

Jesus the Eternal King

Written on: January 31, 2022

Article by: **Samuel Mulligan**

God often uses negative situations to bring about great good. This is perhaps best seen in Jesus' crucifixion, where the death of the Son of God brought salvation for all people. But it is also seen in the events leading up to Jesus' death. John 18:28–19:22 records Jesus' trial before Pilate and the inscription Pilate placed above the cross. This story is filled with schemes, lies, and compromises, all resulting in Jesus being condemned to death. But out of this very negative situation, God was able to bring about great good. Because the final result of Jesus' trial was not a victory for the Romans or the Jews. Instead, it was precisely what they had tried to prevent by killing Him: a final, universal declaration that Jesus is King.

During the trial scene, there are three principal characters or groups involved: Jesus, Pilate, and the Jews. Each has a throughline¹ during the trial as they react to events and take action, and each has something to teach us. There is much we could say about the Jews and their throughline, how over the course of the trial their zeal to 'serve God' by having Jesus killed leads them to reject God as their king and abandon all their moral principles. Their final words in the trial are, "We have no king but Caesar," (19:15). We watch their descent step-by-step as they do or say anything they can to get Jesus killed. But for the sake of brevity, we'll focus our time on Pilate and Jesus, which is where the heart of the action lies.

First, we come to Pilate, and his throughline of compromise. During this trial, there is a spiritual war being waged between Jesus and the world. Through his whole ministry, Jesus has been doing the will of the Father and proclaiming the truth—the truth about who He really is, and the truth about his Kingship. The world has been fighting against Jesus and trying to silence that

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claim. Now, Pilate finds himself caught in the middle of this spiritual battle, needing to make a decision and choose a side

One thing we need to know about Pilate was that at the time, his career was in a very precarious position. Sejanus, his patron in Rome who had appointed him to the position of Governor, had just been executed by the Roman Emperor. This left Pilate vulnerable, lacking friends in high places to protect him. Also, the Roman Emperor's policies had recently grown very pro-semitic, meaning he would favour the Jews over Pilate in a dispute. To make matters worse, Pilate already had a record of slip-ups and mistakes in dealing with the Jewish people. At the time of Jesus' trial, Pilate would have been very insecure about his career, and this certainly influences how he acts on this occasion.

During the trial, Pilate faces a moral dilemma. On the one hand, he knows Jesus is innocent. He says twice, "I find no guilt in him" (18:38; 19:6). Once he starts talking to Jesus, it becomes clear He's not the zealous revolutionary the Jews claim. Pilate knows the charges are false, and he wants to let Jesus go. However, given his fragile political position, he cannot afford to make the Jews angry—and freeing Jesus would make them very angry. Such a controversy would likely result in Pilate being deposed. So he faces a dilemma, needing to choose between saving his career or the life of an innocent man.

Over the course of the trial, Pilate tries to make a series of compromises, desperately seeking some middle ground where he doesn't need to make this uncomfortable choice. The first compromise involves the tradition of releasing a prisoner. He says, "You have a custom that I should release one man for you at the Passover. So do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" (18:39). He offers a legally-acceptable solution that will allow Jesus to go free without punishment. However, the compromise fails, because the Jews demand the release of Barabbas instead (18:40).

Next, Pilate tries to compromise by choosing a lesser sentence. In 19:1–3, he has Jesus flogged. Pilate was probably hoping the Jews would be satisfied after this. He was hoping that once he brought Jesus out to them in such a pitiful state (19:5), they would relent. Instead, this only causes them to double down on their demands for his crucifixion (19:6).

Pilate continues to seek Jesus' release, going back and forth between talking to the Jews and talking to Jesus, desperately seeking a way out, but finding found. Then, in John 19:12, the Jews play their final card. "If you release this man, you are not Caesar's friend. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." They directly threaten Pilate's job. They force him to make a decision, and when it's all on the line, Pilate gives in and hands Jesus over to be crucified (19:16). He knew what was right, but had delayed too long in doing it, by trying to compromise. So, when the moment arrived, when the spiritual war came to its climax, Pilate found himself standing on the wrong side.

Then, we come to Jesus, and His throughline of kingship. This is where we really see God taking a negative situation and bringing about great good through a series of ironic reversals. Although neither Pilate nor the Jews believe Jesus is a King, His kingship continually takes centre stage throughout the trial: Jesus is called the King of the Jews almost every time He's mentioned, we see royal imagery applied to Him even when He is flogged, and the final result of the trial is a written declaration of His kingship that was read by all who came to Jerusalem. Entirely contrary to the wills of everyone present—but in accordance with the will of God—Jesus' eternal kingship was proclaimed for all to see.

When Pilate first speaks to Jesus in 18:33, he asks Him, “Are you the King of the Jews?” The theme takes root at the very start of the trial, and remains at the forefront throughout. Pilate mentions this charge because the Jews had refused to state their charge against Jesus (18:30), and this is Pilate's best guess. He suspects that Jesus is trying to set Himself up as an earthly king to overthrow Caesar.

Pilate is both right and wrong. Jesus is a King—but not the kind Pilate is expecting. Jesus says in v. 36, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered over to the Jews. But my kingdom is not from the world.” Jesus' kingdom is from above; it is a spiritual kingdom. Earthly kingdoms are established and maintained through force, but Jesus' disciples are not fighting for Him, because His kingdom is of a different nature entirely. Jesus *is* the King of the Jews, but He's not leading a rebellion against Rome. He is the spiritual King, the Messiah, the Saviour. He delivers them, not from political rulers, but from their sins. Rather than trying to defend Himself against the Jews' charges, Jesus proclaims to Pilate the nature of His kingship.

Although Pilate dismisses Jesus' attempts to reach him (v. 38), Jesus' kingship remains central for the rest of the trial. From there onward, almost every time Pilate or his soldiers refer to Jesus, they call Him, “the King of the Jews” (18:39; 19:3, 14, 15, 19). Pilate doesn't do this because he believes it to be true—but God's will is working through this situation. Pilate does it largely to annoy the Jews, because they detest having Him called their king. It's the principle reason they want Him crucified, so they can silence forever His blasphemous claims to be the Messiah.

Likewise, even when Pilate has Jesus beaten, the imagery of kingship remains central. John records, “The soldiers twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head and arrayed him in a purple robe. They came up to him, saying, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’” (John 19:2–3).

But the theme of kingship finds its ultimate fulfillment directly after the trial. Jesus carries His cross to Golgotha, where He is crucified with a criminal on either side. Pilate places a final inscription over Jesus' cross that reads, “Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews” (19:19). The high priests had pressured Pilate into crucifying Jesus against his own will. Although he had conceded to their demands, he had no desire to please them. Through this inscription, Pilate takes one final opportunity to antagonize the Jews. However, by the will of God, this simple inscription accomplishes so much more

than that. This took place during the Passover, so *all* the Jews had to come to Jerusalem. And as they did, they saw Jesus and the inscription over His cross. In 19:20, John records that many Jews saw this inscription, for it was written in Greek, the *lingua franca* of the day; Aramaic, the common language of the Jews; and Latin, the official language of the Roman Empire. This final proclamation of Jesus' kingship is seen and read by all who pass by. Being written in these three languages, this proclamation—like Jesus' kingship—is universal. The chief priests had worked tirelessly to silence Jesus and deny His kingship. They had thought that by killing Him, they could finally stifle these claims. And yet, in John's perfect irony, it was that very death that provided the means and occasion for this most universal proclamation of all.

The chief priests do not approve of this inscription, and they tell Pilate to write instead that Jesus *claimed* to be the King of the Jews (v. 21). But with God's will working through the situation, the inscription stands. Pilate answers, "What I have written I have written" (v. 22). This declaration of Jesus' kingship—not the decision to crucify Jesus—is the result of all the compromising, scheming and plotting. Jesus truly is the king of the Jews, the king of the whole world, and the king of our lives. By the end of the trial, though neither Pilate nor the Jews believed it, this eternal truth stood plainly written for all to see.

What does this mean for our lives today? The first application is that we cannot remain neutral in the spiritual battle that wages around us. Like Pilate, everyone is on one side or the other, whether they realize it or not. When we try to remain neutral by making compromises with the world, we only deceive ourselves. If we choose to follow God, then we must serve Him with all our hearts.

Compromises with the world can take many forms. They can be internal, when we choose to adopt the world's values, as Pilate did when he valued his career above justice. They can also be external, when we choose not to stand up for the truth, or when we live by the morals of the world so as to fit in. It is reflected in how we spend our time and money, and in what we think about. We face much opposition from the world today, and neutrality can appear an enticing solution. But as Pilate discovered, we cannot remain neutral about Jesus. We must choose a side and commit to it fully. Everyone will be forced to make this decision eventually, but the more time we spend compromising, the more likely it is that we, like Pilate, will come down on the wrong side.

Second, as seen through this whole passage, Jesus is king. He is the King of the Jews, the Messiah, who has saved His people. He is the King of the world, seen in the universal nature of Pilate's proclamation. And He is the King of our lives, ruling over everything we say and do. Jesus is the King, and the King must reign. Do our lives reflect His kingship? Is Jesus ruling in our hearts?

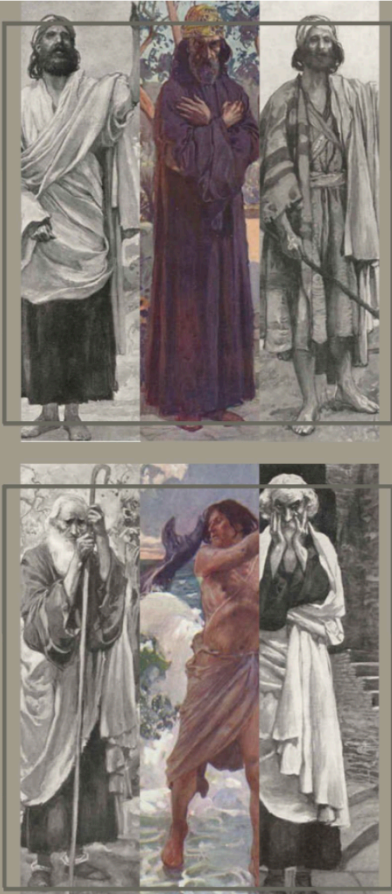
One day, Jesus will reign over all, whether they have accepted Him or not. But today, we have the choice of willingly and joyfully accepting His kingship for our lives. Jesus' kingship is not a heavy burden, like the sort of kingship that belongs to the world, because Jesus' kingdom is not of this world. But it does require us to give everything

we have. If Jesus is to be King in our lives, then He must be King over all, because there can be no compromise. We must surrender every part of our lives to His lordship, and live each day to serve Him. Therefore, let us seek to make our every thought, word and action devoted to Him. Let us glorify Him in all that we do.

All praise and honour to our eternal King!

Omagh, ON

1 A Throughline: a common or consistent element or theme shared by items in a series or by parts of a whole. Merriam Dictionary



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From Generation to Generation

Written on: January 31, 2022

Article by: Immanuel Velasco

The pandemic has brought an ‘uncertain certainty’ to many congregations. The uncertain part is that we don’t know exactly what it will look like when we all start coming back together in force. We are certain, however, that we will abide with God just as he dwells with us.

I believe that an important part of Congregational health in the coming months and years, is to ensure that our members of every age and spiritual maturity sustain and strengthen intentional connections. The spirit of community is built into us, after all, God said, “... Let **us** make man in **our** image...” (Gen 1:26, emphasis added).

From One Generation to the Next

If you talk to any mature Christian, most do not want or expect to play the exact same role forever.

When I was in my late 20s, I was approached by Max Craddock, our long-time minister at the Strathmore Church of Christ. He said that once a month there were some speaking opportunities on Sunday evenings and asked if I would step in. It seemed a bit ironic to be asked, as I am sure that I had dozed off during some of *his* sermons as a teenager. I accepted the offer and discovered a wonderful opportunity to hone my writing skills and to practice public speaking in front of those small Sunday evening groups. Having ‘grown up’ at Strathmore, these were people that I knew and trusted, and who were patient with me as I as I practiced those new skills.

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About a year later, I ‘graduated’ to speaking on a Sunday morning. It was exciting to look out into the congregation and to see plenty of smiling faces. And off to my left, there was Max, who was just starting to doze off. Who knew that it would give me such a warm feeling?

It was a beautiful exchange of roles and part of the natural process whereby those who are more mature share responsibilities with those who are younger to bring about maturity and the continuity of God’s work.

An Example from Israel (Deuteronomy 11:13-28)

Deuteronomy chapter 11 takes place at the end Israel’s 40 years in the wilderness, and just prior to that nation entering into the Promised Land. God had taken His people out of Egypt, and for a generation, they experienced first-hand what it meant to depend upon God. Here, like a good parent, God provided guidelines for the situation into which they were about to enter.

This chapter includes certain key instructions about giving honour to God’s word (v.18-20). To this day, certain orthodox Jews take this passage quite literally, keeping scriptures posted by their doors and bound to their foreheads.

To paraphrase the message: *Once my promise is fulfilled, this is what you need to do: Tell your children at every chance how I’ve been faithful. Don’t forget about how I have taken care of you. You’ll continue to be blessed if you obey my commands, and cursed if you turn away from me (v.26-28).* From history, we know that Israel only lived by these commands during certain parts of her history, and that fulfillment of God’s grace and love came fully through Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection.

Inter-generational Relationships In Modern Churches

In more recent history, especially within Western Culture, there has been an artificial division between age groups. It began perhaps with Sunday Schools which during the industrial revolution were a response by churches to the growing number of unschooled children that were working in factories. More recently, events like ‘youth rallies’ and the role of dedicated youth minister, have in the post WW2-Baby-Boom Era attempted to respond to the massive growth in the numbers of young people. This isn’t to say that modern youth ministry doesn’t have a place, as it helps to address certain challenges.

Having spent many years working with the young people of the church, I can say that there are certainly some unique things about ministering to youth. Each generation is faced with a different set of values than the one before. The times are changing and changing quickly. Not only that, but young people have different energy levels, and struggle with their own set of questions because of their stage in life. Yet I believe that healthy and authentic inter-generational relationships play an indispensable role in the life of the church and the growth of each member.

An example from John, called Mark

John, called Mark has a few mentions in the New Testament, and provides a powerful example of someone who grew into a leadership role within the Church and did so with the help of more mature Saints. The role that his family played in the church is suggested in Acts 12:12, when Peter, having escaped from prison went directly to a home where the brethren were praying for him. It was the house of Mary, John Mark's mother. Mark was chosen by Paul and Barnabas to accompany them on their first mission journey. But since he decided to return home before the work was complete, Paul and Barnabas disagreed over including him in their second effort. They parted company over this disagreement and went their separate ways (Acts 12:25; 15:36-40). By the time that Paul wrote 2 Timothy, he had changed his mind about John Mark. He now considered him to be such a valuable asset that Paul is requesting his presence (2 Tim 4:11). In light of this example, we might ask ourselves – how we are fostering relationships between generations that encourage patient growth?

5 Steps- Encouraging Faith Into Action

Every Christian is a Minister. Every Christian has the responsibility to prepare themselves and to the best of their ability prepare others for service. As mature members, we can use our words and actions to encourage less mature Christians, and gradually release responsibility to them. As less mature members, we can take time to appreciate the experience that is being shared and bring our own energy to the work of the Church.

Let me suggest 5 Steps that we can take to successfully mentor the next generation of leaders:

- 1. Invite Someone to put their Faith into Action.**
- 2.** What is a work that this person might be interested or talented in?
- 3. You Observe, I do**
 1. Let them sit and watch only
 2. Break it into smaller steps
- 3. I do, you help**
 4. Let them take a small responsibility
- 5. You do, I help**
 6. Let them take most of the responsibility
- 7. I observe, you do**
 1. Let them take the whole Action
 2. Mature Christian is a 'Safety Net' Only.

Bible references are from the English Standard Version.

Stouffville, ON

Note: Immanuel is a Deacon with the Strathmore Blvd. Church of Christ in Toronto, and President of the Great Lakes Bible College.

Hebrews Quotations Considered, Hebrews use of the Old Testament – Part 3

Written on: January 31, 2022

Article by: Kevin Cleary

Most will be aware that the purpose of the book of Hebrews is to dissuade people who were thinking of leaving Christianity and returning to Judaism. The author does that by demonstrating the superiority of Christianity. The author does this extremely effectively and we can see just how effectively when we pay close attention to the structure and argumentation.

I have included an outline of the book suggested by Dan Owen and others that we looked at in the last article to help us.

- I. 1:5-14 Exposition of Various Enthronement Texts
- II. 2:5-3:1 Exposition of Psalm 8:4-6
- III. 3:7-4:13 Exposition of Psalm 95:7-11
- IV. 4:14-8:6 Exposition of Psalm 110:4
- V. 8:6-10:31 Exposition of Jeremiah 31:31-34
- VI. 10:1-10 Exposition of Psalm 40:6-8 (This is a sub-section of the Exposition of Jeremiah 31:31-34)
- VI. 10:32-12:3 Exposition of Habakkuk 2:3-4
- VII. 12:4-13 Exposition of Proverbs 3:11-12
- VIII. 12:18-24 Exposition of Exodus 19:10-23

You will want you Bible open to Hebrews as you read this next section.

To begin his arguments, the author cites several passages related to some specific themes. First, Psalms 2 and 45, have the themes of Kingship as does II Sam 7:14. These Kingship passages would easily be understood as applying to not just the human ruler of Israel but in an even greater way, to the ultimate King of Israel, the Messiah. If David's son was to be a "son of God," how much more the perfect realization of the King like David? This King will be the true "Son of God," perfectly bearing his image and reflecting his glory (John 1:14). This "Firstborn," not in a birth order sense but in a rightful heir sense, will occupy the preeminent role in God's realized scheme of redemption and restoration. This role involves divinity and therefore, this firstborn is worthy of worship, a fact even attested to by the angels. This rightful King will truly reflect God, therefore, he will "Love righteousness and hate wickedness." His rule will not be limited by a human lifespan but will rather be perpetual. He was from before

creation and even involved in it, and his rule will outlast creation. It will be a rule not on an earthly throne but from the right hand of God himself, in heaven.

When one pays close attention to the descriptions given in the Psalms that are referenced, there is no way that any purely human descendant of David could fulfill such a role. It is only in Jesus, that these descriptions could be truly satisfied. While these texts, no doubt, have contextual applications to human rulers of Israel, none could ever fully meet the qualifications required by the texts. Imperfect human placeholders, no matter how good, (and many were not good) could only further demonstrate the need for a greater fulfillment in the awaited Messiah.

Does the Hebrews author then make appropriate use of the Old Testament text's cited? Clearly he does. Perhaps a more appropriate question would be to ask, was it ever appropriate to see a physical king being the primary referent of these texts?

Having demonstrated Jesus' right to rule through this collection of enthronement passages, the author goes on to discuss His priestly qualifications as mediator and the source of salvation. Two passages are cited by the author to discuss the incarnation. They are Psalm 8:4-6 and Psalm 22:22. The author of Psalm 8 seems to describe humans in general, as "a little lower than the angels". But the Holy Spirit, the divine author had Jesus in mind, who for a little while was made human in order to qualify as our great high priest. Once again, the author goes on to demonstrate that humanity neither exhausts nor fulfills the Psalm because, "we do not yet see everything in subjection to him." Specifically, Jesus needed to "destroy death and the one who has the power of death." As with the previously quoted passages, the author sees the immediate context as only partially fulfilling the passage while the fullness belongs to Christ. This then is a completely appropriate use of this passage. The apologetic value to the readers of Hebrews is evident.



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It should come as no surprise, at this point, that a similar thing can be said of the authors use of Psalm 22. Since we know that this was the Psalm that Jesus quoted on the cross, we immediately make that connection. First century Christians would have done so as well, even those who were thinking about abandoning the faith. Psalm 22 makes another historical connection to the crucifixion when it predicts that lots would be cast to decide who would get Jesus' clothing (Pace, 2007, p. 88). These would no doubt point the reader to apply this Psalm to Jesus. When one reads the Psalm, it is clearly envisioning something greater than David, both in the suffering it describes, as well as the glorious victory mentioned in Hebrews (Smith, 1996, p. 243).

So while there is no doubt a reference to David in Psalm 22, the full application and fulfillment of the Psalm is found in Jesus. Given that, and the well attested connection to Jesus, the writer of Hebrews makes an appropriate and convincing use of this Old Testament Passage.

Moving on to his next argument, the writer of Hebrews makes a slightly different use of the Psalms. One that is initially a more obvious moral application but which will become more familiar as his argument advances. Much like Paul in I Corinthians 10:1-5, the author recounts the past behaviour of the Israelites as an example of what not to do. Long after Israel's failure to enter the land of Canaan, David wrote about it in Psalm 95:7-11. God sentenced them to die in the wilderness for their disobedience and this serves as a lesson for all of us.

However, the author does not stop there. He further develops his argument based on redemptive history. Since David said "Today," even though he wrote long after the people had entered Canaan, at least some aspect of God's rest must remain to be entered. This is familiar territory for the author of Hebrews. Once again he has demonstrated that the initial or immediate subject of the Psalm does not explain its full meaning or fulfill what it anticipated. Taking his point one step further, he transitions from an argument based upon redemptive history to a typological one. (Carson, 2019).

The type that he cites is God's sabbath rest. When God freed his people from Egypt, He promised to give them 'rest' in the land of Canaan. In this limited sense, Joshua gave them rest. But now, in Christ, God frees his people from slavery to sin, and promises an eternal rest. Those who entered Canaan and observed God's Sabbaths enjoyed peace from their enemies and the providence of God. But the ultimate fulfillment of this type was reserved for those who receive eternal rest based on the finished work of God in Christ. Far from doing violence to these Old Testament passages, the author of Hebrews argues persuasively from them, making appropriate use of them.

Our author then turns to Psalm 110 which, is referenced throughout the New Testament, to shed further light upon the priesthood of Jesus. Jesus quoted from it to prove that the Messiah could not merely be a human descendant of David. And perhaps recalling the words of his Lord, the apostle Peter cited it on Pentecost to prove the enthronement of Jesus in heaven following his ascension.

Having already applied Psalm 110 to the reign of Jesus, the writer of Hebrews now shares what it says about His priesthood. All legitimate high priests in Israel had to be appointed by God. Psalm 110:4 not only declares the enthronement of Jesus but also His divine appointment as high priest. He was not appointed as a Levitical priest, since the 'son of David' was from the tribe of Judah. But rather, He was a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Since Psalm 110 is quoted throughout the Synoptic gospels and the book of Acts, we are not surprised to find it referenced again in the book of Hebrews. But the author proceeds to explain that which had only been implied by earlier citations. Namely, that no purely human descendant of David could fulfill all that is said of the messiah in this Psalm. He was already enthroned in heaven when God inspired David to write this psalm. And at that same time, God appointed him a priest forever in after the order of Melchizedek Ps.110:4. Since Abraham paid tithes to and was blessed by Melchizedek, then Melchizedek is greater than Abraham. And since Levi was seminally present within Abraham, it follows that the priesthood of Levi paid tithes to the priesthood of Melchizedek and thus to the priesthood of Jesus. Furthermore, the Messiah's priesthood was established by an oath from God himself.¹

Now a whole new priesthood required a whole new covenant, for God's covenant through Moses reserved that role for the descendants of Aaron. Rather than turning again to the Psalms, the writer cites the prophet Jeremiah. The prophets of God spoke on his behalf and for most of Israel's history, attempted to bring about repentance. Sometimes, as in the case of Jeremiah, they also predicted that which was to come. So it was that our author quoted from

Jeremiah 31:31-34. This passage comes out of a larger discussion in Jeremiah of God's continued providence in the face of his people's rebellion.

Jeremiah reminded Judah of God's love for them, even in the midst of judgment. And in the context of Judah's downfall he promised to one day establish a new Covenant – not only with them but with all of His people.

In the near term, God did bring his people back from exile and reaffirmed his covenant with them. They resettled the land, rebuilt the temple along with the city of Jerusalem. But this was not the new covenant that He had promised. Nor would He have proposed a whole new one, if the old one would do. (G.K Beale, 2007, p. 972). Jeremiah 31:31-34, implies that the Old Covenant was insufficient. "In speaking of a new covenant he makes the first one obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." (Heb 8:13)

Why was the first covenant insufficient for the purposes of God and in what sense had it become obsolete? Jeremiah has said as much and the Hebrew writer proceeds to explain.

It has to do with the sufficiency of Christ's sacrifice and therefore the superiority of his Priesthood. Jeremiah anticipated the nature of the better covenant in two important



ways. First, that God's law will be reside the hearts and minds of his people, and second, that sin will be remembered no more. These points serve as a summary of all that he argues from chapter nine verse one through chapter ten verse fourteen. As with previous Old Testament references, Jeremiah 31:31-34 required a greater fulfillment than what was available under the old law. It would take a new covenant with a new set of promises and blessings. Jesus himself spoke of the 'new covenant in my blood', clearly a fulfillment of all that Jeremiah had promised.

Although not a central part of the argumentation of the book the author of Hebrews makes an interesting use of Psalm 40:6-8. We mention it because part of our goal is to understand how this author uses portions of the Old

Testament. This quotation is found in the midst of a discussion of the New Covenant which began in chapter 8. The author has been explaining the superiority of Christ's covenant because of His better sacrifice. With this in mind, he quotes Psalm 40:6-8. This Psalm speaks of God's deliverance, which ties into the authors discussion of sacrifice. It also speaks of an internalization of God's law, in a way that is similar to Jeremiah 31:31-34. The author goes beyond simply noticing a theme, by making Christ the referent of these verses. David, in this case, is a type while Christ is the antitype. As has previously been the case, David could not embody the full expectation of the text. Only Christ's obedience could satisfy verse six. It is important to point out that the term "open ear" is an expression, meaning obedient submission (G.K Beale, 2007, p. 976). The change of wording is justified as a thought for thought translation of the Hebrew idiom. Furthermore, only Christ's sacrifice could satisfy God's justice, therefore, the Old Testament sacrifices were not what God was truly looking for. The Hebrews writer then, is fully justified in making use of the Psalm. Furthermore, he is well within the realm of sound reasoning to suggest, that his points about the better covenant and sacrifice were anticipated in the passage.

To connect the thoughts of Chapter ten to the following points of encouragement, the author combines two Old Testament passages to convey a single message. These passages are, Isaiah 26:20 and Habakkuk 2:3-4. While the combination may initially

seem questionable, upon examination the connection becomes quite clear. Isaiah and Habakuk are anticipating God's judgment upon Judah through Babylon (Morris, 1981, p. 111). Furthermore, they are making a similar point about trusting God through doubt and hardship.

Habakuk had expressed doubt in God's intention to destroy Judah and God's answer was "the righteous shall live by faith." In other words, "trust me." Now, as the Hebrews author prepared to launch into a prolonged discussion of faith, these two passages serve as a perfect springboard for the rest of his discussion. The usage of these passages is a little more obvious than some of the others, as he is making a moral argument. He has done this earlier, with his initial use of Psalm 95 in chapter three. Essentially saying, God's people in the past have been in a similar situation to what you are in now, and those who were successful, maintained their faith. If you want to be successful you will need to do the same. There seems to be some fear on the part of the author that they didn't fully grasp what exactly faith was all about. He feels the need to offer an extended explanation by way of numerous examples.

Having examined the relevant passages and how the Hebrews author employs each one, we can make some summary remarks that will help us to explain the author's hermeneutical approach.

We have seen how the author of Hebrews chose certain Old Testament concepts like "King", "Priest", "Sacrifice", "Rest", "Covenant", and went on to demonstrate how each of these examples could never fulfill the complete intention of God. And even when they had first-hand reference to a person or event in the Old Testament, they ultimately prefigured Jesus. The author does not wrench passages out of context to make his point. Rather, he demonstrates from the context, how the Old Testament pointed to something more. He repeatedly points out that the ultimate author was not the historical individual who originally wrote, but rather, God (Heb 1:5-13; 3:7; 9:8). Therefore, it would be expected that we find predictions in various forms of what God was ultimately working toward.

To summarize, the Hebrews author believed that God wrote a book outlining his scheme of redemption through Christ. Jesus is the climax of that book and the fulfillment of all that God did and said through history. His use of the Old Testament then, is as part of God's book which is, the story of Jesus. Because of this conviction, he expresses frustration in chapter 5 when his audience seems unable to grasp the big picture provided by the overall narrative of the Bible.

As we consider what application we could make of this, we hear the words of Jesus "You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life."

Commenting on this passage, Luther said, "[T]he Scriptures of the Old Testament are not to be despised but diligently read. . . . Therefore, dismiss your own opinions and feelings and think of the Scriptures as the loftiest and noblest of holy things, as the richest of mines which can never be sufficiently explored, in order that you may find that

divine wisdom which God here lays before you in such simple guise as to quench all pride. Here you will find the swaddling cloths and the manger in which Christ lies. . . . Simple and lowly are these swaddling cloths, but dear is the treasure, Christ, who lies in them.” (Hays, 2014).

The writer of Hebrews understood this and wrote so that we might understand it as well.

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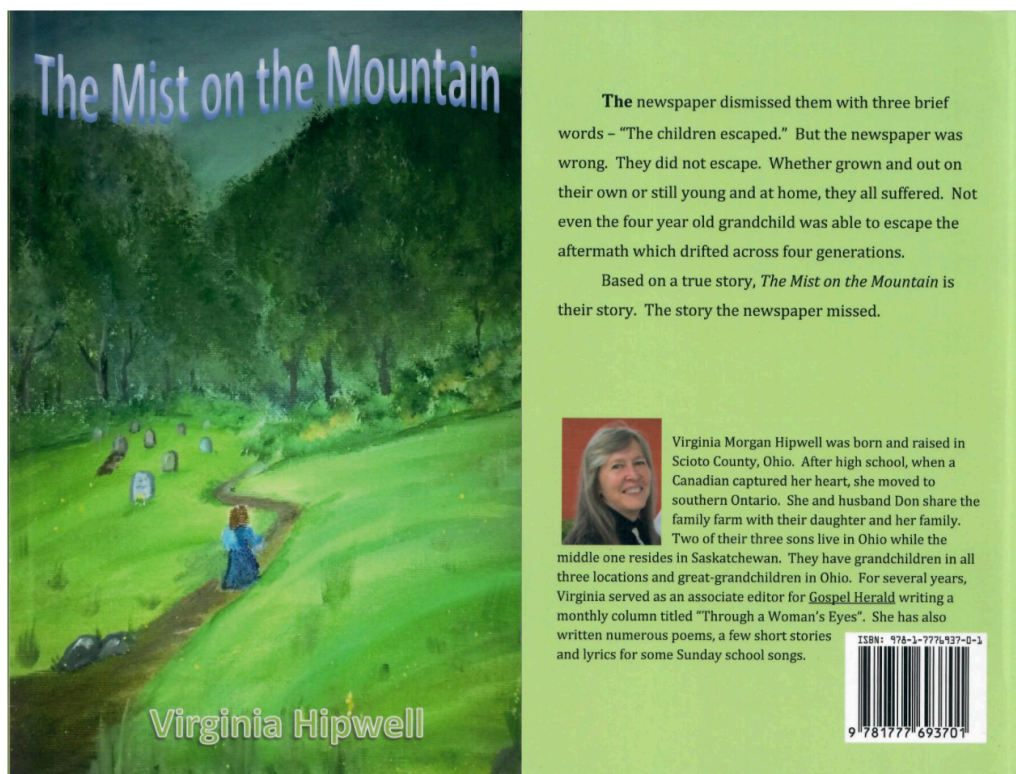
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¹It is worth noticing, that unlike other psalms, psalm 110 did not apply first to David and then to Jesus. David was speaking prophetically and in a way that could only apply to Jesus. And while this does not diminish the apologetic value of the passage it does represent a minor departure from the author’s pattern of seeing Jesus as the greater fulfillment. In this case, he is the only fulfillment.



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To Overcome, or Not?

Written on: January 31, 2022

Article by: Ruth Zimmerman

A crisis was unfolding, late one night, as I switched on the bathroom light. Making the slow but steady climb up the moulded back-splash of the bathroom sink was an earwig. Now, the presence of an earwig in the bathroom is only slightly unusual. Here in Lae, “wildlife” in the bathroom (and everywhere else in the house) is the undefeatable ‘norm’. My house isn’t much different from a camp cabin. It has gaps and floor-to-ceiling screens, and it is far from bug proof. If they aren’t coming through holes, then they are following the plumbing or even coming through the screens (yes, some little, bitey, bright green “tree hoppers” are that small!). I’ve counted up to six different kinds of ants in the house at one time and one of them is carnivorous! And my roommate, Miring, was brushing her teeth one day and a 4-inch-long centipede came up the pipe and out of the drain! I could go on telling you about random insect encounters for hours, but that’s getting off topic. Time to go back to the unfolding crisis instead.

I watched the traveller for a short time, without much interest, before realizing it was heading straight for a spider perched on top of the back-splash. A very tiny spider. It was not much larger than the head of a pin and the earwig was easily 20 times its size, likely more. I stood transfixed and the realization that I could relate to the spider hit me between the eyes. Ever feel like life is bearing down on you and you can’t get away? I’ve felt that a lot over the past three years – the feeling of being on the point of being swallowed. For me it’s been death, and more death; frequent Malaria; overwhelming work pressure; fractured relationships; the frequent feeling that I’m a commodity and not a person with needs and feelings; mourning with dear friends experiencing a paralyzing situation; seeing spiritually immature decisions being made by Christians who should know better, etc. etc. And then Covid-19.

Covid has taken everything and turned it upside-down for all of us, wherever we are on Earth. Being here, during this pandemic, has given me the possibly unique perspective of being envious of those of you who have been in frequent lock downs! With so few vaccinated in Papua New Guinea (less than 4% as I write this!) and so much disobedience, life has become frightening. Even a short shopping trip guarantees contact with huge crowds and very few wearing masks. P.N.G. was slow in joining the pandemic, but in recent months Delta has taken hold and numbers continue to climb. And this week, the thought that the new Omicron variant could further delay my already delayed furlough, has nearly tripped me over the edge. I have felt like I am that tiny little spider, and that my “earwig” is the size of a transport truck.

As all these realizations ran through my head, the earwig continued to climb. It was approaching the end of its journey and I stood wondering how to help the spider, but before I could come to a decision, the earwig reached the top. What happened next left me slack-jawed and awestruck. The spider, recognizing its adversary and the danger it was in, didn’t hesitate. It didn’t turn-tail and run (do spiders have tails?) but it took a mighty leap right at the earwig’s face. I watched as the earwig, in its total surprise, lost its grip and tumbled back into the sink. By then I was cheering and applauding the spider while reassessing my life.

In his second letter to the Corinthian church, Paul, writing of his struggles, said, *‘For God, who said “Let light shine out of darkness,” made His light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay*

to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed; perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not abandoned; struck down, but not destroyed...' (2 Corinthians 4:6-9).

God gave the little spider the ability to jump (and a lot of bravery!), but for us who have obeyed Him, He has given us His light and His Spirit. We are frail, but with God's strength, and with Him living in us, we are able to weather everything that life throws at us.

A few verses later Paul continued, *"Therefore, do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So, we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen. For what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal."* (2 Corinthians 5:16-18).

The little spider made me realize that my focus has become skewed over the past few years. I pray while looking at the problems and sorrows and pressures and frustrations. Too many times I rely on my own strength, not His. My eyes have been fixed on what is temporary, not what is eternal. Instead of taking a mighty leap in the face of Satan whenever he pops up at eye level, I've been more prone to turn tail and run, unlike the spider. I've been feeling overcome, but thanks to the bathroom 'wildlife', I now remember that I'm not.

Lae, Papua New Guinea

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The Truth That Sets Us Free

Written on: January 31, 2022

Article by: Dave Knutson

Text: John 8:24-32

At the trial of Jesus, Pilate asked... 'what is truth?..and then he didn't stick around for the answer. He scoffed at the very concept of truth and dismissed the possibility that it could ever be known.

It is a marvellous thing for us to open our bibles and to have Jesus reassure us of three things.

1. The first is...that there is such a thing as truth
2. That its capable of being known by each and every one of us.
3. And the truth is not always bad news.

That is what Jesus said...in John 8:32:

As He spoke these things, many came to believe in Him. So Jesus was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, *"If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free."* .

Now Jesus did not explain on that occasion how it would set them free. But He did say that without the truth, they could not be set free.

As we proceed, let's consider two things

1. The relationship between Satan & truth.
2. And just how it was...that Jesus accomplished our salvation.

Now as long as God has spoken to men and women, Satan's had something to say. But, Satan is an enemy of the truth...the arch-enemy. He does not want the truth to get out...certainly not the kind that saves. The Bible calls him a liar, a deceiver, an accuser and an adversary. When Satan tells a lie, that's the only time that he's not a hypocrite. Now Satan is able to tell the truth...and he does as long as the the truth that he tells – amounts to a lie. For when Satan lies, that is the real Satan

His most effective weapon is the partial truth...the kind that amounts to a lie. He is the ultimate spin-doctor. And when he gets done, Christians look like tyrants, and sinners like freedom fighters, standing up for our human rights.

When Jesus told the parable of the soils, he explained that the seed was the word of God and that the birds who took the seed away...represented Satan

Here's how serious that is... Luke 8:11-12

“Now the parable is this: the seed is the word of God. “Those beside the road are those who have heard; then the devil comes and takes away the word from their heart, so that they will not believe and be saved.

Now the point is – that people are lost because of sin. The only remedy to the problem of sin is the gospel. If Satan stops us from hearing it...he can keep us from being saved. So, the fight against Satan has always been a fight for the truth.

During his final week, Jesus met a man whom he commended. He said to him: You are not far from the kingdom of God.”(Mk.12:34). He was an honest man...who understood scriptures. He was on the right track, but Jesus said that more was needed. He was still outside of the Kingdom of God. You see, close to – is not the same thing as – a part of.

Let me suggest, that Satan loves it, when as many people as possible...are ‘not far’ from God’s kingdom. He wants them close to God’s kingdom but not in it. He wants them to believe that they’re in it, secure in that conviction and immune to further appeal.

On the night that Jesus was betrayed, he prayed for his disciples (John 17). That prayer – was all about truth. Jesus asked his Father for, two things...things that his disciples would need once Jesus was no longer with them.

During his ministry – Jesus protected them from Satan. He did that in large part, by teaching them the words of the Father. They had believed what he said and because of that, Satan’s world hated them. Now that Jesus was leaving and going back to heaven, He petitioned the Father for protection. Here is what he prayed: (15-17)

“I do not ask You to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. “They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world.



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“Sanctify them in the truth; Your word is truth. “As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. “For their sake I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth.

Jesus asked for divine protection in the area of truth. He did that because truth is the first thing that Satan takes away. Jesus asked for the safety and protection of God’s sanctifying truth.

From what Jesus said, it is also evident that the truth that sets us apart is the truth that makes us one. Sanctifying truth is unifying truth. The way that it works is like this. When God’s truth sanctifies two people – it joins each of them to Jesus. And when two people are both joined to Jesus, they are joined to each other.

So, the unity of God’s people is not something that we create. It is the work of God. We are united *in* Christ only with those who have been united *with* Christ. Sanctification happens when we believe and obey the word of God. As the apostle Paul would put it – years later, our job is to maintain the unity created by the Holy Spirit.

But that unity is the product of Truth – given by the Spirit of Truth. It is brought about by the word of God. You and I can destroy unity...but we cannot create it.

We cannot create unity in Christ any more than we can create our own word of truth to sanctify ourselves.

God keeps us safe by giving us his word...the truth. That’s where the scriptures come in. Whenever false doctrine put the church in danger, the Holy Spirit fought back. He inspired men to write and protected the church with the truth.

John’s gospel shares two of the ‘truth’ promises that Jesus made to his apostles, both of which he delivered to them through the Spirit of Truth

The first promise looked to the past. It was total recall. God’s Spirit would cause them to remember all that Jesus had taught. The second promise looked into the future, because they weren’t ready yet to hear the whole truth. They weren’t even ready for the crucifixion.

So Jesus promised them that after he left, the Holy Spirit would come upon them and that they would be clothed with power from on high. The Spirit of God would lead them into all the truth. He would guide them and teach them all of those things that they were not yet ready to hear. This is what began to happen on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2)

Jesus said :

“But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will

disclose to you what is to come. “He will glorify Me, for He will take of Mine and will disclose it to you.

The words of Jesus are not just found in the red letter sections of the gospels. The New Testament is from start to finish, the words of Jesus. The New Testament does not merely contain the word of God, it is the word of God. It was and it still is, divine protection in the area of truth

Now the bible does not recognize many different orders of truth. There is only the regular garden-variety that you and I use every day. The scriptures are not only inspired but are also factual historical documents. They give us an accurate record of real events. The reason why the gospel of Jesus Christ is the truth that sets us free, is because all of those events recorded in the New Testament actually took place. They are not fictitious.

Here are some of those non-fictitious facts about Jesus.



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The scriptures make it clear that Jesus came to earth to save sinners. But as we look at certain things that Jesus did and said, there are two questions that we ought to ask –

This first is:

Did it have to happen – in order for Jesus to save me?

Was it necessary?

The second question – goes one step further. When I find an event that was necessary, was it also sufficient to save me?

Let's start with the incarnation. The apostle Paul has some things to say about that in (Phil 2:6-8) as does the prologue to John's gospel

But the writer of Hebrews explains why it was necessary (2:14-18)

Therefore, since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives.

For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

In order to save us, Jesus had to become one of us. It seems that Jesus could not save...what he had not become. He did not become an angel to save angels. It was necessary for God to come in the flesh in order to save those who were flesh.

The sacrifice for human sins...had to be human. But it had to be more than human to be sufficient. It had to be of infinite value – It had to be divine. Jesus was both.

Therefore, the incarnation was necessary. It was necessary, but was it sufficient?

What if Jesus had showed up on earth as a man...taken a good look around and then caught the next flight back to heaven? Would that have saved us?

Not according to the scriptures. Coming in the flesh was necessary...but not enough. It was necessary – but not sufficient

When God became a human, it was a package deal. The birth of Jesus necessitated his death, as does ours. (Phil 2:5-8)

As a human being, Jesus exercised freedom of choice. The writer of Hebrews says that he was 'tempted in all points like as we are'. He was perhaps tempted as we have never been. He was the only man in history that had never sinned, and Satan knew it

Matthew tells us that Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by Satan. Temptation was a necessary part of God's plan and part of the human experience. But when Jesus was tempted, he chose life over death, obedience over sin. He was tempted as we are, yet without sin.

No sinner could ever purchase our salvation. But the sinless life of Jesus was not sufficient. Had He checked out before the cross, you and I would not be saved.

During his ministry, Jesus fully obeyed the Father. His life was not just defined by the absence of sin...it was filled with goodness and righteousness. Jesus came to fulfill the law and in the process, to keep all of God's promises. He was the son of Abraham and

the son of David. He was the prophet like Moses who delivered a new covenant – in his blood.

The apostle Paul put it this way:

“For as many as are the promises of God, in Him (Christ) they are yes”

God has said yes to each one of His promises because Jesus fulfilled the scriptures. His ministry followed the itinerary set by his heavenly Father. He did what he saw the Father doing. He said, what he heard the Father saying. He did not come to do his own will.

Jesus did all of the things that were needed in order for him to ‘fulfill all righteousness’. He did not just make it up as he went along

Was this necessary? Of course it was. Jesus was no freelance saviour. He always did the will of his heavenly Father

But was it sufficient?

Was it enough for Jesus to persist in ministry, to resist temptation and to do the will of the Father while on earth? Had he stopped short of the cross, the answer is no. No...it was not.

Then there is that terrible scene in Gethsemane...when His hour had come. He was beaten down with sorrow and alone among men – who slept..

Mark writes:

Jesus... went a little beyond them, and fell to the ground and began to pray that if it were possible, the hour might pass Him by. And He was saying, “Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.” (Mk 14:35-36)

Jesus prayed to the God with whom all things are possible. What He wanted to know, was if it was possible for God with whom all things are possible – to let the cup to pass?

The answer was....No. It was not possible. It was not possible for the God with whom all things are possible...to save Jesus from the cross and also to save us from sin. It could not be done.

God could not save the world by just trying a little harder. He could not simply speak and make it so. There are some things that are not possible – for the God with whom all things are possible. There was no other way and no alternative means. There was only one way and it excluded all others.

The cross was necessary. All of the events leading to the cross were necessary. But piled one on top of the other...they were still not sufficient

Not even the cross – by itself was enough. An impure sacrifice would not do. An incomplete ministry – would not have fulfilled the scriptures. The cross was necessary, but by itself, it was not sufficient

Later that night, Jesus said to Peter,

“Put your sword back into its place; for all those who take up the sword shall perish by the sword. “Or do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? “How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it *must* happen this way?”

As Jesus hung on the cross, His enemies insulted him. They said:

“You who are going to destroy the temple and rebuild it in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross.”

In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, “He saved others; He cannot save Himself.

He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him.

Satan was back. The stakes had never been higher. The last thing that Satan wanted Jesus to do were the last things that Jesus still needed to do.

So the people cried out, ‘If you are the Son of God, prove it!’. After all, God would never let his son die on a cross! Surely, the real Son of God would come down from the cross and stomp on his enemies. They taunted him and mocked him with their theology, saying ‘Come down & we’ll believe’. Satan said – it’s over – It’s finished. But Jesus knew it was not. Satan tried to bring him down from the cross – with bad theology. And he didn’t just use the enemies of Jesus. His disciples didn’t want him there either. They tried to talk him out of it. They tried to stop the soldiers with a sword. And if we’d been there, I expect that we would have wanted him to come down as well

What if Jesus had come down from the cross? He could have shut them all up...and blown them away. And I think...that at that moment, the disciples would have loved it. They would have loved it for a day or two...until Jesus explained to them just what had been lost

Jesus had every right to come down. And if he had...not one of us would be saved today. We would not be saved, because it wasn’t finished until it was finished. Our salvation was not actually finished...until Jesus came out of the tomb. Had Jesus failed to rise again, all would have been lost

Rising from the dead – proved that he was the Son of God. It fulfilled the promises of God and opened a door from death to eternal life...where none had ever been

All these events were necessary and all together, they were enough. This is how Jesus has secured for us a salvation that endures to eternal life. This is the truth that sets us free...and there is no other. As the apostles would later declare – there is no other name given among men by which you must be saved.

It is the name of Jesus. He is the son of God who came in human flesh in order to redeem those who are flesh. He was tempted in every way that we are, yet without sin. He lived a life of positive righteousness and obedience to his heavenly Father before dying on the cross to purchase our salvation. And he rose again so that we might join him in life eternal

All these things were necessary for God to make salvation available to us

Our salvation has cost God everything. He has paid a price beyond which not even He can go.

More than anything, God wants to save each one of us. Knowing what we do about what Jesus did in order to save us, we ought not be surprised if God asks us to do more than one thing in order to be saved.

To believe that Jesus...the man from Nazareth was his son. To recognize that we are separated from him because of sin and to turn away from that life of sin. To let others know that we believe in Jesus and to be immersed into his death so that we might rise from the water eternally alive to God. Our spirits need never again part company with our Lord, whose Spirit of Truth will come to live within us.

Each of these things are necessary and all together they are by the grace of God sufficient to bring each of us to salvation and keep us saved.

Barrie ON

The Tower of Babel

Written on: January 31, 2022

Article by: **Bob Sandiford**

Bible Stories for Adults

Text: Genesis 11:1-9

(NIV) Now the whole world had one language and a common speech. ² As people moved eastward, they found a plain in Shinar and settled there. ³ They said to each other, “Come, let’s make bricks and bake them thoroughly.” They used brick instead of stone, and tar for mortar. ⁴ Then they said, “Come, let us build ourselves a city, with a tower that reaches to the heavens, so that we may make a name for ourselves; otherwise we will be scattered over the face of the whole earth.”

⁵ But the LORD came down to see the city and the tower the people were building. ⁶ The LORD said, “If as one people speaking the same language they have begun to do this, then nothing they plan to do will be impossible for them. ⁷ Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other.” ⁸ So the LORD scattered them from there over all the earth, and they stopped building the city. ⁹ That is why it was called Babel —because there the LORD confused the language of the whole world. From there the LORD scattered them over the face of the whole earth.

The basic story is about a tower that some people built a long time ago – thousands of years ago, in fact. But, far from just an interesting incident, God had a purpose for having Moses write it down. The account is about human pride and rebellion, underlining the importance of obedience to God’s word and the consequences of failing to do so.

This story is set in history, taking place sometime after Noah’s death as recorded in Gen 9:28.

- Gen 10 is about the descendants of Noah’s sons and their wives. And – this fits in just before the account of God calling Abram, at the start of Gen 12.

Looking back to Noah:

- After the flood, Noah built an altar and offered sacrifices on it, and God made a covenant with the earth to never again destroy it by flood – that is, to kill all humanity and all living creatures with a flood, and the rainbow is the sign of that covenant. (8:20-9:17)

- God also blessed Noah and his sons, and gave them some commands, the first and last of which was, “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth.” (9:1 & 7)
- The ‘be fruitful’ seemed to be no problem – all of Gen 10 is the record of how fruitful Noah’s sons were. Helped out by them living for a few hundred years after the flood! (e.g. Shem 9:11)

Whether this took place before all the migration described in chapter 10, while all the people were still together, or whether this was one of the branches of Noah’s family, we come to the episode of the tower of Babel in chapter 11. It could certainly fit chronologically before the scattering of the people described in chapter 10. And, as we’ll see, this would also make sense in context of the events surrounding the tower.

The location was somewhere in what was to become Babylon and today is modern day Iraq.

- This may have been under Nimrod, Noah’s great-grandson. Gen 10:10 indicates that Shinar was the location of his kingdom.
- It’s not surprising that everyone alive at the time shared a common language – all were descended from Noah and his three sons.
- They found a place and settled there – they weren’t spreading out as God commanded and in fact were resistant to God’s will. They didn’t want to be ‘scattered over the face of the whole earth’ and lose the advantages of a denser population base (11:4)
- So a decision was made to build not only a city, but also a tower that would be as high as they could make it – figuratively ‘a tower that reaches to the heavens’.
 - This wasn’t an attempt to reach God – it was an attempt to make something so other people would remember them – to make a name for themselves – and something to centre their civilization around, rather than spreading out.
 - Think about it – this was taking place on a plain – plains are flat – so anything tall would be seen from a great distance.
 - It seems that they pioneered the technology of brick-making by baking clay. They did this because stone is not abundant in a fertile plain.
 - The plain where they lived must have been fertile, since there was enough food produced not only for the farmers, but for the workers who would be making the brick, bringing in wood, and building the city and the tower.
 - Archaeology has uncovered a number of ancient towers in the area – called Ziggurats. Square bases, sloping sides, with a small shrine at the top.
 - Observation – even the building materials were man-made, not God-made.
- Before the tower was finished, God came to take a look.
 - This is figurative of course since God would have known everything about what was going on all along.
 - In much the same way that he had intervened in the lives of Adam and Eve when they rebelled, God took direct action again. He chose to disrupt

their ambitions by replacing their common language with many languages. This made it impossible for them to cooperate in their joint project. All such activity came to a halt as they splintered along linguistic lines and scattered all over the earth.

- The name by which we recognize the tower today – Babel – wasn't the name the builders gave it. 'Babel' apparently is the word from which Babylon comes – but is also close to the Hebrew word for 'confused.'

Observation: When members of the godhead purposed to create Mankind in their own image, they expressed that divine intent with the words 'Let Us' (Gen 1:27). Similar cooperative intent was echoed by the migrants to the land of Shinar who in rebellion to God said "Come let us build...(Gen 11:4)". God responded with another 'Let Us'...to put an end to that rebellion (Gen 11:7).

We are reminded that while men and women rebel and sin, the will of God still prevails. He guides the flow of history, establishing physical and spiritual boundaries beyond which we cannot go. It is rather within these boundaries that we decide whether or not we will trust and obey, or go our own way.

Looking ahead to Abram's calling

Genesis 12:1-3 (NIV) The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. ² "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you. "

What lessons might we take away from this?

1. Human pride and earthly plans cannot stand before God's power.
 - a. God's instructions to Noah and his sons were not only to be fruitful – but also to 'fill the earth' – to spread out through the world.
 - b. This group wasn't following that command. Shem was quite likely still alive at this point since he lived 500 years after the flood, and knew that commandment. Instead, they settled in one place and decided to stay there and NOT be scattered over the face of the whole earth. Their pride was in wanting to show off how great they were, how skilled and smart – and that pride led them to rebel against God's command, and to try to steal His glory.
 - c. God put paid to that idea – starting with multiplying languages – and causing them to be scattered.
 - d. For us – this is the power of God, and is why we need to be careful about our choices.
2. Humanity can't elevate itself in any meaningful way in God's sight – only God can do that.

a. In the very next chapter, God chooses Abram – and promises to Abram the results that these humans were striving to achieve for themselves. “I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing.” (12:2). “So Abram went, as the LORD had told him;” (12:4)

1. The contrast between Babel and Abram has to be intentional
2. The promise of God vs the intent of human pride
3. The results of rebellion vs the results of obedience.
4. For us – put on humility before God and before others – the reward we want is the reward that only God can give us, and humility is the only way to get it.
3. God’s plans will work themselves out despite human opposition and rebellion. And – there are consequences to that rebellion – consequences to sin.
 - a. The disobedience represented by the tower of Babel didn’t stop God’s intent for humanity to spread out through the world.
 - b. If people won’t obey – God’s will shall still be accomplished – and may carry immediate consequences for the disobedient, though some of those may be deferred.
 - c. With this principle in mind, we ought to examine our hearts and minds regularly to ensure that we follow a path of humble obedience, respecting the authority and power of God...for all glory belongs to God.
 - i. God still confounds and confuses the lives of those who set out to create their own ‘tower of Babel’.

Summing up:

- If you know what God wants, then do it. Even when the things which we do are done in obedience to His will, they must also take place within the boundaries that God has set for our individual lives .

James 4:13-17 (NIV) ¹³ Now listen, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go to this or that city, spend a year there, carry on business and make money.” ¹⁴ Why, you do not even know what will happen tomorrow. What is your life? You are a mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead, you ought to say, “If it is the Lord’s will, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogant schemes. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ If anyone, then, knows the good they ought to do and doesn’t do it, it is sin for them.

- Focus on making God famous – give Him the glory or credit for all that He accomplishes. Let *Him* lift *us* up, rather than trying to do it ourselves.

John 6:40 (NIV) For my Father’s will is that everyone who looks to the Son and believes in him shall have eternal life, and I will raise them up at the last day.”