

IF YOU ARE THE SON OF GOD

STUDIES ON THE TESTING OF THE SON AND SONS OF GOD

Jesus experienced testings similar to those of the people of Israel, who were also led by God into the wilderness, to be tested as God's 'sons' (Deut. 8:2,5), and he strengthened himself by reflecting upon Deuteronomy 6-8. Through his hunger and their dependence upon the manna bread, trust in the word of God was learned (Deut. 8:2-3; Matt. 4:4 par.). In the contexts of the temptation to leap from the temple and the demand for water, Jesus and the people learned not to violate the relationship of patient trust by forcing God to provide protection (Deut 6:16; Matt. 4:7 par.). Finally, neither the lands which God promises to put under the Son nor those given to the people of God must become a distraction from utter loyalty to God, leading to the worship of false gods associated with them (Deut. 6:10-13; Matt. 4:10 par.).

Declared Son of God in his baptism, Jesus is now tested in his filial trust and loyalty to God. The temptations do not involve 'ways of being a king.' What Jesus might do for others does not enter into the temptation narrative. Rather it is a matter of what he might wrongly attempt to do for himself. [SC Mott, *Biblical Ethics and Social Change*, (Oxford: 1982), pages 174-51

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Nine studies based on Matthew's presentation of the ministry of Jesus as Messiah, tracing the issues raised in the Wilderness Temptation through to the Cross and Resurrection. The first four deal with the matter of Temptation, in relation to both man and God, with the Deuteronomic command to 'love the LORD your God with all your heart, soul and strength' as the basis for the temptation of Jesus [as in Matthew 4:1-11].

Studies 5-8 take up the confession of Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God and Son of Man, His mission, and the fourfold 'programme', as delineated in Matthew 16:13-28. The Son of Man must 'go to Jerusalem, be rejected by the leaders of the people, be crucified, and be raised from the dead on the third day.' And we also observe the fulfilment of the Deuteronomic command by the Messiah, in the act of crucifixion. The final study deals with the motif of Christians as 'sons of God' also being led by the Spirit, to participate in the life, sufferings and death of Christ.

The Testing of Man, and God

Introduction

The purpose of these studies is to investigate the nature and consequences of what are commonly called 'the Temptations of Jesus'. Our first concern will be to determine the meaning of the terms used, and then consider how they are used in Matthew's Gospel, in relation to Jesus.

While we generally believe that 'to tempt', or 'be tempted' is a negative or wrong thing, that is not always the case in the Scriptures. Of the 36 uses of the verb *peirazo* in the New Testament, we find that it usually has a positive meaning. This is 'to test' (to put on trial, or to try), and it is always used in this sense in Matthew (in the Synoptics it is used 12 x, for the testing of Jesus by Satan or his opponents: cf. Heb. 2:18; 4:15; John 6:6). It is used negatively only in I Corinthians 7:5 and James 1:13-14.

The noun *peirasmos* means a 'trial' (Acts 20:19), a 'test' (II Cor. 13:5), or an 'attempt' (Acts 9:26; Heb. 11:29). Satan seeks to use the created order to entice and tempt man (I Cor. 7:5; 1 Thess. 3:5), and the believer must be aware of constant danger (Gal. 6:1). Other uses in the New Testament show that the Church experiences temptation (I Cor. 10:13), that Paul himself was a 'trial' to his hearers (Gal. 4:14), that the believers' faith is 'tried' (I Peter 1:6; 4:12), and that God rewards those who are faithful (James 1:12).

For the use of the verbal form in Matthew see 4:1ff.-the 'testing of the Son'; 16:1ff.-the Sadducees demand signs; 19:3-the Pharisees request for Jesus' view on divorce; 22:18-the test of whether Jesus should pay the tax to Caesar; and 22:35-where Jesus is asked by a lawyer concerning the great command. The answer given at this point is from Deut. 6:5, which we note provides the background to the contest in the Wilderness.

Our studies will cover Matthew's account of the 'Testing of Jesus' (Matt. 4:1-11) (which follows the declaration that Jesus is the 'Son of God' at His baptism), and then trace this ongoing testing to the Cross, where it clearly culminates. Matthew 16:21-23 gives a four-fold schema, which details the revelation that the Messianic Son of God (and Son of Man) must go to Jerusalem, be rejected, be crucified, and so be raised from the dead. The Passion of the Son is the climactic test. As Kline comments,

Jesus' symbolic baptism unto judgment appropriately concluded with the divine verdict, the verdict of justification expressed by the heavenly voice and sealed by the Spirit's anointing, Messiah's earnest of the kingdom inheritance (Matt. 3:16,17; Mk. 1:10,11; Lk. 3:22; cf. Jn. 1:32,33; POOL This verdict of sonship was contested by Satan, and that led to the ordeal by combat between Jesus and Satan, beginning with the wilderness temptation immediately after Jesus' baptism and culminating in the crucifixion and resurrection-vindication of the victorious Christ, the prelude to his reception of all the kingdoms of the world (the issue under dispute in the ordeal; cf. esp. Matt. 4:8ff.; Lk. 4:5ff.). (M. G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned*, Eerdmans: 1968, page 39.1

To introduce our investigation of the Matthew 4 passage, we will need to review the Biblical contexts and content of the term 'to test'.

§1. The Term 'to Test' is a Covenant word

The term 'to test' has links with Deuteronomy chapters 6-8. So 8:2,5--"the LORD led Israel in the wilderness for 40 years to humble and test the people, and to discipline it 'as a man disciplines his son.'"

The verb is used to denote two aspects of the same relationship: positively, how God tests his people, and negatively, how Israel tests God. It implies a testing of the partner in the covenant to see whether he is keeping his side of the agreement.

Hence, God does not test the heathen, but only His covenant people. And the individual who is tested is a pious man, not the ungodly. When Israel tests, it is always the LORD, and never the false gods.

The Covenant responsibilities:

- a. The LORD, will be Israel's God, will be with and near them, and will fulfill all their needs. He will bless them.
- b. Israel, is to fear and love, worship and honour, be faithful, listen to his voice and obey, keep his commands. Israel is to treat the LORD as "reliable". And what is required of the nation, is required of the individual.
- C The LORD and His Anointed One: the obligations are parallel to those already enumerated.

§2. God testing man

On certain occasions, God arranges a test, to determine ["to know"] whether his son is true to the covenant.

- a. Abraham in Genesis 22:1f. See verse 12: "now I know that you fear God". Abraham then receives the great blessing promise, since he has obeyed God's voice (22:18).
- b. The LORD tests Israel with the manna, in Exodus 16:4, 20:20, to find out whether they would walk in his laws.
- c. Deut. 8:2: Israel was led into the desert, "to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep his commands".
- d. Deut. 13:2ff. Israel may not listen to false prophets, even workers of signs. For God is using them to know whether Israel loves the LORD wholeheartedly.
- e. Testing in Judges: see 2:22, and 3:4ff, cf. 3:1.
- f. In 2 Chronicles 32:31 the LORD tests the covenant son, Hezekiah, to know what was in his heart.
- g. Job: there is no mention of 'to test' as such, but Satan is authorised to see whether Job would stand fast in his faith.

§3. Man testing God

It is a grave offence for man to test God. For to test God is to demand him to demonstrate his covenant fidelity-will he keep his obligations. It is to demand 'signs' or 'proofs' that He really is with His people. It really shows man's unbelief, doubt and suspicion. And such action warrants God's wrath. The "classic example" -Massah, as recorded in Exodus 17.

- a. The basic test was "whether the LORD is among us or not" Ex. 17:7. But God has already given ample proof of His power and faithfulness to His covenant son. For see Numbers 14:22, for the glory and signs which they saw.
- b. Israel was again warned about the Massah event in Psalm 95, "though they had seen my work".
- c. Psalm 78: Israel is not steadfast with God. See verses 11 and 17, and again in 40-43. They did not keep in mind his works.
- d. Psalm 106:6ff. After such a great salvation [through the Red Sea], they soon forgot his works.

Hence the admonition in Deut. 6:16. "You shall not put the LORD your God to the test, as you tested him at Massah."

Finally, the LORD's Anointed in Isaiah 7, is given a sign, even though he did not seek one. It is the sign of God with us. 7:14. Man is not free to put God to the test: he is above questioning. The covenant son is to submit to the loving and disciplining Father. He will ever be with him.

§4. Further Implications

To test was not originally educative, disciplinary, but simply to find out the person's attitude to God, know what was "in his heart".

It later became a paternal act of discipline and filial upbringing, and since the covenant is framed in familial terms, testing came to be part of the relationship. So see Proverbs 3:12, Psalm 11:5, 94:12 and 119:71. Later again the notion of filial privilege came to be associated.

Hebrew and Greek education were markedly different. For the Hebrew it meant chastening, supervision, practical upbringing, whereas for the Greek it was more about character training and instruction. For the Hebrew then, there was much more discernment in the face of suffering, and encouragement within that experience.

They even knew of testing with a view to 'exalt': this was true for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

So for Jesus to be in the wilderness for 40 days, was to again be in Israel's experience of discipline and temptation. Would he obey in all things, from the heart? And after this humbling, would he be exalted?

Remember, know and live!

The First Temptation of Jesus: Matthew 4:1-5 [Deut. 8:2-6]

What the temptation story shows is the determination of Jesus, asserted from the beginning, in the face of all compulsions and seductions, to be the Son of God, and nothing but the Son, every day-to be true, in all that the Father gave Him to do, to the heavenly voice and the gift of the Spirit.[James Denney, *Wong Roads to the Kingdom*, *The Way Everlasting*, Hodder & Stoughton: 1911, page 1901

Introduction

Given the divine programme (the calling of the nations as the inheritance of the Son) what power was available to accomplish it? Did the end justify any means to effect the purpose? To answer these questions, most have followed the idea of the Liberals from earlier this century. They held that Jesus was tempted to abuse His Sonship: they were concerned about His work (and not His person). They were concerned about Jesus' relation to men (not God) and wondered what kind of Messiah He might be (not, if He was the Messiah). But does such a view correctly interpret the evidence in the Scriptures themselves?

More recent (and careful) investigation of the 'Temptation Narratives' have led us to reconsider the whole question of 'testing', especially in relation to Jesus. For the key to understanding the temptations has been found to lie in the Deuteronomy passages which Jesus quotes to counter them. That is, all His answers derive from the chapters containing Israel's fundamental creed (Deut. 6:4-5): hence, the issues that He answered all find their focus in those same chapters. As France comments,

While each verse quoted might be seen as an appropriate expression of a moral principle which happened to come to Jesus' mind, the fact that the choice was in all three cases made from this small single section of the Old Testament suggests that the passage was especially in Jesus' mind at the time, as a pre-figuration of his own experience. He was learning the lessons which God had intended Israel to learn in the desert. [R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, Tyndale Press: 1971, pages 50-51.1

The Background to the Testing of the Son: Matt. 4:1

1. Jesus--the Son of God--is led by the Spirit (Mark 1:12-'drove') into the wilderness. Declared Son by the Father, at the Baptism, Jesus is tested. It is axiomatic that the son of God has the Spirit of God. [_ the spirit of prophecy]. The Spirit had led Israel through the Wilderness.
2. In later Judaism it was not so much the LORD who tested Israel, as Satan tempting the nation. [Many other activities were attributed to him.] Perhaps the best example of this is seen in Job.
3. The Wilderness is the place of humbling and of testing hunger: Deut. 8:2ff. What happens then, is no mere accident, but part of the overall purpose of God. And Satan acts as God's instrument.

§1. What is in your heart? Fasting for 40 days and nights-4:2

1:1. 'Remember' that Israel spent 40 years in the wilderness: Deut. 8:2. 'to humble' -with a view to fasting. Not merely matter of hunger, but of fasting.

1:2. The 40-days instead of years.

- i. Exodus 24:18: Moses before he met God. Numbers 14, the 40 years relate to the 40 days the spies were in the land of Canaan, and the resultant grumbling.
- ii. Moses' return to the mount in Deut. 9:18 as penance for the people, is of 40 days. See also Ezekiel 15 for the principle of a day to represent a year.
- iii. Elijah without food in 1 Kings 19:8.

Jesus represents not merely Moses or Elijah, but Israel. See also Moses on Mount Sinai: Deut. 9:9; Exod. 34:1. [Others have argued that there is a clear contrast to Adam: Adam did not engage in fasting, he had ample provision with the trees of the garden, and he was in Paradise. On the other hand, Jesus fasted for 40 days, had no provisions, and was in the Wilderness.]

§2. Hunger and craving in the Wilderness-4:2-3

What is the nature of this sin? [Note that there are no observers.]

2:1. Israel may rest secure in the face of threatened hunger: see Psalm 136:25; 146:7; 104 (esp. 271); 145:15; 38:18f; 37:19. For the Covenant obligations of God, see Deut. 28:1-14. God was faithful, as is recounted in Deut. 2:7, Neh. 9:21.

2:2. Yet Israel was never satisfied with God's provision: they rather 'craved' for the food of Egypt. Psalm 78:18ff. for their testing of God, by demanding the food they craved.

2:3. Note that hunger is not wrong or sinful of itself: only when it comes into conflict with the purposes of God is it sinful. Israel demanded other than what God was ready to give. So the real nature of this sin of craving is revealed: discontent is characterised as distrust, unbelief, and that in violation of the Covenant See Numbers 11:20,23 and Psalm 78:22,32.

§3. The Divided Heart-4:4

3:1. Israel is to 'love the LORD with all your heart'. Compare this to the half-hearted, or divided loyalty. The man with divided loyalty falls a prey to craving and temptation. Man's heart is not inclined to obey, so needs to be restrained, disciplined and brought to obey. For a man's heart see Genesis 6:5; 8:21, together with Ezekiel 11:9 and 36:26 (of stone). [Hence the comment in the Commands in the Prayer Book: 'incline our hearts to keep this law.' and 'write your law in our hearts by your Holy Spirit.' 1

3:2. Israel was to have a 'circumcised heart' Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4; 9:25f. In fact, God promises to do this to Israel, so that the nation may love Him wholeheartedly, as in Deut. 30:6.. However, Israel remained a 'hard-hearted' people: Psalm 95:8ff.

3:3. How is the heart taught? By listening to, and living by, every Word of God. See the context in Deut. 8:2ff. The whole of the account is to deliberately show that Israel was utterly dependent upon God's word. Note that a mere shift or adjustment in their diet would 'neither have humbled Israel nor taught them the truth which the manna did.' [M. G. Kline, 'Deuteronomy', The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Oliphants Ltd: 1963, page 166.1 Hence, Israel had to depend on the supply of 'heavenly bread, the fruit of a daily creative exercise of the word of God.'

3:4. Jesus is learning that same lesson; he does not reply in any autonomous fashion, but cites the Scripture as determining His life as a child of God. Schweizer correctly comments, 'he can hear and obey God totally, leaving everything to him.' [E. Schweizer, The Good News According to Matthew, SPCK: 1976, page 621

§4. The Testing of the Son

This test was to discipline the Son, and to reveal what was in his heart. Israel failed, showing their heart was divided by craving and unbelief. Would the Son crave for 'earthly food' [easily obtained in plentiful amounts], or remain faithful, by 'remembering' that God is ready to supply his needs?

His needs are obviously met: see Matt. 4:11 (angels), and John 4:32ff. The Word of God reigns in His heart. After all, as Denney affirms, 'What comes first is sonship to God, faith in the Father, the love, trust, and obedience of a child; to this, everything else is to be postponed, in the possession of this every trial is to be overcome.' [Denney, op. cit., page 194-195.1

This also means that the Church is not free to enlist under its banner (or join others under their own banners) those whose primary concern is 'social reform' or 'social justice. Such a programme will never bring in the kingdom of God. Just as allegiance to Jesus is not contingent on evoking by 'loaves and fishes', so His Church may not contemplate a kingdom founded on 'bread'.

Finally, here is the post-baptismal obedience of Jesus to the Law of Moses. 11 also serves as an exemplar for the post-baptismal obedience of Christians to the Law of Christ (I Cor. 9:21; Gal. 6:8; Jas. 1:25, 2:12; 11 Peter 3:2; Matt. 28:19-20).

'You are the Son of the Living God'

'It is by the necessary corridor of suffering and death that Jesus will pass from his lowly earthly status to his eschatological glory.' U. P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew*, Paulist: 1979, page 1161

Introduction

In this study we will trace the issue of Jesus' identity and its relation to His work as the Son of God. Matthew's account gives us the discussion Jesus has with His disciples, when He questions them about His identity, and then goes on to introduce them to the import of His mission. He gives a programmatic statement, from which we will consider the first section.

1. The Identity and Mission of the Son of God-Matt. 16:13-28

Peter is the central figure in the dialogues recorded by Matthew. He was not only the recipient of divine revelation, but also intruded human - in fact Satanic - thoughts and temptations upon the Christ of God.

§1. 'Who am I'

In conversation with His disciples, Jesus asked them what others believed about His identity. The answers centred on prophets: those named include Jeremiah, a prophet of judgment who was opposed and persecuted. Then, to the question of who the disciples believed Jesus to be, His identity was given as 'the Christ, the Son of the living God'. In fact, Peter's declaration is an affirmation from God about Jesus.

In the declaration there is a combining of three titles - Messiah, Son of God, and Son of Man. Peter, the untutored child (Matt. 11:25-27), shares this revelation concerning Jesus. In response, Jesus blesses Peter, disclosing his identity as 'rock', promising victory over death, and assuring him of an authoritative role in the new community. Yet this is not for public circulation, for Jesus knows that His mission is linked to His identity.

§2. 'What must I do?'

Matthew introduces a transition in Jesus's ministry, for 'from that time Jesus began to show' the disciples that the focus of His thought is the Cross (Matt. 20:17-19; cf. Mark 8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34). The first section describes the relation of the Cross to Jesus (verses 21-23), while the second treats its relation to the disciples (verses 24-28).

Jesus' teaching includes four elements: He must (i) go to Jerusalem, (ii.) suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, (iii.) be killed, and (iv.) and be raised on the third day. The 'must' here is the must of indispensability, and so inevitability. For the purposes of God to be fulfilled, Jesus must continue as obedient Son. Further, as with the 'temptation narrative', Jesus knows that His mission is determined by, and expressed in, the Scriptures ('it is written').

Once again, Peter is the central disciple. Here he fails to grasp that the Son of God/Man suffers. He cannot cope with a further, and deeper revelation. In so doing, he repeats Satan's

temptation 'If you are the Son of God', which he assumes precludes any consideration of suffering. He rebuked Jesus with the statement 'May God spare you from such a fate!' Puffed up with the earlier revelation, he now only thinks the thoughts of man. just as He dismissed Satan (Matt. 4:10), Jesus now dismisses his demonic disciple.

As a sequel to this, all the disciples of Jesus must personally accept their own Cross. Note that the statements in verse 26 are also true for Jesus. Finally, we see the shift in emphasis from the earthly Jesus (16:13) through death (16:21) to His return as the judge with heavenly attendants (16:27).

We shall turn now to the first of the elements Jesus introduced - the visit to Jerusalem.

II. Coming to Jerusalem & Cleansing the Temple-Matt. 21:1-17

In chapter 21 Matthew provides his account of Jesus' first visit to Jerusalem (the Holy City, Mt. Zion/Temple). Here the prophets have been rejected, and killed. Now, Zion will reject her King, for having been notified that Jesus in the Messiah, Israel rejects Him as not what they wanted.

As we consider this account we should note that 'everything about the entry into city and temple and the immediately following expulsion of the Temple concessioners was calculated.' [B. Meyer, *The Aims of Jesus*, SCM: 1971 page 1701

§3. The 'staged entry' to Jerusalem at the Passover

3:1. 'Roll out the red carpet'

The entry commences with the obedient hearing of the Messiah's word by the disciples. His promise is fulfilled, as they find the donkeys, as directed. This is the only time recorded in the Gospels that Jesus does not walk.

For another king's entry to this city, see David's entry in 2 Sam. 16:1,2. Jesus makes use of two animals (with mother to calm and reassure the untried colt), suitably decked for the occasion. This is in fulfilment of the Scriptures: see Isaiah 61:1 and Zech. 9:9 for the vindicated king, but here HUMBLE (cf. 5:5 -'meek' and 11:19 -- 'gentle'). This is in marked contrast to a warrior's charger.

The coming King has been a theme since 3:11 when the Baptist served to prepare the people for the Coming King.

3:2. The Response of the Disciples and Crowd.

Hosanna = save us! (cf. use by disciples in Lake storm). And how else should Galileans on an annual pilgrimage respond on seeing the city, and the Temple?!

The whole city is 'stirred' (seismic shake-up: cf. Matt. 2:3). Others had gone out to welcome the visiting Pilgrims. With their puzzled question 'Who is this?', they fail to recognize the King when he comes, appropriately announced. After all, the prophet-king (Deut. 18:15ff.) has come.

Prophecy is here fulfilled, but not seen to be by the people. It is not surprising that they later reject the one they have not understood - from 'Hosanna' to 'Crucify Him!' They misinterpret Psalm 118 - they quote verse 26, but ignore verse 22 ['the rejected stone']. Again, they were concerned about 'signs' and 'miracles', but not the work of God.

§4. The Temple 'Demonstration'

4:1. The Messiah comes to the Temple.

In contemporary wars, the victor king entered the conquered city and destroyed or desecrated the Temple. But here is the true Israelite at worship (Ex. 19:6) and the one greater than the Temple (Matt. 12:6), who comes to interrupt all business. He calls all religious security and confidence into question (Jeremiah 7:3,4)

There is judgment, yet restoration: Zech. 14:21. As He later states, 'Your house is desolate' Matt. 23:38. Did they understand this action ('sign') from Malachi 3:1 as he came to cleanse ALL worship [not merely at Temple]? For here is the Messiah-so the worship of the nations is imminent. This had taken place in the 'court of the Gentiles' [nations].

4:2. The 'Sign of the Temple'.

He deliberately came - without any spontaneous anger - as Lord and Judge to Temple, and gave the 'sign of the Temple to unbelievers. He even (24:2) claims that He is able to destroy the Temple, yet rebuild it.

Three related incidents are recorded: the 'cleansing, the healings, and the praise of the children. Firstly, the 'cleansing' or judgment. This includes both the sellers and buyers (Passover pilgrims), for whole sacrificial cultus was debased (cf. His sacrifice). The Temple is the place of worship, not commerce. What is judged is not merely what happened in the Temple confines, but everyday life (their hypocritical worship). The den of robbers is not only the Temple, but all of life (Jer. 7:11: cf. the prayer for the nations in Is. 56:7).

Next, the outcasts are now welcome. 2 Samuel 5:8 gives us the categories of those excluded from the Temple. Here is the only miracle in the Temple itself (blind and the lame). They 'came to him'. Now the barriers to worship are down, as a new worshipping community gathers around the Messiah.

Finally, the children respond to what is happening (cf. Matt. 11:15ff.), but this is not the puerile urge to play. Jesus explains the event in terms of Psalm 8. 'Hosanna to the Son of David' - Jesus is recognised by the children.

For the link of Psalm 118, and Psalm 8: Jesus has come in the name of the Lord, which prompts the worship of the name in all the earth, by the children. And the children serve in the face of the enemy/avenger, as Jesus is being readied for the great conflict [cf. Hebrews 21. The anger of the scribes and chief priests (the 'wise and understanding' of Matt. 11:25-27) is seen later in their demand - 'by what authority?' Yet He is the rejected chief Temple stone.

'with all your soul'

The Second Temptation of Jesus: Matthew 4:5-7 [Deut. 6:16, Psalm 91]

'Jesus is tempted to force God's hand to see whether he really is with his Son, and will meet his need as he has promised. [R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament*, Tyndale Press: 1971, page 52]

Introduction

We have ascertained that the testing of the Son (Jesus) in the Wilderness follows the pattern employed by God when leading Israel to the Promised Land. Israel was to hear the Covenant Word of their living Saviour God, and trust Him in all things. The first temptation showed that Jesus, as a true man, accepted the promissory Word that he would be provided for in his service.

This second temptation raises the issue of divine protection, and its implications for God's Son, during the Wilderness experience. Here the temptation is to test God to see whether He will prove true to His promise in the Old Testament. To understand the nature of this test, we will consider the issues of covenant protection, together with its relation to the Temple, the danger of 'testing God', and the requirement of Israel to 'love the Lord with all your soul.'

§1. Protection given to Israel as Covenant Partner

God offered blessing or cursing to Israel: included in this blessing was protection from all that endangered or threatened life. An example of this was seen in Deut. 32:23f.: against such threats, Israel was promised protection for obedience. Such a blessing was known and enjoyed in the Wilderness: Deut. 8:14f. reminds them of this benefit.

In fact, God is said to have preserved His people, as He bore them. See Ex. 19:4ff for the covenant form of how God 'bore' His people. Again, in Deut. 32: 1 Off. it was God who 'bore' His people, like an eagle mothers her young.

A parallel to this is the Israelites' clothing (Deut. 8:4, 29:4). So, God's care is likened to that of parental care, while they were in the Wilderness (see also Num. 11:12f., Is. 46:3f, Hos. 11:3 etc.). Again, God is seen as 'shepherd' who carries and protects his flock in its wanderings (Isaiah 63:8f. Finally, see Josh. 24:17 for the record that 'God preserved us' - here by means of angels or prophets.

§2. Protection at the Temple

The Temple is the location par excellence where protection is expected and effective, for it is there that the divine presence is localised. This is the goal of the wanderings, for Israel to reach Canaan: thence God's appointed 'place of resting' Deut. 12:18, 21. etc.

Israel knew Jerusalem as not only the capital, but also as the 'holy city and mountain', for here the LORD had chosen to reside, for his presence to be acknowledged. Here, then was the sanctuary, a refuge (see Psalm 73:17; and further 17:8; 57:2; 61:5; 63:8). Another Psalm

in this category was Psalm 91 - both a refuge and a Temple psalm (it has even been attributed to Moses).

The 'wing' of the Temple

The 'wing of the Temple' is cited in Psalm 91:4. Satan brings Jesus to the very place where the covenant son is assured protection 'under the wings' of the Almighty. What could provide a more appropriate setting for such a testing of the Son to presume upon God's promise of protection?

§3. Don't tempt God

Since we have surveyed 'Man testing God' in our first study, only a résumé is necessary at this point. We found that the 'classic example' of such testing was the temptation at Massah, recorded in Exodus 17. There the covenant son demanded a sign from God to show whether God is with him or not, i.e. whether or not He is present and active, fulfilling His covenant obligations. The attitude expressed here is one of discontent, mistrust and unbelief - all symptoms of a radical breach in the covenant.

Temptation, of course, can take many forms. At Massah it was to 'seek proof of his [God's] presence and his power to visit on them the covenant sanctions, whether blessing or curse.' [M. G. Kline, 'Deuteronomy', The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Oliphants: 1963, page 164] In the Gospels, it is to see whether He would protect His covenant son from danger. Both are typical of this testing of God: a deliberate seeking to put God into a situation where He must act, and that unambiguously.

We must also remind ourselves that the issue - at this point - is not to be associated with the Pharisees' demand for a sign (Mark 8:11). Here we must affirm two points: firstly - there are no onlookers; what is being tested is the relationship between God and His Son, and Satan is alone with Jesus. Secondly - Satan wants Jesus to tempt God, i.e. to gain a sign of confirmation, a small token, that God is with him in his covenantal service, and will keep His promises.

As regards the setting for the testing, at the Temple, where better to tempt the Son to misuse the promise of protection? After all, is God really with him? (Matthew has already established that Jesus Himself is 'God with us': Matt. 1:23; cf. Is. 7:14. Furthermore, for Christians to obey God's Word is to continue to hear and keep Jesus' words - see 5:2, 28:20.)

§4. 'with all your soul'

Jesus is expected to challenge God to preserve His life, because of covenant obligations. And Satan reminds Jesus of the very words of Scripture, that assure the covenant-keeping Israelite of divine protection. Jesus remembers

something further: Deut. 6:16 - 'you shall not put the LORD your God to the test'. Yet we are reminded that Jesus is not only reluctant to tempt God, but he is ready to surrender his life, in obedience to God. His relationship to God must be characterised by unconditional love and obedience [even if he takes your soul = life].

Israel was to learn to trust God, even in the face of suffering and martyrdom - even when God does not appear to save his covenant partner from death. Would Israel trust God to do that? See the martyr Psalm 44:25 where the sufferers are brought to the dust [where their 'soul' = life is laid low], having been taken as sheep for the slaughter. It is this Psalm that Paul quotes (Romans 8:35-39) to encourage the believers that nothing can separate them from the steadfast [reliable covenant] love of Christ.

Jesus may not demand that God save him from death: see the important sequel in Matthew 26:38-42, with Hebrews 5:7-8 as parallel. Jesus is not set on 'saving his life' (Matt. 16:24-26), or 'grasping at the privileges of sonship' (Phil. 2:5). For, on the Cross Jesus is once more 'up high' - very concretely - and once more he refuses to 'throw himself down'. As Schweizer aptly comments, 'the cross will be the final answer to Satan.' [E. Schweizer, *The Good News according to Matthew*, SPCK: 1976, page 641

'tempted with idolatry'

The Third temptation of Jesus: Matthew 4:8-11 [Deut. 6:13-151

'In his temptation Jesus proves to be God's man; he succeeded where Adam, Israel, and all righteous persons failed. He will not rule as a superman; he will be a Messiah who is like his brothers in every respect, 'yet without sin' (Heb. 4:15), i.e., he will continue to belong completely to God. To the very end, the path of the Messiah leads through testing and temptation to the Cross.' [L. Goppelt, Typos, Eerdmans: 1982, page 1001

Introduction

Each day righteous Jews recited their creed: 'You shall love the LORD Your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength' (Deut. 6:4-5). We have observed that the first two "tests" showed that Jesus had undivided loyalty, and total trust in God as His faithful Creator and King: that is, he kept the first two of the three elements listed in the creed.

The final test would call into question whether Jesus would love God in relation to 'strength'. Having been attested as Messianic Son, with the promise of universal rule (Psalm 2), Jesus must determine which mode of effecting this rule is consistent with total love to God. This determination will be traced through the issues raised in the record of the incident – the 'high mountain', 'riches and idolatry', the danger of true for false worship, and the resultant departure of Satan from the scene. We will see that Jesus exhibits the obedience (cf. Heb. 5:8) which Israel should have learned (Deut.8:2ff.; Jer. 31:32).

§1. The High Mountain

This temptation is foiled on the basis of Deut. 6:13 (cf. Exod. 34:11-17), thus again showing the backdrop for this test. We must, however, consider the high mountain, and the promised riches.

Moses was not permitted to enter the Promised Land, although he viewed it from a distance - from Mt. Nebo: Deut. 34:1-4. This parallels the of Deut. 3:27, where Moses outlines the riches awaiting the people in and warns them of the danger of forgetting the LORD, and turning to idolatry. On Nebo Moses was permitted to view the land, in the same way as inspecting new property, prior to the actual handing over or transfer of ownership.

High mountains are also noted as sites of idolatrous worship: Deut. 12:1ff. Israel is warned not to copy the Canaan worship, but rather destroy such sanctuaries. Israel must avoid such false worship.

§2. Riches and Idolatry

Israel has been warned against forgetting the LORD, due to the prosperity of Canaan. The riches are actually designated as 'mamon' - goods, property and other assets, of an external nature, in comparison with the body or life itself.

Deut. 6:10ff. 'take heed lest you forget the LORD: you shall serve him . . . you shall not go after other gods . . . ' The parallel is given in Deut. 8:

see verses 11,14,17 for the danger of crediting riches to self-effort, and then idolatry, verse 19. It is rather the LORD who has given such wealth [covenant blessing]. As Kline pertinently comments, 'such is human perversity that Israel, satisfied with the material plenty of a plundered culture, would be inclined to honor the claims of their victims' idols and forget the claims of the Lord who had saved from Egypt and given victory in Canaan.' [M. G. Kline, 'Deuteronomy', in The Wycliffe Bible Commentary, Oliphants: 1963, page 164.1 Israel must avoid all other allegiances - whether social, political or religious - for they distract Israel from total dedication to the LORD.

There is yet a further danger - that of being seduced by false prophets and dreamers to idolatry. This too is called a test: here to test whether Israel really loves the LORD, and obeys His word: Deut. 13:2,3. Yet Israel engaged in such idolatry, even while in the Wilderness: Deut. 9:6, 31:20; 32:15ff. Furthermore, Israel could not erase the dreadful incident of worshipping the Golden Calf from their memory.

Idolatry and Demon worship are linked in Deut. 32:17, and in Psalm 106:37. The gods of the nations were classified as angels, and/or demons. Sometimes such idolatry is explicitly called the worship of Satan. See 2 Kings 21 for the abominations denounced as unbridled idolatry.

§3. Don't exchange the glory of God for idolatry

Jesus replies to Satan from Deut. 6:13. He will not forget the LORD, for the sake of temporary riches and the folly of idolatry (Satan worship). The reason for His refusal is the witness of the Scriptures. Note too the fact that God's commands provide a bulwark against antinomianism.

Here the high mountain is the location for both viewing the riches of the world (and their anticipated transfer), and the site for idolatrous worship. Satan is ruler of this world [Luke 4:6 'it has been delivered to me' 1, and as lord offers. the kingdoms and their glory [here 'mamon' cf. Rev. 21:241 to Jesus. Jesus is encouraged to 'fall down and worship': such worship has already been introduced in Matthew's Gospel, as the Magi worship Christ (Matt. 2:2, 8, 11)!

Jesus rejects outright any suggestion of service to Satan, even an utilitarian alliance. False worship is not countenanced, for God alone is worthy of service. In fact, Jesus cites Deut. 6:13, where the comment 'You shall serve (ta 'abod') contrasts with the house of slavery ('abád ím). [Both words have the same root, and contrast the old and new masters of Israel.] As Jesus later reaffirms, 'man cannot serve God and mamon': Matt. 6:24. Here Jesus remembers the obligations of the covenant son: he does not forget the giving of God, and refuses to be seduced to idolatry.

§4. Satan's departure and the Ministry of the Angels

The Son is given authority over the creation, is served by the angels for this ministry, and is granted protection. Here Jesus has been encountered by Satan, who is never-the-less the agent of God, and has withstood him. He is the victor in the contest, and is acknowledged so.

Satan failed in his most extreme test [his ultimate goal] - rebellion and idolatry. Jesus demonstrated his undivided love for the Father [cf. Abraham in Gen. 22:12]

The angels come to minister, and acknowledge the authority and lordship of Jesus. (They are also seen as examples of faithful ministry in Matt. 25:44, and 27:55.) The tested and vindicated Son is exalted, and ready for his work.

Satan has observed the divinely attested Son, and. contested this identity. Later in the Gospel this identity is disclosed, again by God (through the Petrine confession, and at the Transfiguration). Yet it is just at that point where the Son must insist that He is under the word of God, and will obediently comply with the directives set before Him.

Meier correctly remarks,

the Son will gain sway over all kingdoms precisely by refusing the offer and demands of Satan on the mount (4:8-10), of the Satan called Peter (16:21-23), and of the enemies at the cross (27:39-43). All of them are enemies of the cross because they think of sonship in terms of glory without suffering. [J. P. Meier, *The Vision of Matthew*, Paulist Press: 1979, page 61]

'The Son must suffer many things'

[The Rejection of Jesus by the leaders of the People: Matt. 26:1-5, 57-68; 27:1-31]

'Jesus is rejected but in the very mode of the rejection his true identity as king of Israel and king of the Gentiles is paradoxically proclaimed! [D. Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew*, Michael Glazier: 1985, page 124.]

Introduction

We noted in our previous study Jesus' programmatic statement, as recorded in Matt. 16:21, with its parallel in 17:22-23, and the elaboration in 20:18 of the part played by the Gentiles. In this study, we will skip the other events of the Passover week, such as the teaching in the Temple, to concentrate on the programme elements.

The second element - 'the Son of Man must suffer many things' - takes up the thrust of the Old Testament, that the saving Messiah would also be the 'Suffering Servant'. This suffering is seen both in the Psalms (22, 41, 42-43, 118) and Isaiah 52-53. Knowing the Scriptures, Jesus must go to the Cross, as obedient Son. Yet, coupled with this is the deliberate and responsible action of those who oppose Him - the Jewish leaders, Judas, and Pilate. We will observe that both God's saving design and human malevolence are knitted together in a colourful fabric.

§1. Jesus' knowledge of impending judgment - Matt. 26:1-2

Matthew 26:1 links the Passion narrative to the preceding teaching of Jesus: He has finished His public ministry, with 'all' His disclosures (cf. Deut. 31:1,24; 32:44-45). He calmly turns to focus on His disciples. He calls His followers to remain alert and awake now in the time of crisis.

Jesus gives the fourth prediction of His rejection and death, which will take place at the Passover. He is explicit in His use of the term 'crucified', and that 'the Son is being handed over' to this form of execution.

§2. The Sanhedrin deliberations - Matt. 26:3-5

The 'then' of verse 3 shows that these events (Jesus' saying in verse 2, and what is described here in verse 3ff.) were simultaneous. As the Sanhedrin (the High Council of Seventy, with a quorum of 23) meets, the Pharisees move to the background, as the priestly and aristocratic families of Jerusalem take over. They act with furtive confusion for although wanting to arrest Jesus 'by stealth' and so end his life, they fear a riot of the people.

Matthew sees the irony: while Jesus is calm, the Counsel is confused, and they decide not to arrest Jesus. Yet he knows what is to happen, precipitated by Judas.

There are a number of events which take place as the background of the playing out of the rejection and suffering of the Son. They are the anointing of Jesus for His death (26:6-13),

the betrayal by Judas (26:14-16), the Last Supper (26:17-29) and the declaration, prayer and betrayal in Gethsemane (26:30-56).

- a. As Jesus is anointed we note that behind the plots of the priests and Judas, He quietly and deliberately assents and consents to the will of the Father. For the Johannine record of this event, see John 12:1-8, where the woman is named as Mary.
- b. What was the motive for Judas's betrayal? Was he prompted by greed or jealousy? Was he a Zealot (does Iscariot mean 'zealot') or did he perhaps see himself as a vigilante eliminating a 'false prophet'? For the fee of thirty silver coins, see Exodus 21:32 (the price of a slave) and Zech. 11:12.
- c. At the Last Supper we find that God's sovereignty is underlined (26:18, 24). Again, we are reminded that even those privy to intimate table-fellowship are capable of treason.
- d. On the Mount of Olives Jesus cites the prophesy of Zechariah concerning the smiting of the Shepherd, and the saying concerning Peter's denial. In the Gethsemane Garden, the filial obedience is prominent as the Son is being handed over – by the Father - to sinners. As He faces His enemies Jesus refuses to ask for angelic assistance (20:53; cf. 44:6-7). He continues to affirm that the Scriptures are being fulfilled (26:54, 56; see Isaiah 53:12 & Zech. 13:12).

§3. Delivered to the chief priests and the scribes - Matt. 26:57-68

At the trial we observe both the baseless action of the priests, as well as the climatic declaration of Jesus. It takes place in the High Priest's home, which is not the appropriate venue for such legal affairs. Again, the time was improper: trials were to take place during the day, and over two days. Meanwhile, Peter spent the time with the High Priest's servants and the Temple police, and later denied any knowledge of Jesus.

The Council (the Elders, Chief Priests, and Scribes called on false witnesses (Deut. 19:15, cf. 16-19 for the punishment for perjury; Exod. 20:16). Jesus was the target of perjury, yet remained silent (Isaiah 53:7; Ps. 38:12-14). For the 'true' multiple testimony concerning the Temple, see: 'I am able to destroy the Temple of God, and to build it in three days.' This was evidently seen as a threat to the very heart of Judaism.

Caiaphas demands, by oath, a response: 'Are you the Christ, the Son of God?!' He unwittingly links the titles of Jesus affirmed by Peter (16:16). For the directives against oaths, see Matt. 5:33-37 and 23:16-22. Jesus gives His confession, concerning the Son of Man. This is startling sequel to the confession of Peter (also see 16:28), for there Jesus speaks of the coming of the Son of Man with power. This is a combination of Psalm 110:1 and Dan. 7:14.

He will be vindicated, and come to judge all. He speaks of His 'coming', of which a proleptic parousia is evidenced in Matt. 28:17-20.

To this confession, Caiaphas erupted with horror. After all, blasphemy is not merely taking the name of God profanely: it is to defamatory, rebellious language directed against God, and was punishable by death. This sentence is demanded by the Council, who then abused

Jesus. 'Prophecy for us' is ironic, for he had predicted this very event, with others (see 26:64; 16:21). As Senior comments, 'Unwittingly the leaders carry out in exact detail the sequence of events that Jesus himself had predicted.' [Senior, op. cit., page 103.1

§4. Delivered to the Gentiles - Matt. 27:1-2; 11-31

Matthew recounts the the second convening of the Council in chapter 27:1-2. As predicted in Matt. 20:18-19, the Son is to be handed over to the Gentiles. However, the Jewish leaders had to decide on new course of action, for Pilate would have rejected the charge of 'blasphemy'.

The trial before Pilate was based on the accusation that Jesus claimed to be 'the King of the Jews'. After an initial interrogation, Pilate offered freedom to a notorious criminal - Jesus Barabbas (cf. Mark 15:7 for his crime as murder). The dilemma for Pilate was compounded by his wife's dream about the 'innocent man'. The Jews chose Barabbas: Jesus the criminal was saved - Jesus the Messiah was executed as a criminal.

The Jewish leaders, like Pilate (and Judas) seek to absolve themselves of all responsibility. On the other hand, the 'people' accept this, as they cry, 'His blood be upon us and our children' (cf. 23:35).

On the release of Barabbas, Jesus is handed over the to the Roman soldiers. As a preliminary to crucifixion He is scourged. Then he suffers the mockery of the battalion, as he is invested with a crown, sceptre, and royal robe. Their mock worship is in stark contrast to the Gentile worship offered by the Magi in 2:3, and later in 27:54 (the centurion's affirmation) and 28:19 ('the nations').

Finally, Jesus is led away, to be crucified. All that had been predicted 'in the Scriptures' was coming to fulfilment. All that was written about the participants in these events was known by Jesus, who trusted His Father to fulfil His total purpose.

'The crucified Christ cries, and calls'

Matthew 27:32-56

'In the details of what happened at Golgotha, the evangelist sees a trial (testing) of the same kind as that found in the temptation narrative, though now it is a literal, desperate reality! [B. Gerhardsson, *The Ethos of the Bible*, Fortress Press: 1981, page 59.]

Introduction

We have traced the programmatic statement which Jesus detailed in Matthew 16:21 to the third element - 'The Son of Man must be crucified.' This study will cover Matthew's account of the execution and death of Jesus: it will also note the correlation to the Temptation narrative, and the events which are the sequel to His death.

Jesus was forsaken by those who ought to have protected and assisted Him. He was betrayed by the political authorities and leaders of the people, as well as by His friends and followers. But further, having been protected by the Father, He is now given up, as this is withdrawn.

Matthew underscores the paradox of the events, as he records the titles which those who oppose Jesus use. They are 'Son of God', 'King of the Jews', 'temple builder' and 'King of Israel': though used as insults, they actually affirm His true identity. Again, Matthew had written (in 1:21) that 'he shall save his people from their sins.' How could a crucified man effect such salvation? In fact, how does any man deal with the offended holiness of God, and His just wrath? Matthew is convinced that Jesus trusted God to do that, by means of the Cross.

§1. Execution by Crucifixion

Crucifixion, as a form of execution, whereby the subject was either tied to, or impaled on a pole, originated in the East. Employed by the Medes and the Persians, it was perfected by the Romans, who copied it from the Phoenicians. They used it for slaves, robbers, assassins, and provincial rebels: it was not used for Roman citizens

The death sentence included an initial flogging (scourging). Following this, the subject, wearing a placard - which announced his crime - around his neck, carried his cross-bar to the place of execution. As a public execution, it was believed to be a useful deterrent. There he was tied or nailed to this cross-bar, which was then lifted up on to the upright. This generally had a peg or block to provide some support for sitting, to relieve the strain on the shoulders and arms. The height of the cross was approximately 7-9 feet, just higher than the average man's height. Those crucified normally took from 2-3 days to die, with some surviving up to a week. When a quick death was required, the lower legs were broken.

The Romans used crucifixion widely, and many mass executions are recorded. Nero crucified many Christians. Constantine banned its use in 312 AD after becoming a Christian. The Jews, however, did not use crucifixion for execution. They used lapidation. Yet they did expose the bodies of the executed to shame and ridicule, as well as stressing that the

executed were cursed by God as covenant breakers, by hanging the body from a tree (see Num. 25:4; Deut. 21:23; Josh. 10:26; 1 Sam. 31:10).

The Cross was the most serious obstacle to the Jews coming to acknowledge Jesus as the Messiah, since it was a scandal to their religious sensibilities and knowledge (Matt. 16:24; 1 Cor. 1:23).

§2. The Crucifixion of Jesus

[Note that the Gospels do not talk much of the physical suffering of Jesus. Furthermore, Jesus spoke very little of His own consciousness of suffering; the import and enormity of His suffering was later plumbed and explained by the apostles.]

After the scourging and mocking, Jesus was led away to the regular execution site, Golgotha. On the way, Simon was commandeered as a porter (cf. Matt. 5:41) to carry the cross-bar. Jesus wore the crime placard, which read 'This is Jesus the King of the Jews' (in the form of a 'confession'). The actual crucifixion is passed over quite quickly by Matthew in verse 35. Matthew's chief concerns are the relation of the act to the Scriptures, and the testing of the Son. We shall consider the testing of the Son, first, and then see the correlation to the 'law and the prophets' (Matt. 5:17; 22:34-40),

2:1. The Testing of the righteous man.

- i. 27:33-34. Jesus is here deprived of food and drink: He is not even given a cup of fresh water. For the 'wine' which Jesus rejected, opinion is divided whether this is the wine offered by Jerusalem women to condemned men (cf. Proverbs 31:6-7), or by the execution squad. The test here is whether Jesus will rebel against God's will, or obey Him from the heart (cf. Matt. 4:2-4). Will craving bring Him to discontent?
- ii. 27:35-37. Here Jesus is deprived of power and prosperity—all His mammon is removed. His clothes are taken, and distributed among the execution squad. Then, His bodily functions and actions are curtailed by being nailed fast, and guarded. Like the earlier testing, Jesus must trust God, with all His strength (Matt. 4:8-10). Will His insecurity lead to rebellion and apostasy?
- iii. 27:38-50. Once again, Jesus is deprived. This time it is protection and deliverance from violent death. His execution is that of infamy and disgrace: He is alone and helpless. This climactic test is whether He will demand God to preserve Him from death (Matt. 4:5-7). Will He surrender His life (soul) without defiance and disobedience, complaint or blasphemy? How will He face the test of being forsaken and abandoned by God?

2:2. The entire leadership are present.

The chief priests, scribes, and the elders are present: Jesus experiences total rejection by official Judaism. They taunt Jesus in a way which echoes the

Temptation of Matt. 4:6. 'Save Yourself . . . let God deliver him . . . come down, and we will believe.' The public insult Him with sayings about the Temple, and His Sonship. This is repeated by the criminals, who denounce Jesus with the same accusation and insults. For an Old Testament call to bystanders to discern the deeper import of this event, see

Lamentations 1:12 'Is it nothing to you, all you who pass by? Look and see if there is any sorrow like my sorrow which was brought upon me, which the Lord inflicted on the day of his fierce anger.'

2:3. The test of Jesus, in the face of Death.

A number of profound questions come to the fore at this point. Will God save Jesus from sin and death? But salvation is not by avoidance of death, but through death. Then, how will Jesus deal with the experience of death, when (i.) He has no personal sin (so His life is not forfeit), (ii.) it comes as a violent and unjust murder, and (iii.) He is abandoned by God?

2:4. 'My God, my God, why have you forsaken me!?'

[Parallels of Psalm 22 and Matthew: 'cry', 'save', 'mockery', 'garments', 'head wagging': but issue is not mere parallelism, quotation.]

From the darkness 'over all the land' (Exod. 10:22), which hides this hideous and repulsive event, we hear the 'cry of dereliction'. It is not an uncontrolled shriek, but a clear and determined declaration (here only used in New Testament). It signifies powerful emotion and a concerted appeal to God. Note that Jesus does not say 'My Father' but 'My God - - .'

Here Jesus - the true man (image of God) - is objectively given up. Firstly, all aid is withdrawn, as the Spirit retires. 'The door is closed.' Can any man face being 'forsaken, abandoned'? Next, He is utterly exposed to wrath, Satan, and judgement. All that opposes God, and so man, erupts from the abyss. These elements include the sword of just judgement (Zech. 13:7; Hab. 1:13), that God judges sin in the flesh (Rom. 8:3; Isa. 53:6 'of us all'), the exposure of Satan as a liar and murderer, with all demonic powers, that Jesus bears the CURSE, becomes SIN, bears all our sins (every element of sin: confusion, fear, anguish, impurity, alienation, inferior-ity, deceit, perversity, etc.), and that He descended to the depth of human experience (Eph. 4:9 He has been there! Hebrews 1:2-3 and 9:14).

As Jesus undergoes this test, there is no complaint. This is remarkable, when we consider these factors: W. Jesus' prayer experience (John 11:41-42. 'you always hear me.'). (ii.) His ministry is faithful (Matt. 7:21: those who prophesy, exorcise and heal rejected), (iii.) He trusts God's word (to 'him who judges justly' 1 Peter 2:23, and Psalm 16:8-11 for the Holy One who dwells in hope).

The bystanders were divided by Jesus' call. One went to offer Him some vinegar on a sponge: he wanted to prolong His life. Others wished to hasten His death, as a way of provoking Elijah into action. Finally, the cry at end of three hours is not that of impatient reaction. In the yielding up of His spirit, Jesus is still in control (Luke 23:46).

§3. The Vindication. How will God answer this prayer?

The sequel to the radical act of the Cross is seen in the events which follow. These are the rending of the Temple curtain, the earthquake, the opening of the tombs, and the worship of the Gentiles.

Firstly, the veil of the Temple is rent from top to bottom: this signifies uninhibited access to God (Heb. 10:19ff.), the abrogation of the Mosaic cultus, and the desecration of the Temple by God Himself.

Next, the local earthquake (recorded only by Matthew) and the splitting of rocks are seen as preliminary portents of the last day (24:8). Other such 'seismic' disturbances are recorded by Matthew in 8:24 (the storm on the Sea of Galilee) and 28:2, where the 'Angel of the Lord' rolls the stone away from the tomb. For the split rocks, we note that Jesus was to be placed in a newly hewn tomb.

A number of Old Testament saints were raised from their tombs, and visited the 'holy city' (cf. 4:5) after the resurrection of Jesus (He is the 'firstborn from the dead' Rev.1:5). Having lived in hope, these saints (cf. Hebrews 11:13-16, 35, 39-40) have this hope come to its fruition in Jesus (cf. Ezek. 37:1-14; Dan. 12:1-2). They further provide a demonstration that God preserves all those who trust Him 'in all their ways'. What Jesus earlier refused Satan, is now given.

Finally, we note the affirmation in Psalm 22:27-28 'nations will recognize and worship'. This is fulfilled in the declaration of the centurion and the execution squad - 'Truly this was the Son of God.' For other such responses of awe and praise in Matthew's Gospel, see Matt. 9:8; 17:6 and 28:8.

After the death and burial of Jesus, the tomb is secured. But Jesus had affirmed that the Scriptures assured Him 'the Son of Man must be raised on the third day.' So the question remains, 'Will this prediction be fulfilled?' For not only had Psalm 22 given much of the background to the act of the Cross - it also included verse 22 which said, 'I will tell of Thy name to my brethren; in the midst of the congregation I will praise Thee.' Would Jesus be again free to witness to 'The Holy, just and loving Father, who may be worshipped and trusted'?

'The Son of Man must be raised on the third day'

[The Resurrection of Jesus as Lord: Matthew 28:1-10]

'As a reward for showing this perfect, obedient love and for humbling himself under the will of the heavenly Father even to the point of dying in ignominy, he is exalted and received power and authority over "heaven and earth" (28:18)' [B. Gerhardsson, *The Ethos of the Bible*, Fortress Press: 1981, page 601

Introduction

This study considers the prophesied resurrection of Jesus. He had stated that this was promised in the Scriptures, and He had trusted God to fulfil His promise to His Son. For Jesus the hope was that He would be free to worship God, witness to His people, and exercise universal sovereignty. The raising of the Son of God/Man is the vindication of God's Word, and the loving faith and obedience of Jesus (Romans 1:4).

The New Testament gives no description of the resurrection of Jesus: its concern is for the effects of this act. The focus is that the tomb was found empty, and the disciples met the risen Lord. The impact is seen to be upon Jesus' followers, their restoration, and commissioning.

§1. The Sunday morning

Matthew records the Sunday morning visit to the tomb, and the events which follow. [Note that in this incident 'see' is used 4x (verse 1, 6, 7, 10), and that throughout this chapter the titles so frequently used give place to the name Jesus'.]

Matthew's interest is the experience of the women visitors, not their intention. Next, he records the 'great earthquake' (cf. the opening of the saints' graves-27:52,53). Part of this was the removal of the stone by the Angel of the Lord (for the witnesses, not for Jesus). He disturbed the soldiers (they cannot cope with such a brilliant messenger see Daniel 10:6-9; 7:9; Rev. 1:17) and awaited the visitors.

§2. The Angelic report

The Angel of the Lord (cf. 1:20 for his earlier work) brought a wonderful message. Firstly, the introductory command: 'Do not be afraid'. This is followed by the explanation for the removal of fear: 'You saw his body laid in here - now see that it has gone.'

The basis for the resurrection message is then announced: 'as he said'. For this teaching, see Matt. 27:63 // 12:40, 16:21, 17:13; 21:18; 26:32, 61 Jesus even promised the return to Galilee (26:32).

Finally, the women are commissioned: 'tell his disciples that he has risen ... go to Galilee ... you will see Jesus.' This is confirmed by Jesus Himself, in verse 10, and 18f. For the significance of Galilee, where light dawns, see Matt. 4:12-16 cf. Isaiah 9:2. 'for those who sat in the region and shadow of death light has dawned.'

§3. Jesus met and greeted them

As they obediently departed, the women encountered Jesus. They had great fear and joy as they met and worshipped him (2:2; 8:2): they 'took hold of his feet' (cf. John 20:17). He addressed them with a message like that of the Angel. For the 'brethren' see: Psalm 22:22. This must mean more than His earthly family (12:49,50; 13:55; 25:40). Jesus is to be reconciled with His brothers 5:9 - ie. Peter. He did not disown them.

Jesus believed that He would be raised from the dead. He had so taught his disciples. The events of the death and resurrection highlight the fact that a new and decisive age has dawned. Jesus has been vindicated, and the Angel comes as witness, and the foreign (enemy) soldiers are overwhelmed.

§4. Royal declaration in Galilee

As a stark contrast to the section 27:57-60 where it was recorded that Jesus was dead and buried, 28:16-20 shows Him to be both alive and sovereign: the Golgotha defeat has given place to the Galilee triumph. The disciples returned to Galilee, and there met Jesus 'on the mountain'. [Note the use of 'mountain' in Matthew's Gospel, as a place for revelation: 4:8; 5:1; 14:23; 15:29; 17:1; 21:1; 24:3; 28:16.1 Here the eleven represent the whole body of believers. And the geographical setting reminds us that just as Jesus commenced His ministry in Galilee (4:12ff.), so the wider ministry commences there.

Jesus' coming evoked uncertainty among the disciples. Verse 17 comments that 'they saw him, and then verse 18 that He 'came'. Does that indicate a failure to recognise Him initially, which is then clarified when He remains with them? What is certain is the apprehension they have: after all, they had forfeited their right to represent Him, due to their desertion.

Jesus' royal speech, which commissioned the disciples for their new work, consisted of three elements: a declaration, with a command, and promise. Note the stress on 'all' (4x, in verses 18, 19, 20). It is the fitting fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy in Matt. 26:64.

4:1. The Royal Declaration. Jesus stated that universal authority had been delegated to Him: it was 'given to me'. This sovereignty, invested by the Father, was far more than what had been offered by Satan. Now Jesus has the right and power to effect the divine policies and purposes, both in heaven and earth (cf. 11:25ff.; 6:10).

4:2. The Royal Command. Here the command is not 'to go'. Rather, the assumption is that such 'going' is the norm. What is commanded is the discipling of the nations, with baptizing and teaching. The call to the nations (also the world, even creation) to follow and submit is the sequel to the divine offer to God's son/king in Psalm 2:7-11. The Gospel is now offered to even the Gentiles, as the new community of the Church (incorporating both Israel and the nations) commences its witness. Previous limitations on the disciples' work are now removed.

Next, the nations are to be baptized, in the name of the Trinity. This means being subject to Jesus' jurisdiction. Note the one name of Father, Son and Spirit: all are present at the baptism of Jesus.

Again, the disciples now become teachers, for they have the responsibility to instruct those who follow what is entailed in being under Jesus' authority. This teaching covers all relationships, and is the fulfillment of the law of love (see 5:19; 15:3).

We note that the previous criteria or scope of work are radically change& no longer Israel, but the nations; not circumcision but baptism, and not the Law of Moses, but the law-word of Christ.

4:3. The Royal Promise. Finally, all circumstances are contingent on the present sovereign, as He directs all of history. For the term 'I am with you' see Haggai 1:13, and Matt. 1:23. Here the stress is not merely the presence of Jesus, but His activity.

§5. Making disciples of the nations

What is offered? The forgiveness of sins (Matt. 3:2, 11-12; Luke 24:46-48). Jesus is the Son of Man, the Messiah, the Lord: He is now authorised to dispense the Spirit of God. See Peter's Pentecost sermon, and the impact on the Jews.

Then note the impact on the Gentiles in Acts 10. Compare with Romans 4:24,25 for the death of Jesus dealing with our trespasses, and being raised for our justification. Compare also with Romans 6, for man being crucified with Christ, and so being raised to new life.

For the witness of Jesus to His brothers, for whom He is their High Priest, see the Letter to the Hebrews (2:10-15; 4:14-16). The family of God, under the elder brother, worship the Father, and trust His word in the temptations (testings and trials) which they experience.

'Who are the Sons of God?'

[The Testing of the Sons of God: Romans 8; James 1; 1 Cor 10]

"Luke ... says Jesus 'was led by the Spirit' (Luke 4. 1), a phrase which distinctly recalls Christian experience of the Spirit (Rom. 8.14; Ga. 5:18)." [James D G Dunn, *Baptism in the Holy Spirit* SCM: 1970, page 411

Introduction

The Son of God/Man has been vindicated, raised from the dead, and the people of God justified (Rom. 4:25). Further, at Pentecost Jesus as Son of God dispensed the Spirit of Holiness, that same Spirit which was given to Him at His baptism. Given that Jesus is now not merely the Bearer but the Mediator of the Spirit, will the people of the New Covenant, invested with the Spirit, share the same experiences of Israel and Christ, being led by the Spirit?

This study considers this question, with reference to trials, testing and temptations as recorded in the Epistles (eg. Romans 8; 1 Corinthians 10; 1 Peter 1 and James 1). That is, how did the early Church face what we call the world, the flesh and the devil? Or, to take up the motif which governed Israel's daily life, and the background to Jesus' wilderness (and temptation) experience, and His recital of the great commandment: 'You shall love the LORD your God with all our heart, soul, strength and mind' (Matt. 22:37)?

§1. Led by the Spirit

Having been declared Son of God, and invested with the Spirit, Jesus was led by the Spirit, into the wilderness. Paul speaks of the believers being led by the Spirit (not so much as walking in the Law, but in the Spirit): not necessarily to testing, but certainly into the wilderness.

Being led by the Spirit includes a readiness to hear and heed the Word of God: Man does not live by bread alone, you shall not tempt the Lord your God', etc. These are addressed to all people (Jesus included). Jesus has heard the Word of God: yet do we hear the Word, as most found the word either unintelligible (the parables), or scandalous?

Jesus the Son is always with us, in our place, under the Word. As the letter to the Hebrews says, Jesus the Son of God ... has been 'tested in every way like ourselves, while yet free from sin' (Heb. 4:14-16 Cassirer). Here the temptations of the Son of God are not specifically Messianic, but are typical of Chose of the 'People of God (ours), with the 'every respect' perhaps echoing the 'all' (your heart, soul, and strength) of Deuteronomy 6:5. Note too that Jesus refused to act as Baptiser in Matt. 3:14, and stood with us.

The believer-son is not to allow anything to dominate his heart (such as the flesh), over against the Spirit. **Second**, while we may assume that God will preserve ova soul, yet not presume upon this (cf. Phil. 2:5ff.). **Third**, beware the seduction of idolatry, with the temptation to abandon the love for God for the sake of possessions.

The Spirit effects sonship, not merely consciousness: 'only those who are led by the Spirit are sons of God' [Pall those who let themselves be led by the Spirit of God are the sons of God': Cassirer]. The redemption of the inner and outer man both involve an experience of death, both a participation in the death experience of Christ (Rom. 8:2,9-10; 8:11,13,17,23). It is to that participation that we now turn.

§2. Sharing in the death and life of the Son

Reformed theologians distinguish between legal and evangelical repentance. The former operates by, 'repent, and if you do, you will be forgiven'. Hence, forgiveness is conditional on adequate repentance. There is an imperative, prior to an indicative. With evangelical, forgiveness is logically prior to repentance, which is but a response to grace: 'Christ has borne your sins on the Cross, so repent.' To accept forgiveness necessarily involves submitting to the implied verdict of guilt. We are unconditionally summoned to renounce our sins, as God's goodness leads us to repentance (Romans 2:4). The Gospel proclaims that we are pre-claimed: so we submit to the verdict of the Cross in the name of Christ, Who has already assented and consented to that judgement, for us.

The theologians also affirm that Christ pro nobis is prior to Christ in nobis: Christ is for us, prior to becoming Christ in us. If repentance is our response to Christ, sanctification is our participation in Christ.

The ongoing action of repentance is duplex: (i.) mortificatio (dying to self, but not as a pre-condition of union with God, but is the gift of sharing in Christ's suffering etc. see Phil 3:10ff.) and (ii.) vivificatio, new life of sanctification (holiness of thought and praxis: cf. theory vs. practice). It has retro and prospective effects, as past sins are forgiven and we face the future in union with the Father and the Son. This is the outworking of the eschaton (last things) in the present, for the Cross and Resurrection is the great eschatological event intruded into the 'now'. What was expected, and dreaded, as happening on the 'last day', has already occurred in Christ (and so us) at the Cross, so that we now share in His new or eternal life (that of the age to come). So, mortificatio and vivificatio, death and new life (cf. baptism and holy communion), are the present signs of the eschaton.

In Romans 8 Paul teaches that we are called to mortify actively all that hinders or obscures Christ's ministry of reconciliation, by dying to prejudice, racism, sectarianism, greed, sloth, etc. and to passive mortification, ie. to allow Christ to desegregate our hearts and minds, lift us up out of prejudice, racism, sectarianism, etc. so that Christ might exercise His ministry in us. This mortification is not 'denying our creatureliness', our natural affections, our bodies, in a world denying mysticism, but letting Christ sanctify them, to present us, body, mind and spirit, holy and blameless to the Father, with our affections centred on Him.

§3. Lead us not into temptation (Matt. 6:13)

God, as Guide of His people (Ps. 23:3), would not want to lead them into danger (Ps. 141:4). Rather, He stands ready to help those who call to Him for aid. But what is this 'temptation' (or 'testing')?

There have been four answers to the nature of this 'temptation'. First, the testing of the individual or Israel, to determine whether the covenant partner would remain faithful (Gen. 3; 22:1-9; Ex. 15:25; 16:4; Deut. 8:2; 13:3; Ps. 26:2). A second usage shows that man is

seduced or enticed by his desires, and is tempted to go astray (Lk. 8:13) [temptation came to Jesus as much from his friends as his enemies (Matt. 3:14; 16:22ff.)]. A third shows how man may be instructed (James 1:2; 1:12). The fourth way in which the term has been used, is to show that man 'tests God', even though this is inadmissible (Is. 7:12; Mal. 3:15; Ps. 95).

When we turn to the New Testament we find the ongoing threat of persecution and suffering, with the implication of denying Christ (Matt. 26:41; Mk. 14:38; Lk. 22:40, 46). The Parable of the Sower calls attention to the testing of believers (Lk. 8:13, but see Matt. 13:21 and Mk. 4:17 for 'tribulation and persecution'). At times Jesus is tested, in the Wilderness (Matt. 4, Luke. 4 and Mk. 1:12,13), and later by the Jewish elders (Matt. 8:11; 16:1: he is asked for 'signs' [cf. Israel in the Wilderness]; Lk. 10:25).

A final testing of God's people is disclosed in Revelation 3:10 (cf. Dan. 12:10), which appears to relate to the great time of rebellion. This is foreshadowed in the ongoing experiences of the Church 0 Peter 1:6; 4:12; Rev. 2:10; [tempted to desert due to sufferings] and James 1:12 [tempted due to man's own desires]).

Another suggested explanation of this request relates to the use of the Massah incident in the Wilderness. The citations of 1 Corinthians 10 and Hebrews 3 are cited as underlining the constant danger of the Church, like Israel, to 'put God to the test' (Deut. 6:16; Ps. 95; 78). It is suggested that Mark 14:38 implies the exhortation to not test (or so deny) God. (Cornelius Houk even argues that Peter 'tested' the Lord at this point with his denial of Jesus, and that each element of the Wilderness experience is paralleled in the Lord's Prayer: see Psalm 78:41, 24, 38, 41. [Scottish Journal of Theology, June 1966, pages 216-225]

However we interpret the term, we must affirm that our relation to God is that which is in question. The great test, for man, appears to be apostasy (Lk. 8:13; Mk. 13:19-23; Matt. 24:21-26). Yet God is not the tempter; He is the Protector and Preserver of His people

For its particular use in James (1:12ff.) where testing issues in Blessing: the Jews have a long history of being tested [so Abraham (Genesis 22) and Israel in the wilderness]. Jesus and James see suffering as external testing, neither sees this to be sought, yet both also acknowledge the eschatological benefit of such. The first testing is that of metal being refined in the fiery smelter's furnace. None is to blame God for failing the test. The issue is to keep genuine faith and so be approved for enduring.

The theme underlies much of the epistle (so 5:7, for need for patient waiting). God allows his choicest servants to endure sufferings, expects them to stand firm, and so be finally rewarded. God does not lead into evil, but they respond to their own impulses. The pressures on this Church include economic, the evil impulse (cf. 4:1ff.), and the external tempter (cf. 3:15; 4:7).

§4. Spirit of Sonship

At Jesus' baptism we noted the Father's declaration, 'This is my Son'. Now the Spirit witnesses to the believer of his 'sonship': the response is the 'Abba - Father' cry of the son (echoing the Son and the Spirit: Mark 14:36; Gal. 4:6).

Sonship issues in experience, namely that of Jesus' own experience of God - as Father. Further, they are fellow heirs, that is, not only with Jews, but with Christ, as inheritors of the

new creation. Here the Spirit is distinctly cited as the 'Spirit of sonship': the Spirit of Jesus' own experience and relation to (Sod, and the One who makes this real for the believer.

Conclusion

Whereas Adam and Israel failed the tests set by the Covenant Father, Jesus the Son remained faithful, and showed that He loved the Lord with all His heart, soul and strength. Throughout His life and ministry, and climactically at the Cross, Jesus as Son of God trusted His Father and offered Himself and His obedience through the Spirit on our behalf. Our experience of sonship, contingent upon, and participating in, Jesus' Sonship, enables us to be led by the Spirit in all of our life and ministry, even into the wilderness, to face testing with confidence in the faithful Father and His incarnate Son, God with us.