

—2000 YEARS OF EXPECTATION—

JESUS



A REVOLUTION CONTINUES:

500th Anniversary of the Reformation

Discover who
wanted him
dead and why

The incredible
truth of his life
and work

The Resurrection
of Hope

Spring 2017 | Display until 5/9/2017

Engaged Entertainment Plus • \$9.99 US



Engaged Media Inc.

Multigenerational HOPE



The Gospel is not intended to be the prize of a single generation or people group. Jesus' life, ministry and resurrection was and is for all. In the final words God spoke to his people for 400 years before the New Testament narrative, he made clear the value of a multigenerational faith.

"Look, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome Day of the Lord comes. And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers" (Malachi 4:6).

The writers of this magazine make up a multiethnic, multigenerational team. From regular members of the Church to seminary students, pastors and more—their bond is a deeply rooted, passionate faith in the risen Savior.

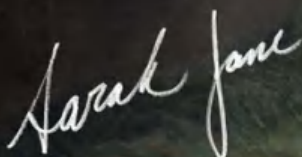
So why make a magazine about Jesus, especially when there has certainly been much written on the topic already? Hope. This magazine's purpose is to convey the sure and steadfast hope of the Gospel.

It goes deep on the oh-so familiar stories of Jesus' life and work (beginning on page 16), so that the cultural boundaries Jesus broke through can be seen in light of modern faith. With Holy Week as a beacon of hope for all who believe, we've designed a devotional-inspired section that you might steep yourself in the events of each day (beginning on page 58). Aware that life brings with it trials, suffering, fear and uncertainty, scripture and wisdom combine for assurance (pages 10, 14, 110, 124 and 130).

God sent his son, Jesus, who lived a perfect life amid sin and brokenness. After teaching, healing and ministering to both Jews and Gentiles, he died on the cross as the atonement for the sins of mankind. Fulfilling the prophesies of the Old Testament, Jesus rose again—defeating sin and death and creating a sure hope. God sent the Holy Spirit to be with his believers—who now have access to the Creator and the promise of Heaven.

This truth is the hope above all hope. Unwavering in times of prosperity or pain—this is the story of hope. †

Sarah Jane Stone





The Transfiguration of the Lord by D. Nollein in St. Jacob's Church, Bruges, Belgium (c. 1694).

JESUS

Spring 2017

EDITORIAL

Editorial Director: **Jickie Torres**
Editor: **Sarah Jane Stone**
Executive Editor: **Jolene Nolte**
Managing Editor: **Kristin Dowding**
Editorial Intern: **Stephanie Agnes-Crockett**

DESIGN

Art Director: **Kelly Lee**
Design Director: **Gabby Oh, Eric Knagg**

CONTRIBUTORS

Mike Alvarez, Ed Cyzewski, Analicia Davis, Judith El Sherbini, Peter J. Epler, Chris Hardy, Emily Keery, Carolyn Koh, Ryan MacDonald, Brian Morris, Karen Ruth Myers, Sarah Chantal Parro, Lauren Saergent, Scott Schutte, Sarah Schwartz, Ryan Stone, Alicia Taylor, Victoria Van Vlear, Alexandria Williamson, Sarah Winfrey

ADVERTISING

Terry Rollman - Publisher
trollman@engagedmediainc.com
Gabe Frimmel - Ad Sales Director
gfrimmel@engagedmediainc.com
(714) 200-1930
Donna Silva Norris - Senior Account Executive
(714) 200-1933
Becky Maas - Account Executive
(714) 200-1959
Sherrie Norris - Account Executive
(704) 421-1517
John Cabral - Advertising Design
Eric Gomez - Ad Traffic Coordinator
Gennifer Merriday - Ad Traffic Coordinator

DIRECT MARKETING GROUP

John Bartulin - (866) 866-5146 ext. 2746

OPERATIONS

Robert Short: IT Manager
Devender Hasija: Newsstand and Circulation Analyst
Shailesh Khandelwal: Subscriptions Manager
Alex Mendoza: Administrative Assistant
Victoria Van Vlear: Intern Program Manager

EDITORIAL, PRODUCTION & SALES OFFICE

17890 Sky Park Circle
Irvine, CA 92614
(714) 939-9991
Fax (800) 249-7761
www.engagedmediamags.com
www.facebook.com/eambybeckett

Jesus © 2017 by Engaged Media, Inc. All rights reserved. Reproduction of any material from this issue in whole or in part is strictly prohibited.

CUSTOMER SERVICE

17890 Sky Park Circle
Irvine, CA 92614

SINGLE COPY SALES

(800) 764-6278
(239) 653-0225 Foreign Inquiries
subscriptions@engagedmediainc.com
customerservice@engagedmediainc.com

Back Issues
www.engagedmediamags.com

Books, Merchandise, Reprints
(800) 764-6278

Letters to the Editor, New Products or to
Contribute a Story or Photo
Sarah Jane Stone:
sjstone@engagedmediainc.com

ENGAGED®
MEDIA, INC.

Mike Savino: CEO
Philip Trinkle: Newsstand Sales Director
Jickie Torres: Director of Content
Jason Mulroney: Director of Content
Kris Roadruck: Director of Marketing
Pinaki Bhattacharya: Vertical Manager

CONTENTS

6 Archaeological Discoveries

8 Timeline

10 A Long-Awaited Hope

14 A Season of Preparation

Man on a Mission

18 Baptism & Beginnings

20 Tempted for the Sake
of Man

24 A Woman, a Well and the
Living Water

28 Rejected from his
Hometown

30 Sermon on the Mount

34 Freeing the
Possessed Man

38 The Bleeding Woman

40 Miracle of Generosity

42 Walking on Water

44 Blind and Sent

48 Raising of Lazarus

52 Roadside Redemption

54 Powerful Parables

Holy Week

60 The Triumphal Entry

64 Jesus Cleanses the
Temple

68 Temple Debates

“The Lord your God is in your midst, a mighty one who will save; he will rejoice over you with gladness; he will quiet you by his love; he will exult over you with loud singing.” —Zephaniah 3:17 (ESV)

7/2 Olivet Discourse

7/4 Judas & Caiaphas

7/6 The Last Supper

8/2 Agony in the Garden

8/6 Betrayal and Arrest

8/8 The Three Jewish Trials

9/2 The Rabbi vs. Rome

9/4 Via Dolorosa

9/8 Death by Crucifixion

10/2 Holy Saturday

10/4 Resurrection

Beyond Easter Sunday

11/0 Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection

11/6 Spreading the Gospel

12/0 The Changing Church

12/4 United in Suffering

Extras

12/8 Resources

13/0 Inspiration

On the Cover

COVER
Christ Weeping Over Jerusalem by Ary Scheffer (1851).
Courtesy of Wikicommons
Design by Kelly Lee

BACK COVER
Photography by Mbolina/iStock
Design by Kelly Lee

Scripture quotations, unless otherwise noted, from THE MESSAGE. Copyright © by Eugene H. Peterson 1993, 1994, 1995, 1996, 2000, 2001, 2002. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.

*Timeline of Holy Week is open to interpretation. We based ours on Bible Gateway's timeline, available at bible.gateway.com/blog.

Archaeological Discoveries

PLACES, OBJECTS AND HISTORICAL WITNESSES CONTEXTUALIZE AND CORROBORATE THE GOSPELS.

By *Jolene Nolte*



1. Herod's Palace and Possible Site of Jesus' Trial Jerusalem

Underground, near the Tower of David, archaeologists excavated remains of Herod's Jerusalem Palace. Many historians, archaeologists and biblical scholars think this was where Pilate would have stayed to keep tabs on the crowded Jerusalem at Passover and where Jesus' trial with him would have taken place.

2. Jesus-Era House Nazareth

In December 2009, archaeologists unveiled remains of a house in Nazareth, dating back to Jesus' era in the early first century AD. Based on the artifacts archaeologists found, such as chalk vessels for following Jewish purity laws for food and water, the house probably belonged to a simple Jewish family. Jesus and his contemporaries may have known this house well.

3. The Jesus Boat

Ginosar, between Tiberias and Capernaum along the Sea of Galilee

Also known as the Galilee Boat, this vessel was recovered from the Sea of Galilee in 1986 and dates back to Jesus' time period. Several of Jesus' disciples were Galilean fisherman, and he and his disciples spent much of their ministry in towns along the Sea of Galilee, perhaps using this boat or one very similar to it. The boat was patched with different kinds of wood, mainly oak and cedar, showing the resourcefulness of its owner(s). The boat is on display today at the Yigal Alon Center.

4. The Pilate Stone

Caesarea Maritima (the original is now located in Jerusalem's Israel Museum)

In 1961, archaeologists discovered a stone, which, while damaged, has a clear inscription referring to Pontius Pilate as the prefect of Judea, verifying the existence and political role of Pilate in the Gospel accounts. A replica of the stone remains where it was discovered in Caesarea Maritima, but the original is now housed at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

5. Ossuary of Caiaphas

Peace Forest, since moved to Jerusalem's Israel Museum

This ornate ossuary bears authentic inscriptions in Aramaic that translate to "Joseph, son of Caiaphas." Scientists dated the bones to the first century and determined they belonged to a 60-year-old male. The first-century historian Flavius Josephus refers to a "Joseph called Caiaphas" as high priest during the reign of Tiberius, Jesus' time period.

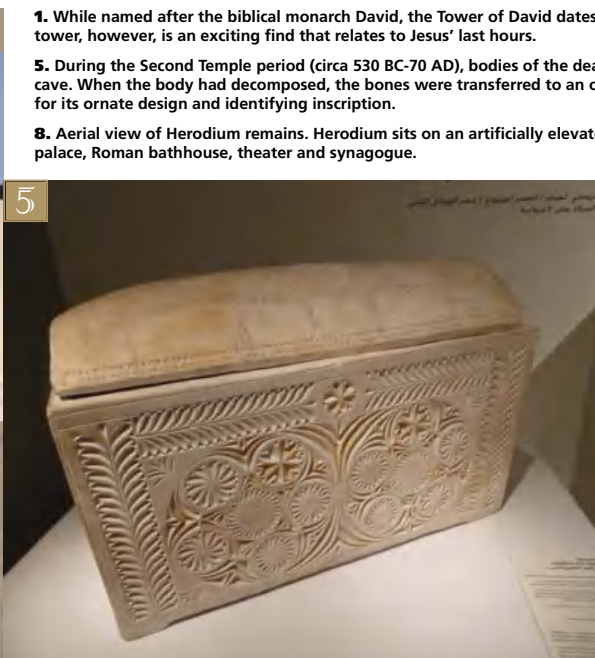
6. Dead Sea Scrolls

Discovered in Qumran, now at Jerusalem's Israel Museum

A discovery that keeps on giving, the scrolls provide many of the oldest known copies of the Hebrew Bible. Extra-biblical writings also give insight into the diverse ideological landscape within Second Temple Judaism, which includes Jesus' era.



4



5



6



7 8



7. Magdala Synagogue

Migdal, part of Galilee region

One of the few and oldest synagogues from the first century AD, the Magdala synagogue is also notable for what is known as the Magdala Stone. The stone features the oldest known relief of a menorah and includes depictions of other objects and symbols associated with the Second Temple, offering insight into first-century Judaism.

The Gospels report that Jesus preached in synagogues throughout Galilee, so it is likely Jesus taught here. There is evidence Magdala used to be a Sea of Galilee port city, making for easy access by boat from Jesus' early ministry home base of Capernaum. The ancient Magdala was likely home to Mary Magdalene.

8. Herod's Lavish Structures

Judean Desert, Caesarea Maritima and more

Many Jews of Jesus' era were disillusioned and frustrated with their leaders, like Herod, who made themselves quite comfortable within the Roman system. Herod the Great remains famous for his opulent structures like Herodium, the fortress at Masada and an artificial harbor as well as Roman-style entertainment structures in Caesarea Maritima. He also had a palace in Jerusalem and rebuilt the Second Temple.

FAR LEFT: PETERHERMESFURIAN/ISTOCK; 1. JEAN & NATHALIE/CC-BY-2.0; 2. DAVID SILVERMAN/GETTY IMAGES; 3. POOL/AP/GETTY IMAGES; 4. BERTHOLD WERNER/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; 5. DEROR_AU/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS; 6. UNIVERSAL HISTORY ARCHIVE/GETTY IMAGES; 7. DAVID SILVERMAN/GETTY IMAGES; 8. ASAF T/WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A Messianic Timeline

A VISUAL HISTORY FROM KING DAVID'S REIGN TO THE HORRORS OF MESSIANIC CLAIMANTS' EFFORTS GONE TERRIBLY WRONG OFFERS CONTEXT FOR THE PERIOD JESUS ENTERS.

587 BC

Temple destroyed by Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar II. Beginning of Babylonian Exile.



Colored frieze of an aurochs, part of the Babylonian Ishtar Gate, which was built during King Nebuchadnezzar II's reign.

516 BC

Returned exiles rebuild and consecrate the Temple, known as the Second Temple.

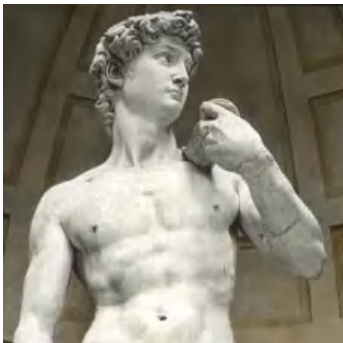


Engraving depicting King Cyrus returning gold and silver articles Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the Temple in Jerusalem. By Gustave Dore (c. 1832-1883).



10th century BC

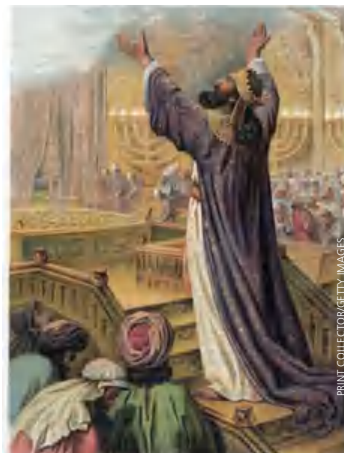
David, king of Israel, God promises to permanently establish his throne (2 Samuel 7).



Michelangelo's David (1501-1505).

c. 970-931 BC

Solomon builds the Temple.



539 BC

Persia conquers Babylon and allows Jewish exiles to return.



Tomb of Cyrus the Great, the Persian king who conquered Babylon and allowed the exiled Jews to return and rebuild the Temple.

167 BC

Maccabean Revolt defeats the Greek Seleucids, establishing Judea as an independent state. The Maccabees cleanse the Temple and establish the Hasmonean dynasty of priest-kings.



Depiction of a seven-branch menorah, which was part of the Second Temple. When Judas Maccabeus cleansed the Temple, he had the menorah lit, and one day's supply lasted for eight days, an event Hanukkah commemorates.

37 BC-4 BC

Herod the Great king of Judea. He is appointed by the Roman Senate, and he builds many famous structures and rebuilds the Temple.



The Western Wall in Jerusalem is an outer retaining wall that surrounded Herod's rebuilt Second Temple.

66-70 AD

First Jewish-Roman War, also known as The Great Revolt. Jewish rebel forces rise up against Rome. The revolt ends in a horrifying bloodbath in Jerusalem. Roman forces destroy the Temple, and any Jews not killed by sword or starvation are taken from Jerusalem—most taken into slavery.



Detail of the Arch of Titus showing Roman troops taking sacred items from the destroyed Temple, such as the large menorah at the center.



331 BC

Alexander the Great conquers Judea.



Detail of Alexander the Great from a mosaic of the Battle of Issus, made c. 100 BC.

63 BC

Roman general Pompey captures Jerusalem, putting Herod the Great and his territories under Rome.



Pompey in the Temple of Jerusalem by Jean Fouquet (1420-1480).

c. 4 BC-33 AD

Life of Jesus.



Baptism of Christ by Joachim Patinir (c. 1510-1520).

132-135 AD

Bar Kokhba Revolt ends with Jews expelled from Jerusalem, and Roman Emperor Hadrian institutes persecutory policies against the Jews.



Among the Dead Sea Scrolls are 15 letters between Bar Kokhba and his subordinates during the Bar Kokhba Revolt.

A Long-Awaited Hope

JESUS ENTERS A WORLD FRAUGHT WITH EXPECTATION, BUT WHAT WERE PEOPLE HOPING FOR?

By *Jolene Nolte*

It had been 1,000 years since God promised David that his descendants would reign forever. The Jewish people have since endured exile, oppression, corruption and hardship. They wait and hope for God to fulfill his promise and reestablish a peaceful, just rule. Simeon has waited all his life. Anna has waited prayerfully for decades. One day, a young, poor couple brought their firstborn son to the Temple, and Simeon and Anna knew their promised Messiah had come. Simeon, upon seeing the child, said, “For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all nations: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel” (Luke 2:30-32, NIV).

But it was not all praises and angel choruses. Simeon prophesied to the child’s mother, “This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too” (Luke 2:34, NIV).

The baby Jesus was already raising and subverting expectations, getting hopes up and looking incredibly different from what you would expect. You would expect God’s chosen ruler to arrive with fanfare and any imaginable luxury—this child was born on a stable floor in a backwater town to working class parents.

A PROPHESED KING

Messiah means “anointed one” (the Greek translation of the Hebrew title is “Christ”), and Old Testament prophets would anoint kings. In the prophetic texts that refer to an anointed one, he is anointed in order to rule as God’s chosen king. To understand how his contemporaries reacted to him—what hopes they cherished and why—we need to understand something of the prophetic and historical context.

SETTING THE SCENE: THE INTERTESTAMENTAL PERIOD

The scene Jesus entered comes in the midst of a long path of suffering, exile and oppression. While many remained in the Promised Land, that land passed hands several times before Jesus arrived on the scene. Alexander the Great conquered Israel, and after his death, the Maccabees mounted an eventually successful revolution. Though they never claimed any Davidic ancestry, they established themselves as priest-kings of Israel, known as the Hasmonean dynasty, lasting from 152-37 BC.

With General Pompey in 63 BC, Rome entered Jerusalem as the new conqueror. The Roman general marked his victory by marching into the Temple’s Holy of Holies, where only the high priest was allowed once a year. Later, while the Jewish king Herod the Great (37-4 BC) was allowed a quasi-independent rule of Judea, after his death,



*The Presentation
at the Temple* by
Armand Jean du
Plessis (c. 1640).



Key Texts

- 2 Samuel 7

After King David brought the Ark of the Covenant to Jerusalem, he thought it was only fitting to at long last build a Temple to house it. Through the prophet Nathan, God told David he was not the one to build the Temple. Instead,

"God himself will build you a house! [...] Your family and your kingdom are permanently secured. I'm keeping my eye on them! And your royal throne will always be there, rock solid."
—2 Samuel 7:11b; 16-17

- Psalm 2 & 110

Psalm 2 envisions an anointed one with God's favor ruling over all the nations, bringing God's justice to the world. Psalm 110 describes a priest-king God appoints to rule as the true king over all nations.

- Daniel 7

In this vision, Daniel, an exile in the Babylonian court, reports, "I saw a human form, a son of man, arriving in a whirl of clouds. He came to The Old One and was presented to him. He was given power to rule—all the glory of royalty. Everyone—race, color, and creed—had to serve him. His rule would be forever, never ending. His kingly rule would never be replaced."
—Daniel 7:13-14

This theme of God restoring his exiled people and setting Israel and the whole world to rights continues throughout the Old Testament prophets. Even after the Israelites returned from the Babylonian Exile and rebuilt the Temple, Second Temple Judaism still saw itself in exile. There was no Davidic king on the throne, and biblical prophets and rabbinic writings note that God did not inhabit this Temple the same way he had the First.



Rome divided the land that formerly belonged to Herod amongst his squabbling descendants, fragmenting Jewish political autonomy from Rome.

By 6 AD, the region of Judea became a Roman province, ruled directly by Rome, while Galilee still had Herod's son, Herod Antipas, as tetrarch, or ruler of one-fourth of his father's former territory—more as a prince subject to Rome than a quasi-independent king like his father.

RESPONSES TO ROME

Historians in the first century AD, such as Josephus, Tacitus and Suetonius all attest that the hope for the coming Messiah was widespread

in the Judaism of the day, but in ways that looked differed: Some opted to get what they could out of the present system—collecting taxes on Rome's behalf and pocketing the exorbitant upcharge, for instance. Some opted out entirely, like the community at Qumran, and still others sought to mount a revolution like the Maccabees before them. Up until the end of the Jewish-Roman Wars, Jewish revolutionaries aimed to throw off their pagan Roman rulers, reestablish the monarchy and renew their commitment to God and to the Torah by rebuilding the Temple.

This is the scene Jesus entered. First-century Jews hoped for their promised king to arrive,



“This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.”

—Luke 2:34 (NIV).

throw off their Roman oppressors and establish his just, permanent, world-restoring rule in its place.

Between the prophetic biblical texts and their historical experience, N.T. Wright in *The Challenge of Jesus* notes that, despite the variety of views, there are common themes in what first-century Jews expected of a Messiah: “First, he would build or restore the Temple. Second, he would fight the decisive battle against the enemy. David’s first act upon being anointed was to fight Goliath; his last was to plan the Temple. Judas Maccabeus defeated the Syrians and cleansed the Temple. Herod defeated the Parthians and

rebuilt the Temple. Bar Kokhba, the last would-be Messiah of the period, aimed to defeat the Romans and rebuild the Temple.”

Jesus, however, did not rebuild the physical Temple, and he never confronted Rome with so much as a sling. He was not curating his followers in order to gain influence—he associated with the down and outs, women and the unclean.

With those expectations in mind, Jesus on the surface seems a very strange candidate for Messiahship. The conflict between the hopes of the people and Jesus’ approach is stark. In his years of public ministry, climaxing in his last week in Jerusalem, this clash comes to a head. †

The Queen of Sheba before the Temple of King Solomon in Jerusalem by Salomon de Bray, (c. 1630-1634). Israel as an ancient nation was at its height in Solomon’s reign with its land united by one king and with a newly built and glorious Temple.

A Season of Preparation

HOW MIRRORING JESUS' MINISTRY PREPARATIONS IN MODERN LENT CELEBRATIONS CAN LEAD TO A DEEPER UNDERSTANDING OF THE MESSIAH.

By Chris Hardy

Every year, in preparation for Easter, many of the world's Christians participate in the season of Lent. A part of the liturgical calendar, Lent spans the 40 days (excluding Sundays) prior to Easter Sunday. It is a time of repentance, fasting and focusing on Christ's salvific work on the cross. The tradition of Lent invites the believer to embody Jesus' wilderness experience, subsequent to his baptism, that prepared the Savior for public ministry.

"Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit, returned from the Jordan and was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness for forty days, being tempted by the devil" (Luke 4:1-2a).

To say that Jesus was "prepared" for his ministry is not to say that he was lacking in knowledge or understanding before his time of intense temptation. But as hymn writer, worship leader and author Matt Papa says of Jesus experiencing suffering in his time on earth, "Now you have a God who understands your suffering, not only by omniscience but by experience." The preceding of Jesus' public ministry by a time of temptation and trial sets the stage for the suffering Jesus was to experience throughout the rest of his ministry. Jesus also sets the example for Christians to follow today.

Interestingly, Jesus is not the only biblical character that has a wilderness experience as a means of preparation for a greater task ahead. God cleanses and prepares the earth with the 40 days of the flood. Moses is prepared to face

Pharaoh through his 40 years in the desert. Under Moses' leadership, the Israelites spend 40 years in the desert before inhabiting the Promised Land.

God did not and does not abandon his people in their times of wilderness; rather, he uses these seasons of trial to teach his children to raise their focus above their situation and lock their gaze and hope on him.

In the same way, Jesus, in the face of trial and temptation, calls his mind toward God's truth and his ultimate purpose for Jesus' life and ministry. In the midst of the trial, Jesus fasts. And when the enemy appeals to his suffering, Jesus fights back by quoting the Law and the Prophets.

It is into this example that we are invited to enter through the tradition of Lent: to be prepared for the battles ahead, to practice the spiritual disciplines of fasting, prayer and meditating on scripture—all for the purpose of a deeper devotion to God.

This Lent, will you practice the discipline of preparation? Will you follow the example set by the Messiah to focus your attention toward God and his salvation? This practice will not only prepare you for the trials and temptations that are promised us in this life, but it will also prepare you for a greater celebration of Easter.

Through imitating Jesus' wilderness experience, we gain the perspective to truly see Easter as the celebration that it is. We see the truth in Jesus' final words in John 16:33: "In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." †

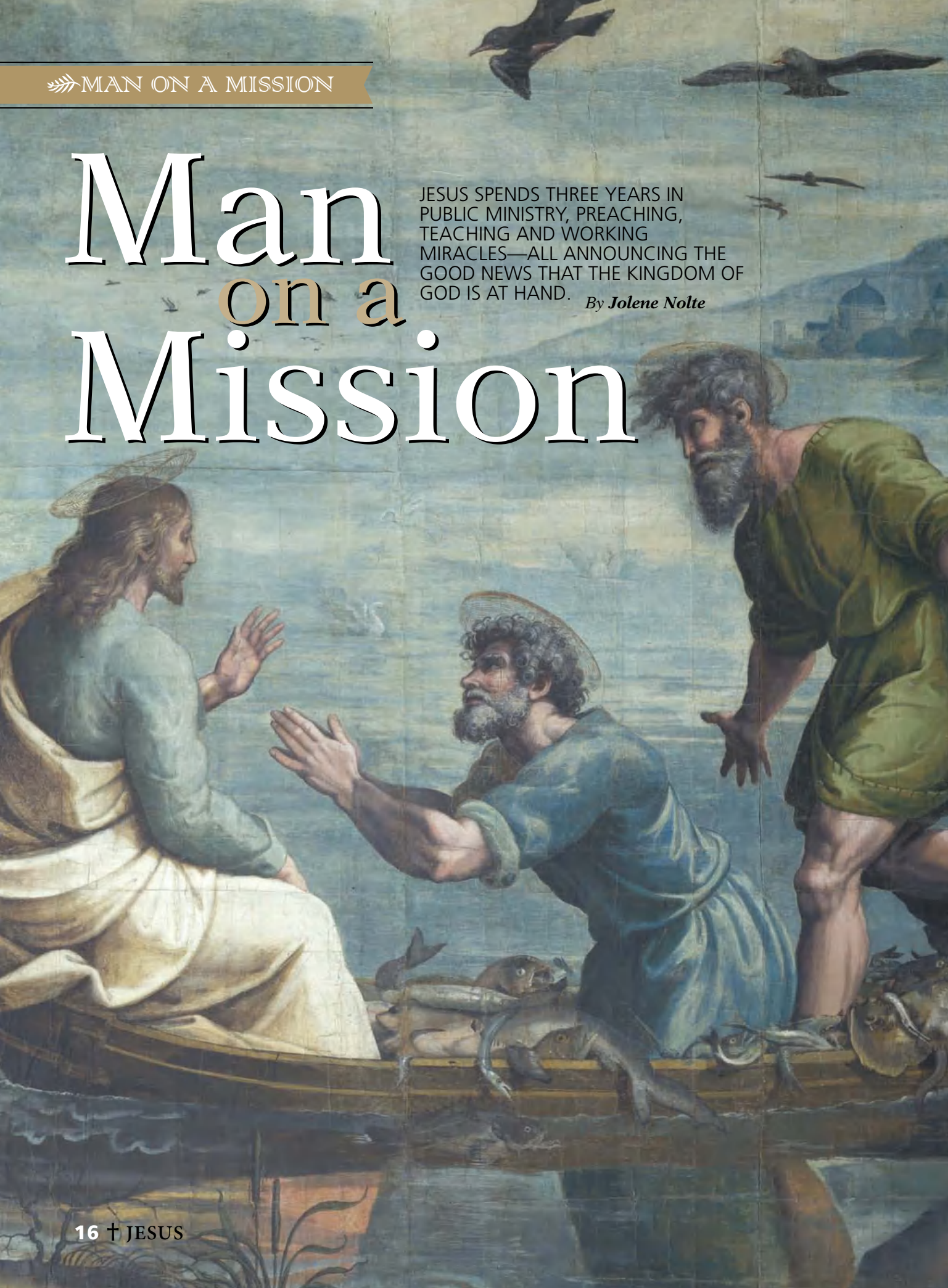


God did not and does not abandon his people in their times of wilderness; rather he uses these seasons of trial to teach his children to raise their focus above their situation and lock their gaze and hope on him.

Man on a Mission

JESUS SPENDS THREE YEARS IN PUBLIC MINISTRY, PREACHING, TEACHING AND WORKING MIRACLES—ALL ANNOUNCING THE GOOD NEWS THAT THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS AT HAND.

By Jolene Nolte





In the waters of baptism followed by the desolate wilderness period of fasting and praying, Jesus emerges and begins teaching, preaching and healing. Jesus describes his ministry this way,

“Go back and tell John what’s going on:
The blind see,
The lame walk,
Lepers are cleansed,
The deaf hear,
The dead are raised,

The wretched of the earth learn that God
is on their side.

Is this what you were expecting? Then
count yourselves most blessed!”
(Matthew 11:4-6)

His preaching and his miracles point
toward a new kingdom. Like the prophets of
old, he does not just speak his message—he
enacts it. Crowds gather because people
know something is afoot. Maybe here at last
was the one to redeem Israel. †

Baptism

&

THE WHO, WHEN, WHERE, WHY AND HOW OF JESUS' BAPTISM
IN THE JORDAN RIVER.

By *Victoria Van Vlear*

Beginnings

At first glance, Jesus' baptism seems straightforward. Jesus goes down to the nearby river, his cousin John dunks him in the water; the clouds part, a dove lands on him and a faceless voice tells the crowd that he's the Son of God. Yet these four verses in Matthew 3 are a powerful kickoff to Christ's ministry and contain significance you won't want to miss.

WHO?

This scene plays out between two power figures in first-century Israel—Jesus and his cousin, John the Baptist. When we meet John at the beginning of Matthew 3, he's "preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand'" (Matthew 3:1–2, ESV). What does that phrase mean? *The ESV Study Bible* says that "to repent, or 'change one's mind,' in the Old Testament called for a change in a person's attitude toward God that impacted one's actions and life choices." John is calling for the people to return to God and is baptizing them as a symbol of their repentance—why? Because the "kingdom of heaven is at hand." The people don't know it at the time, but John is talking about Jesus.

"John's ministry was a precursor ministry for the Messiah," says Kyle Strobel, theology professor at Biola University. Like Jesus, John's ministry was foretold 700 years earlier by the prophet Isaiah: "A voice cries: 'In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God'" (Isaiah 40:3, ESV). John is the trailer to the feature film, the prologue to the story.

WHEN?

All three of the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) relate Jesus' baptism as the first event of significance after his birth. This may seem a bit odd. Jesus is now 30 years old—plenty of time to get a head start on the miracle business. But that's not what he had in mind. This is the first event of Jesus' recorded public ministry, which would last for the next three years. "The focus here is on the new era inaugurated, because God has descended to us in Christ Jesus," Strobel says. Jesus has come to shake things up, and he's starting at the Jordan.

WHERE?

John's ministry happened in two main places: the Judean wilderness and the nearby Jordan River; both of which are east and north of Jerusalem. "It is not

irrelevant that John is in the desert," Strobel says. "The desert was the place God sent his people to remember who he was...and where people went as a prophetic witness against the established religious enterprises of Jerusalem."

Both John and Jesus set themselves against the religious leaders in Jerusalem, the Pharisees and Sadducees. By placing himself in the desert, John is protesting the actions of the religious culture in Jerusalem. The fact that Jesus comes out to John in the wilderness is significant as well. *The ESV Study Bible* says that by doing so, "Jesus also endorses John's ministry message and links his mission to John's."

WHY?

As the Incarnate God, Jesus doesn't need cleansing. John wonders about this when Jesus shows up on the bank of the Jordan. "John would have prevented him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?'" (Matthew 3:14, ESV).

But Jesus has a ready answer: "Let it be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15, ESV). What does that mean? In his *Commentary on the Whole Bible*, Matthew Henry says that Christ did this "to show his readiness to comply with



Baptism of Christ by unknown.

all God's righteous precepts...Thus Jesus began first to do, and then to teach."

HOW?

Once John has baptized Jesus, two things happen that make this ordinary scene extraordinary. "Behold, the

heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and coming to rest on him; and behold, a voice from heaven said, 'This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased'" (Matthew 3:16–17, ESV).

How does this heavenly intervention

change the event? Just as Jesus endorsed John by coming to him for baptism, the Father endorses Jesus by sending his Spirit in the form of a dove. "Through God's baptism of Jesus in the Spirit we discover more than the Messiah," Strobel says. "Here we see God's own Son." †

Tempted for the Sake of Man

JESUS PROVES HIMSELF TO BE
THE PERFECT ADAM THROUGH
A TRIAL OF TEMPTATIONS.

By *Mike Alvarez*

Everyone is tempted in this world: tempted to eat foods we shouldn't, to lie to impress others, to look lustfully at someone and to do things we shouldn't. Not only are we tempted, we're pretty bad about fighting our temptations, too. "People are not good at anticipating the power of their urges, and those who are the most confident about their self-control are the most likely to give into temptation," writes Loran Nordgren, senior lecturer of management and organizations at the Kellogg School of Management, Northwestern University, in Illinois.

THE ROOT OF TEMPTATION

Why are we tempted? The secular answer could be that we're in a moral society which flourishes when people follow rules laid out for their benefit. The biblical answer to why we're tempted is simply, Adam. Adam, the first man, found in the book of Genesis, was in the Garden of Eden with his wife, Eve. God gave Adam everything. There was only one thing God said Adam and Eve could not do:

"The Lord God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it. And

the Lord God commanded the man, saying, 'You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die'" (Genesis 2:15-17).

Genesis 3 goes on to tell that the serpent, Satan, tempted Eve to eat of the tree, which then led to Adam being tempted by Eve. Adam had a perfect life and still failed at fighting temptation—introducing sin to the world and bringing temptation to modern life.

JESUS FACES TEMPTATION

Despite the fall, there is hope. In the Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, Satan tries to tempt Jesus. Jesus, who is God, knew that during his time on earth he would be tempted. He knew he would have to suffer.

In the three Gospel accounts, Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, and then, being led by the Spirit, went into the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights. While there is no dispute between the accounts as to whether or not Jesus was tempted, there is some minor question as to exactly how it happened.

Mark and Luke both indicate that Satan tempted Jesus—most likely throughout the 40 days. The



The Temptation of Christ
by unknown.



Why would JESUS do this?

To Be the Perfect Adam

Alone in the wilderness and fully committed to complete fasting, Jesus is approached by Satan and tempted in a very similar manner to which Adam and Eve were tempted. Satan twisted the words of God in his attempts to cause Jesus to give into his offers. Unlike Adam, Jesus stayed firm. Lacking the sustenance of food and even company, Jesus was in a place where he had nothing but his dependence on God. Even still, he did not give into temptation.

To Be a Sympathetic and Helpful Priest

In John Piper's book, *Fifty Reasons Why Jesus Came to Die*, Piper discusses how much worse Jesus' temptation was than ours. "On the way to the cross for thirty years, Christ was tempted like every human is tempted. True, he never sinned. But wise people have pointed out that this means his temptations were stronger than ours, not weaker. If a person gives in to temptation, it never reaches its fullest and longest assault. We capitulate while the pressure is still building. But Jesus never did. So he endured the full pressure to the end and never caved. He knows what it is to be tempted with the fullest force."



Close up of
stained glass
window.



Temptation of Christ by the Devil by unknown (12th century).

text doesn't state exactly how Satan tempted Jesus throughout the 40 days, but Matthew and Luke both describe the final three temptations.

THE ACCOUNT

At this trying point of having not eaten in almost a month and a half, the king of lies, the all-star of temptation nips at Jesus, offering to satisfy desires apart from God—to which Jesus' responses are extraordinary.

And the tempter came and said to him, "If you are the Son of God, command these stones to become loaves of bread." But he answered, "It is written, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God" (Matthew 4:3-4, ESV).

In the face of temptation, Christ leans on God the Father's words. He refutes the devil with an understanding that one cannot simply take God's words as good advice, but as the air we breathe to live.

"Then the devil took him to the holy city and set him on the pinnacle of the temple and said to him, 'If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down, for it is written, "He will co-

mand his angels concerning you," and "On their hands they will bear you up, lest you strike your foot against a stone.'"

"Jesus said to him, "Again it is written, 'You shall not put the Lord your God to the test.'"

"Again, the devil took him to a very high mountain and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory.

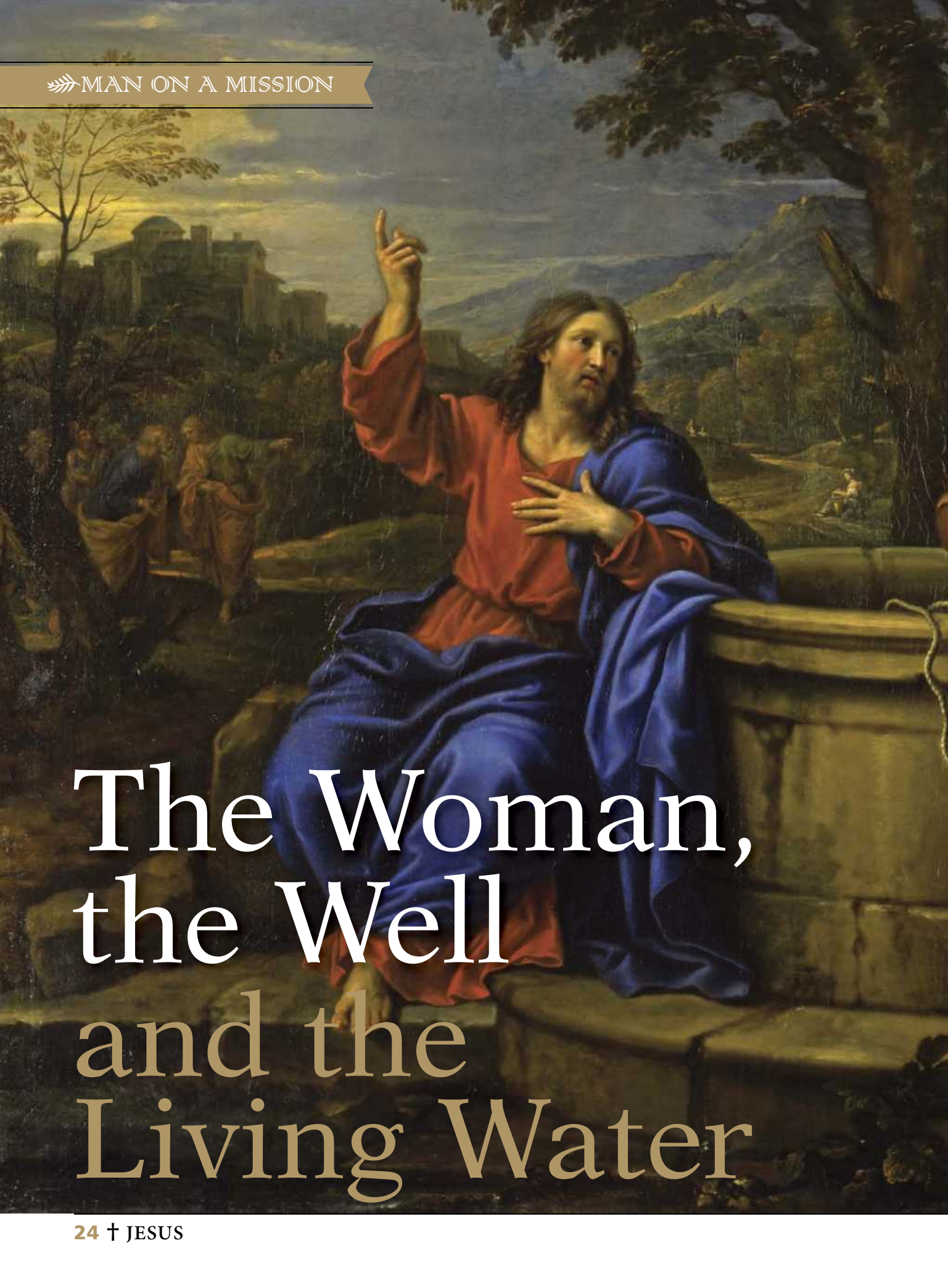
And he said to him, 'All these I will give you, if you will fall down and worship me.'

"Then Jesus said to him, 'Be gone, Satan! For it is written,

"You shall worship the Lord your God and him only shall you serve.'"

"Then the devil left him, and behold, angels came and were ministering to him" (Matthew 4: 5-11).

In life's moments where the words "no one understands what I'm going through," seem best fitting—this moment in Jesus' ministry says that he does, indeed, know. Not only does he understand, he sees, sympathizes and offers the hope of a way out. Jesus, through his life, death on the cross and resurrection, gives hope of overcoming temptations. †

The background of the page is a reproduction of the painting 'The Woman at the Well' by Peter Paul Rubens. It depicts Jesus Christ, with long brown hair and a beard, wearing a red tunic and a blue cloak. He is seated on the stone steps of a well, his right hand raised in a gesture of blessing or teaching, and his left hand resting on his chest. In the background, a woman in a blue and brown dress is walking away from the well. The setting is a lush, hilly landscape with a large stone building in the distance and a large tree on the right.

The Woman, the Well and the Living Water



Christ and the Woman of Samaria by Pierre Mignand (c. 1684).

ACCORDING TO JESUS, SOME BOUNDARIES ARE MEANT TO BE BROKEN.

By Pastor Peter J. Epler

Let us imagine an all-too common scenario: This morning you grab a cup of coffee and sit down at your computer to read the news. The big headline catches your eye: ‘Pastor Caught In Public Indiscretion.’ The article goes on to explain that a well-known (albeit controversial) pastor was seen entering a questionable establishment on the wrong side of town, ordering a drink and focusing far too much of his attention on his waitress. You read and re-read the article. Part of your heart is saddened by yet another fall of a public leader; the other part of your heart is curious about the man and the circumstances that led to this headline. You are torn between judgement, grief and curiosity. Why would a pastor do such a thing? Why would this pastor cross these religious, moral and even cultural boundaries?

Would it surprise you to learn that the scenario we just imagined was not a modern one, but one that is found in the pages of Scripture? The Gospel of John tells us the story of this pastor; we are told where he was, who he spoke with and the consequences of his actions—though they aren’t what you may think.

GALILEE BY WAY OF SAMARIA

Jesus, a Jewish Rabbi and teacher of the law of God, was traveling from Judea to Galilee. Between these two cities was a region called Samaria. We may call this the “wrong side of town” today—you know, that place you drive a few extra miles out of your way to avoid? In fact, the Jews of that day would travel a great distance around Samaria because they believed that the Samaritan people were unclean. The common thought was that the people were so unholy, so separated from God, that just to be in their town caused you to become unholy; eating or drinking with them was an unthinkable sin. Yet, here we find Jesus choosing the most direct path between Judea and Galilee—the one that led right into the heart of Samaria. No Rabbi would ever do that, but Jesus was no ordinary Rabbi.

Upon reaching the city, Jesus sent his disciples into town to buy food. He stayed by the well, and soon a woman arrived, during heat of the day, to draw water. There are several things to note about this moment that we may overlook: First, the woman was coming to draw water during heat of the day, not early morning or late evening, as was typical. She was avoiding the rest of the women. Even in a city of supposedly unclean and unholy people, she was outcast due to her numerous male partners.

Second, she was a woman and Jesus was a man. We don’t think much of this today, but in those days for a man to have a private conversation with

Man on a Mission

a woman was considered extremely inappropriate. For a rabbi to do so was unconscionable.

Third, he not only spoke with this woman, but he shared the Truth of God with her. Some Rabbinic traditions of the day held to the belief that providing women with the knowledge of Torah (the laws of God) was so inappropriate that it was considered as evil as teaching your daughter to sell her body for a profit.

Jesus not only crossed a Jewish cultural standard by being present in a Samaritan town, He crossed a moral standard by being alone with, and talking to, a woman. As if those two “sins” weren’t bad enough, he went so far as to teach this outcast Samaritan woman about God and offer her eternal life with God.

Why would this rabbi cross these cultural, moral and religious standards? Could it be that the standards of God are not the standards of men? Could it be that God values people, not based on their actions, sins, gender or city? Could it be that Jesus saw more at stake than his reputation in that moment?

That woman—outcast by her own people, declared filthy and unclean by the Jews—found in Jesus’ actions and intentions a home and a hope that transcended the temporary. God sees value where people do not. A sinner came to faith and inherited the kingdom because Jesus broke all the rules.†

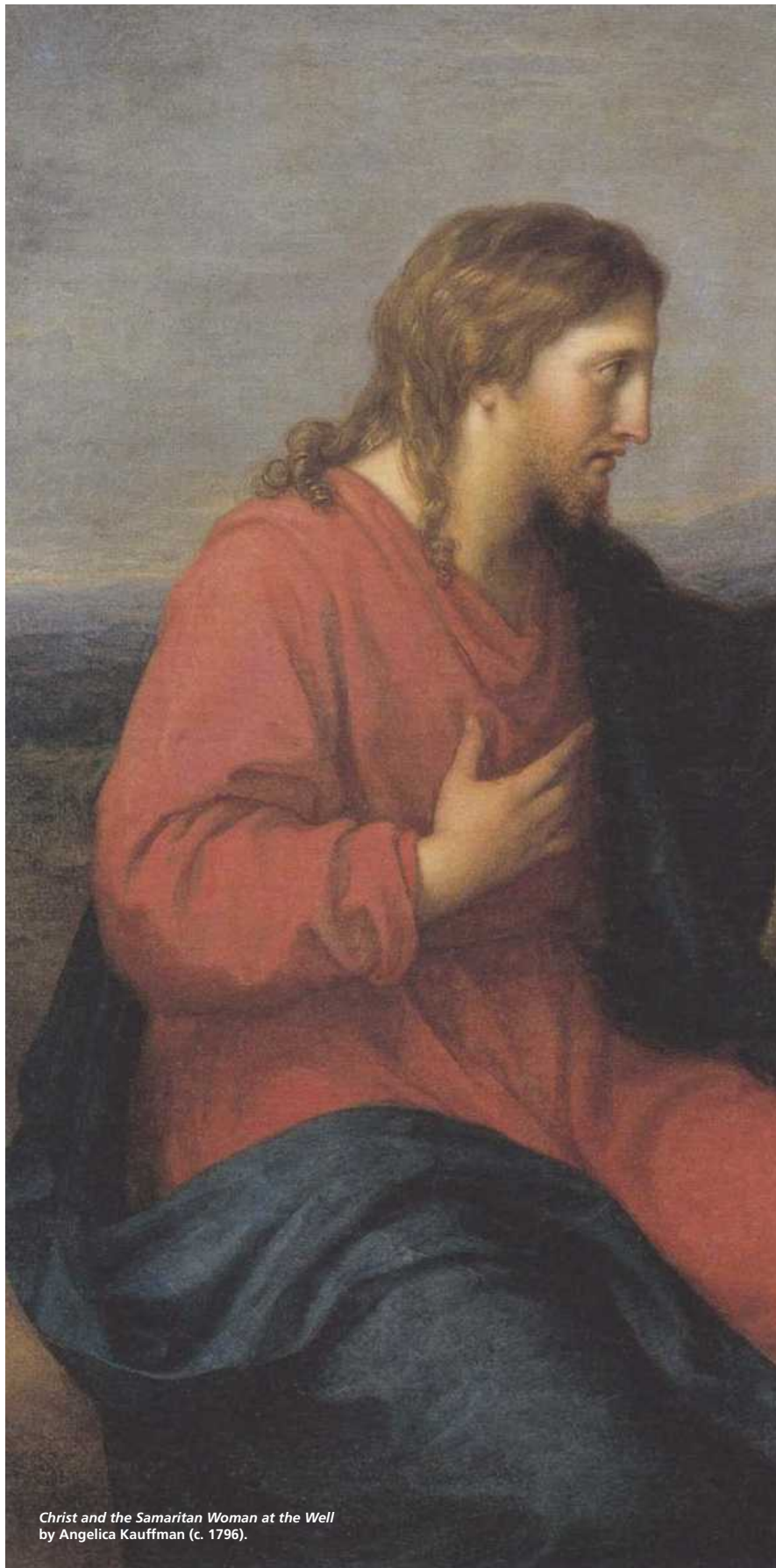
Called to Take Action

WHAT DOES THIS PASSAGE CALL CHRISTIANS TO DO IN THEIR OWN LIVES?

It is all well and good to read the story of Jesus and the woman at the well and then close the Bible and move on with life. We rejoice that her faith in Christ led many in her town to salvation as well. We excuse ourselves from the application of this passage, because we don’t like what it calls us to do, where it calls us to go, whom it calls us to serve.

The reality is we are called to do as Jesus has done; we are to set our sights on the outcast, the refugee, the homeless. The people you judge as unclean. We don’t have the liberty to rejoice in Jesus’ example of love for this woman and, at the same, time ignore the Word of God to us. “...lift up your eyes and look on the fields, that they are white for harvest...I have sent you to reap...” (John 4:35-38, NASB).

Our world is full of “Samaritan” women and men—refugees needing homes, homosexual neighbors, friends whose marriages are on the brink and more. Christ-followers are called to take Jesus-action: Meet someone at the well—love them as God loves them, offer them the hope they so desperately need and break self-imposed boundaries for the Glory of God and the good of mankind.



Christ and the Samaritan Woman at the Well
by Angelica Kauffman (c. 1796).

The Woman, the Well and the Living Water



“Jesus not only crossed a Jewish cultural standard by being present in a Samaritan town, He crossed a moral standard by being alone with, and talking to, a woman. As if those two “sins” weren’t bad enough, He went so far as to teach this outcast Samaritan woman about God and offer her eternal life with God.”

Rejected from his Hometown

WHY THE SCRIPTURE JESUS READS SAYS SO MUCH, AND THE REAL REASON HE IS REJECTED.

By *Jeremy Cannon*

After being baptized (Luke 3:21-22) and overcoming the temptations of Satan (Luke 4:1-13), Jesus returns to Galilee, his home province, and proceeds to teach in the synagogues (4:14-15). We are told that he is “glorified by all” in Galilee. He is accepted by many Jews, but not those from his hometown of Nazareth.

WHAT IS SO SPECIAL ABOUT NAZARETH?

Within Galilee is the city of Nazareth, where Jesus is raised by his earthly parents, Joseph and Mary. Nazareth is not a prominent city like that of Jerusalem; as Nathanael asks, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46) According to the *ESV Study Bible*, in the first century, Nazareth would have been fairly small in size and number—with only one synagogue for the Jews to meet in on the Sabbath for “singing, set prayer readings, the reading of Scripture, an interpretive homily [a sermon] on the weekly Scripture reading, and a priestly blessing.” It is a quaint town style synagogue at which Jesus begins his ministry.

THE PROPHET ISAIAH

Jesus is called upon to read from the Scriptures one morning, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah is given to him.

He unrolls the scroll and finds the place where it is written,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” —Luke 4:17-19

The passage Jesus reads is from Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6. Isaiah is a prophet who writes to the Israelites who are facing invasion from Assyria due to their disobedience toward God. Despite the oncoming destruction, God promises a coming Messiah—that is, an anointed or chosen one who will deliver the people. Isaiah 61:1-2 comes immediately after a depiction of what the city of God will look like when the Messiah comes (Isaiah 60), and proceeds to describe who and what the Messiah will do (Isaiah 61).

Jesus sits down and claims, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing” (Luke 4:21). Everyone spoke well of Jesus and “marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth” (v. 22). However, what in fact was he claiming to fulfill? In what ways did he fulfill these claims?

THE ANOINTED ONE

First off, the Spirit of the Lord being upon him—thus showing him to be the anointed one (the Messiah)—is evident. What the phrase in Isaiah essentially means is that the Messiah is “marked by the counsel...and the power...of God.” We see this fulfilled in Jesus’ baptism, where “the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove” (Luke 3:22). God has chosen Jesus to “proclaim good news to the poor”—that is, the Gospel.

Secondly, the Messiah has come “to proclaim liberty to the captives” through the Gospel. It is not just a message that Jesus proclaims. Because of who he is—God and man having been united and perfect—and what he does, he sacrifices himself for us. When it says “to set at liberty those who are oppressed” it literally means to set the position of those who are oppressed as free. As Paul later proclaims, we have “been set free from sin” (Romans 6:18) as a result of Christ’s sacrifice on the cross.

The last phrase, “to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” refers to the celebration of the year of Jubilee (Leviticus 25:8-22). Every 50th year there is a deliverance and liberty of all indebtedness for each Israelite toward one another. Jesus has come to proclaim the final freedom and cancelation of all indebtedness for all of God’s faithful people.

WHY IS JESUS REALLY REJECTED?

Many assume that it is because of Jesus' claim to fulfill the prophecy that he is rejected from his hometown. This view cannot be true. Jesus quotes to them a Proverb (v. 23) that basically calls for him to go heal himself. That is, Jesus sets his mind straight, for he is merely a son of a local man, not the Messiah. Some likely see him as a madman. However, it is his comments that follow this proverb that get him into trouble.

In Luke 4:24-27 Jesus uses examples from the Old Testament prophets Elijah (see 1 Kings 17:1, 18:1) and Elisha (2 Kings 5:1-14) to show that he is not here to set up a kingdom like they expect. In fact, just as these prophets are rejected, he is about to be rejected. What they do not understand is that Jesus is not here just for the Jews. He has come for the sins of the world (John 3:16)—including Gentiles (non-Jews). For over 2,000 years the Jews have been the people of God, and now the one supposedly anointed by God himself wants to come proclaim freedom for the Gentiles.

THE THEME OF REJECTION

Jesus goes against the norm. He does not come to meet their expectations, but rather to be the Messiah, the Christ and the savior of the world. Throughout Jesus' ministry, he is rejected by many of his own people. His rejection in Nazareth is simply the starting point of the criticism of his ministry.

Jesus is rejected so that we can be accepted. That is, Jesus is rejected by man so that we can be accepted by God. Whether we are Jews or not, we can trust in his sacrifice that came about by our rejection in order to be accepted by God the Father forever.

ENCOURAGEMENT FOR ALL BELIEVERS

Some believers may think they are safe from such rejection, as if they were automatically going to be accepted more because of Christ. Jesus, however, clearly states that we are not. As he says to his disciples in John 15:18, "If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you." If a leader is rejected, so are his followers—plain and simple.

As believers, we should be proud of rejection as the Apostles are in Acts 5:41. We should not be surprised that we are deemed outcasts by the world, but rather be proud that we are considered worthy to be rejected, just like Christ. ☩



Christ preaching at Capernaum by Mauryc Gottlieb (1878-79). After Jesus is rejected from Nazareth, he goes to nearby Capernaum, which functions as his new home base for much of his early ministry. In contrast to his hometown, the people in Capernaum "were surprised and impressed—his teaching was so forthright, so confident, so authoritative, not the quibbling and quoting they were used to" (Luke 4:32, MSG).

*Jesus was rejected by man
so that we can be accepted
by God.*

The BOLD WORDS OF WISDOM REVEAL THE TRUTH OF THE KINGDOM. Sermon on the By Scott Schutte Mount

Here, toward the beginning of Jesus' ministry, it seems as if an average, everyday-looking man has been performing all kinds of healing and miracles in the land of Galilee. It is as if this man has come out of nowhere and very quickly achieved a celebrity status.

This household-status of his name makes sense, because who would keep this kind of information to themselves if they saw it with their own eyes? If there was a man in a hospital that started healing everyone on the spot, would people not tell everyone they knew? Would they not rush to get every patient to see this man?

Needless to say, news about Jesus soon spreads throughout all of Syria. Masses of people start following him. Epileptics, lepers, paralytics, demon-possessed and people with all kinds

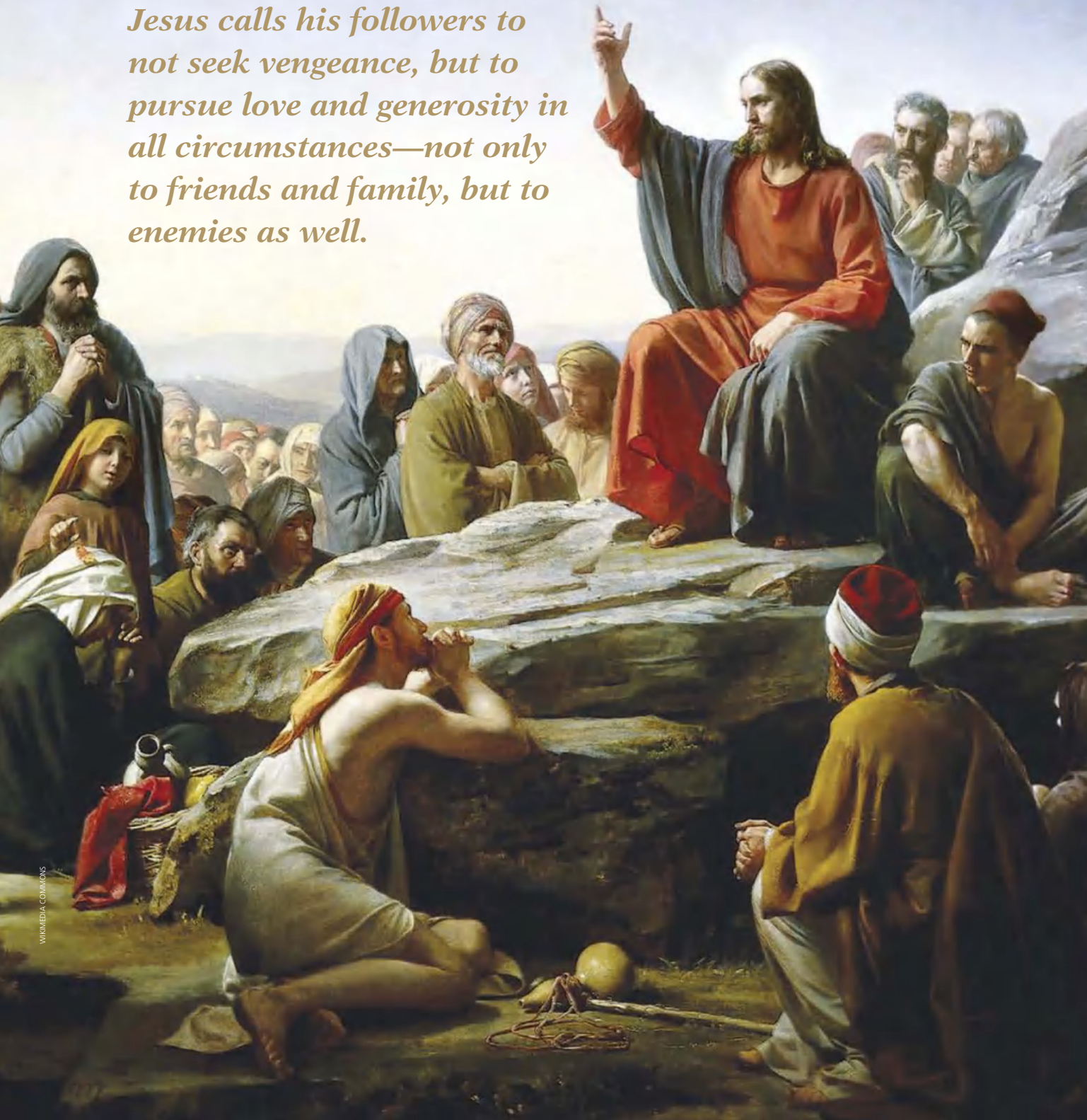
of diseases are coming in hoards to be healed by Jesus. What does Jesus do when he notices how big the crowds are? He finds a mountain to stand on, and he begins to teach them. It is at this moment that Jesus gives one of the most memorable messages of all time.

WORDS FROM THE HEALER

What does Jesus preach about at this opportune moment? Jesus realizes that he is drawing a large following, and so he decides to teach them what it truly means to be his followers. With this sermon, Jesus tells the people what life in the kingdom of the new covenant looks like; he sees beyond their physical needs, to their deeper spiritual needs.

Jesus presents some radical teachings in this relatively short sermon. He tells the people about the centrality of the kingdom and the demand

Jesus calls his followers to not seek vengeance, but to pursue love and generosity in all circumstances—not only to friends and family, but to enemies as well.



Man on a Mission



The Sermon on the Mount

With this sermon Jesus tells the people what life in the kingdom of the new covenant looks like; he sees beyond their physical needs to their deeper spiritual needs.

for ethical accountability. He tells his followers how citizens of his kingdom must be difference makers in this world. Jesus explains how he, and he alone, is able to fulfill the law and bring it to its fulfillment. He enlightens the listeners how the heart is the root of our sin, and how sin is just as egregious when it is done in the heart as if it were done in action. Jesus calls his followers to not seek vengeance, but to pursue love and generosity in all circumstances—not only to friends and family, but to enemies as well. He teaches how to pray, and he models it. He teaches the pursuit of humility and making God a priority in life. Jesus encourages trust in God and the building of right relationships with everyone. After teaching all of these things, Jesus basically gives the ultimatum of either “unquestioning obedience and commitment to God” or “going the way of the world.”

MODERN IMPLICATIONS

What is so amazing and impactful about Jesus’ teaching isn’t just the counter-cultural ideas he presents, but the fact that he meets people where they are and provides for their immediate needs before he tells them how to live. Oftentimes, believers try to start their connection with nonbelievers by telling them that they need to live differently. That is not what Jesus does. Jesus meets with them, meets their needs and positions himself in their lives to be a person that they will listen to.

It is important for us to understand that Jesus doesn’t stand on a soap box, shouting at people to live differently. He loves people, builds relationship with them, dines with them and after all of these things, he shares the gospel with them. It is this approach that gives weight to the holy truth in Jesus’ message.

As believers, we should love people, build relationships with them and place ourselves in other’s lives in order to present the truth of the gospel to them. It is only then that they will truly listen and hear what the Holy Spirit is saying. †

Freeing the Possessed Man

JESUS' MIRACLE AT DECAPOLIS REMINDS US
THAT WE ARE NEVER TOO FAR GONE TO BE SAVED.

By *Stephanie Agnes-Crockett*

Oftentimes, the more that we get to know ourselves, the more we begin to see how terrible we are as people. We desire to be loved and understood, but we have trouble loving and understanding ourselves. It's easy enough to accept that God will save others, but the question of our own worth can cause wonder.

THE DEMON POSSESSED MAN

Enter the events in Decapolis. When Jesus gets there, he meets a possessed man. This man hangs around the tombs and slices himself with sharp stones. Thanks to his seemingly superhuman strength, no one could control him, and no one particularly wanted to be around him, either. He would break free of the bonds people attempted to restrain him with, and then go roaming around in the wilderness.

As soon as Jesus arrives in the region, the possessed man knew who had come near. He identifies Jesus by his title, "What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God?" (Mark 5:7) He then asks Jesus not to torture him. When Jesus asks the spirit who he is, the spirit confesses, "My name is Legion...for we are many." A legion of Roman soldiers at that time numbered 1,000, so it was no wonder that this

man, with a whole legion of demons inside of him, would be such a powerful menace.

Jesus wasn't daunted. He did drive out the demons, but not to hell. Under Jesus' authority and with his permission, the demons went into a huge herd of pigs nearby, who then rushed over the edge of a steep bank, falling into the waters below only then to be drowned. The demoniac became a regular man once more—set free from the plague of darkness that had held him captive for so long. Jesus told the man to stay behind and preach to the people around him.

SET FREE

After the pigs had drowned, Luke 8:36 says, "...the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them, for they were seized with great fear."

Those who first feared the demon-possessed man now feared the one who had demonstrated authority over him. In contrast, the demon-possessed man clothed himself, showing an image of how Jesus would cover sins. He asked Jesus for permission to follow him, but Jesus urged the man to stay behind and "tell what great things God has done for you" (Luke 8:39).

Jesus brought the possessed man back to life, and even encouraged this once dead man to bring life to those around him. The social

Jesus Cures a Demon-Possessed Man by William Hole (c. 1846-1917).





Jesus Drives Out a Demon by Julius Schnörr von Carolsfeld (c. 1794-1872).

“And when He stepped out on the land, there met Him a certain man from the city who had demons for a long time. And he wore no clothes, nor did he live in a house but in the tombs. When he saw Jesus, he cried out, fell down before Him, and with a loud voice said, ‘What have I to do with You, Jesus, Son of the Most High God? I beg You, do not torment me!’ For He had commanded the unclean spirit to come out of the man. For it had often seized him, and he was kept under guard, bound with chains and shackles; and he broke the bonds and was driven by the demon into the wilderness”

—Luke 8:26-29, NKJV

outcast who had once roamed the desert became a missionary to his own people, the Gentiles. He became an example to those around him of one who had been delivered from the power of darkness and conveyed into the kingdom of light (Colossians 1:13).

This man was the most hopeless of all. No one could rescue him, except for Jesus, and he did, indeed, rescue him. If your situation looks helpless, know that it was the man with a legion of demons in him that Jesus saved that day. Not because he was the most qualified for salvation, but because of Jesus’ compassion and great power. Even today Jesus is willing to exercise this same authority. †



The Swine Driven into the Sea by James Tissot (c. 1886-1896).



Naked I Came into the World

“And he wore no clothes...” Luke 8:27

The man who Jesus saved at Decapolis was wearing no clothes while possessed, but went on to clothe himself as he sat peacefully at Jesus’ feet. This action, clearly indicative of the man’s returning to his rightful state of mind, also bears spiritual and metaphorical weight. The man clothed himself on the day of his salvation.

“Clothed and in his right mind...” Luke 8:35

The clothing makes sense in light of the salvation that happened that day, given Genesis 3. After the fall, “The LORD God made garments of skin for Adam and his wife and clothed them” (Genesis 3:21). God was the first to cover over man’s sin, and he did so by means of animal skin. When God clothed Adam and Eve in skin, he performed the first animal sacrifice. Later, Abel offered animals to God, and then God went on to establish the covenant, which featured regular sacrifices as atonement for sin. Israel lived under this law, which meant sacrificing an animal to cover man’s guilt, as God prophesied an ultimate covering, a sacrifice that could purify once and for all.

Throughout the Old Testament, prophecy indicates that the Son of God would come to be the ultimate atoning lamb, the final sacrifice, for sin. When Jesus saved the demoniac, the man went on to clothe himself, foreshadowing the way that Jesus would become the clothing for all human sin.



Why the pigs?

Why did Jesus send the demons into the pigs? While only Jesus himself knows the answer, one theory concerns the Levitical law. Consistently throughout the Old Testament, we see God command his people to have nothing to do with unclean animals. Not only were pigs off limits as food, but an Israelite would become unclean just from touching a dead one (Leviticus 11:8).

Dr. Allen Ross, professor of Old Testament at Beeson Divinity School, argues that animals may have been declared ceremonially unclean for a number of reasons, such as their scavenging practices or because of their role in pagan worship. The law differentiates clean from unclean based on whether an animal chewed cud or had a split hoof.

What Levitical law makes clear is that Jews should not have been handling pigs. In the largely Gentile region of the Decapolis, it is possible that the herdsman was indeed a Gentile. On the other hand, it is possible that the herdsman was, himself, a Jew who was raising the pigs for commercial purposes. Had they survived, the pigs that drowned would likely have been used in idol worship.

By allowing the demons to enter the pigs, Jesus made a distinction between human and animal, between clean and unclean. Jesus made the possessed man clean, and the demons entered into the already unclean pigs. This distinction between clean and unclean is also a reminder of the difference of Jew and Gentile, and that God had selected a people as his own.

The Bleeding Woman

A FAITH-FILLED WOMAN RISKS DISAPPROVAL TO GAIN HEALING FROM JESUS.

By *Carolyn Koh*

IF or 12 long years, this woman has suffered from unceasing bleeding. She has spent her wealth consulting with doctors and undergoing treatments, only to walk away poorer and still bleeding.

Then, the famed healer comes to town.

"If I touch him," she thinks, "even if only the very slightest touch of the fringe of his robe, I shall be healed." She dares not approach him openly but goes in disguise and reaches out to touch him, furtively. When she does, her life changes forever.

THE FAITH-FILLED WOMAN

Under the societal norms of the time, menstruating women were considered unclean, and dared not participate in the daily life of their towns or cities, as any contact with another person would render the affected person unclean, too.

A woman with an unrelenting hemorrhage, then, would be a total pariah. She would spend most of her

time indoors, unable to socialize or even do simple things like shopping or walking. But she dares to believe that this healer from Nazareth has the power to cast away her ailment. He healed lepers, who were also considered unclean; so, she reasoned, there must be hope for her.

THE STOLEN TOUCH

A large crowd is waiting for Jesus and his disciples when they return to Galilee from the land of the Gerasenes. One of the people in the crowd is Jairus, a ruler of a synagogue in Capernaum, who throws himself at Jesus' feet and begs him to heal his daughter, who is deathly ill.

"My dear daughter is at death's door. Come and lay hands on her so she will get well and live" (Mark 5: 21-24).

Jesus rushes to meet the girl, his disciples pushing him through the crowd that clogs the narrow streets of Capernaum, when all of a sudden he feels a release of energy. Someone has touched him—it had not been just

any touch, but the furtive touch of a faith-filled person. He stops and looks around. "Who touched me?"

His disciples are puzzled, as there are dozens of people surrounding them; when no one answers, Peter says, "But Master, we've got crowds of people on our hands. Dozens have touched you" (Luke 8: 43-45).

Jesus, however, insists that someone has touched him and demands that the person step forward. He had felt the power leave him, and he knew that someone had been healed.

THE REVEAL

Hearing Jesus' questioning, the woman prostrates herself before him, trembling in fear, and tells her story. Instead of the anger she fears, Jesus reassures her, "Courage, daughter. You took a risk of faith, and now you're well" (Matthew 9:22).

Far from being angry, Jesus commends her for her faith, and the woman walks away, healed and clean.†

The Unclean Made Clean

Mosaic Law includes what are known as purity laws. The laws reflect God's holiness, and their specifications range from what was clean or unclean when it comes to food, to who can or cannot enter the Temple, or even be touched.

Menstruating women, those with skin disease (such as lepers) and those who touched something impure (such as a corpse), were deemed unclean.

The bleeding woman would have suffered a perpetual status as unclean as long as her disease persisted. Those who knew her condition would avoid touching her so that they would not be deemed unclean themselves. This explains why she is so determined to stay hidden amongst the crowd and tries to touch Jesus' garment, secretly.

Instead of being contaminated by the woman's touch, Jesus makes her clean. Jesus is not afraid to touch others whom society considers unclean. He touches lepers to heal them when he just as easily could speak the words and maintain his distance. He is also not afraid to touch corpses—something that would have banned priests from Temple service for the rest of their lives—and instead of becoming defiled himself, he brings the dead to life.

This woman's contact with Jesus illustrates a paradigm shift: His cleansing power is transformative enough that he remains undefiled, and the unclean are made clean.



The Woman with an Issue of Blood by James Tissot (c. 1886-1896).

Miracle of Generosity

A YOUNG BOY'S OFFER AND THE DISCIPLES' DOUBT MAKE AN IMPROMPTU MEAL INTO A LESSON ON FAITH.

By *Judy El Sherbini*

Jesus has just performed a miracle and healed an invalid man near the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem, then crossed the Sea of Galilee. A large crowd of men, women and children follow his crossing and greet Jesus upon his arrival. They are curious to meet the man who is said to have performed miracles and cured the sick. When Jesus arrives at the shore, he sits on the hill, surrounded by his disciples, and a crowd of over 5,000 people gather near them.

Jesus' visit coincides with the Jewish feast of Passover. Aware that the crowd would likely be hungry, Jesus asks his disciple Philip where they can purchase bread to feed all of the people who had gathered. This is a test of Philip's faith, as Jesus already knows how he will feed the masses. Philip is dismayed and advises Jesus that not even 200 silver pieces will be enough to buy bread for every person in the crowd. Andrew, another disciple, scans the crowd and tells Jesus that there is a little boy who has five loaves of barley bread and two fish. The little boy selflessly offers his bread and fish to Jesus. Andrew is skeptical that the boy's bread and fish will be of any real help in feeding the large crowd. Jesus takes the food and directs the people to sit on the soft green grass.

Jesus holds up the bread and gives thanks for it. He then hands the bread to the people who are seated before him. He next gives them the fish. Jesus invites the people to eat as much of the food as they want. When the people had eaten to their satisfaction, Jesus asks his disciples to gather the

leftovers so that nothing is wasted. The disciples fill 12 baskets with the leftovers from the mere five barley loaves, and the crowd realizes that God is with them, in witnessing the miracle that Jesus has just performed.

A WEARY TEACHER

This is a politically tumultuous time in history. According to the Gospel of Matthew, King Herod has just beheaded John the Baptist. People looked to John for moral and religious inspiration, and his beheading by the king shocked and stunned them. John's death is an enormous loss to the people of Israel as well as to Jesus, who had been baptized by John. At this time, Herod is wary of John's influence and any rebellion he might inspire. According to the Gospels, Jesus, affected by John's death, wants to withdraw and be in a solitary place. However, as Jesus seeks his solitude, the crowds gather on the banks, greeting Jesus and offering him no privacy. Jesus does not shun the crowd, but instead embraces the gathered; thus the story of the loaves and fish came to be known.

WHAT HAVE WE OFFERED?

Jesus' encounter with the little boy is indicative of so many of his teachings. We see how Jesus' disciples argue with Jesus about the possible ways to feed the crowd. Philip believes that no amount of money will suffice to feed the crowd. Andrew doubts that the little boy's offering will make any difference in feeding the masses.

However, Jesus has a plan, and the crowd is well



1852-60 Illustration by Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld.

fed. This is an expression in faith, in believing that there is always a way to accomplish even the most daunting task. Jesus tests his disciples and shows them that one should focus on finding a solution to a dilemma and not be discouraged by the problem.

Just as God fed the Israelites manna in the desert when all hope was lost, so did Jesus feed the hungry crowd when no solution seemed evident. Jesus provides bread for nourishment as well as the word of God—the bread for our souls—for he says, “I am the bread of life” (John 6:35).

When looking at the impact a small act of generosity may have, remember that the little boy gives away his food so that Jesus can feed the masses. When thinking of this act, you can’t overlook this little boy’s generosity. It is the time of the Passover feast, and this child opts to give away food that is likely

meant for his own family. Jesus multiplies this small act by the boy and turns it into a grand gesture—feeding the unexpected crowd until they are full.

WHAT CAN WE EXPECT?

There are still 12 baskets of bread left over even after the large crowd has been fed. Jesus does not merely satisfy everyone with his generosity; he provides more than is needed. When you consider what you have to offer in your faithfulness toward God, sometimes you will receive more than you expect, ask for or need, thanks to God’s love and generosity. And when you think about what you have to offer in living a faithful and ethical life, keep this in mind, as God may take your offerings, talents and generosity, in any capacity, large or small, and turn them into something spectacular and unexpected. ✠

Walking on Water

IN THE MIDST OF THE STORM, THE DISCIPLES WITNESS A MIRACLE THAT SHOWCASES GOD'S POWER.

By *Emily Keery*

Thousands of years before Jesus, the Israelites were trapped on the banks of the Red Sea with Pharaoh's army in hot pursuit. The famous miracle of crossing the Red Sea becomes a key story in the Jewish narrative. Into this imagery, Jesus creates his own water crossing miracle—walking on water. This time, Jesus takes it a step further and doesn't require the elements to change around him to journey across the Sea.

A DECOY FOR THE CROWDS

After feeding the 5,000, Jesus immediately sends the crowds away and instructs the disciples to go ahead of him in a boat across the Sea of Galilee while he goes up a mountain to pray. On one level, this is a decoy for the crowds who get confused by the disciples going in one direction and Jesus in another. This allows Jesus some time in prayer by himself and follows his pattern of wanting to keep a low profile with the crowds.

CONFUSION IN THE DARK

Matthew records it is night when the disciples are still stuck fighting the wind and waves to get across the lake. John says they had rowed three or four miles out in this time. Just before dawn, Jesus makes his way out to the boat by walking on the water. Likely exhausted from the night's venture, in the dim pre-dawn light, the disciples think it is a ghost and verbally call out in fear. Mark says that Jesus "was about to pass by them," and their cries catch his attention (Mark 6:48, NIV). It is a dark, chaotic environment, and the disciples are alarmed by the sight of Jesus.

In response to this fear, "Jesus immediately says to them: 'Take courage! It is I. Don't be afraid'" (Matthew 14:27, NIV). Here, Jesus is using the same language God uses with Moses at the burning bush. Theologian Gary Burge notes, "The verb to be—*eimi*—possesses no predicate here and thus reflects God's divine name given to Moses on Mount Sinai" (Exodus 3:6). This is a pronouncement of deity. After this answer, Mark and John record that "the disciples are willing to take him into the boat" (John 6:21, NIV); this is enough proof for the disciples.

Only Matthew adds that Peter is skeptical: "Lord, if it's you," Peter replies, "tell me to come to you on the water" (Matthew 14:28, NIV). This test corresponds to Jesus' emphasis that the disciples will do everything that he does. This move to follow Jesus out on the waves both tests if it is really Jesus and his teaching about the kingdom of God: "And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (John 14:13, NIV).

TWO STORMS, TWO DIFFERENT MIRACLES

This incident directly juxtaposes a similar story of Jesus sleeping in a boat while the disciples fear drowning in a storm. Jesus is woken up and calms the wind and the waves as the disciples marvel: "Even the winds and the waves obey him!" (Matthew 8:27, NIV) This time the miracle is different. Jesus is out in the middle of the storm, undeterred by the forces of nature; there is no need for things to change around him—he is on top of the waves. His "path led through the sea, [his] way through the mighty waters, though [his] footprints were not seen" (Psalms 77:19, NIV). †

*This move to follow
Jesus out on the
waves both tests if
it is truly Jesus and
his teaching about
the kingdom of God.*

Blind and Sent: *A Journey toward Sight*

JESUS HEALS A MAN BORN BLIND AND OFFERS SIGHT
TO ALL OF HIS FOLLOWERS.

By **Karen Ruth Myers**

Much of the time, difficulties in our lives are our own fault. From the first sin in Eden until the last sin in this fallen planet, we will live under self-inflicted curses of heartache, disease, infidelity, pain, wrath, racism, temptation and oppression. But sometimes, true injustices surface, like the man born blind without cause, found in John chapter nine. How did Jesus interact with him, and what can that mean for us today?

QUESTIONS—AND THE ANSWER

“Who sinned?”

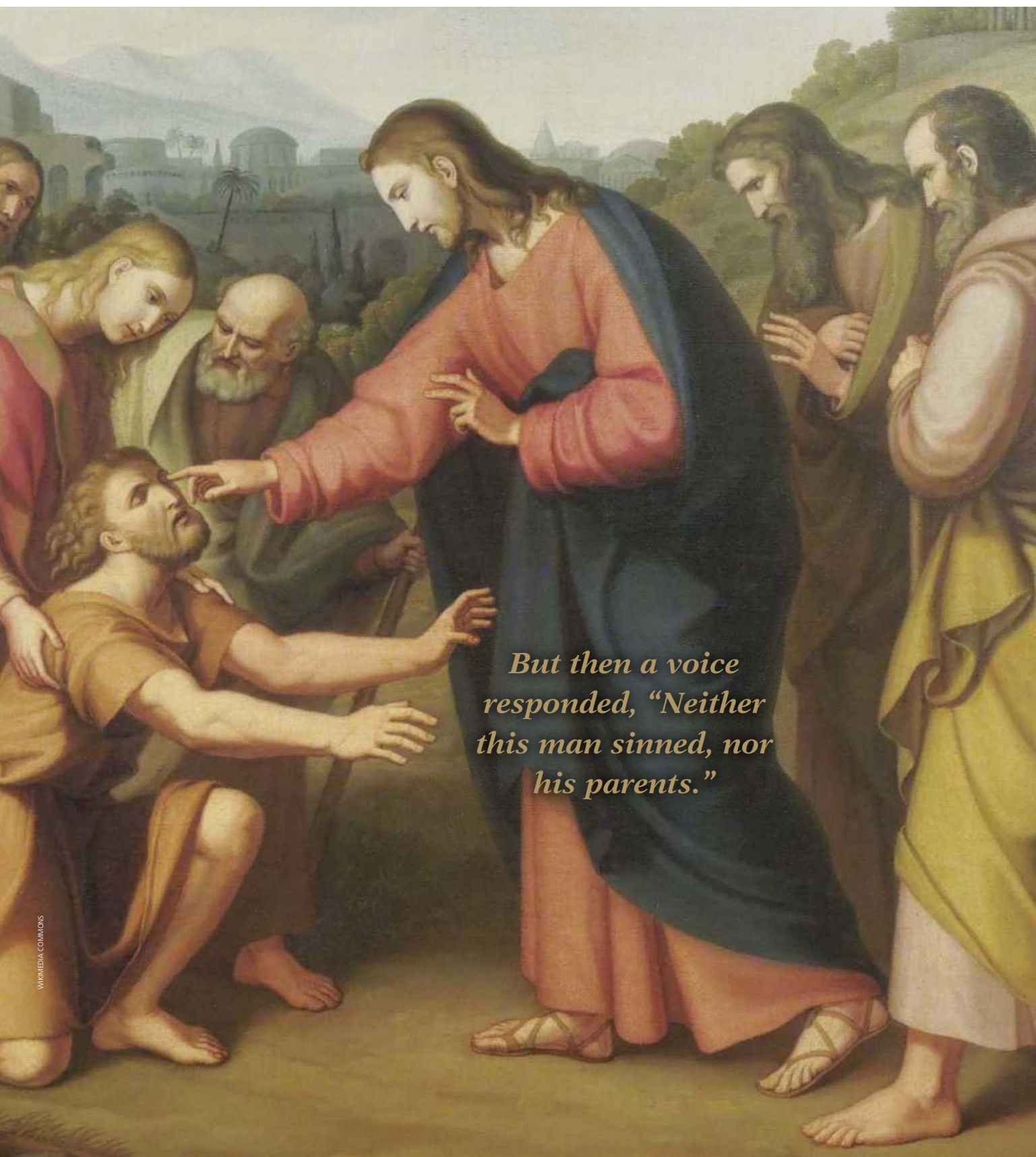
The blind beggar must have heard that question day in and day out, and had likely heard many answers. Resigned to a disability he didn’t ask for or deserve, sitting near the Temple day after day, year after year—he had been a subject of gossip since the day of his birth. He expected nothing but sightless suffering and judgmental passersby, with an occasional coin thrown at him in mercy or pity.

But then a voice responds, “Neither this man sinned, nor his parents.”

His ears perk up. The voice halts, directly in front of him, then pauses and continues, “...but that the glory of God might be manifest in him.”



Healing the Blind Man by Václav Mánes (1832).





The Conversion of Mary Magdalene
by Paolo Veronese (c. 1548).

The voice holds authority. It commands attention. Those words, “the glory of God might be manifest in him,” are something nobody had ever said about the blind beggar.

Suddenly, the voice makes an unpleasant noise. It spits in the dirt at his feet. Then a hand—a sticky, muddy hand—wipes across his face and eyes.

He grimaces. What kind of person would have the audacity and rudeness to slather mud-spit in a blind man’s eyes?

“Go,” commands the voice. “Wash in the pool of Siloam.”

Who does this voice belong to? Siloam is too far of a walk! For a healthy person to walk the route of maze-like streets, made of slick Jerusalem stone, from the Temple Mount to the Siloam pool takes a full 22 minutes. Calculating for a blind man stumbling along, the journey would be at least an hour long and quite treacherous. Can’t he see that the man is blind? How will he get there? What if he falls, loses his way or drowns?

Yet, the sightless man arose. After all, he reasoned, every day he sits. Blind. Stagnated. Immovable. Stuck.

He accepts the challenge. He responds to the mandate, blindly groping along the walls of other people’s homes and businesses, crying aloud for a shove in the right direction from scornful strangers, feeling his way through the crowds in the streets, persevering though his own self-doubt and dark thoughts, creeping down a slippery stone stairway and finally encountering the water. Siloam.

REFLECTIONS IN THE WATER

Siloam means sent. Not destination, not faith, not healing, not renewal. Just, sent. Why on earth this blind man was sent to Sent, he didn’t know—but the mud on his face and the words ringing in his heart, “that the glory of God might be manifest in him,” urged him forward.

He carefully dipped his toe in the water, then his whole foot, then both feet. He waded in, then plunged himself under—and saw.

His healing was not so much an arrival—but more an immersion into the path and the discovery of being sent.



ON BEING SENT

While passing by, Jesus truly saw the man. How often do you really see the people you pass by? We might “see” them or even talk or gossip about them, but do we actually see them?

Do we recognize that God can manifest himself through individuals who—for our standards—are disabled or disadvantaged or abnormal?

Would you be willing to go somewhere or do something for Jesus if you’re not even sure what the destination or purpose might be? Even if it seems uncomfortable or difficult or if you’re not promised healing or some recompense?

You may feel like he slathered spit and mud in your face. Your feet may falter as you fumble down the path. Your rhythm may at times be unsteady, but go. He will manifest his glory in you, if only you follow his words and obey.

Immersed in the journey that brings you to sight, you will find your healing. †

Blind and Sent: A Journey toward Sight



Beyond the Moment

A SMALL SAMPLING OF HOW MIRACLES CONTINUE TO BRING HOPE LONG AFTER HOLY ENCOUNTERS.

Angel warning and the flight of the holy family into Egypt (Matthew 2:13-23)

Sometimes evil people can impede our plans, threaten our existence, or seemingly divert our aim, but God always ensures that his divine purposes come to fruition. What resulted from this situation—and often comes to pass in such cases—extended great blessings to people who never expected to be visited by, included in, and touched with Jesus’ presence and love. To this day, Egyptians along the ancient travel routes treasure the fact that Jesus came to live among their people, their homes, their cities and not just with the Jews.

Changing the water into wine (John 2:1-11)

It’s no coincidence that Jesus’ first miracle took place at a wedding, which, in the moment, honored a couple celebrating the union of their two lives into one. He saved them from embarrassment, provided more joy and let them taste and see that the Lord truly is good. Yet, the hope from this miracle reaches far beyond that occasion. Jesus’ miracle honored the basis of all human civilization: marriage. Unless a man and woman become one, there are no human interactions, no homes, no procreation, no offspring, no future, no legacies. There are no families, churches, schools, cities, nations or other human institutions. Jesus’ miracle also honored motherhood, and we would do well to also follow the instructions his mother gave to the servants: “Do whatever he tells you.” Surely then, we, too, will find blessing and surprises.

Woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5:25-34, Luke 8:43-48)

Jesus didn’t just heal her body—he healed the plague of her soul and taught this timid woman to not be ashamed anymore.

Mary Magdalene’s redemption (Mark 16:9-11, Luke 8:2, John 20:11-18)

Her miracle did not end when Jesus cast out seven demons. Rather, it continued from day to day as she found freedom from degradation, dignity for herself as a woman, meaning for life as an honest character and follower of Jesus—and ultimately the great honor of being the first person to see the resurrected Jesus and announce the news of his resurrection to the disciples.

Lazarus’ resurrection (John 11:1-44)

If you had the chance to be given a new lease on life, as Lazarus did, it wouldn’t matter that someday you would face death again. What would matter is the hope that would rule your life, crowning each day with meaning and purpose. You would be glad to have learned lessons both from the first time around and from your moments in heaven, and you would be inspired by this fresh chance to share the truth of life.

The resurrection of Jesus (Matthew 28, Mark 16, Luke 24, John 20)

Of course, this greatest of all miracles leaves us with the hope every day that we, too, will one day be resurrected. How blessed are we if we resurrect to glory in Christ!



Raising of Lazarus

JESUS' RESPONSE OF WEEPING CONVEYS FAR MORE THAN SADNESS;
HE IS INTRODUCING US TO COMPASSIONATE OUTRAGE.

By *Ryan MacDonald*

John 11 is the beloved story of Jesus raising his good friend Lazarus from the dead and is probably most known for containing the smallest verse in the Bible, “Jesus wept.”

If you grew up in the church, you were probably taught in Sunday school that this quaint little verse was in the Bible to show us that Jesus understands sorrow. That he, too, was at times sad, and therefore is able to offer the type of comfort we need when life gets us down. Though there is nothing particularly wrong with this concept, it is not actually what is happening in the text. Behind this trite and inadequate exposition, we will find Jesus not only offering a new vocabulary for our emotions, but a reliable paradigm for how to process tragedies that happen around us.

MORE THAN SORROW

The narrative begins when Jesus first gets word that Lazarus is sick through his sisters, Mary and Martha, asking Jesus to come quickly—but by the time he arrives in Bethany, Lazarus has already been dead for four days,

and Jews from all around the area had come to mourn with and support the family. It's important to note that in first century culture—and even in some cultures today—it was common to have professional mourners to help attendees weep and further express their sorrow for the deceased. Upon Jesus' arrival, this group of professional wailers would have been in full force, helping people express the pain and loss of Lazarus' death.

The key moment in this story happens right after Jesus asks to speak with Mary. She quickly leaves the house and runs to meet him. The group gathered around her assumes she is going to the tomb to mourn, so they all get up and follow her out. Mary falls at Jesus' feet and says, “Lord, if you would have been here, my brother would not have died” (John 11:32, NIV).

And this is where things get interesting; The Bible tells us that “when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her were also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. ‘Where have you laid him?’ he asked. ‘Come and see, Lord’ they replied. Jesus wept” (John 11:33-35, NIV).

The Raising of Lazarus by Rembrandt Hermenszoon van Rijn (c. 1630-1632).





Raising of Lazarus by Jesus by
Carl Heinrich Bloch (c. 1870s).

Jesus is giving us an example of how we are to engage a world that is filled with brokenness and loss, danger and disappointment and ultimately, sin and death. He is introducing us to the emotion of compassionate outrage.

At first glance we see Jesus moved by the sorrow of the crowd and drawn into tears through empathy and compassion. However, theologian Dr. Don Carson in his book, titled *Scandalous*, really helps us unpack the true meaning of Jesus' tears. He writes, "There is no way that the original text should be rendered 'deeply moved'... It means 'he was outraged,' that is what this verb means whenever it is applied to human beings." The translation of, "he was outraged" puts a completely different spin on the story. Jesus is not merely sad, he is also angry. Outraged in fact!

This also helps us make sense of the narrative; Jesus knows full well his plan to raise Lazarus in just a few minutes. Would it make any sense then if he was crying merely because he missed his friend? But what if something deeper was happening? What if Jesus' emotion was a mixture of compassion and anger, like Dr. Carson suggests? Carson helps us put the pieces together as he concludes, "Jesus is outraged not because he has lost a friend, but because of death itself...He is outraged at the death that has called forth this loss [and] by the sin that lies behind [it]."

COMPASSIONATE OUTRAGE

Jesus is not merely expressing his condolences to the family, he is giving us an example of how we are to engage a world that is filled with brokenness and loss, danger and disappointment and ultimately, sin and death. He is introducing us to the emotion of compassionate outrage.

Whether it's injustice that we discover at work, violence that is reported on the news or loss that we experience in our family, Jesus gives us permission to express our anger at the brokenness of the world while simultaneously mourning the pain that it causes.

"Jesus wept" is far from a cute little picture that demonstrates how God can be sad too; it is a firm validation of the complexity and health of human emotion and a paradigm of how to process tragedy that happens around us. †

Jesus is not only offering a new vocabulary for our emotions, but a reliable paradigm for how to process tragedies that happen around us.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

A church in present-day Bethany (now known as al-Eizariya, which means "Place of Lazarus").

Roadside Redemption

JESUS' ACCEPTANCE AND LOVE FOR ZACCHAEUS, DESPITE HIS SEEDY JOB AND WRONGDOINGS, EVOKES A MESSAGE OF GRACE.

By *Judy El Sherbini and Sarah Jane Stone*

When Jesus enters Jericho, throngs of people wanting to hear him speak surround him. Zacchaeus, the head taxman, is amongst them and desperately wants to see Jesus. With the crowds blocking his way he runs ahead of the people, but due to his short stature he still cannot see. Persistent in his efforts, Zacchaeus scales a tree and is able to see Jesus as he passes.

Jesus looks up to Zacchaeus and calls to him by name, asking him to come down from the tree. Once on the ground, Jesus announces that he will be a guest in Zacchaeus' home that day, and Zacchaeus is delighted by the great honor. However, the announcement draws great ire from the crowd, because as the head taxman, Zacchaeus is despised by his community—considered to be a crook and entirely unworthy of such an honor.

AN UNWELCOME HOST

Those working for the Romans as tax collectors would pledge to collect a certain amount of money from trades and individuals and were entitled to keep anything they raised over the pledged amount. This practice encouraged the tax collectors to take as much tribute as they could from their fellow community members, profiting on their neighbor's misfortune.

As a result, tax collectors were not merely disliked but loathed—seen as thieves, robbers and cheats.

Disdain for these individuals ran so deep that even the home of a tax collector was considered unclean, making the idea of Jesus entering such a home unimaginable. However, this was exactly the type of encounter Jesus readily undertook as he sought to bring salvation to the lost.

Jesus said, "Today is salvation day in this home! Here he is: Zacchaeus, son of Abraham! For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost" (Luke 19:9-10). Appalled by the crowd's reaction and humbled by Jesus' acceptance, Zacchaeus proclaimed that he intended to give to the poor and make amends to those he had cheated. Not only did Zacchaeus see Jesus, he accepted Jesus' offer of love—finding salvation and redemption that inspired repentance.

UNINHIBITED GRACE

Jesus' acceptance and love for Zacchaeus, despite his seedy job and wrongdoings, evokes a message of grace. For this very reason, this roadside encounter with Jesus is relatable to the human experience at large.

Simply put, Jesus loves Zacchaeus, the tax collector. This love, despite Zacchaeus' position as someone who takes from others for his own gain, shows grace. We are called to have grace for others—even those who are seemingly unlovable—and like Zacchaeus did, repent. Just as Zacchaeus showed faith in light of Jesus' grace, so should we consider how we are walking in faith because of the grace of the savior. †



Niels Larsen Stevns: *Zakæ (Christ And Zacchaeus)* by Gunnar Bach Pedersen (c. 1913).

What happened next?

There is some speculation as to what became of Zacchaeus after this encounter with Jesus. Various sources refer to him as Zacchaeus Matthias, who took the place of the twelfth apostle, replacing Judas Iscariot after Jesus' ascension. The Apostolic Constitution refers to Zacchaeus, the Publican, as the first bishop of Caesarea. In either case, it seems that Zacchaeus made good on his exclamations of his intended acts of repentance.

“Today is salvation day in this home! Here he is: Zacchaeus, son of Abraham! For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost.”

—Luke 19:9-10

Powerful Parables

HOW JESUS' DYNAMIC METHOD OF TEACHING GIVES HIS WORDS ENDURING FORCE—BOTH THEN AND NOW.

By Alexandria Williamson

Jesus used parables to connect with his audience through relatable and culturally relevant situations and circumstances. Yet, these narratives were often misunderstood by those in attendance. In his book, *Parables: The Mysteries of God's Kingdom Revealed Through the Stories Jesus Told*, John MacArthur writes that this is because Jesus' parables had a twofold purpose: "They hid the truth from self-righteous or self-satisfied people, who fancied themselves too sophisticated to learn from him, while the same parables revealed truth to eager souls," he writes. Therefore, those with soft hearts would often grasp a parable's meaning before anyone else.

Matthew 13:3 tells us Jesus told the crowds "many things in parables." In fact, it seems the use of parables was commonplace in the teachings of Jesus.

CONTEXT FOR TEACHING

Matthew 21 and 22 contains a significant string of parables. In the days before his arrest and crucifixion, the people honored Jesus at his entry into Jerusalem. This fulfilled the messianic prophecies spoken in Zechariah 9:9 and Daniel: 24-27; the image of the Prince of Peace entering on a donkey was met with

enthusiasm, as those souls in attendance recognized the savior they'd longed for, causing a stir when it came to the religious leaders who took issue with a homeless carpenter entering their city like a king.

Jesus caused further ruckus when he flipped tables in the outer court of the Temple, the area reserved for Gentile prayer. He then went on to heal the sick.

All of these events were spectacular displays of Jesus' authority to a crowd of Jews who were preparing their hearts to praise the God of the Passover. Few, if any, had any idea that God's great judgment was about to pass, once again, over his people at the cross.

Yet, not all acknowledged Jesus as Messiah. The religious leaders, who knew the prophecies inside and out, were "indignant" at the sights and sounds of Jesus (Matthew 21: 15, ESV).

The next day, the chief priests and elders questioned Jesus' authority.

In a way that must have infuriated the already angered priests, Jesus responded with three parables.

A POWERFUL EXAMPLE

The first was a parable of two sons. One son told his father he wouldn't work in the vineyard that day, then changed

Significance of Parables

MORE THAN A STORY, THIS METHOD OF TEACHING IS FOUND DEEP IN THE HEART OF JEWISH CULTURE.

According to "The Contexts of Jesus' Parables," written by Oxford College's David B. Gowler, "No Old Testament [parable] serves as a direct parallel to the New Testament's use of parables as a short narrative." However, there was some precedent for the use of parables in Jewish tradition.

The Hebrew word for parable, *mashal*, serves as a term for literary devices: parables, allegories, proverbs, poems, and fables—which were used in Jewish culture and oral tradition.

In all, a *mashal* is meant to instruct and illustrate, which is exactly how Jesus employed them.

Christ with his Disciples
by Jørgen Pederson Roed
(c. 1800s).





The Tribute Money by James Tissot (c. 1886).

his mind and went. The other told his father he would go, but later did not (Matthew 21:28-30, ESV). Jesus asked the leaders which son did the father's will. They respond with, "The first," and Jesus told them that "tax collectors and prostitutes go into the kingdom of God before you" (Matthew 21:31, ESV).

The next parable was about tenants who leased a vineyard. The master sent his servants to collect the fruits of the fields, but the tenants beat and killed the servants. The master eventually sent his son with the assumption that his heir would be safe. He wasn't. The tenants took the heir off the property and killed him (Matthew 21:33-39, ESV). Jesus asked the religious leaders how the landlord should respond, and they agreed the tenants should be killed (Matthew 21:41, ESV). Jesus then quoted a messianic psalm (Psalm 118) and told them, "the kingdom of God will be taken away from [them] and given to a people producing its fruit" (Matthew 21:43, ESV).

The final parable was about a wedding feast. The king sent his servants to invite guests to his son's wedding. The guests refused. The king sent servants out again. The guests refused a second time, and some even killed his servants. In his anger, the king condemned the guests. He sent new servants out to gather anyone willing to attend. The impromptu guests were given wedding garments to replace their soiled clothes, but one guest refused them (Matthew 22:1-12, ESV). In response, the king threw him into "the outer darkness;" Jesus then announced that, "many are

called, but few are chosen" (Matthew 22:13-14, ESV).

Upon hearing these bitter condemnations, the Pharisees left to devise their plan of attack against Jesus.

PROFOUND MEANINGS

Their reaction makes sense. In the first parable, Jesus told the men that society's lowest and most despicable would be granted access to the kingdom of God before the most religious. This is a recurring theme in his preaching. According to *The MacArthur Bible Commentary*, "The pariahs of Jewish society, most publicly despised by the chief priests and elders, had found salvation while the self-righteous leaders had not." In the second parable, the Jewish leaders, represented by the vinedressers, were again called out for their treatment of the prophets and the coming execution of Jesus. Their response to these atrocities, in both counts, was "also Christ's judgment against them," but they were too self-righteous to realize their sin.

By employing so much Old Testament prophecy and making connections between his triumphal entry and the authority of the Father, Jesus makes his underlying meaning completely understandable to his audience.

However, Jesus didn't stop there. In his final parable, he pronounced abject judgment on his listeners while also pointing out the unmistakable goodness of God. The king not only invited the men to his son's wedding, but he invited them multiple times. When those guests refused, the king extended his invitation to all without qualifications. These new guests were even offered

Powerful Parables

Jesus' parables had a clear twofold purpose: They hid the truth from self-righteous or self-satisfied people who fancied themselves too sophisticated to learn from Him, while the same parables revealed truth to eager souls."

—John MacArthur

Twelve-year-old Jesus teaching in the Temple by Christian Wilhelm Ernst Dietrich (1700s).

kingly robes to wear in place of their stained, common clothes. This is profound and prodigal generosity, and this is exactly what is offered to us at the cross. Yet, one member of the crowd refused the offer of a wedding garment, thinking his clothes surely must be good enough. This self-righteous attitude costs him dearly.

In three short and simple stories, Jesus delivers an

ardent announcement of his authority, of God's plan for salvation and of the dangers that befall individuals who rest on their own understanding. He goes head to head with religious leaders who confidently deny his kingship, and he renders their self-righteousness and pursuit of power useless in the face of his coming crucifixion and resurrection.†





Holy Week

By *Sarah Jane Stone*

All his earthly life led up to this one week. Following three years of teaching, Jesus is faced with his final week—a week unlike any other where the relationship between the Creator and his creation would be forever altered, where sin and death would be defeated.

Beginning with Sunday's triumphal entry and going through the betrayal, trials and crucifixion, before ending with the empty tomb, the following section is designed to walk you day by day through the events of Holy Week.

"It was about noon, and darkness came over the whole land until three in the afternoon, for the sun stopped shining. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Jesus called out with a loud voice, 'Father, into your hands I commit my spirit.' When he had said this, he breathed his last. The centurion, seeing what had happened, praised God and said, 'Surely this was a righteous man.'"

—Luke 23: 44-47 (NIV) †

HOLY WEEK || Sunday

The Triumph

Entry into Jerusalem by A.R. Mironov (c. 2016).



hah Entry

JESUS' GRAND ENTRANCE INTO JERUSALEM IS A PROPHETIC SYMBOL OF THE TYPE OF KING HE MEANS TO BE.

By Jolene Nolte



By the time Jesus enters Jerusalem just before the Passover, anticipation is thick. Many fellow pilgrims and locals have heard of this man and his miracles, like raising a dead man to life. A man who could do that could surely free them from their oppression; perhaps this at last was the Messiah.

PASSOVER HOPE

Thousands of Jewish pilgrims poured into Jerusalem for Passover. The 0.5-square-mile city was busy with preparation, teeming with people arriving to celebrate the holiday that commemorated the Exodus, when God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt.

Every year at Passover, according to the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 16), the Jewish people came to the Temple at Jerusalem to offer a Passover sacrifice, eat unleavened bread as



Entry of Christ to Jerusalem by
Pietro di Giovanni d'Ambrogio
(c. 1435-40).

their ancestors had before leaving Egypt and remember. This remembrance is not just of a past event, but a present reality and future hope. The Exodus narrative is the foundational one for the Jewish people—God saving his people,

*"Shout and cheer, Daughter Zion!
Raise the roof, Daughter Jerusalem!
Your king is coming!
a good king who makes all things right,
a humble king riding a donkey,
a mere colt of a donkey.
I've had it with war—no more chariots in
Ephraim,
no more war horses in Jerusalem,
no more swords and spears, bows and arrows.
He will offer peace to the nations,
a peaceful rule worldwide,
from the four winds to the seven seas."*

—Zechariah 9:9-10

freeing them from their oppressors and giving them a new identity as his chosen people. While the Exodus had already happened, first-century

Jews longed for it to continue to happen; they would have celebrated God's deliverance of Israel from Egypt with an eye to how God would come to free them from Roman rule.

PROPHETIC SYMBOLISM

Jesus tells his disciples where to go, to untie a colt, and if they're asked about it, say, "The Lord has need of it." Jesus' choice of steed is deliberate and prophetic. First of all, he chooses to ride rather than walk into the city. This is only one of two references in the Gospels to Jesus riding anything. Second, he is not riding a war horse but a humble beast of burden. His contemporaries would have known the Zechariah passage well, and the royal, Messianic expectations attached to it. At the beginning of one of the holy city's most crowded, holy weeks, Jesus bursts on the scene, enacting a messianic passage.

This was not lost on the crowd. They lay out their cloaks as a makeshift red carpet and wave palm branches. Hundreds of years before, back in the days of Jezebel, Jehu received a similar response when his fellow Israelites learned he had just been anointed king. The men around him quickly covered the ground with their cloaks and announced Jehu king with a trumpet blast. In their more recent history, when Judas Maccabeus had defeated the Syrians (Seleucids) and purified the Temple, the people greeted him by waving palm branches (2 Maccabees 10:1-9).

The Triumphal Entry



This crowd, gathered for the Passover in the early first century AD, indicates what they understood and hoped for: Jesus as their liberating king. This is also evident in what they say: “Hosanna!” and “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.” While now, Sunday schools and Palm Sunday processions use “Hosanna!” as an expression of praise, the Hebrew word literally means “Save, now!” Save us now—from Rome, from this continued state of exile; save us like God saved us from Egypt, like God saved our ancestors from the Philistines by the hand of David. The phrase “Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord” comes from Psalm 118. The psalm is a triumphant one, celebrating God’s steadfast love, defeat of enemies and return from exile.

The Gospel of John points out that some of the crowd had followed Jesus from Bethany, where he and his disciples were staying, and spread the word about what Jesus had done there—Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. This would have been more than utterly astounding to a first-century Jew. In Ezekiel 37, the prophet Ezekiel had a vision of God bringing a whole valley of dry bones back to life. Bones, or anything dead for that matter, were unclean in the Mosaic Law. Ezekiel’s vision is one that symbolizes God making dead Israel live, making the defiled clean and inaugurating a new era of Spirit-filled life, forgiveness and return from

exile. When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the prophetic words in Ezekiel no doubt came right to mind for his contemporaries: “And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live; and I will place you in your own land” (Ezekiel 37:13-14a, ESV).

The crowd is hoping that Jesus is inaugurating this new era as the promised divine and just ruler who will finally free Israel of her oppressors and set the world to rights.

NOW WHAT?

Expectation is thick; the crowd is excited, and Jesus has made his grand entrance. What does he do now? Mark 11:19 tells us he went and walked around the Temple and then went back to nearby Bethany with the 12 disciples. He doesn’t storm into Roman headquarters; he doesn’t gather rebel troops or even give a speech. He simply looks around the Temple and leaves. What kind of messianic program is that?

From his entrance on Sunday, Jesus constantly raises and disappoints the crowd’s expectations. He was clearly not the military victor many of them wanted: This is a king who rides a borrowed donkey, not a mighty war horse, clearly not intending to seize his throne—or his people’s liberation—by force. †

Contemporary Commemorations: Palm Sunday



In preparation for a Palm Sunday service in Secunderabad, India, two boys collect palm fronds.

Churches across the world commemorate Jesus’ Triumphal Entry by celebrating Palm Sunday. Many evangelical churches celebrate with the congregations’ children making a procession into the main service, waving palm branches and singing “Hosanna.” In some places, the Palm Sunday procession is a large event, packing the streets like the first-century crowd would have packed Jerusalem’s. Some churches burn the palm branches they use on Palm Sunday, the last Sunday of Lent and the beginning of Holy Week, and save the ashes for the coming year’s Ash Wednesday, the start of Lent.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

A RADICAL DISPLAY OF AUTHORITY GETS BLOOD BOILING.

By *Emily Keery*

Wengeful zealot, spiritual guru, anti-establishment defender: Who is this Jesus? Paintings depict Jesus with fire in his eyes waving a whip around as people flee in terror.

Others imagine a more stoic Jesus defending the right to a tranquil Temple. Still others portray Jesus shaking his fist at the chief priests as he overtakes their territory like a boss. While the theatrics may be left to the imagination, Jesus clearly had more in mind than a righteous temper tantrum.

WHY THE BUSTLE IN THE TEMPLE?

Pilgrims to the Passover festival would need approved animals to sacrifice. 200,000 paschal lambs were required, and visitors needed a place to find them. Furthermore, a Temple tax of a half shekel was annually required (Exodus 30:13, Matthew 17:24). Jewish shekels were not in circulation, so current coins needed to be exchanged in order to pay the tax. The images on other coins made the priests bar them as idolatrous. Commissions were charged on the exchange of heathen coins for Jewish

shekels. Passover presented a market for the animals and money exchange.

This market grew up in the “hieron” area of the Temple, which included the Court of the Gentiles. Theologian Gary Burge points to some evidence that the high priest Caiaphas had argued with the Sanhedrin over selling animals in the courts. In the end, commerce won over worship. Strikingly, Jesus’ beef is not with animals or Temple tax exchange per se: It is with distracting the worshiper. In fact, this market showed a complete disrespect for Gentile proselytes. The Court of the Gentiles was the closest that Gentiles (and ritually impure Jews) got to the Holy of Holies. Josephus noted that it had pillars in Greek and Latin forbidding strangers from going any nearer to the altar. If Gentiles wanted to worship, they had to do it amidst the smell of manure and the noise of the crowd. He said, “My teachings have all been aboveboard” (John 18:20-21).

AUTHORITATIVE ZEAL

Despite the chaotic atmosphere, it is Jesus who commands the narrative. He makes a whip and starts the cleanup. The whip was



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

Christ Expels the Merchants from the Temple
by Gian Antonio Fumiani (c. 1678).



Temple Guard

Since the Temple was a holy site that housed large groups of people throughout the year, security was a concern. There was a priestly guard comprised of three priests: one at the Chamber of the Flame, one at the Chamber of the Hearth, and one at the Chamber of Abtinias (the site of grounding spices for incense). There were also 21 Levites who guarded various gates and chambers. It was imperative that the guards stayed vigilant. There were stories of a captain of the guard burning the shirt on a fellow priest who had fallen asleep (Midrash i 1). The priests were allowed to sleep outside the inner court where a fire was always burning. The elder priests held the key to the Temple, and at night, they would place it under a marble block and sleep on top of it. It is likely that members of this Temple guard came to arrest Jesus (Luke 12:4, John 18:3).



likely made of rushes used for bedding for cattle. This tool used as a weapon would be no impediment to a Temple guard. Strikingly, the depth of Jesus' passion and assertion of authority makes the people stand up and listen as he orders them to clear the area. In the noisy environment, what would have made everyone sit up and listen at the prompting of one man? The fire in Jesus' eyes was so strong, people fled before it. The disciples reflected, "For zeal for Your house has consumed me" (Psalms 69:9, AMP).

Jesus' act would have stirred up the wrath of the Temple authorities not only because it created a disturbance, but more so because he walked in like he owned the joint. His commanding authority made merchants and cows alike flee in its wake. Matthew describes that as the money changers fled from him, the blind and lame came into the Temple to find him (Matthew 21:14). This exchange caused the power brokers of the Temple, the chief priests and teachers of the law, to both abhor and fear Jesus (Mark 11:18).

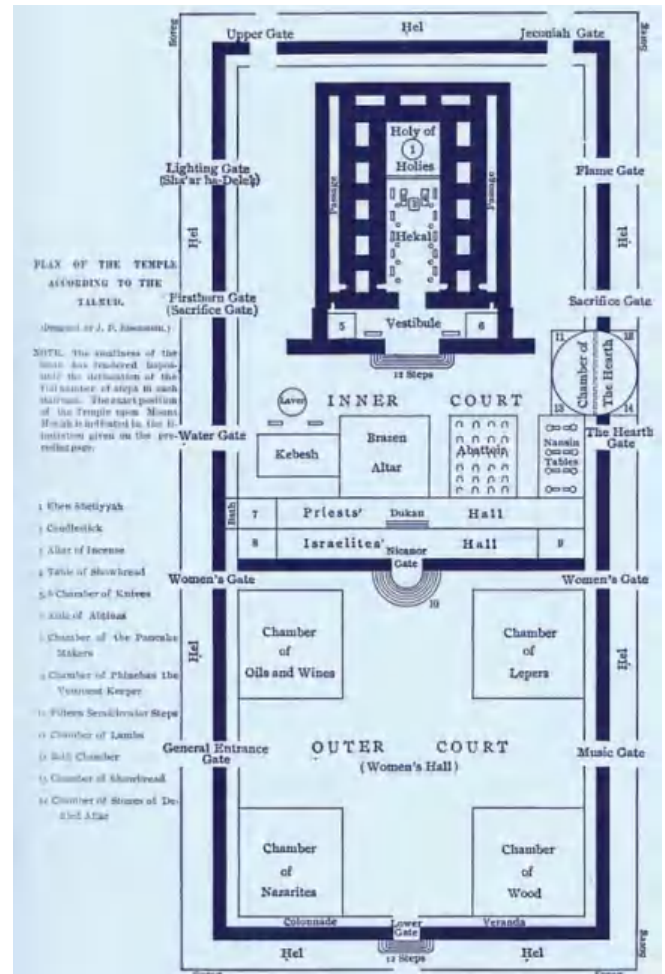
THE HISTORICAL PRECEDENT

Jesus wasn't the first person to cleanse the Temple. In 165 BC, Judas Maccabeus led a revolt against the Greek Seleucids, and, once he fought his way to Jerusalem, found the Temple gates destroyed and the altar desecrated by Antiochus Epiphanes. The reestablishing of this sacred place of worship is still celebrated in the feast of Hanukkah. Jews were celebrating it in Jesus' day with great fervor (John 10:22-23). It was a mix of religious devotion and national pride.

While there was this historical precedent for cleansing the Temple, Jesus' act varies in some critical ways. The Maccabees cleansed the Temple in a political gesture that was inspired by rage against the Gentile defilement of the Temple. Interestingly, Jesus is far less worried about political implications and focuses on the spiritual implications inhibiting worship. Jesus alludes to Isaiah 56:7: "I'll bring them to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. They'll be welcome to worship the same as the 'insiders,' to bring burnt offerings



Jesus Cleanses the Temple



and sacrifices to my altar. Oh yes, my house of worship will be known as a house of prayer for all people.” Jesus is defending the Gentiles’ right to worship in a place of spiritual peace. This wouldn’t be very popular to Jews bristling under Roman occupation.

Moreover, the Temple was still at the forefront of the Jewish mind. Jews of the day confessed “Eighteen Benedictions” from which 14 dealt with a new Temple and Messiah. In a massive PR move, Herod employed 18,000 men full-time from 20 BC to 64 AD rebuilding the Temple. It was commonly thought that the coming Messiah would rebuild the Temple. Into these expectations, Jesus says that his credibility will be built on destroying the Temple: “But the Jews were upset. They asked, ‘What credentials can you present to justify this?’ Jesus answered, ‘Tear down this Temple and in three days I’ll put it back together’” (John 2:19). The idea of destroying it in three days was logistically crazy and theologically bewildering.

A NEW TEMPLE

While the Gospel of John places the cleansing of the Temple in a different part of the narrative, many scholars assume it is the same event the Synoptic Gospels describe. What John adds is Jesus’ discussion of a new Temple.

When Jesus describes the destruction of the Temple, he refers to his own destruction, not a vengeful judgment on the physical Temple. Ironically, the crowd thinks he is talking about the literal Temple submitting to judgment; however, Jesus is referring to the judgment he will take upon himself.

In an even more subversive move, Jesus installs himself as the Temple (John 2:21), which will parallel the physical Temple in its destruction and resurrection. Jesus is stepping into the center of Judaism and setting up a new focal point—himself. This implication went way beyond knocking over tables; it would dislodge the role of the Temple itself. His brazenness cannot be missed. No wonder the establishment wanted to kill him. ☩

LEFT Model of Herod the Great’s rebuilt Second Temple.

RIGHT Notice that the Court of the Gentiles isn’t even on this map of the Temple layout. It would be on the outside of the outer line labeled “Soreg.” The soreg was a low railing that separated the Court of the Gentiles from the areas closer to the Holy of Holies.

Temple Debates

FOLLOWING THE CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE, JESUS EXCHANGES STRONG WORDS WITH JEWISH LEADERS IN THE TEMPLE COURTS—FULFILLING THE ROLE OF A JEWISH PROPHET WHO CALLS THE PEOPLE BACK TO GOD.

By Ed Cizewski

The Tribute Money by Valentin Du Boulogne (c. 1630-1631). Earlier in his ministry, the Pharisees—a different Jewish sect from the Sadducees—have also tried to trap Jesus by asking him, “Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?” Jesus turned the question around: “This engraving—who does it look like? And whose name is on it?” They said, ‘Caesar.’ ‘Then give Caesar what is his, and give God what is his.’ The Pharisees were speechless. They went off shaking their heads” (Matthew 21:17b, 20-22).

The tradition of the Hebrew prophets remain alive and well throughout the ministry of Jesus. While we may be most familiar with the faith of a prophet like Elijah, who called down fire from heaven, the bulk of a Jewish prophet’s ministry is spent on constructive critiques of his own people.

Prophets primarily work to redirect the people back to God when they have strayed to worshipping other gods or have become particularly immoral or unethical. Prophets are often controversial and are almost always opposed by state and religious leaders. Based on the prophets Jesus quoted in his debates with the Jewish leaders in the Temple courts, he saw himself ministering in the same tradition: offering a critique and a call to return to God.

WHY WAS JESUS IN JERUSALEM?

Jesus’ debates with the Jewish leaders take place in a highly volatile atmosphere. For starters, the Jewish leaders are already on high alert, plotting to kill Jesus because he had raised Lazarus from the dead on his way to the city (John 11).

As tensions escalate with the religious leaders, Jesus travels to Jerusalem for the annual celebration of Passover, knowing that his death is drawing near. He even comments that a prophet cannot die outside of Jerusalem (Luke 13:33).

Jews frequently travel to Jerusalem for the major religious holiday of Passover (Luke 2:41) in order to celebrate the deliverance of the Jewish people from Egypt. After the Lord frees the Israelites from Egypt (Exodus 12), the feast of the Passover is instituted (Leviticus 23:4-8). In particular, the Lord commands, “For seven days present a food offering to the Lord. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work” (Leviticus 23:8).

Jesus has seven days in Jerusalem to challenge the misguided religious establishment that has mischaracterized God and added a number of distractions from the true worship of God. Such prophetic confrontations rarely result in the honoring of a prophet.

CLEARING THE TEMPLE COURTS

Perhaps Jesus’ most striking action is the clearing of the moneychangers out of the Temple courts. This event sets the tone for his confrontations with the Jewish leaders and



Who Did Jesus Debate?

The majority of the Jewish leaders involved in the debates with Jesus were Sadducees. Based on the best documents from the time of Jesus, we know that the Sadducees are most likely closely connected with the Temple and the priesthood and are also very likely to be among the wealthy elite.

Dr. Allan Ross of Beeson Divinity School writes: "Most treatments about the Sadducees assume that all Chief Priests and other leaders of Judaism were Sadducees. The text of Josephus does not say that; it says only that those priests who were Sadducees came from the governing class."



The Apparition of Christ to the People by Aleksander Ivanov (c. 1837-1857). John the Baptist declares, "Here he is, God's Passover Lamb! He forgives the sins of the world! This is the man I've been talking about, 'the One who comes after me but is really ahead of me'" (John 1:29-30) when Jesus approaches. Asking his interlocutors to identify if John the Baptist's ministry is from God or not is a loaded question, not only because John the Baptist's ministry is popular with the people, but because John the Baptist has publicly endorsed Jesus as greater than himself.

prompts a showdown between Jesus' authority and their own.

The moneychangers make it possible to travel from distant regions and purchase animals for the Passover sacrifice. While this may start out as a practical help, it leads to two key problems: The moneychangers set up shop where the Gentiles are supposed to pray, and the moneychangers exploit their customers.

When Jesus drives them out of the Temple area, saying they had turned a house of prayer into a den of thieves, he both indicts their dishonesty and alludes to the call of God to all of the nations.

Jesus quotes Isaiah 56:7, a passage that assures God's coming justice and, in particular, the place of foreign eunuchs in God's kingdom. The full context of the passage is particularly helpful in clarifying the message of Jesus:

"And foreigners who bind themselves to the Lord to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants, all who keep the Sabbath without desecrating it and who hold

fast to my covenant— these I will bring to my holy mountain and give them joy in my house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house will be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Isaiah 56:6-7).

Further stoking the flames of conflict with the Jewish leaders, Jesus quotes Jeremiah 7:11 while driving out the moneychangers: "Has this house, which bears my Name, become a den of robbers to you? But I have been watching! declares the Lord."

The context of Jeremiah 7 is a prophecy of the destruction of the Temple because the people have abandoned the Lord. Not only are the moneychangers keeping Gentiles away from God's invitation, but the Jewish people have abandoned the Lord and will soon see their Temple fall.

The authority of Jesus to both challenge the authority of the religious leaders and predict the destruction of the Temple forms the background of the debates that follow.



WIKIMEDIA COMMONS

CONFLICT WITH THE JEWISH LEADERS

As Jesus grows in popularity, so does the opposition of the religious leaders who believe Jesus carelessly provokes the Romans to attack their nation: “Then the chief priests and the Pharisees called a meeting of the Sanhedrin. ‘What are we accomplishing?’ they asked. ‘Here is this man performing many signs. If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our Temple and our nation’” (John 11:47-48).

In fact, the crowds are using particularly inflammatory language by calling Jesus the Son of David—clearly implying that they expect him to overthrow Rome as the new King of Israel (Matthew 12:15). Short of killing Jesus, they at least hope to discredit him, and they begin by calling his supporters “children.”

Unfazed, Jesus suggests that children are actually quite trustworthy in recognizing the work of God: “From the lips of children and infants you, Lord, have called forth your praise” (Matthew 21:16b).

Failing at this insult, they press Jesus more directly about the origin of his authority. After all, he is a simple carpenter from the backwater of Galilee without official credentials.

Once again, Jesus bests their arguments by comparing his ministry to the well-respected ministry of John the Baptist: “I will also ask you one question. If you answer me, I will tell you by what authority I am doing these things. John’s baptism—where did it come from? Was it from heaven, or of human origin?” (Matthew 21:25-26).

Much like the Jewish people who rejected the messages of the prophets several centuries earlier, Jesus criticizes the Jewish leaders for failing to recognize the coming of God’s Kingdom and for failing to repent. In fact, the unrighteous tax collectors and prostitutes are ahead of them in God’s Kingdom (Matthew 21:31, 43-44).

A PREDICTION OF A DESTROYED TEMPLE

Besides losing their place in the Kingdom of God, Jesus also warns the Jewish leaders that they will soon lose their place in Jerusalem’s Temple. Through the parable of the two sons and the parable of the vineyard owner, Jesus emphasizes that these religious leaders have abandoned God and will be replaced by the Gentiles.

Ironically, it’s the Jewish leaders’ own words that condemn them. After hearing the story of vineyard tenants who kill the owner’s son, they reach the following conclusion about the owner: “‘He will bring those wretches to a wretched end,’ they replied, ‘and he will rent the vineyard to other tenants, who will give him his share of the crop at harvest time’” (Matthew 21:41).

Instead of trapping Jesus in his own words, Jesus uses their words to condemn their actions and to predict their coming destruction. Matthew writes that this is the last straw: “When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard Jesus’ parables, they knew he was talking about them. They looked for a way to arrest him, but they were afraid of the crowd because the people held that he was a prophet” (Matthew 21:45-46).

Leaving the Temple Mount after debating the Jewish leaders, Jesus makes his prediction about the future of the Temple chillingly clear: “Do you see all these great buildings?” replied Jesus. ‘Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down’” (Mark 13:3).

Much like the Hebrew prophets before him, Jesus calls the people of Israel back to repentance, chides the unbelief of religious leaders and predicts the coming destruction for those who oppose God’s path to peace. By this point, the Jewish leaders are fully committed to killing Jesus, the supposed prophet. They only need an opportunity to strike. †



Who Killed Jesus?

One of the great tragedies throughout history has been the careless and deeply flawed ways the Jewish people have been blamed for the death of Jesus. The reality of the Gospel story dramatically undermines any such accusatory narratives:

- Jesus is extremely popular among the Jewish people.
- Roughly 70 Jewish leaders in the Sanhedrin fear Jesus because of his growing popularity.
- Unable to discredit Jesus publicly, the Sanhedrin has to plot the death of Jesus in the evening in order to avoid a riot.
- Even the 70 members of the Sanhedrin are divided in their opposition to Jesus.

The overwhelming Biblical witness concludes that a small group of elite Jewish leaders are responsible for the death of Jesus, and even these leaders required the collaboration of the Roman governor in order to carry out their plot. Any attempts to blame the entire Jewish race for the death of Jesus is a gross misunderstanding of the historical record and most likely the failure of the historical church.



Ed Cyzewski (MDiv) is the author of *A Christian Survival Guide and Coffeehouse Theology*. He writes at edcyzewski.com.

Olivet Discourse

HAVING CRYPTICALLY PROPHESED OVER THE TEMPLE'S FATE, JESUS' DISCIPLES ASK THE QUESTIONS TO WHICH WE ALL WANT ANSWERS.

By **Karen Ruth Myers**

Eschatology

The study of “the last things”—or “eschatology” as scholars term it today—currently refers to the end of time, but historically referred to the final destinies of an individual, a nation, the world, mankind, a historical period.

Hebrew has no abstract term to equal such an abstract concept. The closest thing to abstraction comes in the phrase used frequently by the Hebrew prophets, *aharit hayamim*, which means simply “the days to come” or “the future” (see prophecies like Jeremiah 29:11 and Deuteronomy 4:30-31). But this definitely has no eschatological significance. A couple of “end times” phrases appear in certain prophecies from early prophets like Elijah, Amos and Hosea; later ones like Isaiah, Micah, Zephaniah and Jeremiah; or even post-exilic prophets like Joel and Malachi: *hayom YHWH* “the day of the LORD” and *b’aharit hayamim* “in the end of the days.” But Daniel alone introduces the strictly “last days” terms *kez hayamim* and *et kez*, which literally mean “at the term of the days” or “at the term” which carry a “due date”-specific connotation.

Unlike our Western, linear view of time, where things are chronological and set, the Jewish mind has a much more fluid view of moments and days, and how God works in moments and days. For example, the preacher Solomon wrote, “Whatever was, is.

Whatever will be, is. That’s how it always is with God” (Ecclesiastes 3:15).

We must keep this in mind when we read the Olivet discourse and other prophetic passages in both testaments.

After tense discussion in the Temple, Jesus walks with his disciples out of the Temple and to the Mount of Olives, telling them that the time is coming when not one of the Temple’s magnificent stones will be left on another. The Olivet Discourse refers to Jesus’ words from the Mount of Olives after this in Matthew 24-25, Mark 13 and Luke 21:5-36.

As a Jew, I can attest to the veracity of our joke “two Jews, three opinions.” This applies also to Messianic beliefs in Second Temple Jewish life. Thoughts about end times also ranged widely.

A common innate belief among the majority of these groups and subgroups and other scattered ideologies holds the presence of the Temple as the icon of Jewish flourishing.

So why does Jesus say that the Temple will be demolished? Especially when people are looking for Messiah, and some folks think that this same Jesus might be Messiah?

Isn’t the Messiah supposed to come one day to the Mount of Olives and open everyone’s eyes to the glorious kingdom of peace and salvation?

Maybe, in the Olivet Discourse, he does.

FOUR QUESTIONS

The disciples are troubled by Jesus’ shocking announcement of the Temple’s future destruction. So, like any good Jews, they instantly jump to asking questions:

When will these things happen?

How will they know?

What signs can they look for before Jesus will return?

And what will be the signs of the end of the world?



The Prophecy of the Destruction of the Temple by James Tissot (c. 1886-1894).

Jesus hears these natural questions coming from men who are honestly perturbed and concerned and a bit frustrated. And Jesus responds. He doesn't criticize them for not understanding or belittle them for not trusting in Him.

His answers offer hope, courage and truth even for the coming negative, fearful and deceitful days. He doesn't lay all the events in a plain save-the-date to put on the calendar. Instead, he actually says nobody knows or can know the day or the hour, but they—and we—can recognize the signs and not be dismayed. We can rest in the fact that the Father knows the times and knows us. The point isn't to know everything, but to watch and be ready.

The signs include wars, famines, deceivers, distresses, persecutions, tribulations and sorrows. But Jesus promises a sure hope and a certain end: "And then—then!—they'll see the Son

of Man welcomed in grand style—a glorious welcome! When all this starts to happen, up on your feet. Stand tall with your heads high. Help is on the way!" (Luke 21:27-28)

WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN? WE DON'T KNOW.

But, of course—in the Jewish understanding of time, according to the Hebrew prophecies, and by Jesus' own promise here on this mountain—Messiah will come again to the same place to reveal himself and his kingdom in a glorious final fulfillment of these words. Until then, he wants us to watch.

FOUR PARABLES

Jesus follows his prophecies with four parables. In them, he lays out principles and practical steps for us to follow in the threat of persecution, distress, conflict, delay and unwanted problems.

First, through the parable of the servants with talents (a denomination of currency), we learn that it is our responsibility to use the resources we have and work hard to gain success.

Through the parable of the ten virgins, we learn to be patient, to prepare more than the minimum, to be ready both for the coming and for the perceived slowness—even if Jesus seems to tarry longer than we expect.

The parable of the fig tree teaches us to be aware, observant, and to notice what goes on around us. As sure as the fig announces the summer, these signs declare that Jesus' return is close at hand.

The parable of the watchman-servant paints a picture of why watchfulness matters. First, a thief breaks in while the watchman sleeps, and secondly, carelessness sneaks in while the servant begins to be more preoccupied with his own wellbeing than with his job to look after the master's resources. †

Judas & Caiaphas

WHILE RIGHTLY VILIFIED FOR CONSPIRING TO KILL JESUS, THEY VIEWED JESUS AS COLLATERAL DAMAGE IN THE BATTLE TO PROTECT THEIR NATION.

By Ed Czerwinski

In 70 AD, the Roman army surrounded Jerusalem, slaughtered thousands, and tore the Temple and its surrounding walls to the ground. Visitors to the Temple Mount today can see the massive stones that remain piled around the foundation. This was the very catastrophe that Judas Iscariot, one of the Twelve, and Caiaphas, the high priest, had tried to avoid roughly 37 years earlier.

THE BRUTALITY OF ROMAN OCCUPATION

While Jesus shows compassion to notorious sinners, heals the sick and performs several notable miracles, many in the crowd continue to speculate that he will rule Israel as king. Such speculation could alarm both the ruling Roman authorities and the Jewish leaders in the Sanhedrin who dread the armies of Rome.

The Romans had conquered large swaths of the known world through their army's brutal efficiency on the battlefield, economic networks and no-nonsense governing policies for conquered territories. Taxes were steep, governors faced enormous pressure and the slightest hint of rebellion was crushed.

Crucifixion under Rome wasn't just a way to punish the guilty. It served as a warning that the most painful of deaths awaited anyone who dared to challenge Rome.

Brutal though the Romans were, they were also highly pragmatic, allowing local governments to handle the day-to-day affairs in their territories. At the start of the first century, the Romans restored the authority of the Sanhedrin with hopes of minimizing conflict with rulers who failed to understand the Jewish customs and religion.

At the time of Jesus, the Sanhedrin assumed responsibility for enforcing both religious and civil laws, which, for the Jewish people, are often the same. This placed the Sanhedrin in the delicate position between the concerns of their own people and the priorities of the Romans. A would-be Messiah, speculated by many to be the Son of David, violated both the Jewish law (Matthew 26:65-66) and the priorities of Rome (John 19:12) and called for immediate action from Caiaphas.

As the high priest, Caiaphas stood at the center of Jewish religious and political life, making the critical decisions that may well determine the fate of their nation. Caiaphas and Judas, along with most Jewish people at the time of Jesus, hated their Roman occupiers, but Caiaphas could only act to save Israel from the legions of Rome if Judas' inclination for self-preservation prompted him to betray Jesus.

FEAR OF LOSING THE TEMPLE AND NATION

At the center of the world of Caiaphas and his colleagues was the Temple and, with it, the status of the nation of Israel as God's chosen people. Jesus routinely threatened the safety of the Temple and the people of Israel.

After Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, Caiaphas and his colleagues in the Sanhedrin were particularly concerned that a Messiah who could raise the dead would prompt the people to rebel against Rome, bringing destruction on the people of Israel:

"If we let him go on like this, everyone will believe in him, and then the Romans will come and take away both our Temple and our nation.' Then one of them, named

The House of Caiaphas by Gustave Doré (c. 1875).



Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, spoke up, 'You know nothing at all! You do not realize that it is better for you that one man die for the people than that the whole nation perish'" (John 11:48-50, NIV).

Jesus also claimed to be God—doing what only Israel's God could do, such as forgiving sins and asserting authority over the Torah—an offense worthy of the death penalty in the eyes of the ruling Sanhedrin, and had threatened to destroy "this temple" in three days. Accusers would bring this up during Jesus' trial.

And while Jesus had threatened the Temple and claimed to be God, Caiaphas knew that the true threat came from Jesus being declared the king of the Jews and bringing about the wrath of Rome.

JUDAS PLANS TO SAVE HIMSELF

Judas is a mystery in many ways, but the one thing we know for certain is this: He never stopped looking out for himself. This shortsightedness made him the perfect pawn in Caiaphas' plans.

Among the few things we know about Judas, it's clear that he routinely stole from the money used to support Jesus, and he didn't care for the idea that Jesus was destined to die. In fact, he betrayed Jesus immediately after a woman supposedly prepared Jesus for burial by pouring perfume on him. Judas objected on the pretext of the monetary waste of this gesture, to which Jesus responded,

"She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has

*"Don't
you know
anything?
Can't you
see that
it's to our
advantage
that one
man dies for
the people
rather than
the whole
nation be
destroyed?"*

—Caiaphas,
John 11:48-50

Ed Cyzewski (MDiv) is
the author of *A Christian
Survival Guide* and
Coffehouse Theology. He
writes at edcyzewski.com.

done will also be told, in memory of her.' Then Judas went to the chief priests to betray Jesus to them. They were delighted to hear this and promised to give him money. So he watched for an opportunity to hand him over" (Mark 14:8-11, NIV).

However, while Judas certainly wanted to stop Jesus and gain the support of the religious leaders, he never intended to kill Jesus. He was simply looking out for himself, and he was even seized with remorse when he learned that Jesus had been condemned to die (Matthew 27:3, NIV).

THE PLAN TO SAVE TEMPLE AND NATION

Caiaphas and his associates only needed a way to kill Jesus, and once Judas realized Jesus wasn't going to defeat the armies of Rome, he sought a way out. What better way to start over than to hand Jesus over to the religious leaders? He could remove himself from danger, win over some powerful friends and keep Jesus from provoking the armies of Rome.

At the heart of the betrayal and trial of Jesus were the all-too-human desires of two men seeking to protect themselves and their nation from perceived threats. They could not comprehend the message of Jesus, because they were so consumed with their self-preservation and their fear of Rome. As we see Caiaphas and Judas lose themselves in their murderous plans, they remind us of the words of Jesus:

"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it" (Matthew 16: 25, NIV).✝

The Last Supper

BITTERSWEET
WORDS LACE
PROMISE WITH
PAIN—AND START
A REVOLUTIONARY
TRADITION.

By *Alicia Taylor*



The Twelve look at each other with questioning eyes. Their teacher, in his uncanny way, has just announced that one of them will betray him to his death. These men have spent years together, climbing through the dusty countryside, shoulder to shoulder. When their teacher's words had scared away the rest of his disciples by telling them to eat his flesh and drink his blood, these twelve had stayed. Each of them had given up comfortable living and easy acceptance at the synagogue. How could any of these men become a traitor?

THE BETRAYAL

All of the disciples but one are surprised to learn that a traitor sits at the dinner table. Strangely, the question that rises to their lips is, "It isn't me, is it, Master?" (Matthew 26:22). Each man knows the weakness in his own heart, and each one understands that his weakness can turn him into a traitor. But only one of them knows the betrayal has already occurred.

A FAMILY DINNER

The setting for this disturbing news is a holiday dinner. Earlier that day, Jesus had sent Peter and John into town with strangely specific

*The Last Supper, (c.1803).
A copy of the famous
painting by Leonardo da
Vinci in the 1490s.*





Farewell Discourse

Strangely, John omits the cup and bread from his account of Jesus' last night before his betrayal. Instead, he records Christ's long speech, known as the Farewell Discourse. Scholars break up the speech into three parts: an exhortation to trust Christ and love one another, an allegory, describing Christ as the Vine and his followers as the branches, and a prayer to God the Father for the preservation of his disciples. The first section emphasizes the fact that Christ is about to leave them, but that they shouldn't be distressed. The next section focuses on the suffering they should expect as part of their lives in Christ. The final prayer, which is the longest prayer by Jesus recorded in the gospels, reveals Christ's great pastoral love for his disciples. The Farewell Discourse is bursting with contrasting themes: joy and sorrow, life and death, Christ's people and the unsaved world.



Christ is separated from the apostles, detail of a tile from the Episodes from Christ's Passion and Resurrection by Duccio di Buoninsegna (c. 1255-1319).



The Last Supper



DEA / G. NIVATALLAH / CONTRIBUTOR

instructions: “A man carrying a water jug will meet you. Follow him home ... He will show you a spacious second-story room, swept and ready. Prepare the meal there” (Luke 22:10-12).

Jesus’ miraculous directions steers the disciples where they need to go, as always. In obedience, the men prepare the room to enjoy a holiday they had celebrated every year of their lives. With the recent triumphant entrance into Jerusalem, their spirits soared. No doubt, they expect this feast to be a celebration of unusual power and beauty.

FOOT WASHING

Toward the end of the meal, Jesus takes a basin of water and wraps a towel around his waist. With all the dignity of a waiter clearing plates, he soaks and rinses the feet of all twelve disciples. Peter objects at first, saying, “You’re not going to wash my feet—ever!” (John 13:8). Jesus insists, and Peter finally accepts. This parallels a similar story from earlier in Jesus’ life, when John the Baptist refused, at first, to baptize him.

“When it was time, he sat down, all the apostles with him, and said, ‘You’ve no idea how much I have looked forward to eating this Passover meal with you before I enter my time of suffering. It’s the last one I’ll eat until we all eat it together in the kingdom of God.’”

—Luke 22:14-16

Since most hosts clean their guest’s feet when they enter a house, Jesus’ foot-washing serves no physical need. Instead, he does this to teach his followers about how to serve one another when he has gone. Christ explains, “So if I, the Master and Teacher, washed your feet, you must now wash each other’s feet” (John 13:12-17).

THE BREAD AND THE WINE

During the meal, Jesus says a prayer of thanksgiving over a loaf of bread, breaks it and gives it to the disciples, saying, “Take, eat. This is my body” (Matthew 26:26). They pass the bread around and eat it. Later writers would explain that this bread is like the manna eaten by the Israelites in the wilderness. It is like the bread the ravens brought Elijah to sustain him in the desert. It is like the scroll eaten by Ezekiel that fills him with the word of God.

After passing the bread, Jesus takes a cup of wine and says, “Drink this, all of you. This is my blood, God’s new covenant poured out for many people for the forgiveness of sins” (Matthew 26:27-29). He passes around the cup for everyone to drink. Later generations would explain how Christ’s blood replaces all of the blood sacrifices of the Old Testament. They would also see parallels between the fruit in the cup and the fruit of the Tree of Life. They would see this cup

“Taking bread, he blessed it, broke it, and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body, given for you. Eat it in my memory.’ He did the same with the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant written in my blood, blood poured out for you.’”

—Luke 22:19-20



The Passover

Whatever the exact relationship between the date of the Last Supper and the Passover, the Gospels indicate that Christ intends the Last Supper to hold Passover significance. The Passover feast commemorates the events on the eve of the Exodus in 1300 BC, when God delivers the Israelites from the Egyptians who enslaved them. At that time, God commands each Israelite household to sacrifice a pure lamb to keep the angel of death from harming them. On the night of the Last Supper, Christ makes it clear that he is that pure lamb, sacrificed to save his people, and that this is a new exodus.

foreshadowed by David's cup that "brims with blessing" (Psalm 23:5) and the "cup of salvation" (Psalm 116:12).

The most important parallel Christians note throughout history is the great contrast between this meal and the meal of Adam and Eve when they take the forbidden fruit. Adam and Eve seize the fruit because they are told God is holding out on them, that the fruit is forbidden because eating it would make them like God. Instead, it ushers in death. Christ's meal works the opposite way. This meal is freely offered because Christ would submit to God even in death, and in doing so, would open the way to new life in him.

BREAD AND BETRAYAL

On the heels of instituting the Eucharist, or communion, Christ connects

the bread on the table with the news of his betrayal. He explains to everyone that he would be betrayed by "The one to whom I give this crust of bread after I've dipped it" (John 13:26). He hands the bread to Judas.

Like Adam and Eve long before, Judas seizes his opportunity. By handing Judas bread from the table where the Eucharist was offered, Christ invites him to accept what he is offering. Instead, Judas chooses to use his closeness to the Son of God as a means of pursuing his own gain in his own way.

NEW CONFIDENCE

Although the disciples don't seem to understand what it means for Christ to identify Judas as the traitor; they all grow in confidence after the meal. Perhaps they think that Christ's identification of

The Last Supper

LEFT *Lord's Supper* by Ruben Zevallos (2015). This modern depiction of the Last Supper emphasizes the bread and wine.

RIGHT *Jesus Christ of Eucharist*—a 17th-century icon at the Historic Museum in Sanok, Poland. This disturbing image is visually working out Jesus' words that his body is the bread, his blood the wine. The cup and the altar he is sitting on evoke receiving the Eucharist. If you are disturbed, you are not the only one. Jesus' words turned away crowds, even his own followers, and had early Christians mistakenly perceived as cannibals.



Judas will cause the man to change his mind. Or, perhaps taking communion brings them each greater confidence. The Gospels paint the moment before his betrayal as a surprisingly hopeful one. All of Christ's friends are confident that they will stand by him through anything. They sing a robust hymn together as they make their way to Gethsemane to pray.

However, Christ knows the Scriptures well enough not to be surprised by the events that will follow. As the disciples grow more confident, he quotes the Old Testament's prediction: "I'll strike the shepherd. Helter-skelter the sheep will be scattered" (Zechariah 13:7). He reminds them that there have always been predictions of his coming death and departure, and he assures them that it will be to their benefit. The words fall on stone ears.

Only Judas believes that any of what is about to happen is possible. †

The Eucharist

Wine and bread don't occur in nature. To create the two elements Christ blessed at the Last Supper, the work of people and the work of God must be joined together. This has been understood as a reflection of both the Incarnation and the Christian life. For many, the practice of taking communion is the central defining activity of Christian life. According to the *Didache*, a collection of the apostles' teaching written around 60-80 AD, the reason Christians meet every Sunday is to take communion together.

Because of its significance, communion enters into the popular imagination. The legends of Arthur center around the Holy Grail, the original communion cup. More recently, the journeying hobbits in *The Lord of the Rings* receive lembas bread, synonymous with the Eucharistic term, *viaticum* (derived from the same Latin root for travel or voyage). The importance of the Eucharist to Christian history, imagination and culture cannot be overstated.

Agony in the Garden

KNOWING THE GRUESOME FATE THAT LIES AHEAD,
JESUS CRIES OUT TO GOD.

By *Lauren Sergeant*

After singing a hymn, in the dark of the evening, a man leads 11 others along to the Mount of Olives. He instructs them, “Sit here while I go over there and pray” (Matthew 26:36, NASB). Leaving eight behind, he takes the remaining three to a place on the Mount of Olives called Gethsemane, meaning “oil press.” Speaking to the three, he laments, “My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death, remain here and keep watch with Me” (Matthew 26:38, NASB). The man walks but a stone’s throw away, falls to his knees and begins to pray.

JESUS’ PRAYER AND PASSION

The man, Jesus, falls from his knees to his face in a posture unusual to Jewish prayer practices, in which it is customary to stand while praying. The position Jesus assumes is reserved for intense supplication, connoting helplessness and dire need before God.

Crying out, Jesus prays, “Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done” (Luke 22:42, NASB). His prayer indicates his Sonship, his Jewishness and his humanity all at once. As the only begotten Son, he calls God “Abba, Father”—Abba being an intimate word used by even adult children with their fathers.

Additionally, this prayer is distinctly Jewish for two reasons. Jesus prays, “If you are willing ...” revealing his trust that God is both sovereign and able to redeem. As Darrell L. Bock puts it, “Requests for God to change His will are not unusual and reflect trust in His



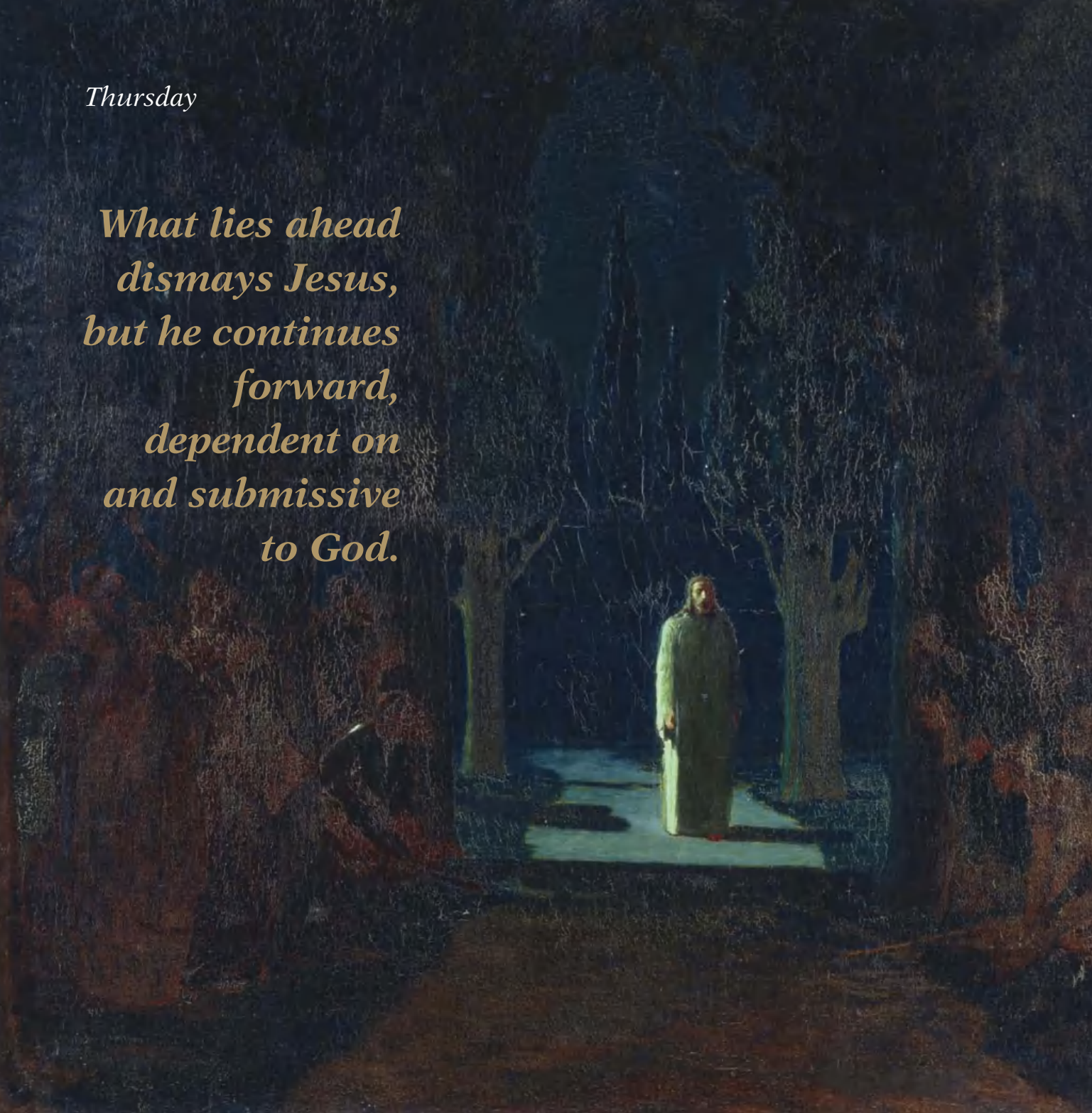


Christ on the Mount of Olives by Paul Gauguin (1889).

P. Gauguin 89

Thursday

*What lies ahead
dismays Jesus,
but he continues
forward,
dependent on
and submissive
to God.*



Christ at the Garden of Gethsemane by Vasilii Grigoryevich Perov (c. 1878).

sovereignty,” just as when Moses appealed to God not to destroy the Israelites, or when Hezekiah pleaded for his life. The Jewishness of Jesus’ prayer is also reflected in how he uses the imagery of the “cup” to symbolize the suffering that is to come for him. He draws on the symbolism of the Jewish Scriptures, in which the cup often denotes God’s wrath, which is to fall upon him as “he who knows no sin” becomes sin.

Finally, Jesus’ prayer is markedly human, demonstrating profound struggle. This prayer reveals that Jesus is no ascetic and no stoic,

indifferent to his impending death, but rather he is in anguish, as he revealed to the three disciples before he left to pray.

DISCIPLES SLEEPING

Rising, Jesus comes back to the place where he left the three: Peter, James and John. He finds them asleep and addresses them all, saying, “Simon, are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Mark 14:37-38 NASB).



Jesus Prays for the Disciples and for Us

Jesus' prayer for Simon Peter is not recorded, but in John 17, directly before this Gethsemane scene, Jesus' prayer for the present disciples and future believers is documented. This is also known as his "high priestly prayer." In it, Jesus prays for the Father to glorify himself, as well as for future believers and their unity: "The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one" (John 17:22, NASB).

The New Testament writer of Hebrews calls Jesus our high priest, who continues to offer prayers to the Father on our behalf. His agony in Gethsemane shows us that he knows what it is like to cry out to God in anguish. Because of this, we know: "We don't have a priest who is out of touch with our reality. He's been through weakness and testing, experienced it all—all but the sin" (Hebrews 4:15).



He is likely referring to his remark earlier that evening to Simon Peter, saying, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has demanded permission to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith would not fail, and you, when once you have turned again, strengthen your brothers" (Luke 22:31-32, NASB). Peter will later lead the disciples in proclaiming the gospel at Pentecost, but only after denying Jesus three times before the next day has even dawned. How beautiful and gracious that Jesus, suffering in the throes of knowing what is to come, would offer

supplication on Peter's behalf, and how wise his instruction for the disciples to pray also.

ANGELIC AID

Jesus returns to prayer a distance away from the three disciples. He prays a second time, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done." He struggles with the frightful reality of what God wills and wrestles with what it means to submit to his Father's will. In response to Jesus' prayers, an angel appears before him and strengthens Jesus in his determination to follow where his Father is leading. The angel does not relieve Jesus' intense emotional discord, but instead affirms his choice to submit to God's plan.

JESUS RETURNS TO SLEEPING DISCIPLES

Jesus returns once again to his followers. He finds them with their eyes heavy with sorrow, and they do not know how to answer him. One author calls this "one of the saddest stories in all of Scripture," due to the profound distance between Jesus and the disciples. Jesus seeks companionship and finds it utterly lacking. Gethsemane sets the scene of a devastating irony: When Jesus faces his most devastating moment on behalf of men for whom he will give his life, the men cannot even remain awake to share in his grief.

Once more Jesus moves away from his disciples to pray. He sweats beads of blood, falling in large drops onto the ground below. Clearly this is an agonized man, and his earlier words to his disciples ring true: "My soul is deeply grieved to the point of death" (Matthew 26:38, NASB). Jesus' dread seems to stem from the "cup" that he referenced earlier. The wrath of God is soon to fall upon him, and his body shows signs of extreme stress in the anticipation. He prays again, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done" (Matthew 26:42, NASB).

Accepting his Father's will for himself, Jesus returns to the disciples. Again, he is far from stoic indifference, and cares very much about the fate that awaits him. What lies ahead dismays Jesus, but he continues forward, dependent on and submissive to God.

JESUS PROCEEDS RESOLUTE

Returning to his disciples, Jesus finds them asleep for the third time, foreshadowing the way in which Simon Peter will later deny him three times. Jesus commands them, "Get up, let us be going; behold, the one who betrays Me is at hand!" (Matthew 26:46; Mark 14:42, NASB.) Fortified by prayer and the knowledge that he is acting within his Father's will, Jesus reassumes his position of authority as the disciples' rabbi.

Jesus' foreknowledge of what is to pass reinforces the fact that he is a willing sacrifice; he freely and lovingly chooses to be the Lamb that takes away the sins of the world. †

Betrayal and Arrest

THE CALM BEFORE THE STORM HAS PASSED, AND JESUS NOW FACES THE VERY REAL ANGUISH OF BEING THE MESSIAH.

By *Victoria Van Vlear*

It is the night of the Passover—a celebration of God’s faithfulness to Israel, and a promise to remember that faithfulness. Yet in the midst of the celebration, Jesus’ closest followers are vaguely uneasy. Jesus accuses Judas of betrayal, and Judas storms off. Then Jesus takes them for a walk in a nearby garden and asks them to stay awake and pray with him. The praying itself isn’t unusual—Jesus often goes off by himself to that end. But tonight, his request has a sense of urgency, and compounded with Judas’ disappearance, the disciples are now thoroughly spooked. Despite this, they fail Jesus and fall asleep.

FACING A MOB

“Are you still sleeping and taking your rest?” Jesus’ voice jerks them out of their drowsiness. “It is enough; the hour has come. The Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise; let us be going; see, my betrayer is at hand” (Mark 14:41-42, ESV).

The disciples stand up to face “a crowd with swords and clubs, from the chief priests and the scribes and the

elders” (Mark 14:43, ESV). This isn’t a subdued crowd—it is a mob ready to step in and start swinging. Where did these people come from? John says in his account that “Judas, having procured a band of soldiers and some officers from the chief priests and the Pharisees, went there with lanterns and torches and weapons” (John 18:2, ESV). Scholars speculate that a government official might have sent a band of Roman soldiers to prevent a riot, while the officers from the chief priests and Pharisees were the Temple guard and Jesus’ primary arrestors.

THE KISS OF BETRAYAL

Judas leads the mob. “Now the betrayer had given them a sign, saying, ‘The one I will kiss is the man. Seize him and lead him away under guard.’ And when he came, he went up to him at once and said, ‘Rabbi!’ And he kissed him” (Mark 14:44-45, ESV). Why does Judas need a signal? Surely most of the company knows Jesus of Nazareth—he has become a well-known teacher in Jerusalem. In *The Life and Time of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim gives us a potential answer:

“A signal by which to recognize Jesus seemed almost necessary with so large a band, and where escape or resistance might be apprehended.” The Roman soldiers may not recognize Jesus, and Judas wants to make sure his former master doesn’t escape.

That Judas uses a kiss as the signal shows how far he has gone down the road of betrayal. Edersheim speculates that Judas “not only kissed but covered Him with kisses, kissed Him repeatedly, loudly, effusively.” This isn’t a quiet betrayal—it is loud, brash and taunting. Jesus later receives mockery, whips and spits from the soldiers holding him, but this mockery is different—it is polite and deeply personal.

WALKING INTO THE LION’S DEN

Jesus knows what is coming, and doesn’t shy away from the Father’s cup. “Then Jesus, knowing all that would happen to him, came forward and said to them, ‘Whom do you seek?’ They answered him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I am he.’ ... When Jesus said to them, ‘I am he,’ they drew back and fell to the ground” (John 18:4-6, ESV).



TRAVMONT_ANA/THINKSTOCK

Why do they not arrest Jesus immediately? Not only has Judas overtly given them the prearranged signal, but Jesus also identifies himself. Edersheim thinks it is Christ's appearance that undoes the soldiers: "The appearance and majesty of that calm Christ—heaven in His look and peace on His lips—was too overpowering in its effects ... the foremost of them went backward, and they fell to the ground."

Yet still Jesus does not run away.

Peter, who perhaps sees his master's determination to go quietly, takes matters into his own hands. "Then Simon Peter, having a sword, draws it and strikes the high priest's servant and cuts off his right ear" (John 18:10, ESV). The physician Luke adds an interesting note in his account: "But Jesus said, 'No more of this!' And he touched his ear and healed him" (Luke 22:51, ESV). The mention of the high priest's servant is important here—

this isn't just an innocent bystander. Edersheim suggests that this servant is "perhaps the Jewish leader of the band." And yet Jesus heals him—the enemy who has come to arrest him.

And what are the disciples' reactions? After Peter's weak attempt at resistance, they see that Jesus will see this through to the end, and "all the disciples left him and fled" (Matthew 26:56, ESV). He is now utterly alone.†

The Three Jewish Trials

By Karen Ruth Myers

INTERROGATED, TRIED AND SENTENCED UNDER THE VEIL OF NIGHT—JESUS' FATE IS SEALED.

The Temple leadership is so incensed at Jesus that they break their own laws to try him. Covertly and under the cover of night, officers of the Temple guard bring Jesus from Gethsemane to an illegal midnight trial.

FIRST TRIAL

Interrogation by Annas: Death for Insubordination

Annas had been appointed high priest by Roman legate Quirinius in 6 AD, but seven years later the Roman procurator Valerius Gratus legally deposes him of his office, since he has imposed capital sentences without permission from the Imperial Government. After his deposition, however—since Jewish tradition considers the high priest to maintain his role until his death—the people still look to Annas as high priest *de jure*, even if he isn't high priest *de facto*. He retains influence over the new high priesthood and remains “father of the court,” presiding over the Sanhedrin.

As the Temple soldiers and servants bring Jesus back from Gethsemane, *Annas* calls together

some of the Temple court administrators. Then he calls Jesus before the court.

Annas knows that even though they have successfully arrested Jesus, or *Yeshua* in Hebrew, he needs to trap Jesus saying something worthy of accusation, trial and condemnation. So, he decides to question Jesus about his teachings.

Jesus knows the examination is a sham, so he responds forthrightly, “I have spoken openly to the world. I have always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where all Jews come together. I have said nothing in secret. Why do you ask me? Ask those who have heard me what I said to them; they know what I said” (John 18:20-21, ESV).

An officer slaps Jesus and rebukes him. Annas denounces the honesty of Jesus as an insult against religious authority and sends him off to a second trial.

SECOND TRIAL

Condemnation by Caiaphas: Death for Blasphemy

In 25 AD, Valerius Gratus appoints Annas' son-in-law, Caiaphas, as high priest. However, Caiaphas is basically a political puppet, because

Illustration of Matthew
26:57-66 by William Hole
(c. 1846-1917).



Trials by Night

According to Jewish law, these trials are illegal for many reasons:

- It is Passover, and no trials are to be held during feast time.
 - Trials are not supposed to be held at night, and these are all held before dawn.
 - Jesus has no representation.
 - A self-incriminating question is asked of Jesus.
 - Jesus is condemned without each member of the council voting, individually.
 - After a death penalty is issued, a night is supposed to pass before the execution is carried out. Jesus is crucified mere hours later.
-



Stained glass window in Saint-Yves La Roche-Maurice depicting Christ before Caiaphas.

Rome retains control of executing capital punishment and reviewing judgments, and Annas retains control of the priesthood through leadership of the Sanhedrin. Still, Annas cannot get rid of Jesus without Caiaphas' help.

Now Caiaphas has the duty and goal at Jesus' second trial to produce the formal accusation. He already has the charge ready of religious insubordination, so Caiaphas invites the priests, the council and various witnesses to come up and corroborate the charge against Jesus.

Many false witnesses come up to testify, but their words do not agree. Even the two witnesses who talk about Jesus' words about the Temple's destruction don't match up. So Caiaphas tries to provoke Jesus to respond to the witnesses' falsehoods and inconsistencies. Yet Jesus holds his peace.

When Jesus remains silent, Caiaphas does something illegal and unethical. Illegal, because he introduces two fresh questions into the trial, which inherently carry new charges against Jesus and a separate set of ramifications. Unethical, because

he essentially compels Jesus to testify against himself. Then—to top it off—he adds an oath to the mix, making it a “damned if you do, damned if you don’t” matter, because under Levitical law, if one refuses to answer when thus adjured, he is morally guilty for not honoring the name of God.

Caiaphas unloads: “I command you by the authority of the living God to say if you are the Messiah, the Son of God” (Matthew 26:63).

Now Jesus has no option but a “guilty” verdict. So he says the truth.

“I am” (Mark 14:62a).

The gavel falls.

The priest tears his clothes in a dramatic show, declares Jesus guilty of a new charge—“Blasphemy!”—and tells the council to suggest a verdict. Of course, by law, blasphemy carries the death penalty, so they all agree: “He is worthy of death.”

Then come the insults, mocking, blindfolding, buffeting and spitting in the face—as well as the third trial.



GOBB/FRENCH MINISTRY OF CULTURE/CC-BY-4.0

THIRD TRIAL

Sentence by the Sanhedrin: Death for Insurrection

Just as the first glimmers of dawn appear on the horizon, the full Sanhedrin gathers together with chief priests Annas and Caiaphas. Their concern? How to put Jesus to death.

Rome doesn't care about a man declaring himself to be son of God. Their whole political and religious system revolves around men who are the sons of the gods. They wouldn't mind God sending himself to earth in human form, either, because their gods take on human form in their stories.

Jewish leaders consult and make their plan. They have to get Jesus to make some kind of statement about being the Messiah, since that is a political claim, a claim to be king. Then they could charge *Yeshua* with insurrection, the Roman authorities would listen and Jesus could be denounced and killed.

They ask him, "Are you the Messiah?"

But he says unto them, "If I said yes, you

When the Rooster Crows

As Jesus is undergoing these illegal trials at the chief priest's residence, Peter warms himself by the fire in the courtyard. Others around the fire ask him if he is with Jesus. Three times, he denies knowing Jesus. If his Teacher's life is in danger, then his own is, too.

The third time, "At that very moment, the last word hardly off his lips, a rooster crowed. Just then, the Master turned and looked at Peter. Peter remembered what the Master had said to him: "Before the rooster crows, you will deny me three times." He went out and cried and cried and cried" (Luke 22:60b-62).

Did You Know?

Leviticus 16 specifies clearly that in order to scripturally be the atonement for the sins of the people, the Yom Kippur sin offering must be delivered over to death by the high priest himself. Otherwise the sins would not be covered. So Jesus—christened *Yeshua* by an angel before his birth because "He shall save his people from their sins"—has to be put to death by the high priest in order to fulfill both prophecy and the law.

Six hours. Three separate trials, three different charges. One objective: death.

"The Jews" in John

For decades after Jesus' death and resurrection, most of the "Christians" or followers of "the Way" are Jewish. After all, Jesus is Jewish, the disciples are all Jewish, and the books of what we know now as the "New Testament" are written primarily by Jewish people or to Jewish audiences.

Yet, strangely enough, when some people read the Gospel of John, they claim that he blames "the Jews" for the death of Jesus. They forget that John was Jewish, that he was writing to his fellow Jewish people, that his literary motifs are all geared to a Jewish mindset (see, for example, how he begins with Creation as the Hebrew Scriptures do), that he presents the forerunner so clearly prophesied before the long-awaited Messiah appears, that his 21 chapters present Jesus over and over as the Jewish Messiah, that he focuses on Jesus' involvement in and fulfillment of Temple and religious ceremonies that Jews would find significant and that he points to Jesus as the atonement for our sin. His references to "the Jews" allude to Jewish leadership, not the race.

wouldn't believe me. If I asked what you meant by your question, you wouldn't answer me. So here's what I have to say: From here on the Son of Man takes his place at God's right hand, the place of power" (Luke 22:67-68).

With no witnesses for corroboration and no further evidence, the whole council rises up and sentences Jesus to death. They bind him and send him to Pilate for execution.

Six hours. Three separate trials, three different charges. One objective: death.

And off to Pilate he goes. †

The Rabbi vs. Rome

THE CONTROVERSIAL TEACHER STANDS CONDEMNED BEFORE ONE OF THE MOST POWERFUL EMPIRES THE WORLD HAS EVER SEEN.

By Sarah Schwartz

Condemned by the Jewish leadership for blasphemy, Jesus is brought to Pontius Pilate. The Gospel of John explains that the Jewish leaders do not have the power to carry out an execution under Roman law, so they send him to be interrogated by Pilate, the Roman military governor of Judea. How would Pilate respond to this homeless former carpenter whom Jewish leaders accuse of claiming to be a king, and therefore acting in opposition to Caesar?

ROMAN JUSTICE

A non-citizen living in occupied territory, Jesus' life is now in the hands of the Roman ruler.

Roman leaders, such as Pilate, are primarily concerned with keeping the peace, with justice serving as only a tertiary concern. Trouble means that word would get back to the Emperor, and Pilate could be removed from his post.

Roman trials were a public event where the accused was questioned repeatedly by the government official in charge of their fate.

Pilate asks Jesus repeatedly about the charges brought against him, but Jesus remains silent, or evades his line of questioning. While his words are sparse, all four Gospels record that Jesus does affirm his royal identity (Matthew 27:11, Mark 15:2, Luke 23:3, John 18:33-37).

PILATE TRIES TO PASS THE BUCK

As the Roman government does not convict people on



Christ before Pilate by Mihály Munkácsy (c. 1881).

religious grounds, Pilate is nervous about getting involved with what he fears is simply a religious dispute between power-hungry leaders. The Gospel of Luke records that Pilate tries to pass him off to Herod (Antipas), who was visiting from Galilee. As the tetrarch of Galilee, Jesus falls under Herod's jurisdiction. Herod does not find reason to convict Jesus, but mocks his royal identity by having a robe placed on him and sending him back to Pilate.

"With this [Pilate] went out again to the Jews gathered there and said, 'I find no basis for a charge against him. But it is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release "the king of the Jews?"'

They shouted back, 'No, not him! Give us Barabbas!'" (John 18:38-40)



Matthew's Gospel tells us that while Pilate was wrestling with what to do with Jesus, he receives a message from his wife, urging him to release the man. Disregarding his wife's message, Pilate orders Jesus to be flogged, a common Roman punishment.

HERE IS THE MAN

However, after his flogging, Pilate appeals to the people one last time.

"Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews gathered there, 'Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him.' When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, 'Here is the man!'

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, 'Crucify! Crucify!' But Pilate answered, 'You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him'" (John 19:4-6).

But the crowd persists, demanding Jesus be crucified for claiming to be their king, the Messiah and Son of God. Pilate, exasperated, attempts to convince Jesus to defend himself.

"Where do you come from?' he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. 'Do you refuse to speak to me?' Pilate said. 'Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?'

Jesus answered, 'You would have no power over me if it were not given

to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin.' From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jewish leaders kept shouting, 'If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar'" (John 19:10-12).

Pilate, succumbing to the pressure of the people, hands Jesus over to be crucified on the charge of treason against Caesar. Crucifixion is an exceptionally painful, humiliating form of capital punishment, reserved only for slaves and non-Roman citizens. In the minds of onlookers, this young rabbi's life is over. †

Via Dolorosa

By Sarah Winfrey

IMMENSE SUFFERING PAVES THE WAY FOR UNSHAKABLE
EVERLASTING HOPE.

A man struggles up a dusty path. He staggers, clearly not strong enough to bear the massive wooden beam that sits across his shoulders. Falling, he catches himself, pauses for a breath or two, and slowly pushes himself upright again. He glances toward his destination, only a few hundred meters from where he is now.

It is a desolate place—a rock outcropping looking out over Jerusalem, where another piece of wood already stands. This one is taller, with one end buried in the dirt. He knows that, when he arrives, the soldiers will fix the beam currently across his shoulders high up on that wooden pole. Then they will nail him to it, and then he will die.

He stumbles again, and this time he cannot catch himself. He tries to stand but falls back to his knees. The bloody wounds on his back are flowing freely again, and he does not move except to heave a weary breath into his lungs. Instead, the soldiers grab someone, a simple passerby, and thrust the beam upon him. Then they drag the man to his feet and pull him forward once again. Even without the weight across his shoulders, he struggles to move. They goad and jeer, and eventually he stumbles on.

SO MUCH PAIN

Jesus suffered terribly: There is no doubt about that.

Tortured so badly that he was too weak to carry a beam weighing roughly 100 pounds approximately one-third of a mile; he likely suffered beyond what most people today will experience.

Today, worshippers can only imagine his pain, the way the blood from the beatings ran down his back and mixed with the dust on the street as he walked. They can only see in their mind's eye the way that blood dried as it ran down his legs, the way it became sticky, attracted dust and then solidified into a mess.

And they can only shudder thinking of the agony when soldiers placed a heavy beam across that broken flesh, the way it pressed on exposed muscle and bone, making every step another torture.

Given how much he was suffering, it isn't hard to see him struggling, then falling and failing to rise. In fact, many people feel surprised that he carried the beam at all, that he made it even a single step before he dropped it and someone else had to be called in to help.

Yes, his suffering was immense.

SKIPPING THE SUFFERING

It would be easier to skip this part of the Easter story. Along with Jesus' torture the night before, this is one of the most brutal scenes in the Bible. It is easier to look away, to pass directly from his arrest in Gethsemane to his resurrection several days later.

Crucifixion (Crocifissione), by
Jacopo Robusti "Tintoretto,"
(1564 - 1565).



Friday

Stations of the Cross

Liturgical traditions offer a way to walk the Via Dolorosa without going to Jerusalem. The Stations of the Cross are 14 scenes, all taken from the Easter story. Many Catholic churches, and some Anglican and Episcopal ones as well, have images for each scene set up, in order, around the main part of their church. People can move from station to station, offering prayers at each one or simply contemplating the image before them. At one of these stations, worshippers view an image of Jesus carrying his cross. This image can invite them into the agony that Jesus must have felt, and can serve as a comfort to those bearing difficulties of their own.

The Crucifixion of Christ,
by Michel Francois
Dandre-Bardon (c. 1700-
1783).

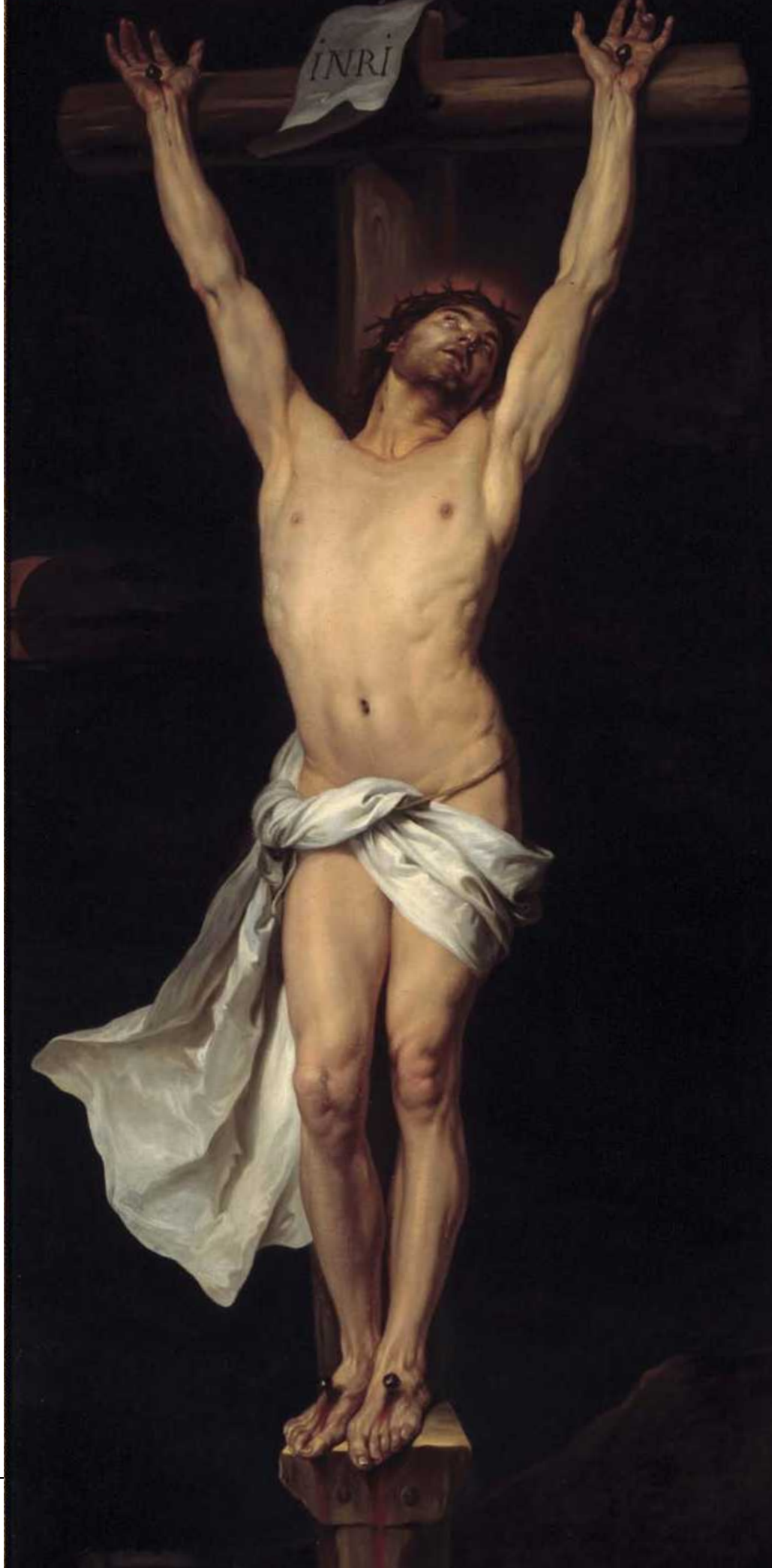


PHOTO BY: LEEIMAGE/IG VIA GETTY IMAGES



Carrying the cross by A.N. Mironov (2011).

The problem is: That's not how it happened. People pass over this part of the story because it hurts. They hurt for him because the brutality of his suffering cannot help but arouse compassion. They also hurt for themselves, though, because he suffered that for their sakes.

So, his suffering becomes their guilt and shame, and this part of the story not only makes them cringe but also makes them want to run and hide. It cannot truly be necessary to dive into Jesus' pain, can it?

The problem with avoiding the pain is this: When worshippers try to avoid all that Jesus suffered, they also try to avoid the fullness of what he took on for them. Peter says, "By his wounds you have been healed" (1 Peter 2:24b, ESV). It is his wounds—his torture, which aided in his death—that open the door to wholeness and fullness in this life and to eternal life in the next, for without them he would not have risen again.

Without Jesus' pain and ultimate death, there is no healing. Without the heavy, dark middle to this story, there is no hope.

Part of the hope Christ's suffering offers believers is for the future. Jesus suffered, died, and rose again so that people might live with him forever in a gloriously restored new Heaven and new Earth. This is a true hope. But his suffering also offers hope right now, if we are willing to embrace our pain as he embraced his.

HOPE FOR THE PRESENT

There's no doubt that the pain Jesus

Walking the Via Dolorosa

If you ever get to travel to Jerusalem, you can still walk the Via Dolorosa today.

While the path pilgrims walk today is probably not the exact path that Jesus walked when he bore his cross, the fact that it passes so close to many places that feature in the Easter story invites worshippers to pray and reflect. Many find it incredibly meaningful to take some time out of their travels to focus on Christ's passion, death and resurrection. In fact, some people travel to Jerusalem during Holy Week, specifically to walk the Via Dolorosa during the same hours when Jesus may have been on it. In doing so, they more deeply identify with his struggle and many begin to find peace of their own.

experienced was beyond what most of his followers experience today, at least physically. But the truth is, everyone has his or her own struggle. Some have physical maladies. Others struggle psychologically and everyone has losses to grieve. It can be easy to try to set these aside, like trying to lay aside the parts of the Easter story that hold so much pain.

But, when a person looks at Jesus, it's easy to see that he didn't avoid pain. In fact, he embraced it. He could have called down angels from heaven at any time. Instead, he stayed. He stayed while they tried him, while they beat him and abused him, and he stayed when, bloodied and weak, they made him carry the mechanism of his own death up that hill.

There is comfort in knowing that Jesus knows what it means to suffer. He knows from experience exactly what it feels like, in both body and soul, to be in anguish. He knows what it means to accept that anguish, even to embrace it, for the sake of something greater.

Like Jesus, we can remain steady, even when things are hard. Long before the day of his death, he called the disciples to take up their crosses, even to the point of losing their own lives. And then he showed them how to do it.

We, in turn, can follow his example. We can bear what has been given us to bear, even when that is excruciatingly painful. Even when we can't do it alone. Even when we are dusty and bloody and praying for an end. We can do it, because he did it first. †

Death by Crucifixion

By Analicia Davis

AT THE GRUESOME CLIMAX OF JESUS' TALE, THE CROSS ONLY APPEARS TO BE THE END OF THE STORY.

Everything during Holy Week leads up to an inevitable event—the cross. Jesus knows it is coming, and the people who oppose him demand it. To some he is a revolutionary; to others, a heretic. But to others still, he is king, Messiah. For all of this, he must die. He must die to satisfy the bloodlust of those he has opposed, and he must die to fulfill what the Scriptures have foretold about him. These two sides converge in a harrowing tale of pain and love.

THE DEPTH OF PAIN AND SUFFERING

Crucifixion is normally reserved for slaves, bandits, prisoners of war and revolutionaries. So horrible and humiliating is this form of execution that Roman citizens of the day could not be crucified without permission of the emperor.

On the day of Jesus' crucifixion, the crowds see Jesus carrying his own cross, at least part of the way, to the place of the skull or Golgotha. In Latin, it is called *Calvary*. The upright beam—also known as the stipe—is about nine feet tall and already fixed in the ground. Nailed to the crossbar he had carried, Jesus is then raised up on the upright stipe with a nail driven through both his feet.

On either side, two bandits are hung with him. Sometimes these two men are called thieves, but these two are most likely insurrectionists like Barabbas, who was freed by Pilate as Jesus was condemned to die. Above his head hangs a sign that Pilate made for all to see and read: "JESUS THE NAZARENE, THE KING OF THE JEWS." The sign reads in three major languages: Aramaic—the language of the Palestinian Jews, Latin—the language of the occupying Romans and Greek—the common language of Jews and Gentiles alike throughout the Empire. Everyone (literate) could read the title Pilate highlighted for Jesus.

As Jesus hangs, dying on the cross, the soldiers divide their spoils—Jesus' own clothes. The gospel writer John points out that this event and the way it happens fulfills the Old Testament Scriptures, in this case Psalm 22:18: "They divide my clothes among them and cast lots for my garment" (NIV).

Here, Jesus suffers to the fullest. When he asks for a drink, he is given only sour wine. He is surrounded by a few close friends and family, but most of his disciples have deserted him. He entrusts his mother to the care of his disciple John and then breathes his last.

וְשִׁירָה בְּדָבָר כְּרוֹמָה אֲדִירָה
ΙΗΣΟΥΣ ΝΑΖΟΡΕΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΣ ΙΟΥΔΑΙΩΝ
IESVS NAZARENVS REX IYDAEORVM

Christ Crucified by Diego Velázquez (c. 1632).

“Jesus, seeing that everything had been completed so that the Scripture record might also be complete, then said, ‘I’m thirsty.’ A jug of sour wine was standing by. Someone put a sponge soaked with the wine on a javelin and lifted it to his mouth. After he took the wine, Jesus said, ‘It’s done . . . complete.’ Bowing his head, he offered up his spirit.”

—John 19:28-30

Friday

Many times, John points out that Jesus fulfills or fills out Scriptures. Sometimes these passages are explicitly prophetic, but other times they are seen as pointing to Jesus more clearly after the events have occurred, and the New Testament writers look back on the Old Testament. Jesus adds depth to passages that first apply to Israel's mighty King David (as with Psalm 22) and to the suffering servant in the book of Isaiah.



The Crucifixion by Jean Francois Portaels in St. Jacques church, Brussels (c. 1886).

When his side is pierced by a Roman spear, blood and water flow out. He is truly and finally dead. None of his bones are broken, however. John points this out as most likely signifying that Jesus is truly righteous like the righteous man of Psalm 34:20, and that he is the final Passover lamb with unbroken bones who is slain on behalf of the people, as depicted in Exodus 12:46.

HOPE IN THE MIDST OF SUFFERING

Christians are the only ones who look at the

cross as more than a device for torture, shame and death. To the rest of the world, the cross is only a terrible and gruesome symbol. To Christians, the cross is a symbol of hope and victory. It symbolizes the beginning of the end in many ways—the beginning of the end of suffering and sin and death. The beginning of what would come to a culmination on Easter morning and even in Jesus' future second coming. The end of death. The beginning of new life. In this moment, it is finished. †



Cause of Death

Many medical professionals have hypothesized as to the exact nature of Jesus' death. Did Jesus die of shock? Perhaps it was heart failure? Or was he asphyxiated? Any of these are a distinct possibility when it comes to crucifixion. The nature of crucifixion forces the victim to fight and struggle for breath. They have to push themselves up with their legs and pull up on their arms to get air into their lungs. Muscles spasming, they would eventually lose the strength to rise up for breath. Physically spent and publicly shamed, the victims would expire—or soldiers would break their legs and other bones so that they could no longer find ways to breathe.

The Final Words of Jesus

Many people commemorate the final words or sayings of Jesus during Holy Week and especially on Good Friday. In many services, a pastor will repeat these seven sayings while snuffing out seven candles. Some traditions summarize the seven sayings by these seven themes:

FORGIVENESS: "Father, forgive them; they don't know what they're doing" (Luke 23:34).

SALVATION: "Today you will join me in paradise" (Luke 23:43).

RELATIONSHIP: "Woman, here is your son." Then to the disciple, "Here is your mother" (John 19:26-27).

ABANDONMENT: "My God, my God, why have you abandoned me?" (Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34)

DISTRESS: "I'm thirsty" (John 19:28).

TRIUMPH: "It's done ... complete" (John 19:30).

REUNION: "Father, I place my life in your hands!" (Luke 23:46)

Holy Saturday

AFTER CHRIST'S BODY WAS LAID IN THE TOMB, THE WORLD WAITED.

By *Sarah Chantal Parro*

On Good Friday, Christ is crucified and laid in the tomb. On Easter Sunday, the tomb is empty. There is no account in the Gospels of the day in between—Holy Saturday. This day falls on the Sabbath, a day of rest, during which work is prohibited according to Jewish practice.

HOLY SATURDAY, THE SABBATH

Christ is crucified the day before the Sabbath. John 19:31 even describes the need to remove Jesus' body from the cross before the Sabbath begins, and verses 41 and 42 note that Joseph of Arimathea's tomb is "close at hand" and that they laid Jesus' body there "because of the Jewish day of Preparation" before the Sabbath (John 19:41-42, RSV).


Jesus Christ has been crucified. The Temple curtain rips in two, the earth shakes and Jesus dies. There is time to remove his body from the cross and lay him in a nearby tomb, but after the Sabbath begins, nothing more can be done. On Holy Saturday, the day set aside for rest (according to the seventh day in the creation account on which God rested), Jesus' followers, disciples and friends find themselves suspended—although it is hardly a time of rest or reprieve.

The Messiah, the anointed one, the Christ from the line of David who is to deliver Israel—"The King of the Jews," as Pilate had written the title on Jesus' cross—has been chosen for crucifixion over a murderer, suffered brutally and died horribly. Having witnessed Christ's persecution and death, the disciples likely fear a similar fate. †

Contemporary Commemorations

In Western practice, such as Roman Catholic and Anglican churches, services and sacraments are severely limited on Holy Saturday. On the night of Holy Saturday, an Easter vigil begins where congregants gather, praying, watching and waiting for the dawn of Easter. In Eastern practice (Eastern Orthodoxy), the day is called Great and Holy Saturday, and a vespers Divine Liturgy is celebrated (in which a Vespers service is combined with a Divine Liturgy service).





The Holy Fire Ceremony at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem is a special Easter vigil, beginning the night of Holy Saturday, since it is held at the site where tradition holds Jesus was buried.

“They took Jesus’ body and, following the Jewish burial custom, wrapped it in linen with the spices. There was a garden near the place he was crucified, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been placed. So, because it was Sabbath preparation for the Jews and the tomb was convenient, they placed Jesus in it.”

—John 19:40-4

The Resurrection

ON THE FIRST EASTER, JESUS DEFEATS SIN AND DEATH.

By *Sarah Chantal Parro*

Easter Sunday marks a new season, just as Jesus' resurrection marks a new era. Jesus' resurrection is the final blow to defeat the tyranny of sin and death. As Adam's disobedience brought sin into the world, Christ, the second Adam, brought restoration and redemption. "For as by a man came death," Paul writes, "by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. Death initially came by a man, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead" (1 Corinthians 15:21).

At the time it happened, Jesus' resurrection was completely unanticipated.

THE EMPTY TOMB AND CHRIST'S INITIAL APPEARANCES

Mary Magdalene is the first person to whom Jesus appears after his resurrection. On the first day of the week after Jesus died and was buried (after the Sabbath, according to Matthew 28:1), Mary Magdalene and the myrrh-bearing women visited Christ's tomb to anoint his body with spices, according to Jewish practice. They found the stone rolled away and the tomb empty, save for the linen clothes in which Jesus' body had been wrapped. The Gospel of John says two angels sat in the tomb:

"They said to her, 'Woman, why are you weeping?' She said to them, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him. Saying this, she turned round and saw Jesus standing, but she did not know that it was Jesus' (John 20:13-14).

At first, Mary Magdalene thinks Jesus is the gardener, and she asks him if he has moved the body. Jesus responds by calling her by name, and she realizes who he is. "Don't cling to me," Jesus tells her, "for I have not yet ascended to the Father. Go to my brothers and tell them, 'I ascend to my Father and your Father, my God and your God'" (John 20:17).

Christ's appearance to Mary is significant

for several reasons. First, Mary Magdalene is sometimes referred to as "equal to the apostles" or the "apostle to the apostles," because Jesus sends her to tell the apostles the news of his resurrection. Second, Mary and the other myrrh-bearing women lend validity to the resurrection narrative. In his short film about the resurrection, New Testament scholar (and retired Anglican bishop) N.T. Wright explains:

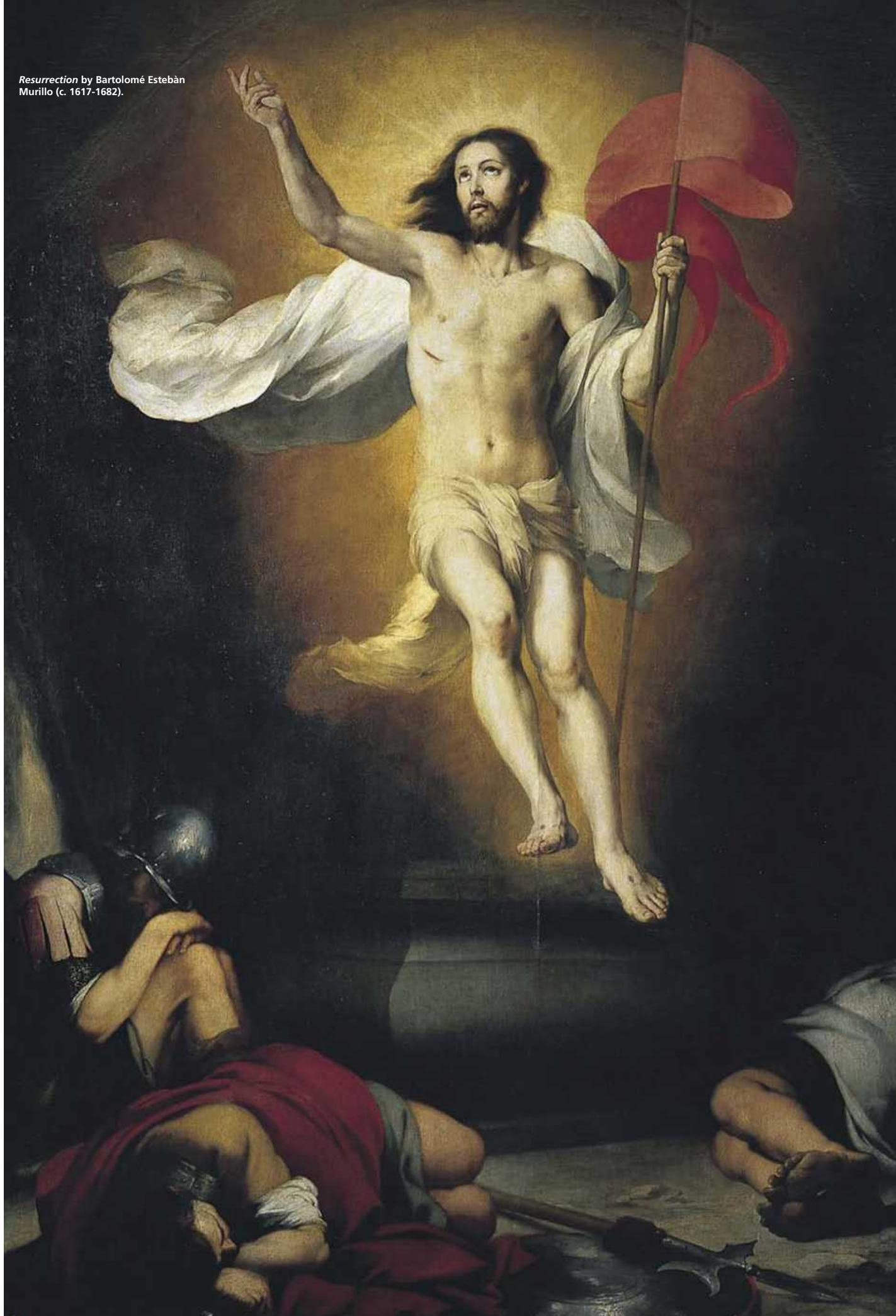
"All of the witnesses confirm the basic outline of the Easter story: The women visit the tomb and find it empty. And this is what makes it almost certain that it's true. Because in Jewish law at that time, women were regarded as such unreliable witnesses that they weren't even allowed to give evidence in court. No one hoping to convince an ancient audience would have invented a story in which the original witnesses were women."

It is a recurring theme in the post-resurrection Gospel accounts that Jesus is at first unrecognized. He appears to two of his disciples on the road to Emmaus, interpreting for them "everything in the Scriptures that referred to him" (Luke 24:27), but "they were not able to recognize who he was" (Luke 24:16).

A GOD YOU CAN SHAKE HANDS WITH

The Gospel accounts of Jesus' post-resurrection activities include multiple instances in which Jesus appears to his disciples and shares a meal with them. At Emmaus, when he breaks bread with his disciples, they finally recognize him and he vanishes (Luke 24:30-31). Along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus eats a breakfast of bread and fish with Peter and six other disciples (John 21:1-14). Again, when the 11 disciples are gathered together in Jerusalem after the resurrection, Jesus appeared to them and they are frightened, thinking at first that they see a ghost. But he shows them his wounds and then asks for something to eat (Luke 24:36-43).

Resurrection by Bartolomé Estebán
Murillo (c. 1617-1682).



Sunday

A physical, bodily resurrection may sound fantastical today, but it's important to understand that proclaiming Jesus' resurrection at the time it happened was just as radical and revolutionary, considering the predominant traditional beliefs about death and the afterlife. Ancient Israelites believed death was final: When someone died, the spirit went to *Sheol*, a common place of darkness to which all humans departed at death, whether righteous or unrighteous. At the time of Christ, Greek culture dominated the Roman Empire (the New Testament itself was written in Greek). But a belief in a resurrection did not stem from the Greeks either, as they too believed that the physical body was shed after death, and spirits inhabited the underworld, called Hades, as mere shadows. Plato taught that the incorporeal aspects of the human being are more real and permanent than the physical, and that death is a release from our prison-like bodies.

The Christian belief in Jesus' physical resurrection, then, and in the promise of a future physical resurrection for everyone who dies, is

"If there's no resurrection, there's no living Christ. And face it—if there's no resurrection for Christ, everything we've told you is smoke and mirrors, and everything you've staked your life on is smoke and mirrors."

—1 Corinthians 15:13-14

very much at odds with both ancient Jewish and ancient Greek beliefs. In the centuries leading up to the time of Christ, some Jews began altering their beliefs about the permanence of death. The Dead Sea Scrolls, traditionally attributed to the ancient Jewish sect of the Essenes, depict what N.T. Wright calls an "apocalyptic hope for the future": "This hope transformed Jewish ideas about what happens after death. People started to believe that when God's kingdom arrived, the dead would be brought back into a new bodily life. This is where the whole idea of resurrection really begins." This hope is reflected in the book of Daniel:

"Many who have been long dead and buried will wake up, some to eternal life, others to eternal shame. Men and women who have lived wisely and well will shine brilliantly, like the cloudless, star-strewn night skies. And those who put others on the right path to life will glow like stars forever" (Daniel 12:2-3).

In spite of this, however, the notion of Jesus himself rising from the dead was hardly expected or easy to comprehend: "In all their tradition," Wright says, "there was nothing that could have



Vienna- Fresco of Resurrected Christ
in Carmelites church in Dobling
(c. 20th century).





Supper at Emmaus by Caravaggio
(c. 1601).

Raw Accounts

Wright points out that while the four Gospels provide commentary on the crucifixion—what Scriptures different events fulfill—there is little to no commentary of this nature in the accounts of the resurrection. What is also striking is that while the rest of the New Testament expands on what Christ's resurrection means for our future hope, the defeat of death and our ultimate resurrection as well, the Gospel accounts make no mention of this, as if there was no time for theological reflection. Instead, the focus is that there is work to be done. Sometimes Jesus gives instructions—Go tell the disciples; go and make disciples—but even when he doesn't, such as when Cleopas and his companion recognize him on the road to Emmaus, that is the result.

This absence of theological commentary combined with other elements, like the prominence of women, indicates that the Gospels record eyewitness accounts. In 1 Corinthians 15, for instance, the earliest written record we have of the resurrection, Wright notes that the women have been "airbrushed out."

prepared them for such a thing; not in the classical world, not in their own Jewish tradition, nor even, except for a few cryptic hints, in anything Jesus himself had said." Jesus' conversation with his disciples on the road to Emmaus makes it clear that the disciples did not fully understand the purpose of Jesus' death, nor did they expect him to rise from the dead. It is no wonder, then, that Thomas refused to believe Jesus had returned unless he was able to physically touch his wounds, or that the disciples react in fear and wonder and think they see a spirit when Jesus appears.

When Jesus rises from the dead, he can be touched, he bears wounds from the crucifixion, he speaks to and walks with his disciples and he eats with them. Yet, in his resurrected state, he is able to appear and disappear at will, unhindered by walls or closed doors. As Wright explains, "These experiences were unprecedented. They



Stained glass East window from Poitiers Cathedral, France, 12th century.

convinced Jesus' followers that he really was the Messiah after all. What's more, they forced them to rethink their traditional Jewish beliefs as to what resurrection itself was all about. Resurrection wasn't just something that would happen to everybody at the end of time; it had happened to Jesus himself, already, in advance. The question of how resurrection would happen and what precisely it would mean were reshaped and refocused."

The resurrection changed the world in more ways than one. The empty tomb is the greatest hope and promise for humanity, and every year on Easter Sunday, the biggest celebration in all of Christendom, this hope is revisited. "O Death," St. John Chrysostom wrote in his Easter homily, "where is your sting? O Hell, where is your victory?" Jesus Christ defeated death by entering into death and coming back from it, and he pulls us all out of the grave with him. †

The Resurrection



A Refocused Hope

By Jolene Nolte

This was extraordinary, but it looked different from what they had hoped. Cleopas and his companion tell the stranger on the road, "But we had hoped that he [Jesus] was the one to redeem Israel" (Luke 24:21, ESV). They had lived in a perpetual state of exile or oppression and without a Davidic king since the Babylonian Exile. They expected a Davidic king to reestablish God-honoring rule in Israel, where they would be free to worship without Gentiles ruling over them. Jesus, however, didn't do anything about Rome. In fact, they executed him. It seems all hope was lost—and then the unthinkable happened. In an interview last year, artist, art critic and art professor Jonathan Anderson describes Jesus as "a conquering hero who wears his wounds." Defeat was turned to triumph, and a living, breathing Jesus appeared to them, still bearing scars on his hands and side. This was something so astounding, they didn't believe it until they saw it. Once they saw it, they couldn't help but share it. God was breaking into history—in a way totally different from what they had thought. The resurrection was supposed to signal a new era of return from exile, of the Messiah ruling and restoring Israel and the whole world to rights. But many thought it was supposed to happen to everyone at once, not to one person with Rome still in charge of their homeland.

So it didn't happen the way they thought, but what did it mean? God was clearly breaking into history, doing only what he could do. Jesus was the Messiah after all, and his resurrection was inaugurating his rule. This rule didn't come with swords and clubs but came through suffering, through death, and somehow came out alive. His resurrection was the first, a foretaste of our own. This superseded the problem of Roman oppression. This was the defeat of death, the inauguration of God's kingdom in which we—Jew and Gentile, men and women—have a part to play. This goes far beyond one people group, one time period's injustices and reaches to what touches everyone in every age—death itself.

While Jesus never denies that we die, his resurrection is a promise of our own. Death is not the end of the story. What's more, Jesus' resurrection signals that something radical has changed. It isn't just about the future resurrection; Jesus' resurrection ushers in a kingdom in which God's will is done "on earth as it is in heaven." We can participate in the work of bringing that about. God is in charge of its ultimate fulfillment, but he has invited us in. He joins us in our suffering, and he shows us that there is hope in the midst of it. He has conquered it, and through him, so can we. We may prefer that God obliterate suffering, come in charging on a war horse and rid the world of injustice at one go, but he did not. Instead, he joins us in it and invites us to join him until he fully establishes his kingdom.



Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection

WHY THE MOST REASONABLE EXPLANATION IS THAT THIS ASTOUNDING EVENT ACTUALLY HAPPENED.

By *Jolene Nolte*

It may come as a surprise to many to learn that nearly 2,000 years later, we still have not come up for a better explanation of what happened that first Easter than the proposition that Jesus actually rose from the dead. That may sound crazy, but join us as we talk with scholars and authors and examine the evidence.

HOW CAN THERE BE EVIDENCE?

It may sound strange to talk about evidence for something that happened in early first century Palestine as if it was something we could investigate so far removed from the event.

As Craig Hazen, Ph.D, Biola Apologetics founder and professor, explains, there are many events that happened in the distant past that we have reasonable historical certainty about, such as the existence and career of Alexander the Great: "Did Alexander the Great really exist, did he really conquer all those lands? There's excellent evidence that this is the case, and we've got a pretty good sketch of what that looks like."

Similarly, he says, Jesus' resurrection is "in principle an investigatable event." It is a historical claim we can evaluate on historical grounds.

"The tricky part of it all is that this particular historical event involves a miracle, so that usually throws some sand in the gears." Still, the miracle is presented as a historical event, so we can still evaluate it. There are related, subsequent historical events and eyewitness accounts we can evaluate and see what best accounts for the data we have.

JUST THE FACTS

Hazen and Gary Habermas, Ph.D (Distinguished Research Professor and Chair in the Department of Philosophy at Liberty University), explain that traditionally, the approach has been to start with the four canonical Gospels. Since many skeptics and scholars do not acknowledge the Gospels as historically reliable, Hazen explains another approach:

"What if we read the books and peer reviewed journal articles of top scholars in the field whether they are Christian believers or not, in fact most of them would not be, and you ... read through everything that's been written on the death and resurrection of Jesus in the last, say, 50 years in French, English, German, Spanish, whatever, and then what you do is you boil it down to the bedrock facts. What does everybody





across the spectrum tend to agree with? And there is a body of data you can actually come up with.” Hazen refers to these as “bedrock facts.” Habermas developed and first published these in *The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the life of Christ* (see sidebar).

Habermas let us in on an additional fact that critics across the board have recently begun to concede: That we have evidence of early oral reports of Jesus’ resurrection within 1 to 2 years of his crucifixion. The well-known skeptic Bart Ehrman as well as the Jesus Seminar agree, and the latest timeframe proposed is within 3 to 5 years of the crucifixion. This early material comes to us through Paul. Since Paul’s epistles were written earlier than the four Gospels and are attributable to an identifiable historical figure, critics acknowledge seven of Paul’s epistles as primary sources. These include 1 Corinthians and Galatians. In Galatians 1, Paul tells of meeting with Cephas (Peter) and James, the brother of Jesus, in Jerusalem three years after his conversion (Galatians 1:18-19). In Galatians 2, Paul reports he returned to Jerusalem 15 years later and met with Peter, James and John. In 1 Corinthians 15:3-7, when Paul writes “For what I received I passed on to you,” scholars are agreed that what follows is a very early creed regarding Jesus’ resurrection that Paul got from the apostles in Jerusalem.

Historical Bedrock Facts

- Jesus died by crucifixion
- He was buried
- Jesus’ death caused the disciples to despair and lose hope, believing that his life was ended
- The tomb was discovered to be empty just a few days later
- The disciples had experiences which they believed were literal appearances of the risen Jesus
- The disciples were transformed from doubters who were afraid to identify themselves with Jesus to bold proclaimers of his death and resurrection
- This message was the center of preaching in the early church
- This message was especially proclaimed in Jerusalem, where Jesus died and was buried shortly before
- As a result of this preaching the church was born and grew
- Sunday became the primary day of worship
- James, who had been a skeptic, was converted to the faith when he also believed he saw the resurrected Jesus
- A few years later, Paul was also converted by an experience which he, likewise, believed to be an appearance of the risen Jesus



Dome of the Pentecost
(12th century) in St. Mark's
Basilica, Venice.

TEST THE THEORIES

The evidential nature of the New Testament and claims of Christianity, most centrally the resurrection, got J. Warner Wallace, former atheist and cold case homicide detective, to launch an investigation as he would a cold case.

Wallace explains, "We [detectives] use what's called abductive reasoning. We walk in the room, and we say 'What's the evidence in the room? Ok, great. Make a list. What are the explanations for this evidence? Ok, great. Make a list. "Now," Wallace explains, "We're going to look at the list of evidences and compare the list of explanations, and we're going to start crossing off the explanations that don't work based on the evidence. [...] We start crossing off the most unreasonable of the explanations so we get from all the possible explanations down to the one reasonable explanation because we don't care about possible. We only care about reasonable. So what I do is the same thing with the resurrection [...]"

Other than the claim that Jesus did actually, bodily rise from the dead, the other theories attempt to use natural explanations to account for the historical, acknowledged facts. This was the problem Wallace came to in his investigation: The alternate theories simply fail to account for all of the evidence, but the Christian explanation requires belief in a miracle. Wallace explains, "When I looked at the other problems with

the other six explanations, I realized that my view, my opinion had nothing to do with their problems. Those problems [were] all inherent to the explanation. But my opinion was everything that was the problem with the Christian explanation..."

Strangely enough, Hazen says the most popular theory does not adequately account for any of the historical facts. Hazen explains this popular theory postulates that Jesus' resurrection "is simply a legend, that it was fabricated, that it was made up. Maybe there was a man named Jesus, and he had a healing touch, and people liked him, and people told stories about him around a campfire for several generations, and then someone finally got around to writing down the stories. But of course by then, he had become this larger than life figure who can walk on water and multiply loaves and fishes and bring people back to life and ultimately conquer death himself. It's a legend. That's by far the most popular [theory], and yet, interestingly, it doesn't capture any of the data. It doesn't make sense of any of the known historical data that even skeptical scholars agree to be true."

If that's the case, we wondered why Jesus' resurrection would still be the center of such a lively debate if in nearly 2,000 years no one has come up with a convincing alternate explanation. In answer to this, Habermas pointed to Bart Ehrman's assertion in his latest book. "He [Bart



Many early Christians were martyred, including here in Rome's Colosseum. Every year on Good Friday, the Pope leads the Way of the Cross procession to the Colosseum in remembrance of Christ's suffering and the suffering of these martyrs.

Ehrman] says you can't prove the resurrection by history, which of course you expect him to say. He calls himself an agnostic leaning toward atheism, so he's pretty skeptical. But incredibly, he says you can't disprove the resurrection with history, either. [...] I think it's amazing for a skeptic to say. I would expect him to say you can't prove the resurrection, because then if [he] said you could [prove the resurrection], you say, "Then why are you a skeptic?" So you know he's going to say you can't prove it. But he doesn't have to say you can't disprove it. So why does he say that? That must mean that those theories don't really cut it. In fact, he even says he's not going to choose one."

PRESENT AND FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Jesus' resurrection becomes more than a matter of history. It intersects with history, certainly, but its implications are seismic even today. Habermas explains the resurrection's centrality: "In the New Testament, virtually all major theology and practice is said to rest on the resurrection. So according to the New Testament, if the resurrection happened, it establishes our theology, and it establishes our Christian practice. It's a center for everything. [...] More than any other doctrine of the New Testament

that is said to be based on the Resurrection is the resurrection of believers. Because Jesus is raised, we will be raised—that is said almost 20 times in the New Testament, people say some version of 'Just like Jesus was raised, you will be raised.'"

The implications of Jesus' resurrection become very immediate and practical as well. Habermas points to 1 Peter 1:3. "Peter says that even though these Christians were going through persecution, Christians to whom he was writing, he says even though they were undergoing persecution, they should rejoice even during times of persecution. They should rejoice because the resurrection secures heaven for them. So I mean that's how practical it gets. It gets so practical that you can rejoice during tough times because of your future."

The confidence and claims of the New Testament grounded in Jesus' resurrection won't make a difference for you here and now, though, if you don't put your confidence in it. Wallace, the former police detective, compares it to a bulletproof vest. The vest's ability to protect you doesn't do you any good if you don't wear it, and you won't have the same confidence in its ability to withstand fire if you haven't tested it. Likewise, Wallace says, evidentially-based, reasonable faith in the resurrection will give you the kind of confident faith that can withstand difficulty. †

[Bio]

J. Warner Wallace is a cold case homicide detective, adjunct professor of apologetics at Biola University, popular national speaker, and author of *Cold-Case Christianity*, *God's Crime Scene* and *ALIVE*.

Craig J. Hazen, Ph.D., is the founder and director of the graduate program in Christian Apologetics at Biola University. He is the author of the popular novel *Five Sacred Crossings* and has lectured on campuses and key venues around the world—including on Capitol Hill and in the White House.

Gary Habermas, Ph.D. has penned dozens of books and over 100 articles. He has given over 1,500 lectures in universities, seminaries, and colleges all over the world and is Distinguished Research Professor and Chair in the Department of Philosophy at Liberty University, where he has taught for 30 years.



“For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas, and then to the Twelve. After that, he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers and sisters at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles.”

—1 Corinthians 15:3-7 (NIV)

Why Does It Matter?

OK, YOU MAY BE THINKING, SO MAYBE THIS JESUS ACTUALLY DID RISE FROM THE DEAD. SO WHAT? WHAT DOES THAT MEAN?

That’s a question Hazen is frequently asked. He responds, “Jesus didn’t pop back from the dead with no explanation.” Before his death, Jesus linked his identity with his foretelling of his resurrection: “He said, ‘I’m claiming to be the Son of God.’ And when the Jews of his time said, ‘Show us a sign that you are the Son of God,’ Jesus says, ‘I’m not going to show you a sign except for one. Tear down this temple and I will raise it up again in three days,’ and the text says he was talking about the temple of his body, that he would die and come back on the third day. That was the great sign that Jesus himself set forward that would put the stamp of approval on everything that he claimed from being the Messiah to the Son of God to the unique savior of humankind. He set up the linkage ahead of time, and then he pulled it off.”

So if Jesus rose from the dead as he said he would, then this validates he is who he said he was. As we explored earlier in the magazine, this was not at all the trajectory first-century Jews would have expected of a Messiah. A Messiah who dies at the hands of Rome, does nothing but create a disturbance at the Temple and comes back to life without all the dead being raised along with him defied expectations and would have been unthinkable based on their existing categories. Yet, Habermas says, “Critics will fully admit that the disciples basically turned the world upside down because of their belief in the resurrection—not that critics will grant it happened—but they grant that the disciples thought it happened.”

Jesus’ resurrection and identity as Messiah (Christ) and Lord was the center of the apostles’ preaching. Eventually this message went from a persecuted sect to the official religion of the Roman Empire without a single armed revolution.



Spreading the Gospel

By *Brian Morris*

HOW DID SAUL OF TARSUS BECOME PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE GENTILES?

The Apostle Paul is a very well known person amongst Christians. Having written 13 epistles to various churches, as well as being a character taking up a large portion of the New Testament book of Acts, it is hard to read the Bible without coming across Paul. However, contrary to most of the other apostles in the New Testament, Paul is not actually present with Jesus during his ministry. While it is very possible that Paul is present at some events of Jesus' ministry—due to his role as a Pharisee—he is never mentioned at any point prior to Jesus' ascension into heaven, and after a significant amount of Jews have already converted to Christianity.

Paul has quite a unique background that prepares him for his ministry to the Gentiles—a ministry that helps to spur on the early church. Prior to his life of ministry, Paul is known as Saul—these two names will be used here to help delineate his time as a Pharisee versus an apostle.

SAUL THE PHARISEE

Paul gives us insight to his life before Christ in Philippians 3:4-11. In this text, he is listing any reason that he might have to boast outside of Christ. In context, Paul is writing that if one could be saved by works, which one cannot, he would be the most likely to be saved by his works. However, for our purposes we are able to see who Paul is. He is a Jew, circumcised on the eighth day, born of the tribe of Benjamin—as he states it “a Hebrew

of Hebrews.” We also know that Saul is a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:25-29).

We know that he grows up in Jerusalem (Acts 22:3) and is educated in the faith by Gamaliel, a well-respected Jewish elder (Acts 5:33-39). In terms of his education, Saul excels beyond his peers (Galatians 1:14). This traditional background gives us insight into his use of the Old Testament in his epistles. As we read the works of Paul, and as we see his ministry and preaching in the last half of Acts, we see that his sermons and his epistles are saturated in Old Testament quotations and references.

In addition to all of this, Saul is a Pharisee who descends from Pharisees (Acts 23:6). As a Pharisee, which means “separated one,” Saul is part of the largest, most important of the Jewish parties in the New Testament—a party seen as opponents of Jesus' ministry. Well studied in the Torah (Old Testament), Pharisees are most known for their two-fold law: the written and the oral; the written being the Scripture, and the oral being the interpretation that the Pharisees have developed. They see their relationship to God as characterized by their obedience to the Mosaic Law.

The first time that we see Saul mentioned in the Bible is in Acts 7:58. He is present at the stoning of Stephen, where it is said that the witnesses of the stoning lay their garments at Saul's feet. He is described in this text as a young man. A few verses later in 8:1 we are given more information concerning Saul. We see that he approves of Stephen's execution—making him

This stained glass window features Saint Paul, the Apostle.



We do not have a specific date for Paul's birth or death; however, most scholars estimate that he was born sometime between 5 and 10 AD and that he died in Rome sometime between 64 and 67 AD.



The Conversion of Saul by Michelangelo Buonarroti (c. 1542-1545).

the first martyr. The text shares of Saul's leading of a great persecution against the early church—ravaging it by entering homes and dragging people out to have them thrown into prison.

DAMASCUS AND THE ENCOUNTER

This leads us to the question: How did the great church persecutor become the great church planter? In Acts 9:1-19, while Saul is on the road to the synagogues in Damascus—en route to continue persecuting the church—he is confronted by a voice. Out of heaven Saul hears the voice of Jesus call to him asking, “Why are you persecuting me?” For the next three days, Saul is blind.

It is important to note that Saul has absolutely

no desire to convert to Christianity when he is called upon on the road to Damascus. Saul is “still breathing out threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord” (Acts 9:1) when he is stopped by the voice of Jesus. It is completely by the Lord's sovereign will and grace that Saul was stopped on the road to be changed from the persecutor of the church to the Lord's “chosen instrument” to preach the Gospel to the nations.

Having been charged by a vision from the Lord, Ananias meets with Saul. Scales fall from Saul's eyes, and he is baptized. Following this, Saul spends several days in the city of Damascus and immediately begins preaching Jesus as the Son of God.



*It is completely
by the Lord's
sovereign will
and grace
that Saul was
stopped on
the road to be
changed from
the persecutor
of the church
to the Lord's
"chosen
instrument"
to preach the
Gospel to the
nations.*



is under house arrest in Rome. The interesting thing about each of these trials is that they do not stop him from preaching the Gospel.

The account of Paul's ministry from Acts 13-28 is extremely action-packed. After Paul is shipwrecked he finds himself on the shores of Malta, where, despite being immediately bitten by a snake, he shakes the snake off and continues to do the work of the Lord. It is when he is imprisoned under house arrest in Rome that he writes the Pastoral Epistles to Timothy and Titus. However, when reading Acts, we should note the amount of time that Paul spends in each location. In Acts 19, Paul is shown speaking in the synagogue in Ephesus for three months, and after he was no longer permitted to speak there he moved to the lecture hall of Tyrannus. Reading through the book of Acts and Paul's epistles, Paul's love for the church—as well as the believers in each of the different cities—is evident.

In the book of Acts, we see the Lord do an incredible work in changing this man from being a zealous persecutor of the church, to doing the exact opposite—seeking to promote the growth of the church. Saul hated Christ and wanted to kill those who were preaching his death and resurrection; but after his conversion, he is led to say in 1 Corinthians 2:2 that he is determined to know nothing except Christ and his crucifixion.

In Philippians 3:8-9 Paul, himself, writes, "For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith."

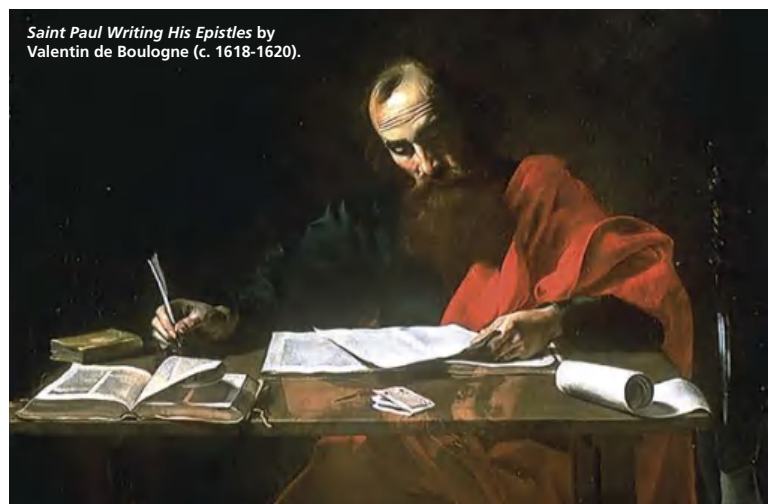
While Paul's initial list of things to boast in (his heritage, education and works) refers to himself as being blameless in accordance to the Jewish law, the Gospel changes his perspective. With new lenses Paul begins to see himself as the chief of sinners (1 Timothy 1:15). †



SAUL BECOMES PAUL

The first place in which we see Saul's name changed to Paul is in Acts 13:9. It is likely that his name is changed because of his ministry to the Gentiles. Paul is a Greek name, whereas Saul is a name that goes back to the first King of Israel.

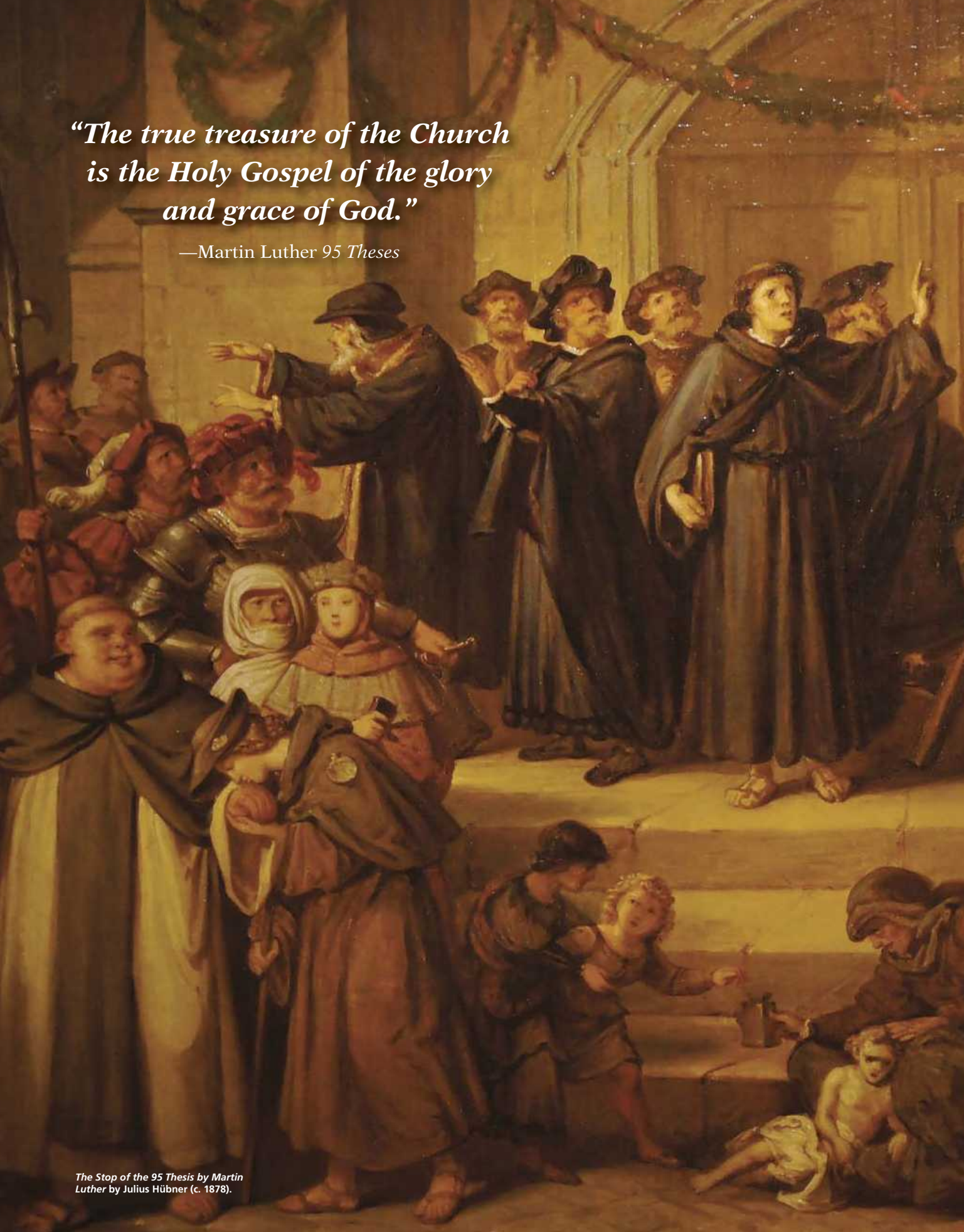
Paul goes on three missionary journeys; He participates in the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15), he performs miracles and preaches great sermons in synagogues—Solomon's Colonnade and before pagans in Ephesus—among other places. Paul spends time in prison and goes through a very difficult and frustrating trial. Near the end of his ministry, he finds himself shipwrecked, and at the end of his ministry he



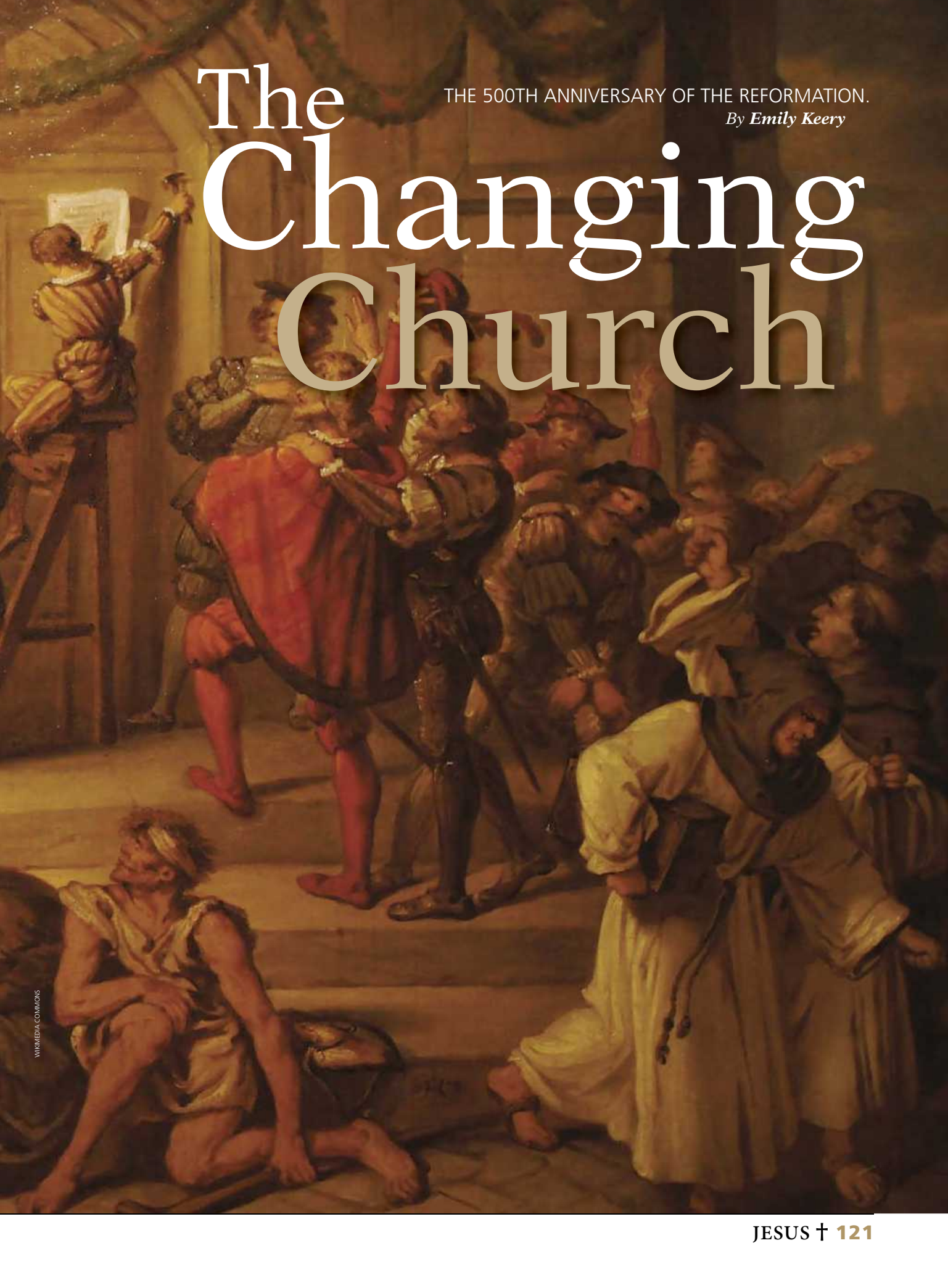
*Saint Paul Writing His Epistles by
Valentin de Boulogne (c. 1618-1620).*

*“The true treasure of the Church
is the Holy Gospel of the glory
and grace of God.”*

—Martin Luther 95 Theses



*The Stop of the 95 Thesis by Martin
Luther by Julius Hübner (c. 1878).*



The Changing Church

THE 500TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE REFORMATION.

By Emily Keery

WIKIMEDIA COMMONS



Luther Posting His 95 Theses in 1517 by Ferdinand Pauwels (1872).

In 1517, when Martin Luther nailed his 95 Theses to the door of the Wittenberg church, he had little knowledge that the nail would splinter the church into hundreds of denominations.

Primarily, Luther was protesting the sale of indulgences (pardon for sins) and papal authority, yet the outcome of his teachings went far beyond these initial issues. Luther translated the Bible and other pamphlets directly into German for the common people. The printing press allowed the ideas to spread rapidly. Luther's emphasis on the "priesthood of all believers" would influence education, politics, business and beyond as it reshaped prominent structures of European society.

COUNTER-REFORMATION

Over time, the Catholic Church acknowledged there were problems, and a reformation took place within the Church. From 1545-63, the Council of Trent met to address some of the problems: more education of priests, financial reforms and reaffirmation of the sacraments. New religious orders and societies, such as the Jesuits, who focused on education, were established to assist with the reforms and spread the message beyond Europe through missionaries.

BASIC TENETS OF PROTESTANTISM

While there are many expressions of Protestantism, the basic tenets have been condensed by theologians to the Five *Solae*

"Faith is a living, daring confidence in God's grace, so sure and certain that a man could stake his life on it a thousand times."

—Martin Luther

(alone): *sola scriptura*, *sola fide*, *sola gratia*, *Solus Christus* and *Soli Deo Gloria*. *Sola scriptura*, or Scripture alone, calls for the Bible to be considered above church tradition. *Sola fide*, or faith alone, notes it is only through faith, not good works, that you receive God's salvation. *Sola gratia*, or grace alone, specifies that you cannot earn God's grace. *Solus Christus*, or only Christ, states that only Christ can mediate between God and man, not a priest. *Soli Deo Gloria* emphasizes that God alone should get glory as opposed to priests or saints.

EFFECTS OF THE REFORMATION TODAY

Beyond expanding the expressions of Christianity and structures of the Church, the Reformation impacted European society and, eventually, the world. Translations of the Bible and other documents into the common language of the people increased. As of November 2016, the Wycliffe Global Alliance states, "The full Bible is available in 636 different languages, giving 5,135 million people access to Scripture in the language they understand best. The New Testament is available in another 1,442 languages, reaching another 685 million people." Correspondingly, many reformers placed an emphasis on improving literacy to encourage individual Bible reading. Education of both clergy and laity grew in importance; schools for all ages and demographics were founded and expanded. Famous universities such as Yale, Harvard and Brown were all founded by Protestants.

The lessened role of papal authority allowed political leaders to decrease the role of the church in matters of state. Famously, Henry VIII broke from the Catholic Church and established the Church of England when the church would not annul his marriage. Over time, the Protestant tendency for anti-authoritarian thought gave rise to support for democracy in government and capitalism. Many reformers, like Calvin, stressed the importance of all work not just for the church, specifically encouraging work ethic in business. This became known as “Protestant work ethic” and greatly shaped early American culture through the Puritans.

In July 2016, it is estimated that there are over 900 million Protestants, making up approximately 40% of Christians worldwide. The 500th anniversary of the Reformation provides a unique opportunity to take stock of the global influence of Protestantism since its beginnings. From education to politics, Luther's protest is still influencing cultures and changing churches 500 years later. ✝

Pope Francis Joins the Celebrations

In October 2016, Pope Francis traveled to Sweden to join in the kickoff celebrations for the 500th anniversary of the Protestant Reformation. He met with leaders of the Lutheran World Federation and led a service at a Lutheran Cathedral, aligning with his history of reaching out to different branches of Christianity. This is a historic gesture, as no pope has ever participated in an event honoring the Protestant Reformation. Until the 1960s, with the Second Vatican Council, there was often resentment within the Catholic Church towards Protestants.

Pope Francis even praised Martin Luther as a reformer even though he was excommunicated by the Catholic Church. He told reporters, “The church was not a role model, there was corruption, there was worldliness, there was greed and lust for power. He protested against this. And he was an intelligent man” (NPR). Rather than focus on theological differences, the Pope emphasized focusing on social issues like helping refugees and fighting against Christian persecution.

Events will continue to take place throughout 2017 in honor of the anniversary. The forms will vary and span different denominations: church services, seminary classes, museum galleries, musical concerts, travel tours and more.

Prominent Protestant Reformers

OTHER REFORMERS TOOK UP SIMILAR MISSIONS TO LUTHER AROUND EUROPE:

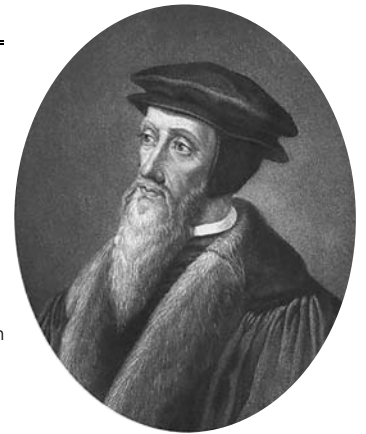


Ulrich Zwingli

In 1522, Zwingli and some others knowingly broke the fast during Lent by eating two smoked sausages; this became known as the Affair of the Sausages and is considered the start of the Reformation in Switzerland. Besides speaking out against fasting during Lent, Zwingli promoted marriage for clergy and attacked the overuse of images in churches. He wrote a new communion liturgy to replace Mass and argued that communion was only a symbol of the Last Supper.

John Calvin

Calvin went to live in exile in Switzerland, because tensions were high between Protestants and Catholics in France. Calvin was a prolific writer; his largest work, *The Institutes of the Christian Religion*, summarized his theology: an emphasis on Scripture, justification by faith alone, the doctrine of predestination and two main sacraments—baptism and the Lord's Supper.



John Knox

Building off of John Wycliffe's translation of the Bible into English, Knox worked for the Church of England and played a key role in the Protestant Reformation in Scotland. With the 1560 Treaty of Berwick, the British and French agreed to leave Scotland, and the Scottish Parliament commissioned Knox and five others to write key theological documents, such as *The Book of Common Order*. Eventually, Knox founded the Presbyterian Church.

United in Suffering

THIS BOND, FORGED
THROUGH THE
PAINS OF LIFE, IS
AN INTENTIONALLY
DESIGNED AND VITAL
CONNECTION.

By *Ed Czerwinski*

On the day of his execution, Jesus is already pierced by the betrayal, denial and cowardice of his closest friends, yet he remains acutely aware of the suffering and catastrophes awaiting those around him. Even as the cross looms, and his final moments press ever closer with each faltering step, Jesus forges a common bond with those around him in the fire of suffering.

As the New Testament writers consider the implications of his suffering, death and resurrection, they find renewed hope in what appears to be the darkest of places. Jesus didn't just come to suffer alongside people 2,000 years ago. He came to unite God and humanity, and suffering became a pivotal point in God's redemption plan.

This "fellowship of suffering" with Christ means that we, too, can establish this common bond with Jesus through our suffering. This bond is no small thing. It is the very substance of our hope—united with Christ in his suffering, we also look toward our uniting with him in resurrection.

While the cross and resurrection are rich with implications for salvation and Christian living, our unity with Christ through suffering is vitally important at a time when the daily recounting of suffering in the news appears to only be interrupted by our own pain and heartbreak. Where is God amidst our pain? And how can we find hope when we are immersed in suffering?

We begin to find God's response in the story of the crucifixion and resurrection.

A SUFFERING GOD AMONG SUFFERING PEOPLE

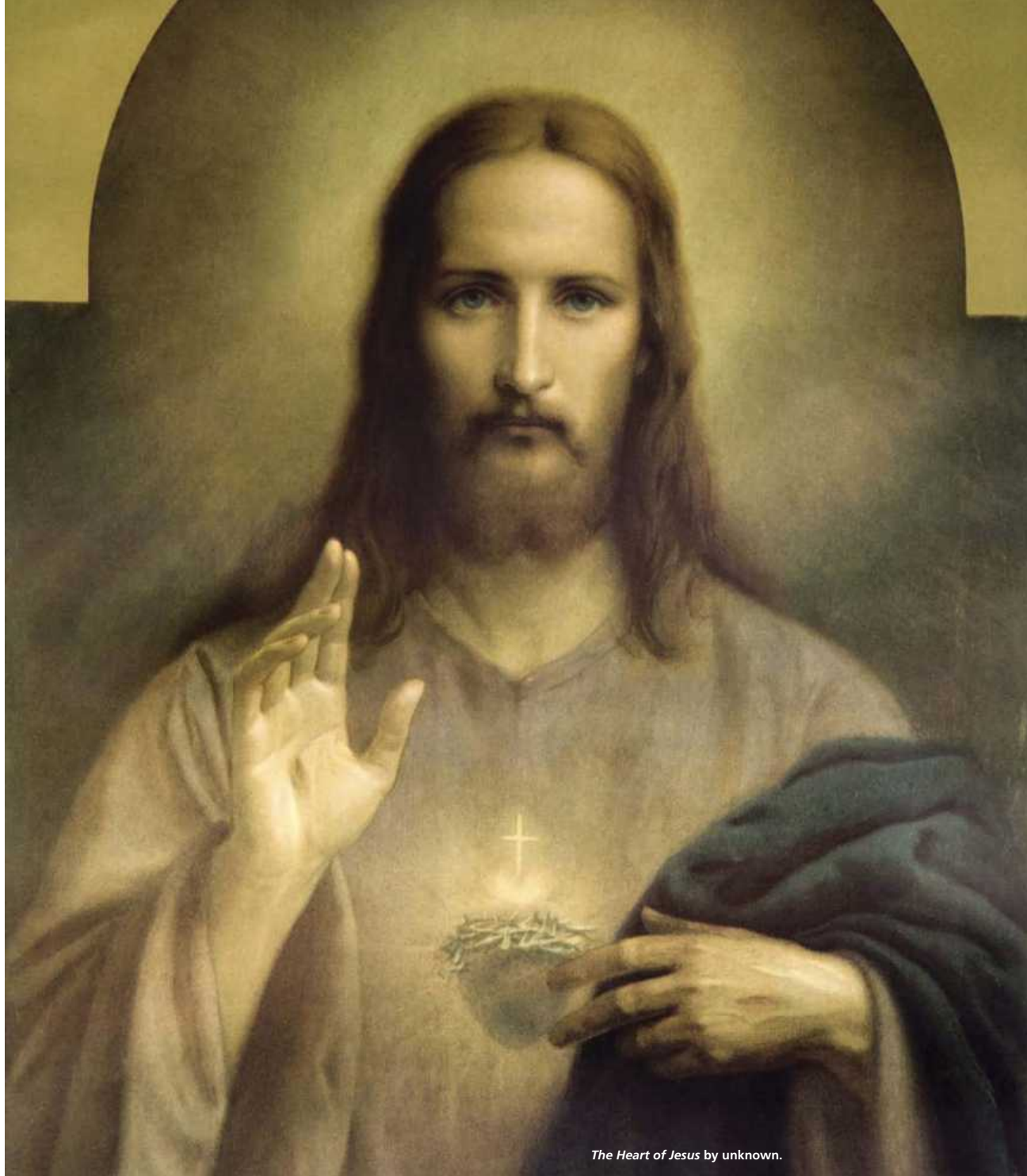
The Gospel accounts of Jesus' suffering and death reveal the depths of Jesus' compassion for the people of Jerusalem after being brutally whipped before his crucifixion. He pauses to tell a group of women who are mourning his execution: "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children" (Luke 28:23, NIV). We need to linger at this scene for a moment. Who among us could imagine pausing from impending execution, by the most excruciating means possible, in order to have a conversation about someone else's suffering in the far-off future?

An all-powerful God who can call down legions of angels at any moment to deliver him from death chooses to suffer alongside men and women. We dare not reduce the death of Jesus on the cross as merely a sacrifice, even if the writers of the New Testament see those elements as present. As Jesus creates a bond with humanity through his suffering and death—he even extends this bond to his executioners.

While nailed to the cross and gasping for breath, Jesus speaks words of mercy and forgiveness over his executioners who carry out the will of their superiors: "'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.' And they divided up his clothes by casting lots" (Luke 23:34). Notice the detachment of the soldiers from Jesus in this moment of staggering mercy and forgiveness. Even as they steal the final worldly possession of Jesus, he forgives them and begs for God's mercy on their ignorance.



Crucifixion of Christ stained glass window from the Cathedral of Saint Patrick in Charlotte, North Carolina.



The Heart of Jesus by unknown.

Yet again, at the moment of his death, Jesus holds out an opportunity for fellowship in the midst of extreme suffering. He refuses to allow even his own execution to separate him from those around him. He doesn't even wait for these men to beg forgiveness for driving nails into his body.

One of the men executed alongside Jesus sees this mercy and realizes that he can be united with the Messiah even in the final moments of his life. The man asks, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom." Jesus answered him, "Truly I tell you, today you will be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:42-43). During his final moments on earth, Jesus comforts this man with the hope that he will soon pass from agony to paradise.

Until his last breath, Jesus continues to show compassion and mercy for those who are suffering. He

joins them in their pain, even if that means minimizing his greater afflictions. However, this identification with those suffering goes far beyond a gesture of solidarity. This is a larger movement of God toward comforting those who suffered and offering them hope.

SUFFERING AS A SOURCE OF COMPASSION

The suffering of Jesus ensures that he can identify with us in every way. From the humiliation of living under Roman rule, to the rejection of his people, to the faithlessness of his discipleships, to his agonizing death, Jesus responds with mercy and words of comfort.

The author of Hebrews sees this sharing in affliction and temptation as a critical part of God's mercy: "For we do not have a high priest who is unable to empathize with our weaknesses, but

we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet he did not sin. Let us then approach God’s throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need” (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Jesus doesn’t personally suffer or seek out those who suffered by mistake. This is a deliberate move by God into our world so that we can unite with God, receive mercy and experience comfort.

GOD COMFORTS US IN OUR SUFFERING

The ministry of Jesus, as the comforter of those who suffer, continues after his resurrection. As Paul suffered persecution and deprivations throughout his missionary work, he looks at his suffering as a key point of fellowship with Christ. Paul sees God the Father as an ever-present source of compassion and comfort (2 Corinthians 1:3-4).

Far from dismissing suffering or attempting to explain it away, Paul sees suffering as a source of hope, because it unites us with God and God’s comfort: “For just as we share abundantly in the sufferings of Christ, so also our comfort abounds through Christ” (2 Corinthians 1:5).

As we receive God’s comfort, we also receive a commission to imitate the ministry of Jesus, sharing God’s comfort with others. Our unity with others comes out of suffering with them. In fact, if we bypass the fellowship of shared suffering, it is next to impossible to share any kind of bond or comfort from God with them.

The more we immerse ourselves in our own suffering, rather than surrendering it to God, the harder it becomes to see God’s hope for us or to receive any kind of comfort—let alone any kind of comfort we can share.

SUFFERING AS OUR HOPE

As Paul reflects further on our unity with Christ through the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:16), he looks to our suffering as holy ground where God is particularly present. Since we are adopted into God’s family, God’s suffering becomes our suffering, and our suffering becomes God’s suffering.

It may be tempting to keep ourselves cut off from God or others in order to “protect” ourselves, but those united with God through suffering are rooted in a deeper hope. As we experience suffering in union with Christ, his comfort and hope become our comfort and hope.

Paul writes: “Now if we are children, then we are heirs—heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, if indeed we share in his sufferings in order that we may also share in his glory. I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us” (Romans 8:17-18).

Best yet, the comfort of God that we receive for our current sufferings is but a foretaste



of the hope that awaits us one day. If we bring our suffering to God and join in this fellowship of suffering, we will receive the foretaste of God’s future comfort.

It may appear nearly impossible to pause in a moment of intense suffering or loss to bear the burdens of others. Who could be so aware of the pain of others while in the grip of suffering or even death in order to plead God’s mercy for one’s executioners or to imagine the suffering of others 30 years into the future?

The writers of the New Testament see the suffering, death and resurrection of Jesus as a movement of God toward our own suffering and hopelessness, even today. As Jesus joins in the suffering of humanity, the comfort of God and the hope of paradise one day become realities for all those willing to be united with him.✠

Ed Cyzewski (MDiv) is the author of *A Christian Survival Guide* and *Coffehouse Theology*. He writes at edcyzewski.com.

Archaeological Discoveries

Page 6

"Ancient synagogue unearthed in Magdala" by archaeologynewsnetwork.blogspot.com.

"Archaeologists: Jesus-Era House Found in Nazareth" by NPR: npr.org.

"Encyclopedia Judaica: Ossuaries and Sarcophagi" by Jewish Virtual Library: jewishvirtuallibrary.org.

"First-century Synagogue Discovered on Site of Legion's Magdala Center in Galilee": regnumchristi.org.

"Learn about the Dead Sea Scrolls": deadseascrolls.org.il.

"Pilate": livius.org.

"The Essenes and the Dead Sea Scrolls" by L. Michael White, Frontline: pbs.org.

"The Galilee Boat" by Israel Department of Tourism: goisrael.com.

"The Magdala Stone": magadala.org.

"Tomb may hold the bones of priest who judged Jesus" by Michael Specter, New York Times: nytimes.com.

Tower of David: towerofdavid.org.il.

A Long-Awaited Hope

Page 10

"Bar Kokhba vs. The Romans" by Stuff You Missed in History Class: missedinhistoryclass.com/podcasts.

"Judas the Galilean" by Jewish Encyclopedia: jewishencyclopedia.com.

Jerusalem: The Biography by Simon Sebag Montefiore, published by Vintage Books, © 2011; knopfdoubleday.com.

"Messiah" by Jewish Encyclopedia: jewishencyclopedia.com.

"Messianic Claimants" by Jona Lendering: livius.org.

The Baker Compact Bible Dictionary edited by Tremper Longman III, Peter Enns and Mark Strauss, published by Baker Books, © 2014; bakerbooks.com.

"The Bar-Kokhba Revolt" by Jewish Virtual Library: jewishvirtuallibrary.org.

The Challenge of Jesus by N.T. Wright, published by IVP Books, © 1999; ivpress.com.

"Temple, the Second" by Jewish Encyclopedia: jewishencyclopedia.com.

Baptism & Beginnings

Page 18

Kyle Strobel, theology professor at Biola University, personal interview.

ESV Study Bible, published by Crossway, © 2008; crossway.org.

Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible by Matthew Henry, first published in 1710.

Tempted for the Sake of Man

Page 20

Fifty reasons why Jesus came to die by John Piper, published by Crossway © 2006.

"Temptation Harder to Resist Than You Think, Study Suggests" by Jenna Bryner: livescience.com.

The Woman, the Well and the Living Water

Page 24

B.T. Sotah 20a (Babylonian Talmud)

B.T. Sotah 21a (Babylonian Talmud)

The Matriarchs of Genesis: Seven Women, Five Views by David J. Zucker and Moshe Reiss, published by Wipf & Stock, © 2015.

The Sermon on the Mount

Page 30

Ryrie Study Bible: New American Standard Bible edited by Charles Ryrie, © 2012.

Zondervan Exegetical Commentary Series, New Testament. Vol. v. 1, Matthew. By Grant R. Osborne, published by Zondervan, © 2010.

Walking on Water

Page 42

The NIV Application Commentary by John. Gary Burge, published by Zondervan, © 2000.

Raising of Lazarus

Page 48

Scandalous: The Cross and Resurrection of Jesus by D.A. Carson, published by Crossway, © 2010.

Powerful Parables

Page 54

"The Contexts of Jesus' Parables" by David B. Gowler, published by Center for Christian Ethics at Baylor University, © 2006.

The MacArthur Bible Commentary published by Thomas Nelson, © 2005.

The Triumphal Entry

Page 60

The Baker Compact Bible Dictionary edited by Tremper Longman III, published by Baker Books, © 2014; bakerbooks.com.

The Challenge of Jesus by N.T. Wright, published by InterVarsity Press, © 1999; ivpress.com.

"The Triumphal Entry" by William Lane Craig; reasonablefaith.org.

Jesus Cleanses the Temple

Page 64

A Theology of John's Gospel and Letters: The Word, the Christ, the Son of God by Andreas J. Kostenberger, published by Zondervan, © 2009; zondervan.com.

Encyclopedia Talmudica edited by Shelomoh Yosef Ze in, published by Yad Harav Herzog Press, ©1992.

"Temple, Administration and Service of" by Joseph Jacobs and Judah David Eisenstein. Jewish Encyclopedia: jewishencyclopedia.com.

"The Cleansing of the Temple" by B.W. Johnson. BibleHub: biblehub.com.

The NIV Application Commentary: John by Gary Burge, published by Zondervan, © 2000.

Temple Debates

Page 68

"The Saducees": bible.org.

"Who Killed Jesus?" by Paul L. Meir, Christianity Today: christianitytoday.com.

Olivet Discourse

Page 72

"Eschatology" by Jewish Virtual Library: jewishvirtuallibrary.org.

"Messiah" by Jewish Virtual Library: jewishvirtuallibrary.org.

"Messianic Expectations of Second Temple Judaism," by Jacob J. Prahlow: pursuingveritas.com.

"The Mount of Olives – 3,000 Years of Jewish History," by Rabbi Ari Enkin: unitedwithisrael.org.

"The Mount of Olives- The Most Significant Forgotten Component In Israeli-Palestinian Arab Relations," by Lee Bender, Jewish Press: jewishpress.com.

"The Romans Destroy the Temple at Jerusalem, 70 AD" by EyeWitness to History: eyewitnesstohistory.com.

"Wars between the Jews and Romans: the destruction of Jerusalem (70 CE)" by Jona Lendering: livius.org.

The Last Supper

Page 76

"An Early Christian Eucharist" in Christian History via Christianity Today. (2008): christianitytoday.com/ch.

"Eucharist": New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia: newadvent.org.

"Eucharist Foreshadowed in Old Testament Writings" by Brian Pizzalatto, Catholic News Agency: catholicnewsagency.com.

"Foot Washing": New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia.

"J.R.R. Tolkien and the Eucharist" by Andre Marie: catholicism.org.

"Last Supper": New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia.

"Matins of the Bridegroom on Holy and Great Tuesday Evening" by the Greek Orthodox Metropolis of Denver: denver.goarch.org/liturgical/tridion/holy_week/hw_matins.pdf.

"Pope Celebrates Holy Thursday by Washing Prisoners' Feet" by Ines San Martin, Crux: cruxnow.com.

"Saint Thomas Aquinas and the Last Supper" by Fr. John Echert: ewtn.com.

"Viaticum": New Advent Catholic Encyclopedia.

Agony in the Garden

Page 82

Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Mark by Robert H. Stein, published by Baker Academic, © 2008.

Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Matthew by David L. Turner, published by Baker Academic, © 2008.

Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Luke by Darrell L. Bock, published by Baker Academic, © 1996.

The Pillar New Testament Commentary by James R. Edwards, published by Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., © 2015.

Betrayal and Arrest

Page 86

"Holidays and Festivals: Passover in the Time of Jesus" by Chosen People Ministries: chosenpeople.com.

The Life and Time of Jesus the Messiah: Complete and Unabridged in One Volume by Alfred Edersheim, published by Hendrickson Publishers, © 1993.

The Three Jewish Trials

Page 88

A Book of Evidence: The Trials and Execution of Jesus by Nancy L. Kuehl, published by Wipf & Stock, © 2013 [ART: Use credit along with cover image: Used by permission of Wipf and Stock Publishers. www.wipfandstock.com"]

"John's Gospel in Jewish Evangelism" by Steve Wertheim, Jews for Jesus Newsletter (January 1993): jewsforjesus.org.

"The Hebrew Trials of Christ: Supplement to Lesson 13" by Champions of Truth: champs-of-truth.com.

"The Six Trials of Jesus" by Steve Rudd, The Interactive Bible: bible.ca.

"The Trial of Jesus: An Account" by Doug Linder. School of Law University of Missouri-Kansas City: law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/jesus/jesusaccount.html.

"Trials of Jesus": gotquestions.org.

The Rabbi vs. Rome

Page 92

"Pontius Pilate": britannica.com.

"Roman Law" by Holman Bible Dictionary: studylight.org.

"Scourging" by Topical Bible: biblehub.com.

The Baker Compact Bible Dictionary edited by Tremper Longman III, Peter Enns and Mark Strauss; published by Baker Books, © 2014; bakerbooks.com.

The Baker Illustrated Bible Commentary edited by Gary M. Burge and Andrew E. Hill, published by Baker Books, © 2012; bakerbooks.com.

"The Roman Empire First Century": pbs.org.

"The Trial of Jesus: An Account" by Doug Linder: law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/jesus/jesusaccount.html.

"The Trial of Jesus: Key Figures": law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/jesus/jesuskeyfigures.html.

Via Dolorosa

Page 94

"A Physician's View of the Crucifixion of Jesus Christ" by Dr. C. Truman Davis. CBN: cbn.com.

"On the Physical Death of Jesus Christ" by William D. Edwards, MD, et al. in the Journal of the American Medical Association: godandscience.org/apologetics/deathjesus.pdf.

"Was Jesus Crucified on a Cross?" by William Lane Craig. Reasonable Faith: reasonablefaith.org.

Death by Crucifixion

Page 98

Jesus the Messiah: A Survey of the Life of Christ by Robert H. Stein, published by IVP Academic, © 1996; ivpress.com/academic.

Whyeaster.com

Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary edited by Clinton E. Arnold, published by Zondervan, © 2002; zondervan.com.

Holy Saturday

Page 102

"Holy Saturday": britannica.com.

"Holy Saturday." Wikipedia: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holy_Saturday.

"Holy Saturday: 'With Fear and Trembling,'" by

Father John Breck. Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America: goarch.org.

"Messiah": britannica.com.

"Sabbath," by Emil G. Hirsch, Joseph Jacobs, Executive Committee of the Editorial Board, Julius H. Greenstone. Jewish Encyclopedia: jewishencyclopedia.com.

"Verses 19-25," Matthew Henry's Commentary: biblegateway.com.

The Resurrection

Page 104

Surprised by Hope: Rethinking Heaven, the Resurrection, and the Mission of the Church by N.T. Wright, published by HarperOne, © 2008.

The Resurrection of the Son of God by N.T. Wright, published by Fortress Press, © 2003.

Evidence for Jesus' Resurrection

Page 110

Cold Case Christianity by J. Warner Wallace, published by David C. Cook, © 2012.

God's Crime Scene by J. Warner Wallace, published by David C. Cook, © 2015.

The Historical Jesus: Ancient Evidence for the Life of Christ by Gary Habermas, published by College Press, © 1996.

The Case for the Resurrection of Jesus by Gary Habermas and Michael Licona, published by Kregel Publications, © 2004.

Spreading the Gospel

Page 116

Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary: Revised and Expanded edited by Chad Brand, © 2015.

The Changing Church

Page 120

"Countries with the Most Protestant Christians": worldatlas.com.

"In Show of Unity Pope Francis Marks 500th Anniversary of Protestant Reformation": Npr.org.

"Pope Francis Reaches Out to Honor the Man who Splintered Christianity": Npr.org.

"The Reformation": history.com.

The Story of Christianity: Volume Two by Justo L. Gonzalez, published by HarperCollins, © 2010.

"What's been done, What's left to do": wycliffe.org.uk.

Hope *for* Tomorrow

SCRIPTURE IS RIFE WITH ASSURANCE FOR THE FUTURE. WHEN HEARTS ARE WEARY, THESE REMINDERS OF GOSPEL TRUTH AND GOD'S ENDURING, LOVING PRESENCE CAN ANCHOR THE SOUL.

By Sarah Jane Stone

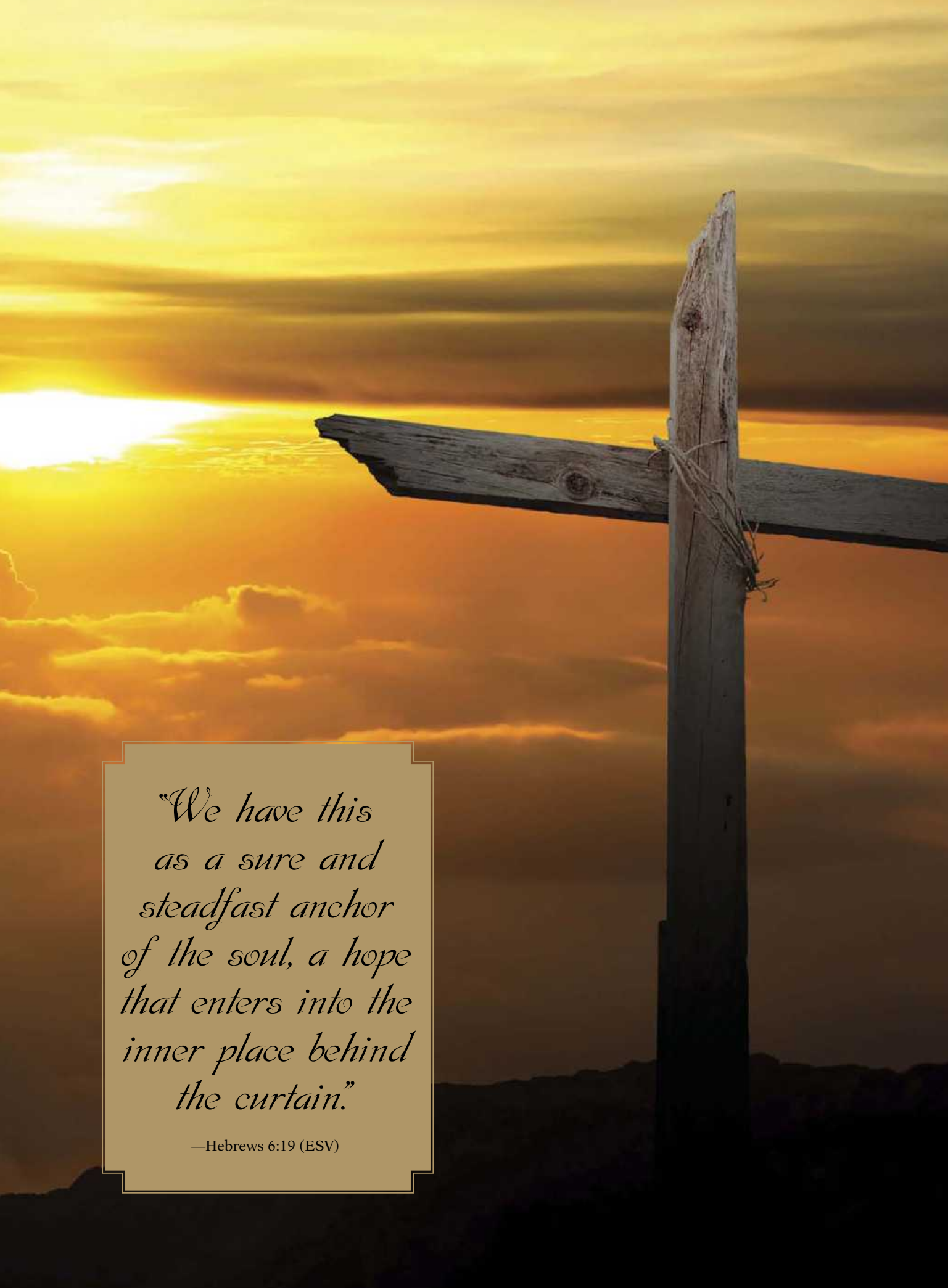
“Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you, casting all your anxieties on him, because he cares for you.”
—1 Peter 5:6-7 (ESV)

“Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin.”
— Hebrews 4:14-15 (ESV) †

“Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

— Romans 5:1-5 (ESV)



A weathered wooden cross stands against a dramatic sunset sky. The sun is low on the horizon, casting a warm, golden glow across the clouds. The cross is made of two rough-hewn wooden beams, with the horizontal beam showing a knot hole. The background features silhouettes of distant hills or mountains.

*"We have this
as a sure and
steadfast anchor
of the soul, a hope
that enters into the
inner place behind
the curtain."*

—Hebrews 6:19 (ESV)