

NOTES ON MATTHEW

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Authorship

The longstanding tradition of the Christian church has been that Matthew was one of the apostles (Matt 9:9; 10:3), a former tax collector for the Roman authorities (therefore despised by his fellow Jews). Some scholars recently agree that the author was a Palestinian Christian Jew and that his audience was Jewish Christian but disagree that he was the apostle named. They date the book in the last quarter of the first century, after the fall of Jerusalem.

However, its Jewish setting makes such a late date problematic in view of the fact that while the apocalyptic passages speak of the destruction of the Temple these all look to the future (to paraphrase Jesus' words, *this generation will see it all*, 24:34). On the late date hypothesis one is left with conjecturing that the apocalyptic passages were invented on the rubble of Jerusalem, or else added to an earlier version of the text after 70 A. D. Thus some liberal scholars, such as John A. T. Robinson, continue to espouse an early date, as early as 40 A. D. or as late as 60 A. D.

While Eusebius suggests an Aramaic original, scholars today argue that the Greek text does not exhibit characteristics of being translated and does not include Aramaic words which occur in Mark. Eusebius may be referring to an Aramaic collection of sayings of Jesus which pre-dates the text of Matthew but may be incorporated in it. Like the book of Hebrews, Matthew encourages Jews to find rest in the truth that Jesus is the Messiah and that there is no turning back from commitment to him or life within the Christian church (16:18; 18:17). It is likely that the Jewish readers to whom Matthew is addressed lived outside Palestine.

The so-called formula passages are a distinctive feature of Matthew and comprise part of the over-all literary plan: *and all this took place what the Lord had spoken...* (1:22; 2:15, 17, 23; 4:14; 8:17; 12:17; 13:35; 21:4; 27:9). Matthew presents Jesus Christ as the promised Messiah, fulfilling all that Jews had anticipated prophetically over many centuries.

Outline of Matthew

Part I

JESUS THE PROMISED KING 1:1-4:11

- 1. Ancestry, birth and childhood of Jesus, 1:1-2:23.**
- 2. John, the forerunner of the king, 3:1-12.**
- 3. Jesus' baptism and temptation, 3:13-4:11.**

Themes:

- a. Christ the King: descended from David; fulfills the messianic promise to Israel.
- b. His Kingdom extends to and includes the Gentiles.
- c. The King: presented, empowered by God's Spirit, triumphs over Satan.
- d. His is the true spiritual Kingdom of God, warranted by God's Spirit.

Part II

KINGDOM MINISTRY IN GALILEE 4:12-16:12**1. At Capernaum**

Call to repentance and discipleship, 4:12-25

Sermon on the Mount, ch. 5-7

Signs of the Kingdom:

The leper, centurion's servant, Peter's wife's mother, and many healed, 8:1-17.

2. Across the lake

Statement on discipleship, 8:18-22

Signs of the Kingdom: stilling the storm, the demoniacs, 8:23-34

Themes:

Jesus calls for true repentance: a changed heart expressed in deeds of love.

The spiritual Kingdom of God is the highest fulfillment of the law of God.

Signs of Jesus' authenticity: his power over disease, nature, the spirit world.

3. Return to Capernaum

a. Kingdom Ministry

The Paralytic, 9:1-8.

Call of Matthew, 9:9-13.

On Fasting, 9:14-17.

Jairus' daughter and woman with hemorrhage, 9:18-26.

Two blind men, 9:27-31.

The dumb demoniac, 9:32-34.

b. Kingdom Mission

Jesus' Compassion, 9:35-38.

The Twelve commissioned, 10:1-42.

c. Kingdom Thesis

The role of John, the forerunner, 11:1-19.

Rebuking impenitence, 11:20-30.

d. Kingdom Controversy

Understanding the Sabbath, 12:1-13.

Plotting against Jesus, 12:14-21.

Blasphemy of the Pharisees, 12:22-37.

The demand for a sign, 12:38-45.
On true kinsfolk, 12:46-50.

e. Kingdom Parables

The sower, 13:1-23.
The tares, 13:24-30.
The mustard seed and the leaven, 13:31-33.
Interpreting parables, 13:34-52.

Themes:

- a. The ministry and message of John the Baptist: the Kingdom of God demands true repentance.
- b. The external religion of the Pharisees is false.
- c. The parables: true religion is of the heart and spirit.

4. At Nazareth: rejection, 13:53-58

5. Throughout Galilee

Herod's (the Tetrarch, Antipas) curiosity about Jesus, 14:1-12.
The 5000 fed, 14:13-21.
On the Sea of Galilee and at Gennesaret, 14:22-36.
Controversy: true and false religion, 15:1-20.
Further signs of the Kingdom: the Canaanite woman, cure of many sick, 4000 fed (15:21-39).
The demand for signs and false religion, 16:1-12.

Themes:

- a. God's Kingdom and Herod's Kingdom are contrasted. b. God's Kingdom includes Gentiles.
- c. God's Kingdom concerns inner righteousness not merely external religious correctness.

Part III

KINGSHIP CONFESSED - JESUS' PASSION ANTICIPATED

From Caesarea Philippi to Jerusalem 16:13-20:34

1. Confession: You are the Christ, 16:13-20

2. First prediction of the passion, 16:21-23

True discipleship, 16:24-28
The Transfiguration, 17:1-13
Cure of the deranged boy, 17:14-21

3. Second prediction of the passion, 17:22-23

Questions: the Temple Tax, greatness, true forgiveness, 17:24 - 18:35.
Beyond Jordan (19:1 - 20:16):

The question of divorce.
 Children brought to Jesus.
 The rich young ruler.
 True discipleship.
 Parable of the laborers.

4. Third prediction of the passion, 20:17-19

Salome and her sons; two blind men healed, 20:20-34.

Themes:

- a. The high point of the training of the disciples: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."
- b. From that point on, Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem and the passion of the Cross, 16:21.
- c. The Transfiguration anticipates the future Kingdom glory.
- d. The disciples cannot comprehend the difference between an earthly and a spiritual kingdom.
- e. Kingdom social life (e.g. marriage, attitudes to wealth, status, relationships) must conform to the standards of Christ's Kingdom.

Part IV

THE KING RECOGNIZED AND REJECTED 21:1-25:46

1. Triumphal entry into Jerusalem, 21:1-11

The cleansing of the Temple, the children's praise, the fig tree, 21:12-22.

2. Final showdown

The Sanhedrin: parables of the two sons, the vineyard, the marriage feast, 21:23 - 22:14.

The Pharisees: the tax question, 22:15-22.

The Sadducees: the resurrection, 22:23-33.

The lawyer: as to the greatest commandment, 22:34-40.

Jesus' counter question to the Pharisees on David's son, 22:41-46.

Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees, 23:1-39.

3. Predictions of the Apocalypse, 24:1 - 25:46.

Themes:

- a. Messiah's kingly entrance into Jerusalem.
- b. His vanquishing of opponents in argument.
- c. Opposition to Jesus hardens into conspiracy.
- d. Predictions about the end of the age.

Part V

THE PASSION OF THE KING 26:1-27:66

1. Fourth prediction of the Passion, 26:1-2.

Conspiracy of the Sanhedrin, 26:3-5.

Jesus anointed, 26:6-13.

Judas' conspiracy, 26:14-16.

The Last Supper, 26:17-35.

Gethsemane, 26:36-46.

Judas' betrayal and Jesus' arrest, 26:47-56.

2. First trial (Caiphas), 26:57-68

Peter's denial, 26:69-75

3. Second trial (Sanhedrin), 27:1-2

Judas' remorse, 27:3-10

4. Third trial (Pilate), 27:11-26

The Soldiers' cruelty, 27:27-31

5. The Crucifixion, death and burial of Jesus, 27:32-66.

Theme:

The self-humbling of the King to the death of the Cross (note Philippians 2:8).

Part VI

THE RESURRECTION TRIUMPH OF THE KING 28:1-20**1. The empty sepulcher (28:1-15).**

Jesus appears to the two women.

The soldiers bribed.

2. Jesus appears to the eleven disciples, 28:16-17.**3. The Great Commission, 28:18-20.**

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MAJOR DISCOURSES IN MATTHEW

Matthew records five major discourses, which conclude with the formula, *When Jesus had finished these sayings...* A sixth group of sayings (ch. 23) against the Pharisees does not conclude with this formula, but may also be regarded as a major discourse. The five formula passages are: 7:28; 11:1; 13:53; 19:1; 26:1).

The list follows:

1. The sermon on the mount, ch.5-7.

(Ethical standards of the Kingdom.)

2. The charge to the twelve disciples, ch.10.

- (Mission and the Kingdom.)
3. The parables on the kingdom of heaven, ch.13.
(The Gospel of the Kingdom.)
 4. Instruction on greatness and forgiveness, ch.18 (note ch. 19-23).
(True greatness and Kingdom religious integrity.)
 5. The Olivet discourse: apocalypse, ch.24-25.
(The Second Coming and the Kingdom.)

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

1. Matthew traces Jesus' lineage to Abraham, the founder of Israel, not to Adam.
2. Among the Gospels, only Matthew uses the terms church and the consummation of the age; the Holy City, the Holy Place and the City of the Great King in relation to Jerusalem.
3. The theme of fulfillment in Christ of the Old Testament messianic promises pervades the book. The characteristic formula is: *All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet...*: 1:22, 2:15, 2:17, 2:23, 3:15, 4:14, 5:17-18, 8:17, 12:17, 13:14, 13:35, 21:4, 24:34, 26:54, 26:56, 27:9, 27:35.
4. Christ's fulfillment of the messianic promise includes his kingship over nature, death, demons, disease and wisdom to confound his enemies. Of greater redemptive significance is his saving work on the cross as Son of God and Son of Man (26:28, 63-68). Within this redemptive purpose he embraced all people, whether Jew or Gentile, of whatever social class.

ON THIS ROCK I WILL BUILD MY CHURCH

Comments on Matthew 16:18

We cannot deny a connection between *petra* and *petros*, but neither can we make *petra* equivalent to the personal Peter, for this interpretation bristles with difficulties in relation to other teaching of the NT.

1. It is clear that a brilliant insight was given to Peter by the Holy Spirit as to Christ's identity. This came to him as one among the Apostles. Christ addressed them as a group. Peter spoke for them all, but there is no evidence that he spoke as prime among them or over them.
2. *Petra* (neuter) identifies rock as a mass of live rock, or bedrock, and is distinct from *petros* (masculine) which signifies a detached stone or boulder. The distinction in the Greek is indisputable. The substance of the revelation is the *petra*; it is that revelation given by God referred to in verses 16-17. Jesus says, "On this rock of revealed truth I will build my church." I think that W. C. Allen in the *International Critical Commentary* has it right: "The play upon *Petros* and

petra means, 'You have given expression to a revealed truth, and your name Petros suggests a metaphorical name for it. It shall be the petra or rock upon which the Church shall stand.' In other words, it shall be the central doctrine of the Church's teaching."

3. As to the claim that there would be no differentiation in any (alleged) original form of the Aramaic: Such an argument is built on conjecture as to what might have been in an Aramaic original rather than upon what we actually do have in Greek, which itself might be the exact form of the original. An argument from silence is slippery. In any case, we cannot escape from the force of the Greek in view of the fact that this is what we actually possess. Further, it is a fallacy to claim that the distinction of gender does not and could not occur in the Aramaic. In Hebrew and Aramaic there are only two gender forms: masculine and feminine. The feminine ah ending is used also for the neuter gender. Which is being used in each case must be determined by understanding the context and adducing the intention of the writer or speaker. The gender distinction in the Greek text could have been intended in any original Aramaic also.

4. As to the Aramaic and Hebrew Kephias (from Keph): this does occur transliterated into Greek in the NT as the name for Peter, and the transliterated Greek form while still sounded in its original Hebrew feminine form is actually masculine in Greek (a point of no consequence). What is to the point, however, is that the name was in circulation and if the writer of Matthew wanted to use the Aramaic he could have used an Aramaic form already current coinage in Greek. Instead he chose to use Petros and petra and to make a distinction between them. The occurrences of Kephias in Greek are: John 1:43; 1 Cor 1:12, 3:22, 9:5, 15:5; Gal 1:18, 2:9, 11, 14.

5. The foundation truth for all Christians is that Christ alone is supreme to them and this seems affirmed by Peter in John 6:66-69. Christ is everywhere said to be the cornerstone and foundation of the Church, not Peter (Eph 2:20, 1 Pet 2:4-8). There is no claim made for Peter by Peter. He is "an" apostle, 1 Pet 1:1; he enjoins humility, 2:21-24; he declares Christ to be the shepherd and bishop, 2:25; he is an elder among elders, 5:1; those who lead are not lords over God's heritage, 5:3.

NOTES ON MARK

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THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the Synoptic Gospels because they "synopsise" the life of Jesus, or give an overview of his life, in roughly chronological order. John's Gospel differs as only a few key events are selected to illustrate an extended theological interpretation of the person of Christ based on his teaching, rather than offering an overview of his life and work.

Many have attempted to harmonize the synoptic gospels. The problems encountered in such an attempt are great. These three Gospels are not intended by their authors to be exact and complete records and chronologies of Jesus' life. The authors select materials and arrange it, generally chronologically, but sometimes topically by grouping certain teachings, events or dialogue.

The consensus among scholars is that Mark formed an early literary base for the writing of Matthew and Luke. This is an hypothesis which seems to be a reasonable one, though it is not unchallenged. About 500 of Matthew's 1068 verses are virtually identical with Mark (whose text totals 661 verses). About 320 verses in Luke are identical with Mark. Probably less than 30 verses of Mark are not found in either Matthew or Luke.

Outline of Mark

Part I

JESUS, GOD'S SERVANT-MESSIAH PRESENTED, 1:1-13

1. Topic: the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, 1:1.
2. The preaching of John, 1:2-8.
3. The baptism and temptation of Jesus, 1:9-13.

Part II

THE GOSPEL OF THE KINGDOM: IN GALILEE, 1:14-9:50

1. Announcement of the Kingdom, 1:14 - 3:12.

Announcement, and call of disciples: fishers of men, 1:14-20.

Cure of the demoniac and Peter's wife's mother, 1:21-34.

*Retirement to seclusion, 1:35.

Preaching, and healing the leper, 1:36-45.

The word and works of the kingdom and the rise of conflict, 2:1-3:6:

The paralytic.

The call of Matthew.

Association with outcasts.

The question about fasting.

Plucking ears of grain on the Sabbath.

The man with the withered hand.

*Retirement to seclusion, 3:7-12.

Themes:

- a. Jesus Christ, God's anointed: his coming fulfills promise.
- b. The Gospel of Christ and his kingdom: repent and believe.
- c. Cycles of ministry and retirement.
 - Seclusion for prayer and instruction of his disciples.
- d. Jesus' authority to forgive sins, and power to heal the sick.
- e. The inclusive nature of the Gospel call: also to social outcasts.
- f. Scribalism: the dangers of religious legalism.

2. The Twelve appointed – Joint Kingdom ministry, 3:13 – 6:6a.

Commissioning of the twelve, 3:13-29.

Opposition at Nazareth: blasphemy, true kinship, 3:31-35.

Parables and warnings, 4:1-34:

- The sower.
- The lamp.
- The growing grain.
- The mustard seed.
- Parabolic method.

Miracles as signs of the kingdom 4:35 - 5:42:

- stilling the storm.
- the Gerasene demoniac.
- Jairus' daughter.
- the woman with the hemorrhage.
- Rejection at Nazareth, 6:1-6a.

Themes:

- a. The call and training of the twelve.
- b. Rejection in his own home town.
- c. Worsening conflict with the Pharisees.
- d. Pressing on with teaching and healing ministry despite opposition.

3. The Mission of the Twelve - Continuing Ministry, 6:6b - 8:10

The disciples sent out, 6:7-13.

The murder of John by Herod Antipas, 6:14-29.

*Retirement to seclusion, 6:30-32.

Further ministry:

- feeding the 5000.
- walking on the sea.
- healing and helping many, 6:33-56.

Increased conflict with the Pharisees:

- external ritual observances vs. true obedience of faith, 7:1-23.

*Retirement to seclusion, and extension of the mission to

- Tyre, Sidon and Decapolis: feeding of the 4000, 7:24 - 8:10.

Themes:

- a. The common people throng Jesus.
- b. Despite Jesus' works, the disciples fail to comprehend who he is and what his mission is.
- c. Growing apprehension among political and religious leaders about Jesus' influence.

4. Return to Galilee and to open hostility from the Pharisees, 8:11-26

- The function of signs.
- The lesson on leaven.
- The blind man healed.

5. Climax of recognition and predictions of the passion, 8:27-9:50.

- Peter's confession at Caesarea Philippi, 8:27-30.
- First prediction of the passion; the cost of discipleship, 8:31-9:1.
- The transfiguration, 9:2-8.
- Lessons to the disciples, 9:9-29:
 - The meaning of the passion prediction.
 - The lunatic child.
- Second prediction of the passion, 9:30-32.
- Further lessons to the disciples: humility and self-denial, 9:33-50.

Themes:

- a. Warnings to the disciples about corrupt religion.
- b. The great recognition: "you are the Christ."
- c. Predictions of the passion.
- d. Significance of the transfiguration.
- e. The nature of true discipleship.

Part III

TOWARD JERUSALEM: THE SIFTING OF FAITH, 10:1-10:52**1. Ministry through Perea, 10:1-31.**

- Marriage and divorce.
- Little children blessed.
- The rich young ruler.
- The danger of riches.
- True discipleship.

2. Deep apprehension, 10:32-52

- Third prediction of the passion.
- The ambitious disciples.
- Blind Bartimaeus.

Themes:

- a. Few miracles are recorded after the transfiguration.
- b. True discipleship entails willingness to forsake all for Christ.
- c. The disciples are unable to grasp the concept of a suffering Messiah.
- d. Key utterance: Jesus summarizes the significance of his impending passion, 10:45.

Part IV
**AT JERUSALEM:
 CHALLENGE AND RESPONSE - PASSION AND CRUCIFIXION,
 11:1-15:47**

1. Palm Sunday

The triumphal entry, 11:1-11a.

*Retirement to seclusion (Bethany), 11:11b.

2. Monday

The withering of the fig tree, the cleansing of the temple, 11:12-18.

*Retirement to seclusion (Bethany), 11:19.

3. Tuesday

Lesson of the fig tree, the delegation from the Sanhedrin on Jesus' authority, the parable of the wicked husbandman, 11:20-12:12.

The cunning questions and Jesus' shrewd answers: the Pharisees on tribute money, the Sadducees on the resurrection, the lawyer on the first commandment, Jesus' counter question on the Son of David, the offering of the poor widow, 12:13-44.

The eschatological discourse: the destruction of Jerusalem and the end of the world, 13:1-37.

Themes:

- a. The impact of the triumphal entry upon the people and upon the Jewish leaders.
- b. The strengthening of official hostility toward Jesus and his coolness while under intense scrutiny.
- c. Jesus' correction of their understanding of the Old Testament.
- d. Jesus' strong statement about his final victory.

4. Wednesday

*Retirement to seclusion at Bethany, 14:1-3a.

Meal at Simon's house at Bethany and the anointing, 14:3b-9.

Judas negotiates betrayal, 14:10-11.

5. Thursday

The Passover meal and institution of the Lord's Supper, 14:12-31.

The Garden of Gethsemane, 14:32-42. Jesus' arrest, 14:43-52.

6. Friday

- Appearance before Caiaphas and Peter's denial, 14:53-72.
- Appearance before the Sanhedrin, 15:1.
- Appearance before Pilate and condemnation, 15:2-15.
- Jesus' passion, crucifixion, death and burial, 15:16-47.

Themes:

- a. Institution of the Lord's Supper as the sign of the New Covenant.
- b. The detail of the narrative about Jesus' arrest, trial and crucifixion.
- c. The incident of the young man recorded only by Mark (14:51-52).
- d. The presentation of Christ's passion as the final divine act to open sinful man's way into God's presence through the death of the Son of God, 15:38-39.

Part V

THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS, 16:1-20**1. The visit of the women to the tomb; declaration of the fact of the resurrection, 16:1-8.****2. Jesus' appearances after the resurrection, 16:9-18:**

- Mary Magdalene.
- The two disciples.
- The eleven.

3. Jesus' last charge to the disciples and his ascension, 16:19-20.*Themes:*

- a. The simplicity, directness and facticity of the account of the resurrection and the disciples' initial disbelief.
- b. The ascension in Mark may represent also Jesus' final retirement, that is, into the heavenly rest where he anticipates the final rest of God's people.
- c. The last word is that of the ongoing mission of Jesus' followers, *who went out and preached everywhere*.

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DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

John Mark, the son of Mary of Jerusalem (Acts 12:12) was a young man and a close associate of the apostolic circle. He may refer to himself in 14:51-52. He twice accompanied Paul on journeys and was also closely associated with Peter at Jerusalem (Papias speaks of him as "the interpreter of Peter"). *Interpreter* may mean translator of Peter's Aramaic preaching and teaching.

Mark may have been written at Rome, in Greek, for Gentile readers, probably

between 65-70 A. D., perhaps as early as 50 A.D.

While uneven and unembellished as to style, Mark is vivid, direct and realistic. No ancestry of Jesus is recorded. Jesus is presented as the Suffering Servant-Messiah who comes to save mankind through his teaching, works and, finally, his atoning death and resurrection (over 1/3 of the book is devoted to the last days of Jesus' life). The characteristic term is "straightway" (used 41 times), which highlights the "action" tone of the narrative. The humanity of Jesus as Son of Man (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34, 45), conveyed by the vigorous narrative, is complemented by the truth in direct assertions of his being the Christ, the Son of God (1:1; 15:39).

THE ENDING OF MARK

The last 12 verses of Mark (16:9-20) are omitted by the two oldest manuscripts of Mark in our possession, and are marked variously in certain other manuscripts as not being in earlier texts. This suggests that while these verses originate in very early Christian times, and probably originate in the apostolic age, they are not by the author of Mark. However, to acknowledge the antiquity and widespread traditional Christian use of this ending, the verses are included in modern translations of Mark but are identified as not forming part of the original text.

NOTES ON LUKE

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Author

Luke the Evangelist, "the beloved physician" (Col. 4:14), a close associate of Paul's and fellow-traveller, whom some identify with the unnamed person in 2 Cor. 8:18, wrote this Gospel and the Acts of the Apostles from within the apostolic circle. Since he apparently uses sections of Mark, the date must follow the date one assigns to Mark. The traditional date for Luke is pre-destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A. D. Many modern scholars prefer the decade 80-90 A. D; however, as left-leaning scholar as he was, John A. T. Robinson dated all three synoptic gospels before 70 A. D. on grounds that an event as catastrophic as the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans would have been referenced in them.

Luke writes as a faithful historian and chronicler (Luke 1:1-4; Acts 1:1-2) based upon his eyewitness testimony and his sharing in the apostolic evangelistic journeys. Luke adds considerable factual and historical data to the interpretive accounts of other authors of the New Testament. Luke and its sequel Acts belong together. They are both dedicated to Theophilus, about whom we know nothing more but may assume was a seeker after the way of Christ. Luke appears to have been written chiefly for a Gentile audience, perhaps for a prominent Roman court circle.

Part I

THE BIRTH, CHILDHOOD AND MATURATION OF JESUS: SON OF MAN, SON OF GOD, 1:1-2:52

1. Preparation for Jesus' birth, 1:1-80.

The promise:

Elizabeth and Zechariah.

Mary and Elizabeth.

The Magnificat.

The birth of John.

Zechariah's psalm of praise.

2. The birth of Jesus, 2:1-52

The birth of Jesus.

Shepherds and the angelic host.

Jesus' circumcision.

Simeon, Anna.

Jesus' visit to Jerusalem, his maturation.

Themes:

- a. Fulfillment of redemptive promise in the birth of John the forerunner and Jesus the redeemer.
- b. The human aspect of the lives of persons chosen to be God's instruments for

fulfillment of the promise.

- c. The humanity of Jesus: extended family, childhood and growth.
- d. The mood of joy and praise to God who did not forget his people.

Part II
**PRESENTATION AND AUTHENTICATION
 OF JESUS FOR MINISTRY, 3:1 - 4:13**

- 1. John's preaching, 3:1-20
 - Call to repentance
 - Anticipating Messiah
 - John's imprisonment.
- 2. Jesus presented, 3:21-4:13
 - Jesus' baptism.
 - The sign of the Spirit and the authenticating voice.
 - His human geneology to Adam.
 - His temptation and victory.

Themes:

- a. The selfless ministry of John to anticipate and present the Messiah.
- b. Jesus is authentically man:
 - Son of Adam.
 - Triumphant Man.
 - Man endowed by the Spirit.

PART III
THE GALILEAN MINISTRY OF JESUS, 4:14-9:50

1. Early Galilean ministry, 4:14-7:50.

First preaching and rejection at Nazareth, 4:14-30.

Signs wrought in Capernaum and the plain of Gennesaret, 4:31-5:32.

- The demoniac.
- Peter's mother-in-law.
- The draught of fish.
- The leper.
- The paralytic.
- The call of Matthew (Levi).

Teaching: interpreting the Kingdom, 5:33 - 6:49.

- The old and the new.
- The Sabbath.
- The call of the disciples.
- The Sermon on the Mount.

Further signs and teaching, 7:1-50.

- The centurion's servant.
- The widow's son.

Message to John.
 Indictment of a disbelieving generation.
 The sinful woman forgiven.

2. Extension of the Galilean ministry, 8:1-56

Early women disciples.
 Parable of the sower.
 Lesson from a lamp.
 His mother and brethren.
 Stilling the storm on Galilee.
 The Gadarene demoniac.
 Jairus' daughter.
 The woman with the hemorrhage.

Themes:

- a. Early signs of rejection parallel with the martyrdom of John.
- b. Rise of a following among the common people.
- c. Interpreting the Kingdom as an inner, spiritual reality.
- d. Miracles are authenticating signs of the Kingdom not the actions of a miracle-worker.
- e. Jesus' compassion for those in need and for the common people.

3. The latter stage of the Galilean ministry, 9:1-50.

The mission of the Twelve, 9:1-17.
 Herod perplexed and alarmed .
 Feeding the 5000 at Bethsaida.
 The pinnacle of the disciples' training, 9:18-50.
 Peter's confession.
 The cost of discipleship.
 The transfiguration at Hermon.
 The deranged boy.
 Prediction of his passion.
 Lesson on humility and tolerance.

Themes:

- a. As opposition grows Jesus spends more time instructing his disciples.
- b. The crowning manifestation: Messiah identified and glorified.
- c. Servanthood as the mark of greatness, not self-seeking.

Part IV

JOURNEY TOWARD JERUSALEM THROUGH PEREA AND SAMARIA: TEACHING, HEALING, CONTROVERSY, 9:51 - 19:44

1. Continuing the mission, 9:51-11:13

Lessons on tolerance and discipleship, 9:51-62.

The seventy commissioned, woes against Chorazin and Bethsaida, 10:1-16.
Joy over success of the mission 10:25-37.

The lawyer and the parable of the good Samaritan.

Lesson to Martha, 10:38-42.

Lesson on prayer and the Lord's Prayer, 11:1-13.

2. Open hostility, 11:14 - 12:59

The saying about Beelzebub, 11:14-26

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The tower, the wise king, salt, 14:25-35.

The lost sheep, piece of silver, son, 15:1-32.

The unjust steward, 16:1-12.

Warning against greed; the rich man and Lazarus, 16:13-31.

Sayings about the Kingdom, 17:1-18:30

Offences, 17:1-2.

Forgiveness, 17:3-4.

Faith, 17:5-6.

Service, 17:7-10.

Gratitude, 17:11-19.

The Kingdom, 17:20-37.

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The publican, 18:9-14.

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The ruler and discipleship, 18:18-30.

4. Approaching Jerusalem and final confrontation, 18:31 - 19:44.

Prediction of the passion, 18:31-34.

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Zacchaeus the tax collector, 19:1-10.

Parable of the pounds, 19:11-27.

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem and Jesus' sorrow, 19:28-44.

Themes:

- a. Warnings against hollow, legalistic religion.
- b. The spiritual nature of the true kingdom.
- c. The cost of discipleship.
- d. Social outcasts are welcomed into the Kingdom.

Part V

**THE PASSION OF JESUS:
CONFRONTATION, ARREST, CRUCIFIXION, 19:45-23:56**

1. Cleansing the Temple: decisive confrontation, 19:45-48.

2. Public disputation, 20:1 - 20:47.

- The Priests and Elders: on authority, 20:1-8.
- The parable of the vineyard, 20:9-18.
- The Scribes and Chief Priests: on tribute money, 20:19-26.
- The Sadducees: on the resurrection, 20:27-38.
- Other Scribes: on the Christ, 20:39-47.

3. Last warning at the Temple, 21:1-38.

- The widow's mite, 21:1-4.
- The prophecy against the Temple and against Jerusalem, 21:5-38.

4. Conspiracy and arrest, 22:1-53 The plots, 22:1-6.

- The Last Supper and warnings, 22:7-38.
- The Garden of Gethsemane, 22:39-46.
- The arrest of Jesus, 22:47-53.

5. Arraignment, condemnation and death, 22:54-23:56.

- Before the High Priest; Peter's denial; derision, 22:54-65.
- Before the Sanhedrin, 22:66-71.
- Before Pilate; the first exoneration, 23:1-5 (note 14, 22).
- Before Herod; further derision, 23:6-12.
- Before Pilate; exoneration and condemnation, 23:13-25.
- Simon of Cyrene; the women along the way to Golgotha, 23:26-31.
- Crucifixion, death among thieves, burial, 23:32-56.

Themes:

- a. Confrontation and dispute, and Jesus' wise answers to his opponents.
- b. Warnings against Jerusalem and predictions about the end of the age.
- c. Detail of the plot against Jesus, his unjust condemnation and death.
- d. Jesus' kingly bearing and acceptance of death as a sacrifice to save the lost, 19:10.

Part VI

THE RESURRECTION OF JESUS, 24:1-53

1. The Resurrection, 24:1-43.

Heavenly visitors announce the resurrection as reported by Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James and other women, 24:1-12.

Jesus appears to two disciples on the road to Emmaus, 24:23-32.

Jesus appears to the disciples in Jerusalem, 24:33-43.

2. The Final Word, 24:44-53.

The substance of the Gospel: attesting to the forgiveness of sin through Jesus' cross and resurrection, 24:44-48.

Jesus commissions the disciples and ascends from them, 24:49-53.

Themes:

- a. The facticity of the resurrection attested to by the empty tomb and Jesus' appearances.
- b. The Gospel delineated and the disciples commissioned.
- c. The joy and testimony of the disciples.

DISTINCTIVE FEATURES

1. The message of this Gospel is to present Jesus as *the son of the highest* (1:31, 32), *Christ the Lord* (2:11), the Saviour of the world, which is the meaning of the name *Jesus*. The historical and biographical data about Jesus are more extensive than in the other gospels. The tone is that of great joy as shown by the hymns and psalms of praise attributed to several individuals in the nativity narrative which have become part of the liturgical tradition of the churches (the *Magnificat* of Mary, the *Benedictus* of Zechariah, and the *Gloria in Excelsis* of the angelic choir at Jesus birth).

2. Special attention is given to the universality of the gospel of Christ: to Gentiles, Samaritans, Syrians, publicans and sinners, outcasts such as lepers, the rich and the poor, the mighty and the lowly.

3. Luke draws extensively upon the parables and sayings of Jesus which contrast true religion with external religion and which emphasize the love of God for lost humanity (such as the parables of the lost sheep, lost coin and lost son, ch. 15).

4. Women are more prominent in Luke's record of the birth, crucifixion, burial and resurrection of Jesus, as well as in notable events of his ministry such as certain of the miracles and conversations, than in the other Gospels. Only in Luke are mentioned the widow of Nain, 7:11-17; the woman of the city, 7:36-50; Joanna and Susanna, 8:3; the infirm woman, 13:10-13; the lamenting women, 23:27-31; the woman in the lost coin parable, 15:8-10; the importunate widow, 18:1-8; Elizabeth and Anna in the nativity narrative, and more detail about Mary.

5. As well, other memorable, moving stories occur only in Luke, including the story of the Good Samaritan, the Rich Man and Lazarus, the Prodigal Son, and the appearance of the risen Lord to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.

6. Significant emphasis is placed by Luke upon the prayers of Jesus, many occasions of which are not included elsewhere. These are often related to crucial events in Jesus' life: 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18; 9:28-29; 10:21; 11:1-4; 22:39-46; 23:34,46; and two parables focus on prayer: 11:5-13, 18:1-8.

7. Jesus is presented as the **Man of the Spirit**, the *New Man*, the man who is conscious of his divine sonship and filial submission to the Father's purposes (4:1, 14; 10:21, 22; 24:49). This theme parallels Paul's teaching that Jesus is the Second Adam, the Last Man, the progenitor of a new *Spirit-bearing humanity* through his obedience and sacrificial death (Rom 5:12-21). On the strength of Luke's record of Jesus reading from Isaiah in the synagogue at Capernaum (4:16-22), a strong case can be made that the primary sign of the Spirit in the New Testament is not Pentecost, but the Spirit-bearing humanity of our Lord. Having read *the Spirit of the Lord is upon me* Jesus goes on to say *today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing*. On this reading, Pentecost becomes the consequent sign of the Spirit: Christians joined to Christ participate in the Spirit; they are re-created as new creatures when they commit themselves by faith to Christ; they are made to share Christ's Spirit-bearing humanity. The Spirit-bearing humanity of our Lord is the pattern of the New Humanity for the New Age.

THE HEROD FAMILY

Late in the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament the Greek Empire was encompassed within the Roman Empire, including Palestine. The cruelty of Roman deputized rulers sparked revolt, a notable one being the Hasmonaean Revolt led by an elderly priest named Mattathias along with his five sons. The result of the ensuing struggle was to win modest independence for Palestine within the Roman Empire under the Hasmonaean House.

The last and probably the most famous of the Hasmonaeanes was Herod the Great who ruled Palestine at the time of Christ's birth. He was a brilliant tactician but a cruel despot. Cunning and ruthless, he contrived to expand his territories and political power. By race an Idumean, he was hated by the Jews even though he was of Jewish faith.

He managed the Palestinian economy adroitly. Prosperity was evident and many beautiful public buildings and monuments were built. Noteworthy among these was the new Temple, named after him, which took over a decade to complete, though construction continued after Herod's time.

Despite his efforts to please various factions of his kingdom -- Greeks, Romans, Pharisees, Sadducees, and others -- Herod failed to win the trust and affection of

his people. Tensions between Egypt and Rome often erupted over Palestinian lands because it was an area of overlapping interests between the Roman and Egyptian empires. Economic prosperity in Palestine depended upon good relations with the Romans (Octavian), the Egyptians (Cleopatra), and peace within its borders. To win support at home Herod reduced the burden of taxation. He also opposed ethnic nationalism which he felt to be inimical to the greater national good.

His personal life was a tragedy. He had a total of ten wives, many children and grandchildren. Family intrigue led to horrific mistakes. He ordered his second and favourite wife Miriamme executed on a charge of intrigue only to find to his anguish later that the charge was false. Others of his family connived with his enemies and competitors (including Cleopatra) against him. The two sons of Miriamme were also executed on partly false grounds. Distrust and intrigue bred bitter cruelty, as is indicated by the killing of the children at the time when Jesus was born.

After Herod in our Lord's time the kingdom was divided under Herod's three sons. Archelous became Ethnarch of Judea, Philip became Tetrarch of North Eastern Palestine, and Herod Antipas became Tetrarch of Galilee and Perea. Jesus was scourged by Herod Antipas (Lu. 23:8) who was in Jerusalem at the time for the Passover. It was he who respected John the Baptist's preaching but was tricked into executing him by Salome and Herodias. There was a Christian disciple in his own household (Lu. 8:3). He was publicly rebuked by Jesus (Mark 8:15).

Herod Agrippa 1, grandson of Herod the Great and a dissolute man, was given the territories of Philip upon the accession of Caligula in Rome. His relations to early Christian are described in Acts 12:1-23. His death is attributed to judgment from God. Agrippa 2, his son and successor, was the person before whom Paul gave his defence and Christian testimony in Acts 21-26.

NOTES ON JOHN

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Author and his Times

Like the three Synoptic Gospels the Gospel of John is nameless. Nevertheless, early in the church the widely circulated four Gospels were acknowledged to have been written by the men whose names they bear.

Earliest Christian tradition ascribes the Gospel of John to John the Son of Zebedee. The main lines of argument supporting this view were laid out in modern times by the British scholar B. F. Westcott in 1880: The text of John suggests that the author was (a) an eyewitness who was a Jew living in Palestine (19:35; 21:24); likely to be (b) *the disciple whom Jesus loved* (13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20, 24) who attests to and wrote this record; and finally, (c) is to be identified as John the Son of Zebedee and brother of James (Matthew 4:21), the Elder, of 2 John 1:1 and 3 John 1:1.

Data which are adduced to support this view include: Awareness of Jewish religious law by the manner the debate between Jesus and the several Jewish factions is reported. Awareness of the subtle divisions among the Jewish leaders. Knowledge of the geography and topography of Jerusalem. Presence of the author at the Last Supper (13:23), at the Cross (19:26), at the empty tomb (20:2) and at the Sea of Galilee (21:7, 20). The author's instinctive, intimate awareness of the Hebraic father-son relationship which Jesus employs when referring to himself and the heavenly Father.

That John and James are unnamed in the Gospel while others are named may reflect the anonymity desired by the writer who refers to himself only as *the disciple whom Jesus loved*. Since James was slain by Herod years before and Peter and others are distinguished from the unnamed "beloved disciple," by a process of elimination the identification points to John, one of the three disciples of the inner circle (Peter, James and John, Mark 5:37), as the author. The touching incident in John's epilogue may be autobiographical (21:20-25).

We know little about John and his brother James. They were sons of Zebedee and described as *Boanerges*, which is defined as *sons of thunder* (Mark 3:17). This suggests a volatile nature, which incidents such as Luke 9:49-50 and 9:54-55 may illustrate. The family were fishermen on the sea of Galilee. He may have been the youngest of the disciples (his death at Ephesus in the mid-90s of the first century suggests a man of advanced years).

If John's mother was Salome she was Mary's sister, then John was a cousin of Jesus on his mother's side. The closeness of Jesus to this family is alluded to in the Gospels. He was associated with Peter in the Jerusalem church (Acts 3:1; 4:13; 8:14). Tradition places him at Ephesus during the latter part of his life where he exercised a powerful and wide-ranging ministry according to second century

church fathers, including Polycrates and Irenaeus.

Critics have dated John as late as 170 AD, though these estimates have been reduced to about 120 AD, with the formative tradition being dated earlier. Conservative scholars generally opt for the period 90-110 AD and regard John as the last of the several great strands of apostolic tradition. Recently J. A. T. Robinson, who is not of the conservative evangelical tradition, has argued for 40-65 A. D. dating: that formation of the tradition began around 40 A. D. which was gradually put into literary form by about 65 A. D., but complete by the time of the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A. D.

John is part of the authentic, eye-witness apostolic writings about Jesus Christ and the earliest Christian faith. C. H. Dodd states that John is no second-hand reshuffling of the Synoptic material. It is different and distinct from the three Synoptic Gospels. The Synoptics devote considerable attention to Jesus' Galilean ministry and less about Jerusalem, while John goes into considerable detail about Jesus' ministry in Jerusalem and nearby Bethany.

John concentrates less on historical data and the concept of the Kingdom (and Jesus' miracles as mighty works of the Kingdom) and more upon interpretation, teaching and reflection upon the significance of Jesus' works as signs, and his debates with representatives of the several Jewish factions. Much attention is devoted to Christ's dealings with individuals and to their response to him (Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the man born blind, Mary Magdalene) and to reporting and reflecting upon dialogue which is sometimes set in what appears to be sermon form. Mark is said to portray Jesus as the man of action (the Servant of the Lord). Nevertheless, John's portrayal of Jesus when he is confronted by his opponents is no less dramatic.

Some have argued that an Aramaic original for use in Palestine preceded the Greek version of John. This is unlikely. John was written in Greek, in substantially the form in which we have it, as the climax of an authentic Hebraic apostolic tradition, by John the Son of Zebedee who spent the last part of his life in the great Church at Ephesus where the text of John was formulated and written and from there circulated.

Outline of John

Part I

PROLOGUE, 1:1-18

1. The Word made flesh
2. Light and life

Part II

DISCLOSURE THROUGH WITNESS

AND
COMPASSIONATE MINISTRY TO THE WORLD
1:19-12:50

1. Attestation, 1:19 - 2:12.

The witness of John , 1:19-34.

Call of first disciples, 1:35-51.

**First sign*: Wedding Feast (the Bridegroom and the best wine), 2:1-11.

§Withdrawal to Capernaum (1), 2:12.

2. Ministry: New Gospel *versus* Old Order, 2:13-11:44.

a) In Judea, 2:13-3:36.

Cleansing of the Temple; equivocal faith, 2:13-24.

To the Jews: Nicodemus and the new birth, 3:1-21.

John's final witness, 3:22-36.

§Withdrawal to Galilee (2), 4:1-3.

b) In Samaria, 4:4-42.

To the Samaritans, 4:4-6, 27-41.

The woman at the well, 4:7-26.

c) In Galilee, 4:43-54.

§Withdrawal to Galilee (3), 4:43-45.

To the Gentiles, 4:46-54:

**Second sign*: the official's son.

d) In Jerusalem, 5:1-47.

**Third sign*: The pool of Bethesda, 5:1-9a

Ritual days and divine authority, 5:9b-29

Credentials and attestation, 5:30-47

e) In Galilee, 6:1-71.

**Fourth sign*: Feeding the Multitude, 6:1-15.

On the lake; the curious crowd, 6:16-24.

The Bread of Life: challenge and response, 6:25-71.

f) In Jerusalem, 7:1-10:39.

§Withdrawal in Galilee (4), 7:1.

Hidden visit to Jerusalem, 7:2-13.

Sudden appearance in Jerusalem, 7:14-24.

The people and the Christ, 7:25-31, 40-44

Christ: the Living Water, 7:37-39.

The leaders: enigma and dilemma, 7:32-36, 45-52.

Incident in the Temple: the woman taken in adultery, 7:53 - 8:11

Christ: the Light of the World, 8:12-20.

Christ: "I am He," 8:21-30
 Abraham's true children, 8:31-59
 **Fifth sign*: the man born blind, 9:1-41
 Christ: The Good Shepherd, 10:1-39

g) §Withdrawal beyond Jordan (5), 10:40-42.

h) In Bethany and Jerusalem, 11:1-45.

**Sixth sign*: the death and raising of Lazarus, 11:1-45.

3. Judgment, 11:46 - 12:50.

Crisis and evil alliance, 11:46-53, 55-57.
 §Withdrawal across Jordan to Ephraim (6), 10:54.
 Supper and Mary's devotion at Bethany, 12:1-11.
 The triumphant entry into Jerusalem, 12:12-19.
 The Greeks: not his own, 12:20-26.
 Passion and mission: He who believes, 12:27-50.

Part III
**DISCLOSURE TO THE DISCIPLES
 AND
 TO ALL OF CHRIST'S FOLLOWERS
 13:1 - 17:26**

1. The Last Supper, 13:1-30.

2. Upper Room Discourses, 13:31-14:31.

- a) The glory of the Father and the Son, 13:31-32.
- b) The New Commandment: love and true devotion, 13:33-38.
- c) The Father's House, 14:1-7.
- d) The Son of God with power, 14:8-14.
- e) The enabling Paraclete (First Promise), 14:15-17.
- f) Christ's promised presence, 14:18-24.
- g) The enabling Paraclete (Second Promise), 14:25-31.

3. Further Discourses on Discipleship, 15:1 - 16:33.

- a) He is the vine, we the branches, 15:1-11.
- b) Obedience based on love, 15:12-17.
- c) Fidelity in face of persecution, 15:18-25.
- d) The enabling Paraclete (Third Promise), 15:26-27.
- e) Additional warning about persecution, 16:1-4a.
- f) The enabling Paraclete (Fourth Promise), 16:4b-11.
- g) The enabling Paraclete (Fifth Promise), 16:12-15.
- h) Comfort: trouble and sorrow will turn to peace and joy, 16:16-33.

4. The Great High Priestly Prayer, 17:1-26.

Part IV
**FULFILLMENT OF MISSION:
 PASSION AND TRIUMPH,
 18:1 - 21:23**

1. The Condemnation, 18:1 - 19:16.

- a) Betrayal and arrest in the Garden, 18:1-11.
- b) High-priestly interrogation and Peter's denial, 18:12-27.
- c) Jesus before Pilate, 18:28-19:16.

2. The Crucifixion, 19:17-42.

- a) The Crucifixion of Jesus, 19:17-22.
- b) Four executioners and four friends, 19:23-27.
- c) Jesus' last words, 19:28-30.
- d) Jesus' death and burial, 19:31-42.

3. The Resurrection and Appearances of Jesus Christ, 20:1-31.

- a) The Empty Tomb, 20:1-10
- b) Appearance to Mary Magdalene, 20:11-18
- c) Appearance to the disciples, 20:19-23
- d) Appearance to Thomas, 20:24-29
- e) The purpose of the Gospel: faith, 20:30-31
- **Seventh sign*: Christ's death and resurrection

4. Epilogue, 21:1-23

- a) Jesus appears at the Sea of Galilee, 21:1-14
- b) The challenge and charge to Peter, 21:15-19
- c) The beloved disciple, 21:20-23

Part V
**POSTSCRIPT:
 ATTESTATION,
 21:24-25**

*This is the disciple who is bearing witness to these things,
 and who has written these things;
 and we know that his testimony is true.
 But there are also many other things which Jesus did;
 were every one of them to be written,
 I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written.*

CHARACTERISTICS AND THEMES OF THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

1. The Identity of Jesus

John is very direct. He focuses on the question “who is Jesus?” Thus there is no genealogy of Jesus, no record of his birth, nothing about his baptism or the temptation in the wilderness. John proceeds directly to the essential nature and mission of Jesus the Christ, the Son of God.

The Gospel of John interprets for us the true significance of Jesus Christ as the Saviour of the world. This is epitomized in the many titles ascribed to him, and in the mission of salvation for which he had come:

Word of God (1:1, 14).
 Life (1:4; 11:25; 14:6).
 Light of the world (1:4; 8:12).
 Only begotten Son (1:18; 3:16)
 Lamb of God (1:29, 36).
 Messiah (1:41).
 The Christ (1:41; 11:27; 20:31).
 Son of God (1:49; 11:27; 20:31).
 King of Israel (1:49; 18:33, 37; 19:15, 19-21).
 Living water (4:14).
 Savior (4:42).
 Bread of life (6:35).
 The great I am (8:58).
 Door of the Sheep (10:7, 9).
 Good Shepherd (10:11, 14).
 Resurrection and life (11:25-26).
 The way, the truth, the life (14:6; 18:37).
 The true vine (15:1).
 My Lord and my God (20:28; 21:15).

One may epitomize John’s message as follows: The key feature theme is stated in the Prologue (1:1-18); namely; that Jesus is God incarnate, the eternal Word of God made flesh. John’s impelling motive is to declare and argue this truth. He says (20:30-31),

*Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples,
 which are not written in this book;
 But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ,
 the Son of God,
 and that believing you may have life in his name.*

John highlights the controversies between Jesus and the Jewish leaders with regard to Jesus' identity. This approach presages the later controversies among Christians and between Christians and non-Christians as to the identity and nature

of Jesus. The confessional statements of early Christian writers such as Justin, Irenaeus, Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Hippolytus and finally the statements of Nicea and Chalcedon all reflect Christian insistence on Christ's incarnate nature. Jesus Christ is the eternal Word of God made flesh. His assertions are life-giving truths. The few miracles which John records are signs to reinforce the truth of Christ's claims. Truth and faith, spirit and life, love and grace are key elements. They reflect personal commitment to and personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord.

2. The Eternal Word made flesh

The Prologue (1:1-18) presents Christ as the eternal Word (*logos*) of God. The term Logos was commonly used in ancient times to identify the impersonal divine element which was thought to pervade the universe and which is reflected in the reason of man. Any Stoic could have recited John 1:1, but no Stoic would accept John 1:14. John uses the term *logos* in a unique sense: Christ is personally the eternal Word of God, the eternal Son of the Father made incarnate at a specific time and in a specific place for our salvation. Note the parallel with and extension of the concept from Genesis 1: God whose word created the universe now comes to us in the person of that eternal Word. Genesis begins with the creation of the universe. John begins with the truth of the pre-existence of the Word of God before the creation of all things. Commentators have noted the trilogy of ideas which expresses this uniqueness in the three key verses of the Prologue. The first, second and third lines in the first strophe are parallel with their counterparts in the other two strophes:

1:1
 In the beginning was the Word.
 And the Word was with God.
 And the Word was God.

1:14
 And the Word became flesh.
 And dwelt among us.
 We have beheld his glory.

1:18
 No one has ever seen God.
 The only Son, who is in the bosom of the Father.
 He has made him known.

2. Truth and Faith

John aims to impart faith (20:31); to bring readers to personal faith in Christ. For this to occur, history and faith belong together. Jesus was a real historical figure and what the Gospel presents about him is the truth of what was going on in the

things that were happening. Truth, faith and trust belong together. The purpose is to lead to faith in Christ as the eternal Word of God who was made incarnate for our salvation and who accomplished our redemption through his life, death and resurrection. The confrontations between Jesus and the religious leaders focus not merely upon accurate reporting, but on persuasion based upon the credible evidence of his character, teaching and signs.

3. Light and Life

Light and life belong together in the Gospel of John. Christ is the light of the world and that light is life (8:12). Christ is not light as an abstraction or as mere illumination (as may occur in meditation) but brings new life through the light which he himself is. To believe in Christ is to receive eternal life (3:16, 36).

New life in Christ is also expressed as new birth, which Jesus indicated to Nicodemus (3:1-15) to be necessary for every person. To be born again means to be born from above, from God (1:12-13; 3:3). Peter correlates this with the implanting of seed, which is the truth of the Gospel (1 Peter 1:23; note also James 1:18).

4. The Paraclete

New life in each Christian is created by the Holy Spirit, whom Christ promised to his followers (1:33; 14:15-17, 25-31; 15:26-27; 16:4b-11, 12-15). Paraclete means counsellor or helper. From these passages we learn that the primary ministry of the Holy Spirit in the life of each Christian is to make Christ real and to illuminate the teachings of Christ. Christ himself is the content of each Christian's life; the Holy Spirit is the facilitator of that content.

The relationship of the Father and the Son (sometimes called co-inherence) is extended by Christ to include Christians. Through the Holy Spirit, Christ is in us and we are in Christ and are brought within the circle of the interpersonal relations of the Trinity (17:22-23). We are drawn into the life of God through Christ's love. We live in God and God lives in us. This is the meaning of abiding in Christ and of having Christ formed in us (note Paul's development of this theme in Romans 8:11). The task of the Spirit is not to magnify himself (16:14) but to reproduce in us the pattern of Christ's own humanity. Only Christ in the perfection of his sinless humanity has the fullness of the Spirit.

5. The Cross

Each of the Gospels, including John, devotes about a third of its length to the arrest, trial, crucifixion, resurrection and appearances of Christ. As in the Synoptics (Mark 10:45), the passion of Christ is part of the divine purpose for human redemption (8:23; 12:23; 13:1, 31; 16:28; 18:11; 19:30, 37; 20:31). Christ

came to lay down his life for the sins of the world. Through his sacrifice we have forgiveness and redemption from sin. The passion narrative is deeply moving. It appears to be written in the form of a devotional narrative, perhaps for oral reading. Christ's love and sacrifice draw men and women to himself (1:29; 12:32).

6. The New Gospel and the Old World

This theme is highlighted in the incident of the wedding feast at Cana: The new wine symbolizes the New Gospel. The New Gospel embraces all humanity, whether Jew, Samaritan or Gentile. God's love encompasses the world, without discrimination as to race (3:16):

- a) Jew, 3:1-21 (Nicodemus).
- b) Samaritan, 4:5-42 (Woman at the well).
- c) Gentile, 4:46-54 (Official's boy healed).

NOTES ON ACTS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Authorship

The book of Acts is a continuation of the Gospel of Luke (Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-2). The date of composition is likely before 64 AD, as it does not recount Paul's death. The author is Luke, Paul's companion on some of his journeys, which is indicated, I believe, in the "we" passages (16:10-17; 20:5-15; 21:1-18; 27:1-37; 28: 1-16; note 2 Tim 4:11 which places Luke with Paul at Rome).

Acts concentrates upon the activities of the first Christians and their message to Jews and Gentiles, and records the growth of the church. Key figures are: James, Peter and John at Jerusalem; Philip and Stephen as the Gospel begins to spread into Roman Palestine; Paul and Barnabas who work from Antioch for the extension of the Gospel to the Gentile world.

The value of Acts is immense. Doctrinally, Acts shows how the integrity of the Gospel was preserved against attempts to make it a form of Judaism. Biographically, the account pin-points leading Jews and Gentiles in their opposition to fledgling Christianity, and how wide-ranging the participation of many Christians was who are named as participants in witness and facilitators of the Christian mission. Transitionally, Acts is the record of how the understanding of early Jerusalem Christians, including the first Jewish Christians, changed as to God's purposes: from their mistaken notion of the imminent establishment of a messianic kingdom to spreading the Gospel world-wide to both Jew and Gentile and establishing the Church.

The dating of church events and apostolic travels in Acts in relation to known events of the times within the Roman Empire is extraordinarily difficult to determine. Most modern dating works from dates proposed by J. B. Lightfoot (1828-1889) and the work of William Ramsay (1851-1939). The most recent thorough study of this matter is the six-volume series *The Book of Acts in its First Century Setting*, 1993 and following:

- I. *The Book of Acts in its Ancient Literary Setting* (B. W. Winter and A. D. Clarke, eds.).
- II. *The Book of Acts in its Graeco-Roman Setting* (D. W. J. Gill and C. Gempf, ed.).
- III. *The Book of Acts and Paul in Roman Custody* (B. Rapske).
- IV. *The Book of Acts in its Palestinian Setting* (R. Bauckman, ed.).
- V. *The Book of Acts in its Diaspora Setting* (Irina Levinskaya).
- VI. *The Book of Acts in its Theological Setting* (I. H. Marshall and D. Peterson, eds.).

Modern conservative scholars such as Donald Guthrie and F. F. Bruce argue for the more traditional earlier dating of most of the New Testament books, ending

their lists within the first century with the writings attributed to John and the book of Revelation. For a recent discussion of canon formation and early Christian literature note: Lee M. McDonald and Stanley E. Porter, *Early Christianity and its Sacred Literature* (2000); and, Lee M. McDonald and James A. Sanders (eds.), *The Canon Debate* (2002).

Liberal scholars were shocked by the theses of John A. T. Robinson, a theologically liberal scholar, who in recent years advocated earlier dating of the New Testament documents than liberal scholars have been wont to do. Indeed, some of Robinson's dates are earlier than those assigned by some conservative scholars. For liberal perspectives on the dates and sequence of events in Acts one may note the work of scholars in the *Interpreter's Bible* and the *Oxford Bible Commentary* (2001).

To this date we have very little concrete information about the circumstances or time-line of development, writing, collating, and editing of the New Testament books. Nevertheless, newly discovered data continually coming to hand, especially manuscripts and manuscript fragments, tend to push the dating of New Testament materials closer to the apostolic age.

Theme:
THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST, PREACHED

Acts recounts the continuing work of the risen Christ through the Holy Spirit to extend the Kingdom of God into the hearts of people everywhere through witness, preaching and manner of life. The title *Acts of the Apostles* is not accurate because there is recounted witness and ministry of many others in addition to the apostles, including Barnabas, Philip, John Mark and Apollos, and women engaged in Christian mission such as Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Lydia.

Peter's address on the day of Pentecost (ch. 2) sets the stage to understand how God prepared the way from Old Testament days for Christ's coming. His sermon to the household of Cornelius and defense of that visit to the church at Jerusalem in ch. 10-11 are crucial to the re-orientation of Jewish Christian thinking.

We wish we had more detail on the inception of Christian work in key centers. For example, we do not know specifically how or when the Christian Gospel was planted in Antioch, Damascus, Rome or Alexandria. We do sense that the strength of Christian witness lay in loving fellowship Christians enjoyed among themselves, worship which included direct personal relationship with God and the sense of God's presence among them, and the power of lives transformed into a new value structure based upon righteousness, truth and fundamental goodness.

Paul's addresses are important because they convey understanding of the Gospel as Good News for the whole world. The list of his addresses follows:

- 1) At Antioch of Pisidia, 13:16-41:
Jesus is the true Messiah.
- 2) At Lystra, 14:14:
The evils of idolatry; the living God.
- 3) At Athens, 17:22-31:
The knowledge and worship of God.
- 4) At Miletus, 20:18-35:
True Christian ministry, leadership and role modeling.
- 5) At Jerusalem, 22:1-21:
Defense before Jews: Paul's heritage and faith in Christ.
- 6) At Caesarea, 24:10-21:
Defense before Felix: Paul's integrity.
- 7) At Caesarea, 26:1-29:
Defense before Festus and Agrippa.
- 8) At Rome, 28: 17-28:
Defense before Jewish elders at Rome: Messianic fulfillment of redemption.

The final comment of Acts is a fitting tribute to Paul's life mission to preach the Gospel to the whole world, including Rome where, though a prisoner facing condemnation and death, he fulfilled his apostolic calling to the end (28:30):

*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.*

Outline of Acts

Part I **PROLOGUE, 1:1-11**

1. The narrative continued, 1:1-2 (note Luke 1:1-4).
2. Christ's post-resurrection appearances and instructions, 1:3-8 2.
3. The Ascension, 1:9-11.

Part II **THE INFANT CHURCH FOUNDED AT JERUSALEM, 1:12 - 6:7**

1. In the Upper Room; Matthias succeeds Judas, 1:12-26.
2. The day of Pentecost; Peter's sermon; the church founded, 2:1-47.
3. The lame man healed; initial opposition at the Temple, 3:1-26.
4. Marked people: external opposition intensifies, 4:1-31.

5. Life together and internal trouble, 4:32-5:11.
6. Trial and triumph: further clashes with the Sanhedrin, 5:12-42.
7. Leadership, structure, ministry and growth, 6:1-7.

Part III
PERSECUTION AND EXPANSION,
6:8 - 8:3

1. The preaching and martyrdom of Stephen, 6:8-7:60.
2. Saul the zealous persecutor, 8:1-3.

Part IV
TRANSITION: INCLUSION OF SAMARITANS AND GENTILES,
8:4 - 12:25

1. Philip in Samaria: conversion of Simon the sorcerer; visit of Peter and John to Samaria, 8:4-25.
2. Philip and the Ethiopian; coastal ministry, 8:26-40.
3. The Conversion of Saul of Tarsus, 9:1-31.
4. Peter at Lydda and Joppa, 9:32-43.
5. Peter at the house of Cornelius the Gentile in Caesarea, 10:1-48.
6. Apostolic conclusion: The Gospel to the world, 11:1-18.
7. Scattered for wider witness:
 - Famine relief to Jerusalem via Baranabas and Saul, 11:19-30.
 - (The preparation of Saul through Barnabas at Antioch, 11:22-26.)
8. Persecution under Herod Agrippa (grandson of Herod the Great); the martyrdom of James; Peter's imprisonment and release; Barnabas and Saul return to Antioch, 12:1-25.

Note:

Antioch became a key Christian center.

Christ's followers were first called Christians at Antioch (11:22-26).

Part V
PAUL'S MISSION TO THE WORLD,
13:1 - 21:16

1. First Missionary Journey, 13:1 - 15:35

Call and commissioning at Antioch of Syria, 13:1-3.

The Asia Minor Circuit

Outbound, 13:4-14:20

Antioch

Seleucia

Salamis

Paphos
 Perga of Pamphylia
 Antioch of Pisidia
 Iconium
 Lystra
 Derbe
 Inbound, 14:21-28
 Lystra
 Iconium
 Antioch of Pisidia
 Perga
 Attalia
 Antioch of Syria

Report to the church at Antioch, 14:27-28.

The Jerusalem Council:

The Gospel, Jewish customs and Gentile converts, 15:1-35.

2. Second Missionary Journey, 15:36 - 18:22

In Asia Minor, 15:36 - 16:10

Antioch of Syria
 Silicia
 Derbe
 Lystra
 Phrygia
 Galatia
 Troas

In Macedonia, 16:11 - 17:13

Samothrace
 Neapolis
 Philippi
 Amphipolis
 Apollonia
 Thessalonica
 Berea

In Achaia and to Syria, 17:14 - 18:22

Athens
 Corinth
 Cenchrea
 Ephesus
 Caesarea
 Jerusalem
 Antioch of Syria

3. Third Missionary Journey

In Asia, 18:23 - 19:41

Antioch of Syria

Galatia

Phrygia

Ephesus

In Macedonia and Greece, to Troas, 20:1-6.

From Troas to Assos, Mitylene, Chios, Samos, Miletus, Cos, Rhodes, Patara, Tyre, Ptolemais, Caesarea, to Jerusalem, 20:7-21:17.

Part VI

PAUL'S ARREST, TRANSPORTATION AND ONGOING MINISTRY

21:17 - 28:31

1. At Jerusalem, 21:17-23:30.

Uprising against Paul and his detention, 21:17-40.

Paul's public defense before the crowd, 22:1-29.

Paul's defense before the Sanhedrin, 22:30-23:11.

The conspiracy against Paul, 23:12-22.

Paul the prisoner: transport to Caesarea, 23:23-30.

2. At Caesarea, 23:30-26:32.

Paul before Felix, 23:31-24:27.

Paul before Festus, 25:1-12.

Paul before Agrippa, 25:13-26:32.

3. Voyage to Rome and shipwreck on Malta, 27:1-28:14a.

4. At Rome, 28:14b - 28:31

Arrival in Rome under guard, 28:14b-16.

Testimony before the Jewish elders in Rome, 14:17-29.

Paul's two years of ongoing ministry in Rome, 14:30-31

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TRANSITION TO WORLD VISION

The most important theme of Acts is the transition of the church from a Jewish community at Jerusalem to include non-Jews based on new understanding, namely, the Gospel's world interest. Exclusivism was a problem among Christians at Jerusalem, witness Paul's rebuke of Peter in this regard (Gal. 2:11).

There are several key indicators of this transition:

- a) Philip's evangelistic ministry to the Ethiopian Eunuch, in Samaria, and along the coastal plain, which prompted the visit of Peter and John to Samaria to confirm that in fact Samaritans had received the Gospel and the Holy Spirit.
- b) The lesson Peter was taught when he was instructed through a vision to go preach in the house of the Gentile, Cornelius, and his subsequent defense of this ministry to Gentiles before the church at Jerusalem (ch. 10; ch.11-18) – a lesson he had to re-learn, as noted above.
- c) The conversion of Paul and his missionary work. In Acts and Galatians he vigorously champions the legitimacy of the offer of the Gospel to the Gentile world, and rejects imposition of the yoke of ceremonial Judaism upon Gentiles.

The scattering of Christians from Jerusalem by persecution was instrumental in opening their eyes to new possibilities for preaching the Gospel.

Acts records the breakout of Christians from Jewish religious nationalism largely through the development of Antioch as a Christian centre (here Jesus' followers are first called Christians (11:22-26).

Once Christians led at first chiefly by Paul transcended religious nationalism (Paul's theme of grace vs works of the law), Roman republicanism provided the decentralization of power, political cohesiveness, trade and commerce, ease of travel, and the rights of the individual for the spread of Christianity.

Sacral societies are impervious to new ideas. Only by the overcoming of local social, religious and political exclusivism through the rule of law could the Gospel spread rapidly. These factors are the truth of the situation in the Empire despite, at times, relapses of local and imperial Roman authorities into persecuting the fledgling church.

Acts is the story of the extension of the Gospel through what was at first a resistant Christian community at Jerusalem to the whole world in recognition of Christ's commission: to be witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and unto the uttermost part of the earth (1:8). This text -- appropriately placed first by Luke in Acts as the Christian priority -- was learned only after a convoluted struggle to escape Jewish religious legalism and nationalism. The structure of the book may well reflect this transition and may highlight the salient themes of the Gospels:

- 1) Acts 1-7 (Jerusalem): records the life of the early Jewish Christian community and pinpoints the themes of the Gospel of Matthew: The Messiah-King has come to Israel as promised.
- 2) Acts 8-12 (Judea-Samaria): recounts the extension of the Gospel to the Roman

community and reflects the concern of the Gospel of Mark: The Suffering-Servant, Son of Man, Son of God.

3) Acts 13-23 (uttermost part of the earth): recounts Paul's mission to the Gentile world and reflects the message of Luke: God's anointed is sought after by Greeks.

EARLY CHURCH CHRONOLOGY

As a general pattern of activity and development, the following appear to be reasonable inferences:

30-40 AD

Early mission in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the coast of Palestine and Antioch in Syria. Leadership of the church under the apostles includes notably James, John, and Peter, but also others such as Stephen and Philip.

40-50 AD

Persecution, scattering, local evangelism, consolidation of understanding as to mission to the world. Beginnings of collections of Gospel materials.

50-60 AD

Paul's missionary journeys along with Barnabas, John Mark, Luke, Timothy, Titus and others. Rapid expansion and church planting occurs through Paul's ministry and the witness of new Christians who travelled extensively for personal and business reasons. Local leadership emerges. Key centres are established and consolidated at Antioch, Ephesus, Corinth and (evidently) at Rome. Preparation of the Gospel records goes on along with active epistolary activity, which materials begin to be circulated for purposes of instruction, edification and correction.

70-80 AD

External civil and social pressures upon the young churches increase. Dangers of aberrant ideas within the assemblies become apparent. Apostolic letters encourage steadfastness of commitment and correction of abuses.

70-90 AD

Continuing expansion, consolidation, correction and accumulation of apostolic and other materials. Gradually authentic writings -- "Scriptures" -- which convey the teaching of Christ and the apostles are conserved and assembled into local collections. These eventually form the New Testament canon of Scripture.

[See also my study guide entitled *Romans and Today's Christian* on this website]

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NOTES ON ROMANS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Roman Epistle

Romans is the first of Paul's epistles in the New Testament canon. It is also one of the most important because in it Paul uniquely expounds the Christian doctrine of salvation, a philosophy of the divine purpose in history, and the ethical foundations and obligations of the Christian life, against the backdrop of his former life as an educated and keenly observant Jew and the predominantly idolatrous Roman culture and sacral political structure.

The Church at Rome

Paul's missionary strategy focused upon establishing regionally influential churches in major centers such as Ephesus, Philippi and Corinth. How and by whom the church at Rome was established is not known to us. Peter was still in Jerusalem at the time when Priscilla and Aquila, who were already Christians, arrived at Corinth from Rome as exiles (Acts 18:2-3) Paul had not yet visited Rome. A guess is that Christian travelers from Jerusalem or other early Christian centers such as Antioch brought the Christian Gospel to Rome. Early Christian tradition associates Peter and Paul with Rome and indicates that they were probably both martyred there. Allusions to Old Testament traditions (4:1) suggest a Jewish segment in the church, or respect for the Old Testament among a Gentile congregation, for the Old Testament heritage, or both; nevertheless, Paul's strong Gentile emphasis points to the Roman church being chiefly Gentile (1:5, 2:14; 11:13, 28-31; 15:16).

Purpose

Paul wrote Romans from Greece during his third missionary journey. He intended to go to Jerusalem with gifts collected for the needy Christians at Jerusalem and hoped to visit the church at Rome on his way to Spain (15:22-28). Thus one purpose of this letter may have been to solicit their support for his intended Spanish mission (which some think was interrupted by his arrest at Jerusalem).

The epistle deals with important doctrinal questions. Are these the focus of the letter, or does it relate to a specific historical situation? I believe that his intentions are not primarily polemical, nor apologetic, but expository; he unfolds the doctrine of salvation -- how God saves the fallen creation through Christ and his cross. Its key question is *how can God be both just and the justifier of whoever believes in Jesus?* (3:26); to which the answer is *by means of the gospel: it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who has faith, to the Jew first and also to*

the Greek (1:16-17).

The historical situation inferred from chapters 7-15 includes personal allusions (ch. 7-8), the status of Israel (ch. 9-11) and the practical exhortations (ch. 12-15:13). On this view the Old Testament background is critical, which includes the status of Israel in relation to the Gospel, and the rationale of Paul's Gentile mission in relation to the entire OT. On this view chapters 9-11 become the focal point of the epistle as a philosophy of history, not a parenthesis interrupting the flow of thought from the doctrinal foundation (chapters 1-8) to the practical exhortations (ch. 12-15:13) as some have thought.

I hold that Romans is fundamentally a doctrinal and ethical dissertation: the doctrinal section (ch. 1-8) leads to the ethical exhortations (ch. 12-15:13) and that in view of Paul's taking up the application of the Gospel to both Jew and Gentile, he must take up the critical historical question of Israel's relation to the Gospel and to God's purposes in light of her covenant history (ch. 9-11).

Romans is a statement of *First Principles* based upon an understanding of the *righteousness of God* (1:17; 3:21-22). It is a statement of how the Gospel is universally applied, whether to Gentile or to Jew. In both cases the Gospel is based upon grace and the indispensable work of Christ. Justification is by faith alone, not by works. Included in this discussion are questions of how Gentiles, who have not known the law of God, are justified; and how Jews, who have known the law of God but have failed in their response to God's gifts and callings, are related to the righteousness of God and to the one body of Christ which includes both Gentiles and Jews (12:4-5).

Paul expounds the nature of the Gospel and Israel's position in the church which had become predominantly Gentile. This parallels the theme of Luke (Paul's companion) in Acts which describes the breakout of the Gospel via the Gentile mission from the church at Antioch, diverging from some Jewish Christian cultural and nationalist sentiments at Jerusalem.

Outline

Part I

INTRODUCTION AND THEME,

1:1-17

1. Paul's apostleship: to preach the Gospel, 1:1, 14-15.
2. The Gospel concerns Jesus Christ, 1:2-4.
3. The Gospel embraces Gentiles, including Christians at Rome, 1:5-7.
4. Paul's aim: to instruct them in lieu of a delayed visit, 1:8-13
5. Statement of the essential Gospel, 1:16-17: *the just shall live by faith.*

Themes:

- a. Not having met them, Paul formally introduces himself and his life's mission to the Christians at Rome.
- b. The Gospel is about Jesus Christ, promised to Israel from the line of David, vindicated by God through the Resurrection.
- c. The Gospel extends to all Gentiles who are freely invited to believe in Christ.
- d. The central theme of the Gospel is "the righteousness of God;" that is, how can God justify sinful humanity and remain just? Answer: by faith, from first to last; faith in the atoning work of Christ.

Part II
THE WAY OF SALVATION,
1:18 - 8:39

1. The human condition: universal sinfulness; universal judgment, 1:18-3:20.

- a. The Gentiles judged for sin and rebellion against God, 1:18-32.
- b. The Jews indicted for presumption and self-righteousness, 2:1-3:8.
- c. Gentile and Jew stand equally under universal divine judgment, 3:9-20.

Themes:

- a. Human beings are not mere creatures, but are created in the image of God, with the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong, good and evil, and are morally responsible for their behavior.
- b. The law of God condemns; it cannot justify.
- c. The human condition is that of universal sinfulness and guilt.
- d. Disobedience, whether to special revelation (Jews) or to the voice of conscience (Gentiles) entails guilt and judgment. The indictment is based upon both disobedience to the revealed law of God and kicking against the barbs of conscience when conscience reflects the law of God.
- e. Anxiety and guilt are not due to repressing what one would like to do but dare not do (Freud), but to having done what one knows he or she ought not to have done. Guilt is due to sinful behavior and cannot be dealt with by simply explaining it away.

2. The grounds of justification before God, 3:21 - 5:21.

- a. Justification is God's gift, through grace, based upon atonement, and is received by faith, 3:21-31.
- b. Old Testament examples confirm this truth: Abraham and David, 4:1-25.

- c. Blessings which attend justification by faith, 5:1-11.
- d. Two lines of spiritual posterity, 5:12-21:
 - From Adam: sin, condemnation, death.
 - From Christ: righteousness, justification, life.

Themes:

- a. Justification means that a sinner is acquitted of guilt before God; it signifies a new standing before God. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to the sinner. In place of guilt, condemnation and death there are righteousness, justification and life.
- b. The source of justification is the grace of God. Grace is the loving way God treats us. It is his unmerited favor. Justification through our own merit or works is impossible.
- c. The ground of justification is the merit and the atoning work of Christ; that is, his perfection, obedience and propitiatory work in relation to our guilt and condemnation and death.
- d. The means of justification is faith alone: faith in humanity answers to grace in God. Faith accepts the free gift of forgiveness which includes acquittal before God's bar of judgment in and by the holy obedience of Christ and his atoning work.
- e. The comparison and contrast between what came to humanity through Adam, and what now comes through Christ highlights the meaning of salvation.

3. The Development of New Life in Christ, 6:1 - 8:39.

- a. The relation of justification to behavior: believer's baptism signifies death to sin and rising to new life in Christ, 6:1-14.
- b. Illustration: involuntary slavery to sin is contrasted with voluntary commitment to righteousness, 6:15-23.
- c. Illustration: death dissolves the marriage bond; so identification with Christ in his death and resurrection frees us for a new union with Christ - a union for loving service through the Spirit, 7:1-6.
- d. The law cannot conquer the sinful nature. The inner tension remains, in which Christ alone can help us, 7:7-25.
- e. Christian living entails a new kind of life - it is life in the Spirit; life as adopted children and heirs of God, 8:1-17.

f. The new life includes hope for redemption of the entire creation and the certainty of the never-failing love of God, 8:18-39.

Themes:

a. Just as we cannot be justified by the works of the law, neither can we think that having begun in faith we can finish by means of self-justifying works. We begin in grace and we continue by grace.

b. We triumph over sinful impulses by seeing ourselves to be dead to sin but alive to Christ.

c. The Holy Spirit indwells us and quickens in us the new inclinations, 8:9-11.

d. Salvation includes more than redemption from sin and death; it includes also a totally new, positive approach to life. We can live in hope, confident that redemption will finally encompass the material order and that until that day the love of God toward us is unailing.

Part III
**THE CHRISTIAN VIEW OF HISTORY,
9:1 - 11:36**

1. The question of Israel's status in view of their heritage, 9:1-5.

2. The sovereignty of God historically to choose or to reject according to his own purposes, 9:6-29.

3. Rejection is due to Israel's dependence upon works, rather than upon the righteousness which comes by faith, 9:30-10:21.

4. Israel's rejection stimulated the conversion of the Gentiles; the full restoration of Israel is anticipated, 11:1-36.

Themes:

a. Paul's anxiety for unconverted Israel is intense. Their rejection of Christ turned the Gospel to the blessing of Gentiles. How great will be the result when Israel turns to the Lord.

b. Gentiles should not boast of special privilege. God can regraft the branch of Israel which was cut off because of unbelief.

c. The free offer of the Gospel is made equally to Jew and Gentile (10:8-13). The burden placed upon all Christians is to preach the Gospel.

d. Rejection of the Gospel by Israel is not total. The faithful remnant are the forerunners of Israel's turning to the Lord. God's wisdom in all of this is inscrutable.

Part IV
**PRINCIPLES OF BEHAVIOR,
12:1-15:13**

1. Standards of behavior, 12:1-21.
 - a. Dedication to the Lord; conformity to Christ, 12:1-2.
 - b. In relation to one another, 12:3-13.
 - c. Within society, 12:14-21.
2. Attitudes to the state: duty, justice, order, 13:1-14.
3. Mores, toleration, servanthood, 14:1-15:13.

Themes:

- a. The living sacrifice: conformity to Christ, not to the pattern of the world.
- b. Recognition of the body of Christ and the harmonious functioning of believers within the body of Christ.
- c. Civic duty: detachment from the world, not from society.
- d. Learning to distinguish mores from morals, and the importance of practising what nurtures others not those things which cause offence.

Part V
**CONCLUSION,
15:14 - 16:27**

1. Paul states his purpose in writing, 15:14-33.
 - a. He proposes to visit them, 15:14-22.
 - b. He hopes to extend his mission to Spain, 15:23-29.
 - c. Reservations about his work in Jerusalem, 15:30-33.
2. Greetings, 16:1-16.
3. Warning, 16:17-19.
4. Further greetings, 16:20-24.
5. Benediction, 16:25-27.

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Spiritual Autobiography

It may be that in this epistle Paul expounds the doctrine of salvation against the backdrop of his own conversion from radical Judaism, his inner struggles over

sin, his agony over Israel's rejection of Christ, and his experiences in the Roman Empire as traveler, missionary and, at times, victim of hostility. He makes himself a representative of his countrymen and longs for their conversion. At the same time, he states that his calling has been the mission to the Gentiles. He finds that Jews and Gentiles face similar problems in responding to grace, justification by faith, and nurturing life in the Spirit. Hence key themes of the book may reflect the parallel he sees between his own experience and his mission: sin, guilt, judgment, righteousness, union with Christ, the struggle with self and the law, the life in the Spirit, and standards of behavior for Christians within a pluralist society.

ROMANS AND TODAY'S CHRISTIAN

A study guide prepared by Dr. Samuel J. Mikolaski
for the
Division of Christian Studies
of the
The Baptist Union of Western Canada
1973

[Dr. Mikolaski developed and implemented the concept of the Division of Christian Studies for Christian Discipleship Training among the churches of the Baptist Union of Western Canada.]

Outline

- Lesson I The Christian, the World and Christ's Gospel
- Lesson II Sin, Judgment and Grace
- Lesson III The Cross of Christ and our Forgiveness
- Lesson IV Christian Commitment
- Lesson V The New Humanity for the New Age
- Lesson VI The Christian Outlook

Objectives of the Course

Three major purposes will be served by this course:

First, to study the Christian doctrine of salvation. What does it mean to be a Christian? How does God provide redemption for mankind, and how may each person experience God's love and grace in Jesus Christ?

Second, the study is planned around one of the key books of the Bible -- Paul's Letter to the Romans. In particular, the first eight chapters will be studied, because these are a biblical primer on the doctrine of salvation. To grasp the message of Romans is to lay a solid foundation for Christian faith.

Third, the method followed will also comprise an introduction to Christian Doctrine, in a biblical context. In contrast to secular views of the world, it is important for the Christian to see the world and human life under the purposes of God who is Lord and Redeemer.

Textbook

The textbook used for this course is, F. F. Bruce, *Romans*, 1963.

[You are urged to utilize other resource materials on Romans which may be available to you.]

LESSON I

THE CHRISTIAN, THE WORLD AND CHRIST'S GOSPEL

Aim of the Lesson

To see how the Christian Gospel furnishes to us a unique way of life, because it is God's revelation in Jesus Christ,

The World into which the Gospel Came

Paul says that he is unashamed of the Christian Gospel (Rom 1:16). In relation to what is this said? Broadly speaking, in relation to his own Jewish religious background as an educated Pharisee (Phil 3:5); in relation to the political power of the Roman Empire (Rom 1:7,15); and in relation to the intellectual heritage of the Greeks (Acts 17:16-34).

The Gospel did not come into a vacuum. It came into a world which was richly furnished with ideas and it had to make its way among them. Our life and situation are the same.

First, Paul knew from experience that religion has an enormous fascination for human beings. He and his contemporaries had been fastidiously religious (Rom 3:1-2; 10:1-3; Phil 3:1-14). Nevertheless, formal religion can dishonour God (Rom 2:17-24). Formal religious acts are often man-originated. They are frequently an effort to manipulate God, or are human efforts to make one's way with God. In this respect, religion is an opiate. Read carefully Phil 3:1-4 and note the contrast between formal religion and knowing Christ.

Second, for many generations the Roman Empire comprised a constant political threat to Christians through repression and persecution (Acts 26). While we in Canada know little about persecution, many Christians still suffer it.

Third, the Greek world has given us a rich heritage of ideas, many of which persist in modern forms. The Christian Way is, we believe, the vital alternative for men today as it was in Paul's day.

For example, the Epicureans (Acts 17:1.8) taught a materialistic world view. Everything could be accounted for, they said, in terms of matter and energy. The life of man is to be seen as the gratification or satisfaction of desires, not as created in the image of God.

Similarly today, Materialism or Naturalism is a strongly held view. In this, human beings are seen as biological organisms who react to environment simply to

satisfy need. Thus all the spiritual and moral life of human beings is seen in naturalistic, biological terms. No freedom, no moral responsibility, no sin, no guilt, no supernatural, no God, no spiritual nature of humans other than the functions of the body until it dies.

Another view was that of the Stoics (Acts 17:18). They also were materialists, but they said that the universe is pervaded by the divine Mind and that everything happens by necessity: human beings are like a dog tied to the chariot of the universe. When the chariot moves, the dog moves, either willingly or by necessity. The future unfolds in a pre-ordained manner.

Nowadays there is a strong revival of teaching in North America (partly from Oriental philosophies like Hinduism) which says that God and the world are really one thing, or aspects of one thing, and human beings are really divine creatures through whom God expresses his own life. In their view God is not personal. God is part of the world, but not above it. Human life and experience are expressions of the divine.

The Christian View

In contrast to the foregoing views, the Bible teaches that God created the world and that he personally cares for it and for all that is in it. The line between God and the world is very real: God is separate from the world; He is over it and not dependent upon it. The world is something God has made and it is totally and constantly dependent upon him (Acts 17:23-25; Rom. 1:19-20).

Thus, the kind of model or reality the Christian Gospel is based upon is that God and humanity are related to each other as Creator to created; as Lord to creature. The relationship is a personal one. Only in this way can sin, guilt, atonement and forgiveness be meaningful. Each human is a spiritual being made for fellowship with God.

That is what Paul is talking about in Romans: We are created for freedom which we have sinfully abused. God judges sin. God through grace provides forgiveness for sin. God restores men and women to himself. God gives us a new kind of life in Christ by His Spirit. This, not a secular model, is the truth about humanity and the nature of the world, according to the Bible. Modern naturalistic views deny freedom, and therefore sin and moral responsibility.

Now, mull this over in your mind (with the TV off but some music on!). Discuss it with someone. Try to sort out modern views of life in contrast to the Christian view. Then, go on to the structure of Romans.

The Structure of Romans

Read Romans 1-8 in a modern translation, like TEV (*Good News for Modern*

Man). All of it? Yes, all of it!

Read the "Introduction" in the textbook (pp.11-69), bearing in mind that some of the Introduction relates to themes dealt with later. Note the outline on pp. 67-69, and the summary of Paul's argument on pp. 60-64.

Grasp the structure and development of Paul's argument:

(a) The theme of the book is The Christian Gospel (1:16-17). The Gospel concerns how God can forgive sin and remain just (3:26).

(b) The first major division of the book (1:18-3:20) develops the truth of human sinfulness and guilt. This is true of Gentiles (who didn't have the OT revelation, 1:18-2:16). It is also true of Jews (who do have the OT revelation, 2:17-3:8). Human beings as we know them -- all of humanity -- universally are sinful (3:9-18), are guilty before God, and are under divine judgment (3:19-20).

(c) The second major division (3:21-5:21) shows how, in a moral universe in which God judges sin, forgiveness through Christ's Cross is possible. This is through God's grace and through redemption (3:21-26), to which the only appropriate response is faith (1:16; 3:22, 26; 5:1). Abraham (4:1) and David (4:6) confirm this from the OT. Through Christ we come into a new life, in contrast to the judgment we inherited since Adam.

(d) The third division (6:1-8:14) is about the new life of the Christian. When we are baptized into Christ's death and resurrection we enter the new life in the Spirit (6:1-11; 8:11). The life through the Spirit of God who indwells every Christian (8:9-11) aims to reproduce in us the life which had been our Lord's upon earth. This is sanctification.

(e) The last division (8:15-39) states the Christian's hope. As Christians we live in the purposes of God, inseparable from the love of God (8:35-39). Life has meaning every day, because our lives are tied to God's purposes (8:28), and our future is in God's final purpose as well, in the life to come. Hope affects our life style as well as pointing to a goal in the future.

Carefully review Paul's development of what salvation in Christ is, and how our lives are related to God's purposes. Do you see it in a bird's eye view? Don't worry if the outline I am suggesting is in some respects different from that of the author of the textbook. There is more in the Scripture than either he or I can exhaust. Now, do your bit as well!

The Christian Gospel (1:16-17)

Note the Textbook pp. 31-40.

The words "Gospel" and "Good News" are equivalent. The Gospel is God's Good News to all mankind that He has redeemed them through Jesus Christ, and they

speak of it through their witness (Acts 2:37-41; 8:26-39; 10:34-48; 16:25-34). Read these passages carefully. Note what was preached and how people who heard the Good News were converted, received the Holy Spirit and were baptized.

Study the following passages on the meaning and content of The Gospel (in addition to the foregoing ones): Matt. 28:16-20; John 20:30-31; Rom. 1:16-17; I Cor. 15:1-4; I Tim. 1:15.

From these passages you will note key elements of the Christian Gospel:

1. It concerns Jesus Christ the Son of God, the Incarnate Lord.
2. He died for our sins. Each of the five following words is strategically important: "Christ," "died," "for," "our," "sins." His death for us was substitutionary and atoning, as the gift of God's grace.
3. He was buried, but He arose from the dead, was seen by his disciples, believed upon and proclaimed as the risen, ascended Lord.
4. Whoever believes on him is saved, is endowed with the Holy Spirit, and becomes part of the believing body of Christians.

Christ the Center of All Things

Christ is the center of all things for the Christian. The Gospel is Christ-centered.

The Gospel brings to us God's provision for human need, set in the context of what the world is really all about as the creation of God, and of what human life is all about.

We are part of a moral world in which the relations we have with God are personal and moral. That is why the Christian Gospel centers upon the reality of human sin, the provision of redemption through God's love, and the believing response of faith.

Human beings are created for freedom in Christ, not to be merely the objects of social engineering for the purpose of adjustment to the secular ideal of "normal" biological and sociological responses to stimuli.

ASSIGNMENT (Lesson I)

Write a short essay (2-4 pages) on the theme, THE CHRISTIAN GOSPEL, centering your discussion on Romans 1:16-17. What is the Gospel? When you hear it, what do you look for? What does the Gospel imply for the Christian view of life, in contrast to non-Christian views? Is this reasonable today?

For Further Reading:

C. Hallesby, *Religious Or Christian*; G. C. Robinson and Stephen F. Winward, *The Way*; Leonard Hodgson, *Christian Faith And Practice*; E. M. Blacklock (ed.), *Why I Am Still A Christian*; D. M. Mackay, *Christianity In A Mechanistic Universe*; Leon Morris, *The Abolition Of Religion*; Malcolm Muggeridge, *Jesus Rediscovered*.

LESSON II

SIN, JUDGMENT AND GRACE

Aim of the Lesson

To study the reality and nature of sin, God's judgment of sin, the relation of judgment to freedom, and the relation of God's grace to judgment.

Study Romans 1:18-3:20

Along with your study, read the textbook, pp. 52-58 and 71-99. The major themes of this section of Romans (which concern the universality of sin and judgment) are:

- (a) All non-Jews are sinful, and deserve judgment, 1:18-32
- (b) God's judgment is real, impartial and just, 2:1-16.
- (c) All Jews are sinful and deserve judgment, 2:17-3:9.
- (d) In fact, men are universally sinful and deserve judgment, 3:10-19.

Some Rhetorical Questions to Ponder:

Is it a fact that all humans are sinners? What is sin? Is sin a viable modern concept? What about guilt? Isn't all guilt morbid and the reflection of an unbalanced mind and repressed urges, as some say? Is the judgment of sin real, and is it fair? If God judges sin, is He a God of love? Why not forgive sin without judgment?

Now that we have read this part of Romans and the textbook, make notes on the reality and judgment of sin.

The Reality of Sin

Some have tried to cure evil and sin by explaining them away (like Christian Science). More commonly today it is popular to offer psychological explanations of sin and of guilt. Can all sin and all guilt be explained away?

Sin is related to humanity's having forsaken God, and humanity's persistent

rebellion against the will of God. Sin is a reality not a fiction, and sin's results in the world may be readily documented. Some say that human anxiety and guilt are due to repressing what one would like to do but dares not do (Freud). The biblical view of the human condition is that anxiety and guilt are due in large measure to our having done what we ought not to have done. Healthy guilt is thus the result of a healthy conscience and the necessary prelude to forgiveness and inward wholeness (Matt. 9:12-13). Note, O. H. Mowrer, *The Crisis In Psychiatry And Religion*.

Discuss the reality of sin and guilt; that is, a healthy, biblical (not morbid) view of sin and guilt. There are many words for sin in the Bible. Some are

Old Testament:

blameworthy wrongdoing, Ps. 32:1; 51:2-3
 perversity, 2 Chron. 6:37
 burdensomeness due to wrongdoing, Job 4:8
 injustice, Lev. 19:15
 wickedness, Prov. 2:12
 rebellion, Isaiah 1:2

New Testament:

blameworthy shortcoming, Rom. 3:23
 Godlessness, Rom. 1:18
 disobedience, Rom. 5:19
 transgression, Rom. 5:14
 lapse, or trespass Matt. 6:14-15
 unrighteousness, Rom. 1:28
 contagious evil, Rom. 12:9

Some of the consequences of sin are

1. Separation from God; spiritual death, Eph. 2:1 - 6.
2. Alienation from God's fellowship, combined with determination to live without God and hostility to God, Ps. 14:1.
3. The darkening of the mind and hardening of moral sensibilities, I Cor. 2:14 Eph. 4:17-19.
4. Enslavement to a bad conscience, impurity, irrational fears, phobias, frustrations, and a morbid sense of guilt and futility as to the worthwhileness of life, 2 Tim. 3:1-7; Rom. 1:21-32. Egocentricity, selfishness, violence.

The Bible is the story of human sinfulness and divine grace. The lives of men and women in the Bible reflect the reality of sin (David, Absalom, Samson, Judas). History is full of other examples as well. Secular literature is replete with facts of

human sinfulness, including the novels of Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and John Updike, and the poetry of T. S. Eliot, to mention only a few modern authors from several cultures.

No Christian should delight in sin, or have a morbid interest in sinful behavior or the failings of others, or express a supercilious judgmental attitude toward those who lapse into sin. Paul's great chapter on love declares that love is not happy with evil (I Cor. 13:6). We ought to keep an eye on ourselves as prone to fail, but be gentle with those who do fail (Gal. 6:1).

The Reality of Judgment

In Romans 5, Paul shows that through Adam sin, condemnation and death came to the human race; but that righteousness, justification and life have come through the New Man (Jesus Christ) to the new race of redeemed men and women.

The judgment of God is real. It is impossible to take the biblical teaching seriously without taking divine judgment seriously. Note the book by Leon Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment*.

The Law of God uncovers sin. The Law reveals the will of God. The moral standard by which men are judged is in view, not simply the mores of Israel (Rom. 3:19-20).

Punishment is not a popular topic. Four views of punishment may be distinguished:

- (a) as retribution to the wrongdoer
- (b) as the vindication of a moral standard
- (c) as a deterrent to the wrongdoer and to others
- (d) as a reforming device to encourage or enforce acceptable behaviour

While many today think that deterrence is a sole justification of punishment, I feel that punishment is morally indefensible if its rationale is strictly deterrence and reformation. It seems to me that to be morally justified punishment must be deserved and be morally commensurate with the evil deed (Rom. 1:32).

In the Bible judgment is related to freedom, as if to say, "You may go so far, but after that judgment comes." Note that modern behaviourists who repudiate freedom (like B. F. Skinner) also repudiate ultimate moral responsibility in favour of conditioned responses. Denying the legitimacy of punishment cancels freedom and responsibility so far as the biblical model is concerned, and I believe that this answers to the realities of human spiritual experience.

Judgment is also related to grace. P. T. Forsyth, the British theologian, once said of God's righteousness, *if he cares enough to be angry, he cares enough to redeem*. Love and holiness are not contradictory in the Bible, but complementary.

Redemption does not skirt judgment, it comes through it. The Cross was the judgment death for sin (Rom. 3:23-26; Gal. 3:10-13).

ASSIGNMENT
(Lesson II)

Write an essay of 3-4 pages on the theme of THE HUMAN PREDICAMENT having in mind some of the following points and questions:

1. Are sin and guilt real? Illustrate this from the lives of biblical people but also history and secular literature, and the press today, if you wish. Don't do it morbidly.
2. Are men really human without conscience and guilt? Does conscience control human behaviour more effectively than deterring laws? Are freedom and responsibility important to essential human nature?
3. Illustrate the effects of sin in the experiences of frustration, failure, fear, and dread of living.
4. Is God just to judge evil and sin?

For Further Reading

Samuel J. Mikolaski, *The Grace Of God*; O. H. Mowrer, *The Crisis In Psychiatry and Religion*; Leon Morris, *The Biblical Doctrine of Judgment*; Stuart Babbage, *Man In Nature And Grace*.

LESSON III

THE CROSS OF CHRIST AND OUR FORGIVENESS

Aim of the Lesson

To learn how God forgives sin through the Atonement. God forgives sin and justifies the sinner through the Cross of Christ. This is Paul's key point in Romans 3:26.

Study Romans 3:21 - 5:21

As you do this, read the textbook, pp. 99-133. Outline this part of Romans, with headings and sub-headings so that you can clearly see the development of Paul's thought.

Note particularly Rom 3:21-26. These are among the most important verses in the entire Bible. Grasp the meaning of this passage and you will secure a solid foundation for biblical faith.

The remainder of the section comprises argument and illustration developed by Paul in support of 3:21-26. Chapter 4 shows that two famous Old Testament men (Abraham and David) declare justification to be by faith, not by works. Chapter 5 indicates how the Christian enters into peace with God through believing in Jesus

(5:1-11), and how salvation has come to mankind through the New Man, Jesus Christ, in contrast to the sin, judgment and death which came through the first man, Adam (5:11-21).

The Key to the Gospel

Salvation is by grace alone, through God's free gift (3:21). Men and women are justified (declared righteous in God's sight, or acquitted of the charges against them) by faith alone, not by deserving or earning it (3:25). The basis of salvation is the Cross of Christ. Christ has redeemed us by his blood, turned away the judgment of God by bearing it, and has established new ground on which we are accepted by God. Through bearing our sins in Christ, God has justly dealt with them and now justifies the sinner through believing faith (3:26; 5:1-11). We freely and thankfully accept what God has graciously provided.

Justification

What is justification? Note these distinctions: by conversion we mean that a man's attitude is changed. By regeneration we mean that his nature is transformed. By justification we mean that a man's standing with God is altered. It has to do with the restoration of our true relation to God, which sin had marred, thereby alienating us.

Sin resulted in condemnation, guilt and alienation. Justification entails the removal of condemnation by forgiveness; the removal of guilt by Christ's righteousness being imputed to us; and the bridging of the gap of alienation by our restoration to personal fellowship with God. This is Paul's great theme also at the close of the part of Romans we are studying (8:21-39).

The first hint of justification comes in Genesis 15:6; more light is shed on it in Psalm 32; still more in Habbakuk 2:4; but we have the full revelation of it in Acts 13:38-39, Gal 3, and Rom 3, 4, 5. This is the heart of the Christian Gospel. Paul is not talking about a legal fiction, but a moral and spiritual reality which issues in a new kind of life: the quality of life of Jesus and His relationship to the Father, made available to sinful men by forgiveness.

The Law is not given to justify sinful humanity, but to uncover sin. The issue of the Law is condemnation, guilt, and alienation (Acts 13:39; Rom 3:20; Gal 2:21; 3:11). Paul knew, just as we know, that God's Law is just and good but that men are universally sinners who come short of goodness. Thus "doing the best we can" or "not being as bad as some" satisfies neither the conditions of human sinfulness in relation to judgment, nor the conditions of goodness in relation to God's righteousness.

Paul knew this experientially and theologically as well (Rom 7:7-25; Gal 3:19-21). We need to see the richness of God's grace in Christ's Cross, not to bustle

about trying to establish our standing before God. Thereafter, not before, follows the life of goodness in relation to the moral standard in Christ.

The Cross of Christ

The ground of forgiveness and justification is never our faith (that is the means of receiving it), but the perfection of Christ and His Cross.

The Cross was not an historical accident that took God off guard, but the purpose of Christ's coming (Acts 2:23; Gal 1:3-4). The Cross has a direct bearing upon the world's evil and sin; it was Christ's judgment-death for sin; and, by that death we are saved. Note: Acts 2:38; 5:30-31; 10:39, 43; Rom 3:25; 5:8; 1 Cor 15:3; 2 Cor 5:14-15,21; Gal 3:13; 1 Pet 2:24; Heb 1:3; 9:26,28; 10:12; John 1:29; 12:31; 1 John 1:7; 2:2; 4:10. These truths are solidly embedded in all the apostolic witness of the New Testament. Get hold of them! It is not only by Christ's life, but by his death that we are redeemed.

The Cross is one of the most complicated of doctrines in the Bible, yet is is a beautiful whole, like a diamond cut with many facets. Through the Cross, Christ won the victory over evil and sin. He is Victor (Col 2:13-15). The Cross does display the love of God and it does make a powerful appeal upon us (Rom 5:6-8). The Cross was the final and great sacrifice for sin, forever (Heb 9:26). The Cross is the judgment of God upon sin which He himself bore in Christ (Gal 3:13; 2 Cor 5:19).

But at its heart the Cross is grasped by us simply and directly in the childlike utterance of deep inward faith which can say "Jesus died for me," lovingly and thankfully. Have you said it believably?

Forgiveness

What is forgiveness? It is not a mere formality. Nor is it just something merely spoken.

When one sins against another, or sins against God, he causes that one to suffer. Forgiveness entails the injured one's absorbing the evil, assuaging it, redeeming it, and turning its evil energy to good. The entire ethical structure of the Christian life is built on this principle (Mat 5:39-41; Eph 4:32; Col 3:13).

This is the principle of vicariousness: that it is greater to endure suffering than to inflict it; that love is able to go beyond itself to make the burden of others its own; and that this act has a regenerating power on the lives of others. God has borne our evil and sin in Christ's Cross (Eph 1:7; 1 John 1:9). Can you now recall the force of the great evangelical chapter of the Old Testament, Isaiah 53?

ASSIGNMENT

(Lesson III)

1. Sit back and review the lesson to yourself. Or, have members of the group review major points of the lesson aloud.
2. Write an essay of 4-5 pages in which you express the relation of Christian's inner peace and sense of forgiveness to the Cross of Christ. Struggle with it! What does the Cross mean to the Christian; and, what should it mean? Topic: THE CROSS AND OUR PEACE.

For Further Reading

James Denney, *The Death Of Christ*; P. T. Forsyth, *The Work Of Christ*; I. Howard Marshall, *The Work of Christ*; William Barclay, *Crucified and Crowned*.

LESSON IV

CHRISTIAN COMMITMENT

Aim of the Lesson

To discover the meaning of faith.

Study Faith in Romans

Note the following passages: 1:16-17; 3:22, 25-27; 4:3, 5, 16, 24-25; 5:1; 10:4, 8-13,17. Read what the textbook has to say on these texts.

The Appropriateness of Faith

Faith is the only appropriate response in man to grace in God. That is Paul's central theme, which he develops into a whole book (Gal 2:16, 20-21; 3:2, 6, 11; 4:26-27).

Despite the vigorous modern attacks on religion, there has been a phenomenal rise of interest in the spiritual nature of man, in spiritual things, and in the knowledge of God. Jesus said, "man cannot live by bread alone."

There have been many triggers to faith. These include: The threat of non-being or the valuelessness of life which has overwhelmed many modern people. Recognition that humans are spiritual beings whose needs must be met in spiritual as well as in material and social ways. Revival of many arguments for the existence of God as an inner compulsion and not simply an intellectual game. The sense of the majesty and transcendence of God, and of our own human defilement as well as finitude. The search for beauty. Lives transformed by Christ have impressed many. The seeming inevitability of belief in God as H. D. Lewis has put it: the inevitability of there being one ultimate, complete and unconditioned being; that He is personal and that He relates to us, is of deep concern to many modern adults. The impact of the person of Jesus Christ on many

people today has been noteworthy. He draws us -- as He drew Malcolm Muggeridge in *Jesus Rediscovered* -- by the sheer beauty, moral impact, and mystery of His life and death.

Carl Jung, the late Swiss psychiatrist, wrote that men and women need four elements in life, namely, *faith, hope, love* and *insight*. Religious faith is not on the periphery of modern human need, but is at its center.

Think about people you have met, conversations engaged in, and articles you have read which indicate the hunger of the modern mind for something more than itself.

What Faith Is Not

One should not interpret the new interest in the transcendent in superficial religious ways. There are many things that warmhearted, Christ-centred Christian faith is not, nor can be. For example

1. Faith does not exist for its own sake, as a kind of ego-trip, or self-assurance march.
2. Genuine faith is not temporary, as if just for a crisis; nor is it merely an effervescent, emotional binge. Christian faith is not the same thing as a bombed mind.
3. Nor is faith simply emotional dependence conjured up because we feel existentially or cosmically lost, without purpose to existence; it is not response to an artificial "father-image out there" which we have psychologically projected (and created) in order to lean on because we're frightened children running away from reality, as Freud said.
4. Faith is not based on fear, though fear may encourage us to think about faith. Unhealthy fear may also totally immobilize faith or the capacity to exercise faith.
5. Faith is not blind. So-called "blind faith" is not Christian faith. Christian faith is based upon the historical revelation of God in Jesus Christ and his concrete dealings with humanity.
6. Faith is not based on tradition alone. It may be hindered more than helped by religious clichés, including evangelical clichés like "claiming the victory." Such clichés are largely without meaning to many today.
7. Faith is not the result of psychological self-abuse, or psychological suicide. Isolation (withdrawal from others) is not what the Bible means by faith. Nor is false self-abnegation or false self-denial (which may really be pathological depression as well as unbiblical theology) the basis of faith. In *Pilgrim's Progress*,

John Bunyan cleverly points to this fallacy. Christian and Hopeful had to change their view of themselves to a more positive view in their pilgrimage of faith. That is the meaning of Giant Despair and his wife Diffidence who urged them to commit suicide. Faith is consistent with a proper sense of the value of oneself as God's creature made for fellowship with God and fellowship with others.

What Faith Is

Christian faith is related, first of all, to hope. That is, faith entails a conviction as to the worthwhileness of life. In this respect, Christian commitment as faith in Jesus Christ the Lord depends upon the prior faith that God is the Creator and holds us and our world and destiny in His hands. Sometimes these two aspects of faith are so interwoven that one can scarcely draw a line between where one ends and the other begins.

Repentance and faith are like two sides of a coin -- they belong together. Repentance is turning away from sin; faith is turning to God (Acts 20:21). Repentance has its intellectual, emotional and volitional elements. We see that we should turn to God; we are deeply moved about our sins; we in fact take the step to turn to God. It is the work of God's Spirit in the world to encourage men to seek God (John 16:5-15).

It is instructive to note how prepositions in the New Testament outline the biblical meaning of faith: we believe *that* something is the case (1 John 5:10) or *that* Jesus is the Son of God (Rom 10:9). We *accept* someone else's word (John 4:24). We believe *upon* (Acts 16:31). We believe *in* (Eph 2.8). We put our trust *in* a person (John 14:1, 10:9).

There are three indispensable aspects to Christian believing faith:

1. Belief that something is the case.

There is the fact-basis to faith. The essential Christian facts are involved in Christian faith. For example, that Jesus did live in Palestine many years ago; that He did die upon the Cross; that the disciples were real people and recorded real history. Christian faith is not based on cloud-9, but is solidly embedded in history. Whatever else Christianity claims, it claims to be based upon an historical revelation. The Christian message has an authentic historical base.

But Christian faith involves much more than believing in certain facts, or believing the truth of certain facts.

2. Conviction of the truth.

Christian commitment includes commitment to the truth as it is in Jesus, and that this truth commands the conscience. "If He is Lord, then I acknowledge His

Lordship." The earliest Christian confession was "Jesus is Lord" (Rom 10:9). All pursuit of truth is like this. One has to be ready to say "I have thus far resisted Christ, but if the path leads His way, then whatever the cost, I'll follow that path." Response to truth inevitably entails a moral demand upon us to believe and a moral commitment to obey (Matt 16:13-20).

To see the truth entails believing the truth. For example, once the data points to the truth that the earth is spherical and not flat, this truth places its demand upon us for belief. Thus pursuit of truth is not an intellectual activity alone; it includes moral response or commitment. The truth we see depends upon the men and women we are. In Christian terms, this is the meaning of the "man of faith" in the Bible (Rom 4:18-25).

3. Personal trust or commitment.

Christian faith involves more than acceptance of the authenticity of the essential Christian facts, and more than formal confession of Christian truths. It has at its highest level the personal meeting of the soul with God in Jesus Christ. That means trust -- to trust in him and to trust one's destiny to His care. In this there is peace (Rom 5:1). The only proper object, ultimately, for faith is a person. Through all the sequential conditions of time from apostolic days to the present, the message of Christ has been spoken to men so that they individually and personally may know him.

To be a Christian is to know Christ, to depend upon His redeeming death and His resurrection for new life, and to accept His way of life (Rom 3:26; 6:4).

ASSIGNMENT

Write an essay of approximately 4-5 pages on CHRISTIAN FAITH.
As you do the assignment:

(a) Keep in mind the following questions:

What is faith?

Is faith important to human beings?

Is faith important to moderns?

What is the difference between wishful thinking and faith?

(b) Speak with three people about faith.

Ask them what they think faith is?

Ask them what they think Christian faith is, and what it is not?

Try to organize your thoughts and theirs around biblical teaching.

For Further Reading

R.E.O. White, *Into The Same Image*; William Barclay, *Fishers Of Men*; E. F. Kevan, *Salvation*; Gresham Machen, *What Is Faith*; Henry Cook, *The Why Of Faith*.

LESSON V

THE NEW HUMANITY FOR THE NEW AGE

Aim of the Lesson

To understand the teaching of the Bible on the relationship of the Holy Spirit to the Christian's life. What is the life in the Spirit? is to ask the question, What is sanctification? When does the Christian receive the Holy Spirit? How is this related to conversion, baptism and our knowledge of God as Triune?

Study Romans 6, 7 and 8:1-14 carefully.

Read the textbook along with your study of these pages, pp. 40-52 and 134-165.

In Chapter 6 Paul shows that new life in Christ ensures new power for living. This is related to baptism which was experienced simultaneously with conversion by believers (6:1-11). Just as Christ died and rose again, so we are buried with him in water and raised to new life. Regard yourself as dead to the old life and alive to the new life, says Paul (6:11-14). For Paul, baptism and faith are the outside and the inside of the same thing: the profession' of faith by the believing person in Jesus Christ and his being joined to Christ by faith-baptism.

Chapter 7 comprises a discussion of the Law. Paul points out that, just as in marriage, the law is binding only so long as a partner is alive. Death dissolves the obligation. Similarly, we died to the Law in being joined to Christ's death in baptism, so that now we live a new kind of life (7:6, 24-25).

The climax of this is in Romans 8:1-14, especially verse 11. Study this passage with great care. Note that the new life of the Christian is the life in the Spirit, and that there is a parallel drawn by Paul between the relation of the Spirit to the life of Christ and our lives.

The Reality of the Holy Spirit

Who, or what, is the Holy Spirit? The Holy Spirit is not impersonal divine energy, but the eternal third person of the one triune God, along with the Father and the Son. Nothing but full personhood accorded to the Spirit will satisfy the demands of the biblical teaching (John 14:26; 15:26; 16:7-15). Trinitarian thought is solidly embedded in the fabric of New Testament language (1 Cor 12:4-6; Eph 1:3-13; 4:4-6; 1 Peter 1:2, 3; Matt 28:19).

The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament the Holy Spirit is the intrusive divine power (Isaiah 31:3), ethical as well as powerful (Isaiah 30:1; 32:15-20). The Spirit is the Life-Giver to all creatures (Gen 1:2; Psalm 33:6; 104:29-30). The Spirit came upon men at

special times for special ministry, including prophetic ministry (Judges 3:10; 6:34; 1 Sam 16:13; 2 Sam 23:1-2).

God created man as a spiritual being for fellowship with himself (Gen 1:26-31; 2:7). When man fell into sin he became alienated from God. Spiritual death ensued from this separation, a death we have all known within ourselves.

But God did not leave humanity to languish. He came to mankind by his Spirit. The promise of the Old Testament was that a New Age would come when God's Spirit would dwell permanently among and within men and women. They would have new hearts, new spirits, new minds. A New Age would dawn, because God would be among his people (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Isaiah 32:15-17; 44:3).

The climactic passage which contains this promise is Joel 2:16-21).

The Dawning of the New Age in Jesus Christ

The New Age dawned with the birth, life, and ministry of Jesus Christ. It is of the utmost importance to grasp the truth that the primary fulfillment of the New Age is the person of Jesus Christ, and that the secondary fulfillment is Pentecost (Acts 2).

Christ himself was the Sign, the Author and the Power of the New Age. He, himself, inaugurated the Age of the Spirit, or the Age of the New Humanity (John 1:32-34; Luke 4:18). His entire life was encompassed by the Spirit: He was begotten by the Spirit of the Virgin Mary. He was baptized by the Spirit. He wrought mighty works by the Spirit. He promised to send the Spirit to His own. He sent the Spirit at Pentecost. He is now the Baptizer with the Spirit. Christ's life in the Spirit is the epitome of our life in the Spirit.

The New Humanity for the New Age

What Paul is talking about in Romans 6, 7 and 8 should now be clearer to you.

The pattern of the NT preaching is that just as Jesus Christ comes as the permanent Bearer of the Spirit and the new man who inaugurates the new humanity: redeemed humanity is now permanently endowed with the Spirit when faith is put in him. Thus faith, baptism and receiving the Spirit are one event not several events in the apostolic teaching. Note carefully Acts 2:37-39; I Cor.6.11; 12:13; Titus 3:4-8. Paul makes sense only if we understand him to say that baptism is the expression on the candidate's part, and recognition on the Church's part, of the faith that alone joins the soul to Christ. This is not to say that salvation is by baptism, but that in the commitment which is called faith-baptism the soul is joined to Christ.

Our life, like Christ's is to be of the Spirit and to be lived in the Spirit. We too are

born of the Spirit (John 3:5; I Peter 3:21). We too are indwelt by the Spirit (Romans 8:9). Can a person be a Christian and not be indwelt by the Spirit? The New Testament knows no such possibility.

Note Romans 8:11, "Moreover, if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells within you, then the God who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give new life to your mortal bodies through his indwelling Spirit." Here Paul again refers to Romans 6 and the union of the Christian by faith-baptism with the death and resurrection of Christ. Paul says that the Father who raised up Jesus from the dead quickens us also because the Spirit who quickens us is the Spirit of him who raised up Jesus Christ from the dead. What he did for Christ he does for us because we share the same indwelling Spirit. By this Spirit we are made partakers of Christ and joint heirs with Christ. By this same Spirit we, too, can utter the word "Father."

The Fruit of the Spirit

Christ sent the Spirit to us in order to reproduce in us His way of life upon earth. This is what Paul calls the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-25), which is distinctly related to the character and uniqueness of Christ himself (Phil. 2:1-13). The test of one's having the Spirit is not an emotional binge nor a bombed mind (Eph. 5:17-20 and I Cor.14:11-12 deny that), but whether there is the "fruit of the Spirit." What else could the criterion be? The pattern is Jesus Christ. Why are we so slow to grasp this truth?

ASSIGNMENT (Lesson V)

Write an essay of 4-5 pages on THE LIFE IN THE SPIRIT. What should one look for in the life of a Christian? How does the uniqueness of Christ affect our understanding of the Christian life? Relate the fruit of the Spirit to daily living.

For Further Reading

Samuel J. Mikolaski, *The Triune God*; James Philip, *Christian Maturity*; John R. W. Stott, *Men Made New*; Michael Griffith, *Consistent Christianity*; R.E.O. White, *Into the Same Image*; Ralph A. Herring, *The Profile of Christian Experience*.

LESSON VI

THE CHRISTIAN OUTLOOK

Aim of the Lesson

To examine the Christian view of life from the standpoint of hope. In contrast to fatalistic and pessimistic views of life and the future, the Christian sees life as meaningful, full of purpose and moving, along with the whole of history, toward

the goal of God's Kingdom.

Study Romans 8:15-39.

Read the textbook, pp. 165-181.

As you study this passage, note the following points:

1. As a child of God, the Christian is delivered from deep subliminal and conscious fear as to the meaning and purpose of life, 8:14-17.
2. The Christian can look upon trial and suffering from the standpoint of the ultimate triumph of God's purposes in the world, 8:17-18.
3. Christians will share in the final glory of God, 8:18-19.
4. The Christian sees evil and suffering as very real, but also as temporary conditions from which God will redeem the world, 8:20-22.
5. Redemption includes the transformation of the body. The presence of the Spirit in us now is the down-payment and guarantee of what God will complete in the future, 8:23.
6. Christians can therefore live in hope. Hope, that is, not just for the future but daily; that is, to live in the certainty that what we are doing is worthwhile. In our perplexities the Spirit helps us to pray, 8:24-27.
7. The keynote is purpose, or life with a purpose, because it is in God's purpose, 8:28. Life is not hit and miss, nor sheer chance.
8. The redemptive purpose of God for the believer is sure. It rests on the work of Christ. Who can gainsay what God has done, and why question what God will yet do? Live in faith that God will accomplish His purposes, 8:29-34.
9. The ultimate question is: can anything or anyone separate us from God's love? No! That love is unfailing. Therefore live in hope today, tomorrow and until Jesus comes, 8:35-39.

The Spirit-led Life

Let us backtrack for a few moments to tackle the meaning of a difficult word, namely, sanctification. Let us do this in relation to our previous lesson and as the springboard for this lesson.

"To sanctify" means to separate something or someone for God's use. The derivative meaning from this is to make holy or whole, fit for God's fellowship.

Sanctification is a decisive act in the separation of sinful men to Christ through the Cross (Heb. 10:10). That is redemption. This is true of every Christian. Sanctification is thereafter also a process or growth into Christian maturity (Heb. 10:14) as our outlook and habits are fashioned more and more into the pattern of Christ's life.

At Pentecost, the Lord sent the Holy Spirit upon His disciples in fulfillment of His promise (John 14, 15, 16; Acts 1-2), and all the Christians were filled with the Holy Spirit. Their lives were raised to the level of the Spirit-filled humanity of our Lord, which is called the new creation (2 Cor. 5:17) and being baptized with the Holy Spirit (John 1:33). And that was the chief plank of the apostolic platform of the Gospel (Acts 2:38).

There were two major results of Pentecost in the lives of the disciples:

First, a new sense of power -- moral power -- to produce in them a Christ-like character (Acts 4:13). Their natural gifts were heightened, but the chief effect upon them of the Spirit's coming was the power to live a Christ-like life. The key to this Christ-like life is love. That is why Paul concentrates upon love as the greatest gift in I Cor. 13 in the middle of his discussion of other gifts (I Cor. 12-14).

Second, illumination or insight. This and moral power are inseparable in the book of Acts. Notice the almost presumptuous words on a moot point of conduct: "it seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us," (Acts 15:28). There was a clear sense of guidance, of freedom, of insight into situations, which gave great confidence and a sense of direction to all they did (Acts 13:2; 16:6-7).

Underlying all the unusual phenomena in the book of Acts stands the permanent change in the disciples at Pentecost. Moral power and insight are the major elements of their transformation. In Acts 1:6 they had no true insight as to Christ's purpose; but following Pentecost (2:22) they had a firm grasp of the Gospel and of the purposes of God for mankind.

The Importance of Hope

Many contemporary writers have said that modern man is without hope, and that hopelessness is at the root of fear, pessimism, cruelty, frustration and depression. It is difficult to see how life can be meaningful without hope; and it is equally difficult to see how hope can flourish without faith.

In recent years there has been a remarkable secular resurgence of interest in the subject of the future. Governments are paying millions of dollars for research on the future. What will life be like in 20, or 50, or 100 years? Even some Marxists have abandoned a deterministic model of the future in favour of a more open-ended future. Theologians also have suddenly re-discovered hope.

Faith entails the fundamental conviction that life is worthwhile; hope involves successful movement toward an envisioned goal. Just as Augustine gave to the early Christian Church a new philosophy of history, so today we need to recover the sense of God's Lordship in life and history. We need the recovery of hope. The greatest vindication of faith to the modern mind is the hope of the saints. Herbert Butterfield has said that history uncovers the universality of sin; it also discloses to faith the meaningful purposes of God. A classic poem on the modern despairing mood is T. S. Eliot's *The Wasteland*. A similar prose piece is Bertrand Russell's *A Free Man's Worship*. The difference between them is that Eliot found hope in God, but Russell concludes with cosmic despair.

The Ground of Hope

First, Christian hope is tied to the past in the joy of forgiveness (Psalm 32). One can be at peace (forgive oneself) because he is forgiven by God, freely and unconditionally. Guilt is not explained away, but carried away by redeeming love. The Christian can live in hope because he has this footing for life, that his past is cared for.

Second, hope infuses every day of the present. That is what being "saved by hope" means (Rom. 5:2; 8:24-25). We live, love, strive, work and build as co-workers with God (I Cor. 3:9; 2 Cor. 6:1). The Christian develops his own skills, gets involved in the world, is diligent and committed because he believes that what he does will not fail. The whole of life is tied to God's purposes. Life has meaning and therefore hope.

Third, hope looks to the future. The world is not seen mechanistically or behaviouristically as a meaningless surge of energy. History is viewed in linear fashion. The world began with God's creative act. It is sustained through all its history by God's providential oversight. It moves toward the final goal of God's Kingdom in Christ (Rom. 8:28; Matt. 24:30-31). The Christian's hope includes the faith that evil will finally be vanquished (Rom.8:21-23); that evil men will be judged (Rom.12:19; James 5:1-11); and, that God's will shall be done.

ASSIGNMENT (Lesson VI)

Romans 8:15-39 is the living body of flesh which graces the structure of hope. All of this stands together in the faith that God is Creator, Redeemer, and Consummator.

Write an essay of 4-5 pages on THE CHRISTIAN HOPE. Let it be not so much on the fact of Christ's return, as upon what hope should mean to the Christian when frustration and despair are the mood of the times.

As you do this last assignment, look back over the other five lessons. Does a Christian world-view and life-view emerge? Read Romans 5:1-5 and 13:11-14.

For Further Reading

Herbert Butterfield, *Christianity And History*; Victor Frankl, *Man's Search For Meaning*; Bernard Ramm, *Them He Glorified*; Augustine, *Confessions*; Wilbur Smith, *Therefore Stand*; Ignace Lepp, *Atheism In Our Time*.

Final Comment

Now that you have studied Romans 1 - 8, why not go on to complete your reading and study of this important epistle? You have established a method which you can carry forward.

NOTES ON 1 CORINTHIANS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Corinth

The southern part of Greece is a large irregular peninsula which is joined to the mainland by a narrow neck of land. Corinth was situated on the northern edge of this neck. To save the dangerous sailing voyage around the Peloponnesus Peninsula, boats and goods were transported across the 3.5 mile neck of land (the boats were pulled on rollers by slaves) between Lechaem at the northwest of the neck and Cenchreae on the southeast of the neck and then re-floated. Thus Corinth was an important commercial and transportation point on the eastern Mediterranean.

During the period 700-500 B.C. Corinth was large and prosperous, however as Athens gained power, Corinth declined. In 338 B.C. Corinth was captured by Philip of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great) and became a leading city of the Greek confederacy. In 196 B.C. the Romans captured Corinth and made it a free city. In 146 B.C. it was leveled by the Romans for complicity against Rome. In 44 B.C. Julius Caesar ordered Corinth rebuilt and it became the leading city of the province of Achaia.

At the time of the New Testament Corinth was much larger than Athens. Its heritage as a free city dominated its culture and traditions -- its population was dominated by "freedmen," i.e., persons who had won or purchased freedom from slavery. It had a reputation for luxury and sexual immorality, which was related in part to the worship of Aphrodite, the goddess of sensual love. *To Corinthianize* meant to corrupt, or to advocate loose living, not unlike the meaning of *bohemian* in modern language.

The Church at Corinth

Paul first came to Europe on his second missionary journey. His experiences in Greece had been personally traumatic as indicated by his mood upon his first arrival in Corinth (Acts 18; 1 Cor. 2:3). Beatings and imprisonment at Philippi, restriction from preaching at Athens, anxiety over the well-being of his converts at Thessalonica, all conspired to darken his outlook. Gradually his ministry at Corinth began to bear fruit, in part because of the encouragement of Priscilla and Aquila and the gift of money from Philippi which enabled him to devote himself to preaching and teaching (2 Cor. 11:9; Acts 18:5).

Four factors bear upon our understanding of the problems within the Christian assembly at Corinth and the tone of Paul's letter to them:

1. The citizens of Corinth were predominantly freedmen; more so than in any other major city in the Roman Empire. They had a libertarian ideology: *Look, I'm*

a free person. No one is going to tell me what to do. The discipline and ethics of the Gospel were hard for some of them to accept, and harder still for Paul to convey.

2. Some Corinthian Christians were bent on tasting whatever was religiously novel or unique. Whereas in Romans and Galatians Paul urges converts and potential converts to leave behind their old religious traditions in favor of the freshness of the Gospel, here Paul urges Christians to quit majoring on claims to religious novelty and a party spirit and to go back to the true foundation of the Gospel.

3. Prosperity fostered a hedonist mentality, which was fundamentally materialist in outlook, including denial of the resurrection (ch. 15). This life-style included social exclusiveness, intellectual vanity, and cultural snobbery which fostered a party spirit. Their vanity (including claims to spiritual gifts) is mere childishness (1 Cor.13:11) not spiritual maturity, said Paul (1 Cor. 2:6).

4. Paul's prose is not flat, but is highly sensitive to likely rejection by his readers. Hence we must determine when he is speaking simply and directly, when he is using satire, overstatement or understatement, and when he is speaking tongue-in-cheek. This is critical to understanding what he is saying about spiritual gifts. The Corinthian Christians appear to still hanker for spectacular aspects of their former pagan religions.

Occasion

Paul probably had no communication with the Corinthian church following his departure after his first visit during his second missionary journey, until his three-year stay at Ephesus during the third missionary journey, from where I Corinthians was written at about 51-52 A.D. It is possible that an earlier, sharply critical and badly misunderstood letter had been sent by Paul (1 Cor. 5:9-11), which some see embedded later in 2 Cor. 6:14-7:1.

Paul writes 1 Corinthians out of considerable anxiety because of reports (1 Cor. 1:11; 16:17) of dissension, confusion, pride and moral laxity. His opponents at Corinth included lechers who practised immorality in the name of freedom, fussy abstainers who adopted rigid patterns of behavior, pseudo-intellectuals and others who claimed ecstasy as the ultimate in religious experience.

Three great themes adorn the epistle: the Lord's Supper (11:17-34); Love, the greatest gift and virtue (ch. 13); and Resurrection Hope (ch. 15).

Outline

Part I INTRODUCTION,

1:1-9

1. The author: Paul the apostle, and his associate Sosthenes, 1:1.
2. The addressees: the church at Corinth, 1:2.
3. The benediction, 1:3.
4. Paul's prayer for them, 1:4-9.

Themes:

- a. While Paul rebukes them for misbehavior, he nevertheless identifies them as *sanctified in Christ Jesus* and *called to be holy*.
- b. *Grace and peace* are characteristic salutations, though more poignant here due to unrest among them and antagonism to Paul.
- c. Despite their restless yearning for flashy gifts, they in fact lack no gift needed to enrich their growth, their understanding and their speaking.

Part II

**THE TWELVE-POINT BILL OF PARTICULARS:
MATTERS FOR BLAME -- PROBLEMS ADDRESSED,
1:10 - 15:58**

1. Disunity and Partisanship, 1:10-17; 3:1-4:21.

- a. Party spirit rebuked, 1:10-17.
- b. Intellectual pride leads to a destructive party spirit, 3:1-9, 18-23.
- c. Our work will be tested at the judgment seat of Christ, 3:10-17.
- d. Ministry faithfulness will finally be judged by the Lord, 4:1-5.
- e. As their spiritual father he rebukes their factiousness and resentment of him, 4:6-21.

Themes:

- a. Factiousness is destructive. It reflects immaturity, not their vaunted claims to spiritual superiority.
- b. Despite some who reject him and have sought to make Apollos their spiritual guru, neither Paul nor Apollos counts for much. Both are servants of Christ. Nevertheless, the Corinthians can never escape their obligation to Paul as their spiritual father.

2. Intellectual Vanity, 1:18 - 2:16.

- a. Rationalism vs the true wisdom of the Cross, 1:18-31.
- b. Unconverted mentality vs the mind of Christ, 2:1-16.

Theme:

Paul attacks intellectual vanity, not reason or wisdom. That which the world regards as foolishness (the Cross) is in fact the wisdom of God. The Corinthians ought not to behave according to the vanity of an unconverted mind but with minds renewed by the Holy Spirit to reflect the mind of Christ.

3. Immorality, 5:1-13.

- a. Expel the incestuous man, 5:1-8.
- b. Avoid entanglement with evil-minded persons, 5:9-13.

Themes:

a. *Actually reported* should be rendered *universally reported* or *everywhere reported*. The implication is that a man had married (or was living with) his step-mother following her divorce from his father (note 2 Cor. 7:12) which was morally offensive both to pagans and to Jews. The scandal was widely known and reported.

b. Decent Christian moral standards call for excommunication of the flagrant offender (4-5, 13). Note that it is to be done as if Paul were there (moral commitment and unity of Christians under apostolic authority) and in the name of Christ, i.e., in accordance with his purity and love, to hate the sin but convert the sinner.

c. *Handing over to Satan* means that the flesh (not body) may be afflicted by the consequences of evil-doing.

d. *Sincerity and truth* mean honesty of purpose and character not vice, here translated *wickedness*; i.e., not mixture of impure motives. This ideal, lauded by pagans such as Plato, should not be abused by Christians.

e. The outlook of an immoral life-style (v.10-11) is that greed and love of riches are themselves forms of idolatry which often are combined, ritually, with sexual indulgence as part of religious spells or quasi-religious practices. Avoidance of such persons does not mean avoidance of ordinary business contacts (v.10); rather, it means not being mixed up with such persons in friendly, life-style associations.

4. Lawsuits between Christians, 6:1-11.

- a. Lawsuits between Christians censured, 6:1-6.
- b. Suffering loss is preferable to civil suit, 6:7-8.
- c. Christian faith entails spiritual transformation of life and life-style, 6:9-11.

Themes:

- a. Disputes among Christians should not be settled by lawsuit but private arbitra-

tion in a common sense fashion. Asking non-Christians to settle disputes amounts to subversion of Christian values (v.7).

b. God's Kingdom involves banishment and judgment against all forms of greed, sexual indulgence, theft, slander; in short, of those who live immorally for themselves, in contrast to life dedicated to holiness.

5. Gluttony and Lust, 6:12-20.

a. Body functions are a moral, not merely a behavioral, issue, 6:12-15.

b. The sin of sexual promiscuity, 6:16-18.

c. The body as God's temple, 6:19-20.

Themes:

a. Gluttony and fornication are moral issues, not merely a-moral behavioral responses or laughable *kicking over the traces*, v.12-13.

b. Sex with a prostitute is more than physical act and gratification: it amounts to moral and spiritual union with the prostitute (v.16) and is a sin also against one's own self. Paul expresses anxiety *on account of the fornications* (v.2), which refers to a promiscuous lifestyle common in Corinth.

c. To make the body God's temple, a most precious price was paid; therefore, says Paul, glorify God in your body.

d. The powers (appetites, inclinations, propensities) of the body are ours to use, provided that such use fits God's purpose for them in creation, promotes the good of others, and signifies our mastery of the body not the body's mastery of us through its passions.

6. Marriage and Celibacy, 7:1-40.

a. The relative desirability of celibacy, 7:1-2, 7-9.

b. Marriage is a mutual contract involving mutual duties, 7:3-6.

c. Indissoluble Christian marriage, 7:10-14.

d. Special circumstances following conversion of a partner, 7:15-16.

e. The Christian in a society of mixed traditions and standards, 7:17-24.

f. The marriage of virgins; Paul's preference for celibacy, 7:25-28.

g. Self-denial may be indicated because of the times, 7:29-35.

h. The duty of parents regarding the marriage of a daughter, 7:36-38.

i. The second marriage of women: permitted but not advised, 7:39-40.

Themes:

- a. Paul carefully distinguishes dominical command from his own opinion.
- b. Celibacy is desirable but in a lustful environment, such as Corinth, marriage is preferable to a life of fornication or unrequited passion.
- c. Marriage should be regarded as a permanent contract involving mutual duties and commitments. These include entanglement, care and distraction which must be accepted lovingly and faithfully.
- d. It may not be possible for a Christian to revolutionize his or her circumstances in a given society, whether married or unmarried, slave or free. One may have to accept one's social and economic status within the conditions of the times.

7. Questions of Conscience: Morals and Mores, 8:1 - 11:1.

- a. Based on the principle of love, avoid food offered to idols, 8:1-13.
- b. Paul defends his apostolic authority, 9:1-14.
- c. Rights and obligations; overriding commitment, 9:15-27.
- d. Example: Israel judged for dallying with evil, 10:1-13.
- e. Application: Keep the Lord's Table inviolate, 10:14-22.
- f. Principle: Seek the good of others; don't insist on your own rights, 10:23-11:1.

Themes:

- a. Offering food to idols makes it neither better nor worse; however, if eating it offends a weaker Christian, don't do it. It is better to avoid such food at the Lord's Table.
- b. Paul defends his right to financial support for his ministry and his apostolic authority.
- c. Readiness for ministry demands self-restraint and careful training, which includes avoiding evil thoughts as the first step toward victory over temptation.

8. Women in Church, 11:2-16; 14:34-36.

- a. The veiling of women in Church and hair style, 11:2-16.
- b. Disruptions of worship are inappropriate, 14:34-36.

Themes:

- a. Men's heads should be uncovered; women's covered during worship, as a symbol of being under authority while there.
- b. Paul appeals to a sense of natural fitness and to custom.
- c. At issue are questions of propriety in community life as against self-assertion. Do the Corinthians propose to set themselves up willfully as the norm of God's

word (14:36)? What they are doing creates social divisions. Factiousness in public worship must be avoided (11:18).

9. The Lord's Supper, 11:17-34.

- a. Dissension and a party-spirit rebuked, 11:17-22.
- b. Institution of the Lord's Supper, 11:23-26.
- c. The manner of observing the Lord's Supper, 11:27-34.

Themes:

- a. Only the sense of a common meal reflects the true intent of the Supper.
- b. Cliques (eating only with those of *one's own kind, or station*) vitiates the meaning of the Supper.
- c. The meaning: the Supper celebrates the New Covenant and serves as a memorial of Christ to preserve the memory of Christ's broken body and shed blood.

10. The Use and Abuse of Spiritual Gifts, 12:1 - 14:40.

- a. Their origin, variety, character and purpose, 12:1-11.
- b. The function of gifts within the church as Christ's body, 12:12-31.
- c. Love is the supreme and universal gift, 13:1-13.
- d. Prophecy (teaching) is superior to unknown tongues, 14:1-25.
- e. Regulations governing orderly public worship, 14:26-40.

Themes:

- a. Each local church is *the body of Christ in that place* and should function as a body having all its parts working variously and harmoniously, not a body with only one part functioning.
- b. The object of the divinely-given gifts is not for personal aggrandizement or to create disorder but for the edification of all.
- c. Teaching is by far the superior gift because thereby others are edified.
- d. Love is the greatest gift and is universally enjoined. Other gifts are not universal and vary as to importance.

11. Resurrection of the Body, 15:1-58.

- a. The resurrection of Christ is the cornerstone of the Gospel, 15:1-11.
- b. If Christ did not rise, Christianity is a fraud, 15:12-34.
- c. The mode of our resurrection, 15:35-49.
- d. The triumph of the resurrection over death, 15:50-58.

Themes:

- a. The resurrection of Christ was amply attested by witnesses to whom Jesus appeared.
- b. Our resurrection depends upon the truth and reality of Christ's resurrection.
- c. The baptism for the dead (15:29): *what will they do who are being baptized on behalf of persons virtually dead* probably means (Tertullian) that we are baptized for our bodies (rising out of the water to newness of life); otherwise, if the body finally does not rise, it is as good as dead and the baptism appears to be pointless. Baptism anticipates the resurrection.

12. Obligation to Social Service, 16:1-4.

- a) The Pattern for Christian giving, 16:1-2.
- b) The collection for the church at Jerusalem, 16:3-4.
- c) Paul's impending visit to Corinth, 16:5-9.
- d) Instructions regarding Timothy and Apollos, 16:10-12.
- e) Exhortation to steadfastness and love, 16:13-14.
- f) The help Stephanas and his companions gave Paul; acceptance of and honor due such leaders, 16:15-18.
- g) Greetings, warning, salutation, 16:19-24.

Themes:

- a) Christian giving should be done on a planned, regular basis, with definite objectives in view.
- b) Progress in the Lord's work usually arouses criticism and opposition. Encouragement of those who minister is important.
- c) "Maranatha" (16:22) means *the Lord is come, beware how you treat him, or Come thou, O Lord*. The first sense is more appropriate to the context.

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Spiritual Gifts

Paul is very much concerned about granular individualism among the Christians at Corinth, a party spirit, and spiritual anarchy on the part of some who viewed themselves as possessing unusual and superior gifts. This led to disregard for the body of the church and hindered the reputation of the faith and the ministry of the Gospel.

The key passages are 12:1-14:40.

In 12:1-7 Paul teaches that all gifts are triunely given by the Holy Spirit under the Lordship of Christ. There are multiple operations. The object of gifts is the general profit of the assembly, not the vanity of the individual.

The list which follows (12:8-10) makes faith generic to all and leads to the metaphor of the body: the church at Corinth should function as a body in a balanced manner, not merely as one bodily function (12:28). Notice that what the Corinthians prized most (tongues), Paul lists last (12:30). The only possible answer to the rhetorical questions in 12:29-30 (for example: *do all speak in tongues?*) is *no*.

Paul shifts attention (12:30) to greater and more desirable and more important gifts. The key universal gift is love (ch.13); where, in v.1-3 Paul downplays tongues, prophecy, wonder-working, and self-sacrifice. All should aspire to be able to teach (14:1).

Consider the following:

1. The word for spiritual gifts (*charisma, charism*) in the New Testament includes many diverse blessings and capacities, such as:
 - a) any act of service, 1 Peter 4:7-11.
 - b) some favor or blessing, 2 Cor 1:11.
 - c) sexual continence or celibacy, 1 Cor 7:7.
 - d) spiritual truth, Romans 1:11
 - e) the privileges of Israel, Romans 11:29.
 - f) salvation, Romans 5:15-17; 6:23.
2. There is an intimate relationship between a gift and a talent: note Paul's comments on improvisation and cultivation of ability (12:31; 14:1, 26). The term *charism* includes all gifts and talents.
3. Diversity of gifts: 12:6, "having gifts differing..."
4. Limitation: 12:29, "surely all do not..."
5. Church oriented: 12:7, 26, "for edification of the body..."
6. Gradation: 12:30; 13:1-3, 8-13, "desire higher gifts, and the most excellent way is love..."

1 Corinthians 13

A delightful, free translation published in the International Critical Commentary, 2nd edition, by Robertson and Plummer, 1914.

1. I may talk with the tongues of men, yea of angels; yet, if I have no Love, so far from doing any good to a Christian assembly, I am become like the senseless din

in heathen worship. 2. And I may have the gift of inspired preaching, and see my way through all the mysteries of the Kingdom of God and all the knowledge that man can attain; and I may have all the fulness of faith, so as to move mountains; yet, if I have no Love, so far from being a Christian of great account, I am nothing. 3. I may even dole out with my own hands everything that I possess, -- may even, like the Three Children, surrender my body to the flames; yet, if I have no Love, so far from becoming a saint or a hero, or from winning a rich recompense from Heaven, I am not one whit the better. Love is the one thing that counts.

4. For Love is patient and kind; Love knows no hatred or envy.
It is never a braggart in mien, or swells with self-adulation;
5. It never offends good feeling, or insists on all it has claim to;
It never blazes with rage, and it stores up no resentment.

6. It delights not over the wrong that men do,
But responds with delight to true dealing.

7. Unfailingly tolerant, unfailingly trustful,
Unfailingly hopeful, unfailingly strong.

8. The time will never come for Love to die.
There will be a time when our prophesyings will be useless;
There will be a time when these Tongues will cease;
There will be a time when our knowledge will be useless.

9. For our knowledge is but of fragments,
And our prophesyings but of fragments.

10. But when absolute completeness shall have come,
Then that which is of fragments will have no use.

The difference is far greater than that which distinguishes childhood from manhood; and yet, even there, how marked the change! 11. When I was a child, I used to talk as a child, to think as a child, to reason as a child. Since I am become a man, I have done away with childhood's ways. 12. In a similar way, what we now see are but reflexions from a mirror which clouds and confuses things, so that we can only guess at the realities; but in the next world we shall have them face to face. The knowledge that I now have is only of fragments; but then I shall know as completely as God from the first knew me.

13. So then, Faith, Hope, and Love last on -- just these three: but chiefest and best is Love.

NOTES ON 2 CORINTHIANS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Authorship and Occasion

This letter reflects Paul's very great pain regarding his relationship to the Corinthian congregation. The organization and sources of the text make the task of interpretation a difficult one, to many somewhat painful.

It appears that 2 Corinthians deals with matters which surfaced shortly after Paul wrote 1 Corinthians. The question is this: is 2 Corinthians a literary unity or is it an edited composite which blends together data and texts which relate to several disparate events, including an epistle referred to which may or may not be part of 2 Corinthians?

First, some scholars divide the epistle into several distinct parts and then build from them a possible sequence of events. These are:

- a) 2:14-6:13.
- b) 7:2-4; 10:1-13:10; 1:1-2:13.
- c) 7:5-16.
- c) 13:11-13; ch. 8; ch.9; 6:14-7:1.

Others, including conservative scholars, hold to the priority and continuity of the content of chs. 1-9, but believe that a later editor combined at least two letters and possibly fragments of other letters into what is now 2 Corinthians.

The following may be a reasonable set of inferences from the data and scholarly opinion:

Paul's first letter (1 Corinthians) did not have the desired effect, either with regard to resolution of reported problems or of factionalism within the congregation. Instead, an attack was mounted against Paul, perhaps with the aid of certain individuals from Jerusalem who claimed to represent the Jerusalem-based apostles (11:4-5, 12-13, 20-23) and who sought to downgrade Paul's apostleship, spearheaded through a local Corinthian church person who had organized a movement against Paul (2:5-8).

On learning of this, Paul made a hurried trip to Corinth, but it was not successful (2:1; 12:14; 13:1-2). He returned to Ephesus. He then wrote a third, severe letter (2:3-4, 9; 7:8, 12). This is the letter, or part of it, which some scholars believe is embedded in chapters 10-13, possibly sent by the hand of Titus (7:6-8). Thereafter, following a trip to Troas, Paul met up with Titus in Macedonia who brought better news: the congregation was again warmly disposed to Paul, the crisis had passed, and evidently the minority troublemakers had either been put down (2:6) or had withdrawn. The parts of 2 Corinthians in which Paul expresses his love for the Corinthian congregation and happiness at their changed attitude toward him (as the one who had begotten them in the faith) show the effects of the

good news from Titus.

2 Corinthians is a passionate letter, moving from despair to joy, from satire to loving concern, from severity to conciliation, and includes a vigorous defense of Paul's commissioning, apostleship and selfless ministry. This was his attempt to put out a spreading brush-fire driven by a powerful wind of enmity of a few. They had attacked his person (10:10), they undermined his character by calling his motives into question, and they distorted his teaching. Evidently the controversy had spilled beyond Corinth because Paul addresses the letter to *all the saints which are in Achaia* (1:1).

Some months later Paul did visit Greece again for three months, probably including Corinth (Acts 20:1-3).

Outline

Part I INTRODUCTION, 1:1-3

1. The author: Paul the apostle, and his associate Timothy, 1:1.
2. The addressees: the church at Corinth, 1:2.
3. The benediction, 1:3.

Part II ADDRESSING THE ISSUE OF STRAINED RELATIONS, 1:4-7:16

- 1. Paul's approach: thanksgiving, comfort, hope, 1:4-11**
- 2. Paul reviews his dealings with the Corinthians, 1:12-2:11.**
 - a. Postponing his visit was not vacillation, 1:12-22.
 - b. Postponement was intended to spare the church further pain, 1:23-2:4.
 - c. While the offender caused pain, it is time to forgive him, 2:5-11.
- 3. Paul's dedication proves the sincerity of his love for them, 2:12 - 3:18.**
 - a. Praise for salvation that came to them through him, 2:12-17.
 - b. He is not self-appointed nor appointed by them, but by God, 3:1-6
 - c. The new covenant transcends the old legal code, 3:7-11.
 - d. Free utterance of the Gospel supersedes legal code diffidence, 3:12-18.
- 4. The watchword of Paul's ministry: Integrity, at a price, 4:2-12**
 - a. Honesty and truth have been his aims, 4:1-6.
 - b. Constant threat to life and limb is the personal price of integrity, 4:7-15.
- 5. Prospect of the resurrection infuses life with hope, 4:16-5:10**

- a. The contrast between outward decay and inward renewal, 4:16-18.
- b. The earthly tent left for the heavenly dwelling, 5:1-5.
- c. Absent from the body; at home with the Lord, 5:6-8.
- d. Accountability before the judgment seat of Christ, 5:9-10.

**6. Accountability makes urgent the ministry of reconciliation:
humanity's reconciliation to God and their reconciliation to Paul, 5:11-21.**

- a. The final judge of Paul's integrity is God, 5:11-13.
- b. Since Christ carried us in his death, we should live for him in life, 5:14-15.
- c. Christ's ministers must therefore urgently preach reconciliation, 5:16-21.
- d. Characteristics of authentic ministry, 6:1-10.
- e. Such ministry should evoke their affection, 6:11-13.
- f. The appeal that they withdraw from impure associations, 6:14-7:1. (Is this the first, letter of Paul to the Corinthians, embedded in the text of 2 Corinthians?)
- g. They should set aside suspicion and trust Paul, 7:2-4.
- h. Paul's relief that they no longer mistrust him, 7:5-16.

Themes:

- a. Commissioning for ministry is God's prerogative. Approval for such is not contingent upon human commendation; rather, it is vindicated by God through results.
- b. The price paid for integrity in ministry may become high, but certainty of the life to come with Christ inspires one to go on.
- c. In concert with Paul's earlier statements about the resurrection (I Cor 15) he here (2 Cor 4:16-5:10) contrasts the earthly with the future heavenly body.
- d. In one of the great NT passages in Paul's writings on reconciliation he makes a clear statement that reconciliation is possible because of Christ's substitutionary death for us (5:14-15).

Part III
**THE COLLECTION FOR THE POOR SAINTS AT JERUSALEM,
8:1 - 9:15**

- 1. The generosity of the Macedonian churches, 8:1-7.
- 2. Christ's example, 8:8-15.
- 3. Titus' mission to Corinth to encourage the work there, 8:16-23.
- 4. Paul compliments them and appeals for their liberality, 8:24-9:1-5.
- 5. Sowing and reaping in ministry, 9:6-15.

Themes:

a. The donations Paul refers to appear to encourage not only solidarity in the faith to help the needy Christians at Jerusalem, but also to fund the implied evangelistic mission of Titus and his two companions (8:18).

b. Paul also gently reminds the Corinthians of the generosity of the Macedonian Christians suggesting, it would appear, that the greater affluence of Corinth should result in more significant amounts of financial assistance for Christian ministry from Corinth.

Part IV
PAUL'S VINDICATION OF HIS APOSTLESHIP.
10:1-13:10

1. Paul's authority and scope of ministry, 10:1-18.

- a. Reply to allegations of cowardice: spiritual power in Christ, 10:1-6.
- b. Reply to insult on lack of personal assertiveness: he will do it personally not merely by letter, 10:7-12.
- c. Paul has determined to stay within the limits placed upon him by God, 10:13-18.

2. Paul's defence against his accusers, 11:1-17.

- a. His zeal is due to concern that false teachers not mislead them, 11:1-6.
- b. The self-support issue: his policy was intended to keep them from being misled by unscrupulous teachers, 11:7-15.
- c. The service and heroism issue: if he wished to do so, he could boast of his experiences and exploits for Christ, 11:16-33.
- d. The claims to revelation issue: special revelations to him are balanced by the thorn in the flesh, 12:1-10.
- e. The apostolic credentials issue: the fruit of his labor attests to his apostleship, not to the maintenance issue, 12:11-18.

3. Paul's final warning to them, 13:1-10.

- a. Paul will deal severely with them upon his arrival, 13:1-2.
- b. The proof of his authority will be Christ speaking through him, 13:3-4.
- c. They should impose the same test upon themselves: the power of Christ is evident in that which builds up, not in that which tears down, 13:5-10.

Theme:

Paul's fierce financial independence, his uncommon zeal for the spiritual well-being of his converts, his unwillingness to promote himself under guise of a cause, and his uncompromising commitment to Christ and the power of the Spirit to glorify Christ laid him open to distortions of his motives and ministry. The final vindication of his ministry stands, he says, in spiritual results: the lives of his converts and the well-being of the churches.

Part V
CONCLUSION AND BENEDICTION,
13:11-14

1. Concluding exhortation, 13:11-13.
2. Benediction, 13:14.

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Comment on:
THE HOUSE NOT MADE WITH HANDS,
4:16 - 5:10

4:16-18

Christians ought not to lose heart in face of physical travail and weakness because that burden is light in comparison with the "eternal weight" of glory which awaits us in heaven.

5:1

The present body is a temporary tent, which will be dissolved at death (unless some are alive at the moment of Christ's return when their bodies will also be transformed). The post-death shelter is superior to that provided by the present body in the same sense that a solidly built house is superior to a flimsy tent. The latter is an interim shelter, the former is permanent. "We have a building" means that the heavenly permanent shelter already exists. It is not made by human hands. God is its sole architect (note John 14:2).

5:2

Here we groan, desiring to be "over-clothed" by the heavenly garment (Paul here changes his metaphor from house to garment). The permanent shelter awaits us after death.

5:3-10

Paul substantiates what he has just said: "if as we have every right to assume," a heavenly shelter awaits us, which prospect is not diminished by the possibility that death will come before Christ's return because a disembodied state (the unclothed soul) is not the ideal state. A body awaits him at death (5:4).

CHRIST DIED THE DEATH OF ALL
5:14-15

This is a strategic passage on the significance of Christ's death: Christ, who stands in place of us all, died the death of all mankind collectively. What Christ did for humanity was done by humanity. We all died in that death. He made atonement for sin by dying the judgment death of sin. Thereby he reconciled us to God. Hence, those who live in him should no longer live to themselves but for him who lived and died for them.

**PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH,
12:7-10**

What was Paul's *thorn in the flesh* which was not divinely removed from him, it appears, to temper potential vanity over the revelations God had given him (12:7)?

The most common conjecture is defective sight, caused either genetically or by the blinding flash of the Damascus road experience. Galatians 4:14-15 and 6:11 indicate that when he wrote something personally (as against using a secretary) he wrote in large letters, presumably because of impaired vision. Others interpret the Damascus road experience to reflect merely Paul's piercing gaze (compare Acts 3:4; 6:15).

More likely, the defect had to do with character traits which might hinder the fulfillment of his ministry, such as proneness to anger. His sharp temper is apparent when he reacted against the Sanhedrin, then apologized (Acts 23:2-5). Paul was afraid that when he returned to Corinth his anger would get the better of him and he would be humiliated further (2 Cor 12:21). Hotheadedness was characteristic of his pre-conversion life (Acts 9:1), which is replicated in his sharp condemnation of Elymas the sorcerer (Acts 13:10). His desire to be present among the Corinthians and *to change his voice* indicates his retreat from anger. Hence *the thorn* may identify his impatience and, at times, hotheadedness.

My commentary on Paul's *Epistle to the Galatians* may be found in the

New Bible Commentary, Revised

eds. Donald Guthrie, et. al.

Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970

NOTES ON GALATIANS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

[For my introduction to, and exposition of, Galatians see “Galatians,” *New Bible Commentary, Revised*, (ed. Donald Guthrie, et. al. IVP, 1970), pp. 1089-1104.)]

Paul believed that the faith of the Galatian Christians was being subverted. “Heresy” is not too strong a term to employ about the views Paul identifies and opposes in this letter. Error which attacks the integrity of the Christian Gospel usually takes one of three forms: truncation (shearing away essential elements of the Christian faith), emasculation (emptying core elements of their meaning), addition (supplementing the Gospel with alleged “new truth.”

Apparently a group of pro-Judaizers was active among the Galatian Christians, who claimed that Paul’s gospel was not enough. More was needed; namely, conservation of Jewish ceremonial observances was necessary. These appear to have been chiefly the rite of circumcision and dietary prescriptions related to pure and impure foods.

It is not difficult to account for their feelings with regard to Paul’s message. From the earliest days of the preaching of the Gospel in the Book of Acts the apostles and evangelists had proclaimed salvation from sin on the basis of God’s free grace in Christ and solely on the merit of Christ’s death and resurrection. There could be no admixture of merit or works on the part of the recipient. Human response simply entailed repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

The Judaizing party understood this message to involve repudiation, rather than fulfillment, of the law of Moses and apparently insisted that along with faith in Christ one must keep the ordinances and works of the law in order to be saved.

In strong language Paul condemned what he saw as corruption of the gospel of grace. He argues that the law was our “schoolmaster” in order to bring us to Christ; that Christ alone fulfilled the law and did so on our behalf. No human has kept the law of God perfectly; hence for fallen humanity the law is not an instrument of salvation, but of condemnation. Further, said Paul, the truth of what grace and faith are is at the heart of the spiritual experience of the Old Testament forefathers.

Along with modifying Paul’s message the Judaizers maligned Paul personally and questioned his apostolic authority, which he vigorously defended.

Outline

I Introduction, 1:1-9.

Salutation, 1:1-5

Paul's surprise, 1:6-9. How quickly they turned to a false gospel, which is not another gospel.

II VINDICATION OF PAUL'S APOSTLESHIP AND AUTHORITY, 1:10-2:21.

1. Paul's object is only to please and serve God, 1:10-12. His message has come by revelation from God.
2. The Gospel is not a product of his former life as a Pharisee, 1:13-14.
3. Nor is it a product of conferral with others following his conversion, 1:15-17.
4. Three years after his conversion he visited Jerusalem and met Peter, 1:18-24.
5. Fourteen years later Paul again visited Jerusalem. The apostles at Jerusalem acknowledged the legitimacy of his apostleship and mission to the Gentiles, 2:1-10.
6. In fact, as to consistency, he rebuked Peter because he acted incorrectly in avoiding Gentile Christians, 2:11-14.
7. Paul reiterates his consistency: Christ alone; grace alone; faith alone, 2:15-21.

III DOCTRINAL ARGUMENT, 3:1-5:12

1. Paul argues that the Galatians' own experience of salvation, and reason, should make clear to them the all-importance of faith, 3:1-6.
2. By faith men and women become the true spiritual heirs of faithful Abraham, and of his promised blessings, 3:7-9.
3. The claim to salvation by works can result only in condemnation. Christ has redeemed us from this curse, 3:10-14.
4. The promise of justification by faith preceded the giving of the Law and cannot be upstaged by it, 3:15-18.
5. The true purpose of the Law was to prepare men and women for grace by uncovering their sinfulness and coming short of the Law's requirements, 3:19-22.
6. Paul makes a contrast between bondage under the Law and the freedom of sonship in Christ, 3:23-4:7.

7. Paul's appeal: How can you go back to Law having experienced grace?, 4:8-11.
8. A further appeal: his manner of selfless ministry among them and integrity of message to them, 4:12-30.
9. Paul cites an illustration intended to clinch the argument: Hagar and Sarah represent Law and Grace, Bondage and Freedom. Therefore, stand fast in the freedom you have under grace, 4:21-5:1.
10. Sharp challenge to them: bondage in observing the Law is inconsistent with faith in Christ, 5:2-12.

**IV EXHORTATION:
THE RELATION BETWEEN LIBERTY AND RESPONSIBILITY,
5:13-6:10.**

1. True Christian liberty entails service for others, 5:13-15.
2. A contrast between the Spirit-led and Flesh-dominated life, 5:16-24.
3. For those who have taught us, life in the Spirit generates concern for the welfare of our Christian brethren; for example, Paul himself, 5:25-6:6.
4. Whatever a person sows, he or she will reap, 6:7-10.

**V PAUL EPITOMIZES THE POINT OF HIS LETTER,
6:11-16.**

Paul contrasts his own aim with those of the false teachers, and reiterates the cruciality of Christ's cross.

**Conclusion,
6:17-18**

NOTES ON EPHESIANS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Occasion

The letter to the Ephesians is one of the “prison epistles,” written during Paul’s two-year imprisonment in Rome, along with the epistle to the Philippians, the Colossians and Philemon; thus in the period 59-61 A.D. Ephesians is not specifically addressed to the church at Ephesus; thus it is held by many to have been a general letter written to the churches of an area, in this case the congregations of western Asia Minor.

Ephesus was one of the great cultural and commercial centers of western Asia Minor -- the Temple of the goddess Diana was located there, which drew thousands of worshippers annually. Ephesus was not itself a sea-port. Miletus, just a few miles away, served that purpose. The area had been an intellectual center for centuries. The earliest of the Greek pre-Socratic philosophers began their work at Miletus.

While he had visited Ephesus briefly during his second missionary trip, it was during his third journey that Paul decided to remain at Ephesus, a stay and ministry which lasted for three years. From the known strength of the church there in the latter part of the first century A.D. it is evident that Paul’s ministry in Ephesus and that region of Asia Minor had been very successful. There is not hint of trouble or of schism in the letter to the Ephesians; only discussion of the transformation the Gospel brings to converts and a summing up of the divine purposes in Jesus Christ. From the story of the riot at Ephesus in Acts 19 we infer that a significant segment of the population had converted to Christian faith. The silversmith’s union would not have incited a demonstration and riot, which drew a huge crowd to the amphitheatre and elicited the concern of the civic authorities, if the number of converts were only large enough to fill a house for a prayer meeting. So many people were being converted that the livelihood of the silversmiths was threatened: sales of idols, amulets and other religious objects were falling.

How many? What proportion of the population? This is an intriguing question. A modern Greek I knew years ago who was born in the area told me that the story still circulated in that part of Turkey is that during Paul’s three-year stay in the Ephesus region upwards of 100,000 converted to Christian faith. To me that makes sense in light of the commotion recorded in Acts 19.

The theological themes expounded by Paul in the first part of Ephesians are of a high order, but this does not preclude detailed attention to the practicalities of every day living, with which Paul deals in the second part of the letter. Christians are exhorted to draw on the stores of strength of their being in Christ to live at

peace with one another, to accept one another (regardless of ethnicity and religious background), to keep themselves from the stain of passion and immorality, and to maintain decorous, loving relationships within the body of Christ, in the community, and within family life.

Outline

Part I:

THE GLORY AND SAVING GRACE OF GOD IN CHRIST, ch. 1-3

Salutation, 1:1-2

I. TRIUNE REDEMPTION, 1:3-14.

Chosen by the Father, 1:3-6.

Redeemed by the Son, 1:7-10.

Sealed by the Spirit, 1:11-14.

II. THE MANIFEST GLORY OF GOD, 1:15-23.

In the life of each Christian:

 Having the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, 1:15-17

 Knowing the hope of God's calling, 1:18-19

In the exalted Christ:

 His Resurrection from the dead and enthronement, 1:20-21

 His Headship of the Church and authority 1:22-23.

III. REDEEMING GRACE, 2:1-10.

Children of wrath, 2:1-3.

Saved by grace, 2:4-9.

Ordained to good works, 2:10.

IV. ESTRANGEMENT OVERCOME, 2:11-22.

Afar off, 2:11-12

Reconciliation through the Cross, 2:13-18

New Household of faith, 2:19-22.

V. THE CHURCH: DIVINE MYSTERY, 3:1-21.

New Revelation, 3:1-5.

"Gospel to the Gentiles," 3:6-7.

In and through the Church, 3:8-13.

God's fullness in Christ, 3:14-21.

Part II:

NEW LIFE AND NEW VALUES ch. 4-6

VI. MATURITY IN CHRIST, 4:1-16

Unity of Faith, 4:1-6.

Gifts of Grace, 4:7-11.

Ministering Saints, 4:12-16.

VII. POST-CONVERSION TRANSFORMATION, 4:17-30.

Former life, 4:17-19.

Renewed in Christ, 4:20-29.

Assurance of the Spirit, 4:30.

VIII. VALUES AND RELATIONSHIPS, 4:31-5:21.

Harmony not discord, 4:31-5:2.

Purity not uncleanness, 5:3-5.

Prudence not vanity, 5:6-14.

Common sense not foolishness, 5:15-21.

IX. DIGNIFIED, DEFERENTIAL FAMILY LIFE, 5:22-6:9.

Wives and husbands: love and deference, 5:22-33.

Children and parents: honor and respect, 6:1-4.

Servants and masters: obedience and good will, 6:5-9.

X. CHRISTIANS IN THE WORLD, 6:10-20.

Soldiers, 6:10-11.

Warfare, 6:12.

Weapons, 6:13-18.

Example, 6:19-20.

Conclusion, 6:21-24.

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Some Key Concepts

The following are some key concepts that occur in Ephesians which will reward further study:

"in Christ," 1:3, 7, 10, 12, 20; 2:6, 10, 13.

"grace," 1:2, 6-7; 2:5, 8; 3:7-8; 4:7, 29; 6:24.

"predestination," 1:4-12; 2:10; 3:11.

"body," 1:22-23; 3:6; 4:12, 15-16; 5:27-28.

"fullness," 1:10, 23; 3:19; 4:10, 13; 5:18.

"trinity," 1:3-4, 5-12, 13-14; 2:18; 3:14, 16; 4:4-6.

"mystery," 1:9; 3:1-12.

"insight," 1:17-18; 3:18-19; 4:13, 22.

"redemption", 1:7, 14; 2:13, 16; 4:30

"sin," 2:1-3; 4:17-19, 22

"sealed," 1:13; 4:30.

Two Prayers, 1:15-23; 3:14-21.

**Paul's Theorems:
Beyond Hedonism to Spirituality**

1. Life: to what Purpose? 1:3-14; 2:8-10; 3:1-19
2. Living behaviorally: Stuffed but Starving, 5:3-20.
3. Relational living: Tear down the Walls, 2:11-22; 4:1-16.
4. The family circle: Love and Deference, 5:21-6:9.
5. What humanity needs: Physician or Veterinarian?

Life with a Good Conscience

*Walk as children of light
for the fruit of light is found in all that is good and right and true,
and try to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*

Ephesians 5:9, RSV
(note also Galatians 5:16-26)

The foundation of Christian values includes the Ten Commandments, the teachings of Christ which focus upon spiritual hunger for righteousness (as in the Sermon on the Mount), and the moral teaching of Paul and other apostles who say much about wisdom, self-control, courage and justice, as well as the key virtues of faith, hope and love. Christian virtue is not based upon uneasy balancing of conflicting values; it comprises the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-26; Eph 5:17-18). The life in Christ answers to a good conscience (I Tim 1:5).

Modern wrong accounts of human behavior include:

1. Sigmund Freud: the dark theory, which attributes neuroses to anxiety about evil wishes or acts which we would commit if we dared, not from acts we have committed but wish we had not (guilt).
2. B. F. Skinner: the bright theory, which claims all behavior is for the purpose of gratification (stimulus-response and need-satisfaction) and that anything which makes you feel good is just fine.
3. Joseph Fletcher: the situationalist theory, which says that all moral standards are simply expressions of feeling and are relative to time and place; therefore no standard but our own applies and this should probably be the *love alone* standard.

Biblical virtue includes:

- Civic duty (Rom 13:1-7).
- Social propriety (1 Cor 8-10).
- Peaceable, loving interpersonal relations (Eph 5:21 - 6:9).
- Goodness, virtue (Rom 16:19; Gal 5:22-23).
- Moral correctness (Rom 1:18-32; 1 Cor 5:9-11; 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21).

Nevertheless, the Bible frequently states that we often know what to do but don't have the mind or will to do that which is good as against choosing that which is a lesser good, or wrong, or evil.

Conscience -- the Lord's Lamp: God had built into human nature the capacity to distinguish between right and wrong. Conscience judges our own behavior. This is its primary function - not to judge the behavior of others. Note: Rom 1:19; 2:15.

But conscience can be conditioned to invert values so that one becomes blind to what is good and can actually justify the practice of evil (to call good evil, and evil good, e.g., Isaiah 5:20; Rom 1:32).

The New Testament speaks of consciences which are weak (1 Cor 8:7), seared (1 Tim 4:2), corrupted (Titus 1:15), evil (Heb 10:22). On the other hand, a redeemed or cleansed conscience can be sincere, clear, good (2 Cor 1:12; 1 Tim 1:5, 3:9; 2 Tim 1:3).

Biblical principle: conscience gets its standards from outside itself. What we allow ourselves to be instructed and conditioned by will to a large degree determine our behavior.

Biblical teaching includes five guidelines for living with a good conscience:

1. Avoid that which is specifically sinful (1 Cor 6:9-11).
2. Do not do that which will be a stumbling-block to others, but that which will build them up (1 Cor 8:12-13).
3. Avoid anything that tends to condition you into un-freedom (1 Cor 6:12).
4. Adapt to society around you for the sake of the ministry of the Gospel, while retaining your Christian standards (1 Cor 9:19-27).
5. Recognize the presence of the Holy Spirit who gives insight and the strength to honor virtue and to live virtuously (1 Cor 6:19; Gal 5:16-26; Eph 5:15-18).

Divine Purpose, Predestination, Freedom

Abstracted from my *The Grace of God*, 1966, pp. 93-97

A key biblical passage on this doctrine is Ephesians 1:1-12. In this section alone occur six of the seven words vital to understanding the New Testament doctrine of election. It is important to see, however, that the scope of the biblical teaching involves much more than use of a limited number of specific words. Ephesians is preeminently the epistle of grace. What God does, the apostle declares, is according to his good pleasure², or according to his own will.³ God chose or elected us in Christ before the foundation of the world.⁴ The election is joined to divine predestination or foreordination⁵ to salvation and sonship in Christ. This

divine work is the particular intention or purpose of God; it may be designated the plan of God or the divine counsel.⁶

Divine revelation impels us to see the present and the future in relation to moral ends. For example, the doubt of the psalmist in Psalm 73:1-16 about the dealings of God with the wicked as compared with the godly is removed only in the light of new insights about the ends by which God finally concludes the matter and by which, therefore, he has been dealing with men all along; (73:17-28). We cannot escape from the sovereign divine will, nor can we reduce it to other terms. The highest categories we know are those which interpret reality in terms of the personal activity of God.

The primary word is the divine "purpose."⁷ We must grasp more fully the meaning of the words "his own" purpose. From this "purpose" there follow "predestination" and "election." The word "predestination" is used to identify God's general intention to save; the word "election" identifies his particular action in the case of any man as that action follows upon his purpose. Both the purpose and the action are predicated upon what God means by Jesus Christ for the world. The purpose is revealed historically in Jesus Christ. In the first instance the election is of Jesus Christ, then of us in him. What the divine purpose is in its plenitude must be forever hidden to finite creatures, but what that purpose is in Christ God has made known to all (Eph.:3:11).

² *eudokia*, 1:5, 9; note Luke 2:14; Phil. 2:13, 2 Thess. 1:11.

³ *thelema*, 1:5, 9, 11.

⁴ *eklego*, 1:4; note Mark 13:20, Acts 9:15, Rom. 9:11.

⁵ *proorizo*, 1:5, 11.

⁶ *prothesis*, 1:11; 3:11; Rom. 8:28; 9:11; 2 Tim. 1:9.

⁷ *Ibid.*

The gratuitousness of the divine action in Christ raises the question of predestination. The saving work is his. God's initiative and consequent action in election can be understood only in the freeness and universality of what Jesus Christ means to the world. On the other side, the new divine power released in the world in Jesus Christ and its operation under the aegis of the Holy Spirit raises the question of the relation of grace to human freedom.

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How to hold the truth of the sovereignty of God as well as the truth of man's freedom under God is the question Christians confront. This is peculiarly a theological question which troubles neither the materialist nor the idealist because they beg the question of true freedom, or else they jettison freedom. However, to Christians, this is a point of joy rather than despair because freedom is the condition of human life *qua* human, and those who put themselves under the Gospel rejoice in the new reality which God accomplishes in Christ.

It should be clear, however, that the answer we give to the question of how divine sovereignty relates to human freedom will depend not only upon how the question is asked but upon which question is asked first. The answer we look for is in the question we ask. The first question to ask and answer is the question of purpose. How are God and man related in the divine revelation? What is God doing in the world? When we see this to be the first question and see its answer to be the primary answer, we will comprehend why grace is axiomatic to God's way of dealing with us.

Some of the old creedal statements, especially those of catechetical form, begin with the declaration that all things, including man, are made to glorify God their Creator. For example, the famous *Larger Catechism* of 1648 asks in the first question, "What is the chief and highest end of man?" The answer follows, "Man's chief and highest end is to glorify God, and fully to enjoy him for ever." Despite appearances to the contrary, and despite the truth of the statement as it stands, it does not answer the question of purpose. Certainly all things made by the infinite God glorify God, but in what particular respect does the creation of man as man glorify God?

Put into a real definition, God's purpose is the creation of free men who will experience the bliss of divine fellowship and service. The creation narrative of Genesis teaches that man lost this freedom through sin, but the promise of grace in both Testaments is the restoration of freedom by redemption and forgiveness. God intends that man shall share with him a common life, spirit, and aim. Grace means that God is determined to accomplish this good and righteous purpose.

Jesus said, "Ye shall know the truth and the truth shall make you free" (John 8:32). Freedom is not the right to do anything, but the opportunity to do the will of God. It finds fullest expression in the incarnate life of Christ, our pattern. The Old Testament words of voluntary servanthood are put into his mouth, "Lo, I come, in the volume of the book it is written of me, I come to do thy will O God" (Exod. 21:8; note Psa. 40:6-7; Heb. 10:7).

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.....God has acted to save the world in a manner which will vindicate righteousness and establish freedom. Under grace this is what the Cross of Christ and our election mean. There is little use talking about election and freedom without Calvary. They find their meaning in Christ's own obedience to the Cross and the accomplishment of our redemption by the Cross. Grace re-creates us in Christ for the freedom of God in which we are no longer our own but are his.

NOTES ON PHILIPPIANS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Introduction

Philippians is a spiritual gem among the Pauline Epistles. There is little hint of controversy among the Christians at Philippi, but an outpouring of affection by Paul for them and confidence in them, combined with his desire that they grow and mature in Christ. While he makes various doctrinal emphases, Paul focuses their attention on christian character and behavior to develop into mature individuals in Christ's image – *to approve what is excellent* (1:10), living in harmony with one another in the church – *being of the same mind* (2:2).

This, too, is one of the prison epistles. We know that Paul was imprisoned in Philippi, Caesarea and Rome. Paul associates Timothy with himself in the salutation, as he does in the salutations of Colossians and Philemon, which are presumed to have been written at Rome. We can rule out Philippi. As there appear to be indirect references to Rome (the Praetorian Guard, 1:13; Caesar's household, 4:22) it appears reasonable to conclude that it was written during Paul's two-year imprisonment in Rome.

Philippi was strategically located at the entrance to a pass through the Balkan mountains from Greece. Philip of Macedon (359-336), the father of Alexander the Great, fortified the town which had been there, converted it into a Macedonian city, and named it after himself.

Acts 16 records the vision which urged Paul to: *come over to Macedonia and help us*. Paul obeyed. We read of his encounter with Lydia, the incident of the slave girl who was possessed by a spirit of divination (or ventriloquism) whom Paul healed. As her owners lost income from her transformation they took legal action. Paul and Silas were arrested, flogged and imprisoned. The jailer was converted. When the city leaders learned that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, and thus badly treated and wrongly imprisoned, they were entreated by the "praetors" to depart.

Occasion

Epaphroditus had brought a gift to Paul from Philippi. Apparently a letter had come with the gift. There are some indications that Paul had replied to the letter before he sent his epistle, and that the Philippians had written again, expressing their displeasure at something the Apostle had written in his letter to them. They suspected a lack of real appreciation on his part. It may have been to this second letter from Philippi that Paul is replying in our Epistle. We shall see evidence for this hypothesis in study of Ch. 4:10-20.

The Philippians intended that Epaphroditus should remain with Paul so long as

the apostle had need of him. His devotion to Paul almost cost him his life due to illness. As he recovered he longed to be back home in Philippi. This was the immediate occasion to write the Epistle. Paul explains why he is sending Epaphroditus back, and commends him cordially (2:25-30).

The Philippian church was chiefly Gentile. The absence of a synagogue in the city would indicate that there were few Jews there. Women occupied a prominent place in the church and in Paul's mission (4:3). The Philippian Christians were noted for their liberality.

The contents are not arranged systematically, but alternate between personal matters and doctrinal instruction.

Outline

Introduction, 1:1-2

I CHRISTIAN OUTLOOK: JOYOUS CONFIDENCE, 1:3-26

1. Paul's prayerful concern for them; his appreciation for their gift, 1:3-11.
2. Regardless of whether he is free or chained, whether others preach out of enmity toward him or out of friendship, the gospel is preached, 1:12-20.
3. The "blessed dilemma:" One is uncertain which to choose -- to remain here for Christ, or to depart to Christ. But it is best for their sakes that he remain, 20-26.

II THE PATTERN IN CHRIST: UNITY IN HUMILITY, 1:27-2:30.

1. Live confidently, in unity, unafraid of adversaries, 1:27-30.
2. Stand together having one another's interests in view, 2:1-4.
3. Imitate the humility and selflessness of the incarnate Christ, 2:5-11.
4. With Christ as our example, be steadfast, watch, work, and stand united in the faith, 2:12-18.
5. As encouragement, Paul hopes to send Timothy; and commends Epaphroditus for his assistance, 2:19-30.

III BE WATCHFULL: DEFEND AND EXHIBIT TRUE FAITH,

3:1-21.

1. Paul encourages them to rejoice in the Lord, 3:1-3.
2. Pride is a pitfall. Paul could boast as an educated Pharisee; but he prefers to lose all to gain Christ, 3:4-11.
3. Paul has not yet reached the goal, but he strives toward it. Maturity does not lie in hedonist surfeit, but through imitating Christ and Christ's *humilitas*, 3:12-21.

**IV SUMMARY: CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES AND CHRISTIAN
MINDSET,
4:1-20.**

1. Unity theme epitomized: two leading ladies are urged to be reconciled, 4:1-3.
2. Confidence theme re-stated: be not anxious, be joyful, be prayerful, be thankful, 4:4-7.
2. Christian values listed: whatever is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, gracious, excellent, praiseworthy, 4:8-9.

Paul urges their minds to be active in thinking on those things that will edify and build up the Christian life, 4:8-9.

3. Paul thanks them for their loving gifts and remembrance of him. He has learned to be content in whatever state God has placed him. He is assured that God will supply all needs – his and theirs -- according to his riches in Christ Jesus, 4:10-20.

**Conclusion
4:21-23.**

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**THE *kenosis* OF THE SON OF GOD,
2:7**

It is ironic that what Paul intended as a pastoral comment has become throughout the history of the church a theological battleground. What does *emptied himself* mean?

Interpretation must focus on the aorist verb *ekenosen* (emptied himself; made himself void) and the participle *labon* (taking on). I believe Paul is saying that the emptying means the taking on of servanthood. In and by this act he became servant. It has less to do with the metaphysics of the divine attributes than with his

creaturely form, taken on to complete the work for which he was sent. Paul is not saying by this that the divine purpose in virtue of this humility was put at risk; rather, that the self-humbling joins with the perfection of Christ's submissive will to the mission of the cross. That is the theme, as well, of Hebrews 10:7, 10): at issue is the humility combined with perfection of obedience. The incarnate Lord takes up our obedience into his own.

I add the paraphrases on Philippians 2:1-8 of J. B. Lightfoot in his *Commentary on Philippians (International Critical Commentary)*. The regular font is the text of the Authorized Version (King James); the paraphrases are in italics:

The Basis of Paul's Appeal

If there be therefore:

If therefore:

- (a) any consolation in Christ
(a) there is any power of exhortation in your experience as Christians
- (b) if any comfort of love
(b) if your mutual love affords you any consolation
- (c) if any fellowship of the Spirit
(c) if you are in true fellowship with the Spirit of God
- (d) if any bowels and mercies
(d) if there are any tender mercies and compassions in your hearts

The Appeal Itself

Fulfil ye my joy,

I beseech you to complete my joy

- (a) that ye be likeminded
(a) by your unanimity
- (b) having the same love
(b) and your love to each other
- (c) Let nothing be done through strife
(c) Do not act from a spirit of faction
- (d) or vainglory
(d) or vainglory
- (e) but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves
(e) but each of you account his brother as better than himself
- (f) Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others
(f) and study his interests in preference to your own

**The Supreme Example of Humility,
which is a frame of mind (disposition)**

- Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who,
Cherish the disposition which dwelt in Christ Jesus. For he,
- (a) being in the form of God
(a) though he existed from eternity in a state of equality with God,
 - (b) thought it not robbery to be equal with God
(b) did not regard that divine condition of being as one might regard a prize eagerly to be grasped.
 - (c) But made himself of no reputation
(c) but laid it aside
 - (d) and took upon him the form of a servant
(d) and took the form of a bondservant
 - (e) and was made in the likeness of men
(e) having been made in the likeness of men
 - (f) And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death
(f) and having thus been found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to God even so far as to suffer death
 - (g) even the death of the Cross
(g) yea, the ignominious death of the Cross.

NOTES ON COLOSSIANS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Introduction: The Church at Colosse

Colossians was written by Paul while in prison in Rome, along with Philemon, Ephesians and Philippians. Colosse, not a large town, was part of a group of towns including Laodicea and Hieropolis (4:13). It appears that Paul had not himself established the church (1:4). Probably it was founded through missionary endeavor emanating from Ephesus, the anchor church of the area. Colosse and its neighboring towns lay about 100 miles east of Ephesus and Miletus.

The church at Colosse was probably predominantly Gentile. Epaphras, one of Paul's co-workers (1:6-7; 4:12), may have been a founder of the church. Evidently he was a prominent member -- perhaps their pastor, or even the pastor of several local congregations -- and was one of their instructors in the truth of the Gospel. Epaphras had visited Paul in prison at the behest of the Colossian church. Paul now returns their greeting; and, it appears, addresses certain concerns Epaphras shared with him about the Colossian church.

The danger threatening the church (identified in 2:8) is doctrinal in nature, of such a kind as to threaten faith in Christ as the incarnate Son of God. This is discussed at some length in chapter 2.

Paul's description suggests that the doctrinal deviation was cultic, claiming the power to unlock esoteric divine mysteries. Some scholars believe that the ideas being disseminated were Gnostic or proto-Gnostic in nature. Paul counters this claim to mystery and special wisdom by asserting that the greatest mystery is Jesus Christ incarnate now indwelling every believer (1:25-27). In him is true wisdom (1:28). In Christ Gentiles are included within the realm of redemption. In Christ are the true treasures of wisdom and knowledge, not the gnosis (secret knowledge) of those who beguile with clever words (2:2-4).

The false teaching included belief in cascading levels of divine (angelic, 2:15, 18, 20) beings, which it was thought hierarchically insulated the impassible transcendent divine principle from finite, corrupt material existence. Accordingly, on this premise Christ is one of those sub-deities. Against this, Paul is at great pains to declare the uniqueness and divine glory of the incarnate Lord. Along with this, the false teachers insisted on certain acetic practices, magic and ritual observances (2: 11, 16, 20-21). These modes of thought appear to have been grounded in a form of metaphysical dualism which identified the physical world with evil (if finite then imperfect, and if imperfect then evil), rather than that evil emanates from creaturely mind and will alienated from God.

Paul's refutation is direct. On the one hand he affirms the preeminence of Christ over all other real or supposed spiritual beings, or eons; and, on the other hand, he

points to the rationale of the gospel of grace.

God is not mediated by angelic beings or shielded from the finite order by cascading emanations of lower and lower divinities; he is not at the tail end of a long list of graded intermediaries. Christ is the full and final revelation of God. Christ has *spoiled (disarmed) the principalities and powers* (2:15). James Moffatt renders 2:15, *he cut away the angelic Rulers and Powers from us*. In other words, the truth as to who Christ is, and what he has accomplished redemptively, simply dismisses such mythology.

God's first-born is himself the creator. Christ brought all things into existence (they are not therefore inherently evil) and he is not only the source of all things, he is their goal. The goal includes not only redemption of sin but, as well, new life, new relationships, and new values which Paul enumerates. There are no transcendental semi-divine beings (the *pleroma* or fullness of metaphysical speculation) because *in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell* (1:19).

Outline

Introduction, 1:1-2

I PAUL'S JOY IN THEM AND CONCERN FOR THEM, 1:3-13

- a. Paul commends their faith and witness, 1:3-8.
- b. Paul prayerfully reinforces their faith: true emancipation in Christ, 1:9-14.

II THE UNIQUENESS, GLORY AND PREEMINENCE OF CHRIST, 1:15-23

- a. The preeminence of Christ, 1:15-20.
- b. The hope to which they were called: reconciliation and renewal, 1:21-23.

III MOTIVATING MYSTERY: CHRIST IN YOU, 1:24-29

- a. The church: fulfillment of Christ's afflictions, 1:24.
- b. Motivational impulse: Gentiles included in Christ, 1:25-29.

IV CAUTION: BEWARE OF RELIGIOUS MYTHOLOGY, 2:1-23

- a. Keep to Christ; avoid beguiling speech, 2:1-7.
- b. Christ transcends all alleged heavenly powers, 2:8-15.
- c. Beguiling myths blind devotees and impose worship of sub-deities, 2:16-19.
- d. Esotericism and ritual do not liberate; they excuse indulgence, 2:20-23.

**V KEY-FEATURE THEMES,
3: 1-4**

- a. You have been raised with Christ.
- b. You have died, and your life is hid with Christ in God.
- b. Seek things that are above.
- c. Set your mind on things that are above.
- d. Christ is your life.

**VI TRANSFORMING VALUES,
3: 5-17**

- a. Death to the old ways: what to reject and avoid, 3:5-11.
- b. Embracing new values: what to accept and follow, 3:12-17.
- c. Reconstructed relationships: the household of faith, 3:18-4:1.
 - Husbands and wives.
 - Parents and children.
 - Masters and slaves.

**VII CONCLUDING COMMENTS AND ADMONITIONS,
4:2-17.**

- a. Be prayerful, 4:2-4.
- b. Live graciously, 4:5-6.
- c. Tychicus and Onesimus will tell you about my situation, 4:7-9.
- d. Final greetings and instructions, 4:10-17.
- e. Conclusion, 4:18.

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**HYMN TO CHRIST,
1:15-23**

Many believe that this passage is, or contains the substance of, a hymn of praise to Christ, and that it is one of the earliest confessional statements we have. Its theme is the supremacy of Christ.

Paul appears to be attacking enemies on two fronts:

First, error deriving probably from Gentile sources; namely, the *pleroma* or “fullness” doctrine of an abstract deity whose bridge to the world is a graduated scale of sub-deities or angelic beings (Paul’s *principalities* and *powers*), of which Christ was thought to be merely one. On this thesis, the devotee sought to transcend the transitional deities to find union with the ineffable.

But there is another possible aspect to this: combining the foregoing with certain ascetic practices which on their face proposed moderation in behavior but in fact were a license to indulgence (note 2:23), probably embracing the popular Epicureanism of the times.

In support of this I note the following: Why do translators inject “spirits” into the text of 2:20 (RSV, TEV, Moffatt) to qualify the meaning of *elements* or *rudiments* (note also 2:8, and Gal. 4:3) when it is not part of the Greek text? Probably as interpretive follow-through from the previous discussion on heavenly intermediaries, but I think this is a mistake.

My own view is that *elemental*, or *elements*, or *rudiments* refers not to the sub-deities, but to the atoms of Epicurean metaphysics. The Greek is *stoicheia tou kosmou*, which suggests the A-B-Cs or *fundamental elements* of reality; namely, the atomistic nature of physical reality. The Epicureans extended this materialist model to a purely behavioral conception of human nature, identical to modern Behaviorism. Despite the Epicurean claim that they advocated moderation, their teaching led in practice to hedonist gratification and indulgence. This is what Paul excoriates in 2:20-23.

Thus Paul’s attack embraces both metaphysics and ethics.

Second, error deriving probably from Jewish sources; namely, that which Paul identifies as *human tradition*, meaning the traditions of the elders (2:8). These concerned allowed or proscribed foods, drink, festivals, holy day observances, new moons, sabbaths (2:16), circumcision (2:11; 3:11), asceticism (2:21), angel worship (2:18).

The hymn is a doctrinal statement, a confession of faith, set within the framework of Christian conversion, baptism, worship, and the household of faith. But Paul does not end there. He calls for behavioral transformation, for ethical realization of the new-found freedom in Christ.

NOTES ON 1 THESSALONIANS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Introduction

Thessalonica, the modern Salonica, was the chief city of Macedonia. It was strategically important politically and militarily in that part of the world right up to World War I. Paul evangelized this area of Macedonia during the latter part of his second missionary journey.

According to the record in Acts (Acts 17:1-18:1), Paul and Silas won many Gentiles to Christian faith (1 Thess. 1:9; 2:14). Some of the leading Jews organized a riot against him, probably because of his initial three-week attempt to preach in the synagogue. Jason, a new convert, suffered at the hands of the mob. Paul, together with Silas and their companions, felt it expedient to move on. Nevertheless, a church was established which was loyal to the basic principles of the Gospel and to himself as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Paul wrote 1 Thessalonians from Corinth. He encourages the congregation in their new found faith. Apart from references to certain eschatological questions no serious doctrinal issue is addressed.

Purpose

First Thessalonians is one of the earliest of Paul's known writings. What major themes characterized his itinerant preaching?

1. Initially, Paul addressed Jewish communities: "to the Jews first" (Rom. 1:16). Acts 17:3 and Acts 13 set out Paul's messianic message: (a) The Old Testament doctrine of a suffering Messiah. (b) Messiah's resurrection. (c) He identifies Jesus with the suffering, risen Christ: *this Jesus, whom I proclaim to you, is the Christ* (Acts 17:3). Jewish leaders of the synagogue reacted against the last point.
2. Two themes pervade 1 Thessalonians: When Paul turned to the Gentiles, many of whom knew of the orthodox Jewish faith but remained uninfluenced by it, Paul preached against the folly of idols (note 1:9). Along with this, he stressed the future return of Jesus Christ to judge the world (1:10).
3. In preaching Christ as the Son of God and the suffering messiah, Paul always emphasized the cruciality of the cross (Acts 17:3).
4. Paul comforted the persecuted Thessalonian Christians with the hope of Christ's return, vindication of his own, judgment of evil, and the setting up of his own kingdom. This theme is not intended to frighten but to comfort Christians (4:18), to encourage them to get on with their work and witness, and not to speculate about the time of Christ's return (5:1-2).

5. Finally, Paul stressed practical, ethical issues of every-day life. In their new experience of Christ and in the household of faith believers had new duties, a new understanding of stewardship and of brotherly love. Purity is the hallmark of authentic discipleship in contrast to the unchaste idolatrous worship. Christians must be diligent in all areas of living and working, altruistic not vengeful, but thankful and joyful (4:1-12; 5:12-22).

6. The letter reflects the first-flush of unselfconscious faith, untainted by later theological controversies about the person of Christ (Ephesians and Colossians) or about the nature of salvation (Galatians). The Thessalonians are puzzled about aspects of the Christian hope, but no theological controversy is apparent. Here is fundamental, uninhibited kerugmatic utterance: *to the church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ* (1:1) and identification of Christ as *our Lord Jesus* (3:11).

Outline

Introduction, 1:1

I PAUL COMMENDS THE THESSALONIAN CHRISTIANS, 1:2-10

- a. Their work of faith.
- b. Their labor of love.
- c. Their steadfastness of hope.

II RESPONSIBLE MINISTRY, 2:1-3:5

- a. Paul's gospel integrity and altruistic concern for them: 2:1-12.
- b. Despite persecution, they help Judean Christians in need, 2:13-16.
- c. Paul deputizes Timothy to minister to them, 2:17-3:5.
- d. Timothy's good report about them, 3:6-10.
- e. Paul's prayer for them, 3:11-13.

IV MORAL ADMONITION, 4:1-12.

- a. Marital integrity, 4:1-8.
- b. Public reputation: untainted love, discreet life-style, diligent workers, 4:9-12.

V HOPE AND EXPECTATION, 4:13-5:11.

- a. The expected return of the Lord, 4:13-15.
- b. Christ's resurrection ensures our resurrection, 4:14, 16.

- c. Translation of those who are alive, 4:17.
- d. Word of comfort, 4:18.
- e. Expectation motivates to action not speculation, 5:1-11.

**VI DAY BY DAY VALUES TO LIVE BY,
5:12-22.**

- a. Quality of life in the church, 5:12-15.
- b. Quality of life of the individual, 5:16-22.

**Conclusion,
5:23-28**

NOTES ON 2 THESSALONIANS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Introduction

A few months after he had written 1 Thessalonians from Corinth Paul followed it up with this letter, written to correct misunderstanding about things he had both taught (2:5; 3:10) and written (2:15). He re-affirmed what he had taught and written. It must not be altered or subverted by any letter falsely purporting to have come from him (2:2).

What concerned him? Some had been led to conclude, either misinterpreting him or deceived by someone else, that the dramatic events of the end times had already begun. They thought it needless to work further. They no longer fulfilled their social and community responsibilities. Idleness and lethargy had created unwelcome attitudes to life and problems within the congregation which he proceeded to reprove (3:6, 11, 14-15). These members should not be ostracized but lovingly admonished.

Paul enjoined that they remain unmoved in what he had taught them and that they see him as an example of hard work and self-support while he was among them (3:7-10, 12) even as he looked for Christ's return.

As to the eschatological points at issue, Paul declared that the Day of the Lord (2:2) will not occur until two other events have taken place including a great falling away, or apostacy, and the appearance of the man of sin, the "lawless one," "the son of perdition" (2:3, 8-9). This corrected misapprehension that he had said Christ would return in his lifetime (1 Thess. 4:17). Thus, while 1 Thessalonians has in view Christ and the church in the end times, 2 Thessalonians has in view Christ and the judgment of a disbelieving world led by the lawless one.

Paul was addressing the puzzling question of the *mystery of lawlessness* (2:7) which was already at work, in contrast to the *mystery of godliness*, or, *of our religion* (1 Tim. 3:16). Why is evil attractive to many? What was its fascination, in contrast to the devotion of devotees of the good? Thus, what was in fact current was the working of evil, not that Christ would return within their lifetime, and that the antidote for this was Christlikeness, including fulfilling one's responsibilities and working diligently, not indulging in idle curiosity as to the shape of events in the future, or simply being busybodies (3:11).

Paul asked for their prayers (3:1) but expressed his pastoral concern for them in four prayers:

First prayer, 1:11-12.

Second prayer, 2:16-17.

Third prayer, 3:5.

Fourth prayer, 3:16.

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Outline

Introduction, 1:1-2

I ENCOURAGEMENT TO TROUBLED MINDS, 1:3-12

1. Paul gives thanks to God for them, 1:3-4.
2. Inevitable divine judgment against evil, 1:5-10.
3. Prayer for them, 1:11-12.

II APPEARANCE OF THE LAWLESS ONE, 2:1-12

1. Events yet to come, 2:1-4.
2. The appearance of the Man of Sin, 2:5-7.
3. The destruction of the Man of Sin and his followers, 2:8-12.

III COMFORT FOR DISTRESSED MINDS, 2:13-3:5.

1. The resilience of saving faith, 2:13-14.
2. Exhortation and benediction, 2:15-17.
3. Steadfastness: his and theirs, 3:1-5.

IV PRODUCTIVE LIVING, 3:6-15

1. Censure the disorderly, 3:6.
2. Paul's example: self-reliance, 3:7-9.
3. Be a provider, not a sponger, 3:10-12.
4. Social responsibility: do good, admonish indolence, 3:13-15.

Benediction, 3:16-18

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The Day of the Lord Note on New Testament Eschatology

Beneath the symbolism and poetry which the Hebrew prophets used to clothe their hope of the future lay a very definite philosophy of history. The faith of Israel was not that history was a never-ending cycle, or that the world was the creation of impersonal forces and would eventually end in nothing, or that it was embarked

on a process of perfectionism ending in some Utopia, but that the world was created by God, that man had been placed upon it to fulfill God's purpose, that, in spite of their sin and disobedience, God was overruling men and nations into conformity with that purpose, and that in His good time both His nature and purpose would be fully revealed and His will be done. Those who had responded to God's summons, so far as they had known it -- in worship, service, and obedience -- the faithful Remnant -- would enter into the full privileges and status of the children of the most High, for which men had been created. Those who had not so responded had damned themselves. They had made themselves unfit to realize the purpose of their creation, which would then be revealed as life together with God, savoured on earth, and lived to the full in the Age to Come.

This view of history was taken over by the Christian Church with this significant difference, that Jesus came proclaiming that the New Age was not 'round the corner', but had, in fact come. He himself had inaugurated the new era. God had now revealed himself to men, and his works were to be seen in their midst.

But obviously there was a considerable element of prophecy unfulfilled. In our current theological jargon, eschatology was not fully 'realized': there remained a 'futurist' element to be reckoned with. Evil had not been destroyed. The Lord had been exalted to the right hand of God, but the world did not acknowledge Him. Proof that He had not finally died on the Cross had been given to a few by the Resurrection appearances and was confirmed by the experience of believers. But mankind at large had yet to be convinced. The old and passing order must finally pass and something completely new take its place. Some much more fundamental transformation must take place, some more dramatic and supernatural intervention of God must bring to a close the present age of darkness and seal the advent of the Age of Light in which the faithful already lived. God's revelation of Himself was not complete. He must make Himself known in all His power and glory to vindicate His faithful servants and confound those who had rejected His Son and His Gospel. This final revelation the consummation of all things, the full realization of all prophecy, and the real inauguration of God's Rule, must be close at hand. All the signs pointed to its speedy advent. The Day of the Lord was imminent -- the triumph of the Gospel and the rout of the wicked, the visible end of the old world, and the enthronement of Christ as Lord of all. Only so could the Scriptures be fulfilled.

[William Neil, *The Epistle Of Paul To The Thessalonians*, (Moffatt New Testament Commentary, selections from pp. xxxvi-xxxix)]

NOTES ON 1 TIMOTHY

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Introduction

1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus are usually grouped together as the Pastoral Epistles because of their common subject matter. These letters are concerned with the work of the ministry among the churches, and are addressed to two young men engaged in pastoral work. Paul, as the senior man, and probably their spiritual father, writes to encourage, instruct, and exhort them in the work of Christ.

Authorship

Serious questions have been raised as to the provenance of the Pastoral Epistles. The questions relate to difficulties of correlating the Acts data concerning Paul's travels with the data of the Pastorals, differences of style and whether some of the doctrines condemned were current at the time, and whether emphasis on church organization reflects later developments within and among Christian congregations. Chronological questions are particularly difficult because Acts closes with Paul's imprisonment (Acts 28:30), but the Pastorals seem to reflect activity after his two-year imprisonment in Rome. Does this infer later re-arrest and, finally, martyrdom?

Such questions suggest to some that the Pastorals are of other than Pauline authorship, though perhaps parts written by Paul were incorporated by a disciple or later editor. Was Paul released from prison for a time? Did he then travel extensively, including a visit to Spain? Do the doctrinal aberrations he condemned adumbrate later more fully developed versions? Do changed circumstances in his post-prison period account for differences in style and emphasis in these letters when compared with his earlier writings? Is it not natural to think that growing churches would earlier rather than much later give attention to organizational structure and ministry needs? Answers to such questions lead many scholars to accept that the direct statements regarding Pauline authorship should not be too readily dismissed (note 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1; Titus 1:1).

Timothy

Many scholars believe that Timothy was of a diffident nature and that Paul had to strengthen his will to be more decisive in dealing with difficult persons and issues. Paul is specific and detailed in his instructions. We are not certain what title, role, or position Timothy had, but it is evident that in the large Ephesus congregation, and probably to the surrounding churches, Timothy was entrusted with Paul's apostolic authority and that Paul expected him to use it.

Paul calls him a *minister* or *servant* (the terms used is *diakonos*, 4:6) and there is indication of Timothy's having been set aside formally for ministry (4:14). He is to teach entrusted Christian doctrine (1:3), reject questionable doctrines (1:4),

direct patterns of worship (2:1-2, 8), ensure appropriate dress and behavior of women (2:9-15), lead appropriately whether in relation to male or female (5:1-2), enroll only senior widows to be helped and for family ministry (5:3-10), insist on social responsibility to one's own (5:8, 16), urge marriage rather than tolerate promiscuity (5:11-15), honor good elders but rebuke erring ones (5:17-20), deal fairly and equitably always (5:21) and, finally, personal advice -- control your anger and look after your health (5:22-25).

Purpose

The purpose of this 1 Timothy is the same as that of the other pastoral letters: first, to caution against false doctrine which undermines the true Gospel; second, to encourage pastors and the people to lives of holiness, obedience, and to be fruitful in ministry. This purpose may be epitomized in five major themes as summation of what Paul means by *faithful saying* (1:15, 3:1, 4:9; 2 Tim. 2:11; Titus 3:8):

- a. Integrity of the Gospel.
- b. God-honoring worship.
- c. Virtuous behavior.
- d. Qualified leadership.
- d. Faithful ministry.

The key thought of the epistle is stated in 1:3-5. It is set out in the form of a contrast: Timothy is to charge (command) that no other doctrine be taught than that which had been committed to them. The false doctrine identified is *fables and endless geneologies*. This is probably a reference to the Gnostic-type heresy, which taught that by knowledge (*gnosis*) humans can through the mediation of angelic beings, or semi-divine emanations, (*aeons*) come to an understanding of the Divine. Paul emphasizes that *there is one God and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus*.

Coupled with this was a further metaphysical and ethics error, that matter is inherently evil. Hence failure or bad behavior could be rationalized as inevitably built into our physical condition. When correlated with Epicurean hedonism these views justified the pursuit of pleasure, especially gluttony and sexual gratification, despite claims that moderation is the norm of human behavior. Paul's lists of Christian virtues, and *faithful sayings*, can be contrasted with Epicurean instructional manuals which were widely circulated in the ancient world. Paul satirizes them as *godless chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge (gnosis, 6:20)*. He declares that the created order is not intrinsically evil; rather, *everything created by God is good* (4:5).

Faith and behavior go together. He urged minister and church members alike to stand firm in the truth of the Gospel and to live holy lives. False doctrine was a cover for lawless living, but from true faith follow love and good works.

In 1:5 Paul says that the aim of the commandment is charity, or love -- to experience the love of God in Christ and to show this love in life. Love is qualified in three ways: it issues out of a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from unfeigned faith. From a pure heart means to come from a cleansed or redeemed heart. From a good conscience means that conscience is renewed by a new, God-given standard. From unfeigned faith means faith which is sincere, devoid of hypocrisy.

Outline

Introduction, 1:1-2

I GOSPEL INTEGRITY, ch. 1

- a. Idle speculations are to be avoided, 1:3
- b. The aim of the Christian is the love of God, 1:L-5
- c. The true aim of the law, 7:11
- d. Paul's gratitude to the grace of God, 12-17
- e. An exhortation to Timothy, 18-20

II PUBLIC WORSHIP, ch. 2

- a. Prayer: intercession and thanksgiving, 2;1-2
- b. The kerugma: one God, one Mediator, open call of the Gospel, 2:3-7.
- c. Men in public worship, 2:8.
- d. Women in public worship, 2:9-15.

III QUALIFICATIONS FOR MINISTRY, Ch. 3

- a. Qualifications for a bishop, or elder, 3:1-7
- b. Qualifications for a deacon, or server, 3:8-13
- c. The mystery of godliness, 3:9-15

IV THE PASTOR, ch. 4.

- a. Societal context of Timothy's ministry, 4:1-5.
- b. Intellectual nourishment; personal godliness, 4:6-10.
- b. Self confidence, exemplary life, devoted ministry, 4:11-16.
 - Public reading of Scripture.
 - Preaching
 - Teaching

**V ADMINISTRATION,
5:1-6:2**

- a. Effective Leadership: relational norms, 5:1-2.
- a. Older and younger widows in the church, 5:3-16.
- b. Elders in the church, 5:17-25.
- c. Personal word to Timothy, 5:23.
- d. Aphorism: evil will out; good cannot remain hidden, 5:24-25.
- e. Slaves and masters, 6:1-2

**VI CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS,
6:3-20**

- a. The ideal: godliness with contentment, 6:3-8.
- b. The snare of materialism, 6:9-10.
- c. Fighting the good fight of faith, 6:11-16.
- d. Stewardship of resources, 6:17-19.
- e. Final word: Remain on guard; avoid godless chatter, 6:20.

Conclusion,
Grace be with you,
6:20

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Bishops, Elders, Pastors, Deacons

For a discussion of these terms, offices, and functions, see my comments in the *Theological Sentences*, Chapter 10 on The Church, on this website.

Note on the Pastoral Epistles

"The letters of Timothy and Titus are writings of Paul's old age. They bear a conservative stamp: "guard the deposit;" "hold fast the form of sound words;" this is their predominant note. Sound doctrine and practical piety are the interests in which they center. St. Paul's great creative days are over. His battles are fought, his course is run. The completing touches remain to be added, and his final seal set to the work and teaching of his life; such is the purpose these letters serve."

[G. G. Findlay, "Paul the Apostle" in *Hastings' Dictionary of The Bible*.]

NOTES ON 2 TIMOTHY

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Introduction

Occasion

Paul's situation is painful. He is in prison in Rome (1:8, 16-17; 2:9) in uncomfortable circumstances, forsaken by some friends, and sensing that his execution is near (4:6-8). How this fits into a chronology of Paul's life is very difficult to determine but may imply release from earlier imprisonment, a period of further ministry, then re-arrest and the current death-cell imprisonment. A happy note is Paul's commendation of Onesiphorus, evidently prominent in the church at Ephesus, who was unashamed of Paul, had sought him out, and brought him assistance.

Was the book written by someone other than Paul. Or, did one of Paul's associates edit the book and include authentic Pauline passages and mimic additional Pauline teaching? Critics allege that the emphasis on orthodoxy is post-Pauline; that Paul's known epistles reflect inspiration and mission, more than cold orthodoxy.

The difficulty with the views of some critics is that where the Pastorals include materials different from Paul it is evidence of different authorship; but parts which parallel Paul are evidence of mimicry. Over the span of a long life of travel, ministry and writing, one would expect that an author's style would change.

This is the last of Paul's written work prior to his execution. We sense in it a great heart and concern for his young protégé. It is essentially a very personal note from the apostle to a young friend and associate, encouraging him in his ministry and cautioning him about false teachers. As well, Paul hopes that Timothy can visit him soon and bring with him certain of Paul's cherished possessions: his cloak, books, and parchments (4:13).

In 4:6-8 Paul refers to his life's work and looks forward to his death and entrance into the presence of Christ. The tone is one of joy and triumph.

Outline

Introduction: salutation and benediction,
1:1-2

I TIMOTHY: BELOVED FELLOW-WORKER,
ch. 1

1. Paul's love for Timothy, 1:3-4.

2. Timothy's spiritual heritage; God's gift to Timothy for ministry, 1:5-7.
 Spirit of power.
 Spirit of love.
 Spirit of self-control.
3. Exhortation to steadfastness in ministry, 1:8-10.
4. Paul's faithfulness an example to Timothy, 1:11-12.
5. The Gospel: a sacred trust, 1:13-14.
6. Paul's isolation, and memory of brotherly love, 1:15-18.

II MINISTERIAL INTEGRITY, ch. 2.

1. Entrusting ministry to others, 2:1-2.
2. Emotional sturdiness for ministry, 2:3-13.
3. Keep to the truth; avoid pointless disputation, 2:14-19.
4. Minister's prime trademark: character, 2:20-26.

III THE WAY OF THE WORLD, ch. 3

1. Sceptical, valueless times, 3:1-7.
2. Paul: steadfastness under fire, 3:10-12.
3. The face of evil, 3:13.
4. The power of the Gospel; the authority of the scriptures, 3:14-17.

IV PAUL'S FINAL CHARGE AND STATEMENT OF HOPE, ch. 4

1. Be steady, endure suffering, evangelize, fulfill your ministry, 4:1-5.
2. Paul anticipates martyrdom, 4:6-8.
3. Paul's appeal for a visit; greetings and warnings; 4:9-15.
4. Alone on trial, yet not alone, 4:16-18.
5. Further greetings, 4:19-21.

Benediction,

The Lord be with your spirit.

Grace be with you.

4:22

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PRISONERS FOR THE SAKE OF CHRIST

It can be said that William Tyndale (c.1494-1536) was the father of the English

Bible. While the Authorized Version (King James Version) was prized in the English speaking world for over two centuries and the translators do not mention Tyndale, many of its felicitous phrases and the cadence of its language are our heritage from Tyndale. His translation of the New Testament could not be suppressed. He fled to the Continent where in 1536 he was arrested, condemned, strangled and his body burned. Like Paul, in prison he wrote to a friend pleading for extra clothing and for his books:

I entreat your lordship, and that by the Lord Jesus, that if I remain here for the winter, you would beg the Commissary to be so kind as to send me, from the things of mine which he has, a warmer cap -- I feel the cold painfully in my head. Also a warmer cloak to patch my leggings. My overcoat is worn out, my shirts even are worn out. He has a woollen shirt of mine, if he will send it. But most of all I entreat and implore your kindness to do your best with the Commissary to be so good as to send me my Hebrew Bible, grammar, and vocabulary, that I may spend my time in that pursuit.

NOTES ON TITUS

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Occasion

Titus is one of the three Pastoral Epistles (see introductions to 1 and 2 Timothy). He was one of Paul's converts (1:4), a Gentile, and an associate in his missionary activities. Paul had sent him to Crete to care for the church there but, as he now instructs Titus to meet him in Nicopolis in Macedonia, he sends either Artemas or Tychicus to replace him in that ministry (3:12).

Titus appears to have been an effective trouble-shooter. He may well have been the "test case" that Paul brought to the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15; Gal. 2:3) on the question raised among the Jerusalem Jewish Christians as to whether Gentiles should be included in the church without being subject to Jewish ceremonial laws. Titus had been deputized by Paul to deal with continuing problems in the church at Corinth and was heartened by Titus' later report (2 Cor 2:12-13; chs. 8, 9). Titus may have carried 1 Corinthians to Corinth, or else Paul's severe letter which for a time alienated part of the congregation from Paul; but it appears that Titus was, in fact, the bearer of 2 Corinthians (2 Cor. 8:23).

To what extent was Cretan reputation a factor in Paul's choosing Titus for this task? Paul appears to indicate this to be the case. He cites Epimenides, one of their 6th century B.C. cosmological philosophers of whom it is reported, *One of themselves, a prophet of their own (Epimenides), said, Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons.* Paul adds, *this testimony is true,* Titus 1:12-13. No need to comment on the famous derivative puzzle, namely, that if Epimenides is a Cretan he has lied and Cretans are not all liars, but if he is not a liar and all Cretans are liars then ... and so the circular argument goes. Little is known of Epimenides, except not infrequent allusions to him and mythology about him in classical literature. What Paul is implying is that Titus' assignment was a tough one. Paul adds *therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in faith.*

Titus' Task

Titus' task was to complete the organization of the church which Paul had planted: *to amend what was defective, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you ...* (1:5).

The prospective leaders are called bishops or elders (the two terms are interchangeable: compare 1:5 with 1:7) who must meet certain spiritual qualifications (1:6-8). The spiritual qualifications of church leaders are all the more significant because of the notorious reputation of Cretans (1:2). Note the parallel between qualifications listed here and in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

As well as being men of good character, the elders must be theologically sound

and able to teach others. The emphasis on sound doctrine seems to imply that there were already teachers actively spreading false doctrines (1:11). What doctrinal aberrations? Paul refers to the *circumcision party*, *Jewish myths*, *quarrels over the law*, *stupid controversies*, *dissensions*, and *genealogies* which suggests Gnostic-type myths (1:10, 14; 3:9-10).

Titus is himself to be an example of high spiritual and moral standards (2:7), the opposite of Cretan reputation (the Greek verb *kretizo* meant *to speak like a Cretan*; or *kratismos*, which meant *Cretan behavior*, *to lie like a Cretan*). He is not to be backward and must silence or rebuke false teachers and troublemakers (1:11, 13). Men, women, younger adults, and slaves are all to behave in a manner consistent with Christian standards appropriate to their age and standing (2:2, 3-5, 6, 9-10). Christians must live honorably within society and show respect to civil authorities (3:1). The mark of the true Christian is a life of good deeds which benefits all in society (3:8).

In a classic passage (2:11-14) Paul sets forward the model of the Christian life as a life that has been touched by God's grace and is a gracious life. Titus is to declare this authoritatively, along with exhortation and reproof:

For the grace of God has appeared for the salvation of all men, training us to renounce irreligion and worldly passions, and to live sober, upright, and godly lives in this world, awaiting our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all iniquity and to purify for himself a people of his own who are zealous for good deeds.

Outline

Salutation, 1:1-4

I ADMINISTRATION, 1:5-9

- a) Appoint Elders in every city.
- b) Their character and qualifications.

II RESISTING FALSEHOOD, 1:10-16

- a) Confront false teachers and scam artists.
- b) Unmask corruption paraded as philosophy and religion.

III GENUINE CHRISTIAN FAITH AND VIRTUE,

2:1-10

- a) Sound doctrine adorned by virtue, 2:1.
- b) Instruction appropriate to age and standing,
 - Older adults, 2:2-3.
 - Younger adults, 2:4-8.
 - Slaves, 2:9-10.
- c) Doctrinal foundation for Christian living, 2:11-15.

**IV CHRISTIANS IN SOCIETY,
3:1-7**

- a) Respect and defer to civil authority, 3:1.
- b) Live blamelessly and virtuously, 3:2-3.
- c) Be motivated by the grace of God and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 3:4-7.

**V CLOSING EXHORTATIONS,
3:8-11**

- a) Proverb: the priority of deeds over mere words, 3:9.
- b) Avoid senseless disputation, 3:10.
- c) Warn the erring but shun the intransigent, 3:11-12.

**VI PERSONAL NOTES,
3:12-15**

- a) Personal requests, 3:12-13.
- b) Encourage altruism, 3:14.
- c) Personal greetings, 3:15.

**Conclusion
3:15**

Grace be with you all.

NOTES ON PHILEMON

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Occasion

Philemon was a citizen of Colossae and active in the church there. Onesimus was his runaway slave whom Paul sent back to him from Rome (Philemon 10, 12, 17; Col. 4:9). From verse 19 we note that Philemon was Paul's convert but the circumstances of his conversion are not mentioned.

Nor do we know how the church at Colossae was established, but it may have been during Paul's ministry of three years at Ephesus (Acts 19:10). Probably many came from surrounding cities to hear him then returned to their own homes to establish local churches.

Philemon was active in the Colossae church and helped his fellow-Christians (5, 7). His house was a meeting place for the congregation. From the phrasing of the letter it is evident that he and the Apostle Paul were on quite friendly terms (2, 13, 17, 22).

Onesimus, a Phrygian, was a slave owned by Philemon. He may have been a trustee or steward in the household who robbed his master then fled (18). He ended up at Rome and while there came into contact with Paul, whom he probably remembered from Paul's ministry in Asia. Through Paul he was converted (10) and thereafter devoted himself to Paul while the apostle was still a prisoner.

A strong personal tie developed between Paul and Onesimus. The apostle would gladly have kept Onesimus for himself but was unwilling without Philemon's consent (13-14). Further, when Onesimus fled he had not only taken some of Philemon's goods, but had also deprived his master of his services. Now, as a Christian and brother he wished to make restitution for the wrongs he had done.

Since Tychicus was about to depart for Colossae and Laodicea carrying letters from Paul, the apostle placed Onesimus in his charge, and by him sent this letter to Philemon in which he recounted Onesimus' faithfulness. He also commended Onesimus' Christian faith and entreated Philemon to receive him kindly, offering to make good any loss Onesimus had inflicted.

Paul hoped to persuade Philemon to forgive Onesimus and to restore him to his trusted position not merely as a slave but as a *beloved brother* (16). Paul added that he hoped to visit Colossae again and to stay at Philemon's house.

This letter is an appeal, a persuasive, not an apostolic command (5-10). On grounds of Christian brotherhood Paul pleaded, *so if you consider me a partner, receive him as you would receive me. If he has wronged you at all, or owes you*

anything, charge that to my account (17-18).

Outline

Salutation and benediction, 1-3

I GREETING TO PHILEMON, 4-7

- a. Paul remembers him in prayer, 14.
- b. His faithful Christian testimony, 5-6.
- c. His help to other Christians, 7.

II APPEAL ON BEHALF OF ONESIMUS, 8-20

- a. A fraternal appeal, not command, 8-9.
- b. A transformed Onesimus has been devoted to me, 10-14.
- c. No longer a slave but a brother, 15-16.
- d. The damage done can be mended, 18-20.

IV AFFECTIONATE CONCLUSION, 20-22

- a. Confidence in positive response, 21.
- b. Philemon usually does more than asked, 21.
- c. Paul hopes to visit him, 22.

Conclusion, 23-25

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THE LETTER OF PLINY THE YOUNGER TO SABINIANUS (on behalf of an offending freedman)

C. Plinius, to his Sabinianus, greeting :

Your freedman, with whom, as you had told me, you were vexed, came to me, and flinging himself at my feet, clung to them as though they had been yours. He wept much, entreated much, yet at the same time left much unsaid, and, in short, convinced me that he was sincerely sorry. I believe that he is really reformed, because he is conscious of his delinquency. You were angry, I know; justly angry, that too I know; but gentleness is most praiseworthy exactly where anger is most justifiable. You loved the poor fellow, and I hope will love him again; meanwhile,

it is enough to yield to intercession. Should he ever deserve it, you may be angry again, and all the more excusably by yielding now. Make some allowance for his youth, for his tears, for your own kindly disposition.

Do not torture him, lest you torture yourself, as well, for it is a torture to you when one of your kindly nature is angry.

I fear you will think that I am not asking but forcing you if I join my prayers to his; I will, however, do so, and all the more fully and unreservedly in proportion to the sharpness and severity with which I took him to task, sternly threatening that I would never say a word for him again. That I said to him because he needed to be well frightened; but I do not say it to you, for perhaps I shall say a word for him again, and again gain my point; provided only my request be such as it becomes me to ask, and you to grant.

Farewell

Dr. Scroggie writes:

Both these letters are classic, but there are striking contrasts. Pliny's is for a freedman; Paul's for a slave. Pliny has doubt about the future good conduct of the freedman; Paul has no doubt about the slave's. Pliny assumes that Sabinianus is and will be angry; Paul does not assume that Philemon is or will be angry. Pliny begs that torture will not be resorted to; Paul asks that the slave be treated as a brother beloved. Pliny severely scolded the freedman; there is no word of Paul's scolding the slave. Pliny's letter is frozen kindness; Paul's melts and glows with Christian love.

This little note has immense values. There are at least seven. Its personal value consists in the light which it throws upon the character of Paul. Its ethical value consists in its balanced sensitiveness to what is right. Its providential value consists in its underlying suggestion that God is behind and above all events. Its practical value consists in its application of the highest principles to the commonest affairs. Its evangelical value consists in the encouragement it supplies to seek and to save the lowest. Its social value consists in its presentation of the relation of Christianity to slavery and all un-Christian institutions. And its spiritual value consists in the analogy between it and the Gospel Story.

[W. Graham Scroggie, *Know Your Bible*, II, p.200-201.]

HEBREWS: MESSAGE FOR MODERNS

A Pastoral Care Exercise

Samuel J. Mikolaski

The Canadian Baptist, January 1986

Hebrews is an exercise in the pastoral care of new Christians. It is not a letter addressed to a specific person or church. However, even this observation must be qualified: while it begins like a general essay it ends like a letter with personal notes.

Setting and Theme

Hebrews was written by an unknown second-generation Christian leader probably to Jewish Christians, or Jews on the way to becoming Christians, who were tempted to turn back from Christian faith for various reasons including persecution. Hebrews expounds Christianity in order to reinforce flagging faith.

Hebrews puts many Christians off because of its complicated literary style and symbolism which reach deep into Old Testament traditions of tabernacle sacrifice. It is a mistake to be discouraged too easily. Like most significant literature, once one puts oneself at the side of the author, moving with him through his metaphors and images, one quickly discovers with delight the workings of a fertile mind and dedicated spirituality.

Remember that the use of symbol, illustration, type, allegory or metaphor is often the short way home to identifying and expounding the richness of a truth. Children readily catch the nuances of C.S. Lewis's *Narnia Tales*. John Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* never fails to enrich. The same is true of J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*. It may take pages of flat prose to detail a single point, but an apt symbol can in a flash creatively illuminate the whole.

This is the method of Hebrews. The message is: Why go back to what is lesser and incomplete when we have in Christ that which is the greatest and complete? Why go back to the ordinances of the Old Testament when all of its promise is fulfilled in Christ? The persistent, nagging questions are: "Why go back?" "Why defect?" "Why not go on?"

While I shall be citing the text of the *Revised Standard Version*, for your enrichment I urge you to read and re-read Hebrews in the *Authorized Version* (The King James Version). Few books in this traditional version are as elegantly translated. It seems as if the literacy of the author, the complications of his theme and the elegance of Elizabethan English conspire to produce a magnificent piece of literature as well as a profound theological statement about the incomparable Christ.

TOPICS OF FAITH

I. Greater Than ... (1:1 - 5:10).

Jewish converts to Christianity faced an issue different than faced by converts from paganism: for Jews the Old Testament was in fact God's word and its heroes of faith were in fact God's men and women. In a time of distress it was easy to contemplate returning to the familiar religious observances which, if not the orthodox Judaism of the temple, for them nevertheless were sanctioned by long-standing tradition based on the Old Testament. Whatever Jews may have thought about specific forms of mediation between God and man (for example: priestly sacrificial mediation or prophetic proclamation or wisdom illumination) the heroes were regarded as anchors for faith.

The book of Hebrews never disparages the Old Testament heroes of faith, though it may well be attacking cultic attachments to their names. It argues instead that they are forerunners of the final mediator, Jesus Christ, and that they and their actions are foreshadowings of the final mediation, the cross.

1. Jesus is Greater than Angels, 1:1 - 2:18.

The abrupt transition to the subject of angels in 1:4 after the magnificent opening statement about Christ underscores the opening theme: the true and final mediator between God and man is Christ, and only Christ. The writer does not question the reality of angels, only false views as to their function as mediators.

Angelic mediation was a feature of ancient thought (Gal. 3:19; 4:14; Col 2:18). Angels are ministers of God's people but not mediators. Thus Hebrews corrects a category: salvation entails more than knowledge and illumination. Only God can save. Christ, as the very son of God, of the very nature of God (1:14, 5, 8) is alone the mediator.

Christ's mediation entails incarnation, identification with us and, finally, the sacrifice of the cross for our sins (2:14-18). Mediation is one thing; mediation which combines with it redemption is another. For Christians, the link with God is not merely secret angelic messages or secret knowledge. It is God's entering our life and redeeming us through the cross. The writer is saying that as important as angels are in the Bible, they are actually irrelevant to the crucial issue of salvation.

2. Jesus is Greater than Moses and Joshua 3:1- 4:13.

Jesus is greater than Moses in virtue of being the Son of God (3:6) who mediates an eternal rather than a temporal covenant (7:22; 8:6; 9:15-22). In some Jewish traditions of the time (as in Philo) Moses is identified with the Logos. Moses was regarded as an intermediary, a mediator of the law (Gal. 3:19).

Hebrews says that the work of Moses and Joshua remained incomplete. Their “rest” (3:11) was not the final resting place of God’s people. “Rest” means the final salvation of God for his people. It means the eternal home of the soul. Just as the Israelites rebelled in the wilderness and missed entering into the “rest” of Canaan, so those who now hold back from full commitment to Christ run the risk of missing the final “rest” of God which is salvation in Christ. As important as the “rest” of Canaan was, it was but an imperfect type of God’s true “Sabbath rest” (4:9-10). This idea might have been triggered by the reference to Joshua’s first conflict-free sabbatic year (Josh. 14:15). The wilderness pilgrimage is made analogous to the Christian’s pilgrimage through conflict-ridden life to the presence of God and final peace.

3. Jesus is Greater than Aaron, 4:14 - 5:10.

The person of the high priest and his moral qualifications to act on behalf of the people is the issue here.

While it is true that Aaron (the first high priest of Israel) and Christ share equally the honour of divine appointment (5:4), Aaron and his successors had first to offer sacrifices for themselves and only then for the people. Christ as the sinless son of God (5:5) had no need to sacrifice for himself. Aaron by nature and human failings could empathize with men; Jesus by nature was sinless but by choice he entered into our life, shared our sufferings, but without sin (5:7-8).

Moreover, Christ’s priesthood is symbolized better by Melchizedek than by Aaron (5:6, 9-10). This is a clever analogy and contrast: Aaron’s ancestry, life and ending are known. These attest to his finitude and limitations. Contrast Melchizedek. He appears suddenly in Genesis 14:18-24. Nothing is known about his ancestry or ending. He is God’s unique agent to Abraham. His royal priesthood appears to be unique (7:1-10). So with Christ. He is the eternal high priest who accomplishes an eternal redemption.

The crispness of this passage suggests to some a muting of the idea of priesthood in Hebrews, although Christ’s work as our high priest is indeed emphasized (2:17; 3:1; 4:14-16; 5:1-10; note Paul’s parallel, 1 Tim. 2:5. The author’s adoption of Melchizedek as the prototype of Christ may be an attempt to preempt Melchizedek because he was used by Jewish groups of the time as the royal and priestly symbol of messianic hope.

Hebrews retains Melchizedek but strips away current messianic accretions to his name. The writer is saying, “If you want a Melchizedek, Christ is that high priest as to both his nature and function, finally and forever. He has already come and has completed his redemptive work. There is no greater.”

Hebrews makes a claim for Christ which is more than an alternate myth parallel to those attributed to Old Testament heroes by various Jewish groups of the time.

Jesus is more than a superior myth. His name represents more than a superior code-word for access to divine mysteries. He is the eternal son made incarnate (notice the use of Psalm 2:7 and 110).

Nevertheless, this not only affirms the divinity and humanity of the son of God; it also affirms the uniqueness and value of man (2:14-18). The symbolism, while appearing to be Platonic, is actually a contrast to Plato's idealism. God loves man as an historical individual. Human persons are not destined for erasure or transposition into some higher reality. Hebrews denigrates neither the body nor individual personhood.

II Better Than ... (7:1-10:18).

The author now turns from the person of the mediator to mediation itself. This part of Hebrews is the heart of the author's argument: Christ alone completes once-for-all redemption by the sacrificing of himself. Chapter seven expands the previously mentioned Melchizedek theme. Chapters 8:1-10:18 concentrate upon several interlocking and contrasting themes all of which focus upon Christ's unrepeatable sacrifice as being better than the oft-repeated sacrifices of the earthly sanctuary.

1. The Heavenly Sanctuary: Better than the Old Sanctuary (8:1-6).

The sacrificial ritual of the tabernacle of the Old Testament is but a pale copy of what must happen for true atonement to take place. This requires more than a tent in the wilderness. It requires an act of atonement in the very presence of God in heaven. The earthly ceremony reflects the heavenly reality which, as the author will show later, involves not an act external to God but a sacrifice which God himself makes in his Son.

2. The New Covenant is Better than the Old Covenant (8:7-13).

The need for the new covenant follows from the limitations of the old (8:6). This was indeed the promise of the Old Testament (8:8) so why should there be either surprise that God has fulfilled his word or reluctance to accept the new covenant? The entire history of Israel rests upon the concept and reality of the covenant God made with them. The new covenant God makes with his people is superior to and is an advance upon the old. The new covenant goes beyond ceremonial religious acts to the actual inner moral transformation of the worshipper (8:10; 10:16). New persons, not merely religious devotees, are the mark of the new age.

It is vital to grasp the comparison and contrast which the author makes between the tabernacle practice of the Old Testament and the work of Christ in the New. My friend, Dr. R. K. Harrison of Wycliffe College, Toronto, has commented that Hebrews is the best commentary on the book of Leviticus.

Picture this: The tabernacle was situated in an enclosure behind an open court in which stood first the altar of sacrifice, then the laver. The tabernacle itself was divided into a holy place (9:2) and the most holy place, the holy of holies (9:3). Once a year the high priest first offered sacrifice for himself then for the people in a very precise way. The blood of the sacrifice was brought by the high priest through the curtain (veil) and sprinkled on the mercy seat in the holy of holies. The curtain symbolized the separation between the holy God and sinful man.

What was the mercy seat? In the holy of holies stood the ark of the covenant (an open box about the size of a cedar chest (9:3-5). In it were the tablets of the law, Aaron's rod that budded and the pot of manna. These symbolized the covenant of Sinai. Covering the ark was a sheet of gold (the mercy seat) out of the ends of which were fashioned two cherubim as if hovering over the mercy seat. It was here that the sacrificial blood was sprinkled but once a year (9:7) to make atonement for sin.

Nevertheless, says Hebrews, as rich as is the symbolism, those sacrifices could not take away sin nor could they relieve the conscience of the sinner (9:8-10).

By contrast, Christ the last and greatest high priest ends all sacrifice by means of his own (9:11 - 10:18). As Isaac Watts said in his hymn, he was "a sacrifice of nobler name and richer blood than they."

The holy place which Christ enters is not an earthly tabernacle but the very presence of God in heaven (9:24). The sacrifice he makes is not of a beast, but of himself. It is his own blood (what a marked contrast this is to the Aaronic mediation). His sacrifice actually atones for sin; it does not merely cover sin for an interim period (9:14, 10:1-3, 11). His sacrifice is made once-for-all, never to be repeated (9:25-28; 10:12). His sacrifice assures the penitent sinner of forgiveness (9:26; 10:14, 17). His sacrifice completes and terminates sacrifices for sin. There need be no more (10: 18). The imagery of the mercy seat is employed by Paul in Romans 3:25. Christ's own body is that mercy seat. Here God and man meet. Atonement is made.

Two matters follow from this exposition:

First, in real atonement where sin is finally dealt with, it is the prerogative of God not to receive sacrifice but to make it. This propitiation is not man's. God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself. The victim is God incarnate. The sacrifice is made by God not to God.

Second, Christ takes up our response in his obedience. His obedience sanctifies us (10: 7, 10, 14). This parallels the New Testament teaching that Christ died our death and that in that death we died (2Cor. 5:14). The entire history of racial disobedience is taken up in Christ's self-giving. He made our response.

God creates in us new life (10:16). We have daily access to God's throne of grace. The symbol of the rent veil in the New Testament is significant (Matt. 27:51; 2 Cor. 3:14-15; Heb. 10:20). Jesus has opened the way to the Father's presence.

III Warnings About...

Interspersed, among the doctrinal teachings is a series of sombre warnings against spiritual defection. The number of these varies with interpreters, anywhere from three to seven. These are the dark side of what is in Hebrews a very positive treatment of Christian faith. They put a burden of responsibility upon Christians to avoid attitudes, teaching and behaviour which undermine true faith in Christ and adequate discipleship. The passages are:

1. Against Inattention and Neglect (2:1-4)

The reflection of Deut. 4:9 in this warning is ironic in light of their hankering after the old covenant. Wycliffe's metaphor suggests a boat that has slipped anchor and is adrift.

2. Against Hardness of Heart (3:7-19)

Disobedience due to hardness of heart which has been formed by insensitivity to God's teaching and by failure to learn from God's dealings with their forefathers.

3. Against Unfaith (4:1-10)

Failure to enter God's rest (the symbol of salvation) because of careless indifference to the gospel.

4. Against Spiritual Immaturity (5:11-6:20)

Failure to go beyond the rudiments of faith so that, like infants, they are still on milk when they ought to have gone on to solid food.

5. Against Wilful Sinning (10:26-31)

The terror of this passage is muted by a proper rendering which is "if we are deliberately continuing a self-chosen course." This is intended as an exhortation to repent.

6. Against Ignoring Christ (12:25-29)

Christ is not to be refused with impunity. He is lord of both the visible and invisible worlds. Neither those who have regard for only this world nor those who denigrate this world in favour of an ideal world can stand without Christ. Though saviour, he is also judge.

7. Against False Teaching and Inadequate Ethics (13:7-16)

Reject esoteric teachings which combine ritual (13:9) with neglect of practical religion (13:16). Religious exercises which leave life style unaffected are useless. Instead, give attention to the graces of a Christ-oriented life (8:7).

IV. Exhortations To ...

The recurring positive exhortations of Hebrews greatly outnumber the warnings and they happily tend to mute the sombre note of the warnings. Repeated calls occur to re-affirm faith and to resume the Christian pilgrimage. It is difficult for English readers to spot all the exhortations in Greek grammar which the subjunctive form “Let us . . .” in English expresses. The following are most of them:

1. *Let us fear* ... 4:1 presents the author’s solicitude to jar them out of indifference (note Phil. 2:21).
2. *Let us strive* ... (4:11) extends the solicitude as encouragement to press on to the goal of their pilgrimage.
3. *Let us hold fast* ... (4:14) our profession because Jesus, God’s son, is indeed our living high priest before God’s throne.
4. *Let us then with confidence draw near* ... (4:16) because our living high priest is there and beckons us to come freely.
5. *Let us leave the elementary things* ... (6: 1) and commit ourselves to advance to spiritual maturity.
6. *Let us draw near* ... (10:22) to God’s throne by means of the new way opened by Christ’s cross.
7. *Let us hold fast* ... (10:23) our hope because Christ’s promises ensure the ultimate outcome of faith.
8. *Let us stir up one another* ... (10:24) to love, good works and faithful assembly.
9. *Let us lay aside every weight and sin . . .* (12:1). This does not mean a reluctant, gentle handling of our misalliance with doubt but a decisive stripping away and casting aside of whatever hinders the spiritual race. Look to Jesus as the author, perfecter and goal of faith. He does not ask us to endure what he did not first suffer.
10. *Let us be grateful* ... (12:28) for the promise of a secure kingdom.
11. *Let us offer acceptable worship* ... (12:28) to the God whose promises in Christ are unshakeable.
12. *Let us go forth to him* ... (13:13) outside the camp, i.e., in the world be willing if need be to endure isolation and abuse for faithfulness.

13. *Let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God ...* (13:15-26) which is not mere ritual but the fruit of speech and of deeds which please God.

V. Perseverance In ... (10:19 - 13:25)

Our author now moves to the practical consequences of his carefully woven argument. These embrace all of life and they define the life of faith. They are superior for reasons more than to fulfill Old Testament preparation and prefiguration. They in fact comprise the spiritual “stuff of life” for which the Old Testament heroes of faith are admired.

Hebrews turns the argument of the potential defectors on its head: “If you really want to go back to the old ways, then consider that the central features of God’s call to them and their response by faith point to the true mediator and corroborate what I am saying to you.”

The person of Christ the true mediator is crucial. He is something they are not -- the Son of God. He does more than perform correct ritual. Through him Christians have direct access to God. Thus the preamble (10:19-39) to his three great final practical themes restates and reinforces everything he has already said: Free access to God’s presence is a present reality through Jesus’ sacrifice (10: 19-20).

We ought to approach gladly, fully assured (10:22). Recall the first surge of your faith. Renew it. Don’t jettison confidence (10:32-36). Renew your discipleship in each of its three major elements, faith (10:38), hope (10:37) and love (10:34). (Note also I Tim. 6:11; 2 Tim. 3:10; Titus 2:2). The remainder of the book beautifully develops these aspects of the Christian’s life.

1. The Pledge of Faith (11:1-40)

There is no need to abandon the heroes of faith; however, Christians are now the true heirs and representatives of that line. What a list! Abel and Enoch, Noah and Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph and Moses! And the women Sarah and Rahab! Limitations and failings from their lives can be cited; nevertheless, they persevered in faith despite failure and despite difficulties.

Faith is the important element in our relations with God (11:6), not tradition or ritual act. Faith grasps the reality of God because the person of faith is grasped by God. Faith in God is one leap of thought: the conviction that God exists, that he is personal and that he acts. He truly rewards (responds to) those who seek him.

Fellowship with God and faithfulness to the terms of this fellowship combined with obedience when God calls define faith. Faith gladly gives to God (11:4). Faith walks with God (11:5; Gen. 5:24). Faith takes God at his word (11:7). Faith launches out (11:8). Faith looks beyond the impossible (11:11). Faith mocks

danger and persecution (11:35-38). Faith looks to final fulfillment and vindication, even beyond this life (11:19, 13, 39-40). We, through our faith, hope and love extend that great line of faith.

2. The Patience of Hope (12:1-29)

Modern perception of the interlocking relationship between faith and hope (e.g., Carl Jung) reflects a long-standing biblical tradition. Faith envisions a goal (11:1). Hope is the sense of successful movement toward the goal. Hebrews reinforces this conviction through careful pastoral attention to the spiritual qualities which nurture hope (note 3:6; 6:11; 6:18).

The message to each reader is simple, personal and direct: *First*, you cannot move forward encumbered. Therefore strip away impediments and sins (12:1). *Second*, have a single eye toward the goal, to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of faith (12:2). *Third*, understand that faith and hope should be toughened not weakened by testing. Don't overrate the abuse you experience as a Christian. It's not as bad as you think. Which good father withholds discipline (12:3-11)? *Fourth*, get on with it. Quit feeling sorry for yourself. Remember that failure to grasp God's promises leaves a vacuum which the bitterness of disappointment is apt to fill (12:15). Fulfilment in life is a corollary of faith and hope.

3. The Labour of Love (13:1-25)

In short, pithy sentences the author enumerates practical qualities which have become the hallmark of true faith: brotherly love (13:1), hospitality (13:2), social concern (13:3), personal morality and fidelity in marriage (13:4), control of greed (13:5), deep trust in God (13:6), Christian modeling (13:7), avoidance of fantastic doctrines and practices (13:9).

Our true sacrifice is Jesus (13: 10). Let us bear the reproach of discipleship gladly (13:12-13). Our true home is yet to come (13:14). Our true worship is the "fruit of lips that acknowledge his name," (13:15). This is the capstone. "Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God," (13:16, note James 1:27).

Preparation and prefiguration in the Old Testament of a greater reality to come. Fulfilment is in Christ, and now in us. This is the message of Hebrews. Make it come alive.

SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES

1. By Whom?

Who wrote Hebrews? No one knows for sure (the heading in the Authorized Version is a later addition). This is as much as we know: He was a literate second

generation Christian leader, very knowledgeable in the *Septuagint* which he uses extensively (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) and in Greek culture. He was probably a Hellenistic Jew (a Jew also educated in Greek culture).

Tertullian proposed Barnabas as the author. Calvin thought it was Luke or Clement of Rome. Luther guessed that it was Apollos, which ever since has been an attractive option. But if so, why was this not remembered later in Alexandria? Harnack thought it was Priscilla and Aquila, which might shed light on the puzzle of the "I" and "we" passages. Recently Yadin has proposed a Jewish-Christian (Essene-like) group in Palestine as the origin of the book.

The author could have been a Hellenist Jew of the Stephen-Philip circle (Acts 6-8, 11:19). The oldest comment we have is probably still the best. Origen of Alexandria (A.D. 185-253) said that the language and style are not Paul's but that the teaching is, suggesting thereby an origin from within the circle of Paul's associates or influence.

2. To Whom?

It is now almost universally held that Hebrews was addressed to a Jewish-Christian rather than to a gentile-Christian group. Where? Suggestions include: Alexandria, Jerusalem or the Judean wilderness, Cyprus, Rome, Caesarea, Antioch, Colossae, Ephesus, Corinth.

The strongest arguments have been made for Jerusalem (W. Ramsay), Rome (W. Manson) or southern Palestine (Y. Yadin, C. Spicq, R. Longenecker). The date is likely A.D. 67-69 during the rising tide of unrest and persecution which led up to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D.70. The Roman authorities may well have had difficulty distinguishing what were to them various troublesome non-conforming Jewish groups and Jewish Christians.

3. The Question of Apostasy

No one can read the severe warnings in 6:4-8, 10:26-39 and 12:25 without asking what have proved to be unanswerable questions. Can one once saved be lost? Is such a thing as final and irrevocable apostasy possible? The ingenuity of expositors, whether Calvinists (including Calvin) or Armenians has been remarkable and often unconvincing. No one from any of the several camps can tolerate the extrusion of his position to its implied conclusions to make of these passages either the "rock of despair" or the "pillow of security." One of the most helpful positions taken on this subject is that of Article 16 of *The Thirty-Nine Articles* (1571) of the Church of England (note the exposition of this by W. H. Griffith-Thomas in his *The Principles of Theology*).

A crux is the question of the spiritual level of the readers. My view is that the people addressed were Jews who had either declared conversion or were on-the-

way to conversion (catechumens). How far had they come? I believe that the enlightenment of Heb. 6:4 goes beyond general human enlightenment by God (John 1:9).

Nevertheless, it is no easy task to unravel the "catechetical foundation" (*themelion*) they are stuck at which is outlined in 6:1-4, from which they ought to go on not go back. This is a six-fold doctrinal foundation: *repentance, faith, Jewish washings* (not baptism, I believe), *laying on of hands* (affirmation?), *resurrection and judgment*. The first two are spiritual, the second pair are symbolic acts, the third pair are eschatological truths.

Is this a reference to the ministry of John the Baptist and a suggestion that Apollos is the author of Hebrews? Does the foundation suggest that these readers were formerly disciples of John or were a detached group of Jewish-Christians somewhere in southern Judea at a half-way point in their faith, hesitant to go on, wishing to go back to their modified Judaism? Or, do these passages make the practical point that those who have enjoyed the privileges of God's family but defect find it particularly difficult to respond anew to God's call?

My interpretation of the theological issues is not original. It parallels what most evangelical Protestants have believed this book teaches.

(a) Clearly the end of deliberate apostasy is fatal. The author faithfully and sternly says this. This is, nevertheless, said in relation to an unspecified possibility. He does not say either that the readers have apostasized in this sense or that any Christian can do so.

(b) He does say that the impossibility of repentance is enclosed within the unspecified hypothesis. As well, the temporal force of the verb is important: "so long as they are crucifying." I believe the lesson is a powerful, pastoral one more than an hypothetical theological one: God will not be mocked by willful sin. God is ready to receive and to restore the penitent sinner.

4. Platonic Symbolism

Readers who are familiar with the philosophy of Plato will recognize concepts which are also familiar to us from the writings of Philo, the Alexandrian Jew who was a Platonist. This concerns the nature of this world and its relation to the transcendental world beyond space and time (note Heb. 8:5; 9:23-28). Nevertheless, it is naive to classify the theology of Hebrews as Platonist metaphysic.

Platonists taught that the material world is unreal; that it is a pale copy of a transcendent, perfect, unchanging reality. Thus the author speaks of the levitical tabernacle, priesthood and ritual acts as mere copies of heavenly realities, including Christ's eternal priesthood and final atoning act.

Christians then as now utilized concepts which were commonly a part of the thought-patterns of the time in order to piggy-back distinctive Christian ideas to the understanding of non-Christians for evangelistic and catechetical purposes. Why should not Christians utilize the idea of the "Logos" to declare who Christ is? So here. The crucial issues are the differences implied in the Hebrews' uses of certain concepts not merely the similarities.

For Platonists this world and life were of little consequence. The idea of an incarnation, and of an earthly sacrifice having eternal significance, would have been unthinkable. I recall the rough second century drawing on the wall of a cave in Asia Minor showing a man on a cross with a worshipper before him. Scrawled in Greek capital letters was written, "Alexander is worshipping his God." But the head on the body of the crucified was that of an ass. This was the derision intellectuals heaped on Christians. And this is precisely the point of Hebrews. God purposes to redeem this world and human beings of this world through events in this world, namely, through his incarnate, crucified, risen Son. The shadow/substance contrast is useful in Hebrews but redemption is historical and particular.

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EDITOR'S BOXED EMPHASES

Keying in Hebrews

Key concern: The Peril of Spiritual Drift

“Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it,” (2:1).

Key theme: Christ is Incomparable

“The name he has obtained is more excellent,” (1:4).

Key exhortation: Look to Christ

“Looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith ... let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him,” (12:2; 13:13).

Why go back to what is lesser and incomplete?

Why not go on?

Mediation is one thing.

Mediation combined with redemption is another.

Jesus is more than a superior myth.
He is the eternal Son made incarnate.

They persevered in faith despite failure and despite difficulties

[NOTE: For exposition of the major themes of Hebrews see my essay *Hebrews: A Pastoral Care Exercise* on this website.]

Outline of Hebrews

Prologue,
1:1-4

I DOCTRINE: THE PRE-EMINENCE OF CHRIST, 1:11-10:18

A. Christ superior to the mediators of the Old Covenant, ch. 1-7.

1. Christ superior to the angels, 1:5-14; 2:5-18.
**The first warning, 2:1-4.*
2. Christ above Moses, 3:1-19.
**The second warning, 3:7-19.*
3. Christ above Joshua, 4:1-10.
**The third warning, 4:11-13.*
4. Christ above the Aaronic priesthood, 4:14-15.
5. Christ prepictured in Melchizedec, 5:1-7:28.
**The fourth warning, 5:11-6:20.*

B. The New Covenant superior to the Old, 8:1-10:18.

1. The Tabernacle ritual pre-pictures Christ's sacrifice, 8:1-6
2. Christ and the Covenant, 8:7-13.
3. The symbolism of the Tabernacle and Christ, 9:1-10.
4. The Day of Atonement and the work of Christ, 9:11-28.
5. The completeness and finality of Christ's work, 10:1-18.

II EXHORTATION: STEADFAST FAITH, 10:19-13:17

1. Freedom of fellowship with God through Christ, 10:19-25.
**The Fifth warning, 10:26-31.*
2. Call to endurance and patience, 10:32-39.
3. Definition of faith and heroes of faith, ch. 11.
4. Spiritual development and steadfast faith, 12:1-24.
**The Sixth warning, 12:25-29.*
5. Final exhortations and contrast between the New and the Old, 13:1-21.
**The Seventh warning, 13:9-15.*

Epilogue,
13:22-25.

NOTES ON JAMES

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Occasion

Four men in the New Testament are named James: the son of Zebedee and brother of John, Matt. 4:21; 10:2; the son of Alphaeus, Matt 10:3 (probably the same as James the Less); the father of Judas the apostle (not Iscariot) Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13; and Jesus' brother, Matt 13:55, Gal 1:19. I accept that James our Lord's brother and the brother of Jude is the only James of prominence who could have written this epistle, and that the content of the Epistle is consistent with what we know of his leadership in the early church.

To Whom? The epistle is addressed: *To the twelve tribes in the dispersion. Greeting* (1:1). This refers to Christian Jews who were dispersed from Palestine.

The key issue dealt with by the author is the truth of the Christian gospel in relation to Jewish religious practices. Some modern scholars date the letter after the martyrdom of James in 61 A.D., which then calls for an author other than James, and after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. This readily accounts for reference to the dispersion. More recently the tendency has been to accept an earlier date thus retaining James's authorship and placing the letter before the crucial council of Acts 15 which dealt with the question of Jewish rites and Gentile converts.

While the faith and works issue was of paramount importance, there is no indication in the letter of church controversy such as later concerned Paul. That "Judaizing Faction" appears to have emerged later as the gospel spread and some Christians at Jerusalem wondered what to do with Gentiles and Paul's expanding mission. This concern was heightened by some Jewish Christians who had been raised to be culturally exclusive. In the early years of the Christian faith at Jerusalem some Jewish Christians (including Peter) were uncomfortable being seen publicly in close contact with Gentiles or Gentile converts.

Outline

Introduction, 1:1

**I True faith and character under trial,
1:2-18**

**II Marks of genuine Christian Character,
2:19-27**

**III Christian openness and impartiality,
2:1-12**

IV Good works authenticate faith,
2:14-26

V The problem of gossip,
3:1-12

VI Earthly and heavenly wisdom,
3:13-18

VII Strife among Christians rebuked,
4:1-12

VIII Indulgence condemned,
4:13-5:6

IX Presumptuousness rebuked,
5:7-11

X Basic observations,
5:12-20

- a. Facing economic repression, 5:1-11.
- b. Regarding Oaths, 5:12.
- c. Prayer for the sick, 5:13-18.
- d. The art of reconciliation, 5:19-20.

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JAMES'S USE OF METAPHOR AND SIMILE

James's style, like that of Mark, is direct and vivid. Abstractions are made concrete. His illustrations are dramatic as, for example, the picture of deference shown to a well-dressed rich man in contrast to the ignoring of a poor man (2:2).

Note the following examples:

- 1:6, a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind.
- 1:10, the scorching sun and fading flower.
- 1:12, the crown of life reward to those whose faith is tested.
- 1:15, conception, birth, growth, death.
- 1:17, God the Father of lights.
- 2:2, 3, fine and shabby attire;
- 2:26, a corpse.
- 3:3, horse and bridle.
- 3:4, ship and rudder.
- 3:5, the tongue like a spark which sets a forest on fire.

3:7, 8, taming creatures, but not the tongue.
 3:11-12, water spring, and fruit tree.
 4:1, inner emotions at war.
 4:14, rapidly evaporating mist.
 5:2, 8, rotting riches, moth-eaten garments, rusty treasure.
 5:7, long-awaited rains that save crops.

PAUL AND JAMES ON FAITH AND WORKS

Are the arguments of Paul and James contradictory to each other? Do they need to be reconciled, as some have said? Not if the respective historical situations they are discussing are made clear.

Opposition to Paul worsened because he had been educated as a Pharisee. He knew well the argument of his Jewish contemporaries that good works – chiefly the precise performance of external religious rites -- were part of justification of any person before God. Paul collided with Jewish leadership precisely because he separated good works from any part in justification, made all the more intense because he claimed that the experience of key fathers of Israel such as Abraham vindicated his argument (Rom. 3:27; 4:1-5, and Galatians).

What, then, do we say about James's insistence: *so faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead* (2:17)?

The answer is that Paul is equally insistent that faith and works belong, indeed, inevitably go together. Good works are an essential and necessary outcome of authentic faith (Rom 6:1-2, 22-23; 8:4).

The following may be deemed simplistic by some but I think it succinctly, concretely, and accurately correlates the views of Paul and James. They are like warriors battling opponents from opposite directions. Paul opposes those who misuse good works as a way of justifying themselves before God. James opposes those who misuse faith by making it purely a formal matter apart from holiness and obedience. Calvin, I think, had it right when he said that *it is faith alone which justifies, and yet the faith which justifies is not alone*.

The following summarize the two different situations which Paul and James address with regard to Abraham and whether he was justified by faith or by works:

Paul (faith)	James (works)
The instrument of justification	The proof of justification.
He writes about non-Christians.	He writes about professing Christians.

(Rom 3:28)

Uses Gen. 15 to prove necessity
of Faith.

Says works must spring from faith.

Deals with error of legalism.

Warns against human merit as
basis of salvation.

(James 2:24)

Uses Gen. 22 to prove necessity
of works.

Says faith must be proved by works.

Deals with error of antinomianism.

Warns against mere intellectual
orthodoxy.

NOTES ON 1 PETER

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Peter

Peter is one of the best-known of the Lord's disciples, and one who occupies a key role from the beginning of our Lord's ministry in the spread of the Evangel. He was a fisherman, married, from the area of Galilee, and of an impulsive nature which comes to the fore in the Gospels. Peter made the great confession that Jesus is "The Christ the Son of the living God", but denied his Lord after Jesus' arrest. Along with John he was among the first to visit the empty tomb, and also one to whom the risen Lord appeared personally.

After the ascension Peter became a leader in the fledgling church and his prominence was evident on the Day of Pentecost when his sermon drew thousands conversion. He was directed to the house of Cornelius to open the door of the church to the Gentiles (Acts 10).

After the Council of Acts 15 Peter receded into the background. James seemed to gain prominence in the church at Jerusalem. In Galatians Paul alluded to a controversy between himself and Peter over Peter's withdrawal from a dinner so as not to be seen eating with Gentiles. There is a tradition that Peter visited Rome. It appears that both he and Paul suffered martyrdom there.

Occasion

Chapter 1:1 indicates a wide distribution of the Epistle to Christians in northern Asia Minor. It is likely that many of the intended readers are Jews, though one may infer Gentile readership as well (1:14, 18; 2:9, 18; 4:3). The persecutions referred to in the book are probably those which occurred during the reign of the Emperor Nero.

To *exiles of the dispersion* 1:1. It is a time of persecution which Peter calls a *fiery ordeal* (4:12) with more to come (1:6; 3:9, 13-17; 4:1-2, 12-19; 5:9-10). It does not appear that Peter blames Roman authorities for whom he enjoins respect (2:13) though we know that Nero falsely accused Christians of acting against Rome.

The letter was written from Rome (5:13). Babylon is a cryptic and derogatory reference to Rome (Rev. 14:8; 18:2, 10, 21). Peter's scribe is Silvanus, who is probably the Silas of Acts 15:22, 32; 2 Cor. 1:19. He had been sent from Jerusalem to Antioch to welcome Gentiles to the Christian faith (Acts 15:22-23) and was Paul's companion. Mark is with Peter, whom he calls *my son* (5:13). This is John Mark, another of Paul's companions (Acts 12:25; 13:4-13; Col 4:10).

The basic purpose of the epistle is summed up in 4:12, *do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you*, to which the appropriate Christian response is

do not return evil for evil or reviling for reviling (3:9), This was a period of intense persecution of Christians in many parts of the Roman empire. Christians are to take patiently charges that they are evil-doers. They should take comfort and find strength in their faith by recalling that they walk in the footsteps of the Lord who, when reviled, reviled not again. They are to suffer the evils of this present world, looking forward to the deliverance which Christ will bring at his coming. But they must be sure that persecution cannot be justified by anything they themselves have done. They must live justly, uprightly and leave the vindication of their lives and their faith in the hands of Christ.

Outline

Salutation, 1:1-2

I SALVATION FULFILLED IN CHRIST, 1:3-2:10

- a. Genuine faith, living hope, 1:3-9.
- b. Ransomed from futility, born again of imperishable seed, 1:10-2:2.
- c. Christ the cornerstone of a new spiritual house, 2:3-10.

II CHRISTIANS IN HOSTILE SOCIETY, 2:11-4:6

- a. Good citizenship, 2:11-12.
- b. Respect for civil authority, 2:13-17.
- c. Enduring servitude, 2:18-20.
- d. Christ's demeanor when abused, 2:21-25.

III CHRISTIAN SOCIAL RELATIONS, 3:1-12

- a. The relation of wives to husbands, 3:1-6.
- b. Responsibilities of husbands to wives, 3:7.
- c. Standards of Christian behavior, 3:8-12.

III EXHORTATIONS FOR THE TIMES, 3:13-5:11

- a. Suffering for righteousness sake, 3:13-22.
- b. Fulfilling one's duty, 4:1-6.
- c. Practicing Christian virtues, 4:7-11.
- d. Suffering according to God's will, 4:12-19
- e. The Chief Shepherd and the under-shepherds, 5:1-5.
- f. Suffer having confidence in final glory, 5:6-11

**IV BENEDICTION,
5:12-13**

**Conclusion,
5:14**

*Greet one another with the kiss of love.
Peace to all of you that are in Christ.*

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Persecution in early Christianity

Did Nero make Christians scapegoats for the fire in Rome?

"But all the endeavours of men, all the emperor's largesse and the propitiations of the gods, did not suffice to allay the scandal or banish the belief that the fire had been ordered. And so, to get rid of this rumour, Nero set up as the culprits and punished with the utmost refinement of cruelty a class hated for their abominations, who are commonly called Christians. Christus, from whom their name is derived, was executed at the hands of the procurator Pontius Pilate in the reign of Tiberius. Checked for the moment, this pernicious superstition again broke out, not only in Judea, the source of the evil, but even in Rome, that receptacle for everything that is sordid and degrading from every quarter of the globe, which there finds a following. Accordingly, arrest was first made of those who confessed (to being Christians); then, on their evidence, an immense multitude was convicted, not so much on the charge of arson as because of hatred of the human race. Besides being put to death they were made to serve as objects of amusement; they were clad in the hides of beasts and torn to death by dogs; others were crucified, others set on fire to serve to illuminate the night when daylight failed. Nero had thrown open his grounds for the display, and was putting on a show in the circus, where he mingled with the people in the dress of a charioteer or drove about in his chariot. All this gave rise to a feeling of pity, even towards men whose guilt merited the most exemplary punishment; for it was felt that they were being destroyed not for the public good but to gratify the cruelty of an individual."

Tacitus, *Annales*, XV, 1414.

**Tertullian on Persecution
(c.197 A.D.)**

"If it is certain that we are the most guilty of men, why do you treat us differently from our fellows, that is, from other criminals? Since it is only fair that the same guilt should meet with the same treatment. When others are accused on the charges which are brought against us they employ their own tongues and hired advocacy to plead their innocence. They have full opportunity of reply and cross-examination; for it is not permitted to condemn men undefended and unheard. Christians alone are not allowed to say anything to clear themselves, to defend

truth, to save a judge from injustice. That alone is looked for, which the public hate requires -- the confession of the name, not the investigation of the charge ..."

Apology, ii.

NOTES ON 2 PETER

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Occasion

The author identifies himself as *Simon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ* (1:1). Other personal data include: reference to his impending death (1:13-15) and Jesus' word about it (note John 21:18-19), to the transfiguration (1:16-18), to a previous letter (3:1). Like 1 Peter, its style is direct and images graphic.

In the early generations of the church this epistle was not deemed to be spurious, only in-authentic; that is, written by someone close to the apostolic circle. Dating by critics in recent years has moved it back from the middle of the second century into the apostolic age. Those who regard it as in-authentic do so on grounds of differences of style (1Peter is said to be more lucid), emphasis on knowledge (allegedly too philosophically Greek), and that the Old Testament illustrations and allusions are not as parallel as they might be. Some critics also claim that the reference to Paul's writings being scripture (3:15-16) points to an era of use later than the apostolic age. My view is that is Petrine, either directly or by someone from his circle, that a pre-destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. is probable but that a date later than 90 A.D. is not convincing. From the beginning of the Christian church the apostles and apostolic writers felt that they were speaking God's inspired word.

An insoluble matter is the relationship between 2 Peter 2:1-3:3 and Jude 4-13. Which author is copying the other? My view is that 2 Peter is prior and that Jude uses parts of it. A possible explanation is that the dangers Peter anticipates are already present in Jude.

The purpose of this letter is two-fold:

First, to encourage Christians to pursue virtue, true Christian graces and character, firmly rooted in sound doctrine (1:3-11). This passage reads like a catechism.

Second, to warn them of false teachers who pervert the true character of the Christian life and the principles of Christian doctrine, including the doctrine of the second coming of Christ. Peter warns that they turn the grace of God into impurity, deny the Lord Jesus, indulge in fleshly lusts, are greedy of gain, and are inordinately proud. Peter lays great stress on their love of luxury, and adds that though they are in bondage to evil they falsely promise liberation to their hearers (2:19).

Outline

**Salutation,
1:1-2**

**I CHRISTIAN DEVELOPMENT,
1:2-21**

- a. Virtue's norms, 1:3-11.
- b. Scriptural norm of the truth, 1:12-21.

**II FALSE TEACHERS,
ch. 2**

- a. The pattern of evil: greed, immorality, exploitation, 2:1-3.
- b. Learning from examples of the past, 2:4-10.
- c. The character and methods of those who mislead, 2:11-22.

**III VINDICATION UPON CHRIST'S RETURN,
3:1-17**

- a. Faithful promise: scoffers will be confounded, 3:1-7.
- b. Onset of the Day of the Lord: as a thief in the night, 3:8-10.
- c. Therefore: what sort of people ought we to be?, 3:11-13.
- d. Answer: without spot or blemish, and at peace, 3:14-17.

**Benediction,
3:18**

*But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
To him be the glory both now and to the day of eternity.
Amen.*

NOTES ON 1 JOHN

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Occasion

1John, 2 John, 3 John

From earliest Christian times these letters were correlated with the Gospel of John and were attributed to the Apostle John. While neither the author nor recipients of 1 John are identified, reference to *the elder* in the salutation of both 2 John and 3 John are held by many to confirm Johannine authorship. Nevertheless recent scholarship has challenged this, while acknowledging that common authorship is probable.

Some scholars date the three books before the Fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. but most believe that the Gospel of John and the three Johannine epistles were written in the last decade or twenty years of the first century A.D. After the Neronian persecutions and the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., there is a period of silence as to the exact chronology of the later epistles of the New Testament. It is in this period that John does his writing, and this work may be placed in the latter part of the last quarter of the century.

It is widely believed that the Apostle John spent his last years in Ephesus and that he died perhaps as late as 98 A.D., the first year of Trajan's reign.

1 John

Personal allusions in 1 John are strong. The author says he is an eye-witness of the ministry of Jesus (1:1-3), which parallels similar claims in the Gospel of John (19:35; 21:24). There is frequent use of the first person clause: *I write*, or *I am writing* (2:1, 7-8, 12-14, 21, 26),

This appears to be a general letter to be read in the churches at large. It is cast in the form of a pastoral letter, or homily. John, the beloved disciple, probably was the youngest of the twelve disciples and the one for whom our Lord had particular affection.

John's purpose is to re-assure Christians in their faith, to urge them to remain firm in the knowledge of what that faith entails theologically about the person of Christ, and to live out that faith in love for one another as a reflection of true knowledge of God who is himself love.

Outline

Introduction, 1:1-4

a. Eye witness attestation, 1:1-2.

- b. Word of life, eternal life, 1:2.
- c. Authentic proclamation, 1:3-4.

**I RESPONSIBLE DISCIPLESHIP,
1:5-2:11**

- a. Walk in the light, 1:5-10.
- b. True obedience to Christ, 2:1-6.
- c. Norm: Love to the brethren, 2:7-11.
- d. Exhortation to all age groups, 2:12-14.
- e. Pitfall: the way of the world, 2:15-17.

**II WATCHFULNESS,
2:12-28**

- a. Spirit of antichrist: denial that Jesus is the Christ, 2:18-25.
- b. Affirmation: abide in Christ, 2:26-28.

**III OBLIGATION: LOVE ONE ANOTHER,
3:1-3:24**

- a. Appearance and reality, 3:1-3.
- b. Release from sin and sinning, 3:4-9.
- c. Theorems: do what is right, love your brother, 3:10.
- d. The *sine qua non* of authentic Christianity: love in deed and truth, 3:11-18.
- e. Grounds of assurance, 3:19-24:
 - Believe in the name of his son Jesus Christ.
 - Love one another.

**IV THEOLOGICAL TEST: JESUS CHRIST IN THE FLESH,
4:1-6**

**V APEX OF FAITH,
4:7-5:5**

- a. Truth's yardstick: God is love; he who does not love knows not God, 4:7-12.
- b. Confessing Christ, abiding in God, 4:13-21.
- c. Believe in Christ the son of God, love one another, 5:1-5.

**VI THE INCARNATION TEST,
5:6-12**

- a. Actual incarnation and passion: the water and the blood, 5:6-9.
- b. Inner conviction as to historical reality and truth, 5:10-12.

**Conclusion,
5:13-21**

- a. Intercession and compassion, 5:13-17.
- b. Born of God, free not to sin, 5:18-21.

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KNOWLEDGE, TRUTH AND BEHAVIOR

In ancient times that Socratic dictum was *Know Thyself* which ancient interpreters of Socrates and Plato said meant *if you know the truth you will do the truth*. But the apostle Paul reminds us that we often know what is right but do that which is wrong.

The British theologian P.T.Forsyth once commented that *the truth we see depends upon the men we are*. In other words, it takes an honest person to honestly acknowledge the truth. This is precisely what John is talking about in this letter.

John argues that the greater the knowledge one claims to have of God and spiritual matters, the greater is his or her responsibility to conform life to the standards of God's righteousness. Some in John's day taught that the special knowledge they possessed freed them from such obligation. No, declares John: if we say that we know him, that we have fellowship with him, and yet walk in darkness, we have fallen into serious error. If the claim to special knowledge does not lead to holy living, then we can be assured that our knowledge is not true knowledge and that we in fact do not know God. Behavior is the test of a claim to truth. The person who knows God best is the one who walks closest to him. To know God as light is to walk in the radiance of that light, not back in the shadows.

It is pointless for a person to say that he or she loves God whom neither can see, but that he or she does not love fellow human beings whom both can see.

**JESUS CHRIST HAS COME IN THE FLESH
AND SUFFERED IN THE FLESH**

1 John 4:2; 5:6

Many commentators fail to come to grips with *this is he who came by water and blood, Jesus Christ, not with the water only but with the water and the blood*.

John's polemical focus is displayed in full force here. He wrote against those who deny that Jesus Christ was born in the flesh and that he suffered in the flesh.

First, he denounced those who say that the human Jesus is not the Christ, i.e., those who differentiated between the earthly Jesus and the divine element known as the Christ. Such teaching divided the historical Jesus from the eternal Christ (a

modern as well as ancient error).

Second, he denounced those who say that Jesus Christ did not come by water and blood, i.e., both by his baptism and by his passion. The Cerinthians, of whom John is probably speaking, taught that the Christ came upon the earthly Jesus at his Baptism. That is, at his baptism Jesus was divinely endowed for his mission. But, they said, the divine cannot suffer (it is impassible). That is the significance of denying that he did not come by blood. The Christ left Jesus before he died on the Cross. Thus, only the human Jesus suffered and died on the Cross.

John insists that Jesus Christ is one person, made incarnate, the Son of God, who suffered for us on the Cross, through whose sacrifice (the propitiation of 4:10) we have forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

This is why repeatedly he uses the compound name of our Lord: *that Jesus is the Christ* and that there is no salvation outside of this truth.

NOTES ON 2 JOHN

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Occasion

[For further introductory comments see my notes on 1 John.]

Most scholars accept that the three Johannine letters are of common authorship, and that they were written during the last years of the first century.

To whom was this letter written? Traditionally, most translators have taken the text to signify a lady and her children, and such rendering has led most readers to the same understanding. But Bruce Metzger, writing for the committee that edited the American Bible Society Greek Text of the New Testament (1966), notes that the committee decided that the language is metaphorical and represents a congregation. The two Greek words are *elekte kuria*. Either could be a proper name and thus be rendered *to the elect Kuria*, or *to the lady Electa*, or *to Electa Kuria*. The reference to *some of your children* (4) and that *the children of your elect sister greet you* (13) suggest that two congregations are in view. While the warnings and injunctions which follow could apply to a family, because of their general nature they apply more appropriately to a group.

The warning of 1 John is reiterated here. The writer cautions them not to entertain strangers who may mislead them as to the reality of the incarnation (7, 9). They should focus attention on what has already been vouchsafed to them: abide in the doctrine of Jesus Christ. From the truth of this it follows that to love God entails obedience to God, and obedience entails love for one another (5-6). To entertain false teachers makes one party to their evil works.

Two major themes stand out in this letter: truth, and love. Truth is a necessary element of Christian experience because of the claim to the historical validity of the Christian faith. Christians are to believe the truth, hold dear the truth, and contend for the truth. The second theme is love. John declares that love and truth are inseparable. Love is not anaemic, unprincipled, or pure emotion. Truth related to love means simply that love embraces integrity.

Outline

Salutation,

1a

THE WALK OF THE CHRISTIAN,

1b-3

- a. Kinship of those who love the truth, 1b-2.
- b. Benediction, 3.

**STEADFASTNESS AND FOREWARNING,
4-11**

- a. Hold to the truth, with love, 4-6.
- b. Conserve faith in the incarnate Lord, 7-8.
- c. Be on guard against false teachers, 9-11.

**Conclusion,
12-13**

NOTES ON 3 JOHN

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Occasion

[For further introductory comments see my notes on 1 John.]

This letter was written to a church which is not identified, though reference in verse 9 to a previous letter suggests to some that the previous letter is 2 John.

Third John is specific in three respects:

First, it is addressed to Gaius, who is probably a leader in the church.

Second, it rebukes Diotrephes, who does not accept John's authority. John promises that when he visits the church he will publicly denounce Diotrephes' prattle and highhandedness (9-10).

Third, John commends Demetrius for his upstanding reputation. Demetrius may be the bearer of the letter. As well, he may be one of the traveling church leaders who was shunned by Diotrephes and whom John now commends to the love and respect of the congregation.

Which Gaius is this? At least three persons are mentioned in the New Testament. First, Gaius of Corinth, where Paul probably stayed while he wrote Romans, (note Rom 16:23; 1 Cor. 1:14). Second, Gaius of Macedonia, who was with Paul during the Ephesus riot (Acts 19:29). Third, Gaius of Derbe, who with Timothy awaited the arrival of Paul at Troas (Acts 20:4-5). Many scholars suggest that the first and third of these may be the same person. Gaius, to whom John wrote, may be one of these or he may be an entirely different person.

John's commendation of Gaius is warm and loving. The opening of the letter breathes the air of personal friendship and warmth of association in the bonds of a common loyalty to Christ, Christian truth, and the Christian mission. John compliments him for fidelity to the truth and for showing hospitality both to friend and stranger. By such gracious hospitality Gaius encouraged missionary work because Christian workers were loathe to take anything from non-Christians; rather, in their travels they depended on hospitality in Christian homes and help from the churches (7-8).

What had Diotrephes done? We discern from 9-10 that he rejected Peter's apostolic authority, he refused to welcome visiting brethren (probably itinerant church leaders and preachers) and ejected from the church those who wished to welcome such visitors. He arrogantly sought to dominate the church.

Outline

**Salutation,
1:1**

- a. John's regard for Gaius, 2-4.
- b. Gaius commended for his hospitality, 5-8.
- c. Diotrephes rebuked, 9-10.
- d. Moral precept: imitate good, 11.
- e. The character of Demetrius commended, 12.
- f. Desire to visit Gaius, 13-14.

**Benediction,
15**

NOTES ON JUDE

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Occasion

The early church father, Origen, said *that Jude wrote an epistle of but few verses, yet fitted with vigorous words of heavenly grace.*

Who was Jude? During the patristic era acceptance of Jude as apostolic and therefore canonical was not uniform, due in part to questions as to authorship and the difficulties of accounting for the parallel passages in both 2 Peter and Jude. I have indicated in my notes a preference for the priority of 2 Peter, but this should be balanced by reference in Jude to a *common salvation* (3) which, for some, suggests a later more theologically stable period of church history, after early generational controversies subsided and a received tradition supervened.

Nevertheless, the rhetoric is fiery, suggesting to me an earlier (that is, pre-70 A.D.) rather than later date. A further characteristic is that this short letter is replete with references: to Moses, Egypt, Cain, Enoch, Balaam, Korah, Adam, the Israelites, and the Sodomites in the Old Testament; to Jesus, James, and the apostles of the New Testament; to the Book of Enoch and the Assumption of Moses from the Apocrypha. Jude uses currently available sources illustratively.

The writer says he is a servant of Jesus Christ, which is consistent with apostolic greetings (Rom. 1:1; James 1:1). He is probably Jude the half-brother of Jesus and brother of James, the apostle and Jerusalem church leader. Other members of the family included Joseph and Simon and sisters, children born to Joseph and Mary probably following the birth of Jesus (Matt 13:55; Mk 6:3). We do not know how many of them became believers in Jesus (John 7:5) but James did, perhaps as a result of the trial, death, crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus. The suggestion that a writer other than Jude the younger half-brother of Jesus, wrote this letter seems unwarranted. Jude speaks of his brother James, but someone who assumed Jude's name might very well have claimed a more significant filial relationship, namely, that of our Lord.

As to the recipients of the letter, we can say only that Jude addresses Christians generally, *to those who are called, beloved in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ.* The epistle has a marked Jewish tone suggesting a Second Temple era, and while the contents might have been addressed to communities of Jewish Christians within or outside of Palestine, the mode of address does not limit the message to them. Some scholars hold that Jude was written to exhort further those to whom his brother James had written, to Jewish Christians who were being adversely affected by false teachers, as were Peter's readers, but in a different locality.

Though brief, the letter is powerfully written. The language is vivid and pointed. The writer displays marked zeal for the spiritual wellbeing of the Christians to

whom he is writing lest they be led away by false teachers. Again, as in the writings of Paul and Peter, errors in doctrine are correlated with licentiousness and endangerment of the high moral code held by believers. As among moderns, religious casuistry in the ancient world found ways to justify indulgence.

The most pointed rendering of their political maneuvering is the Authorized Version (KJV) of verse 16, *speaking great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage*. The list of their aberrations makes doleful reading.

- a. Deceivers in disguise,
crept in unawares, 4.
- b. Decry grace,
pervert grace into lasciviousness, 4.
- c. Deny Christ,
deny our only Master and Lord, Jesus Christ, 4.
- d. Unbelieving and impure,
those who do not believe ... unnatural lust, 5-7.
- e. Spin fantasies,
filthy dreamers, 8.
- f. Corrupt the body,
defile the flesh, 8.
- g. Reject standards,
reject authority, 8.
- h. Defame dignitaries,
revile the glorious ones, 8-9.
- i. Speak ill of that which they do not comprehend,
revile what they do not understand, 10.
- j. Pervert the emotions,
following their own passions, 16, note 10.
- k. Practice greed, enmity and rebellion,
way of Cain ... for the sake of gain, 11.
- l. Their presence at communion is offensive,
blemishes on your love feasts, 12.
- m. Devoid of intellectual and cultural values,
waterless clouds ... fruitless ... wandering stars, 12-13.
- n. Dissemblers,
grumblers, malcontents, 16.
- o. Deft at ingratiation,
loud-mouthed boasters, flattering to gain advantage, 16.

He exhorts the Christians *to contend for the faith* (3). The term *faith* here signifies the body of Christian truth, or Christianity as a whole. He describes the subversive actions of the apostates and then gives a detailed list of their characteristics and intentions. Interspersed are added warnings and exhortations to the readers. He reminds them that in the past God judged false teachers and those

who opposed him.

Outline

Salutation, 1-2

I THE PURPOSE OF THE EPISTLE, 3-4

- a. Exhortation: contend for the faith, 3.
- b. Warning: there are false teachers, 4.

II FALSEHOOD EXPOSED, 5-16

- a. Historical illustrations of evil men and their judgment, 5-11.
- b. Danger lies within their own ranks, 12-13.
- c. Judgment of apostatasy re-affirmed, 11-16.

III AN EXHORTATION TO THE CHRISTIANS, 17-23

- a. Recall apostolic warnings, 17-19
- b. Conserve and build faith , 20-23.

Benediction, 24-25.

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THE BENEDICTION

The benediction which ends Jude has been commonly used to conclude Christian services of worship:

*Now to him who is able to keep you from falling
and to present you without blemish
before the presence of his glory with rejoicing,
to the only God,
our Savior through Jesus Christ our Lord,
be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority
before all time and now and for ever.
Amen.*

NOTES ON THE BOOK OF REVELATION

Samuel J. Mikolaski

Occasion

The author identifies himself as John (1:1), a servant of Jesus Christ and fellow-sufferer with other Christians who are being persecuted (1:9), and adds that he was exiled for his faith to the island of Patmos, which is off the western coast of Asia Minor. Directness of identification -- *his servant John* suggests widespread knowledge of who is writing -- and correspondence between the Gospel of John and Revelation tend to reinforce common authorship.

The book is a revelation (an apocalypse) – an inspired prophecy of what must soon take place (1:3, 10; 17:3; 22:7). Its central theme is that in the face of persecution and political turmoil Christ’s promise to return in triumph is firm: *Surely I am coming soon ... I am Alpha and Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end* (3:11; 22:7, 12, 20).

While the tenth decade of the first century is held by many to be the period in which it was written, I tend toward dating it in 68 A.D., a few months after the death of Nero, on grounds, in part, that 17:10 refers to Galba on the throne of Rome, and that confusion at Rome, including threat of collapse of Rome politically and socially is part of the context of the book. I believe that a Roman context for the book immediately after the Neronian persecutions best coheres with data in the book and with the contents of 2 Peter.

Style and Structure

The literary style of the book is Christian Apocalyptic, that is, symbolic terms and symbols which require great care in their interpretation. Apocalyptic was employed in Jewish history (as, for example, parts of Daniel) to encourage the readers to look away from the trouble of contemporary events to the consummation of the purposes of God in the Kingdom of Messiah.

A clue to the structure appears to be 1:19 where John is commissioned as follows: *Now write what you see, what is and what is to take place hereafter*. To the author the fulfillment of the events he portrays is near at hand. How this is to be understood is problematical. One may argue that the whole series of events is deemed to be imminent, or that the first part of the series is imminent to be followed throughout history by others, until the climax at the end of the age and God’s final judgment. The author’s central point is firm expectation and a sense of imminence.

There is little controversy as to the structure of the first three chapters which record the seven letters to the churches of Asia Minor, but the rest of the book is problematical.

The main body of the book presents world events symbolically under number and symbol schemes. Along with 666, which is the famous number of the beast (13:18), these include:

The number seven:

- Seven spirits of god (1:4; 4:5; 5:6).
- Seven lampstands and seven stars (2:12-20).
- Seven churches (2:1-3:22)
- Seven seals that seal a book (5:1).
- Seven angels who blow seven trumpets ((8:2; 9:21; 11:15-19).
- Seven mystic figures, 12:1-14:5.
- Seven kings (17:10).

The number three:

- Three woes ((9:12; 11:14)
- Three angels (14:6-9).
- Three foul spirits (16:13).

The number twelve and its multiples:

- Twenty-four elders on thrones (4:4, 10-11).
- One Hundred forty-four thousand sealed, including;
- Twelve thousand from each of the twelve tribes, (7:4-8);
- Twelve gates to the city that has twelve foundations (21:10-21);
- Twelve fruits on the tree of life (22:2).

Symbolic names are frequently used, the most important of which is reference to Christ as Lamb as though slain (5:6), the conquering warrior whose name is the Word of God (19:11-16). Babylon (17:5; 18:1-24) stands for Rome. Other symbolic names include:

- The Nicolaitans (2:6, 15).
- Jezebel (2:20-23).
- Abaddon, Apollyon (9:11).
- Sodom and Egypt (11:8).
- Armageddon (16:16).
- God and Magog (20:8).

Note on structure by W. Graham Scroggie

(Know Your Bible, vol. II, 1940, pp.370-371)

The first three chapters are straightforward, but the remainder of the book, as to structure, is variously regarded. What is clear is that there are three series of judgments, the Seals, the Trumpets, and the Bowls. These, it seems to me, are neither contemporary nor entirely consecutive, but telescope out of one another; that is, Trumpet judgments are the seventh Seal judgment, and the Bowl judgments are the seventh Trumpet judgment; the last of each series is the beginning of another.

It is noteworthy that after both the sixth Seal and the sixth Trumpet judgments there is a break in the narrative, and a long section is inserted before the seventh of each is announced. These particulars seem to supply the clue to the structure of the book, which is in five parts, a Prologue, three series of Visions, an Epilogue, with explanatory matter interspersed.

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Outline

Introduction, 1:1-3

I SALUTATION AND PROLOGUE, 1:1-11

- a. Attestation: the revelation of Jesus Christ, 1:1-3.
- b. Salutation, 1:4-8:
 - Grace and peace.
 - From Jesus Christ the faithful witness.
 - Who loved us and freed us from our sins.
 - Who made us a kingdom of priests unto God.
 - Behold, he is coming.
 - Every eye shall see him.
 - I am Alpha and Omega: who is, who was, who is to come.

II VISION OF THE SON OF MAN: THE EXALTED CHRIST, 1:4-20

- a. John on Patmos. In the Spirit on the Lord's day, 1:4-11.
- b. The Son of Man, 1:12-16.
- c. I am the first and the last: now write what you see, 1:17-20.

III LETTERS TO THE SEVEN CHURCHES, 2:1-3:22

- a. Ephesus, 2:1-7.
- b. Smyrna, 2:8-11.
- c. Pergamum, 2:12-17.
- d. Thyatira, 2:18-29.
- e. Sardis, 3:1-6.
- f. Philadelphia, 3:7-13.
- g. Laodicea, 3:14-22.

IV THE VISIONS

4:1-22:5

- 1. Vision of the divine glory, 4:1-11.**
- 2. The Lion of Judah, 5:1-14.**
- 3. Worthy is the Lamb to open the seals:, 5:5, 9, 12; 6:1-8:1.**
 - a. First seal: the white horse, 6:1-2.
 - b. Second seal: the red horse, 6:3-4.
 - c. Third seal: the black horse, 6:5-6.
 - d. Fourth seal: the pale horse, 6:7-8.
 - e. Fifth seal: the martyrs, 6:9-11.
 - f. Sixth seal: signs in the heavens, 6:12-17.
 - First interlude: consolation.
 - Sealing of the 144,000, 7:1-8..
 - Sealing of the tribulation saints, 7:9-17.
 - g. Seventh seal: silence in heaven, 8:1.
- 4. Readyng the seven trumpets, incensing the prayers of the saints, 8:1-6.**
- 5. The seven trumpets, 8:7-11:19.**
 - a. First trumpet: hail, fire, blood, 8:7.
 - b. Second trumpet: the sea becomes blood, 8:8-9.
 - c. Third trumpet, the falling star, 8:10-11.
 - d. Fourth trumpet: sun, moon, stars darkened, 8:12-13.
 - e. Fifth trumpet: bottomless pit opened, scourge of locusts, 9:1-12.
 - f. Sixth trumpet: four angels released; godless impenitence, 9:13-21.
 - Second interlude: judgment and consolation.
 - John eats the bitter scroll, 10:1-11.
 - Measuring the temple, 11:1-2.
 - The two witnesses, 11:3-14.
 - g. Seventh trumpet: consummation, 11:15-19.
- 6. The first great enemy: the dragon, 12:1-18.**
 - a. The woman with child, 12:1-2.
 - b. The fierce dragon, 12:3-6.
 - c. War in heaven, 12:7-12.
 - d. War on earth, 12:13-18.
- 7. The second great enemy: the beast from the sea, 13:1-10.**
- 8. The third great enemy: the beast from the earth; the mark of the beast,13:11-18.**
- 9. The Lamb on Mount Zion,14:1-20.**
 - Third interlude:

- Angelic messages, 14:1-11.
- Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord, 14:12-13.
- Vintage harvest: winepress of judgment, 14:14-20.

10. The Seven Bowls, 15:1-16:21.

- Introducing the bowls, 15:1-16:1.
- a. First bowl: sores on men, 16:2.
- b. Second bowl: sea becomes blood, 16:3.
- c. Third bowl: rivers and fountains become blood, 16:4-7.
- d. Fourth bowl: scorching heat of the sun, 16:8-9.
- e. Fifth bowl: darkness, 16:10-11.
- f. Sixth bowl: foul spirits entice world rulers to Armageddon, 16:12-16.
- g. Seventh bowl: the great earthquake, 16:17-21.

11. The fall of Babylon, 17:1-18:24

- a. Babylon, the great persecuting harlot, 17:1-6.
- b. The mystery of the harlot and the beast, 17:7-18.
- c. The doom of Babylon announced, 18:1-3.
- d. The call: escape, come out of Babylon, 18:4-8.
- e. The world's lament over Babylon, 18:9-19.
- f. Divine vindication: righteous judgment has fallen, 18:20-24.

12. The fall of the powers of evil, 19:1-20:3.

- a. Paean of praise for God's triumph, 19:1-5.
- b. Marriage supper of the Lamb, 19:6-10.
- c. Defeat of the beast and the false prophet, 19:11-21.
- d. Binding of Satan, 20:1-3.

13. The Millennium, revolt and final judgment, 20:4-15.

- a. Christ's millennial reign, 20:4-6.
- b. The loosing of Satan and final confrontation, 20:7-10.
- c. The great white throne judgment, 20:8-15.

14. New heaven and new earth, 21:1-22:5.

- a. *Behold, I make all things new*, 21:1-8.
- b. The new Jerusalem, 21:9-22:5.

V EPILOGUE, 22:6-20

- a. Attestation, 22:6-9.
- b. Warning, 22:10-15.
- c. Invitation, 22:16-20.

The Spirit and the Bride say, "Come."

And let him who hears say, "Come."

*And let him who is thirsty come,
let him who desires take the water of life without price.*

*He who testifies to these things says,
"Surely I am coming soon."*

Amen.

Come, Lord Jesus.

Benediction,

22:21

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Chapter Annotation

[Annotation of the chapters may help the reader to grasp the sense of the book.]

Chapter

1. The risen, glorified Christ.
2. Letters to the churches at Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira.
3. Letters to the churches at Sardis, Philadelphia, Laodicea.
4. The heavenly throne, the elders, the living creatures.
5. The Lion-Lamb, the sealed book.
6. Opening the six seals.
7. Sealing the 144,000 from Israel; the redeemed of all nations.
8. Opening the seventh seal, sounding four trumpets.
9. Sounding two trumpets.
10. The scroll which was eaten.
11. Two witnesses, the seventh trumpet.
12. The woman, the man child, the dragon, Michael.
13. Two beasts: from the sea, from the earth.
14. The Lamb on Mount Zion, angels and their messages.
15. Seven angels with the seven plagues.
16. Outpouring of the seven bowls of wrath.
17. The mystery of the woman and the beast.
18. Fall of Babylon.
19. The Marriage Supper of the Lamb; divine judgment and triumph.
20. The Millennium, revolt and the Great White Throne.
21. New Heaven and Earth, the Holy City, the New Jerusalem.
22. The Holy City; the great invitation, *Come*.

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NOTES ON INTERPRETATION

Interpretation

Generally speaking, there are four methods of interpreting the book:

1. *Preterist*: that the greater part of the events have already been fulfilled during the period in which the book was written, which includes the Fall of Jerusalem and the decline of the Roman Empire. The book is thus a consolation to persecuted Christians of that early period.
2. *Historical*: that the book presents in prophetic outline of continuous history from the Apostolic Age to the present time. Thus the events relating to chapters 1-19 have been and are being fulfilled in the history of the Roman Empire and ever since. This view absorbs into it the millennium as symbolic and descriptive of unfolding church history.
3. *Futurist*: that the book deals mainly with events yet to come which will be fulfilled on the earth. Thus the predictions belong to eschatological times; the events belong to the *latter days*. On this view the millennium is a concrete period of years, yet to be fulfilled.
4. *Idealist or Spiritual*: the contents of Revelation are to be interpreted spiritually. The symbols and images do not detail the future nor do they have historical application; rather, they are graphic representations of the struggle of good over evil throughout world history, the spiritual struggles of God's people in every generation, and the ultimate triumph of the Kingdom of God.

The first resurrection and the millennium (20:1-7)

Some have rejected the concept of an historical millennial reign of Christ on the earth, arguing that this is the only passage in which it is mentioned. But the passage is a sufficient foundation for the doctrine. A key issue has been whether to distinguish the work of the church from the millennium of which the latter is said to be symbolic.

Is this prophecy to be understood literally? Does the teaching of the passage mean that for a period of a thousand years before the resurrection and the end of this world this earth will be the scene of a visible kingdom of God, from which the power of Satan will be removed, and that Christ will reign supreme and unopposed?

In the early centuries of the Christian church the predominant sentiment was to accept the literalness of the millennial kingdom. Included in holding this belief were Justin, Papias, Irenaeus and others.

During those centuries Christians were too busy preserving faith, life and limb during intermittent, savage persecutions to develop a philosophy of history.

But upon the conversion of Constantine and the proclaiming of tolerance for Christians by the Edict of Nantes early in the 4th century, the attitude of Christians to life in this world gradually changed. In the period after Constantine's death and the accession of his sons to power in Rome the number of devotees at the pagan shrines and cults radically shrank while the number of Christians increased, though Christians still remained a minority of the population.

Christians became euphoric. Historians of the period record this mood. Many Christians believed that because Christian emperors ruled, the Kingdom of God had arrived.

But at the end of the 4th century A.D. and the beginning of the 5th century all of this changed with the encroachment of nations at the fringes of the Empire until, finally, in 410 A.D. Rome was sacked by the Goths under Alaric.

The fall and sacking of Rome was an event of catastrophic proportions. Christians could not understand how the blossoming kingdom of God could suffer disaster. From their standpoint, Pagans taunted Christians that the disaster was due to forsaking pagan gods.

These were the times and events which impelled Augustine in North Africa to write his great treatise *The City of God*. It was the first attempt to formulate a Christian philosophy of history.

In sum, Augustine argued that no earthly kingdom is, or can be, the kingdom of God, because all human institutions are infected with evil. (Note my comments on Augustine in Chapter 11 of my *Theological Sentences*.)

St. Augustine held and taught the doctrine of the millennium, but chiefly in a spiritual form signifying inner life, and the influence of the church, but towards the close of his life he diminished the concept. Throughout the Middle Ages the idea of the millennium was largely conflated with the idea of the Church's being the Kingdom of God on earth.

Since the Protestant Reformation the doctrine has been revived, sometimes by enthusiasts but also among traditional Protestants and modern evangelical Christians.

Modern Roman Catholic thought cannot be epitomized as being either for or against the idea of the millennium. It is generally telescoped into the idea of the final kingdom. Some Protestants have given up the idea while others in the traditional Protestant denominations simply ignore the doctrine, but most evangelical Christians retain belief in an actual millennial reign of Christ at the end of the age.

The turning point of interpretation is whether the first resurrection of Rev. 20:5 is to be understood literally. Those who see the millennium as the spiritual impact of the church upon the world invariably interpret the first resurrection as the quickening of Christians by the Holy Spirit -- the resurrection from the death of sin unto the life of righteousness. But it strains the language of the passage to make it read anything other than an actual resurrection of Christians at the end of the age. It is very hard to believe that the second resurrection is of a literal kind but that the first is not.

Thus I believe that anything less than recognition of the reality of the millennium requires inordinate reconstruction of the passage, regardless of how difficult it becomes to fit either the reality of the first resurrection or the reality of the millennium into an interpreter's scheme of things. Further, any scheme which posits that Satan has been bound during the time the church has existed and that the nations of the earth have not been deceived during this time is sheer fantasy. If the true sense of the first resurrection and the true sense of the millennium is not the literal one then that true sense has yet to be found.

Interpretation in relation to John's perspective

(G. R. Beasley-Murray, "The Revelation," *New Bible Commentary, Revised*, 1970, p. 1280)

He wrote for the churches under his care with a practical situation in view, viz. the prospect of the popular Caesar-worship of his day being enforced on all Christians. No man who said "Jesus is Lord" could also confess "Caesar is Lord"; the latter demand threatened the existence of the whole church of God. Grasping the principles involved, John was given to see the logical consummation of the tendencies at work, mankind divided to the obedience of Christ or antichrist. On the canvas of John's age, therefore, and in the colors of his environment, he pictured the last great crisis of the world, not merely because, from a psychological viewpoint, he could do no other, but because of the real correspondence between his crisis and that of the last days. As the church was then faced with a devastating persecution by Rome, so will the church of the last days find itself violently opposed by the prevailing world power. The outcome of that great struggle will be the advent of Christ in glory, and with him the establishment of the kingdom of God in power. John clearly regarded the end as at hand (1:1-3), but the "foreshortened perspective" no more invalidates his utterances than it does those of the Old Testament prophets and of our Lord himself, for it is characteristic of all prophecy.

“The Theology of the New Testament”

[This chapter is published in the *Expositor's Bible Commentary*, F. E. Gaebelin, ed., Volume I (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979). The entire series, both OT and NT, are well worthwhile to own.]