

Open Heart, Open Bible

Exodus and John's Gospel

Linking Theme: Redemption

Passage for weekly reading (week 26):

John ch. 's 18 – 21

It is finished

Having committed Himself, His disciples, and those who would follow on from them to the Father in prayer, our Lord now submits to His terrible passion. Only John records that those who had come with Judas to arrest him actually “**drew back and fell to the ground**” (v.6) as Jesus confessed His identity. There was a power of God emanating through Him to cause this reaction. Previously, Jesus had simply walked through those who would harm Him (Luke 4 v.30), they had been rendered powerless (7 v.30), or He had “escaped their grasp” (10 v.39). Now, however, He knows that His hour has come (12 v.23). He must “**drink the cup**” that the Father has given Him to drink (Matt. 20 v.22). Jesus is allowing Himself to be taken.

John is quite sparing with the details he gives regarding Peter's denials and Jesus' interrogation before the High Priest, but reveals more than the other gospels in respect of our Lord's interaction with Pilate. The Roman Governor wanted nothing to do with Jesus' execution, (the moreso after his wife had told him of her dream – Matt. 27 v.19), but his weakness in bowing to political pressures is very evident. The two crucial people in these immediate events leading to the crucifixion were Judas and Pilate. The one worshipped mammon, the other Caesar. They could not therefore have behaved in any other way than they did. They were dominated by idolatry. God the Father was allowing them, under their false gods, to have their way (19 v.11). This gives us a clear picture as to how spiritual warfare works in our own lives.

Jesus' responses to Pilate in 18 v.'s 36,37 are also important. His kingdom is supernatural (“**not of this world**”), and He, as its King, personifies truth. A person can only discover absolute truth by listening to Him. For Pilate, there was no absolute truth. How true this is in much of our thinking today. Truth is only seen as relative, and very rarely as something absolute and objective.

Three times Pilate said that he found no basis for a charge against Jesus, and three times he was shouted down. Lacking the courage of his own convictions, he goes back again to Him to try to find out more. More is not forthcoming, however! Finally, surrendering to the inevitable, he consents to Jesus' death.

Like all the other gospel writers, John is very aware as to the fulfilment of Biblical prophecy that is being worked out in these momentous hours. As Matthew and Mark, he draws on Psalm 22 for some of that prophetic insight, but cites a different verse (22 v.18) to give understanding of our Lord's passion. The piercing of Jesus' side, and the outflow of blood and water so caused, is also unique to John's account, as is his appreciation of the significance of the Passover regulation that not one of the bones of the sacrificial lamb should be broken (Exodus 12 v.46, Numbers 9 v.12). Psalm 34 also refers to this (v.'s 19,20). John sees the piercing of Jesus' side as the fulfilment of Zechariah 12 v.10, which prophecy also anticipates the time when the Jews as a nation will be able to recognise the Lord as their own Messiah. As they mourn for Him, He will purify them (Zech. 12 v.10 – 13 v.2). The involvement of Nicodemus with Joseph of Arimathea is satisfying, for it seems as if this Pharisee has indeed come to a place of being "born again" (see 3 v.'s 3&7). If not, he is certainly "not far from the Kingdom"! (see Mark 12 v.34)

On resurrection Sunday, the confusion of Peter and John is explained to us in v.9. The understanding of all the disciples was still very patchy regarding their Lord's true nature, and they would have been utterly drained of emotion at this time. Mary Magdalene recognises Him belatedly, much like the disciples who walked with Him along the road to Emmaus as described by Luke. His remark to her is one of Jesus' most reassuring of words at this time of turmoil – **"I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God"** (v.17).

In His first resurrection appearance to all the disciples (less Thomas!), Jesus gives to them His delegated authority to forgive sins. "Breathing" on them in the way that He did was a sign of that gift, a sacramental act through which He conferred on them His Father's authority to represent Him (v.'s 22,23). It was not a bestowal of power. That awaited them on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2 v.4). Authority must be backed up by power if it is to have any credibility! A week later, the Lord appears to Thomas, who was with the others by now. His confession is well known, as is Jesus' response, **"blessed are those who have not seen and believed"**. There is a sense in which believers down the ages come into that category (see 1 Peter 1 v.'s 8&9).

The final chapter of John describes to us another of our Lord's resurrection appearances before ascending to His Father's glory. The incident reflects the story from Luke at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (Luke 5 v.'s 4-11). The disciples left their all to follow Him then, in His presence. They must continue to follow Him now, in His absence. Peter is reinstated, as Jesus puts him through the mill in that penetrating question and answer session. Peter himself will be a shepherd, as he is told he will continue the work of the Good Shepherd. Neither must he concern himself as to how the Lord would use the others – especially John! **"You must follow Me!"** It's a command, albeit a loving one. The Good

Shepherd says the same to all of us, for only in following Him are we assured that **“none shall pluck you from My hand”** (10 v.’s27,28).

Food for thought / discussion / prayer

1) What has been the main benefit, for you, spiritually speaking, of our readings in Exodus and John’s Gospel? The outstanding thing I have gained is a fresh understanding as to the power and necessity of our Lord’s ongoing ministry of intercession. His High Priestly prayer of John 17 gives us a clear appreciation of the nature of that intercession. My theme for Exodus and John has been that of redemption, the Passover Lamb being an O.T. type and shadow of the One who became the Lamb of God. Through the work of the cross, we are saved. That salvation, however, has to be worked out in life’s experience if it is to have any reality in a darkening world, and this is where our sanctification comes in, the substance of our great High Priest’s intercession. We work out our salvation by submitting to that progressive work in our lives. Jesus is praying that I be set apart to God (sanctified through the truth), which is God’s will (1 Thess. 4 v.3). Holiness is my goal as a Christian. Everything else slots into place as I agree to that. Jesus has reconciled me to His Father as the Lamb of God, but enables me to live in the good of His salvation because He is my Intercessor. Jesus is praying for me! With such a High Priest, how can I allow any sin to continue to have dominion over me? **“if, when we were God’s enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life?”** For me, it’s time to raise the bar in my walk with God. How about you?

2) There are four **“musts”** in John’s Gospel:

You **must be born again** (3 v.7)

Worshippers **must worship the Father in spirit and in truth** (4 v.24)

You **must follow Me** (12 v.26 & 21 v.22)

You **must love one another** – by this all men will know that you are my disciples
(13 v.34)

These imperatives express the essentials of the life to which we are called, in which we are both worshippers and disciples. Let’s say “yes” again to these “musts” of the Lord Jesus, so that we may be grafted in to His vine and bear fruit as He intends. Amen!!

Next week’s passage: Joshua 1 – 6