizations throughout the Ancient Near East.

Far from being unique Christianity embodied, to pagan cultures, common and familiar elements of all its predecessors. The Mesopotamian myths of a dying and rising god were made manifest in Jesus the Christ. The Egyptian belief in an afterlife was carried forth in the sayings of Jesus who coupled it with the Zoroastrian belief in the age to come. The secret nature of the mystery cults was manifested through the secret initiation rite of baptism and the sacrament of the Lord's supper in which it was believed the supplicants shared in the power of their god by eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Additionally, it espoused a monotheism rooted in Judaism which mirrored the philosophies in that God, the source of all, is unity in diversity (the philosophical One) to which all souls which sought the Platonic Good (now found in Jesus) would return after judgement.

## THE PROMISE OF SALVATION

The concept of salvation in some form is present in all religions both extinct and extant. Salvation may be of this world in the present time in the moment or may be a promise to be fulfilled in a future time or age. In Christianity we find salvation in both the present moment and the promised future: it is both eschatological and realized eschatology. Biblical faith is not concerned with how the process happens or whether it is physical, mystical or ethical. Rather it is the proclamation of salvation which sets it apart from other religions and gives it its kerygmatic character.<sup>16</sup> The claim is made that God has saved his people in history and that act is a precursor of salvation in the future.

The primary meaning of the Hebrew word for salvation is non-religious and is most often found in a military context meaning deliverance. The Hebrew word for deliverance comes from the roots *niph'al* and *hiph'il* with *hiph'il* having the sense of deliverer. However, the key to understanding salvation in the Hebrew mind is found in the word *ga'al* which means *to redeem*.<sup>17</sup> This is the word used as a

---

16. From the Greek *Keryssein* (to proclaim) and *deryx* (to herald). In Christianity it means a preaching of the gospel with an emphasis on the essence of the gospel as in catechesis or teaching.

17. Yahweh himself is represented as Israel's *ga'al* thirteen times in Isaiah and five times in other sections of the Septuagint.



synonym for *deliver* and *save* especially in the Prophets and psalms with particular reference to the redemptive activity of God.

In the Old Testament deliverance in the sense of redemption was most often seen in the context of adversity, oppression, captivity and death but not in the context of sin. Redemption in the latter sense is most often found in Deutero-Isaiah. There is a sense in which all of Israel's history is *Heilsgeschichte* or salvation history. Although the biblical stories of the Old Testament have counterparts in the mythologies of many traditions it is only with the Hebrews that these stories form a line of salvation history in which God's breaking into human history leads to the salvation of humanity. It was by a specific series of historical events through a specific culture's history that God's saving purpose in Jesus Christ was revealed:

*And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.*<sup>18</sup>

Salvation in the name of Jesus Christ is unique to New Testament history; therefore, other religions and philosophies do not meet the criteria for salvation history.

The event from which the Jewish people were given a distinct religious identity was the miracle of God's intervention in their deliverance from Egypt by the parting of the Red Sea. Since that event the Jewish people have used it as the hermeneutic to understand their unique place and role in salvation history. It is through Israel's experience of salvation history that the biblical concept of salvation was realized. The biblical doctrine of salvation is not a logical deduction from theistic philosophy. It is not a concept of mystical union with the divine. Biblical theology in the Old Testament is the salvation history of the Hebrews; that is, a recitation of the great things God has given to his chosen people. The biblical doctrine of salvation is an assertion that God's intervention into human history is a fact and not a theological argument.

There is an eschatological aspect to salvation as it has occurred, is occurring, and will occur in the future. Salvation is always active. It is an event which has happened, is happening and will continue to happen. It is one continuous action of past, present, and future. It is realized, yet not realized, as it is not made visible to us. There is no separation or contradiction between historical salvation and eschatological salvation. The former, by becoming active in the present, is the matrix and same event as the latter. Eschatological salvation is the final realization beyond history which historical redemption foreshadowed and promised. Past, present and future are not three separate occurrences of salvation at three separate times but constitute one deliverance and one redemption. Biblical time cannot be seen as linear since God's intervention into the history of humanity is a continuous

---

18. *RSV*, Acts 4:12.

phenomena with no beginning and no end.

There is a close connection in biblical thought between salvation and righteousness and they denote the same quality of the divine character. God saved Israel not because of Israel's righteousness but because of God's righteousness. No matter how many times Israel was faithless God kept his covenant promise made first to Moses and then to Jeremiah in the most eloquent and powerful words in the Old Testament:

*But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it upon their hearts; and I will be their God and they shall be my people.*<sup>19</sup>

Thus Israel's justification was by faith alone. The writer of Deutero-Isaiah revealed this biblical truth during the Exile. Paul recovered it from the rabbinic doctrine of merit by which it was obscured. Luther separated it from the medieval doctrine of salvation by works and it became the main theological underpinning of Protestant theology. Today we must liberate it from the doctrine of secular humanism. We must make Paul's words as preached to the early church about the relationship between righteousness and salvation come alive and live for us today:

*Now it is evident that no man is justified before God by the law; for "He who through faith is righteous shall live."*<sup>20</sup>

*For I am not ashamed of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to every one who has faith, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it is written, "He who through faith is righteous shall live."*<sup>21</sup>

Paul proclaimed that the righteousness of God has been revealed in Christ who is the promised salvation. Righteousness and salvation are synonymous terms because he expressed his doctrine of salvation by his teaching of justification by faith. Salvation is justification and it is the corollary of the righteousness of God.

During the second and third centuries there arose a salvation myth among Gnostics known as the Gnostic myth by many scholars.<sup>22</sup> According to the myth

19. RSV, Jeremiah 31:33.

20. RSV, Galatians 3:11.

21. RSV, Romans 1:17.

22. The Gnostic Myth is the well known ancient myth of the Anthropos or Heavenly Man.

a celestial light-being was cast out from heaven and when he fell to earth his personality was shattered into countless minute units which become the essence of humanity and were imprisoned in the evil matter of our bodies. Humanity was now controlled by evil forces and had forgotten its divine origin. In the myth the Gnostic redeemer would descend from heaven and save these elements by imparting *Gnosis* or knowledge of man's actual nature. Salvation would occur when the redeemer gave man the secret words (*Gnosis*) by which the soul at death could escape the planetary guardians of the heavenly spheres and ascend to the world of light. Thus, salvation would come in the re-creation of the fallen man into the heavenly person which he was before he fell: the New Man.

The myth was incorporated syncretistically<sup>23</sup> into many of the mystery cults of the Hellenistic world and it is believed by some scholars that Paul's use of terms such as *second man...from heaven* or *heavenly man*,<sup>24</sup> *new man*,<sup>25</sup> *perfect man*,<sup>26</sup> and John's Gospel's *Son of man who descends from and ascends into heaven*<sup>27</sup> show how Hellenistic Christianity reinterpreted the original kerygma of the Aramaic speaking church. Thus, it became a form of Christianized Gnosticism which would be intelligible and acceptable to the higher paganism of the Greco-Roman world. This is the basis by which some scholars argue that the concept of a gathering into one of a fragmented humanity in the *body* of the person the Son of man from heaven is a Christianized version of the Gnostic Myth.

Although Gnosticism was declared heretical by the early Christian church there are many modern scholars who believe this myth underlies the New Testament conception of Christ as redeemer. This claim can be made because the myth was well known throughout the Hellenistic world of the first century and widely accepted as a religious philosophy by intellectuals. There is no question that Paul would have been familiar with it and quite possibly Christianized it as a teaching device.

However, the Gnostic myth as source material for Paul and John is open to serious criticism. First, there is no first century collaborating literary source. All of the extant texts which document the use of the myth are literary sources from the second and third century. Secondly, it is possible this second and third century literature is the gnosticizing of biblical Christian conceptions. It is a tautology to say that Colossians and Ephesians embody the Gnostic myth and then prove the existence of the myth by citing Colossians and Ephesians. Lastly, all that is found

---

23. From the Greek *synkretismos* which means the union of two parties against a third. In theology it means the combination or reconciliation of differing beliefs in religion.

24. *RSV*, I Corinthians 15:47-48.

25. *RSV*, Colossians 3:10.

26. *RSV*, Ephesians 4:13.

27. *RSV*, John 1:51; 3:13; 3:14; 5:27; 6:27; 6:53; 6:62; 8:28; 12:23; 12:34; 13:31.

in Colossians, Ephesians, and John can be found in Old Testament prophesy which is the basis of the New Testament scheme of salvation. The New Testament plan for salvation is a rediscovery of the Old Testament prophetic kerygma in the light of the ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

The New Testament plan for salvation through Jesus is the fulfillment of Old Testament salvation history:

*The Son of man came to seek and to save the lost*<sup>28</sup>

Luke's statement agrees with the writers of Matthew and Mark who present the ministry of Jesus as concerned with salvation. The obvious question is, who are the lost whom Jesus came to save? Jesus' answer was the distinctive feature of his ministry which set him apart from rabbinic Judaism, the apocalyptic movement, and sectarian Judaism: salvation is for sinners.

Understanding Jesus' gift of salvation to sinners requires us to return to the Old Testament understanding of God's righteousness. The question posed to Jesus was whether salvation is achieved by the righteousness of God or by the righteousness of man. He answered using the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican:

*Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, "God, I thank thee that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week, I give tithes of all that I get." But the tax collector, standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, "God, be merciful to me a sinner!" I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.*<sup>29</sup>

The salvation offered by Jesus results in forgiveness of sins, reconciliation with God and the peace which flows from that relationship. Repentance and changed behavior are the conditions for reconciliation and salvation. As the parable shows God cannot forgive if the sinner is unwilling to recognize his sin and be forgiven.

To Jesus the forgiveness of sins was closely linked with salvation and in turn was manifested by signs of healing. The healing signs were an integral part of the Servant-Son of man paradigm which Jesus had discerned in the prophesy of Isaiah and which he took upon himself. In Isaiah the days of salvation will come when

---

28. RSV, Luke 19:10.

29. RSV, Luke 18:10-14.

the blind see, the deaf hear, the lame walk, and the dumb sing or speak.<sup>30</sup> When healing Jesus used the formulas *your faith has saved you* or *your sins are forgiven*.

The New Testament Greek uses the verb *sozo* which means to save and the noun *soteria* which means salvation for the healing stories in which Jesus forgave sins. The forgiveness of sin is a spiritual healing concomitant with physical restoration of health. The one being forgiven receives spiritual healing which is salvation in the sense of admission into the kingdom of God which is both a present and future reality. This is the realized eschatology found in both the synoptic Gospels and Acts.

John's interpretation of Jesus was that of Savior<sup>31</sup> which was an interpretation of his name. However, the object of salvation was frequently identified as *kosmos*; the world. In the Gospel of John the world was the created order now at enmity with God and in need of salvation through Jesus.

There is no question that Jesus saw himself as Isaiah's servant of the Lord and his work as one of Isaianic liberation:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*<sup>32</sup>

*The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because the Lord has anointed me to bring good tidings to the afflicted; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound.*<sup>33</sup>

The most dramatic signs revealed by the gospel writers that Jesus saw himself in this role were the signs of the bread and wine at the Lord's supper. In these signs Jesus identified himself as the new sacrificial offering in whose blood a new covenant would be ratified between God and the newly redeemed Israel. In Romans, Paul relates Jesus saying:

*The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish*

30. RSV, Isaiah 32:3-4; 35:5-6; 42:7.

31. A large number of personal names are derived from the Hebrew root *ys* ' including Moses, Joshua, Hosea, Isaiah, Elisha, and Jesus. The Greek form *yesua* ' is found in Matthew 1:21; John 4:24; Acts 5:31; Philippians 3:20; Ephesians 5:23; Titus 1:4; II Peter 1:1. In all these names God rather than the person named is explicitly or implicitly the agent of salvation.

32. RSV, Luke 4:18.

33. RSV, Isaiah 61:1

*ungodliness from Jacob; and this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.*<sup>34</sup>

which is based on Isaiah:

*And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord. And as for me, this is my covenant with them, says the Lord: my spirit which is upon you, and my words which I have put in your mouth, or out of the mouth of your children, or out of the mouth of your children's children, says the Lord, from this time forth and for evermore.*<sup>35</sup>

The Isaianic servant of the Lord would establish a new covenant with God's people for all nations. He would liberate those in bondage and open the door to salvation to all those in spiritual and physical prison by the redemptive act of forgiveness of sin. It was in this context that the apostolic church understood the work of Jesus as salvation.

In this light salvation is historical deliverance. It is not the salvation offered by wisdom or knowledge (Gnosticism), by merit or right actions (Judaism), or by mystical absorption into the deity (Hellenistic mysticism). Salvation is accomplished by an act of God breaking into human history as witnessed by the birth, life, death, resurrection and ascension of Jesus the Christ. The Christian message of salvation is not a philosophy, not an ethical code, not a technique of mystical practice. Salvation is the kerygma, preaching, and evangelism of the Isaianic proclamation of liberation as an ongoing act of God without beginning or end.

## RESURRECTION IN JUDAISM

Although the doctrine of resurrection is an accepted part of Judaism today it is not attested to in the Old Testament. The closest reference occurs in the Book of Daniel which was written ca. 168 B.C.E.:

*At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation untill that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to*

---

34. *RSV*, Romans 10:26-27.

35. *RSV*, Isaiah 59:20-21.

*shame and everlasting contempt.*<sup>36</sup>

It is obvious that this passage does not represent a natural and logical development of Old Testament Hebrew thinking but is heavily indebted to Zoroasterism and was designed to reassure the devout of an afterlife free from the specter of Sheol. Michael represents the Iranian Saoshyant who was the savior who will come at the end of the present era. The role of Saoshyant is to vindicate the righteous and resurrect the dead.<sup>37</sup> The end of the passage referring to shame and everlasting contempt is the punishment proscribed for the wicked in Zoroastrian teaching.<sup>38</sup>

Any attempt to read the concept of resurrection into the older books of the Old Testament is in error because the concept of resurrection was not a part of Hebrew thought at the time they were written.<sup>39</sup> Common examples of this inappropriate Christian redaction include such texts as Isaiah 26:19, Job 19:25-27, and Psalm 17:15.

Isaiah 26:19 says:

*Thy dead shall live, their bodies shall rise. O dwellers  
in the dust, awake and sing for joy! For thy dew is a dew of  
light, and on the land of the shades thou wilt let it fall.*

This is purely hyperbolic language couched in agricultural terms which reflects the hope that the spiritually inert community of Israel will arise as does the grain after the spring rains. It has nothing to do with resurrection of the dead.

Job answered Bildad the Shuhite's negative statements on wickedness:

36. RSV, Daniel 12:1-2.

37. Saoshyant is an Avestan word meaning *One who will bring Benefit or Savior*. Many scholars believe that Zarathustra used this word for a person or group of people who would restore the world to a state of purity. The Saoshyant would appear just before the end of time and bring about the final battle between good and evil. It was believed the Saoshyant would appear at the end of the millennium (the period of Mixture) when the world was entirely dominated by evil and would usher in Frashokereti. Frashokereti is usually translated *Renovation* and is used for the moment when evil has been eliminated from the world. That will be the beginning of the final, ideal state, when the sun will stand still in mid-heaven and the dead will be resurrected. The dead will rise up and the final judgement will take place.

38. Zend Avesta, Yasht 16; Bundahesh 11.6 *etalii*.

39. The three sections of the *Tanakh* were canonized as follows: Torah (Pentateuch) 6<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.; Prophets 4<sup>th</sup> century B.C.E.; Holy Writings 2<sup>nd</sup> century B.C.E. to 2<sup>nd</sup> century C.E..

*For I know that my redeemer lives, and at last he will stand upon earth; and after my skin has been thus destroyed, then from my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see on my side, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. My heart faints within me!* <sup>40</sup>

When put in the context of previous chapters of Job these are words of desperation and not confidence in the inevitable. Job was expressing that after the agony of the flesh his hope was to see a benign God in contrast to his hateful friends. There is no expectation of resurrection on the part of Job.

In Psalm 17 David prayed to the Lord first reminding him of his loyalty and then reciting the threats of his enemies. He then ends the prayer in these words:

*As for me, I shall behold thy face in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding thy form.* <sup>41</sup>

David was not talking about his death but rather waking from sleep after a night's shelter protected by the Lord. In other words the passage is to be interpreted in the context of asylum and *epopteia* <sup>42</sup> rather than resurrection.

The concept of resurrection as a belief did not enter Judaism until the writing of the Apocryphal and Pseudopigraphal books. In most of this intertestamental scripture the doctrine of resurrection is keyed to reward and punishment predicated on the manner in which one lived their earthly life. More specifically, one was expected to live a life according to the covenant. It was believed that on the last day all souls would be called to judgement but only the righteous, those who had maintained covenant fidelity, would be resurrected. There were specific reasons why one would not be resurrected including those who denied the authority of the Torah, those who shamed their fellow man in public, and according to Rabbi Akiba <sup>43</sup> those who read outside books; that is, Apocryphal and Pseudopigraphal books which had been determined to be heretical.

40. Job 19:25-27.

41. Psalm 17:15.

42. From the Latin meaning epic poetry. For a classic source on the *epopteia* of David see F. Notscher, "Das Angesicht Gottes schauen" nach babylonischer und alttestamentlicher Auffassung (1924).

43. Rabbi Akiva ben Joseph 50-135 C.E.. He was the leading scholar and a famous teacher in the formative period of rabbinical Judaism. A pupil of Rabbi Eliezer he is credited with extensive exegetical attempts to relate Jewish legal tradition to scriptural texts. He is also credited with providing the basis for the Mishnah by his systematic grouping and codification of the *kalakkoth* (legal traditions). In 132 he supported the revolt against Rome under Bar Kokhbah, who he thought was the Messiah, and was martyred by the Romans soon afterwards.



However, one of the Apocryphal books, *The Second Book of Maccabees*, found in the *Septuagint* is remarkable for its message of resurrection. The seventh chapter is the story about the martyrdom of the seven Maccabean brothers and the two speeches of their mother. As the chapter unfolds we see the development of an understanding of resurrection.<sup>44</sup>

### 1. First Brother:

The mutilation and murder of the first brother is described in minute detail. After his death his mother and brothers encourage one another with the words, *The Lord God is watching, and surely he takes pity on us.*<sup>45</sup> Then they invoke the Torah: *He will certainly take pity on his servants.*<sup>46</sup> The theological substantiation of the resurrection is thus based on an appeal to the Torah.

### 2. Second Brother:

With his last breath he exclaimed, *Inhuman Fiend, you may discharge us from this present life, but the King of the world will raise us up, since it is for his law that we die, to live again for ever.*<sup>47</sup> Raising up is an act of God and only secondarily means resurrection of the faithful.

### 3. Third Brother:

When faced with the mutilation of his body he says, *It was heaven that gave me these limbs; for the sake of his laws I disdain them; from him I hope to receive them again.*<sup>48</sup>

The account of the third brother gives concrete expression to the idea and expectation of the bodily character of resurrection.

### 4. Fourth through Sixth Brother:

The fourth through sixth brother each speak from the perspective of the dual outcome of human destiny: punishment for the wicked and evil; resurrection for those steadfast to the law and covenant.

44. For a review of this chapter see Hans Kung, *Eternal Life? Life After Death as a Medical, Philosophical, and Theological Problem* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 86-87.

45. RSV, II Maccabees 7:6.

46. RSV, Deuteronomy 32:36.

47. RSV, II Maccabees 7:9.

48. RSV, II Maccabees 7:11.

### 5. Mother's First Speech:

The mother's first speech is devoted to the theme of creation in which she fuses the traditional Isarelitic thinking with that of the Greek theory of the elements in order to justify the possibility of a new creation: *It is the creator of the world, ordaining the process of man's birth and presiding over the origin of all things, who in his mercy will most surely give you back both breath and life, seeing that you now despise your own existence for the sake of his laws.*<sup>49</sup>

### 6. Mother's Second Speech:

In this speech the mother moves from the creation of humans to creation of the world and for the first time in the Old Testament puts forth the idea of creation out of nothingness. To her youngest child she says, *I implore you, my child, observe heaven and earth, consider all that is in them, and acknowledge that God made them out of what did not exist, and that mankind comes into being in the same way. Do not fear this executioner, but prove yourself worthy of your brothers, and make death welcome, so that in the day of mercy I receive you back in your brothers' company.*<sup>50</sup>

During this period there was disagreement whether the dead would be resurrected to a life of immortality or whether they would be transported to a newly created world. Immortality was originally termed eternal life and the newly created world the world to come. Eventually the two terms merged in meaning to mean the hereafter. Additionally, there was a difference of opinion as to whether resurrection was to be spiritual or corporeal.

By the time of Jesus the Essenes, Samaritans, Sadducees, and Pharisees were deeply divided regarding resurrection. The Essenes were somewhat ambiguous about resurrection. They held that at death the body would perish while the souls of the good would ascend to a place of bliss and the souls of the wicked would be consigned to a place of torment. There are specific statements that the faithful would share a common estate with the angels and stand forever in the presence of God.<sup>51</sup> It is unlikely that this belief referred to resurrection but rather to the language of mysticism in which the devout would be included in the wider communion of the saints. There is a fragment in the War Scroll which can be interpreted *those that shall rise from the earth* at the time of the final battle between God and Belial would be resurrected; but, other translators interpret *those that shall*

49. RSV, II Maccabees 7:23.

50. RSV, II Maccabees 7:29-30.

51. Manuel of Discipline II:25; Book of Hymns III:19-23; VII 29:31; XI:10-14; XVIII:26-30.

rise from the earth as upstarts on earth which has nothing to do with resurrection.<sup>52</sup>

It is generally assumed that the Samaritans did not believe in resurrection. However, the fourth century sage Marqeh in his exposition of Deuteronomy 32, the Song of Moses, gave a detailed recitation of eschatological resurrection. The problem is that the original text of Marqeh has been superimposed with Islamic additions and there is no way to determine whether Marqeh's statements represent the true Samaritan belief in resurrection which was later accepted by Islam or whether such a statement is an Islamic overlay to the original Marqeh text.

The Sadducees completely denied the existence of resurrection<sup>53</sup> and their bleak view of the hereafter as a place of desolation and misery permeates the book of Ecclesiasticus.<sup>54</sup> These passages are supported by the Greek statement:

*All things that are of the earth turn to the earth again,  
and all things that are of the waters return to the sea.*<sup>55</sup>

The Pharisees accepted resurrection and it is their perspective which became the norm and is recited in the second of the Eighteen Benedictions which are a part of every Hebrew service:

*Thou, O Lord, art mighty for ever, Who quickens the dead  
in abundant mercy...and keepeth faith with those who sleep in the dust.*<sup>56</sup>

It is also found in the Kaddish recited at the burial service and in the blessing when visiting a cemetery:

*Magnified and hallowed by His great name, Who will  
hereafter renew the world, quicken the dead and raise them  
to life everlasting.*

*Blessed art Thou, O Lord...who formed your in judgment...  
and put you to death in judgment...and will hereafter restore and  
quicken you in judgment.*<sup>57</sup>

52. War Scroll, XII:5.

53. See Acts 23:8; 26:8 and Josephus *Antiquities of the Jews* XIII.i.4; *War* II.viii.14.

54. For example 7:17; 10:11; 17:27-28; 28:6; 30; 32.

55. Euripides *Supplices* 531-35; *Orestes* 1086-88; *Chrisippus* fragment 839; cf. Lucretius *De rerum natura* II.998.

56. This benediction is cited in the Mishna (*Rosh Hashanah* 4.5) and was most probably inserted into the Standing Prayer to rebut the denial of resurrection by the Sadducees.

57. *Babylonian Talmud*, Ber. 58b [*baraitha*]; *Tosef.* Ber. 6.9. The *Tosef* is a supplement to the *Mishna* containing six orders with the same names of those in the *Mishna*.

Finally, the beginning of every morning service starts with a profession of belief in the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the dead.<sup>58</sup>

## THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS

The resurrection of Jesus is the central point of faith within Christianity; however, it is not resurrection as previously understood by the Hebrews. It is unique because it is the resurrection of the Messiah. Resurrection marks the division between the life of Jesus the man and Christ the God. Resurrection in Jesus connects the old order of the Old Testament with the Apostolic Age and the promise of the resurrection for all on the last day. The resurrection of Jesus is the place where faith and history meet. It is as enigmatic as it is indissoluble.

Christian hope in resurrection is not a hope in a future utopia but is a recognition that resurrection in Jesus is a shared resurrection. It is a sharing of both the present and the future in the risen Christ. Contrary to popular thought life after death for Christians does not depend upon the resurrection of Jesus. When the Sadducees came to Jesus and told him there was no resurrection he countered:

*And as for the dead being raised, have you not read in the book of Moses, in the passage about the bush, how God said to him, "I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob?" He is not God of the dead, but of the living; you are quite wrong.*<sup>59</sup>

Even for Paul, who preached so strongly about the necessity of a united resurrection in Christ, the resurrection of Jesus is not the basis for accepting belief in resurrection in general. Paul did not say, *If Christ had not been raised there would be no resurrection* but rather *If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised*<sup>60</sup>

Paul developed this premise when he failed to draw general conclusions from the resurrection appearances of Christ. In Paul's letters there is no suggestion that the appearances of Jesus after his crucifixion proved or even confirmed his survival of death. Paul doesn't even imply that our resurrection will in any way resemble that of Jesus. Paul's only statement on our resurrected body is that:

*God gives it a body as he has chosen, and to each kind of seed its own body.*<sup>61</sup>

58. *Babylonian Talmud*, Ber. 60a.

59. *RSV*, Mark 12:26-27.

60. *RSV*, I Corinthians 15:13.

61. *RSV*, I Corinthians 15:38.

Paul cannot tell us the nature of our resurrection body because the resurrection of Jesus is unique: it is not an example of a general resurrection of the faithful.

If Jesus' resurrection is pre-eminent how do we explain the cases of resurrection from the dead in the New Testament cited by John, Luke, Mark, and Paul? There is no question that the intent of John and Luke in the cases of Lazarus and Dorcas is that they were considered clinically dead and were brought back to life.<sup>62</sup> However, the cases of Jairus' daughter and Eutychus are somewhat different in that Luke said of Jairus's daughter *her spirit returned* and Paul said of Eutychus *his life* (literally *soul* in Greek) *is in him*.<sup>63</sup> Even in the case of Lazarus, Jesus said *I go to wake him out of sleep*. The question is, were they really dead or just sleeping?

The answer may be found in an understanding of life and death in the ancient Hebrew mind. To the Hebrews of this time there was no absolute dividing line between life and death. Death was seen as a weak form of life. It was believed the soul left the body at death but if it had not gone too far could be called back to the body. Thus, the explanation of the distinction between the resurrection of Jesus and those raised from the dead is that the former is truly resurrection while the latter was a type of extended healing beyond that generally practiced or expected. These healings were eschatological. They were a sign that the end time was at hand and that the new age in Jesus was to begin.

Before we examine the specifics of Jesus resurrection we need to ask, did Jesus see his resurrection beforehand and if so is there any documental evidence? The difficulty in answering this question is that the New Testament documents were written to teach and explain the post-resurrection faith of the apostolic church. It is obvious that the passion narratives have been redacted by the early church to explain the death and resurrection of Jesus and we cannot take at face value such phrases as *after three days* and *will rise again*. However, scholars do recognize inferences in the prediction narratives which may have begun within Jesus himself. This is because it is not stated that *after three days* Jesus rose but *on the third day* as Matthew and Luke recognize by their correction of Mark's *after the third day*.<sup>64</sup>

Matthew and Luke reflect the words of Hosea:

62. John 11:1-44 recounts the story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead at Bethany. In Acts 9:36-41 Peter is brought to Tabitha which means Dorcas (Tabitha in Aramaic and Dorcas in Greek mean *gazelle*) who has died. Peter prayed and then said, *Tabitha rise* and she opened her eyes and sat up.

63. In Luke 8:49-56 = Mark 5:35-43 Jesus brings the daughter of Jairus back to life. In Acts 20:9-12 Paul is visiting Troas where he prolonged his speech until midnight. Eutychus, a young man sitting in a window, fell asleep, and fell three stories where he was presumed dead. Paul embraced him and told the people not to be alarmed. Paul continued his speech until daybreak and when he left Eutychus was alive and went with the people.

64. RSV, Matthew 16:21; Mark 8:31; Luke 9:22.

*After two days he will revive us; on the third day  
he will raise us up, that we may live before him.*<sup>65</sup>

It is likely that Jesus saw his vindication as the Son of man representing the whole people of God in the form of resurrection. The pattern had already been set by the dry bones episode in Ezekiel in which the Son of man is told to prophesy and the bones, personifying Israel, came to life.<sup>66</sup> In this context it is inconceivable that the Son of man, a name which implies vindication from suffering, would come to his end with the humiliation and death of a common criminal. As the Son of man is a recurring theme of his ministry it is argued that Jesus foresaw such vindication by God at the end of his ministry, humiliation and death.

Jesus also spoke of the need to be perfected.<sup>67</sup> This perfecting is linked with his death in Jerusalem with the accomplishment of his baptism<sup>68</sup> which with the *cup* is the gateway to his glory.<sup>69</sup> We should interpret this as the assertion that the Son of man, Jesus, was to rise in glory to the Father and be seated in victory at his right hand.<sup>70</sup> As in Daniel<sup>71</sup> the Son of man representing the *saints of the Most High*<sup>72</sup> will be given judgment in the face of his oppressors and receive the kingdom, the power, and the glory.<sup>73</sup> Jesus prediction of rising in three days referred to the same act of God in which God will vindicate him both as Christ and Son of man. Both are eschatological references to the final messianic act of God. The uniqueness of Jesus is that the event of resurrection on the third day occurs in the midst of human history and is not delayed until the last day.

How do we prove Jesus was resurrected from the dead? It is recognized that the

65. RSV, Hosea 6:2.

66. RSV, Ezekiel 37.

67. RSV, Luke 13:32-33 wherein *after the third day I finish my course* in Greek literally means *I am perfected*.

68. Accomplishment and baptism have the same philological root in Greek.

69. The *cup* is a metaphor for the new order, the new age to come in Jesus. *Glory* represents his victory over death and vindication by the Father.

70. RSV, Mark 14:62 and parallels.

71. RSV, Daniel 7:13-27.

72. The *saints of the Most High* are those who have remained faithful to the covenant in the face of persecution.

73. Daniel 7:13-27 is Daniel's dream of the four beasts. It begins with one like the Son of man being presented to the Ancient of Days wherein he received dominion, glory and kingdom over all peoples, nations and languages. The four beasts are the personification of four kingdoms with the fourth being different. It will devour the whole earth, trample it and break it into pieces. Eventually the fourth kingdom will be judged and the *saints of the Most High* who have been persecuted receive their kingdom.

earliest accounts of his resurrection do not specifically speak of an empty tomb.<sup>74</sup> That he was in fact buried in a tomb as opposed to the dictate of Roman law in which his body would have been thrown into a lime pit, simply left to rot or given to the Jews for interment in a common grave may be accepted from the consistency of the gospel narratives.<sup>75</sup> However, the empty tomb is implicit in both Acts and the Pauline letters.<sup>76</sup> Both Acts and the Pauline letters imply a belief in bodily resurrection because to the Hebrews resurrection must be bodily. Spiritual resurrection is a later Christian concept and was not a part of the Hebrew belief system.

How did Jesus' followers explain the empty tomb? The women at the tomb are shocked not to find Jesus inside and did not believe that he had risen when told so by the figure at the tomb.<sup>77</sup> Instead they ask where his body was taken. The empty tomb was totally unexpected, bewildering and perplexing. Explanations such as his disciples took the body and hid it; the body was stolen by mysterious strangers; the women went to the wrong tomb; and Jesus fainted on the cross and subsequently escaped from the tomb were common. The fact of the matter is the disciples could neither deny the tomb was empty nor produce his body.

Contemporary scholarship discounts the significance of the empty tomb. The story of the empty tomb is seen in mythological terms of the spiritual acknowledgment of Jesus' dying on the cross as the victory of God. This is what the resurrection originally meant to the apostles and what it means to us. Most of us find it easier to believe that the empty tomb produced the disciples' faith rather than the disciples' faith produced the empty tomb.

According to the gospels it was the appearances of Jesus after the third day which were the catalyst for the disciples' belief in the resurrection as well as confirmation of their faith. There are records of at least eleven resurrection appearances. It is important to note that the appearances of Jesus were not to everyone but only to those who had been his followers during his earthly life. All his appearances are couched in the words: *God...made him manifest; he appeared; he revealed himself; he presented himself alive and not to all the people but to us who were chosen by God as witnesses.* The appearances were assurances given to those who had

74. Although this statement is in direct opposition to the gospels it does not mean *ipso facto* that the tomb was not empty. It is obvious that older source material such as L, M, Q, and others which we cannot identify were used in the construction of the gospel accounts. Application of the tools of modern biblical criticism, especially literary criticism, to the account of the empty tomb point to the conjecture that the empty tomb might well be a construction of the Evangelists to support the belief of Jesus' resurrection and not be historically accurate.

75. All four gospels cite a tomb: Matthew 27:57-61; Mark 15:42-47; Luke 23:50-56; John 19:38-42.

76. I Corinthians 15:4; Acts 13:29-30; Acts 2:31.

77. *RSV*, Luke 24:11.

previously accepted him and not proof to compel faith for unbelievers.

Paul gives a detailed list of Jesus' appearances in I Corinthians 15: 5-7. He places the appearances in the context of the original tradition which he had received and adds that most of the witnesses were still alive. Matthew, John, and Luke all have resurrection accounts but Mark 16:9-20 must be discounted as it clearly does not belong to the original text. The majority of scholars believe it replaces the original ending of Mark which is now lost but included an appearance to the disciples. Although it cannot be certain in all cases it is highly likely that some of the appearances reported by two sources were in fact the same appearance although the particulars of the appearances are somewhat different. However, there are at least eleven appearances which are certain.<sup>78</sup>

Mark originally contained no appearance stories but merely pointed the way to subsequent appearances in Galilee. Appearance stories seem to have grown up as isolated units or *pericopes*. Inevitably, what was originally indescribable came to be described in earthly terms. The only way the post-apostolic community could construct appearance stories was to model them on stories they had heard about the earthly life and ministry of Jesus. They included a missionary charge, a command to baptize, a promise of abiding presence or the gift of the Holy Spirit, instruction about the fulfillment of biblical promises in his death and resurrection, the assurance of his presence in the breaking of the bread, and finally the hope of his return.<sup>79</sup>

---

78. I Corinthians 15:8; cf. Acts 9:3-8; 22:6-11; 26:12-18. In Corinthians Paul states that he was also a recipient of a resurrection appearance.

79. Bruce M. Metzger and Michael D. Coogan, eds. *The Oxford Companion to the Bible*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 648-49.



Figure 7.1: Resurrection Appearances of Jesus

	WHO	CITATION	ACTION
1	Mary Magdalene and other Mary	Mt 28:9-10	Jesus appeared as they left the empty tomb. They held his feet, worshiped him and he instructed the disciples meet him at Galilee.
2	Mary Magdalene	Jn 20:11-18	Jesus appeared outside the empty tomb. Mary was told not to touch him and tell the disciples he was ascending to Father.
3	Peter	I Cor 15:5	This is in Paul's explanation about the resurrection.
		Lk 24:34	Cleopas and companion return to Jerusalem and are told by the disciples Jesus appeared to Simon.
		Mark 16:7 ?	Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome are told at the tomb to tell Peter and the disciples they will see Jesus in Galilee.
4	Cleopas and companion	Lk 24: 13-31	Jesus joins them on the road to Emmaus and interprets the scriptures as well as blesses the bread. He then vanishes.
5	Eleven and other disciples	Lk 24:36-49 Disciples and other	Jesus showed them his hands and feet. He ate fish with them and explained the scriptures. He promised to send the Holy Spirit.

		Jn 20:19-23 Disciples except Thomas  cf. I Cor 15:5 ?	At a house in Jerusalem he shows them his hands and side. He breathed the Holy Spirit on the and gave them the power to forgive or retain sins.
6		Jn 20:24-29	At a house in Jerusalem allows Thomas to touch his hands and side.
7		Mt 28:16-20  cf. Mark 16:7 ?	Jesus meets them on a mountain in Galilee. He commands them to baptize in the name of the Father, Son, Holy Spirit.
8		Acts 1:6-9  = Lk24:50-51 ?  = I cor 15:7 ?	In Jerusalem the disciples ask if it is time to restore the kingdom. Jesus tells them it's not for them to know the time, but promises to send the Holy Spirit.
9	Seven disciples	Jn 21:1-14	Jesus meets them at the Sea of Tiberious and commands the draught of fish. They eat breakfast and Peter is asked three times, <i>Do you love me?</i> Peter asks, <i>What about this man?</i> in reference to the Beloved Disciple and is rebuked.
10	More than 500 brethren	I Cor 15:6	This is in Paul's explanation about the resurrection.
11	James	I Cor 15:7	This is in Paul's explanation about the resurrection

All gospel accounts record the appearances depicting the same phenomenon of a body recognizable yet changed, transcending the limitations of the flesh, yet capable of manifesting itself within the order of the flesh. This is the spiritual or glorified body of Christ. This does not deny the physical nature of Jesus' body as it is Luke and John who insist on the physical manifestations of Jesus resurrected body<sup>80</sup> who most specifically state that Jesus had, by the time of the appearances, *entered into his glory and been glorified.*<sup>81</sup>

The theological purpose of the resurrection stories is to present Jesus as exalted in the Father's glory and as such there is no real distinction between the resurrection and the ascension appearances. Even Acts<sup>82</sup> which equates the ascension with the termination of the appearances<sup>83</sup> treats this event as one of farewell rather than glorification. The moment of glory had already occurred at the resurrection and the appearances are seen as happening after Jesus' enthronement as Lord and Christ.

We are now at another crossroad and must ask the question, did the resurrection and resurrection appearances actually happen or were they some form of hallucination, wishful thinking, or deception on the part of the disciples? This is a very difficult question to answer. All those who were alive and experienced the events were dead when the gospel accounts were written so first person testimony was impossible. Is it possible that the disciples, suffering from shock and deep emotional distress, had a hysterical break with reality and saw what they wanted to see? Is it possible that the intense desire to deny the fact of crucifixion and the death of Jesus lead to an equally intense desire to see him once again and this desire manifested itself in the appearances? How credible is it that the appearances were only seen by those who were already prepared to believe and had been followers of Jesus during his earthly ministry? Could the disciples have constructed an elaborate hoax to prove that Jesus had risen on the third day as he had predicted? The answer to all of these questions is best answered by another question. Without the resurrection experiences in some form that was not illusory or intentionally deceptive how is it possible to account for the radical and permanent transformation of the disciples? If the appearances had been nothing more than psychic phenomena they would have become progressively less vivid and it would have been virtually impossible to pass on the legacy of a living Christ from generation to generation. If the appearances were a hoax it is unlikely that twelve or more people could have planned and implemented such a scheme over an extended period of time or that others would continue to believe them.

---

80. *RSV*, Luke 24:39-43; John 20:20, 27.

81. *RSV*, Luke 24:26; John 13:31*et alii* cf. 20:22 with 7:39.

82. *RSV*, Acts 1:11.

83. cf. the contrast with Luke 9:51; 22:69; 24:26 where Christ's taking up to the power and glory of the Father is associated with the Passion and Resurrection.

Something extraordinary and supernatural happened which the disciples knew were appearances of the resurrected Jesus. There is no other explanation which adequately explains their transformation between the crucifixion and Pentecost. The resurrection appearances are the only evidence to explain the dynamics of the apostolic witness, as well as our own belief, which is firmly rooted in Paul's understanding of faith. It is faith in the living Christ which is the basis for the abiding experience of the Christ who lives in me<sup>84</sup> and the continuing knowledge of the power of the resurrection.<sup>85</sup>

In the Pauline letters the resurrection hope lies in the Holy Spirit. In Romans, Paul states:

*If the Spirit of him who raised Christ Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also through his Spirit which dwells in you.*<sup>86</sup>

The Holy Spirit is the vital link, not only between Christ's resurrection and ours, but between our present and our future. For Paul this transformation has already begun through baptism where we are incorporated into the body of Christ. Paul says:

*Likewise my brethren, you have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead in order that we may bear fruit for God. While we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But now we are discharged from the law, dead to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.*<sup>87</sup>

By his use of spirit language Paul relates the risen life known in Christ to the resurrection yet to come.

When responding to the doubts and questions of the Thessalonians and Corinthians about the resurrection of the body<sup>88</sup> Paul's theological answer was the unity between the resurrection of Christians and the parousia of Christ. The dead in Christ, as risen men and women, cannot be excluded from the glorification of the new age. But the resurrected body will be radically changed. Paul wrote to the

84. RSV, Galatians 2:20.

85. RSV, Philemon 3:10.

86. RSV, Romans 8:11.

87. RSV, Romans 7:4-6.

88. RSV, I Thessalonians 4:13; I Corinthians 15:12.

Corinthians:

*Lo! 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 imperishable, and we shall be changed. For this perishable nature must put on the imperishable, and this mortal nature must put on immortality. When the perishable puts on the imperishable, and the mortal puts on immortality, then shall come to pass the saying that is written:*

*"Death is swallowed up in victory  
O death, where is thy victory?  
O death, where is thy sting?"<sup>89</sup>*

Just as the resurrection of Christ was not simply restoration to life but exaltation to victory so it is with the resurrection of those that are in him. The purpose of the resurrection of the dead is that we may reign with Christ. The resurrection of Christians and the parousia of Christ are one.

It is the firsthand awareness of the living Christ, then and now, which has sustained the Christian church. It is the existence of the Christian church which is the living proof of the resurrection. In the final analysis it is this common and lasting knowledge of the living, victorious Christ which is the only evidence for the affirmation that Jesus is risen and is one with God.

## SUMMARY

The significance of the resurrection of Jesus cannot be understood until it is juxtaposed against the milieu of Ancient Near Eastern cultural and religious views of the afterlife and resurrection. His resurrection encompasses the Ancient Near Eastern developmental understanding of afterlife and resurrection from the earliest myths of a dying and rising god, myth and ritual myths, resurrection myths, the mysteries and philosophies, to a monotheistic god as deliverer of his people.

In the Old Testament righteousness and salvation are linked to covenant fidelity. Salvation has an eschatological perspective: it has occurred, is occurring and will occur; however, this should be understood as one saving act of God and not three separate acts. Israel's history may be seen as *Heilsgeschichte* or salvation history because the proclamation of salvation becomes kerygma: God has saved his people once in history and the expectation is that he will do so again. Deutero-Isaiah's insight is that justification is by faith alone.

---

89. RSV, I Corinthians 15:51-55.

New Testament salvation in Jesus is the fulfillment of the Old Testament plan for salvation. In Jesus, salvation through forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with God is open to all as all are sinners. It is from this understanding of Isaianic liberation that John is able to call Jesus, Savior. In this light salvation is historical deliverance.

The synoptic Gospels, John, Acts, and Paul all declare a belief in the bodily resurrection of Jesus. However, it is the resurrection appearances which confirm the faith of the apostles and are the catalyst for our belief in his resurrection. These appearances are the glorified Christ. Paul's answer to the doubts of the Thessalonians and Corinthians is that there is a unity between the resurrection of Christians and the parousia of Christ. The Holy Spirit is the link not only between Christ's resurrection and ours but between our present and future. It is the first hand experience of the disciples of the living Christ in this new age of his Spirit, the common knowledge of the living Christ, who is victorious over death which is the only true and absolute evidence for affirming that he is risen and is one with God the Father.

## Epilogue

---

At the end of Fyodor Dostoevsky's novel *The Brothers Karamazov* Kolya suddenly cries:

*Karamazov, is it really true that, as our religion tells us, we shall all rise from the dead and come to life and see one another again, all, and Ilyusha?" And Alyosha replied, half laughing, half rapturously: "Certainly we shall rise again, certainly we shall see one another, and shall tell one another gladly and joyfully all that has been." And so Alyosha went with the boys serenely to the funeral meal, to eat pancakes. "Well come along! And now we go hand in hand" And Kolya goes on enthusiastically: "And always so, all our life hand in hand! Hurrah for Karamazov!"*<sup>1</sup>

Is it really that easy? If the meaning of life and the meaning of death are necessarily intertwined, the assured belief in an eternal life has crucial consequences for a meaningful and responsibly organized temporal life. Likewise, there are consequences for a meaningful and responsibly accepted death. The Protestant theologian Eberhard Jungel puts it another way:

*Christian faith does not simply abolish fear of death and hatred of death, but it takes away blindness from both, from the fear of death and the hatred of death arising from it...It teaches us to understand death. It illuminates death in the light of the gospel. Thus it brings light also into the darkness of death.*<sup>2</sup>

---

1. F.M. Dostoevski. *The Brothers Karamazov*, 2 vols. (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1958), 912-13.

2. Hans Kung. *Eternal Life? Life After Death as a Medical, Philosophical, and Theological Problem* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1948), 163. Originally E. Jungel, "Der tod als Geheimnis des Lebens" in the same author's *Entsprechungen: Got-Wahrheit-Mensch. Theologische Erörterungen*, Munic, 1980, 338.

In the resurrection of Jesus we find the fulfillment of God's promise to the prophets; that is, the creation of a new earth and a new heaven.

*For now I create a new heaven and a new earth,  
and the past will not be remembered, and will come no more  
to men's minds. Be glad and rejoice for ever and ever for  
what I am creating*<sup>3</sup>

God's new creation is described by Jeremiah as a *new covenant* and Ezekiel as *a new heart...and a new spirit*. Our new creation in the resurrected Jesus is described as a dialectical movement of thought: life, justice, freedom, love, and salvation.

When the New Testament speaks of resurrection, it does not refer to the natural continuance of a spirit-soul independent of our bodily functions. What it means, following traditional Jewish theology, is the new creation, the transformation of the whole person by God's life creating spirit. Unlike release from Platonic corporeality in the resurrected Jesus we are now released with and in his now glorified, spiritualized corporeality: a new creation, a new man. Easter is not a feast of immortality; Easter is a feast of Christ. It is the feast of the crucified Christ now glorified of which we are a part by our sharing in his one body.

This is the meaning of bodily resurrection. It is not a body in the physiological sense, a corpse, or remains. It is the essence of self with its entire history.

*That not only man's naked self is saved through death,  
when all earthly history is left behind, all relationships with other  
human beings become meaningless; bodily resurrection means  
that a person's life history and all the relationships established  
in the course of this history enter together into the consummation  
and finally belong to the risen person*<sup>4</sup>

Resurrection of the body means that man rediscovers in God not only his last moment but his entire history.

In the words of Hans Kung:

*By entering into the infinite, the finite person loses his  
limits so that the present contrast of personal and impersonal  
is transcended and transformed into the transpersonal.*<sup>5</sup>

---

3. RSV, Isaiah 65:17-18.

4. F.J. Nocke. *Eschatologie* (Dusseldorph, 1982), 123.

5. Hans Kung, *Eternal Life? Life After Death as a Medical, Philosophical, and Theological Problem* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1948), 112.



It is understood in the requiem mass for the dead that in sharing Jesus' resurrection we share in his metamorphosis: *vita mutatur, non tollitur* which means *life is changed; not ended*. Our death and shared resurrection in Christ does not mean all is lost or the end. It does not mean to perish and fade away into nothingness. It is not a diminishing of our humanity. Our realized eschatological resurrection in Jesus is our destiny and the fulfillment of God's promise in the person of Jesus.

Jesus is man.

Jesus is myth.

Jesus is God.



## Bibliography

---

- Albright, William F. *From the Stone Age to Christianity: Monotheism and the Historical Process*, 2nd ed. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1957.
- Alison, James. *Raising Abel: The Recovery of the Eschatological Imagination*. New York: Crossroads, 1996.
- Aulen, Gustaf. *Jesus in Contemporary Historical Research*. Transl. Ingalill H. Hjelm. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1976.
- Aquinas, Thomas. *Summa Theologica*, translated by Fathers of the English Dominican Province revised by Daniel J. Sullivan in *Great Books of the Western World*. Robert Maynard Hutchins, Editor in Chief. Chicago: Encyclopedia Britannica, 1952.
- Banks, Robert. *Reconciliation and Hope: New Testament Essays on Atonement and Eschatology*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974.
- Barnstone, Willis, ed. *The Other Bible*. San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1984.
- Barry, Colman J. *Readings in Church History: From Pentecost to the Protestant Revolt, vol. 1*. New York: Newman Press, 1959.
- Barth, Karl. *The Resurrection of the Dead*. Transl. H. J. Stenning. New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1933.
- Bloom, Harold. *Omens of Millennium: The Gnosis of Angels, Dreams, and Resurrection*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1996.
- Boccaccini, Gabriel. *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1998.
- Borg, Marcus et alii., eds. *The Lost Gospel Q*. Berkley: Ulysses, 1996.
- Brianchaninov, Ignatius. *On The Prayer of Jesus*, Transl. Father Lazarus. Rockport: Element, 1993.
- Brown, Raymond. *Jesus God and Man: Modern Biblical Reflections*, New York: Macmillan, 1976.
- \_\_\_\_\_ *New Testament Essays*. Milwaukee: The Bruce Publishing Company,

- 1965.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Birth of The Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in Matthew and Luke*, Garden City: Doubleday, 1977.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Death of the Messiah From Gethsemane to the Grave: A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, New York: Doubleday, 1994.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Virginal Conception & Bodily Resurrection of Jesus*. New York: Paulist Press, 1973.
- Bruce, F.F. *Jesus & Christian Origins Outside the New Testament*. Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1974.
- Buber, Martin. *On Judaism*, New York: Schocken Books, 1967.
- Cameron, Ron, ed. *The Other Gospels: Non-Canonical Gospel Texts*. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1982.
- Charlesworth, James H. *Jesus Within Judaism: New Light from Archaeological Discoveries*. New York: Doubleday, 1988.
- Cohn, Gabriel H. and Harold Fisch, eds. *Prayer in Judaism: Continuity and Change*, Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1996.
- Cohn, Hiam. *Concept of Justice in Jewish Law*. Santa Barbara: Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, 1973.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Human Rights and Jewish Law*. New York: KATV Publishing, 1984.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jewish Law in Ancient and Modern Israel*. Hoboken, New Jersey: KATV Publishing, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Trial and Death of Jesus*. New York: KTAV Publishers, 1971.
- Collins, John Joseph. *The Scepter and the Star: The Messiahs of the Dead Sea Scrolls and other Ancient Literature*. New York: Doubleday, 1995.
- Crossan, John Dominic. *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*. San Francisco: Harper, 1992.
- Cwiekowski, Frederick J. *The Beginnings of the Church*. New York: Paulist Press, 1988.
- Davenport, Guy and Benjamin Urrutia. *The Logia of Yeshua*. Washington, D.C.: Counterpoint, 1996.
- Dodd, C.H. *The Authority of the Bible*. Glasgow: William Collins Sons & Co., Ltd., 1960.
- Dulles, Avery. *Apologetics and the Biblical Christ*. Paramus: Newman Press, 1971.
- Eiseman, R. and Wise, M. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Uncovered*. Dorset: Element, 1992.
- Eusebius: *The Ecclesiastical History, Vol. I [Books I-IV]*. Transl. Kirsopp Lake. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1975. \*E. Schwartz's text used in volumes i and ii of Part II of the edition of *Eusebius in Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der erstern drei Jahrhunderte* published by the Berlin Academy.
- Eusebius: *The Ecclesiastical History, Vol. II [Books VI-X]*. Transl. J.E.L. Oulton. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980.

- Eusebius, of Caesarea. *The Ecclesiastical History*, 2 vols., Loeb Classical Library, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926-1932. \*Greek and English on opposite pages.
- Farmer, William R. ed. *Anti-Judaism and the Gospels*, Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1999.
- Fortman, Edmund J. *The Triune God: A Historical Study of the Doctrine of the Trinity*. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982.
- Fredrickson, Paula. *From Jesus to Christ: The Origins of New Testament Images of Jesus*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus of Nazareth: King of the Jews*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1999.
- Friedman, Richard E. *Who Wrote The Bible?*. New York: Perennial, 1989.  
\* Originally published by Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, 1987.
- Funk, Robert and Hoover, Roy W. *The Five Gospels: The Search for the Authentic Words of Jesus*. Sonoma: Polebridge, 1995.
- Gillette, Douglas. *The Shaman's Secret: The Lost Resurrection Teachings of the Ancient Maya*, New York: Bantam Books, 1997.
- Harris-Shapiro, Carol. *Messianic Judaism*, Boston: Beacon Press, 1999.
- Hays, Richard B. *The Moral Vision of the New Testament*, San Francisco: HarperSanFrisko. 1996.
- Henderson, Joseph L and Maud Oakes. *The Wisdom of the Serpent: The Myths of Death, Rebirth, and Resurrection*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1990.
- Jagersma, Henk. *A History of Israel from Alexander the Great to Bar Kochba*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986.
- Jeremias, Joachim. *New Testament Theology: The Proclamation of Jesus*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Eucharistic Words of Jesus*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1966.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Problem of the Historical Jesus*. Transl. Norman Perrin, Philadelphia: Fortress Books, 1974.
- Kasper, Walter. *Jesus the Christ*. New York: Paulist Press, 1977
- Keck, Leander E. *A Future For The Historical Jesus*. Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971.
- Keller, Werner. *The Bible as History*. New York: William Morrow and Company, 1981.
- Kersten, Holger and Elmar R. Gruber. *The Jesus Conspiracy: The Turin Shroud & the Truth about the Resurrection*. Rockport: Element, 1992.
- Kung, Hans. *Eternal Life? Life After Death as a Medical, Philosophical, and Theological Problem*. Transl. Edward Quinn. Garden City: Doubleday, 1984.
- Lane, Dermot A. *The Reality of Jesus: An Essay in Christology*. New York: Paulist Press, 1975.

- Larue, Gerald. *Sex and the Bible*. Buffalo: Prometheus Books, 1983.
- Latourette, Kenneth S. *A History of Christianity*, 2 vols. New York: Harper & Row, 1975.
- Laymon, Charles M. *The Lord's Prayer in its Biblical Setting*. New York: Abingdon Press, 1968.
- Leon-Dufour, Xavier. *Resurrection and the Message of Easter*. Transl. R.N. Wilson. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974.
- Lonergan, Bernard. *The Way to Nicaea: The Dialectical Development of Trinitarian Theology*, Transl. Conn O'Donovan. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1976.

The German Edition is:

- Lonergan, Bernard. *De Deo Trino*, first part.
- McNeile, A.H. *St. Paul, His Letters and Christian Doctrine*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1920.
- Macquarrie, John. *Principles of Christian Theology*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1977.
- Maloney, George. *Centering on the Lord Jesus: The Whole Person at Prayer*. Everett: Performance Press, 1987.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Jesus Prayer For Modern Pilgrims*. Everett: Performance Press, 1988.
- Mayotte, Ricky. *The Complete Jesus*, South Royalston: Steerforth Press, 1997.
- Meagher, James L. *The Tragedy of Calvary: Minute Details of Christ's Life from Sunday Morning until the Resurrection and Ascension*. New York: Samuel R. Leland, 1934.
- Metzger, B.M. *New Testament Studies*, 5, 1958-1959.
- Miethe, Terry L., ed. *Did Jesus Rise from the Dead: The Resurrection Debate*. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1987. \*This is a transcription of a debate between Gary R. Habermas and Antony G.N. Flew with responses by Wolfhart Pannenberg, Charles Hartshorne, and James I. Packer.
- Miller, Robert J., ed. *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version*. Sonoma: Polebridge, 1992.
- Morgenstern, Julian. *The Rites of Birth, Marriage, Death, and Kindred Occasions Among the Semites*. Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1966.
- Niebuhr, H. Richard. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper & Row, 1951.
- Niebuhr, Richard R. *Resurrection and Historical Reason: A Study of Theological Method*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1957.
- O'Collins, Gerald. *What Are They Saying About Jesus?*. New York: Paulist Press, 1977.
- Otto, Rudolph. *The Idea of the Holy: An Inquiry into the Non-Rational Factor in the Idea of the Divine and Its Reflection to the Rational*, Transl. John W. Harvey, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923.

- Pagels, Elaine. *Adam, Eve, and the Serpent*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.
- \* Exegesis of Genesis 1-3 ending with St. Augustine's sexualized interpretation of sin, i.e., the dogma of Original Sin which therefore requires man's need of external government: A Christian State and imperially supported church. Topics include Gnostic interpretation of the story of Adam and Eve, virginity, chastity, and celibacy which St. Paul sees as the only "means of restoring humanity to Paradise". From: Chrysotom, *De sacerdotis*, pp. 3, 15.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *The Gnostic Gospels*. New York: Vintage Books, 1989.
- Pannenberg, Wolfhart. *Jesus God and Man*, 2nd ed., Transl. Lewis L. Wilkins and Duane A. Priebe. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1977.
- Patai, Raphael. *The Messiah Texts*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1979.
- Perkins, PHEME. *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection*. Garden City: Doubleday, 1984.
- Rahner, Karl. *Foundations of Christian Faith: An Introduction to the Idea of Christianity*. Transl. William V. Dych. New York: The Seabury Press, 1978.
- Ramsey, A. Michael. *The Resurrection of Christ*. Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1946.
- Raphael, Simcha. *Jewish Views of the Afterlife*, Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1994.
- Reumann, John. *Jesus in the Church's Gospels: Modern Scholarship and the Earliest Sources*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1973.
- Robinson, James M., ed. *The Nag Hammadi Library, Rev. edition*. San Francisco: Harper-Collins, 1988.
- Rush, William G. *The Trinitarian Controversy*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1980.
- Sanders, E.P.. *The Historical Figure of Jesus*. New York: Penguin Press, 1993.
- Schillebeecks, E. *Christ the Sacrament of the Encounter with God*. New York: (Sheed and Ward), 1963.

The Dutch edition is:

Schillebeecks, E. *Christus, Sacrament van de Godsontmoeting*. Bilthoven: H. Nelissen, 1960.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus: An experiment in Christology*, Transl. Hubert Hoskins. New York: The Seabury Press, 1979

\_\_\_\_\_. *Jesus Christ and Human Freedom*. New York: Herder and Herder, 1974.

Schnackenburg, Rudolph. *The Church in the New Testament*. Transl. W.J. O'Hara. New York: The Seabury Press, 1965.

The German edition is:

Schnackenburg, Rudolph. *Die Kirche im Neuen Testament*. Freiburg: Herder KG,

1965.

- Schurmann, H. *Der Abendmachisbericht*. Paderborn, 1957.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *Jesu Abschiedsrede*. Paderborn, 1957.
- Schweitzer, Albert. *The Quest for the Historical Jesus*. New York: MacMillen, 1968.
- Shanks, Hershel, ed. *Christianity and Rabbinic Judaism: A Parallels History of their Origins and Early Development*. Washington, D.C.: Biblical Archaeology Society, 1992.  
 \_\_\_\_\_ *Understanding the Dead Sea Scrolls*. New York: Random House, 1992.
- Shorto, Russell. *Gospel Truth: The New Image of Jesus Emerging from Science and History and Why It Matters*. New York: Riverhead Books, 1997.
- Sloan, Harold. *He Is Risen*. New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1942.
- Solomon, Lewis D. *The Jewish Book of Living and Dying*, Northvale: Jason Aronson, 1999.
- Stuve, Michael E., ed. *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period: Apocrypha, Pseudopigrapha, Qumran, Sectarian Writings, Philo, Josephus*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984.
- Tipler, Frank J. *Modern Cosmology, God and the Resurrection of the Dead: the Physics of Immortality*. New York: Doubleday, 1994.
- Toth, Tihamer. *The Risen Christ: Sermons on the Resurrection and on the Blessed Virgin*. Transl. V.G. Agotai. St. Louis: B. Herder Book Co., 1938.
- Tully, Mark. *Four Faces: A Journey in Search of Jesus the Divine, the Jew, the Rebel, the Sage*, Berkley: Ulysses Press, 1997.
- Van Den Busche, H. *Understanding The Lord's Prayer*. Transl. Charles Schatdenbrand. New York: Sheed and Ward, 1963.
- Vawter, Bruce. *This Man Jesus: An Essay Toward a New Testament Christology*. Garden City: Image Books, 1975.
- Vogel, Linda J. *Rituals for Resurrection: Celebrating Life and Death*. Nashville: The Upper Room, 1996.
- Whippel, John F. and Allan B. Wolter. *Medieval Philosophy from St. Augustine to Nicholas of Cusa*. New York: The Free Press, 1969.
- Williams, H.A. *Jesus and the Resurrection*. New York: Longmans, Green and Co., 1951
- Williams, Rowan. *Resurrection: Interpreting the Easter Gospel*. New York: The Pilgrim Press, 1984,



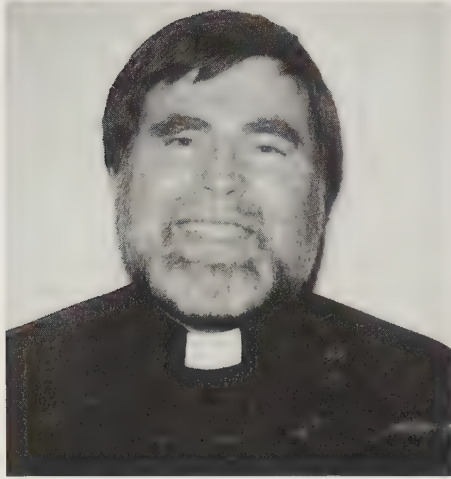
# Index

- Abbot Daniel 94  
Absolom 96  
*acta*  
    *Acts of the Scillitan Martyrs* xxin3  
    *Acts of St. Justine and His  
    Companions* xxin3  
    *Letter of Churches at Lyons and  
    Vienne* xxin3  
    *Martyrdom of Polycarp* xxin3  
Ahitophel 96  
Akiva, Rabbi 90  
Alexander, Bishop of Alexandria 18, 20  
Altaner, B 18n38  
amphictyony 47n45  
Annas 142, 143  
Anthenagoras of Athens xxn3  
Apocrypha 6n17  
Apocryphal Scripture  
    *Acts of Andrew* xxin3  
    *Acts of John* xxin3  
    *Acts of Paul* xxin3  
    *Acts of Peter* xxin3  
    *Apocalypse of Peter* xxin3  
    *Book of James* xxin3  
    *Coptic Gospel of Thomas* xxin3  
    *Epistle of the Apostles* xxin3  
    *Gospel of Peter* xxin3  
    *Gospel of Thomas* xxin3  
Apologists xx  
Apostolic Age xix  
Apostolic Council  
    See Council of Jerusalem  
Apostolic Fathers xx  
Aquinas, Thomas 24, 28, 100, 102-104  
Arabic Gospel of the Infancy 44n31  
Aristeas 7  
Aristides xxn3  
Aristotle 24, 28  
    *Physics* 101  
Arius 18n38  
    heresy 14n33, 18n37, 19, 28, 29, 50  
Arnobius xxin5  
Assyrian astral lore 5  
Athenagoras of Athens  
    *On Resurrection* xxin3  
    *Supplications for the Christians* xxin3  
Augustine 6, 21n45, 24  
*Enchir* 100  
Babylonian Talmud 87  
Balaam 45  
Balak 45  
Barabbas 86, 150  
Bar-Kokhba, 90  
Bar-Sacapion, Mara 87  
bastard  
    see *mamzer*  
Beatitudes 58, 59  
Ben-Koseb, Simon  
    See Bar-Kokhba  
Bordeaux Pilgrim 94  
Buber, Martin 24n46  
  
Caiaphas 93, 107, 138, 142, 143  
Charles the Bald 101n38  
Chenoboskion 44n31  
Cicero 151  
Clement of Alexandria  
    *Spiritual Gospel* (John) 9  
Clement, bishop of Rome  
    *Clement I and II* xxn3  
*Codex Bezae Cantabrigiensis* 36n12,  
    117n23, 119  
Constantine, Emperor 18n39, 19  
Cornelius xxin5  
Council of Alexandria 18  
Council of Carthage xxin3  
Council of Chalcedon xx, 72, 73  
    Definition of  
        see hypostatic union  
Council of Constantinople 19  
Council of Ephesus 6  
Council of Jerusalem xix, xx, 61, 81  
Council of Nicaea xxii, 5, 19, 28, 29  
    *Homoousios* 19  
    *Hypostatic Union* 14n34, 20  
Council of Toledo  
    *Filioque* 19, 28  
Covenant  
    renewal 38  
Cyprian xxin5, 37  
Cyril of Alexandria 14n34  
Cyril of Jerusalem  
    *Catechetical Instructions* 44n31

- Daniel, Book of 40, 49  
 David 40, 46n38, 47  
   Covenant 40n20  
 Death of God Movement 26, 28  
 Deborah 39  
 Decalogue 39  
 Deism 20, 20n44  
 Descartes, Rene 24n46  
*Didache* xxn3  
 Dionysius xxiiin5, 4, 103  
   *Div. Nom.* 103  
 Dionysius the Areopagite 101n38  
 Divorce  
   Adultery for women 59  
   Except Clause 60  
     *moicheia* 60  
     *porneia* (unchastity) 60, 61  
       incest 60, 61  
   Grounds for  
     *hitilel* 59  
     *shami* 59  
   Initiation of  
     Deuteronomy 59  
     Pharisaic Judaism 59  
   in Ezekiel 59  
   in Leviticus 59  
   Jesus view 60, 62  
   Mosaic Law 60  
 Doctrine of Papal Infallibility 25n47  
 Doctrine of the Virgin Birth 6  
 Doctrine of Transubstantiation 125,  
   125n37  
 Easter 196  
 Elijah 51, 52, 53, 94, 157  
 Elisha 94  
*Emmanuel oracle* 46n38  
 Epiphanius  
   *Against Heresies* 54  
   *Epistle of Barnabas* xxin3  
   *Epistle to the Philippians* xxn3  
 Erigena, John Scotus  
   *On the Division of Nature* 101n38  
 Essenes 40-43, 117  
 Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia 6, 18n39  
   *History of the Church* 44n31  
 Ezekiel, 161, 196  
*Fayum Fragment* 130  
 George of Laodicea 20  
 Gnosticism 83  
   *Apocryphon of John* xxin3  
   *Letter of Ptolemy to Flora* xxin3  
   *Pistis Sophia* xxin3  
*Gospel of the Birth of Mary* 44n31  
*Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew* 44n31  
 Griespach, Johann  
   *Gospel Parallels* 32  
 Hebrew Bible  
   *See* Septuagint  
 Hermeneutics xxiiin7  
 Hermes  
   *Shepherd of Hermes* xxn3  
 Hippolytus  
   *Heresies* 44n31  
 historical critical method 10n28, 30, 45  
 Ignatius, bishop of Antioch 12  
   *Letters of* xxn3  
     use of *catholic* 82  
     use of *orthodox* 83  
     use of *universal* 83  
 Irenaeus 5, 161  
   *Against Heresies* 44n31  
 Jeremiah 196  
 Jerome 45  
   *Against Pelagius* 54  
   *Commentary on Isaiah* 55  
   *On Illustrious Men* 46n41  
   *Onomasticon* 94  
 Jesse 46n38, 47  
 John the Baptist 41, 43, 48, 51-54, 56, 84  
 Josephus, Flavious 3n7, 146, 147, 151,  
   160  
   *Antiquities* 87, 91  
   Suicide 97  
 Judaizers xix, xx  
 Judas Iscariot 96, 97, 99-101, 105, 107  
 Jungel, Eberhard 196  
 Justin Martyr 11n30, 117, 161  
   *Dialogue with Trypho* xxin3, 55  
   *First Apology* xxin3  
   *Second Apology* xxin3

- Karaites 88, 88n9  
 Lactantius xxiin5  
 Lazarus 46, 92, 93, 94, 107, 138  
 Leavitt, Robert 3, 27  
*logio spermatikoi* 101n38  
*Logos* 11, 14n33, n34, 16, 28, 101n38  
 Lord's Prayer  
   *Amidah* 64  
   Discipline of the Secret  
     Pliny 62n42  
     Trajan 62n42  
   *Shemoneh Esrei* (Eighteen  
   Benedictions) 63, 84  
   theology of 65  
 Lucian of Antioch 18n37, n38  
 LXX  
   *See* Septuagint  
  
 magisterium, xix  
*manzer* 59n33  
 Marcion xxin3, 83  
   *Antithesis* 83  
 Maximus, Confessor  
   *Ambluga* 101n38  
 Medieval Metaphysics xxiiin6, 20, 21,  
   22, 101, 107  
 Neronian Persecution 4  
 Messiah  
   Concept of 91  
     Jesus as 50, 79, 92, 100, 145  
     Andrew 77  
   of Aaron 40  
   of David 40, 144  
 Minucius Felix  
   *Octavius* xxin3  
 Montanus 84  
*Muratorian Canon* xxin3  
*Mysterium Tremendum et Fascinocism* 22  
 Nag Hamadi Library xxin3  
 Nazianzus, Gregory 101n38  
 Nestorius 14n33  
 Newman, John Henry Cardinal 25n47  
 Nicholas I, Czar 88  
 Nicholas of Cusa 21n45  
 Nicolas, I Pope 19  
 Novatian xxiin5  
  
 Origen 161  
  
   *Homily on Luke* 44n31  
 Papias of Hierapolis 139  
   *Church History* 6  
 Paradise  
   *See lestai*  
*parousia* 11n30, 49, 127n40, 129  
 Pentecost xxiii, 9, 89  
 Peter  
   Papacy  
     Peter as first Pope 78, 81  
     *Primus inter pares* 82, 84  
   Petrine Ministry  
     Confession of Peter 77  
     *ekkllesia* 78, 80, 81  
     *petros, petra, kepha* 78  
     Pope as Vicar of Christ 77n70  
 Philo 146, 147  
 Philocarates 7  
 Pilate, Pontius 137, 145-150, 162  
 Plato 24, 28, 101  
   *Phaedo* 169n13  
   philosophy 121, 169  
 Plotinus 170, 171  
   Metaphysics 171n15  
 Polycarp xxn3  
   *Epistle to the Philippians* xxn3  
 Pontifical Biblical Commission 30, 50  
 Protevangelium of James 44n31  
 Pseudo Dionysius 24, 28, 101n38  
 Pseudopigrapha 5n12, 42, 49  
 Ptolemy II Philadelphus 7  
 Pythagoras, 87, 168  
  
 Quadratus xxin3  
 Qumran 6n17, 40, 42, 117, 157  
  
 Rachel  
   Tribe 47  
 Resurrection  
   in Christianity  
     of Jesus  
       Appearances 187-191  
       Jesus as the Christ 184  
       Jesus prediction of 185, 186  
       The empty tomb 187  
   Paul  
     Bodily 196

- Hope in the Holy Spirit 192  
 Relationship between  
 resurrection and parousia 192
- Resurrection  
   in Judaism  
     Book of Daniel 178  
     II Maccabees 181, 182  
     Sectarian Judaism 182-184  
     Zoroasterism 179
- Resurrection  
   Myths  
     Assyrian: Astarte-Tammuz 165  
     Babylonia: Marduk Myth 166  
     Canaanite: Baal 167  
     Egypt: Osiris 166  
     Greek: Persephone 168  
     Hittite: vanishing gods 165  
     Hurrian: Tesub-Iluyankas 165  
     Sumerian: Ereskigal-Inanna 164  
     Phoenician: Adonis 168
- Richard of St. Victor 2, 21n45
- Ritual Purity 155n61
- Sadducees 41, 88
- Salvation  
   as biblical doctrine 173  
   as eschatology 173  
   as righteousness 174
- Christian  
   healing signs 176, 177  
   in the name of Jesus 173  
   Jesus as Isaianic liberator 177, 178  
   repentance and reconciliation 176
- Gnostic myth 174, 175
- use by Paul 175, 176
- Jewish  
   as deliverance 172  
   as *Heilsgeschichte* 173, 193
- Saul, King 39, 40
- Schweitzer, Albert xxii, 29, 50
- Scotus, John Duns 20
- Second Coming 10n30, 127
- Septuagint 6, 13, 34, 45, 50, 129  
   *Parthenos* (virgin) 44, 45  
   Traditions J,E,P,D 41n25
- Serapes 13
- Socrates 19n41, 87
- Solomon 38n16, 40
- Stephen of Rome xxiii5
- Synoptic Problem 1n1
- Tacitus 87, 146, 151
- Tatian  
   *Diatessaron* xxii, xxin3, 31  
   *Ephraem's Syriac Commentary* 31n3  
   *Peshitta Syriac Version* 31n3  
   *Discourses to the Greeks* xxin3
- Tertullian  
   *Apology* xxin3  
   *Epistle to Diognetus* xxin3
- Thaleia* 18, 18n39
- Theodosius I, Emperor 19
- Theophilus, bishop of Antioch  
   *Apology to Autolytus* xxin3
- Tiberious, Emperor 87, 146
- Tribal League 38, 39
- Trinity  
   Doctrine of 16, 20  
   Economic Trinity 16, 17  
   Imminent Trinity 16, 17, 18  
   Triadic Formula 69
- Vatican Council I xx, 25
- Vatican Council II xix, xxii
- Western Non-Interpolations 36n12, 117
- Zealots xx, 41, 43, 75
- Zebedee, sons of 113, 131
- Zoroasterism  
   *Avesta* 171  
   Cosmic Dualism 41n23  
   *Gathas* 171  
   Pahlavi texts 171  
   Resurrection 171



## About the Author

---

Fr. John W. Sweeley is a member of the clergy of the Catholic Apostolic Church of Antioch-Malabar Rite and is a member of the administrative staff of its seminary Sophia Divinity School. He holds a B.A. in social science from the University of Baltimore, an M. Ed. in counseling from Coppin State College, an M.A. in theology from St. Mary's Seminary and University, a C.A.S.E. in psycholinguistics from the Johns Hopkins University, and a D.D. in theology from Sophia Divinity School.

Fr. Sweeley's work has appeared in such diverse journals as *Christ's College Bulletin*, Cambridge University, Cambridge, England; *The Journal of the Association for the Study of Perception*; and *Touched by Adoption*.























\$ 49.00

0761817306



51900