

Self-Portraits of God

Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

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Self-portraits of God

Studies in the life and work of Jesus

Lesson 1 A Study of Miracle

General Introduction

When God made people He made them with the potential to have their abilities increase. When things went wrong and sin entered, people were marred, but still loved, and God began a long series of approaches to His needing-to-be-repaired people, using a series of titles and acts. The titles that He used, and the acts that He did, were intended by Him to convey to His subjects some knowledge of what He was like.

We probably all know all this, but perhaps not so well known are some of the messages from these titles and acts which are associated with Jesus during His life on earth. By the use of the parables that He told, Jesus brought the eternal future to view, while by the use of miracles He revealed the invisible God in visible forms.

His best-known acts are the recorded miracles that make up part of the Gospel records known to us as the books of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, in the New Testament of our Bibles. Many people are also aware of the recorded miracles making up portions of the Bible-book named the Acts of the Apostles. Perhaps not so well known are miracles which make up parts of the history in the Old Testament portion in the Bible.

These miracle stories of God's intervention in the lives of people are some of our best sources for learning what God is like. These miracles carry messages that are often greater than the individual acts. The messages from the meaning and nature of the individual miracles make a great study of the character of the God who does these unusual acts, acts which are often separate in their occurrences, but which by their nature fit together, drawing pictures of their author; self-portraits of God.

Prepared to be blessed as we began this study of the life and work of Jesus by looking at the meaning and nature of some of the miracles done by Jesus recorded in our Bibles.

Why the Biblical record of the acts of Jesus

In the Biblical book of Acts Luke points out that he has recorded in the Gospel book called by his name concerning what Jesus began both to do and to teach during His life here on earth.

The significance of recording the teachings of Jesus is apparent to all of us. But what is the significance of the acts of Jesus which are recorded? Why are these particular acts recorded? Are these recorded acts all the acts that Jesus did? Do they all have the same message?

The apostle John, commenting about the total activities of Jesus, as compared to the things that he has recorded in his Gospel from Jesus' life writes that

there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written"(John 20:25, NKJV).

Therefore we conclude that those acts which were selected to be recorded were selected because they were seen as having special significance; they were functional. Notice the following texts.

Acts 2: 22

“Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God among you by miracles and wonders and signs which God did by Him in the midst of you, as you yourselves also know;...”

Matthew 11: 2-5

“Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,
and said unto him, art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

Jesus answered and said unto them, go and show John again those things which you do hear and see:

the blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.

Jesus' answer to the disciples of John the Baptist, regarding the question John the Baptist had had them bring to Him as to whether He was the expected One, was to point them to His works.

This means that Jesus' works testified that He was the Expected One; the Messiah promised throughout the Old Testament.

John 20: 30, 31

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

Now that we have in front of us the function of the record of Jesus' acts, we can seek to find the individual messages His works carry; messages which show He is the Promised One, the approved Son of God who gives life.

We will do this study by revisiting individual accounts of miracles from the Gospels. But before revisiting, we should note that for study purposes the acts of Jesus can be divided into four categories or classes:

1. Miracles of Healing the Sick
2. The miracle of raising the dead
3. Miracles of exorcism, or, casting out devils, and
4. Nature Miracles

Class 1- Miracles of Healing the Sick

It was very common for Jesus, while He was on earth, to go through villages healing; and when He left there was not one person who was still sick. In the records of these acts by Jesus no requirement for healing is presented to the ill ones; the only required qualification for one to be healed, showing in the story, was their need.

Notice the record in Matthew 9: 35.

Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the Gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

Miracles of healing-the-sick done by Jesus were aimed at the ordinary ills or sicknesses of any Oriental village: the blind were given sight, the lame were made well, the deaf were made to hear, and the lepers were restored whole.

One of the interesting things we notice as we begin to study Jesus acts of healing is that Jesus connects the ordinary illnesses, or sicknesses, found in any Oriental village He traveled through, to sin. This connection between sickness and sin appears many times in the records of His work. For example, notice Mark 2:17, where we read that

those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

These records call to mind the great prophecy of Isaiah 35: 3-6, which reads,

strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you. Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert.

In these Old Testament verses healing and salvation are tied together just as in the works and words of Jesus.

But back to our study of Jesus!

Matthew 8: 2-4.

And behold, a leper came and worshipped Him saying, " Lord, if You are willing, You can make me clean."

Then Jesus put out His hand and touched him, saying, "I am willing; be cleansed." Immediately his leprosy was cleansed.

And Jesus said to him, "See that you tell no one; but go your way, show yourself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, as a testimony to them."

The stories of Jesus' healing of lepers are of great interest to our study because after a leper was healed the law required him to appear before a priest for an examination to confirm that he had in fact been healed; this was not true of any other illness. If the priest confirmed that the leper had in fact been healed, there was a required ritual that the healed leper must participate in before he could return to his tent, or again be a participant in the affairs of the nation.

What makes this ritual recorded in the Old Testament book of Leviticus interesting to our study is the fact that the required ritual was a portrayal of the gospel, the good news of salvation; including an acting out of the death and resurrection of the promised Messiah, and the blessings accruing from them (For the details see Leviticus 14: 1-20).

Therefore each time Jesus healed a leper the healing was followed by an acting out of the plan of salvation- the solution to the hopelessnesses of those plagued with sin.

But sickness and sin were not only associated in a general way in the Scriptures and the work of Jesus, but sometimes the healing of the sick was preceded by an explicit statement of forgiveness of sin. Notice the story in

Mark 2:1-12.

In these verses a very ill young man was brought to Jesus by his friends when Jesus was not reachable! So they took him up on the roof of the house in which Jesus was working and broke up the roof and let their friend down into the presence of Jesus. The Bible story says that when Jesus saw their faith He said to the paralytic, Son your sins are forgiven you.

There is no record showing a request for the forgiveness of sin. But the story ends with the dying young man taking up his bed and walking away in perfect health!

The special element in this story is the implied element; that the young man had caused his own problem; but Jesus forgave his sin and healed him.

In this story we are introduced to a Jesus who forgives sins as soon as He sees faith expressed. This story also shows that the forgiveness of sin brings with it healing as pictured in Isaiah 35. Finally we observe the implied condition for seeking Him- we must respond to His drawing. (Jesus did not have to ask the paralytic who he was.)

Mark 5: 22-42.

Jesus is on His way to heal a little girl, at the request of her father, when the crowd is so large, and progress is so slow toward the father's house that the father fears his little daughter might die before Jesus can walk there; but the situation gets much worse when suddenly Jesus stops moving forward to turn around and say to the crowd who are pushing on Him, "Who touched My clothes?!"

Notice the record of this great story.

And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death, come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live."

So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.

Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for 12 years, and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse.

When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched his garment.

For she said, "if only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well."

Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction.

And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?"

But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"

And He looked around to see her who had done this thing.

But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth.

And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

Because this lady who was sick for so long was healed by simply reaching out in faith to Jesus, we know that however chronic our evilness has been, Jesus responds to the touch of faith.

The Self-portrait

in this miracle of healing is of the Wish-grantor; the One from whom we can receive without asking.

Now to our next story.

I heard what you said! You are very happy for what happened to the ill lady but how does the story of the little girl end?! Does she stay dead?!

We will finish that story when we do category 2 of our study- the miracle of raising the dead. (What do you think happened to the little girl?! Does she stay dead?!)

Mark 10:46-52.

Now they came to Jericho. As He went out of Jericho with His disciples and a great multitude, blind Bartimaeus, the son of Timaeus, sat by the road begging.

And when he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to cry out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!"

Then many warned him to be quiet; but he cried out all the more, "Son of David, have mercy on me!"

So Jesus stood still and commanded him to be called. Then they called the blind man, saying to him, "Be of good cheer. Rise, He is calling you."

And throwing aside his garment, he rose and came to Jesus.

So Jesus answered and said to him, "What do you want Me to do for you?" The blind man said to Him, "Rabboni, that I may receive my sight."

Then Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your faith has made you well." And immediately he received his sight and followed Jesus on the road.

The healing of the blind man of Jericho resulted in his becoming a follower of Jesus.

Miracles of healing as

Self-portraits

collectively show us Jesus at work – a self-portrait of God that reveals One who lives to serve; a picture that reminds us of the Old Testament text which declares that He rejoices over us with singing.

Miracles of Jesus, Class 2- Raising the dead

We left our story of the trip by Jesus to the house of the ruler of the synagogue who had a very ill daughter at the point where the father has just been told by a messenger from his home that his daughter has died, and then the question was asked, "Why trouble the teacher any further?"

The Biblical story continues, (Mark 5: 36- 42)

As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe."

And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James.

Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly.

When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."

And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him and entered where the child was lying.

Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise."

Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was 12 years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement.

In the stories we have reviewed thus far each of the people needed the blessing they received. But there is a sense in which this father did not need his little girl; she was not his means of support. She is not even said to be his only child. Therefore Jesus going to her home to heal her when He was asked to help her by her father means that He cares about what we care about. The father's urgency of request is based in his love for his little daughter.

We also note that the Bible writer gives us no indication that Jesus would have gone to her home if the little girl's father had not gone to find Him and request His help for the very ill little girl. It seems that she would have died and not been raised back to life if the father had not asked Jesus for help.

The picture we see revealing itself in this story is that in answer to the request of those in need, Jesus does things which otherwise apparently would not be done. The message from this miracle that is added to our accumulating knowledge about Jesus is that He loves to have us work with Him.

The Self-portrait

is of the Divine-listener.

Luke 7: 11-16.

Now it happened, the day after, that He went into a city called Nain; and many of His disciples went with Him, and a large crowd.

And when He came near the gate of the city, behold a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother; and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the city was with her.

When the Lord saw her, He had compassion on her and said to her, "Do not weep."

Then He came and touched the open coffin, and those who carried him stood still. And He said, "Young man, I say to you, arise."

So he who was dead sat up and began to speak. And He presented him to his mother.

Then fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, "A great prophet has risen up among us"; and, "God has visited His people."

Jesus' raising of this woman's son shows us that when Satan has apparently succeeded in destroying that which we very much need, Jesus is often waiting to provide; that He knows our need, and cares.

John 11:1-44.

No doubt one of the most famous stories in Scripture about someone being raised from the dead is a story of Lazarus, the friend of Jesus, whom He let die!

Lazarus not only died, but was buried for four days. However, the surprising element in this story is that the expressed faith of Lazarus' family, something that has been effective to the healing of the lady who was sick for 12 years, fails to bring about the desired result for this family, even though they were well-known to be a family Jesus loved to visit any time He was in their area.

This is a great story which is distinguished from our other miracle stories by this dimension of unrewarded faith in a specific outcome; a faith openly expressed by Jesus' friends, the sisters of Lazarus

In the healing stories reviewed above, when people expressed their faith in Jesus to Him and asked for a need to be met, their request was granted; the need was met. The expression of faith always was rewarded with the requested healing. But in this story Jesus, knowing the desire of the sisters, internationally stays away from their home, thereby denying them their request.

Notice John 11: 6. "So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place for He was."

But I am getting ahead! Let's read the story.

Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha.

It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick.

Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick."

When Jesus heard that, He said, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it."

Now Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus.

So, when He heard that he was sick, He stayed two more days in the place where He was.

Then after this He said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again."

The disciples said to Him, "Rabbi, lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?"

Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours in the day? If anyone walks in the day, he does not stumble, because he sees the light of this world.

"But if one walks in the night, he stumbles, because the light is not in him."

These things He said, and after that He said to them, "Our friend Lazarus sleeps, but I go that I may wake him up."

Then His disciples said, "Lord, if he sleeps he will get well."

However, Jesus spoke of his death, but they thought that He was speaking about taking rest in sleep.

Then Jesus said to them plainly, "Lazarus is dead.

"And I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, that you may believe. Nevertheless let us go to him."

Then Thomas, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, then we may die with Him."

So when Jesus came, He found that he had already been in the tomb four days.

Now Bethany was near Jerusalem, about two miles away.

And many of the Jews had joined the women around Martha and Mary, to comfort them concerning their brother.

Then Martha, as soon as she heard that Jesus was coming, went and met Him, but Mary was sitting in the house.

Now Martha said to Jesus, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.

"But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You." Jesus said to her, "Your brother will rise again."

Martha said to Him, "I know that he will rise again in the resurrection at the last day."

Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

"And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"

She said to Him, "Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, who is to come into the world."

And when she had said these things, she went her way and secretly called Mary her sister, saying, "The Teacher has come and is calling for you."

As soon as she heard that, she arose quickly and came to Him.

Now Jesus had not yet come into the town, but was in the place where Martha met Him.

Then the Jews who were with her in the house, and comforting her, when they saw that Mary rose up quickly and went out, followed her, saying, "She is going to the tomb to weep there."

Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."

Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.

And He said, "Where have you laid him?" They said to Him, "Lord, come and see."

Jesus wept.

Then the Jews said, "See how He loved him!"

And some of them said, "Could not this Man, who opened the eyes of the blind, also have kept this man from dying?"

Then Jesus, again groaning in Himself, came to the tomb. It was a cave, and a stone lay against it.

Jesus said, "Take away the stone." Martha, the sister of him who was dead, said to Him, "Lord, by this time there is a stench, for he has been dead four days."

Jesus said to her, "Did I not say to you that if you would believe you would see the glory of God?"

Then they took away the stone from the place where the dead man was lying. And Jesus lifted up His eyes and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me.

"And I know that You always hear Me, but because of the people who are standing by I said this, that they may believe that You sent Me."

Now when He had said these sayings, He cried with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth!"

And he who had died came out, bound hand and foot with grave-clothes, and his face was wrapped with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Loose him, and let him go."

It was after Lazarus died, our story tells us, that Jesus went to visit the family. Then the apostle John in his gospel record of this event shows us why Jesus waited to go to the family- His very good friends. He could raise the dead as easily as He could heal the sick. But many people did not know this. Jesus' waiting to go to the family revealed a dimension of His character that was unknown to His friends and their acquaintances. In this revelation He gives to them a blessing that they did not know was available to be asked for.

The Resurrection of Lazarus

reveals a God who is willing to enlarge our concept of Him; to let us know that when Satan has apparently gained a final victory, Jesus is able to bring us the greatest joy and proof of His power and care.

The Self-portrait

is of an intelligent One filled with love, compassion, and power; a parent inviting His children to a larger share in His life.

Miracles of Jesus, Class 3- Miracles of exorcism, or, casting out devils

Our first story in this class of Jesus' acts is a great one! It is a story of Jesus being confronted directly by an evil spirit in church! The record of this event is found in

Mark 1: 21-28, 32-34.

Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.

And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes.

Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,

saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are- the Holy One of God!"

But Jesus rebuked him, saying. "Be quiet, and come out of him!"

And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.

Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

This story reveals that the Devil and/or his agents can go any place people can go. It also shows us that when people have fallen under the power of Satan to the extent they are not able to speak of their need, Jesus is able to give the freedom that is longed for.

In the stories we have reviewed above in Class 1 of the healing stories, we saw that some of the people who were healed had not expressed faith, some of the people who were healed had requested healing, and some of those who were healed were people who had had healing requested for them by someone else.

These observations appear at this point in our study because they appear to be reflective of basic principles underlying Jesus' way of relating with those He intends to help. This observation is made in this place because we seem to be seeing the same principles pushing up in this study of the casting out of demons.

In the story of the demon who went to church, for example, just reviewed above, the presence of Jesus was sufficient reason for the demon to cause suffering to the one in whom it was dwelling, and who was subsequently freed from the torments of the evil spirit, by Jesus, but without anyone being seen who asked for that help.

The Self-portrait

is of the Reader of hearts.

Mark 9: 17-27.

The story we are going to revisit next is again one where the victim does not ask for help; rather it is someone else, the victim's father, who asks for the deliverance on behalf of his son, something that we have seen being done before; only in this story there is an added dimension; the father who asks for a blessing for his son receives a deliverance for himself that he did not ask for!

But I am getting ahead! Let's go back to the start and read the central portion of the story.

Then one of the crowd answered and said, "Teacher, I brought You my son, who has a mute spirit.

"And whenever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, gnashes his teeth, and becomes rigid. So I spoke to Your disciples, that they should cast it out, but they could not."

He answered him and said, "O faithless generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I bear with you? Bring him to Me."

Then they brought him to Him. And when he saw Him, immediately the spirit convulsed him, and he fell on the ground and wallowed, foaming at the mouth.

So He asked his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" And he said, "From childhood.

"And often he has thrown him both into the fire and into the water to destroy him. But if You can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

Jesus said to him, "If you can believe, all things are possible to him who believes."

Immediately the father of the child cried out and said with tears, "Lord, I believe; help my unbelief!"

When Jesus saw that the people came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it: "Deaf and dumb spirit, I command you, come out of him and enter him no more!"

Then the spirit cried out, convulsed him greatly, and came out of him. And he became as one dead, so that many said, "He is dead."

But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose.

The central element that this story adds to our growing understanding of Jesus and His way of treating people lies in the revelation of the ability for the faith which seeks help for another to gain a blessing for the one interceding for the one in need.

In this case, the faith which brings healing to the son is the gift of God to the intercessor, the father of the possessed boy; the faith which was required for his son to be healed.

In this passage we find a revelation in parallel; first we find an account of the life of a young man during that time he is under the control of the evil spirit. The father, in giving this account, reveals that the boy has been living an existence nobody wants.

The parallel accounting of the life of the boy is a picture in motion; Jesus lifting up the boy, freed, from the ground where he has been wallowing, and presenting him whole to his father and to the crowd.

The parallel revelations are of the works of the Devil, and of the redemption that is available through Jesus; the Divine One from the Father's glory stooping to separate people from their captor.

In this story Jesus' work is that of Deliverer; it is to be noted that Jesus does not ask how the son came to be in that condition. He simply reveals His willingness to respond to this human need- but not apart from an expression of faith. Jesus, the One who asks, "What can I do to help?"

Miracles of Casting out demons are acted parables; revealers of the desire of Jesus for His children.

The Self-portrait

is of the Healer of both body and soul; the One with ultimate authority- the future is guaranteed.

Miracles of Jesus, Class 4- Nature Miracles

This class of miracles, the last class in our review, which we have designated class four, is that group of miracles, which have, as the object of the action taken by Jesus, events or actions occurring in the natural world. These acts seem to draw from their observers an interest in Jesus and who He is that goes beyond the responses we have seen to any of His miracles of healing, or raising the dead, or even His direct confrontations with the evil spirits who terrorized the people they were able to gain control over- even when the evil spirit was in church!

The people who are participants, or even just observers, of this class of miracles all seem to ask the same question- what manner of man is this? It seems that Jesus greatest impact on the people came from these confrontations with nature.

Jesus acts were participants in His teachings.

It has been said of Jesus' teachings about nature that His words placed the teachings of nature in a new aspect and made them new revelation; that He could speak of the things which His own hands had made, for they had qualities and properties that were peculiarly His own; that in nature, as in the Old Testament Scriptures, divine, momentous truths are revealed; and in His teaching about nature Jesus laid these open before the people, bound up with the beauty of natural things.

In the Old Testament scriptures, which were the only Bible Jesus' hearers had, the New Testament not yet being written, the sea is often the habitation of dragons or forces of evil. The Greek word (LXX) for wind is the same Greek word that carries the meaning of spirit. Therefore a story in the Bible of a storm on the sea, with wind and

waves, can be a symbol of evil spirits on a rampage. It is sometimes also suggested that a ship in Scripture is a symbol of the church. But I am getting ahead again!

Mark 4: 35-41.

On the same day, when evening had come, He said to them, "Let us cross over to the other side."

Now when they had left the multitude, they took Him along in the boat as He was. And other little boats were also with Him.

And a great windstorm arose, and the waves beat into the boat, so that it was already filling.

But He was in the stern, asleep on a pillow. And they awoke Him and said to Him, "Teacher, do You not care that we are perishing?"

Then He arose and rebuked the wind, and said to this sea, "Peace, be still!"

And the wind ceased and there was a great calm.

But He said to them, "Why are you so fearful? How is it that you have no faith?"

And they feared exceedingly, and said to one another, "Who can this be, that even the wind and the sea obey Him!"

When Jesus is awakened to the storm with the sea-water already partly filling the boat He and the disciples are riding in, the symbolic message is rich. The church (the ship) is apparently about to sink into the forces of evil, with Christ in its midst. Jesus' presence brings no obvious saving effect until His people call on Him for help.

It is of great interest to note that when He stands up and speaks to the storm, He says, Be Quiet, Be muzzled (grk). These are the same words that He spoke to the evil spirit in church that we read in Mark 1: 25.

In this story of the stilling of the storm we find One who can speak to the storms in our lives, and bring us peace, if we ask.

The fact that He is awakened from sleep not only points to His complete trust in the protecting power of His heavenly Father, within which He so consciously moves, but to the great victory to be realized by His resurrection; death often being presented in Scripture as a sleep for the righteous. It is also of much interest to note that as our pattern He made use of no help that is not available to us. His miracles for others are our assurance that He can provide for us, but He worked none for Himself. He is dependant on the Father for His personal safety, as we are, for He is the pattern for the Christian life for us.

The Self-portrait

in this story is of the everwatchful-One sleeping.

(See Matthew 14:13-21 for this next story.)

When Jesus heard that John the Baptist had been put to death He went by boat to a deserted place by Himself. But when the multitude heard it they followed Him on foot from the cities.

And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and He was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

When it was evening His disciples came to Him saying, "This is a deserted place and the hour is already late. Send the multitude away that they may go into the villages and buy themselves food."

But Jesus said to them, "They do not need to go away. You give them something to eat."

And they said to Him, "We have here only five loaves and two fishes."

Jesus said, "Bring them here to Me."

Then He commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass. And He took the five loaves and two fish, and looking up to heaven, He blessed and broke and gave the loaves to the disciples; and the disciples gave to the multitudes.

So they all ate and were filled, and they took up twelve baskets full of the fragments that remained.

Now those who had eaten were about 5000 men, besides women and children.

In the feeding of the 5000 men plus women and children we meet a Jesus who is the bread of life. If the disciples had understood this miracle they would have known who Jesus was, because this miracle points to the communion service; to the One who not only provides for the daily needs we have, but Who gives us life.

The great point of this miracle is that it assures us that we do not have to leave Jesus, even in this world, to have our needs met. This miracle is our daily life's life insurance.

The Self-portrait

is of the Great Provider.

Matthew 14:22-32.

Our final story of this review is one of the greatest of the storm stories. It is the conclusion to the story of the feeding of the 5000 men , plus women and children , which we have just revisited. This story occurs on the same day. We would say we were on our way home, when the strangest thing happened!

Immediately Jesus made His disciples get into the boat and go before Him to the other side, while He sent the multitudes away.

And when He had sent the multitudes away, He went up into a mountain by Himself to pray. Now when evening came, He was alone there.

But the boat was now in the middle of the sea, tossed by the waves, for the wind was contrary.

Now in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went to them, walking on the sea.

And when the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out for fear.

But immediately Jesus spoke to them, saying, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid."

And Peter answered Him and said, "Lord, if it is You, command me to come to You on the water."

So He said, "come." And when Peter had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Jesus.

But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Lord, save me!"

And immediately Jesus stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O You of little faith, why did you doubt?"

And when they got into the boat, the wind ceased.

Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, "Truly You are the Son of God."

Jesus walking on the sea, in the storm, on the water with Peter, shows us that with Him as our focus we are safe anywhere. That He and His constant followers have victory over evil, even when it is on a rampage. But we also see in this experience that when the storms around us draw our attention away from Jesus, we immediately began to be overcome.

The most surprising message from this picture of two walking on water is

The Self-portrait

of Jesus beginning to let His disciple get wet; "and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, 'Lord, save me!'"

Miracles as Self-portraits

show to us the power of the Divine King.

Miracles as Mirrors

reflect to us the character of God.

Self-portraits of God

Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

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Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

Lesson 2 Pictures from the Parables

General Introduction

At the farm we have recently been enjoying watching the little dog and the little horse as they are growing up. These two are great friends. One day they were out in a small pasture playing along side of the fence. Little dog would suddenly jump at little horse as if he was going to bite him on his heels, and little horse would just as quickly turn and run as fast as he could along the fence to the other side of the field with little dog right behind him, barking as loud as he could! Little dog sounded very fierce! However when the two of them had reached the far side of the field little horse would slide to a stop, turn around very quickly, lower his head as if to bite little dog and chase little dog as fast as the two of them could go back to the near side of the field, where they would both stop, turn quickly around, and do it over again, until little horse got tired.

When little horse got tired he would suddenly stop running and hang his head down and go to sleep! When he woke up they would often start up their game again. Sometimes little dog would get tired of waiting for little horse to wake up. Then he would jump at little horse barking loudly while little horse was still asleep! Sometimes it worked and little horse would jump and start to run-- it seemed before he had awakened!

One day as I came around the corner I saw little horse with his head hanging down, sound asleep, in front of the children's swing set. When little dog

saw me he immediately remembered the sleeping horse, and just as quickly ran behind him, and marked furiously!

The sleeping little horse did what it seemed he had done many times before -- he leaped straight ahead! His head went between the chains for the swing; the seat of the swing came up across his chest; the swing set itself came down across his back, and he ran! Fast as he could go, he ran across the big field, jumped across a small creek, and continued to run as fast as he could for about a quarter of a mile before turning around and racing back to the house where I was now standing. Every little ways as he was running a piece of the swing set would break loose and fall into the field.

By the time he was near to me there was not much of the swing set left hooked to him -- just the swing across his chest with the chains going up to the main bar of the swing set, which was across his back. He stopped near where I was and stood perfectly still. His eyes were very large; he seemed to be very frightened, but he did not move. I approached him carefully so I would not get hurt if he suddenly decided to run again, but he did not move. He stood like a statue, crosswise in front of me. The one eye I could see him looking at me with was also motionless. As I unhooked the chain from the swing and dropped it on the ground, I expected him to run away but he did not move, even then.

I gently removed the bar of the swing set from his back and stepped back. He continued to stand very still for a moment or two, then tried moving forward. When the swing set did not follow him he trotted off, watching me, as if to say, thank you.

The point of this storytelling is of course to present the question -- is this story a parable? What is it that makes a parable a parable -- the thing we are going to be searching, looking for portraits, in this lesson?

A parable is a told-story presented by the teller so as to present to the hearer a real-life situation in which one can by association see the main point, or points, the speaker wishes to convey. Many times the elements making up the story are significant to the meaning or messages the teller of the story intends to be understood by the hearers. In such a case the parable can carry many messages, each attached to a portion or symbol of the story. That which makes a story into a parable is therefore seen to be the intent of the storyteller. The accuracy with which the elements of the told-story portray the message being illustrated is of course dependent on the knowledge of the storyteller regarding the object being used as a symbol for his message.

The desired function of a parable is to make clear by familiar association the presentation of ideas which by themselves may be strange to the hearer or hearers. The benefits of parable telling are several; but the greatest is probably the memories that come flooding back to the hearers each time they see the illustration used by the story teller happening again in the world around them.

The parables of Jesus are therefore stories He told to make clear and familiar to His hearers principles and ideas that might otherwise be unfamiliar -- principles that were the way of life in the Kingdom of Heaven that He was inviting them to become a part of. With parable telling the invisible glory of heavenly truths became visible by being illustrated with earthly things that were familiar to the people. Some of these stories told to people were themselves about people; stories like the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son. The elements of daily life thus illustrated often became invested with a significance not recognized by their observers before hearing the parable.

As such the nature stories Jesus told as parables about the Kingdom of Heaven, and about daily life, made nature a vehicle of revelation; a vehicle generally unrecognized as revealing God's presence in daily life before Jesus used it for that purpose. The events of daily life as given understanding by looking through the windows of the natural world took on a special meaning -- they became, to the follower of Jesus, self-portraits of God and His Kingdom found in their own lives.

We turn now to a study of the parables Jesus told, and some of the messages they carry.

If these stories are at all new to you, you may find yourself wishing that you could have been present to listen to these presentations as Jesus spoke them. You might have wanted to ask some questions -- some of His hearers did! Jesus told stories about everything from yeast to figs that were not! But I'm getting ahead again!

Now to the stories.

Parable # 1

The first story

or parable , we are going to look at is of course a story that Jesus told; as such it is a story that is almost 2000 years old. But it is also a story that is so familiar that we could have taken it out of this morning's newspaper! This story is all around us. But it has an ending that carries a message which is almost always overlooked! Now to Jesus' story.

Then He said a certain man had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me. So he divided to them his livelihood.

And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in the land, and he began to be in want.

Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

But when he came to himself, he said, how many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

I will rise and go to my father, and will say to him, father, I have sinned against Heaven and before you,

and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.

And he arose and came to his father.

But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

And the son said to him, father I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.

But the father said to his servants, bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet.

And the bring the fatted calf here and kill it, and let us eat and be merry;

For this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.

And they began to be merry.

Now his elder son was in the field. And as he came and drew near to the house, he heard music and dancing.

So he called one of the servants and asked what these things meant.

And he said to him, your brother has come, and because he has received him safe and sound, your father has killed the fatted calf.

But he was angry and would not go in. Therefore his father came out and pleaded with him.

So he answered and said to his father, lo, these many years I have been serving you; I have never transgressed your commandment at any time; and yet you never gave me a young goat, that I might make merry with my friends.

But as soon as this son of yours came, who has devoured your livelihood with harlots, you killed the fatted calf for him.

And he said to him, son, you are always with me, and all that I have is yours.

It was right that we should make merry and be glad, for your brother was dead and is alive again, and was lost and is found (Luke 15: 11-32).

Setting and Analysis of this story

A father, two sons, and conflict over who is getting what; a familiar story, except that Jesus told it is a parable! So what is hiding in the story?

Notice the occasion for the telling of this story.

Luke 15: 1-3. Then all the tax collectors and the sinners drew near to Him (Jesus) to hear Him.

(There was always a crowd around Jesus. On one location when He was talking to the multitude on the seashore they pushed so close to Him there was no space left for Him to stand and speak and be heard, so He got into a small boat and pushed out a little from the crowd. He seems to have preferred to be in the outdoors--many of His illustrations were drawn from nature. Also, there were no buildings large enough to accommodate the throngs of people following Him.)

And the Pharisees and scribes complained, saying, this Man receives sinners and eats with them.

(Jesus was nice to the people who came to see Him. He saw each one as they could be. The pure atmosphere surrounding Him, the gentle kindness with which He treated even the children, often caused people who came into His presence to wish to be worthy of His trust. It seems sometimes He did not even have time to eat.)

“So He spoke this parable to them.”

On this occasion (Luke 15:1-3), in responding to the complaints of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus told the story of the father and his two sons which we have just recounted; He also told a story about a lost coin and a story about a lost sheep.

In the story of a sheep which gets lost the sheep knows that it is lost, but it cannot help itself. It is dependent on the goodness and efficiency of a shepherd to find it and take it to safety. Fortunately for the sheep in this story there is a good shepherd, who represents Jesus, who seeks diligently for the missing sheep until he finds it and carries it home.

This is one of the most famous of Jesus' pastoral tales. It has often been the inspiration for an artist's painting. It is seen in Christian homes, in children's rooms, and in books around the world.

The second story Jesus told in responding to the Pharisees and scribes is the story of the lost coin. In this story of a coin that has been lost, the coin of course does not know that it is lost, or that it is a value; these elements are attached to the coin by someone who values it. In Jesus telling of the story the house is needing to be cleaned before the coin can be found! But when the coin is finally found the story is ended just as the story of the lost sheep-- there is a call to the friends to “come and rejoice with me; I have found that which was lost!”

In both these stories Jesus attached a value to that which was lost that is only revealed to the hearer or reader of the story when the final line of the story is told; the love of the owner for the central object of the story—a love so strong that whatever the recovering of the lost requires is not considered too high a cost to the owner who has lost the valued item. And when the recovery has been accomplished the recovery is accompanied by much rejoicing!

(In some of Jesus' stories, who the story was about was another element that was not clear until He said the final line!)

In the third story, the story of the father and his two sons reviewed above, these elements are again present; but there is much more. (This story was again for the complaining leaders!)

When Jesus divided this third story around two brothers, He used them to represent two kinds of people.

The first brother represents a group who have a very good life. They have all the necessities of life and the loving parent who guides and provides. But they are openly dissatisfied and want a change. When they can, they take their life into their own hands and live the way that seems to promise all that they have ever wanted; they leave the father's presence.

The second brother is used by Jesus to represent those people who give faithful service to the father and those around them, meeting the elements of life responsibly, for the reward of a steady and stable live.

The problem that the story brings to the reader is that neither son, the one who runs away, nor the one who stays home, loves the father; he is misunderstood by both sons.

The son who leaves home in search of happiness, and loses all, comes home to ask to be treated as a servant, while the son who stayed with the father and worked responsibly for him, instead of enjoying being in the father's presence, has been counting what wages will be received; as such he acts like a servant. This son despises his father because the father is good to those the son thinks are unworthy of the father's love.

In this dimension both sons are lost coin sons—they do not know that there is intrinsic value in themselves and those around them, even when those around them disagree with them.

Both sons are also lost sheep sons. They seek only those things which they feel are necessary for the existence of this life.

Jesus very gently puts the two sons who are at the center of the story in sharp contrast with the father.

In Jesus story the son who runs away from home and comes to see no value in himself is all the time the object of the father's love and concern; the father is presented as watching the road for him. And at the first intimation that the father's presence might be welcome, while the son is still a long way off, the

father runs to meet the son, the one who left the father's home to be free of the father's presence. In this, the son is not like the sheep; he could return home, if he chose to do so, but like the coin he does not know his own worth in the eyes of the father; nor does he know the character of the father- his father. This son only discovers the love of the father for him after he has turned to him as the source of that which is necessary for this life; but in turning he finds more than the necessities of life he was seeking for; he finds the loving father that was hidden from him before.

That love which he spent all he had to obtain he finds to have been beside him through all his journey, unrecognized, and therefore, like the presence of Jesus in the ship asleep, of no apparent value.

The other son, the one who stayed home and shared the father's house all those years also does not know of the love of the father for his brother, or for himself. Therefore when he sees his father very happy because his lost son is found again, he is not only surprised to learn of the father's love for his erring brother, but he is so unlike the father he has served for so long that he is unable to participate in the father's joy. He anticipates that the returned brother of his will be given by the loving father some of that which he believes he has earned the ownership of.

While the story shows the father assuring the angry son that all that he has is his, the stay-at-home brothers, not as wages, but as a gift, this son does not, in the story, enter the house to be family with his father and brother, and the celebrating servants of the father, who were able to enter into the joy of the father and consequently be in his home as participants in the father's joy—and as such become family to the father.

The story comes to an end with the son, who has been assured by the father that all the father has belongs to him, outside the home where the family reunion is going on, by his own choice. Those who are with the father are those who love what he loves, and therefore can enter into the joy of the father-members of His family.

Self-portraits appearing in this Parable

The self-portraits here are of three kinds of people-- those who discover the father to be their source of blessing; those who have by birth all they desire; and the father who loves all his children, while waiting for them to discover what he is like, so they can enter into his joy; something that is only possible as they come to love what he loves-- the joy of giving.

Portrait One

The story started with the Pharisees and scribes complaining; we therefore know that they are represented by the loveless brother who serves in

the family always, without discerning the father's character, or love for those who choose to be separate from the father's home; this portrait is of a child who does not know that it has a loving father.

Portrait Two

The brother who learned only at great cost-- all the father had was his brothers-- represents those who so often are given up on by their peers; or are thought to be of no worth. This brother is now a child who has learned, from the joy that sprang from his return, that every gift from the father is according to love; the love of the father who saw him as he could be-- and rejoices at the discovery. This portrait is of a father and a son.

Portrait Three

This picture is in a side-by-side photograph frame. This is because in the story there are two portraits of the father.

The first picture is of the loving competent father we all wish we had-- with no family that recognizes him.

The second picture is the reunion portrait; every one in the picture, father, son, and servers, is a member of the family we conclude because they rejoice with the father over the return of one who was lost and is home again.

The Center of the Parable

In the Old Testament we find a very gentle portrayal of what God is like when the prophet writes that as a father pities his children so the Lord pities those who serve Him. Jesus' parable of the father with two sons adds to this Old Testament portrait when it assures us that father is not only what God is like, it is what He is. Therefore we are not surprised that Jesus made all these stories end with the same ending; a call to, "come rejoice with Me." By rejoicing with God we become members of His family; sharers of His character.

Parable # 2

Another parable He spoke to them: The kingdom of heaven is like leaven, which a woman took and hid in three measures of meal till it was all leavened (Matthew 13:33).

Setting and Analysis of the Story

The Bible introduces this story by saying that the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea.

And the great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and whole multitudes stood on the shore.

Then He spoke many things to them in parables (Matthew 13:3).

One of the parables that He told them on this occasion was the parable of the sower; one of the longest of the parables, when one seeks to explain it, for every detail in the story about the seed, the soil, the birds, the thorns, the sun, even the depth of the seed in the soil, is very significant to the message the story carries. No ingredient can be omitted without doing violence to the parable's life-application.

Our parable, which compares the kingdom of heaven to leaven, is, by contrast, one sentence long!

This leaven parable assumes the setting is understood. The many people surrounding Jesus are of all types; there are the rich and influential who were always near to see what Jesus was doing; the sick and lame, who were hoping for healing; and the curious who had time to go and observe, plus all those who were there, again, because of the spiritual blessings they received as they listened to Jesus' teachings and observed His works for the multitude.

The subject of interest is again the Kingdom of Heaven. The implied question being, how could Jesus set up a kingdom from this type of following? There were no soldiers and no state support. This question Jesus seeks to answer with the parables about the Kingdom of Heaven, parables which are never illustrated by the governments of this world.

Our parable, or story, about leaven suddenly becomes very central to finding the answer to the question as to how the kingdom can come from this kind of people, for it introduces an element that is not part of any of the kingdoms appearing in history, up to this time.

By this parable about leaven Jesus tells His hearers that His kingdom, the Kingdom of Heaven, is invisible!

"The Kingdom of a Heaven is like leaven." This means, in part, that it comes from without, and must be introduced into its subject by some outside force; "the woman hid the leaven in the meal." This done the leaven was invisible; it would only become visible by result; "she hid it in the meal till all was leavened."

Therefore the matter of the setting up of the Kingdom is perhaps as interesting an issue to Jesus' hearers as are questions like, what kind of people will be in the kingdom once they have been leavened? And, once the kingdom has been set up, to what purpose is the kingdom and membership in it?

Often when Jesus had told the people stories, like the stories of the soil, and the wheat and the tares, in answer to questions from the hearers He explained the significance of each element appearing in those stories. But it seems no one asked the question that appears to be the central one in our story—what is the leaven? Therefore Jesus did not explain the story of the leaven, directly.

However there is another short parable that indirectly may give us an answer to our question, what is the leaven? It is the account of the withered fig tree.

To learn the information this story might contribute to an understanding of the parable of the woman hiding leaven in the meal, we will just hold our study of the leaven parable until we have examined this other story.

Parable #3!

This withered fig tree parable, parable # three in our study, is a story that is not a story! It is in fact one of the few parables Jesus not only spoke but acted out.

This unique parable is in parallel to the story of the woman hiding the leaven in the meal in several ways; but first, the account of what happened! Notice the record as found in Matthew 21: 18, 19.

Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry.

And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, "let no fruit grow on you ever again."

Immediately the fig tree withered away.

Notice the parallels to the leaven story-- in both parables the agent of change comes from without that which it affects; it is invisible; when introduced, its presence is made known by the results seen.

In these parables, the results are parallel—the fig tree withers while the meal is leavened.

However there are some differences.

In the story of the leaven the presence of the leaven as the agent of change is stated, though the identification of what the leaven represents as an actual agent in the setting up of the Kingdom of Heaven is not given.

In the acting out of the withering of the fig tree no agent of change is introduced, but the withering of the tree is tied to the words of Jesus; He speaks, the result follows.

In this parable of the fig tree the changes which are the object lesson of the parable are close followers of the words of Jesus. Notice, "Immediately the fig tree withered away."

This means that the setting up of the Kingdom of Heaven follows Jesus words; is intrinsically tied to the words of Jesus.

Jesus' words are here the outside force which, though invisible, produces the seen result.

But you say, this act seems to be strange! So, let's look at the circumstances surrounding this event.

Setting and Analysis of the Story of the fig tree being cursed

This story appears near the middle of the chapter in Matthew's record of these events (chapter 21). Jesus had just ridden a donkey into the city accompanied by large crowds of people. (This was the first time that we read of Him riding; He always walked.)

Then beginning at verse 12, we learn that having arrived inside the city

Jesus went into the temple of God and drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple, and overturned the tables of the moneychangers and the seats of those who sold doves.

And He said to them, It is written, My house shall be called a house of prayer, but you have made it a den of thieves.

Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the temple and He healed them.

But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" they were indignant and said to Him, Do You hear what these are saying? And Jesus said to them, yes. Have you never read, Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants You have perfected praise?

Then He left them and went out of the city to Bethany, and He lodged there.

Next come the verses we are examining; the story of the fig tree.

Now in the morning, as He returned to the city, He was hungry.

And seeing a fig tree by the road, He came to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, let no fruit grow on you ever again. Immediately, the fig tree withered away.

The first thing we remember about fig trees is that it is the nature of the fig tree to start growing its fruit before its leaves appear; therefore, for one to see a fig tree with leaves is for one to know that the tree has already produced figs. Therefore, when Jesus saw the tree He knew by its appearance that it was declaring that it had produced fruit.

The message of the parable of the withered fig tree is to be seen in the light of the experiences which occurred on the day preceding this event. The fruit of Jesus' style of life was very apparent in the scenes in the temple, which were a partial fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah-- Our God will come; He will save us.

By contrast, the fruit of the lifestyle of those who were the religious leaders of the nation, those supposed to be representing God to the nation, was seen in the complaining leaders who could not enter into the rejoicing that was going on in the temple, God's house; the rejoicing that was a result of the work of Jesus as He went about setting up the Kingdom of Heaven—doing the work of God.

This act of Jesus in His withering of the fig tree left everyone well and healthy, but it also drew the attention of everyone who knew about it to the future of those who appeared to represent fruit for Jesus and His Kingdom, when they produced only leaves; they looked like fruit bearers, but they did no one service; their future was portrayed by the withered fig tree.

The point of these remarks is of course to see if these activities help us to understand the parable of the leaven; parable #2.

And one thing immediately stands out-- in the parable of the withering of the fig tree the active agent closely follows the words of Jesus. Therefore we can draw our first conclusion-- the Kingdom of Heaven has as its activating agent, the words of Jesus! The leavening follows the words of Jesus.

Conclusion

regarding the parables of the leaven and of the withered fig tree.

When the parable of the fig tree-withered reveals that it is the words of Jesus which lead to the results which are seen we learn that the message of the story of the leaven is that the Kingdom of Heaven comes by the gentleness of the inspiration of the word. No outside force is used for its establishment. But an outside agent must be introduced into the daily life of the soul for the Kingdom of Heaven to be visibly operating there.

The leaven, the words of Jesus, can produce results wherever it has been hidden by the one placing the leaven.

Therefore we can guess that the woman who hides the leaven in the meal represents the Holy Spirit, and that the leaven represents the grace of God—but we will have to look at another parable to determine if our guess is correct.

Let's look at one more story; our last one of this study on the parables of Jesus. (One needs a book on the parables of Jesus!)

Parable # four

Matthew 25: 1 – 13.

Then the Kingdom of Heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Now five of them were wise, and five were foolish.

Those who were foolish took their lamps and took no oil with them, but the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.

But while the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept.

And at midnight a cry was heard: Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!

Then all those virgins arose and trimmed their lamps.

And the foolish said to the wise, give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.

But the wise answered, saying, no, lest there should not be enough for us and you; but grow rather to those who sell and buy for yourselves.

And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding; and the door was shut.

Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us!

But He answered and said, assuredly, I say to you, I do not know you.

Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour in which the Son of Man is coming.

Setting and Analysis of the Story

Jesus had been doing interactive teaching with a variety of groups of people, including leaders of the people.

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. (This was a time when there was much building being done on the temple complex.)

And Jesus said to them, do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not one stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down. . . (Matthew 24:1,2).

Having said these things, Jesus and the disciples left the temple and the temple grounds and went to the Mount of Olives, which was but a short distance away.

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, tell us when will these things be? And what will be the sign of your coming, and of the end of the age? (Matthew 24: 3)

In response to their questions Jesus makes some interesting comments, and tell some great stories- one of which is the parable of the 10 young women.

Through Matthew's record of this story there runs a timeline. The story just preceding it ends with a prediction of coming judgment (Matthew 24: 45-51). The parable following our story of the 10 young women, adds to the prediction of a coming judgment the element of personal accountability; with the accountability in the predicted judgment being based on the use made by the lord's servants of that which was his, and which he had given to them in trust to be used for good. (See Matthew 25:14-30.) That story, the parable of the talents, is followed by a descriptive story of the judgment itself (See Matthew 25: 31-46), often referred to as The Sheep and Goats Judgment.

The fascinating point of our story, the story of the 10 virgins, is that it is used by Jesus to reveal the way to be able to pass the coming judgment! This parable seems to be almost one in a class by its self, for while there are many elements to the story, as we will soon see, there is only one element of the story to study; all of its other elements are understood. This is one of the most fascinating of the parables!

Notice the elements:

1. People
2. Lamps
3. A wedding
4. A bridegroom
5. 10 Girls
6. Lamps to light the darkness
7. Oil in the lamps
8. Vessels for extra oil
9. A tardy bridegroom
10. All the girls sleeping
11. All the girls were invited
12. All the girls believe there was going to be a wedding
13. All the girls were properly dressed
14. All the girls awoke when the bridal party finally came
15. All the girl's lamps had been giving light to the darkness
16. All the girls lamps were now going out

The story is running so smoothly that one could almost go to sleep in church when Jesus suddenly introduces an unexpected element- some of the girls have failed to bring extra oil for their lamps!

Their plea to their companions to be allowed to borrow some of their extra oil from their personal vessels is as expected as is the polite refusal of those who have great desire to go with the bridegroom and his group; which group is already moving on.

The story ends with those who have stayed with the bridegroom going into the house with the bridegroom and the rest of his guests, while those who have gone to buy oil arrive too late to receive admittance; the door having been shut.

The rejection of the late-arrivers would perhaps be more surprising if it were not for the nature of the wedding party; those who made up the bridegroom's accepted guests were those who were ready at the time he came for them.

This element of time, introduced here as being ready on time, is continually present in all the stories making up this group of parables. They all cluster around the timeline-theme of readiness for the judgment; this readiness being based always on the preparations having been made before the arrival of the judgment.

As we noted earlier, there is only one unexpected element in our story of the 10 girls; the oil in the vessels for extra oil which is carried by only 5 of the waiting girls; which oil is additional to the oil all 10 girls are presented as having in their lamps. (Each of the actors in the story having in their possession a vessel for extra oil, as is indicated by the direct statement of that fact by the storyteller.)

The fascinating question that comes to us from this particular story is different from any of the other questions associated with the other parables we have looked at; question- what is missing in the story?! What is it that is not there for some of the girls?

This question would seem to parallel the issue of the unfaithful steward in the story of the talents, when condemnation came for not improving that which belongs to the master and which was given to the steward as a trust, except that in our story of the 10 girls there is no record of any improvement having been made by any of those girls who were accepted into the bridegroom's home. Neither is there a failure of desire, as in the parable of the father with two sons, where one chooses to stay outside the father's home; these girls wanted to be allowed into the house, even though the door had already been closed.

At this point one thing is clear. The girls in the story all have the capacity for carrying extra oil. The central question from the parable is therefore two-sided; what is it which is represented by the oil, and how does one buy it? A second issue is also quite easy to formulate; what is the appropriate time for buying the oil?

The parable answers the question of the appropriate time for buying the oil which makes one an accepted member of the accepted guests: while one is preparing to meet the bridegroom; before he comes.

The question as to what the oil represents is not answered in the story as told by Jesus while sitting on the Mount of Olives- maybe because nobody asked! But maybe because everybody already knew.

There is a fascinating story in the Old Testament that deals with oil in a particularly interesting context from the viewpoint of our story. (Oil appears in the Old Testament approximately 170 times; often in connection with directions regarding acceptable worship practices.) This story is found in the book of Zachariah, chapter's 3 and 4; we are particularly interested in that portion of the story which speaks of a lampstand and its oil. We are equally interested, however, in the accompanying dialogue.

In this story the prophet sees a lampstand of solid gold with the bowl on top of it, and seven lamps with seven pipes to the seven lamps. Two trees are by the lampstand, one on the right and one on the left of the lampstand.

Whereas the context is the Lord's work on behalf of His people, Zachariah asked the question we want him to ask, "what are these?"

The answer is twofold; the first answer is, "this is the word of the Lord."

Now we know what is symbolized by the lampstand- the word of the Lord.

The second half of the answer is in regard to how that work described in the passage will be accomplished. The prophet is told it will not be by might nor by power, but by the Lord's Spirit.

What makes this passage so interesting to our parable is the fact that this lampstand only functions with oil. The oil in this story is explicitly stated to come from the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord of the whole earth (4:13,14). Therefore the message in this passage in Zechariah is very clear; when the prophet was told that the work would be accomplished by the Lord's Spirit we learned that the oil which makes things function is the power of the Spirit of God.

Now back to our story of the 10 girls. In this story the central element is the oil which is carried by some of the girls in their vessels for extra oil, as extra oil. We also notice that as in the story of the lampstand, the lamps only function when they are supplied with oil.

We can now understand the parable. All the girls heard the invitation and went out to meet the bridegroom, having planned to go with the bridegroom to the wedding. But some lacked the Spirit of the Lord in their personal lives- represented in the parable as the vessel for extra oil.

The message

which this parable carries by its context is to tell its hearers that the way to pass the coming judgment is to have the Spirit of the Lord functioning in your life, before the bridegroom comes;

that there is a time coming when the personal preparation will have to have been already made. The presence of the Spirit of the Lord in His word can guide you to the bridegroom, but a personal preparation is required for one to pass the coming judgment, and enter the home of the bridegroom.

The Center of the Parable

In this parable we have again the recurring central themes of invitation, and of the need for personal readiness; the personal readiness which is having the Spirit of the Father; it is this which makes one able to rejoice with Him. Here the negative conclusion pushes to the front. Those who were not admitted were those who though they had heard the invitation and intended to respond did not have the Spirit of God operating in their lives, and therefore they did not have the character of the Father.

In the context the message is clear- the Lord's work on behalf of His people will be accomplished, not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord, while the question as to who has a proper preparation is answered in the story by the portrayal of the crisis in the life as being that which reveals the preparation having been already made.

The Self-portrait

here is of one who invites to participation in the happiness of his family- the marriage festivities of his son. But the invitees must make the proper preparation and come on time because the father loves his son and wills to give him only the best.

Messages from the Parables

We have seen four types of parables.

1. The told story
2. The lessons Jesus acted out
3. Natural acts interpreted
4. The story that starts with an observation regarding the world around Jesus and His hearers, and leads into a story that Jesus wants to tell.

Probably our favorite type of parable-story is the nature observation followed by interpretation. In these stories Jesus interprets the message which He Himself had given to the lilies, the weather, and the grass of the field.

He shows that the working power of the Kingdom of Heaven is invisible and comes from without. This working power is introduced by some outside force and only becomes visible by result. Here the Kingdom of Heaven works from within outward, until the essential nature is changed.

In the parables which Jesus told, the central teaching we now find to be about the working of grace.

In the parables we find the One who answers questions- not only about our lives but about what God is like as He works out salvation for His children.

The Self-portrait

is of the One who knows,

and who shares His knowledge; as such, the One who follows the Golden rule- do unto others according to your superior knowledge as they would have you do for them if they knew what you know.

Parables as Mirrors

In the mirror which is the individual parable we see looking back at us the revelation of a Presence we did not see without the mirror- the One making the object carrying the revelation.

Parables- revealer's of the presence of God. Self-portraits of the Creator.

Self-portraits of God

Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

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Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

Lesson 3 Snap-shots in Titles

General Introduction

When I was in college there was a general good time had by all, except for the time spent in one or two classes in which one felt like they might never be able to get the credit required to be allowed to graduate. Exactly which class was The One that made life uncertain depended on the course of study being pursued, generally -- except for the one or two classes that made almost everybody struggle.

One of the famous classes was a course in the fine arts which lasted all year long. Each quarter was a different topic; music, art, and literature. This means, of course, that we learned a lot about the famous places in the world, as well as the things that they were famous for -- like the flying buttresses in architecture.

Many of these buildings and objects had a religious theme and often featured famous works of art, such as the paintings on the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel. To this student it seemed that there were artist's ideas of the creation story, and portrayals of the life and death of Jesus, and conceptualizations of Jesus and His mother, on or in every building ever conceived during those long centuries we were learning about!

The question that seems to push itself into this lesson, as one re-lives those pictures we learned by author and location, is, why all this attention to the story of Jesus? What was He really like? Were those artist's conceptions always correct? Where in the Bible does one look for a picture of Jesus?

I heard you! You said you had already figured out that I was going to suggest to you that the answer to these questions might be hiding in the titles that Jesus used and came with;

and you are right. There seems to be a title appropriate for every facet of the story of salvation; for every picture painted. As such each title merges itself into a portrait of the activities and qualities of the one carrying that title.

Some of those titles are intriguing; titles from nature, like, The Branch, The Bright and Morning Star, the Lily of the Valley, or, the Rose of Sharon. And there are also those perhaps better known, but nebulous, descriptive titles composed of phrases such as, the Wrath of the Lamb, or, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah.

Of course there are also titles everybody recognizes, even if everybody does not know that Jesus was called by them. Titles like Judge, Prophet, Servant, King, Lamb, or God.

Many of the meanings carried by these titles are just about what one would assume they mean, from their general use in daily vocabulary. However there are some fascinating titles, which are very easy to pronounce, and which are very often misunderstood.

As we proceed with this study that class in the fine arts will be somewhat close to all of us, I suppose, as we try to identify the pictures that seem to want to reveal themselves as we survey the vocabulary-colors making up each title-picture; and again you have already guessed that in this study we will be reviewing those titles that are the easiest to misunderstand.

Title One: Only begotten

(Many of these thoughts were presented to us by Dr. Raoul Dederen in a class in Christology, in about 1965.)

The Story

Our study begins with the simple statement found in Matthew 3:17-- this is My Beloved Son. This phrase comes to us from the account of Jesus baptism. This record simply states that John was preaching about the One coming after him who was greater than himself; this One would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and fire, John said.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.

And John tried to prevent Him saying, I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?

But Jesus answered and said to him, Permit it to be so now for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. Then he allowed Him.

When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him.

And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, this is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

Setting and Analysis of the Story

This is My Beloved Son. This title is so clear that it would need neither comment nor explanation, except that this title, son, appears in one of the best-known verses of Scripture with an alteration. As you probably know John 3:16 tells us that God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten son that whosoever believes on Him should not perish, but have everlasting life.

Now we have an interesting issue -- why does God's beloved Son become His only-begotten Son when the promise is that faith in Him brings everlasting life? What is the meaning of the phrase only-begotten? What does this phrase add to the concept beloved?

The phrase only-begotten is a translation of the Greek word monogenes. Yes, you are going to have to learn this word! This word appears in the Greek New Testament nine times; five of those times it is applied to Jesus. This is a most fascinating concept.

Meanings of Monogenes, when applied to others then Jesus

In Luke 7: 11-15 we read about a dead man being carried out of the city of Nain by a large group of people at the same time that Jesus and a large group of people were entering the city. When Jesus saw the weeping-widow mother walking behind the people carrying her son's body He had compassion on her and said to her, Do not weep. Then He came and touched the open coffin and those who carried him stood still, and He said, Young man, I say to you arise! And the young man sat up and began to talk. And Jesus presented him to his mother.

The relevance to our study of this story is in the description of the young man Luke gives to us; the only son of his mother and she was a widow. The only-son phrase appearing in Luke's Gospel is a translation of the word monogenes. By this story we find our first definition of the word monogenes; the only one, irreplaceable. The father has died and there are no other children. And because the mother is a widow, he is also the needed one. The dictionary meaning of monogenes is, in general, the same;

mono, meaning one; and genes, from ginomai, meaning come to be. The dictionary meaning is one-of-a-kind.

In Luke 8:42, Jairus' daughter is a monogenes daughter. This father may have had sons, but this was an only daughter.

Luke 9:38 adds to our study when we read there of a man calling to Jesus from a crowd, asking Jesus to look at the son of him, because, "he is monogenes to me." This boy has had many bad experiences, and Jesus heals the boy, but the reason that he is monogenes is not given. This story simply tells us that to the father he is monogenes.

Summary

One irreplaceable son, the needed one, an only daughter, and an unknown quality, so far make up the meaning of monogenes.

Hebrews 11:17. By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son.

In the experience in Abraham's life referred to in the Hebrew's text the offered-up-son Isaac is not put to death and resurrected. Rather it is the faith of Abraham that trusted God to the point of being willing to obey the clear command of God to offer up the son through whom the promises of a future family were to be fulfilled that is credited with the faith which obeys God's expressed will. According to this faith the son was offered up, but the faith of the father does not make Isaac a monogenes.

Isaac is not only the son of his father (you already knew that!) but he is also the son of his mother, being born after she was expected to be able to have children, according to the promise of God to her. This makes him a monogenes. Of course Abraham, Isaac's father, was also old when he was born, but after the death of Sarah, Isaac's mother, Abraham had other children by his second wife.

To see Isaac's monogenes title coming from the fact of the age of his mother is of course adequate reason for him to be called monogenes. But there is much more to the story of Isaac! Being the son of a promise also qualifies him for the monogenes title, but there is more! Isaac was the son through whom the promised Messiah was to find His genetic family roots. Isaac's descendants became the tribes of Israel. Isaac is not only the promised son, he is the son through whom the promises made by God to Abraham were to find fulfillment.

The Portrait

In the New Testament, when the word Monogenes is not applied to Jesus, the picture we are presented with is drawn by association; the portrait is of a divinely provided irreplaceable channel of blessing.

Meanings of Monogenes when applied to Jesus

The first occurrence of this word when it is applied to Jesus is found in

John 1:14. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

This passage parallels the story of the boy; the significance of the monogenes title is not clear; unless it is that He is full of grace and truth. The implied message in the English language is that He was fathered by God; but that is not the meaning of monogenes. The concept of becoming a parent is not part of this word. That element comes shortly! With another title!

John 1:18. No one has seen God at anytime, the only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.

In this passage we have a great definition for the significance of monogenes. Here we are told that the One who knows God perfectly has set forth in language the One no man has ever seen. This means that the monogenes is the revealer of the unseen One; the accurate representative of the father.

1 John 4:9. In this the love of God was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son Into the world, that we might live through Him.

Here the message is easy to see-the sent from God, the monogenes Son, is the One through whom eternal life is brought within our reach.

John 3: 16. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.

In this verse the Only Begotten (monogenes) grants everlasting life to all who believe in Him.

John 3:18. He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

The very interesting question this text presents to us is in regard to its reference to the name of the Son of God.

This chapter, chapter three, starts with the statement that there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

This man came to Jesus by night. (The one called Son of God in verse 18.)

This name, Jesus, is the name that the angel instructed Joseph he was to call the son to be born to Mary, because, he said, He will save His people from their sins (Matthew 1: 21).

Therefore the significance of monogenes in John 3:18, where it is connected to the title Son of God, and both are applied to Jesus, is that this monogenes is the One who, if believed in, removes the condemnation which attaches to those born in the world, and saves His people, those believing in His name, for the everlasting life promised in the preceding verse, John 3: 16.

Summary

When Jesus is called the monogenes, translated the only begotten, there is no reference to anyone being fathered.

There are several messages carried by the title as it is attached to Jesus. He as the monogenes is full of grace and truth, the accurate representative of the unseen Father, sent by Him, to bring everlasting life within the reach of those who believe in Him. This means that by extension, Jesus is the needed one; a meaning of monogenes that we found being carried by this word earlier.

He is also the remover of the condemnation which attaches to all born in this world. Jesus, the only begotten, with whom none of His people perishes.

Here we see that the meaning of monogenes, though painted with different colors than in our earlier texts, has the same significance-- a divinely provided irreplaceable channel of blessing.

MONOGENES-one kind of Gift; the only one you cannot live without.

The Portrait

This self-portrait is a double exposure- covering a profile of Jesus we see the glory of the Father.

Title Two- Firstborn

My brother is older than I am; you already know! He was born first! Abraham Lincoln was born before George Bush-- a long time! You already said it! Abraham Lincoln was born first! The firstborn was born first! I agree. So why are we starting a study of this word? Notice Hebrews 1: 5, 6.

For to which of the angels did He ever say: You are My Son, today I have begotten you?

And again:

I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son?

But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says:

Let all the angels of God worship Him.

What is the significance of Jesus being called the firstborn in Scripture?

Luke 2:7. And she brought forth her firstborn son. In the Greek word order-- and she bore the son of her, the firstborn.

Hebrews 11: 28. By faith, he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

This text of course comes from the story of the deliverance of the twelve tribes of the Israelites from being slaves in Egypt. On the night of the exodus of the Jews from Egypt all who were born first and were not in a marked house died.

In these two texts when someone, including Jesus, is called the firstborn, the word means born first.

Revelation 1: 5. This text reads in part, Jesus Christ, the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead.

Now we have a problem! In the Old Testament, there are accounts of a number of miracles, including stories of people being resurrected from the dead. Therefore the title firstborn cannot mean born first when Jesus is called the firstborn from the dead.

We have also noticed that Joseph had two sons; the oldest being Manasseh, the younger being Ephraim (Genesis 48:17, 18). However in Jeremiah 31:9 the Lord says Ephraim is My firstborn.

Now we have the exciting question put in front of us; if firstborn sometimes does not mean born first, what is the significance of the title, firstborn? Remember Hebrews 12:23 tells us there is a church of the firstborn in Heaven.

To look for the significance of this title in those occurrences where it does not seem to refer to being born first, we will examine some more texts in the Bible where this title appears.

Genesis 43: 33. This text comes to us from the story of Joseph seating his brothers to eat with him. In part it reads,

And they sat before him, the firstborn according to his birthright, and the youngest according to his youth.

We should have many such texts! The firstborn title refers to the receiving of the birthright when it does not mean born first.

Notice the following passage. Psalm 89: 20-28.

I have found My servant David; with my holy oil, I have anointed him, with whom My hand shall be established; also My arm shall strengthen him.

The enemy shall not outwit him, nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

I will beat down his foes before his face, and plague those who hate him. But My faithfulness and My mercy shall be with him, and in My name his horn shall be exalted. Also I will set his hand over the sea, and his right hand over the rivers. He shall cry to Me, You are my Father, my God, and the rock of my salvation.

Also I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth. My mercy I will keep for him forever, and My covenant shall stand firm with him.

In this passage we see set forth some of the blessings that were part of receiving the birthright. This generally went to the one born first. But in this passage, as in others we noted, the blessing of the birthright did not go to the one born first; David was the youngest of the sons of Jesse (1 Samuel 16:10-12), but he is here made firstborn by the Lord.

When Hebrews 12: 23 speaks of the General assembly and church of the firstborn, who are registered in Heaven we now know that all who will belong to the Kingdom of Heaven will be participants in the blessings that are tied to the title Firstborn.

The richness of the blessings that come with the title firstborn is seen when we read about Jesus that He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation, for by Him all things were created.

The Portrait

here is of all the Gold-Metal wearers; Him who made what God has, and is therefore the firstborn of all creation, and those God made to be His firstborn, sharers of His title Firstborn.

Title Three: I have begotten you

Introduction

It is said of Jesus, in Him was Life, original, unborrowed, underived. If this is true, then what does the phrase, "I have begotten you", mean, when it is applied to Jesus? Does it not mean, "I have fathered you."? Or, does it have some hidden meaning like the phrase only-begotten? What is the message which this title-portrait carries, or, to ask the question a different way, when the picture was taken, what was the subject the camera was aimed that? What is the picture taken of?

First -- yes, this phrase is accurately translated, and, yes, this phrase means I have fathered you. But is Jesus not one of the members of the Godhead? Yes, again!

Notice John chapter one.

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God (John 1: 1, 2).

Proverbs adds to our thinking, as One brought up with Him! (See chapter 8, verse 30—Hebrew; minion) Sooo! What does this title reveal as a self-portrait of God?!

This title is one of the fascinating studies found in Scripture. You will enjoy this concept, and maybe be a little surprised at the picture it presents, if you do not already know.

The Story

In the New Testament book titled Hebrews we are reading along about priests and the duties they were expected to be responsible for, and how one became a priest, and that no one made himself a priest, when the writer suddenly records that God said,

"You are My Son, Today I Have Begotten You."

The question that immediately jumps out at us is, what day is today? On what day was the Son begotten?

The first thing that comes to mind in order to start to find an answer to this question is to look in the margin of the Bible to see if there is a reference to another passage where this concept appears; there is-- Psalm 2: 7.

This Psalm is a story passage, told by a third person, who is telling about a conversation as it is observed; and at the same time, the third person comments on the activities being observed, and also participates in the dialog. This section of verses, or paragraph, develops something like this:

COMMENTATOR'S COMMENTS

Why do the nation's rage, and the people plot a vain thing? The kings of the earth and their rulers set themselves and take counsel together against the Lord and

against His anointed (One chosen by or as if by divine election; Webster), saying, let us break their bonds in pieces and cast away their cords from us.

He who sits in the heavens shall laugh; that Lord shall hold them in derision.

Then He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure:

(COMMENTATOR'S REPORT of what the Lord actually said He did in response to the conflict over His anointed is recorded in the next verses.)

Yet have I set My king on My holy hill of Zion. (The anointed was made King by God in spite of the objections.)

COMMENTATOR'S QUESTION TO THE NEW KING -- What was that document the Lord gave to you at your enthronement, and what did He say to you?

NEW KINGS REPLY TO THE COMMENTATOR'S QUESTION

I will declare the decree: The Lord has said to Me, You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.

Ask of Me and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.

Now we have the answer to the question about what day "today" is, the day on which the Lord said, Today I have begotten You; it is the enthronement day, the day that the One divinely appointed to be king became king.

I heard your question. If the Lord could say to the new king, Today I have begotten You, on the day of His enthronement, could He not also say to Him, I have begotten You, on the day of another great event, such as the day of His resurrection, or the day that He became High Priest, if the Lord was the One bringing about all of those acts?

Another text! Paul was preaching about what God has said He would do for those who believe and respond to His promises, when he said (See Acts 13:33),

and we declare to you glad tidings-- that promise which was made to the fathers-- God has filled this for us their children, in that He has raised up Jesus. As it is also written in the second Psalm:

You are My Son, Today I Have Begotten You.

In the second Psalm, the day the king was begotten was the day of his becoming king; but here in Acts chapter 13 the day that Jesus was begotten was the day of His resurrection.

One more text. Hebrews 5: 5.

So also Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest, but it was Him who said to Him: You are My Son, Today I Have Begotten You.

Summary

The phrase translated I have begotten you is a phrase that means I have begotten you, I have fathered you; I have caused you to become. Exactly what it is one has become has to be determined by the work one has been begotten to do. But it is always a work that is tied to one's being a son. (Don't forget that girls are brothers in Deuteronomy!) "Today" refers to the time the action is taken.

The Portrait

This title is applied to the One begotten by the Father to be King, Priest, and Savior. Whereas this work involves making peace between the Father and those who fear, hate, or misunderstand Him, this picture is of the One who is the Father's comrade (Hebrew-- see Zachariah 13: 7)-- the Father's Twin.

Title Four: The Lamb

As this study on the meaning of some of the titles associated with the work and person of Jesus has progressed it has begun to become clear that all the titles that Jesus carried, or that were predicted about Him, are each proleptic portraits of a work, or facet of His mission, or a revelation of a character quality, that He would be found to have as the life He lived came to view before those who were observing Him.

No one of these titles is adequate to portray the entire story of Jesus, unless it is the title Lamb, as it appears in the Gospels, or the first four books of the New Testament, and in the last book of the New Testament, The Revelation.

This title sometimes seems to have gathered under itself the entirety of the person and work of Jesus. The significance of the title is twofold; one facet being the very obvious, and the other being one of the most surprising! You may be delighted, and surprised, when you see what is hiding in the shadows of this picture!

Now to

The Story

In the beginning of that story which reaches from the first chapter of the Bible to the last verse, we read of the creation of the earth, and the garden where the people lived, until they needed for Jesus to come and bail them out of trouble. One of the first details we learn about the way back to oneness with God, after the trouble in the garden, comes from the fact that the One coming to restore unity was to be represented by a Lamb. This vocabulary word, Lamb, is found through all the time-line of the Biblical story.

The concept lamb is central to all facets of the biblical story. Throughout the entirety of the Old Testament the worship of God, after the trouble in the garden, involves in one dimension, or another, the concept lamb, starting of course with the first book in the Bible, Genesis.

When we start to read the New Testament we do not read very many verses before we find John the Baptizer, at the very beginning of the New Testament portion of the Biblical story, preaching to the people, down by the river, about the Lamb of God.

The obvious question is, what is the significance of the title Lamb when it is applied to Jesus by John as he preaches by the river?

Lamb appears in the Old Testament about 81 times. About 75 of those times the context is sacrifice and suffering. The other references are to clothes, flocks, or people. This Greek word is Amnos.

This means that when John the Baptist called Jesus the amnos Lamb of God in John 1:29 and 36, his hearers learned that the future, for Jesus, would include suffering as part of His work. Throughout the Old Testament lambs were offered in sacrifice. By this title Jesus was designated to do the work symbolically accomplished by the sacrificial Lamb.

But this is only part of the story of the Lamb!

When we start to read in the book of Revelation, written by the same person who wrote the Gospel of John to which we have just been referring, we find that the book of Revelation also has a story about a lamb near it's start; but the word for lamb in the Revelation is a different Greek word than the Greek word for lamb appearing in John's Gospel. Here the Greek word for Lamb is arnion—not the word amnos which we saw earlier.

In the Story in the Revelation there is a problem about the opening of a sealed document, a scene which John is watching, when the solution to the issue is found to be

a figure which appears to John as a lamb having been slain, only to have the figure be called the Lion of the Tribe of Judah!! Now we have a surprising development! The lamb having been slain is now also the Lion

The symbol of a lamb having been slain is of course a portrayal of the work Jesus has already accomplished thus far as the Amnos Lamb, a concept that is not a surprise because of all the allusions to it in the Old Testament and in the early portions of the New Testament. But in all those appearances of the Lamb concept there was no indication that the suffering Lamb would become a Lion! There are a few allusions to a Lion work in the Old Testament, but they are not prominent.

With this portrayal of Jesus as the Amnos Lamb we have a new pattern of activity portrayed for the one carrying the lamb title. The future portrayed for Jesus by this now dual symbol will not only include a work associated with suffering, the Amnos side of the symbol, but it will also include those types of activities associated with a Lion!

Snapshots of the Work and Character of Jesus as the Lion-Lamb

In the Old Testament (the LXX) the word amnos for lamb occurs only four-times; none of those occurrences are references to a real lamb. Rather the word refers to a lamb-like quality.

The word-pictures for this title range from a description of the hills skipping like lambs, because of the presence of the Lord (Psalm. 114: 4, 6), to a portrayal of God's kindness toward His people, which is described as His gathering the lambs and carrying them gently (Isaiah 40: 11).

In the Revelation, where the lamb title appears 28 times, the variety of pictures is even wider; the Lion having now become an actor under this symbol, alongside the expected qualities, those associated with the Lamb.

In the Revelation Chapter 7, Jesus as the Lamb leads and provides, along with God, for the redeemed in heaven.

In Chapter 13, the Lamb is the Pattern,

While in Chapter 15 the Lamb shares the title Lord God Almighty. The message here is that the Lion that became a Lamb and was subsequently slain is not only the Redeemer of His people, but is worthy of the title Lord God Almighty.

Finally, in Chapter 19 the Lamb is shown to be the sum total of all the attributes we have discovered Him to be in our study. He is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Lamb (Amnos) of God, the Lord God Almighty, drawn into one -- because He has accepted the responsibilities of being a husband to the redeemed; the Provider of her home. The fulfillment of this responsibility is that which necessitated all the work He has done before. The figure of marriage in this chapter shows the intimate and indissoluble nature of His work.

The references to the Anion-Lamb acting as a Lion are of such a nature as to imply that the use of power in association with the working out of salvation for those who are to be living in the Lord's house is reserved for the Lord alone (see Revelation 12). Those who are His do all their gaining of victories with only the Amnos-Lamb portion of the Arnion-Lamb symbol.

The significance of the Lamb title is that the influence and work of Jesus is never-ending, and without borders.

The result of the Arnion-Lamb's work in the atmosphere of His people is such as to guarantee that their horizons are eternally being pushed out.

The Self-Portrait

Under the lamb title in the Scriptures, we find a collage; the pictures are of a very gentle Lamb, and of a powerful Lion.

Titles as Mirrors

The Only-begotten, Monogenes, literally meaning one-of-a-kind, the unique one, when applied to Jesus, means that there will never be another Jesus, the One who saves from Sin. This One is our only Savior; the only Savior.

The title Firstborn tells us Jesus is not only important to us, but that he is very important to the Father, the One who loves us enough to send a Helper, of whom none is greater. This title shows that the Father would not have it said that He could have done more. It is sometimes said that in giving Jesus, the Father gave all heaven; that the title Firstborn means that the Son of God was given to the human race, for ever to be our brother, while sharing the throne of the universe; The Firstborn of all creation, God's First Choice.

I have begotten you reminds us that all of the blessings we have come out of the love of the Father. He is the first cause of all our good, all our blessings; the Provider of all our needs; the One who knows us as only a Maker can.

In

The Mirror

which is the titles of Jesus we see reflected The Trusted One who can.

Self-portraits of God

Studies in the Life of Jesus

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Self-portraits of God

Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

Lesson 4 Historical Portraits- Jesus the Person in the New Testament

General Introduction

Tidings of the work of Jesus spread rapidly throughout Capernaum. Because they were afraid of the rabbis, the people did not come to be healed upon the Sabbath, but when the sun set there was a great commotion! From their homes, from their shops, from the market places, the inhabitants of the city hurried toward the house where Jesus was staying. Friends brought sick friends upon couches. Sickly people came leaning upon any type of support they could find. Some, of course, were helped by their friends, as we saw happening in the story of the paralytic in the study on Self-portraits in Miracles. They often entered the house in a very feeble condition, only to walk out in the strength of perfect health. The blind were given sight; the deaf were made to hear, and the troubled were made free.

On this evening the people continued to come and go hour after hour because no one knew whether or not Jesus would still be there in the morning. He went from city to city. Never before had the city of Capernaum had a day like this one. The throngs of people represented the followers of many gods, but none of their gods had done for their followers what Jesus was doing for the people of this city. Throughout the hours following the setting of the sun, on that Sabbath, the air was filled with the sounds made by those people who had been restored to wholeness.

Jesus was joyful in the joy He had awakened. He rejoices over us with singing (Zephaniah 3: 17). As He saw the suffering of those who came for help, He sympathized with them, and rejoiced in His power to help. He did not stop healing the people until they were all well. There was not a person left in the city, who came for help, who was not healed! Finally silence settle down upon the home of Simon Peter, where Jesus was staying. The long exciting day was over. (For the record of this story see, for example, Luke 4: 38-43.)

Sooo! How did this great life get started? What events introduced this life to the world?

The angel Gabriel was sent to Mary by God to tell her she was going to have a Son, and that they should name Him Jesus, because He would save His people from their sins. See Luke, chapter 1.

Wise men came from the East to see Him. They got there by following a star. See Matthew, chapters 1 and 2.

Out in the fields shepherds were doing the work of shepherds when an angel appeared in the sky and spoke to them, telling them that today, there is born to you a Savior; then other angels appeared, singing and lighting-up the plain. See Luke, chapter 2.

And little Jesus grew up and increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with both the people who met Him, and with God (see Luke 2: 52), until one day when He met the people leading a study session in the temple; and they discovered that He had a different picture of God than they had, that He knew God as a friend rather than some one to talk about. Jesus' God was His familiar and very likeable friend; Someone He had known from all eternity; as One brought up with Him. See Proverbs, chapter 8.

Jesus was subject to His parents, working with them in their daily lives, and working in Joseph's carpenter shop, until He was baptized.

Then everything changed.

When Jesus came up out of the water at His baptism He went up on the river bank to pray, and there was a voice from heaven, which sounded like thunder to many, heard by the crowds gathered for John's meeting, which said, "this is My Beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," and life was never the same again! (For the story of Jesus baptism see Matthew, chapter 3.) We also learn from this record that God is not only Jesus' familiar and very likable friend, but He is also Jesus' Father.

The most ordinary things of life were altered by His presence. In the Old Testament David, the Psalmist, said that even the hills skip like little lambs at the presence of the Lord! In Jesus life, the times of the New Testament, something as ordinary as a wedding feast was made to be never-forgotten, because the host had miscalculated the number of friends that would be interested in the marriage of his children, and ran out of fresh wine for the guests to enjoy- only to have Jesus mother, who was a helper at the wedding feast, tell Jesus what had happened. He said, **FILL THE WINE JARS WITH WATER!** Some one actually did it! Then Jesus said to serve it to the host. Some one actually did it! The host spoke to the bridegroom, expressing his surprise at the fact that the bridegroom had kept the best wine until the last. (See John, chapter 2.)

From this event until the end of His life no one could ever guess what He might do next. Most of His time was spent repairing people and their lives, but He also talked

and talked to assure people that their lives could be very happy if they took the God of heaven to be their daily companion. If one surveys the material recorded and preserved for us to study, it is easy to say that Jesus favorite topic to talk about was the paternal character of the One known to the people of His nation as their God; the One they all knew about, but saw in a very different light from the one in which Jesus presented Him. Jesus concept of the God of Heaven, we saw in an earlier study, was that He is the Father we all wish we had. What made Jesus concept so different from the concept that the people already had was His personal acquaintance of the Father who was the pattern for all the great things that Jesus did- things which the people enjoyed and were blessed by every day of their lives. With Jesus' God, life was worth more than just living- it had the promise of a life that lasted as long as Jesus' God lived- with no bad, and all the desires of the renewed heart realized more and more as the times of the life eternal moved on. Jesus' God's future was a future in motion- people grew in it.

The life of the future which Jesus lived and presented in words was not only what everyone wanted, for their future, but it was breaking into many people's lives as they listened to Jesus teach, and saw the works He did.

And they murdered Him. How does that happen?! He raised up the sick, healed the injured, stopped storms by speaking to the wind and the water, raised people from the dead, sent devils into a herd of swine, who subsequently raced down a steep bank and over a cliff, and drowned in the sea! And yet they murdered Him; or is it more accurate to say, yes they murdered Him, but He died for another reason?

Back to [The Story](#)

[The Person of Jesus](#)

Philippians, chapter 2, verses 5-8.

Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,
who, being in the form (morphe) of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,

but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form (morphe) of a bondservant (doulos), and coming in the likeness (homoioma) of men.

And being found in appearance (schama) as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

The person described in these verses is fascinating! Yes, you will have to learn four Greek words. But notice the story they tell!

Word 1. Morphe. This word, translated “form”, speaks of the essential nature of a thing. (See Romans 12:2, and 2 Corinthians 3: 18, for examples.) A formal dining room table and a card table may be very different in their appearances; that which makes them both “table” is their essential nature. Their essential nature is their “morphe”.

Word 2. Doulos. This word, bondservant or slave or servant, in English, is used in contrast to the word master. It also appears as the contrasting term to the concept “freeman”. It describes a house servant in contrast to the son. When the Apostles are designated douloi, or servants, the significance is that they are unconditionally obligated to serve.

Word 3. Homoioma. This word is of things compared; things that are alike, or similar. He looks like him; similar in appearance to jasper. It can also mean that something is equally great, important, as powerful as, or, equal.

Word 4. Schama. This word is used regarding the outward appearance, form or shape. It is often translated by the word change. It refers to an appearance change, as compared to a change in the essential nature. In 2 Corinthians 11:14 Paul talks of Satan transforming himself into an angel of light.

With this information what a description of the person of Jesus we find in Philippians chapter 2.

The second person of the Godhead (Jesus), while being in the essential nature of God, equal with God (morphe), took on the essential nature (morphe) of a servant (doulos) -unconditionally obligating Himself to serve- while becoming similar to other men in nature (homoioma), though not exactly like them, in outward appearance form or shape (schama), as a man, and not retaining the appearance of God that He had had.

Jesus, while walking this earth, in general looked like the people of His nationality. However some of the reactions to Him, that we read about in the Bible in connection to some of the events in His life, seem to indicate that the fact He was not only Man but God, showed. Probably no one ever saw Him and mistook Him for someone else. He was God and that element of His life, at special times and in connection with certain special events, showed very dramatically.

But He was also a man, and His necessities were those of a man. He got hungry, and tired; He became thirsty, and He had to pray. When He was at Jacob’s well and the well was deep He had to wait for some one to come to the well to draw water for Him, for Him to be able to get a drink. But He could also stop the approach of the very wild

and violent demon- possessed men by simply raising His hand. By a word He could banish disease, and still a storm.

Great opposites are seen in Jesus life!

The Self-portrait here is of a human being emitting the Glory of the Divine.

Back to our story.

Jesus daily life- the Acts, #1

Because it was the time for the Passover, Jesus went to Jerusalem. The central object of attention in the city was the Temple. Not only was it located on a high point, but the walls were gleaming white marble, which contrasted with gold-capped pillars. It has been called one of the greatest of the architectural works of skilful workmanship. Tourists from all that part of the Middle East and Western Europe came to Jerusalem at the time for Passover; some from as far away as Spain. Some came to follow the prescribed forms of worship, but many others came because of the great crowds. To be in Jerusalem at the time of year for the Passover was to be at the great gathering of the year for that part of the world, it now seems.

The Romans, after having conquered the city of Jerusalem, had taken a great interest in this building and had contributed much toward bringing it to the state it was in when Jesus went to the Passover being held there after He first started His public work of ministering to the spiritual needs of the people who were seeking for more help with there lives than they were getting from the contemporary church they usually attended.

Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And He found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers doing business.

When He had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers money and overturned the tables.

And He said to those who sold doves, Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise! (See John 2: 13-22).

If Jesus had done this any place else in the world it would have gotten a reaction- but to do this in Jerusalem at the time of the Passover with the world watching was to guarantee there would be a reaction from those who ran the temple; they would be concerned that someone might start to wonder if the temple was being used for what it was designed to be.

But there was not only a reaction from those who ran the temple, there was a great reaction from the people in town. Prior to Jesus act of chasing the cows out of church, many people acquainted with the details of the temple worship, including some of those

people not in town, had already been questioning whether or not the true purpose of the temple had been being progressively covered over until it was no longer visible.

No sooner had the cattle in the temple been chased out, along with those who took their cows to church, than there was a crush of people who came into the temple to see Jesus. The sick came, the lame came, the blind came, the deaf came; everyone wanted to see Jesus and request help with their problem- and He healed them all.

There were sounds of happiness through all the corridors of the temple.

Then He did it again. He started His work by revealing the purpose of the temple and the appropriate habitants of it, and near the end of His life He again repeated the message (For a record of the second cleansing of the temple, see texts such as Matthew 21: 12-16).

The activities of Jesus were always illustrations of the messages which He taught, but in the reorganization of the temple He gave a revelation of the purpose for which He had come, and by implication He set forth the meaning of the temple.

This writer does not need to tell you that Jesus was the talk of the town- of the world! It would seem obvious that He could not do anything that would cause more reaction- but He did. All the works of Jesus were of such a nature as to cause people to wonder if their own life could be more meaningful.

Then Jesus went out from there and departed to the region of Tyre and Sidon, to seek rest (see Mark 7: 24). One can not read this account without immediately wondering who Jesus considered His friends to be. Tyre and Sidon were cities where the people worshipped and lived as do those who have no personal interaction with the God of Heaven. Yet when a woman of Canaan came from that region to the house where Jesus was staying and asked Him to heal her young daughter who had an unclean spirit, Jesus said to her, great is your faith; let it be to you as you desire. And her daughter was healed. When the mother arrived at home she found her daughter, without the unclean spirit, lying on the bed.

However this is only part of the story! When the lady asked Jesus to heal her daughter, He said nothing! When she asked several times He said to her, in English translation, it is not appropriate to give the children's food to the dogs! She said, yes Lord, but even the dogs eat the crumbs that fall from the table! Jesus said, I am not sent but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel! She heard Him say, I am not sent but to the sheep lost by the house of Israel (making the word of a genitive). The woman said, Lord help me! Jesus said to her, Great is your faith- let it be to you as you desire (see Matthew 15, and Mark 7, for this story.).

The Self-portrait

in this dialogue, is of the One who has as His friends every one who will accept His help; everyone desiring a better life for themselves or for some one they know or love. To seek Jesus is to be His friend.

Jesus' daily life- the Acts, cont.

Simon Peter said to them, I am going fishing. They said to him, we are going with you. They went out and got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. (See John 21: 1-14, for this story.)

But when the morning had come Jesus stood on the shore, but they did not know that it was Jesus.

Then Jesus said to them, children do you have any food? They answered Him, no.

And He said to them, cast your net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some. So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish; one hundred and fifty-three.

One day I found myself needing to prepare a field for planting. I am not a farmer and have never been- but I plowed the field and harrowed it. It looked like I had plowed and harrowed it! It was the worst looking field I had ever seen. I grew up in a valley where there was lots of farming, and none of those fields had ever looked like the field I had prepared.

I called a farmer friend of mine and told him of my problem. After hearing my story of the awful looking field, he said to me on the phone, do you like the appearance of the field? I said, no. He said, do it over. I said to him, I have already done it over. He said to me, do you like the appearance of the field? I said, no. He said, do it over. I said to him, I have already done it over. He said, do you like the appearance of the field? I said, no. He said, do it over.

I kept expecting him to say that I should get another piece of equipment, or that there was something wrong with the soil, but all he said was, do it over. I think of that experience every time that I hear the story of the disciples going fishing and catching nothing- all night. Then Jesus came, and said to them, try again! - on the right side; the side where He was.

Jesus' daily life- the Acts, # 4

With the storm over, they came to the other side of the sea, to the country of the Gadarenes- safe at last!

And when He had come out of the boat, immediately there met Him two demon-possessed men, coming out of the tombs, exceedingly fierce, so that no one could pass that way. These men had their dwellings among the tombs, and no one could bind them, not even with chains,

Because they had often been bound with shackles and chains, and the chains had been pulled apart, and the shackles broken in pieces; neither could anyone tame them.

And always, night and day, they were in the mountains and in the tombs, crying out and cutting themselves with stones.

These men wore no clothes, and were driven by the demons into the wilderness. When they saw Jesus from afar they ran and worshipped Him.

When Jesus saw these men He commanded the unclean spirits to come out of them. (For the unclean spirits often seized them.)

And suddenly they cried out, saying, what have we to do with You, Jesus, You Son of God? Have You come here to torment us before the time?

Then He asked them, what is your name? And they answered, saying, my name is legion, for we are many.

And they begged Him earnestly that He would not send them out of the country. (Now a good way off from them there was a herd of many swine feeding on the mountain; there were about two thousand of them.)

So all the demons begged Him, saying, If You cast us out, permit us to go into the herd of swine. And He said to them Go! Then the demons went out of the men and entered the swine.

And suddenly the whole herd of swine ran violently down the steep place into the sea and drowned in the sea.

When those who fed them saw what had happened they fled, and told in the city and in the country everything, including what had happened to the demon-possessed men.

And behold, the whole city came out to see what it was that had happened, and came to Jesus, and found the men from whom the demons had departed, sitting at the feet of Jesus, clothed and in their right mind.

And they were afraid.

And those who saw it told them how it happened to them who had been demon-possessed, and about the swine.

Then the whole multitude of the surrounding region of the Gadarenes asked Him to depart from them for they were seized with a great fear.

And when He got into the boat, the men who had been demon-possessed begged Him that they might be with Him. But Jesus sent them away saying, Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you.

And they went their way and proclaimed throughout the whole city, and in Decapolis, all that Jesus had done for them; and all marveled.

So it was, when Jesus returned, that the multitude welcomed Him, for they were all waiting for Him. (See Matthew 8: 28-34; Mark 5: 1-20; and Luke 8: 26-40, for this story.)

The Portrait in this story is a time exposure: Demon-possessed men doing a fade, coalescing into the likeness of God; dark spots on a black film becoming points of light. A displayed potential - anyone can be a helper for Jesus.

Then they also brought infants to Him that He might touch them, but when the disciples saw it, they rebuked them.

But Jesus called them to Him and said,

Let the little children come to me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of heaven. Luke 18:15, 16.

Everyone was welcome in the presence of Jesus. He was available to all.

One more account of daily activity from the life of Jesus;

(the One of whom John the apostle wrote, the whole world could not hold all the books that would be written if all the life and works of Jesus were to be recorded! See John 21:25.)

Jesus' daily life- the Acts, cont.

Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, Sir, we wish to see Jesus.

Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.

But Jesus answered them, saying,

The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.

He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.

If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, Him My Father will honor....

(See John 12:20-36).

The immediately noticeable part of this account, which we have reviewed only in part, is the fact that the requested interview with Jesus, made by the Greeks to the apostles, is not said to have occurred. Verse 36 of this passage says Jesus was hidden from them.

The work of Jesus is left incomplete; the request to see Jesus, made to the followers of Jesus, is to be fulfilled by the followers of Jesus. The revealing of the Father, plus the added dimension of the telling of the love of Jesus, was being turned over to others. Jesus' life and work on earth were closing.

The Teachings of Jesus

In the accounts of the life of Jesus that we have, His work is barely getting started when surrounded by large crowds of people He invites them to sit down on the grass on the plain on the mountain near the sea, and presents to the crowd the principles of His Kingdom- a presentation known as the Sermon on the Mount. In this presentation Jesus repeatedly uses the word blessed, makarios, health to the soul, the language of heaven. He seems to have forgotten that He is here.

The work that He came to earth to do is revealed by the often repeating of this word in this primary presentation of the principles of the kingdom He had come to establish and was announcing. The kingdom of heaven is at hand was His first message. And the second was like it; the kingdom is within you.

But His favorite theme was the paternal love of the Father, as we have seen; a love manifested by the word blessed being repeated so many times in the Sermon on the Mount. The repetition of this phrase by Jesus showed the hearers that both the kingdom of heaven in heaven, and the kingdom of heaven to be established here on earth had the same objective- the health of the soul, the eternal life of its subjects.

The kingdom of heaven is here seen to have as its central focus the welfare of all connected with it; the Father, the Son sent to the earth doing the presenting of the kingdom to men, and of the Holy Spirit, yet to be announced, and of the people created by God to be the inhabitants of the earth He had created.

The centrality of the blessed, in the message and acts of Jesus and the Father who asks all to hear His Son, means that the intent of the work of the kingdom was to have one glad pulse of harmony pulsing through all the creation of God- eternally.

Teachings- #1

As all good stories start- Once upon a time, there was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews who had heard of Jesus and was intrigued by what he heard. By nature he must have been a researcher, because he just had to hear what Jesus would say in answer to some of his questions.

However--! So he went at night.

When the two of them met he said to Jesus,

Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.

Jesus immediately changes the topic of discussion from Himself to His hearer!

Most assuredly, Jesus said, one cannot see the kingdom of heaven, unless one is born from above (Greek), again (English).

Nicodemus perhaps feels a little uncomfortable- he was a ruler in Israel, and very religious. Therefore we are not surprised to find him saying back to Jesus, Can a man re-enter his mother's womb, and be born?

Jesus responds to the question by saying, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not marvel that I said to you, you must be born again.

The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit.

Nicodemus asks Jesus what we all want him to ask- how can these things be?

Jesus' reply to this question is to point out that the new birth, salvation, is only possible through His death, and our being re-made by God into His image. No alteration or improvement of us is adequate. There must be a new principle implanted. One must be born from above- by the powers of heaven.

As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.

The reason that Jesus came was because the Father let Him come; they were in total agreement on the need for a Redeemer to buy back the forfeited dominion that Adam had lost to Satan; what they were not in agreement on was the part each was to play in the redemption operation. If the Father had come instead of the Son, the story of the Redeemer would not be changed. This account would read the same.

For God so loved that He gave. It was a struggle with the Father to let Someone die- the unguilty for the guilty- His love is the love of a father, and the love of a mother. Remember, can a mother forget her infant child? Yes, they may forget, but I will not forget you.

But He also rejoices over us, His children, the needing to be re-made ones, with singing. Therefore we are not surprised that someone came to help. (For this story see the book of John, chapter 3, verses 1- 21.)

Teachings- #2

As Jesus was traveling through the villages teaching and healing,

a certain woman named Martha welcomed Him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at Jesus' feet and heard His word.

But Martha was distracted with much serving, and she approached Him and said,

Lord, do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Therefore tell her to help me.

And Jesus answered and said to her,

Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her. (See Luke 10: 38-42.)

In this story one immediately notices the change of teaching style- the instructions of Jesus were often given in parables. Here He answers directly the implied question as to what is the important element in the activities of daily life, when sin is not one of the issues.

One also notes the setting- a private home with people who from other passages we learn are Jesus' comfortable friends.

This is one of only a few records preserved for us of Jesus interacting with His friends in the home of His friends.

Because in response to the request from Martha Jesus answers directly, we conclude that when Jesus was comfortably with friends He did not speak in parables; in this setting, we see Him speaking with simplicity and perfect freedom. He knows that His words will be understood.

By implication we see Jesus at rest from the conflicts of public life. The leaders of the people never let His life become boring!

The Portrait here is of Mary sitting at Jesus' feet listening to words of life, while Martha is in the kitchen, preparing for the welfare and comfort of their Guest.

The one needful thing that Jesus referred to was the quiet desire of Mary to be in Jesus' presence, learning of the food for the soul- acquiring the graces necessary for spiritual advancement; gaining the qualifications for the future immortal life.

It was these things Jesus said should not be taken from her, for the preparation of those things that were necessary for His comfort.

But there is also another dimension to this story.

The work of God on this earth needs energetic workers. There is obviously a wide arena of service for the energetic Marthas. But in this record we find Jesus

saying that all need first to sit with Mary at the feet of Jesus, being sanctified by grace.

The Self-portrait

we have here was taken in the kitchen- Jesus among the dishes, food, and workers- who all bear a family resemblance to Him.

Teachings- #3

One day Jesus was doing what He usually did- teaching the people and healing their illnesses- when a lawyer stood up and said he had a question.

The lawyer's question was, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?

With this question begins the account of one of the most famous of the stories told by Jesus in His teachings; a story which was a part of Jesus' reply to the question which the lawyer asked, politely, twice.

The exciting part of this exchange between Jesus and the lawyer is found in the double formulation of the one question. The first formula being the one we have seen, what shall I do to inherit eternal life, and the second formulation of that question being, who is my neighbor?

Because the word neighbor means by dictionary definition, one who is near by, or close by, the repetition of the question with the change in the formulation shows a politely hidden dispute over the issue, who is my neighbor, or, who is the one who is 'near by'? The answer seems to be so obvious one is surprised by the question. (See Luke 10:25-37 for the record of this very interesting dialogue.)

Jesus, in answer to the first formulation of the lawyer's question, the what shall I do to inherit eternal life formula, had the lawyer answer his own question; something it turned out the lawyer was able to do. Then Jesus commended the lawyer for giving the correct answer, adding only, this do and you will live.

The hidden dispute attached to the lawyer's question comes to light when, having been commended by Jesus for giving the correct answer to the question what shall I do to inherit eternal life (The lawyer had said, you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as your self), the lawyer, instead of sitting down, asks his question again, politely, with the second formulation- Who is my neighbor?

To reply to this formula of the question Jesus tells His very famous story about the leaders of the church living useless lives. This story has come to be known as the story of the Good Samaritan.

Probably there are several reasons for the great fame which has attached to this story; not the least of which being the fact that this story was of a contemporary event that all Jesus' hearers in the crowd of listeners knew about.

In this story a badly wounded traveler is found by a series of church leaders who do nothing for the wounded man; then a Samaritan finds the wounded man and provides for all his needs. It is also likely that all those who knew of this event approved of the actions of the church leaders- though they probably did not all approve for the same reason- except for the questioning lawyer!

At the first of the encounter the lawyer appears to be trying to stir up the crowd against Jesus, but at this point in the exchange it becomes apparent that the lawyer is seeking a greater good than the one being set in front of the nation by its contemporary leadership.

We can expect Jesus to gently answer the lawyer's question, who is my neighbor, in such a way as to answer the lawyer's real question- what does one live in front of those who surround him, if one wants his life to lead to entering heaven? What shall I do to inherit eternal life? What is it that makes me a child of God's? I want to inherit what He has promised to His children.

The story of course ends with Jesus assuring the lawyer that to do what is written in the law of God is the requirement- "And He said to him, You have answered rightly; do this and you will live." And the assurance is, the effect of righteousness (right doing) is quietness and assurance forever (See Isaiah 32:17).

The judgment of God is, by this story, set on the shoulders of the good deed.

The Self-portrait

here is of God in His home, dressing for the storm his neighbor is in.

Teachings- #4

Jesus had been traveling throughout Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, making the headlines of the daily news, and was "being glorified by all", when He decided it was time for a visit to His home town.

So He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up.

And as His custom was, He went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day and stood up to read.

And He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah. And when He had opened the book, He found the place where it was written:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,

because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind,

To set at liberty those who are oppressed. (For this story see Luke 4:16-31).

Then He closed the book and gave it back to the attendant- and all eyes were on Him!

The reports of His work had been sensational! They had heard stories they could hardly believe!

After reading, and then sitting down, Jesus began to talk to the people about the passage He had just read from Isaiah- the Old Testament prophet, and the writer of the book from which He had just read.

The people liked the sermon very much until He said that the work they had heard He was doing, He was actually doing; that the scripture He had just read described the works He was doing; that His mission was for Him to fulfill the passage in Isaiah He had just read- that the Isaiah passage was a prophecy of Him.

They knew that the reports which they had heard prior to His return to their town matched the Isaiah passage- but they had already decided that the reports were false, or greatly exaggerated, for they knew His family- He was from their town. Besides, works that good would have been done in their district, the Jewish one, and not in the district where the half-Jews and non-Jews lived.

The people in the synagogue interrupted Jesus' sermon to question Him as to the appropriateness of the works they had heard He was doing for non-Jews.

Jesus responded by showing them from scripture that the works He was doing were in harmony with the works done in the past by the prophets of God. He reminded them that in some time periods the Jews, God's specially-called people had become a people, by their choices, who God could not work for- but that that fact did not stop God from working for those who let Him work for them.

AND THEY GOT MAD! They pulled Him out of the pulpit and across town to a high cliff to throw Him over- but He disappeared from their sight, and left town- to go and do more of the work described in the Bible passage He had read- the passage which described His mission.

Jesus taught that He was the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament. And His works, and His way of relating to all the people who were around Him, added the testimony of correct representation to His words and revealed the purpose for which He came.

Conclusion

It was Jesus' human necessities that enabled Him to be one with the people in their daily lives, and it was His divinity expressed in acts that humanity could not accomplish which made Him their Savior, and enabled Him to reveal the Father as He met humanities needs.

In the mirror of the historical Jesus we see reflected the life we all desire; available as we piggy-back with Him, as He did with the Father.

For in the daily life of Jesus we see that for others He worked miracles- but He worked none for Himself. From the way in which He addressed the issues that He solved, it is apparent that the authority with which He worked for others was His own. But for the necessities of His own life He was dependent on the Father, while His prayer life reveals the fact that He had no interest in a life apart from the will of His Father. I and My Father are one was not only what He said, it was the way that He lived.

In these accounts that we have reviewed from His daily life, it is apparent that His reason for living was to reveal that the testimony should always bear with it the incense of correct representation.

The Self-portrait

of Jesus in His daily life is of a powerfully gentle person leaving an endless trail of fragrance everywhere He goes.

Historical Life as a Mirror

In the mirror which is the historical Jesus we see reflected One like us doing faultlessly the acts of God.

Self-portraits of God

Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

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Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

Lesson 5 Drawings by the Prophets-- Old Testament Prophecies of the Coming One

General Introduction

AND THE EARTH WAS WITHOUT FORM AND VOID. And God said let the earth bring forth. And God saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good.

So God created man in His own image; male and female. And the Lord planted a garden in Eden, and there He put the man He had made.

And the Lord God commanded the man saying,

Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 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.

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which God had made.

Then the serpent said to the woman, you will not surely die.

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her and he ate.

And they heard the sound of the Lord walking in the garden in the cool of the day. And Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord among the trees.

And the Lord said to the woman,
I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in pain you shall bring forth children; your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you.

Then to Adam He said,
Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you saying, you shall not eat of it:

Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.

In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust shall you return.

Then the Lord God sent man out of the garden of Eden. (See Genesis, chapters 1-3 for this story.)

The casting out of the garden testifies to the excellence of the garden.

“For by grace are you saved through faith.” Faith is not expressed toward God when He agrees with you; when things go as you like. There was nothing in the garden which would enable people living there to disagree with God- the Creator of the Garden and those who lived in it. The Garden was an expression of the gentle love God had toward those He had created.

Faith toward God is only expressed when He disagrees with you. Faith is the evidence of things not seen.

The perfection of the garden left no opportunity for the expression of that faith which activates grace and purifies the soul. The sentence pronounced by God over the guilty pair which declared that it was going to be by difficulties that they would proceed through their lives was not motivated by the anger of God, but that sentence came from His love; His desire for their continued companionship.

Opportunities for the expression of faith must be created; an environment with a lack of perfection was an absolute necessity for the salvation of the soul to be possible; the salvation of the soul is a co-operative work- God making the potential, creating the opportunities for the expression of doubt by His children- people responding by faith; that faith which activates grace and brings it into the soul-temple as the restorative element provided by God for the restoration of the souls of those of His children who choose to be part of the kingdom which He is setting up for those who choose the service of others over the service of the self.

In this choice they choose the life pattern of love; love for the neighbor- the one who is near; the one to whom they have the opportunity to reveal what God is like. This love seeks not its own good, but the good of those by whom it is surrounded.

Love is both the gift of God and the developed result of the choices made by the one choosing to follow the pattern of other-people-centeredness.

The Lord desires to be loved by His children. The quality of love which He desires is the quality of love which is the outgrowth of an appreciation of His character. This love can only be returned after a personal knowledge of that toward which it is expressed is acquired.

Those events which occur in our lives, and which by occurring acquaint us with the God who loves us, are per-destined. See Ephesians 2:10. Before the foundations of the world were laid, God planned for us. See Ephesians 1:4.

The salvation of the soul is a co-operative work. The co-operation which brings about the salvation of souls is not only required on the part of man, who must express that faith which attaches to grace and brings it into the life, but it is also required on the part of God.

“I will send someone to help you,” is His promise. Someone will come- to enlighten and act as a guide to choosing those choices which will bring grace to the soul to restore the soul from the damage occurring in connection with the events in the garden of Eden, and our own mis-choices; someone who, by coming, will bring grace within the reach of everyone; every grace-remade soul then being a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. See Ephesians 2:22

What would such a sent-person be like? Male or female? When would they come? How would any one know that the sent person was the sent person?

There are so many questions that immediately come to mind when one hears about Adam and Eve being created by God, made in His image, on a just-finished earth, provided with a garden home and then expelled from their new house only to be promised One to bring assistance!

Questions like, what kind of assistance was the coming One bringing? What would it do? Whereas the One expelling them from their home was the same One sending the assistance and help- what could they expect the future to look like?

There is of course no obvious end to the questions that one might want to ask about this story, so let just start someplace, anyplace, in no real order, and look at a few of the prediction-descriptions of the coming One appearing in the Old Testament. This is a great study! The word pictures are fascinating. (Sometime you must read through all of them all!)

Promises, Predictions, and Self-portraits

The One Given and Sent

Isaiah 9:6

Note: There are perhaps 50 passages in the Old Testament that speak directly about the coming Sent–One.

As you probably already know, the Old Testament differs from the New Testament in that the Old Testament points to the future as the time of the Coming One, while the New Testament points to the Coming One either as a present reality, or as having already come and given the Self-portrait of what the Heavenly Father is like. The New Testament also points to the future as a time when the having-come One will come again.

The Old Testament also has passages dealing with the fact that the Coming One would come twice- but those passages are not always as vivid and clear as the portrayals of the return of the having-come sent-One are, when we find them in the New Testament.

Isaiah 9:6 says,

For unto us a Child is born,
Unto us a Son is given;
And the government will be upon His shoulder.
And His name will be called
Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

The proper way to study any verse is to start at the first phrase and follow through it logically, but there is an element in this verse that is so exciting that it almost forces us to start with it!

That element is in the phrase,
And the government will be upon His shoulder.

The exciting part of this phrase is from the Hebrew. The Hebrew verb form translated into English as “will be” is a verb form technically designated as a waw conversive. The literal translation of this verb form makes the phrase read, “And the government has been upon His shoulder.”

The child who has been born to us, the Son who has been given to us is One who has already had the government upon His shoulder! This is no gift of an ordinary baby!

The sent One is the One who, at His birth, has already had the government of Heaven upon His shoulder from eternity. This One is the One who Proverbs 8 refers to as One being having been brought up with the Father (v.30-Hebrew, minion; variously translated- as One brought up with Him; as His architect; designer).

The One to come as a fulfillment of the promise made by the Creator to His in-trouble children is the One who, at the time of the making of the promise, already has the government of Heaven on His shoulder. The One willing to come for the rescue of the children of God is, in this verse, designated Mighty God.

The Creator of the children of God on this earth did not look for some one to rescue them- He willed to come Himself.

Notice again the descriptive titles- Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace, Wonderful, Counselor.

The Son given unto us is the child born; the coming One, carries the title, Prince of Peace; the baby to be born, our gift, is Everlasting Father. The Creator of all must have a great love for His children- seen as what they could become, if rescued.

It could be argued that He could have sent someone else, but that would not show He loved us. The love of Heaven is seen in Heaven's gift of the paying of that which could not be paid by God's self-pawned children; paid by their Father.

But when the Prince of Peace, the wonderful counselor, the Given and Sent One, has left his home to bring the Redemption for His children, what is He bringing? What is He coming to do for those in need? What does that which He is bringing do for them? When He has done what it is that He does, what does the observer see? Does that which is seen reveal that the doer is the Sent-one?

Notice the following:

Isaiah 35: 3-9.

Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees.
Say to those who are fearful-hearted, be strong, do not fear!

Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God;
He will come and save you.

Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped.

Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing.
For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.

The parched ground shall become a pool, and the thirsty land springs of water;
In the habitation of jackals, where each lay, there shall be grass with reeds and rushes.

A highway shall be there, and a road, and it shall be called the Highway of Holiness. The unclean shall not pass over it, but it shall be for others.

Whoever walks the road, although a fool, shall not go astray.

No lion shall be there, nor shall any ravenous beast go up on it; it shall not be found there.

But the redeemed shall walk there, and the ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with singing,
with everlasting joy on their heads.

They shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away.

The Commission of the Sent-One

Isaiah 61:1-3

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me, because the Lord has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor;

He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives; and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all who mourn,

To console those who mourn in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness;

That they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified

Faces of the Ever-Present

In the Mirror which is our lives we see reflected the many faces of the Ever-present One; He who is the Architect of the Father draws many lines in His own face. When we look for Him in our lives we face a world of many faces.

When my daughter was little she had some toys called transformers; one never knew what they would be configured as the next time they were present in her play. Their visible form changed as the story line being imagined changed. But of course there was a limit to the changes that could be arranged by the moving of their parts.

In this review of some of the drawings by the prophets appearing in the Old Testament depicting the One bringing the redemption for His created children, we have observed that the ability to change, to be the Transformer, has only that limit which equals the needs of those the Given One seeks to help.

This Transformer differs from the toys my daughter had for play, not only in the unlimited varieties of the self-revelation form, but in the unlimited forms of change that can be made in the essential nature of the objects for whom the wide variety of self-revelations are made.

Once upon a time, the way that all good stories start, there was a little boy who loved to do the same things that his father did.

Each day as his father would start off to work this little boy would express the wish to go to work with his dad, and each day his father would tell him that he could not go because he was too little.

But time went on and one day the father said to his son, as he was leaving for work, ask your mother to fix you a lunch for tomorrow, and then you can go to work with me.

The next day father and son went to the father's work together.

The day went by quickly for the little boy. When the working men were all starting to go home the father came to the boy and told him that he had to go down by the creek and then he would be ready to go home; he told his son to wait there where he was.

The little boy waited for his dad, but his dad did not return. It began to get dark and the little boy started to get cold so he crawled into a small hut nearby and soon was sound asleep.

He woke up hearing the sounds of men talking quietly. When he opened his eyes he saw men walking around outside the hut where he was sleeping, looking at the ground. When they saw that he was awake they asked him if any thing strange had happened. He said no; that his father had told him to wait there- that he would come right back, but that he had not returned- that during the night he had started to get cold, but that his dog had come and kept him warm; but that he had left earlier.

That was no dog, the men said to the little boy; that was a panther.

The many faces of God

when His children are in need. Him "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." Micah 5:2.

The Many Places of the Given One

"Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" Isaiah 53:1.

One of our professors had a degree in comparative religions and another degree in anthropology; so the Government of New Guinea hired him to do a study of the people living in an unmapped area of their country.

To do this study required him to walk through the jungles, making trails where there were none. So carriers and trackers were hired and their journey was begun.

This professor was of Dutch nationality, very white skinned, and would sometimes be burned so dark that his wife would not recognize him immediately when he returned from a survey trip.

One day they had been traveling until the professor said to the carriers that he was so tired that he could walk no farther. Everyone stopped and started to prepare for the night, except for the exhausted professor who immediately crawled into a small hut some earlier traveler had left there and was just as immediately fast asleep.

He awoke to the sound the natives make when something is wrong. Recognizing the warning sound he opened his eyes but did not move. There, hanging out of the brush making the roof for the little hut he was sleeping in was a very deadly snake; it was swinging back and forth over his face. Without moving he tensed every one of his muscles as tight as he could and suddenly sprang out of the little sleeping hut.

The natives killed the snake. But there was a problem.

The snake which had been hanging over the professor was the snake which seduced the woman in the Garden, in the culture of the people who were traveling with the professor as he surveyed the people of the region.

Every culture has a form of the three stories that start the story of the Bible- the story of Creation of the world and man, the entrance of sickness and suffering in connection with the snake and the woman in the Garden, and the story of the Flood.

In the story of the fall of man in the culture of the people the professor was traveling with, the husband had come home to find that his wife had run off with the snake. God said to him, when you catch up to them you are to kill the snake.

So the husband started tracking them, but when he caught up to them he got so mad that instead of killing the snake he began to beat his wife and the snake got away. Therefore when those snakes are all caught and killed there will no longer be hunger, or sickness.

The next morning the carriers refused to continue the journey because it would not be safe; the devil was on their track. The only thing to do was to return to their starting point and start over again. But the group had traveled a large distance, so the professor tried to reason with the carriers, but it did no good until one of them said that if the group were to cut a new wandering trail, the devils would get lost and they could safely continue their travel. So they all started on their trip again, cutting a new trail- some thing which they would continue to do for three days, and then the devils would have become lost.

The people of this region never wear shoes and the bottoms of their feet are as tough as leather.

Suddenly as the group was cutting a section of new trail the lead men fell down in pain- their feet bleeding. Someone had hidden large thorns in the ground.

And then arrows started to fly! Fortunately peace was made and the group was taken to meet the chief of the area. Everything went quite normally, except that the

professor estimated that there were several times as many huts for people to live in as there were people to live in them.

When he questioned the people about the huts they said that someone came to the mountain to teach them every evening; that one of the things they had learned was that the dead were going to live again- so they had built the huts so they- the resurrected ones- would have a place to live.

The Self-portrait

here is a moving picture of the whole of creation, with the presence of God shadowing every frame.

Guilty and Innocent

Isaiah 53: 4

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;
Yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.

In Leviticus 14 we have a fascinating third cousin to the passage just quoted from Isaiah. This chapter in Numbers is not a directly messianic passage in the opinion of this writer, but it is tied to a portrait of the Coming One we might miss without the insights it brings to us.

The problem being dealt with is leprosy. In Old Testament times the worst thing that could happen to anyone was to become infected with the disease of leprosy. This was because not only was the disease a progressive wasting away of the body of the victim until the disease struck some vital part and the suffering victim died, but it was also the most dreaded because of the way that the victims of this disease were treated by the society in which they lived. They were allowed no contact with any other human being than those who were their fellow-sufferers. This isolation was made the more unpleasant by the prevailing opinion that the onset of leprosy was the result of the direct curse of God.

In Leviticus 14 is described the rituals to be followed by some one who had been healed from leprosy. The rituals were a portrayal of both the objective and the subjective atonement, including the resurrection from the dead. The person healed of leprosy had to go through the prescribed ritual before they could again be a part of their community, and return to their family and friends.

The connection between Leviticus 14 and our study of portraits of the One sent to help is found in a story appearing in the Babylonian Talmud.

In this story two are talking and the one asks the other one when the Messiah will come. The reply is that He has already come. The questioner asks where He can be

found. The answer is that he is among the lepers at the gate. The questioner then asks how he, the seeker for the messiah, would know him from the rest of the lepers. In response to this question the answerer says that the lepers unbind all their sores, and then bind them up again; but the Messiah unbinds one and then rebinds it, saying, lest I should be called and I would not be ready. This story is footnoted to Isaiah 53:4.

When King Uzziah refused to listen to the priests, and offered a sacrifice on the alter in the temple, something that the Lord had said that only the priests were to do, the Lord immediately struck him with leprosy, and he went out of the temple white as snow, and, in spite of being the king, lived in a special house until the day of his death.

In Isaiah 53:4, which we quoted above, we read of the Messiah,

“we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God.”

The word smitten is a translation of the Hebrew word Negah. This word is the word which appears in the smiting of King Uzziah when the Lord punished him with leprosy.

The story we can now find in Isaiah 53:4 is the account of the Sent-One being struck with leprosy by God because of His sins! EXCEPT that the very next words in Isaiah 53 are,

But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. Isaiah 53: 5-6.

This Self-portrait

is of us looking in a mirror that gives back only a purified reflection. This picture reveals that the mirror is itself a portrait of God.

Coming as King

There are some fascinating passages in the Old Testament that leave us wondering what the properly understood message is. The words of these texts are in themselves obviously capable of being carriers of a packet of information about the central person in the Old Testament- the Promised being-Sent One. But the context surrounding those texts is often not what is readily understood as being a portrayal of the Coming One, or of events associated with the appearing and life of the Messiah- the anointed One, or the Given One, in other passages in Scripture clearly dealing with the future Redeemer.

Therefore it is to the great delight of the Bible student that sometimes writers of Biblical materials, writing after the time of the author who presents the material with the fascinating word clusters lacking a clear context, comment on the texts, giving them a specific setting.

An illustration of this kind of material is found in association with the story of Isaiah, chapter 7.

In this chapter the prophet Isaiah is sent to give a message to the king of Judah. It is a time of war. Two of Judah's enemies have decided to join their forces and attack Judah, again. There has been war between these groups in the past, but the enemies were then not strong enough to win the battle with Judah; but now Judah's king believes that they have the ability to win in a battle with his nation. He is very afraid.

The Lord, knowing how afraid the king of Judah is, sends the prophet Isaiah with a message assuring the king that the nations which he fears are not going to win if there is a battle.

Then the prophet gives the king a sign- a child is going to be born, a boy child, and before the child is old enough to choose between good and evil the 2 nations which are so fearful to the king will be no longer!

The exact words of the message are,

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Immanuel!” (Isaiah 7:14).

The translators have capitalized the words son and his, making the passage a reference to the promised Sent-One. This act emphasizes the central question presented to the reader of this text- is the predicted child who is to be born, and who is to be called Immanuel, the promised Savior?

One thing is clear immediately, the name Immanuel means God with us. The question is, does the name attached to the to-be-born son express an expression of faith, God is with us, or is it expressing a fact; this one is God? If the significance of the name is to be found in its being a statement of fact, the name should be translated God with us.

When the time of this war and the time for the coming of the promised Given One are compared, it is clear that this child can not be the promised Redemption-bringer. The time for the appearing of the promised One is clearly presented to Bible students in the book of Daniel, and the time Isaiah spoke to the king was not the designated time.

But what about the words, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son? If this verse is not to be seen as a direct prophecy of the coming One, is this verse not then a prophecy for some child to be born, the result of a virgin birth, in the time of Isaiah?

There are 2 words for young women in the Hebrew of the Old Testament; one is the word bethulah, which means virgin. The second word is almah, which appears only 8 or 9 times, and because of the changing contexts in which it appears, cannot be said to carry a particular and exact meaning, other than that it designates a young woman of marriageable age.

The Hebrew word translated virgin in Isaiah 7:14, the verse we are looking at, is the word almah. Therefore the prediction in Isaiah tells the king that a young woman, not identified for us, perhaps present with the king as the Prophet Isaiah talks to him, is to bear a son and have the name which is the assurance of the care of God for the frightened king and his nation. The name of the child, Immanuel, when said, reminds all those who hear the name pronounced that God is with them.

The prophet Isaiah's own children carried this same kind of statement, as did the children of Hosea. Through the prophets the Lord tried many different ways of assuring the people of the nation He had a special role for, of His continuing good will toward them. "I know the thoughts that I think toward you says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil." Jeremiah 29:11. "In quietness and confidence shall be your strength." Isaiah 30:15.

So what does this passage have to do with our study of texts about the coming Promised One?!

I suspect you already know- Matthew, the writer of the first book of the New Testament, quotes this text, originally written in Hebrew, when he writes his Greek language record of the acts and deeds of Jesus done while Jesus was living in Palestine, and uses the Greek word for a virgin to translate the Hebrew word almah, young woman.

Matthew wrote,

so all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying:

Behold the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, God with us. Matthew 1: 22-23.

As an inspired writer of a book of the Bible Matthew points out to us the otherwise uncertain application of the words appearing in Isaiah's assurance of the Lord's good will toward Israel.

Jesus, the coming Promised One was to be born of a virgin. (For the story of the birth of the One bringing Redemption, see Matthew 1: 18-2:23, or Luke, chapters 1 and 2.)

Another great picture

of the coming One that is only seen clearly with the help of a later Bible-writer, is the material found in

Zechariah 9:9.

This material paints a brilliant portrait of an event in the life of the coming-Promised One which it must have been fascinating for Bible students in Old Testament times to conjecture about; a portrayal of a triumphal entry set in the context of the overthrow of ancient enemies.

The noticeable element that is lacking, in addition to the timing of this triumphant scene, is the absence of a supporting cast! No king has a triumphal entry alone- yet in this scene from the life of the Christ He is alone. It is also of interest to notice that no response to the invitation appearing in this verse is part of the picture that appears in Zechariah's book.

This verse reads,

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation,
Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

This material appears in a passage promising protection to God's people in Old Testament times, while promising trouble to those who oppose God's plans and people.

Matthew picks up this verse and gives it a context of time, tying it to the Messiah. He writes the story of this triumphant act, however, after it has happened, in his Gospel in what is in our Bibles chapter 21, verses 1-11. Notice what happened when Zechariah's verse became reality.

Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,
saying to them," go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose them and bring them to me.

And if anyone says anything to you, you shall say, the Lord has need of them', and immediately he will send them.

All this was done that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the prophet, saying:

Tell the daughter of Zion, Behold, your King is coming to you, Lowly, and sitting on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey.

So the disciples went and did as Jesus commanded them.

They brought the donkey and the colt, laid their clothes on them, and set him on them.

And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road.

Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: “Hosanna to the son of David! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, “Who is this?”

So the multitudes said, “This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee”.

Matthew has seen the triumphal entry before he understands that that act is the fulfilling of the verse in Zechariah we are studying. In fact the death of Jesus has occurred before any of the disciples tied the triumphal entry into Jerusalem, by Jesus, to the picture in Zechariah. Notice the comment of the apostle John;

“His disciples did not understand these things at first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written about Him and that they had done these things unto Him.” John 12:16.

John also writes that

“the people who were with Him when He called Lazarus out of his tomb and raised him from the dead, bore witness.” John 12:17.

If this bearing witness occurred before the triumphal entry ride by Jesus, there may have been a very large multitude of people who went out to see Jesus ride into the city in the fashion of a conquering King, because Lazarus had not only been raised from the dead, but he had been in the tomb for four days! Other stories of the raising of the dead had been doubted by some, but this act nobody could cast doubt on.

It has been estimated that the people in and about Jerusalem when it was destroyed numbered about one million. If there were that many in Jerusalem when the story of the raising of Lazarus was reported, the crowd who went out to see Jesus enter the city would have really seemed like the whole world.

It is therefore no wonder that the Pharisees, who were actively opposing the work of Jesus because He and His works were more popular than they were said,

“You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!” John 12: 18-19.

The element these texts together add to our portraits of the Messiah appearing in Old Testament portrayals of the coming Helper is found in the fact that all these fascinating historical happenings were hiding in a text that even the disciples did not notice as being of particular import to the life of the Coming One, until they were enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

The Self-portrait

of God here is of the Member of the Godhead who reveals that which we would not see without His enlightenment. This portrait is of One pointing away from Himself.

Our last picture to assemble is a mosaic- a composite picture made of

Snap Shots of the Future.

a future being offered by the One bringing help for those who couple themselves to Him:

For the vision is yet for an appointed time; But at the end it will speak, and it will not lie.

Though it tarries, wait for it; Because it will surely come,
It will not tarry. Habakkuk 2:3.

Your eyes will see the King in His beauty; They will see the land that is very far off. Isaiah 33:17.

And it will be said in that day: “Behold, this is our God; We have waited for Him, and He will save us.

This is the Lord; We have waited for Him; We will be glad and rejoice in His salvation.” Isaiah 25:9.

For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former shall not be remembered or come into mind. Isaiah 65:17.

Your dead shall live; Together with My dead body they shall arise.
Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; For your dew is like the dew of herbs,
And the earth shall cast out the dead. Isaiah 26:19

Therefore prophesy and say to them, “Thus says the Lord God: Behold, O My people, I will open your graves and cause you to come up from your graves....” Ezekiel 37:12.

“The wolf and the lamb shall feed together, The lion shall eat straw like the ox, And dust shall be the serpent’s food.

They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain,” Says the Lord.
Isaiah 65:25.

Drawings by the Prophets as Mirrors

In this study we found many Old Testament Prophecies acting as mirrors, reflecting pieces of the future.

The Self-portrait is of One whose reflections always reveal another.

Self-portraits of God

Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

Inside this Lesson- Tracings in His Choices: the Character of Jesus

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Self-portraits of God

Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

Tracings in His Choices- the Character of Jesus

General Introduction

The evening news is reporting that, according to a researcher from Great Britain, criminals can be identified by the way they walk. They say a careful study of recorded security tapes is sufficient for such an identification.

Webster has several definitions for the concept character; among them are a definition telling us that character is the main or essential nature; especially those qualities which are strongly marked and which serve to distinguish a person's usual qualities or traits.

According to the news story just referred to, walking patterns reveal the main intents of the walking-one being observed; they serve to identify a person's usual qualities or traits. If this is true, according to Webster's definitions walking patterns serve to identify the character of the one being observed.

Again one reads that actions repeated become habits, and that habits taken together make up character.

In this lesson the character of Jesus, that which was His usual qualities or traits, is that which we are going to be seeking to identify.

To identify those qualities which were the distinguishing qualities of Jesus, which were the revealers of what He was like, we will look at word pictures recording Jesus interacting with those people who came into His daily life in the records of His life in the Bible.

Before we begin that study though, because there is probably a never-ending list of qualities which one can think of, and which the imagination can construe as being participants in the daily life of Jesus as He encounters His world, for interest sake we will assemble a list, without supporting evidence, of potential qualities that might appear in our study, based on a general knowledge of the life of Jesus. This list will function in our study as our hypothesis. It is, at this point, our belief that Jesus was like this:

Our Hypothetical Picture of Jesus

*Manifested respect for age
Shunned needless controversy
Had a sweetness of disposition
Tender forbearance training disciples
Wasted not even a morsel of bread
Defeated Satan on every point
Allowed Himself to be guided step by step by the Father's will
Did faithfully His home duties
Accepted hospitality of all classes; dined comfortably with all classes, including the noble, the poor, and the ostracized
Accepted invitations to feasts
Could willingly descend to the level of the young
Acted as if they were family, when with people like the Samaritans
Controlled the table talk
Was willing to repeat His lessons
Never resorted to noisy disputing
Spoke with authority
Drew the attention of the best educated and the deepest thinkers
Could always vary His message to meet the audience
Saw potential in every person; (most important discourses were to the one person audience)
Reproved with severity sometimes
Spoke words of comfort and hope to mothers
Busy
Nothing could ruffle His patience- atmosphere of peace surrounded Him among turbulence of angry enemies
Gentle
Dignified
Won children's love
Never dejected by censure
Never urged His presence on anyone*

Now to our study- Tracings in His Choices- the Character of Jesus

Tracing #1.

John 4: 1-26

Therefore, when the Lord knew that the Pharisees had heard that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John (though Jesus Himself did not baptize, but His disciples), He left Judea and departed again, to Galilee. But He needed to go through Samaria.

So He came to a city of Samaria, which is called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob gave to his son Joseph.

Now Jacob's well was there. Jesus, therefore, being wearied from His journey, sat thus by the well. It was about the sixth hour.

A woman of Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "give me a drink."

For His disciples had gone away into the city to buy food.

Then the woman of Samaria said to Him, "How is it that You, being a Jew, ask a drink from me, a Samaritan woman?"

For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.

Jesus answered and said to her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, "give me a drink," you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water."

The woman said to Him, "Sir, You have nothing to draw with, and the well is deep. Where then do You get that living water?"

Are you greater than our father Jacob, who gave us the well, and drank from it himself, as well as his sons and his livestock?"

Jesus answered and said to her, "who ever drinks of this water will thirst again,

but who ever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life."

The woman said to Him, "Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor

come here to draw.”

Jesus said to her, “Go, call your husband, and come here.”

The woman answered and said, “I have no husband.” Jesus said to her, “you have well said, I have no husband, for you have had five husbands, and the one whom you now have is not your husband; in that you spoke truly.”

The woman said to him, “Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”

Jesus said to her, “Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews.

But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”

The woman said to Him, “I know that Messiah is coming, (who is called Christ). When He comes, He will tell us all things.”

Jesus said to her, “I who speak to you am He.”

Verse 27 adds,

And at this point His disciples came, and they marveled that He talked with a woman; yet no one said, “What do you seek?” or, “Why are you talking with her?”

There is often that in Scripture which surprises us for many reasons, connected to the issues of sin and its destruction from our lives, and such surprises are something we have come to expect, but this thought-question by the disciples is not something the reader of the Bible expects! It is not anticipated by any of the stories in the Bible appearing up to this time, or by any of the principles composing the teachings of the plan of salvation!

This implied question, “What are you doing talking with a woman?” comes to the Bible student as a complete surprise. Perhaps the reason for the great element of surprise to the Bible reader is because the story, or word picture, of this hour in Jesus day, as it appears in the King James Version, reads, “and upon this came His disciples, and marveled that He talked with the woman”.

But in the New King James Version, which we are using, the implied question is, “why are you talking with a woman?” (Incidentally, this form of the implied

question is the correct formula, based on the Greek manuscript.)

The question is fascinating because it opens up to us part of the world of the disciples; those who Jesus was training to be His replacements for the work of establishing the Kingdom of God on Earth, when He was no longer here to do that work Himself.

So, why was Jesus talking to “a woman?”

To seek to find the answer to this question we will look at a few verses which appear in the Biblical story of creation, regarding the origin of woman.

Genesis 1:26, 27.

Then God said, let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the Earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the Earth.

So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 5:1, 2.

In the day that God created man, He made him in the likeness of God. He created them male and female, and blessed them and called them mankind in the day they were created.

So? Why was Jesus talking to a woman? Because she was created in the image of God.

The character Self-portrait

appearing in this story is about Jesus willingness to share what He is; the Original, by whom the copy was made.

The character quality which shows through this encounter is reflected from the regard Jesus is here showing for that which He has made, even after it has been badly damaged by an enemy.

This portrait is of affection and generosity.

The character of woman is a partial portrait of the character of Jesus. (Adam is the other half.) The original couple were male and female- both being in the image of God. The differences between them being based in the fact that they were made to reflect different qualities from the character of God; but whereas God has no defective or second class character qualities, we conclude that though the man and the woman

are different, the difference is not indicative of inferiority on the part of either one; different but equal at their creation, seems to be the correct formulation.

So why was Jesus talking to a woman? Because she was one of His special created works. The man and the woman were the crowning work of the creation week.

(For the full story of the creation, including the creation of the man and the woman, see Genesis, chapters 1, 2.)

Tracing # 2.

Jesus is traveling again; His days are full. He is again going through the territory which belongs to the Samaritans- a mixed race of people who were relatives to the Jews. These families did not get along.

Now it came to pass...that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, and sent messengers before his face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him.

But they did not receive Him, because His face was set for the journey to Jerusalem.

And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?"

But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "you do not know what manner of spirit you are of. For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

And they went to another village.

Luke 9: 54-56.

In this record of a family squabble, a very large family squabble, we see that there is no force used by Jesus in the accomplishment of His mission. His sending messengers to announce to this village His impending arrival indicated His willingness to be friends with these relatives. But when they indicated their desire to not have Him in their village, He went, peaceably, to another village- and without being mad!

We know this because when Jesus sent the seventy disciples out to work for the people, with the commission to heal the sick, and say to them, the kingdom of God has come near to you, He told them to visit, first of all, the cities of Samaria, even though He had but shortly before been repulsed by a Samaritan village. (See Luke 10:1-12).

The character Self-portrait

is of wisdom; the wisdom of the maker of all and the lover of all. The One who loves enough to let the little ones in the knowledge of what He is like, disagree with Him until they have opportunity to learn what it is that He hopes for them.

One can hear Him again saying, do unto others according to your superior knowledge that which you would want them to do to you if they knew what you know.

Later Jesus told a parable involving several people, which has turned out to be one of His most famous, in which He commended a Samaritan as being the example of what God's people are like, when those in the parable to whom the Samaritan was being compared, were Jewish high churchmen.

This character Self-portrait

is of appreciation.

Another time Jesus encountered ten lepers who requested healing. He told them to go and show themselves to the priest- all healed lepers had to be pronounced clean by the priest, as we saw in an earlier study; but Jesus had not done anything for the lepers!

Like the people at the wedding in the city of Cana, who took water to the host of the ceremonies so he could judge it's quality as wine, the lepers did what Jesus had told them to do, and left Jesus' presence to go see the priest so he could pronounce them clean- in spite of the fact that they were still lepers! There were nine Jews and one Samaritan.

On their way to the priest the ten lepers were healed. The nine Jews went on to see the priest; the one Samaritan turned around and went back to find Jesus and thank Him.

Jesus told the people about this event, recording the great joy of the healed Samaritan leper.

The only motive for this healing that comes down to us is in fact the joy of the Samaritan for what Jesus had done for Him.

This record of Joy, being caused by the act of Jesus, leads us to

Another character Self-portrait of Jesus

This picture is hiding in the revelation that He will exercise divine power for no more reason than to make one of His children happy.

The portrait here is of cheerfulness and happiness.

Another Story. Tracing #3.

(These stories are not in any chronological order.) John 7: 53-8:11.

Jesus is again back in Jerusalem. The Leaders bring- dragging alone behind them- a woman who they have caught in the act of adultery; of course the Bible says that the husband is the one who is to charge her, but in this case it is the church leaders.

And everyone went to his own house, but Jesus went to the Mount of Olives.

Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them.

Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery, and when they had set her in the midst,

they said to Him, “teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act.

Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?”

This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, “he who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.”

And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, “woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?”

She said, “no one, Lord.”

And Jesus said to her, “neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.”

The woman paid Jesus nothing before He gave His decision in her case; she was forgiven for free. “Neither do I condemn you.”

But He also said, “Go and sin no more”, which means that the present free forgiveness was based on the condition of future obedience. To be able to live a life of

obedience would keep her in touch with the grace of God.

Jesus has great compassion and love for the children He has given life. He has great compassion and love for His erring children, but the love for His children and the desire for their happiness that called forth the first revelation of the laws by which their system was designed to live forever, is still His love for them; the laws by which their system was designed to live forever are unchanged.

The character of the law giver, the revelation of those principles by which they are able to function forever, is here declared to be unchanged.

The character Self-portrait is of longing desire; the desire to have more children, a larger family; the desire to have those made by Him live with Him forever- to be wherever He is.

This parental picture is of calmness coupled to firmness- the firmness of the lily on the lake.

The character of Jesus; tracings in His choices-

Tracing #4.

While waiting for a response from a university to some school work I had submitted to them for their approval, I got a job driving a logging truck for some people who were buying some trees my Mom was selling.

My job included loading the truck which I was supposed to then drive into town to a large wood yard where the truck would be unloaded by some one from the crew who lived at or near the wood yard.

Because of the close proximity of the wood yard to the places where the employees lived, it was common for some of their pets to show up at the work site from time to time.

One of the employees had a dog who was a mix of general dog and coyote, who was quite wild and seemed to be always hungry. Because of the lack of time to eat regular meals I carried a lunch with me- generally some sandwiches. From time to time I would save some food and give it to the always-hungry dog. She never came close enough that I could touch her, but we did seem to become used to one another. The employees warned me to be always on the alert when I was out of my truck because she, they said, would bite people.

Another employee had a small black dog; just ordinary dog.

This ordinary small black dog liked to sneak up behind me, when I was out of the truck removing the chains which held the load onto the truck, and try to bite my heels. My shoes had low tops so I had to always be on the watch to make sure I was not bitten, by either dog.

One day I drove into the wood yard and looked for the two dogs. The coyote dog was across the yard busy sniffing in a pile of wood, while the small black dog was nowhere to be seen.

I climbed out of the truck and started to remove the chains holding the load onto the truck, when the coyote dog suddenly turned toward the truck and started to charge the place where I was standing. At first she did not worry me much, as she was quite a distance away, but her charge did not slow at all as she was approaching the spot where I was standing. I began to wonder if this was the day that I was going to be attacked quite fiercely by what was apparently a very angry dog. When she got to where I was standing, with her fangs bared, she suddenly swerved around me and attacked the small black dog which had sneaked up behind me without me seeing it.

She slashed at the little black dog and swerved away and then attacked the little dog again in the same manner until she had driven the small black dog some distance from where I was standing.

I suppose it would be fair to say that I gave the hungry dog some of my lunch because she was apparently always hungry, but it was also because I hoped that we might become friends. Up to the day she kept me from being bitten, it did not seem that my plan to become friends had worked.

Unbeknown to me, she was watching over me.

Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus is who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead.

And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, a Pharisee, they made Him a supper; and Martha served at the supper, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him.

Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of Spikenard, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil.

But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said,

Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to the poor?

This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it.

But Jesus said, let her alone; Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for me. She has come before hand to anoint My body for burial.

Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.

For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always.

Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying, this man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is touching Him, for she is a sinner.

And Jesus answered and said to him, Simon, I have something to say to you. So he said, teacher, say it.

There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty.

And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell me, therefore, which of them will love him more?

Simon answered and said, I suppose the one whom he forgave more. And he said to him, You have rightly judged.

Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head.

You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in.

You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.

Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little.

Then He said to her, your sins are forgiven.

And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to themselves, who is this who even forgives sins?

Then He said to the woman, your faith has saved you. Go in peace.

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you? And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him.

(For this story see Matthew 26:6-16; Mark 14: 3-11; Luke 7: 36-50; John 12: 1-8.)

Mary was being of service to Jesus, never knowing that He was watching over her; never recognizing that He was the One forgiving her sins.

The character Self-portrait

which is shining from this story is of loving care- the loving care of the One who, often unrecognized, is our Guardian.

Tracing #5.

Then Jesus entered and passed through Jericho.

Now behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus who was a chief tax collector, and he was rich.

And he sought to see who Jesus was, but could not because of the crowd, for he was of short stature.

So he ran ahead and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see Him, for He was going to pass that way.

And when Jesus came to the place, He looked up and saw him, and said to him, "Zacchaeus, make haste and come down, for today I must stay at your house."

So he made haste and came down, and received Him joyfully.

But when they saw it, they all complained, saying, "He has gone to be a guest with a man who is a sinner."

Then Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold."

And Jesus said to him, "Today salvation has come to this house, because he also is a son of Abraham;

for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."

(Luke 19: 1-9.)

"I give half of my goods to the poor; and I restore fourfold."

There is no mention in this story of Zacchaeus knowing what Jesus looked like before Jesus stopped under the tree. Neither is there a mention of him having been accused by man, except that he was a tax collector!

The point of these comments is of course to note that before Zacchaeus was accused he had confessed his sin, and had begun to make restitution.

The implied is that he had encountered the influence of the Holy Spirit. Under its influence he had changed his life-style to one that left his conscience free.

Jesus reaction to a Jewish tax collector who wanted very much to see Him was

to go to his home for a visit. He also said, “today salvation has come to this house.”

The character Self-portrait

is a picture of gentleness toward that which is defective. This character tracing is of Mercy; the One bringing salvation to those who should not have been lost.

Zacchaeus was a Jew. “Salvation is of the Jews”, we saw Jesus saying in an earlier story (John 4:22).

As such this character portrait is also of patient forgiveness;

that patient forgiveness which responds to acts of right-doing in people’s lives, when those acts are brought about by the influence of the Holy Spirit.

When my daughter was little we would say “I love you” to her, and she would repeat the same words back to us- but the saying of the words was without inflection. There was no understanding of the meaning of those words in her mind.

One day, when we had been traveling far from home in a city which was so full of tourists that one could not walk on the sidewalk, my wife and I needed for my wife to go into a store and make a purchase.

We agreed that I would let her out and continue driving through the crowds until I had circled the block (there were no parking spaces); that if she was there I would pick her up without parking, if she had not yet come out of the store I would again circle the block until she was waiting on the side of the street, in the crowd.

When my wife got out of the car she immediately disappeared into the tight crowd of people. Our daughter seemed to realize that my wife was free- she was out of our reach. Our daughter looked at me and said, “do you think she will come back?”

“Oh yes,” I said. “We have a string tied on her.” My daughter was quite puzzled; she understood the concept for we often played with her toys by pulling them with a string around the house. “She loves us,” I explained.

I circled the block, surrounded by many people walking, something like trying to drive through a parade. The first two times around the block my daughter was quite concerned when we arrived at the pick-up area and my wife was not there. As we approached the pick-up area the third time around the block my wife suddenly stepped out of the thick crowd right next to our car; our daughter instantly had the greatest smile; not only had her mother come back, but she suddenly understood, “I love you.”

It seemed to us that our daughter always trusted us after that experience. Her trust was to us always a source of Joy. To be trusted was to be loved. Love, trust and joy, are apparently chained together. Love brings the others. Perhaps this is why Paul wrote of the gifts of the Spirit, and ended with saying, "the greatest of these is love."

So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee, where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum.

When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him, and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death.

Then Jesus said to him, "Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe."

The nobleman said to Him, "Sir, come down before my child dies!"

Jesus said to him, "Go your way; your son lives." So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way.

And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, "Your son lives!"

Then he inquired of them the hour when he got better. And they said to him, "Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him."

*So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, "Your son lives." And he himself believed, and his whole household.
(John 4: 46 - 53).*

As we read the accounts of the works of Jesus on behalf of the people, one senses the joy He found in the ability He had to be of help; in the Joy that came back to Him from the joy His acts and teachings awakened in the lives of those who passed through His life.

Not only was He doing the work of the Father- giving a revelation of what the Father is like, but He was also giving a successful revelation of what the devil is like- the Devil possessing people and throwing them into the fire and making them live like mad men, and Jesus, God's representative, setting them free to live lives of usefulness, reflecting the goodness of God to them, to the community and to their families.

Happy as these accounts are, there seems to be a greater source of Joy to Jesus- that joy coming to Him when He saw people trusting the goodness of God; believing in His thoughts of peace toward them. For Jesus, to be trusted was to be understood, and to be understood was to be loved. Joy, Peace and trust, are wonderful qualities, but in Jesus' life, as in the gifts of the Spirit list, the greatest of these is love.

The character Self-portrait

is about the joy which comes from giving that which returns trust- the base for love, because God is love.

This picture is of kindness.

Another Tracing

*Levi-Matthew; a Publican
(a Tax collector- a Jew collecting taxes for the ruling Romans- dearly hated!
by all Jews.)*

After these things He (Jesus, a Jew) went out and saw a tax collector named Levi, sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, "Follow Me." So he left all, rose up, and followed Him.

Then Levi gave Him a great feast in his own house.

Now it happened, as He was dining in Levi's house, that many tax collectors and sinners came and sat down with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many, and they followed Him.

And when the Pharisees saw it they complained, and said to His disciples,

"Why does your Teacher eat and drink with tax collector's and sinners?"

When Jesus heard that, He said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

(For this story see Matthew 9:9-13; Mark 2: 13-17; Luke 5:27-32.)

Jesus is here seen sitting as an honored guest at the table of the Publican, showing that He recognized the dignity of humanity.

The character Self-portrait

is of that which appealed to the heart of Jesus; a soul thirsting for the water of life.

The picture here is of compassion- the beauty of spirit.

Our last tracing

The days of Jesus teaching the disciples and people as He walks through the lands of the middle east are coming to an end; the works of gentleness as He heals the sick, and forgives the sins of the guilty end as surprisingly as they began:

*And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying,
“All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.
Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,
Teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”*

And He led them out as far as Bethany, and He lifted up His hands and blessed them.

Now it came to pass, while He blessed them, that He was parted from them and carried up into heaven,

And sat down at the right hand of God.

And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the work through the accompanying signs.

(See Matthew 28: 19-20; Mark 16:19-20; and Luke 24: 50-53.)

The character Self-portrait

is of partnership, a picture in motion, an Adult holding the hand of a child, two working together;

the portrait of perseverance and energy.

Tracings in His Choices as Mirrors

When one, male or female, stands in front of one of the mirrors which is the character tracings of Jesus, one sees reflected a being composed of many parts, all of which have their origin in Him-

the Bringer of Sunshine.

Self-portraits of God

Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

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Photographs of Redemption as Mirrors

Self-portraits of God

Studies in the Life and Work of Jesus

Lesson 7 Photographs in Redemption

General Introduction

***“Father, father,” the children called as they quietly ran down the hospital hall.
“Father, there is a snake that is stuck!”***

Doctor-father had to see what it was that the children were talking about!

The hospital had been doing some upgrading, including putting new roof-tar on the building. The tar had been shipped to the hospital site in barrels which, after the tar was removed, were stacked in a near-by field.

The weather had been so hot that the tar remnants left in the barrels would become soft during the day.

On this particular day a large snake had crawled through the barrels and had gotten covered with tar. After leaving the barrels it had crawled through the grass and leaves that were on the ground as it headed out into the forest. However before it had crawled very far so many leaves and so much grass had become stuck onto the tar which was stuck to the snake that it could still make its crawling motion, but it could not move forward as the sticks and leaves on the snake simply slipped on the sticks and leaves that were lying on the ground.

At this point the big snake started to cry-- loudly! It was then that the children heard the crying snake and went to see what was making the snake cry.

Seeing what the problem was they had gone to find Doctor-father.

When father saw the problem the big snake was in he decided that they must help the snake, so they picked up the big snake and took it with them back to the hospital where they all sat down on the front porch of the hospital and stretched the snake out across their laps so they could wipe it down with kerosene, thereby removing all the leaves, grass, and tar that were stuck to it.

After putting talcum powder on the snake they turned it loose to continue its journey to wherever big snakes go on hot days.

The big snake crawled a distance away, and then turned and looked back as if to say, "thank you."

Of course it seems obvious that that is the end of the story, but in fact the big snake did not leave, rather it stayed around the hospital and ate the rats which were a problem for the hospital. It also became a friend to the children.

When the snake had eaten all the rats around the hospital the doctor's daughter would put it across her shoulders, holding its head with one hand, while its tail dug on the ground, and carry it down to their house where it would stay and eat all the rats around their house. Then she would carry it back to the hospital where the cycle would start all over again.

And that is how a big snake came to be known as Tar-baby in Thailand.

Of course there would not be this snake story if the snake had not done that which got it into trouble, and if some one had not seen its problem and cared enough to help! As such this story becomes a portrait of redemption.

From daily life we already know that redemption is the replacing of a loss with a solution which causes the original condition to again be available; or, the replacing of a loss with a replacement which is greater than the original condition, or which has more potential than the original condition! To convert some thing damaged into something of value can be an act of redemption.

Redemption- the exchange of something for something else of equal or greater value.

The cost of the act of redemption is of course determined by the problem the needing-to-be-redeemed is in, unless the act of redeeming has more than one dimension to it.

If the redemptive act is also to serve as a statement about the one doing the redeeming, rather than just the trouble the needing-to-be-redeemed is in, then the indebtedness plus the cost of the self-revelation determines the cost of the redemptive exchange; the self-revelation to be given by the redemptive act then complicates the otherwise simple exchange of a payment to cover a debt.

If the redemptive act is to be a self-revelation in addition to an act of trouble solution, then the redemptive price is determined at least in part by the one doing the redeeming rather than being determined solely by the one whom the payment is to satisfy.

If the debt is philosophical in nature, a conflict about values, then the payment may in fact be made by the redeemer to another than the one causing the appearance of a debt to have been incurred.

Therefore the price of any act of redemption is set by the issue to be resolved and by the judge or judges who are to arbitrate the exchange, and the one or ones who are to decide when the indebtedness has been reduced to non-existence.

Redemption- the exchange of something which one has, for that which one never had, or which one had, but which has been lost; something which has value to the one offering the redemption price.

Webster says of redemption that it is

To get or to win back; to free from distress or harm; to free from captivity; to extricate from, or help to overcome, something detrimental; to release from blame or debt; to free from the consequences; to change for the better, to restore; to remove an obligation by payment; to convert into something of value; to offset the bad effect of; or to make worthwhile.

In our study redemption is probably going to carry all these meanings, plus the dimension of self-revelation by the redeemer, for the problem seems to start with a misrepresentation. But I am getting ahead!

Portraits of Redemption

The Story- from the start.

Once upon a time, the way all good stories start, or,

In the beginning God created the Heavens and the Earth- and the Angels.

One of the angels God created was described thus-

You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

You were in Eden, the garden of God; and every precious stone was your covering: the workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created.

You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God;

You were perfect in your ways (God had made him as much like Himself as He could?) from the day you were created till iniquity was found in you.

Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; you corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor.

I cast you to the ground.

You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities.

(See Ezekiel 28: 12-18.)

How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground.

(See Isaiah 14: 12.)

And the earth was without form and void, and God said, Let there be light, and fish, and birds, flowers and people!

And the Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man, male and female, whom He had formed, to tend the garden and to keep it.

*And the Lord God commanded the man, saying,
"Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; 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."*

Now the serpent- the great angel who had corrupted his way because of his beauty- was more cunning than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made.

*And he said to the woman,
"Has God indeed said, 'you shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?"*

*And the woman said to the serpent,
"We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'you shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"*

Then the Serpent said to the woman, "you will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."

So the woman took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Therefore the Lord God sent him out of the garden, lest he (Adam and Eve) put out his hand and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live forever. And He placed cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden, and a flaming sword which turned every way to guard the way to the tree of life.

So the Lord God said to the serpent,

"because you have done this, I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed." (See Genesis, chapters 1-3.)

Portraits in Redemption, picture #1.

The Serpent's victims would not be left his helpless captives (see Genesis 3:15), shut out from their garden home with its tree of eternal life.

What exactly would God do? The picture at this point is not very clear. But this is the start of God's activities on behalf of His children who have pawned themselves! Why did they not die on this day when they had disobeyed the command of their Creator? Because as soon as there was trouble there was a Redeemer.

God could have given them up to their captor; He had lost only that which He had given to Adam. Or He could take it all back by force; or, He could decide to buy back the

indebtedness and try again to win the hearts of these children of His; or He could have just started over again.

Indirectly, all His children were involved- those who did not rebel when Lucifer did, and these two, and any children they might have- He had told them to multiply.

I heard you! You asked, why did God not prevent the problem before it got started, if He really knows all, and has all power? Because He wanted to have more children; children who loved Him. Love can not be commanded; only by love can love be awakened.

So God instituted a plan He had had from the foundation of the world, and began a self-revelation that would reveal who loved Adam and Eve in such a way as to give them the life experience which, when they looked back over it, would make them happy; an experience which, when they could see the end from the beginning and the part they played in God's purposes, would be such that they would not want to change anything.

But they already had a life experience!

Results were to be compared; Lucifer had given them access to the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which access God had denied them. God sent them out from the Garden; Who really loved them and wanted for them to be happy in their lives?

By the eating of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which God had withheld from them they had gained knowledge- the knowledge of evil. But was this knowledge a blessing? Had they gained anything more than a knowledge of pain and suffering? Had God in fact been being good to them when He withheld from them this knowledge?

Lucifer and Adam and Eve could only rebel against their maker because their Maker loved them. The response of love can only be given freely; love from another must be won. Therefore God made His creatures with the potential for growth and the ability to disagree.

God the Creator knew the risk He was taking, and He designed the plan for redeeming from the beginning (see 1Peter 1: 19-20), but creating His creatures with free will was the only path to the loving intelligent relationship that He desired to have with them. To Him, love from His children was worth dying for. It also was the path to an eternal future of family togetherness.

Without His love being returned, He did not have a stable eternity of happiness to offer. For a government based on love to function, love must not only be given, it must be returned.

This Self-portrait

is of the Pattern Maker

But I am getting ahead, again!

Portraits in Redemption, picture #2.

What was God offering? Words and acts.

In outline form God's offer might be summarized this way-

Promises- about Him and us

Representations- of Himself and His kingdom, in our lives

A personal encounter- He came

More promises- about Him and us

Personal acts-for His children

He will die to pay redemption's price

The acts of God toward His in-trouble children have unfolded since the Garden of Eden in connection with daily events occurring in their lives.

The promises being made by God to His children also came to His children in a context of the daily progression of the argument as to who was the good guy and who was the bad guy. Was Lucifer the benefactor of the children of God, as he claimed to be, or was God, the One restricting the activities of His children, the one who loved them?

The answer could only become inarguably clear when the results of participating in the variety of offered programs was seen.

To be acceptable to God the decision made by His children had to be based in freewill- the exercise of the freewill He had given to His children, when that freewill was exercised in harmony with sufficient evidence for them to make an intelligent decision; a decision based in the exercises of the mind God has given to each of His children.

From the first it seems that Lucifer felt that he could not win if these principles were followed.

Instead of presenting himself and his program to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as a great alternative to God's program, he disguised himself and used misrepresentation.

What he won, he won through mis-information.

Even though God had been following the same rules from the time He made His children and their garden, and even though He had lost the first round to Lucifer, the solidity of results based on these principles was so sure God made no change in His way of operating.

He did however change the way that He interacted with His children. (The reason for this change, I think, becomes clearer to students of the controversy as the contest progresses, and the events become a story.)

This Self-portrait

is of the Sample-

a picture doing what it portrays; the One who is the way, leading the way.

Promises- about Him and us.

(The following materials are not listed in chronological order, nor is there any intent to list more than will give a sketch of the activities being reviewed. The whole Bible story amplifies the portraits being sketched here. You must read them all!)

Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, on those who hope in His mercy, to deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

For thus says the High and Lofty One Who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:

I dwell in the high and holy place, with him who has a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.

Psalm 33: 18, 19; Isaiah 57: 15.

Is this not that fast that I have chosen: to lose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?

Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out;

When you see the naked, that you cover him, and not hide yourself from your own flesh?

Then your light shall break forth like the morning, your healing shall spring forth speedily, and your righteousness shall go before you;

The glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard.

Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer; you shall cry, and He will say, here I am.

Isaiah 58: 6-9.

*If you turn away your foot from the Sabbath,
From doing your pleasure on My holy day,*

*And call the Sabbath a delight, the holy day of the Lord honorable,
And shall honor Him, not doing your own ways,*

*Nor finding your own pleasure,
Nor speaking your own words,*

Then you shall delight yourself in the Lord;

*And I will cause you to ride on the high hills of the earth,
And feed you with the heritage of Jacob your father.*

The mouth of the Lord has spoken.

Isaiah 58: 13, 14.

*For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth;
And the former shall not be remembered or come onto mind.*

Isaiah 65: 17.

This Self-portrait

is of the first cause; the Word which forms the result.

Representations- of Himself and His kingdom, in our lives

The most unexpected development to be used as a means of communication between the Lord and His children, in my opinion, was two stones worn on the clothing of the High priest. These two stones were used by the Lord as a channel of communicating yes and no answers to questions asked of the Lord by the people. When I first learned of this channel for communicating, I thought how great it would be if we had such a system to use now!

Then I began to realize that the system which I thought would be the answer to my questions for the Lord, would in fact not work; the Lord might be ready to communicate to me what He wanted me to know, but His opportunity to communicate would have to wait until I figured out the right question to ask Him.

He might want me to go to the next city and help a sick person there, when I am busy growing crops and not thinking about spending hours asking random questions just to discover if He had a message for me. The first question today would be, "Do I have Mail?"

If I did ask the Lord if He had a message for me, and the answer was yes, then the guessing would begin. If the message was about something I knew nothing about, I would never ask the right question to learn the message God had for me. I am glad we do not use that system today.

(For references to this system of communicating, see texts like Exodus 28: 30; and 1Samuel 28: 6.)

Notice what God said, which indicates the difficulty of this seemingly great system for communicating:

For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55: 8, 9.

This Self-portrait

is of the unimaginable.

The most common method God has used to make His messages known to people and to nations, was for Him to speak through people known as prophets, or spokesmen.

Some of the prophets were very interesting people. Isaiah was still a lad when God called him to be a prophet.

Some of the people God called to be prophets were women.

Micah worked with sycamore fruit.

Some times when God found the people were resistant to the messages He was gently trying to communicate to them, He had the prophets do unusual things!

Hosea was first told what nationality of girl to marry, and later he was told to go down to the market place and buy a prostitute- He did it! He went out and bought a prostitute! Even she was shocked!

Ezekiel was told by God to buy some new clothing and take it out and bury it in the mud by the river bank for about a year, and then go and dig it up to see what had happened! Then he was told to preach about the event!

Isaiah was told to have children and give them certain names which revealed the future.

Elisha was told by the Lord that a very sick non-Jewish general was coming to see him about being healed, because a young girl his army had stolen away from Israel had told his wife, her master, that the prophet in Israel knew the God of Israel, and that if the Prophet asked the God of Israel, the God of Israel would make the sick general well.

The Lord added in His message to Elisha that Elisha was not to go out to see the general; he, Elisha, was only to send a message to the general telling him that he was to go and dip in the river Jordan seven times. The General got mad! But he did it and was healed.

God's general method of communicating His messages to His prophets was by dreams and by visions- something probably similar to a moving picture, I think. However there were exceptions; He talked to Moses, as a man talks to a friend.

Occasionally He employed symbols to add a message which was additional to the main message. When God commissioned Moses to be His spokesman to Pharaoh of Egypt regarding His plans for Israel to leave Egypt, He appeared to Moses in the form of a burning bush which burned and was not consumed.

This approach not only served to get Moses attention, and to reveal the presence of God to the shepherd, but it carried a message which was additional to the primary message about God's plans for Israel. The use of the bush pre-revealed the incarnation; the fact that the Mighty God would take the form of a person so He could live among His children, as one of their neighbors.

All God's acts since the Garden have not only benefited His children, but have themselves revealed future acts portraying what God was offering.

This Self-portrait

is of the Unanticipated.

Some times some of the people from among the people God had been influencing with His messages were so anxious to have their neighbors do what they wanted them to do, and to do it their way, that they would hire people to pretend to be prophets, and say what they, the employers, wanted the people to believe!

So God did the expected-

A personal encounter- He came.

“But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons.”

Galatians 4:4.

***“Now in the sixth month the Angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth,
to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the House of David. The Virgin's name was Mary.***

And having come in, the angel said to her, Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!

But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was

Then the angel said to her, Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God.

And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus.

He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David.

And He will reign over the House of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.

Then Mary said to the angel, how can this be, since I do not know a man?

And the angel answered and said to her, The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.” (Luke 1: 26-35)

Born in a manger; grew up in Egypt and Nazareth. Preached and healed all over the Middle East, but His majority activity was healing and comforting the people who had been hurt the worst by Lucifer, the great Angel who merited a personal description in Scripture he was so outstanding- but he was still a created being, something he seemed at times to forget.

In addition to the very great and active daily life Jesus lived doing good deeds (see the lesson on the historical Jesus), and the many stories He told (see the lesson on the parables), and the supernatural acts He performed (see the lesson on the miracles and their categories and significances), in addition to these things, He died for us.

But before He could die He had had to become a person, this member of the Godhead, with the help of the Father and the Holy Spirit.

***“Therefore, when He came into the world, He said:
...a body you have prepared for Me.” (Hebrews 10: 5.)***

More promises- about Him and us

[Jesus began His ministry at about thirty years of age (see Luke 3: 23.) Up to this time He lived with His mother and Joseph and was subject to them (see Luke 2: 21-51)].

To Nicodemus He promised that people could be born again; they could have a new life principle implanted, they could live free from the old over-mastering passions. They could be involved in the Kingdom He was making.

To the paralytic and to Mary He gave assurance of the forgiveness of their sins. To those whose lives had been filled with the pursuit of daily existence He gave assurance that they could be workers in His kingdom.

To those who took time to learn of the lessons that He was teaching and the eternal life He was offering, He said that in His father's house there were many mansions, and that when He went back to the Father He would prepare a place for them- and not only would He prepare a place for them, but that He would come back and get them, to take them to be with Him wherever He was, and that they would be always where He was.

Jesus also said that those who choose to be a part of His work and kingdom would have persecutions in this world, and that if they left all for Him, in this life they would receive one hundred fold.

Personal Acts- for His children

And as we have seen before, He illustrated all of these teachings by the acts that He did- both for the good people and for those who chose not to live a part in His kingdom.

At Capernaum we saw that He healed all the people, not just those who had faith in God.

In the miracle of the loaves and fishes He provided food for thousands of people, for all those who stayed to listen to Him and to be healed, until it was late in the day, including those who only followed Him so they could complain- on two different occasions.

When some of His followers were unable to understand some of the events of His life, and were very troubled, He appeared to them as a stranger so He could discuss with them those principles which would give them understanding and peace in their lives.

There is probably nothing that we can think of that we might want Him to do for us that He did not do for those who chose to be a part of His work and kingdom- except take them out of the world when He left it; neither did He take away their conflicts, because without these they would not be able to express faith and have the lost image of God restored, by God's grace.

This Self-portrait

is of loving ability expressed.

After this there was a feast of the Jews, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is in Jerusalem by the sheep gate, a pool, which is called in the Hebrew, Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of sick people, blind, lame, paralyzed, waiting for the moving of the water.

For an angel went down at a certain time into the pool and stirred up the water; then, who ever stepped in first, after the stirring of the water, was made well of whatever disease he had.

Now a certain man was there who had an infirmity 38 years. When Jesus saw him lying there and knew that he already had been in that condition a longtime, he said to him,

Do you want to be made well?

The sick man answered him,

Sir, I have no man to take me into the pool when the water is stirred up; but while I am coming, another steps down before me.

Jesus said to him,

Arise, take up your bed and walk.

And immediately the man was made well, took up his bed, and walked. And that day was the Sabbath.

The Jews therefore said to him who was cured,

It is the Sabbath; it is not lawful for you to carry your bed.

He answered them,

He who made me well said to me, take up your bed and walk. And they asked him,

Who is the man who said to you, take up your bed and walk?

But the one who was healed, did not know who it was for Jesus had withdrawn, a multitude being in that place. Afterward Jesus found him in the temple and said to him,

See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.

Then the man departed and told the Jews that it was Jesus, who had made him well.

For this reason, the Jews persecuted Jesus, and sought to kill him, because he had done these things on the Sabbath.

But Jesus answered them,

My Father has been working until now, and I have been working.

Therefore the Jews sought all the more to kill Him, because He not only broke the Sabbath, but also said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God.

John 5:1-18.

In this lesson we have been looking at portraits of redemption drawn for us by the words and works of Jesus. It is an interesting activity to look at these pictures. They are like looking at an old photo album- there is a picture of Great grandfather, and there is a picture of auntie when she was 6 months old; each picture carries some thing special. But in the story we have just reviewed there are so many objects for us to pay attention to that this one picture is almost a complete picture album!

There is of course the portrait of a sick man; and there are pictures of the healed man, strong and carrying his bed through the village square; there are pictures of the men who are angry that he has gotten well enough to carry his bed, on the Sabbath day; there is a snapshot of Jesus returning to talk to the man who has just been scolded; there is a picture of the healed man talking to the angry men; and there is a picture of Jesus and the angry men talking; there is a picture of Jesus and the angry men each going a different direction; and there is a portrait of the angry men in a large group meeting.

The exciting thing about all of these pictures is that none of them is what the act done by Jesus for the forever-sick man appears to be about.

This picture we can not paste under either of our captions- 'Jesus teaching', or, 'Jesus doing!'

All these portraits fade to become a single abstract painting- a village scene coalescing into a living color self-portrait in which salvation is framing the Sabbath.

This Self-portrait

is of rest; the Sabbath commandment coalescing into the salvation of the soul.

(For a great Biblical presentation of this concept of the Sabbath as a portrayal of the work God wants to do for the soul, see Hebrews 3: 7- 4: 11.)

His every word, teaching and act was a line in the portrait of redemption He was tracing- following the pattern designed in Heaven before the foundations of the earth were laid.

And, having done all these things for us,

He will die to pay redemption's price.

Adam and Eve ate from the tree with the death penalty attached to its fruit- the gift of God is eternal life, but the wages of sin is death. Some one must die for God to offer forgiveness, and at the same time not give up the rule of the world. The law of God is a transcript of His character; therefore it is unchangeable as long as He does not change His character. Because God is Holy the law of God is holy.

Redemption, that which is being portrayed in the pictures we are looking at, means that God decided not to let anyone die- He would provide Himself the ransom.

He would take the penalty of death on Himself. Himself the victim of the penalty- Himself the offerer of the ransom. Himself the evidence of the love which withheld the

knowledge of evil.

The wages of sin, evil, is death; He would take the death and give life.

But the cost would be very high for the ransom price must be paid for each of the descendants of Adam- He would taste death for every person, knowing that not all would want to become His children. But He would not have it said that He could have done more when the death penalty was imposed on all who chose to not be part of His world where there would be only living for others.

In the remade world there would be no sickness, suffering or death. They would not hurt or destroy in all the ages to come.

But first-

His life begins to end when He corrects Judas to save Mary from those who could not, would not, comprehend her wealth of pure devotion toward Jesus for what He had done for her life. Her gift was for sins forgiven.

Judas's response to Mary's gratitude was to want to steal her gift. Being unable to enrich himself with what was hers, he went out from the banquet for Jesus and sold Jesus to His enemies, knowing that they were looking for help to have Him dead.

Jesus' life begins to end when He corrects the revelation of God being given in the temple worship- the making of money He exchanged for the healing of the sufferers seeking God's presence.

Jesus' life begins to end when He heals the withered hand of a worshipper on the Sabbath in church to show correct Sabbath significance.

Jesus' life begins to end when in the beginning the plan of redemption was formed- He was the Lamb slain from the foundation of the earth,

when the Godhead in council agreed on the roles to be fulfilled by each of them. (For this concept see 1Peter 1: 18-21.)

God the Father agrees to exchange the children's indebtedness for their Creator-father's activities on their behalf.

When Jesus, One equal with God the Father, not only lives a life which reveals the Father's character but dies a death of suffering for every child of Adam and Eve the self-revealing-payment of redemption is finished. The good-guy is known. It is the Godhead who come to the rescue of the dying; not Lucifer, the beautiful Son of the Morning.

But while the redemption-payment is finished, the redemption portrait is not assembled until the suffering-dying ransom-Price comes forth from the grave at the call of His associates.

He had power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it up again, but He waited in the grave after dying on the cross and being buried until He was called to come out because He was there as a prisoner of divine justice.

(For the story of the ending of Jesus' life see, for example, Matthew 26:1- 28:20; Mark 14: 8- 16:20; Luke 22:1- 24:53; or, John 17:20- 21:25.)

When the price was paid and He had rested through the Sabbath, the symbol of

redemption realized, He was called by the Father and left the grave.

*He could do all this because in Him was life original, unborrowed, underived.
(For this concept see, for example, John 10: 14-18; Micah 5:2; or John 1: 1-3.)*

The Self-portrait

is of redemption's price- the life of the Lifegiver.

Portraits of Redemption as mirrors

In the mirrors which are the photos of Redemption we see reflected the value of a soul created in the image of God, even after it has been ruined by an enemy.

Redemption- the Self-portrait of God.