

Responding to articles (mostly pro Roman Catholic) sent anonymously to me and received 14th June 2011:

(4) Is ‘Christ in the Eucharist’?

[Part 1]

This article is my fourth response to the package of articles sent anonymously to me and received by me on 14th June 2011. My first response that dealt with the question –

‘Does Christ’s sacrifice continue?’

is located on http://www.takeheed.info/Assorted_Articles/Ecumenism/response-to-articles-part-one.pdf

My second response dealing with the question –

‘Is Robert Sungenis right on “being saved”?’

is located on http://www.takeheed.info/Assorted_Articles/Ecumenism/response-to-articles-part-two.pdf

My third response dealing with

‘Is The Mass a Propitiatory Sacrifice?’

Is located on http://www.takeheed.info/Assorted_Articles/Ecumenism/response-to-articles-part-three.pdf

Responding now to Article 4

This fourth response relates to an article sent to me that was written (I assume) by Karl Keating of ‘**Catholic Answers**’ and is entitled ‘**Christ in the Eucharist**’. My response, because of the sheer volume of material involved, will be divided into three parts. The article by Mr Keating is located on http://www.catholic.com/library/Christ_in_the_Eucharist.asp and herewith is the text of the article that was sent to me anonymously –

Christ in the Eucharist

Protestant attacks on the Catholic Church often focus on the Eucharist. This demonstrates that opponents of the Church—mainly Evangelicals and Fundamentalists—recognize one of Catholicism’s core doctrines. What’s more, **the attacks show that Fundamentalists are not always literalists. This is seen in their interpretation of the key biblical passage, chapter six of John’s Gospel, in which Christ speaks about the sacrament that will be instituted at the Last Supper.** This tract examines the last half of that chapter

John 6:30 begins a colloquy that took place in the synagogue at Capernaum. The Jews asked Jesus what sign he could perform so that they might believe in him. As a challenge, they noted that "our ancestors ate manna in the desert." Could Jesus top that? He told them the real bread from heaven comes from the Father. "Give us this bread always," they said. Jesus replied, "I am the bread of life; whoever comes to me will never hunger, and whoever believes in me will never thirst." At this point the Jews understood him to be speaking metaphorically.

Again and Again

Jesus first repeated what he said, then summarized: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven; if any one eats of this bread, he will live for ever; and the bread which I shall give for the life of the world is my flesh." The Jews then disputed among themselves, saying, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?'" (John 6:51–52).

His listeners were stupefied because now they understood Jesus *literally*—and correctly. He again repeated his words, but with even greater emphasis, and introduced the statement about drinking his blood: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of man and drink his blood, you have no life in you; he who eats my flesh and drinks my blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He who eats my flesh and drinks my blood abides in me, and I in him" (John 6:53–56).

No Corrections

Notice that Jesus made no attempt to soften what he said, no attempt to correct "misunderstandings," for there were none. Our Lord's listeners understood him perfectly well. They no longer thought he was speaking metaphorically. If they *had*, if they mistook what he said, why no correction?

On other occasions when there was confusion, Christ explained just what he meant (cf. Matt. 16:5–12). Here, where any misunderstanding would be fatal, there was no effort by Jesus to correct. Instead, he repeated himself for greater emphasis.

In John 6:60 we read: "Many of his disciples, when they heard it, said, 'This is a hard saying; who can listen to it?'" These were his disciples, people used to his remarkable ways. He warned them not to think carnally, but spiritually: "It is the Spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life" (John 6:63; cf. 1 Cor. 2:12–14).

But he knew some did not believe. (It is here, in the rejection of the Eucharist, that Judas fell away; look at John 6:64.) "After this, many of his disciples drew back and no longer went about with him" (John 6:66).

This is the only record we have of any of Christ's followers forsaking him for purely doctrinal reasons. If it had all been a misunderstanding, if they erred in taking a metaphor in a literal sense, why didn't he call them back and straighten things out? Both the Jews, who were suspicious of him, and his disciples, who had accepted everything up to this point, would have remained with him had he said he was speaking only symbolically.

But he did not correct these protesters. **Twelve times he said he was the bread that came down from heaven; four times he said they would have "to eat my flesh and drink my blood." John 6 was an extended promise of what would be instituted at the Last Supper—and it was a promise that could not be more explicit. Or so it would seem to a Catholic. But what do Fundamentalists say?**

Merely Figurative?

They say that in John 6 Jesus was not talking about physical food and drink, but about spiritual food and drink. They quote John 6:35: "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.'" They claim that coming

to him is bread, having faith in him is drink. Thus, eating his flesh and blood merely means believing in Christ.

But there is a problem with that interpretation. As Fr. John A. O'Brien explains, "The phrase 'to eat the flesh and drink the blood,' when used figuratively among the Jews, as among the Arabs of today, meant to inflict upon a person some serious injury, especially by calumny or by false accusation. To interpret the phrase figuratively then would be to make our Lord promise life everlasting to the culprit for slandering and hating him, which would reduce the whole passage to utter nonsense" (O'Brien, *The Faith of Millions*, 215). For an example of this use, see Micah 3:3.

Fundamentalist writers who comment on John 6 also assert that one can show Christ was speaking only metaphorically by comparing verses like John 10:9 ("I am the door") and John 15:1 ("I am the true vine"). The problem is that there is not a connection to John 6:35, "I am the bread of life." "I am the door" and "I am the vine" make sense as metaphors because Christ is like a door—we go to heaven through him—and he is also like a vine—we get our spiritual sap through him. **But Christ takes John 6:35 far beyond symbolism by saying, "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John 6:55).**

He continues: "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me" (John 6:57). The Greek word used for "eats" (*trogon*) is very blunt and has the sense of "chewing" or "gnawing." This is not the language of metaphor.

Their Main Argument

For Fundamentalist writers, the scriptural argument is capped by an appeal to John 6:63: "It is the spirit that gives life, the flesh is of no avail; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and life." **They say this means that eating real flesh is a waste.** But does this make sense?

Are we to understand that Christ had just commanded his disciples to eat his flesh, then said their doing so would be pointless? Is that what "the flesh is of no avail" means? "Eat my flesh, but you'll find it's a waste of time"—is that what he was saying? Hardly.

The fact is that Christ's flesh avails much! If it were of no avail, then the Son of God incarnated for no reason, he died for no reason, and he rose from the dead for no reason. Christ's flesh profits us more than anyone else's in the world. If it profits us nothing, so that the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Christ are of no avail, then "your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished" (1 Cor. 15:17b–18).

In John 6:63 "flesh profits nothing" refers to mankind's inclination to think using only what their natural human reason would tell them rather than what God would tell them. Thus in John 8:15–16 Jesus tells his opponents: "You judge according to the flesh, I judge no one. Yet even if I do judge, my judgment is true, for it is not I alone that judge, but I and he who sent me." So natural human judgment, unaided by God's grace, is unreliable; but God's judgment is always true.

And were the disciples to understand the line "The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life" as nothing but a circumlocution (and a very clumsy one at that) for "symbolic"? No one can come up with such interpretations unless he first holds to the Fundamentalist position and thinks it necessary to find a rationale, no matter how forced, for evading the Catholic interpretation. In John 6:63 "flesh" does not refer to Christ's own flesh—the context makes this clear—but to mankind's inclination to think on a natural, human level. "The words I have spoken to you are spirit" does not mean "What I have just said is symbolic." The word "spirit" is *never* used that way in the Bible. **The line means that what Christ has said will be understood only through faith; only by the power of the Spirit and the drawing of the Father (cf. John 6:37, 44–45, 65).**

Paul Confirms This

Paul wrote to the Corinthians: **"The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ?" (1 Cor. 10:16). So when we receive Communion, we actually participate in the body and blood of Christ, not just eat symbols of them.** Paul also said, "Therefore whoever eats the bread and drinks

the cup of the Lord unworthily will have to answer for the body and blood of the Lord. . . . For any one who eats and drinks without discerning the body, eats and drinks judgment on himself" (1 Cor. 11:27, 29). "To answer for the body and blood" of someone meant to be guilty of a crime as serious as homicide. How could eating mere bread and wine "unworthily" be so serious? **Paul's comment makes sense only if the bread and wine became the real body and blood of Christ.**

What Did the First Christians Say?

Anti-Catholics also claim the early Church took this chapter symbolically. Is that so? Let's see what some early Christians thought, keeping in mind that we can learn much about how Scripture should be interpreted by examining the writings of early Christians.

Ignatius of Antioch, who had been a disciple of the apostle John and who wrote a letter to the Smyrnaeans about A.D. 110, said, referring to "those who hold heterodox opinions," that "they abstain from the Eucharist and from prayer, because they do not confess that the Eucharist is the flesh of our Savior Jesus Christ, flesh which suffered for our sins and which the Father, in his goodness, raised up again" (6:2, 7:1).

Forty years later, **Justin Martyr**, wrote, "Not as common bread or common drink do we receive these; but since Jesus Christ our Savior was made incarnate by the word of God and had both flesh and blood for our salvation, so too, as we have been taught, the food which has been made into the Eucharist by the Eucharistic prayer set down by him, and by the change of which our blood and flesh is nourished, . . . is both the flesh and the blood of that incarnated Jesus" (*First Apology* 66:1–20).

Origen, in a homily written about A.D. 244, attested to belief in the Real Presence. "I wish to admonish you with examples from your religion. You are accustomed to take part in the divine mysteries, so you know how, when you have received the Body of the Lord, you reverently exercise every care lest a particle of it fall and lest anything of the consecrated gift perish. You account yourselves guilty, and rightly do you so believe, if any of it be lost through negligence" (*Homilies on Exodus* 13:3).

Cyril of Jerusalem, in a catechetical lecture presented in the mid-300s, said, "Do not, therefore, regard the bread and wine as simply that, for they are, according to the Master's declaration, the body and blood of Christ. Even though the senses suggest to you the other, let faith make you firm. Do not judge in this matter by taste, but be fully assured by faith, not doubting that you have been deemed worthy of the body and blood of Christ" (*Catechetical Discourses: Mystagogic* 4:22:9).

In a fifth-century homily, **Theodore of Mopsuestia** seemed to be speaking to today's Evangelicals and Fundamentalists: "When [Christ] gave the bread he did not say, 'This is the *symbol* of my body,' but, 'This *is* my body.' In the same way, when he gave the cup of his blood he did not say, 'This is the *symbol* of my blood,' but, 'This *is* my blood,' for he wanted us to look upon the [Eucharistic elements], after their reception of grace and the coming of the Holy Spirit, not according to their nature, but to receive them as they are, the body and blood of our Lord" (*Catechetical Homilies* 5:1).

Unanimous Testimony

Whatever else might be said, the early Church took John 6 literally. In fact, there is no record from the early centuries that implies Christians doubted the constant Catholic interpretation. There exists no document in which the literal interpretation is opposed and only the metaphorical accepted.

Why do Fundamentalists and Evangelicals reject the plain, literal interpretation of John 6? For them, Catholic sacraments are out because they imply a spiritual reality—grace—being conveyed by means of matter. This seems to them to be a violation of the divine plan. For many Protestants, matter is not to be used, but overcome or avoided.

One suspects, had they been asked by the Creator their opinion of how to bring about mankind's salvation, Fundamentalists would have advised him to adopt a different approach. How much cleaner things would be if spirit never dirtied itself with matter! But God approves of matter—he approves of it because he created it—and he approves of it so much that he comes to us under the appearances of bread and wine, just as he does in the physical form of the Incarnate Christ.

NIHIL OBSTAT: I have concluded that the materials presented in this work are free of doctrinal or moral errors.
Bernadeane Carr, STL, Censor Librorum, August 10, 2004

IMPRIMATUR: In accord with 1983 CIC 827 permission to publish this work is hereby granted.
+Robert H. Brom, Bishop of San Diego, August 10, 2004

First of all – who is Karl Keating? One of the books I have in my possession on Roman Catholicism is **‘Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The attack on “Romanism” by “Bible Christians”**’ written by **Karl Keating** and published in 1988.

Having read the title of Mr Keating’s book, Christians can perhaps better understand and appreciate the title of the book written by my good friend and brother in Christ, former Roman Catholic, **Rob Zins**. Rob’s book is entitled **‘Romanism: The relentless Roman Catholic Assault on the Gospel of Jesus Christ’**.

In the **‘Introduction’** to his book, and having made direct reference to Mr Keating and his book, Rob wrote – **‘In the light of the popularity of his book, we have chosen Keating as an example of modern Catholic writing’**. Rob then went on to quote the following which is located on the back cover of Mr Keating’s book –

‘Karl Keating is the director of Catholic Answers, a lay organisation which explains and defends the beliefs, history and practices of the Catholic Church. He engages in public debates with leading anti-Catholics, and edits *Catholic Answers*, a monthly journal of apologetics’.

An indirect ‘connection’ that I might claim to Mr Keating would be through our mutual contact with the late Bart Brewer. Bart was for many years a Roman Catholic priest and then the Lord saved him and in 1994 Bart was one of the first guest speakers I hosted here in Northern Ireland. Bart went to be with the Lord in 2005 and in my tribute to him, located on - <http://www.takeheed.info/tribute-to-bart-brewer/> I wrote -

‘It is very true that there are certain people that we meet along the road of life who truly enrich our own lives. Bart Brewer was one of those people... Just as Paul wrote of the Christians in Philippi **“I thank my God upon every remembrance of you” so Margaret and I thank our God, who was also Bart’s God, upon every remembrance of one gracious, gentle, giant of a **“good and faithful servant”**, Bart Brewer. Bart’s earthly **‘Pilgrimage from Rome’** has ended and he has now **“entered into the joy of his Lord”** but, as his pastor wrote in the email informing me of Bart’s death, Bart’s message to those still deceived by Roman Catholicism, would graciously and in love be, **‘No priest but Christ; no sacrifice but Calvary; no authority but the Word of God; no confession but the Throne of God’s Grace’**.**

In complete contrast to my own tribute, Karl Keating wrote this following Bart’s death –

‘For about three decades Brewer headed one of the more effective anti-Catholic ministries. He took credit for assisting several priests and nuns and many lay people in transitioning into Fundamentalism. He seemed inordinately pleased that I devoted a chapter to him in *Catholicism and Fundamentalism*. (For a while he even marketed my book, perhaps because I was the first Catholic to take him seriously.) Several years ago Brewer suffered a stroke. He no longer could tour Fundamentalist churches and regale audiences with stories of Catholic iniquities. His ministry became a shell. In September 2005 he died. I wonder whether he had any regrets, any qualms of conscience, in his final years. Did he suspect

that he had made a colossal mistake, leaving the true Church for a simulacrum [*Cecil - a superficial likeness*]? In his last days did he repent of what he had done, especially his leading so many astray over so many years? I have no way of knowing, but I do know that Bart Brewer, whatever his present state, now knows that he opposed the truth and, therefore, the Truth. Please keep him and those he influenced in prayer’.

I can personally assure Mr Keating that, having spent several very happy days with Bart and Ruth at their home in San Diego the year before Bart died, Bart was as zealous as ever to rescue Roman Catholics from the dark deception that is Romanism and he was as much at peace with his (and my) Lord as he was from the day he was truly saved and converted out of Roman Catholicism – this was how Bart phrased it in his book **‘Pilgrimage from Rome’** –

‘After fifteen months of chaplain duty with the navy on Okinawa and in Thailand and Japan, it was time to return home. To my great joy I was assigned to the naval station in Long Beach, California... Mother and I found a comfortable apartment near the base and I began my routine: saying daily mass, hearing confessions, baptising babies, providing catechetical instructions for prospective converts, and visiting the sick and bereaved. Almost every night mother and I studied the Scriptures. As I studied, I saw much disagreement between church dogma and the Word of God. Questions kept tugging at my mind. Why? What had caused the church to depart so far from the Scriptures? Why had tradition become more important than simple faith?... My world seemed to be crumbling... I had heard of priests who left the church and whose lives were shattered by the load of guilt they bore... My spirit was restless and troubled, but now as I searched for truth, I saw that there was no turning back. It was time for a titanic decision... I would not be returning to my diocese. On our way north we passed through the little town of Gilroy... I stopped the car and asked mother to wait. I took my mass kit into the Catholic church and left it next to the confessional booth. The umbilical cord was cut! At last I had done what I knew was right. I stepped into a new life that day, one I would never have understood or even appreciated had I not left the glamour that once I called life. **I turned to the Lord with my whole heart, unfettered by false gods and by false religion. I have never regretted taking that step, not for one moment... When I was born again, a child of the living God, my heart became aglow with a vehement desire to tell the world of His wonderful salvation’. (pp 85-86 & 119).**

I can further assure Mr Keating that Bart’s **‘vehement desire to tell the world** (*Cecil - especially Roman Catholics*) **of His wonderful salvation’** never left him, even though in failing health, and Bart’s **‘present state’** is that of now being eternally **“absent from the body and... present with the Lord”** (2nd Corinthians 5:8).

Returning briefly to Mr Keating’s book, **‘Catholicism and Fundamentalism: The attack on “Romanism” by “Bible Christians”**’, also located on the back cover are 6 endorsements including those by Archbishop Philip Hannan of the Archdiocese of New Orleans, Francis X Maier, Editor of *National Catholic Register*, and Jesuit, John A Hardon, author of *The Catholic Catechism* (Cecil – An official RC source that I have often quoted from).

Mr Keating’s book also carries on one of its early pages the ‘Nihil Obstat’ of Msgr. Joseph Pollard S.T.D. and the ‘Imprimatur’ of Roger Mahony, Archbishop of Los Angeles. These declare that Mr Keating’s book **‘is considered to be free of doctrinal or moral error’**. In short, Karl Keating is no ‘lightweight’ but could be viewed as something of a ‘heavyweight’ amongst Roman Catholic apologists.

I want overall to address three statements made by Mr Keating in his article and to put them to the test of Scripture. The first statement will be addressed in the remainder of this article.

1. Are Protestants wrong to view the language of John 6 as being 'symbolic' rather than being 'literal'?

I have highlighted in red a number of portions in Mr Keating's article and amongst those portions are the following –

'Protestant attacks on the Catholic Church often focus on the Eucharist... the attacks show that Fundamentalists are not always literalists. This is seen in their interpretation of the key biblical passage, chapter six of John's Gospel in which Christ speaks about the sacrament that will be instituted at the Last Supper ... Twelve times he said he was the bread that came down from heaven; four times he said they would have "to eat my flesh and drink my blood."... But what do Fundamentalists say? ... They say that in John 6 Jesus was not talking about physical food and drink, but about spiritual food and drink. They quote John 6:35: "Jesus said to them, 'I am the bread of life; he who comes to me shall not hunger, and he who believes in me shall never thirst.'" They claim that coming to him is bread, having faith in him is drink. Thus, eating his flesh and blood merely means believing in Christ. But Christ takes John 6:35 far beyond symbolism by saying, "For my flesh is food indeed, and my blood is drink indeed" (John 6:55). He continues: "As the living Father sent me, and I live because of the Father, so he who eats me will live because of me" (John 6:57). The Greek word used for "eats" (*trogon*) is very blunt and has the sense of "chewing" or "gnawing." This is not the language of metaphor. Why do Fundamentalists and Evangelicals reject the plain, literal interpretation of John 6?'

Mr Keating asks **'Why do Fundamentalists and Evangelicals reject the plain, literal interpretation of John 6?'** and in this first part I shall now begin to endeavour to answer the question posed by him.

In his full article Mr Keating referred to **'literally', 'symbolically', 'metaphorically', 'figuratively'** – this terminology is related to **'hermeneutics'**, officially defined as **'the science of Bible interpretation'**.

In his Study Bible, Pastor John MacArthur has a section called **'How to Study the Bible'** and under the sub-heading of **'Principles to Understand'** he writes the following helpful words –

'The Literal Principle: Scripture should be understood in its literal, normal and natural sense. While the Bible does contain figures of speech and symbols, they were intended to convey literal truth. In general, however, the Bible speaks in literal terms and we must allow it to speak for itself.

The Synthesis Principle:... It means that **the Bible does not contradict itself. If we arrive at an interpretation of a passage that contradicts a truth taught elsewhere in the Scriptures, our interpretation cannot be correct. Scripture must be compared with Scripture to discover its full meaning.**

Evaluating: ... Remember the Bible will never contradict itself.

Alan Cairns, in his **'Dictionary of Theological Terms'** also makes the following helpful comments under his definition of **'Allegory'** -

'A figure of speech in which a description of one thing is given under the image of another. It is usually a story to explain or expound a truth, in which people, things and events have another meaning than the obvious or literal. Both the Old and New Testaments employ allegory (Psalm 80:8-19; Ecclesiastes 12:3-7; John 10:1-16; Ephesians 6:11-17)... Many Evangelicals... hold that

there is also a spiritual sense behind the literal... they view much of the Old Testament as typical as well as historical... their exegesis of the history will be literal... while their application of it will be spiritual. **There is Scripture warrant for this. We have the example of Christ and His apostles. Jesus saw in the story of Moses raising up the brazen serpent the truth of His own redeeming death (John 3:15) ... Paul... saw the Passover as a type of Christ (1st Corinthians 5:7) and treated the historical narrative of Israel's journey to Canaan as typical of Christian experience (see 1st Corinthians 10:1-11) ... Paul's statement in Romans 15:4 appears to warrant our making allegorical applications of the historical narratives of the Old Testament'.**

Alan Cairns also sheds more light on how Rome interprets Scripture. He wrote –

'The most serious misuse of allegory is found in the use of the alleged *fourfold sense* of Scripture. The *four senses* attributed to a passage are (1) the literal (2) the allegorical [or analogical] (3) the moral and (4) **the anagogical**... It [*fourfold sense*] became the chosen mode of treating Scripture in the Romish church and played a major role in keeping the Bible a closed book to clergy and laity throughout the dark ages. Even when the Reformation had called men back to the plain meaning of scripture, Rome persisted in her adherence to the *fourfold sense* of Scripture... **This of course left all the room in the world for Rome to cite "Biblical" authority for dogmas for which she could never hope to adduce proof from the plain words of Scripture'.**

I highlighted in red the word '**anagogical**' and in his definition of this term Mr Cairns writes –

'From the Greek *anago* "to lead" or "bring up". It is one of the *four senses* in which Scripture was interpreted by the Alexandrian school of **Origen** and by the Roman Catholic church. The anagogical sense... uses an interpretation which the New Testament itself appears to use... **However the anagogical meanings claimed by Romish interpreters were usually very much more imaginary. Coming from a distaste for and distrust of the literal sense of Scripture anagogical interpretation did more to obscure God's word than to elucidate it'** (Cecil – a good example would be Rome's rejection of the clearly stated "finished" sacrificial work of Christ on the Cross [John 19:30] that they claim to perpetuate in their Sacrifice of the Mass).

You will note that I highlighted in red the name of **Origen** because he was one of the 'references' cited by Karl Keating in defence of Rome's teaching on this subject.

Just to diverge for a moment I found the following fascinating citation about **Origen** on <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen>

Origen's cosmology is complicated and controverted, but he seems to have held to a hypothesis of the preexistence of souls, before the world we know was created by God, God created a great number of spiritual intelligences. At first devoted to the contemplation and love of their creator, almost all of these intelligences eventually grew bored of contemplating God, their love for him cooling off. Those whose love for God diminished the most became demons. Those whose love diminished moderately became human souls, eventually to be incarnated in fleshly bodies. Those whose love diminished the least became angels. One, however, who remained perfectly devoted to God became, through love, one with the Word (Logos) of God. The Logos eventually took flesh and was born of the Virgin Mary, becoming the God-man Jesus Christ. The diverse conditions in which human beings are born is actually dependent upon what their souls did in this pre-existent state. Thus what seems unfair, some being born poor and others wealthy, some sick and others healthy, and so forth, is, Origen insists, actually in a by-product of the free-will of souls.

These views attributed to **Origen** – could I speculate that perhaps they might be the basis or source of Joseph Smith's **heretical 'pre-existence'** teaching as articulated in Mormonism?

On the 'Mormonism Research Ministry' web site (Cecil – one of the LINKS from my own 'Take Heed ministry web site) on this link <http://www.mrm.org/a-z> we find this definition –

'Pre-existence. Also referred to as the *First Estate* or *Pre-Mortal State*. Mormonism teaches all humans lived near a planet called Kolob as God's *spirit children* before coming to earth and taking on human form. Since God's children could only progress so far in the pre-existence, it was necessary that they go through a probationary state here on earth in order to prove their worthiness to return to God's presence and continue their eternal progression (*Gospel Principles*, p. 11)'.

Lest any reader be suspicious of the citation found on 'Wikipedia' the following appears in relation to **Origen** in my 'Evangelical Dictionary of Theology' (Marshall Pickering 1985) -

'He held that certain cardinal principles were clearly laid out in Scripture, while on other matters Christians were free to speculate. Among his speculations were the beliefs that souls who had erred in a former life were placed upon earth in a human body as part of a purifying process and that all beings, even the devil and his angels would ultimately be reclaimed and restored by God's grace' (p 803).

Returning again to Mr Keating's question - 'Why do Fundamentalists and Evangelicals reject the plain, literal interpretation of John 6?' – I want now to highlight some of the MANY examples in John's gospel of where 'symbolic', 'metaphorical', 'figurative', 'allegorical' and legitimate 'anagogical' language is used to convey 'literal truth'.

[1] **John 1: 14**

"And the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us"

Comments

The terminology "was made flesh" conveys the 'literal truth' of Christ's Incarnation

[2] **John 1:29**

"Behold the Lamb of God who taketh away the sin of the world"

Comments

The terminology "the Lamb of God" is the language of 'sacrifice' associated with the Passover night in Egypt and the subsequent Tabernacle and Temple rituals and pointed to the 'literal truth' of Christ's 'sacrifice' at Calvary. The terminology "taketh away" is associated with the role of the Scapegoat in the sacrifice for sin on the Day of Atonement and points to the 'literal truth' of the 'taking away' of sin by Christ on the Cross of Calvary.

[3] **John 1:36**

"Behold the Lamb of God"

Comments

The repeat reference to **“the Lamb of God”** is once more pointing to the **‘literal truth’** of Christ’s ‘sacrifice’ at Calvary.

Commenting on the passage that included verses 29 & 36, **Matthew Henry** wrote ‘The paschal (*Passover*) lamb, in the shedding and sprinkling of its blood, the roasting and eating of its flesh, and all the other circumstances of the ordinance, represented the salvation of sinners by faith in Christ. And the lambs sacrificed every morning and evening can only refer to Christ slain as a sacrifice to redeem us to God by his blood’.

[4] **John 1:51**

“Hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man”

Comments

Having clearly made an indirect reference in verse 47 to Jacob in His conversation with Nathanael, by describing him as “an Israelite indeed in whom is no guile”, (*thus contrasting Nathanael with Jacob who was full of guile – see Genesis 27:35*) the Lord most likely again has Jacob in mind (see Genesis 28:12) when He spoke of **“the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son Of Man”** His purpose being to illustrate the **‘literal truth’** that He alone is the “one mediator between God and men” (1st Timothy 2:5) and the ‘literal truth’ that He alone is the only “way” to heaven (John 14:6).

Matthew Henry wrote ‘Through Christ... things in heaven and things on earth are reconciled and united together.

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker** states (p 54) ‘Full faith in Him (*Christ*) must be grounded as He now tells Nathanael upon the conviction that in Him as He now is, i.e. The Word made flesh, is to be found the meeting-place of heaven and earth. Jacob at Bethel had dreamed of a ladder set up on earth whose top reached into heaven... He (*Nathanael*) now learns that Jesus is the real ladder by which the gulf between earth and heaven is bridged. In Him the glory of heaven has come down to earth... and through contact with Him earthbound man is lifted up to heaven. This may be said to be the dominant theme of the Gospel of John’.

[5] **John 2:19&21**

“Jesus answered and said unto them, destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up... but He spoke of the temple of His body”

Comments

The listening Jews thought mistakenly that Jesus was talking about **‘this’** (stone) **‘Temple’** in Jerusalem that was dedicated to the worship of God and had taken 46 years to build. But Jesus was employing this terminology to Himself to convey the **‘literal truth’** that in His incarnate body He was dedicated to glorifying God His Father (see John 8:29 & 17:4) better than any earthly man-made Temple and, even if ‘raised to the dust’ (killed), He had divine power to **‘raise it up’** - He was here teaching the **‘literal truth’** of His forthcoming death, burial and resurrection.

Commenting on the passage from verse 12-22, **Matthew Henry** wrote ‘The first public work in which we find Christ engaged, was driving from the temple the traders whom the

covetous priests and rulers encouraged to make a market-place of its courts... Christ, having thus cleansed the temple, gave a sign to those who demanded it, to prove his authority for so doing. He foretells his death by the Jews' malice... He foretells his resurrection by his own power... the Scripture speaks by way of figure. When Jesus was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered he has said this'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 64) 'It was not without significance that on the eve of the passion that Jesus foretold the destruction of the temple... as an act of judgment upon the unspiritual nature of the worship that had come to be offered in it... as a result of the resurrection a new spiritual temple could emerge – the fellowship of believers, a shrine of the indwelling Spirit' (see 1st Corinthians 3:17)

[6] **John 3:8**

“**The wind** bloweth where it willeth, and thou hearest the sound of it, but canst not tell from where it cometh, and where it goeth, so is everyone that is **born of the Spirit**”

Comments

Just as human beings can discern evidence for the activity of **'the wind'** but cannot control it, for that ability lies alone within in the realm of the Divine, so the **'literal truth'** of Divine sovereign activity in lives when they are **'born of the Spirit'** (*Cecil – the Spirit regeneration of lost sinners*) is being taught here by the Lord to Nicodemus.

Commenting on this verse and the reaction of Nicodemus in verse 9, **Matthew Henry wrote** 'The wind bloweth where it listeth for us; God directs it. The Spirit sends his influences where, and when, on whom, and in what measure and degree, he pleases. Though the causes are hidden, the effects are plain, when the soul is brought to mourn for sin, and to breathe after Christ. Christ's stating of the doctrine and the necessity of regeneration, it should seem, made it not clearer to Nicodemus.'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 67-68) 'But Nicodemus for all his theological learning lacks spiritual insight. He fails to see that it is supernatural birth of which Jesus is speaking... There also exists a realm of spirit in which God is at work... there is much that is mysterious and seemingly arbitrary about the new birth of the Spirit... But there is also much that passes comprehension in the invisible working of the natural phenomenon of the wind, but its effects are nevertheless undeniable... Nicodemus... ought not to be ignorant of the power of God to change human lives... Nicodemus... had an inadequate understanding of His power'

[7] **John 3:14**

“And as **Moses lifted up the serpent** in the wilderness, even **so must the Son of Man be lifted up**”

Comments

The people of God had sinned as they journeyed to the Promised Land; God sent deadly serpents amongst them that bit and killed many of them. They confessed their sin to Moses and sought a means of salvation. Moses, having received instructions from God, **'lifted up the (brazen) serpent'** by putting it on a pole and all who looked to it were saved from having being bitten (Numbers 21:5-9). The Lord was

teaching the **'literal truth'** that through Him being **'lifted up'** sacrificially on the Cross of Calvary, all who would look to Him alone for salvation would be saved from their sins.

Commenting on this verse **Matthew Henry wrote** 'Jesus Christ came to save us by healing us, as the children of Israel, stung with fiery serpents, were cured and lived by looking up to the brazen serpent. In this observe the deadly and destructive nature of sin... at the last it bites like a serpent. See the powerful remedy against this fatal malady. Christ is plainly set forth to us in the gospel... Look and be saved, look and live; lift up the eyes of your faith to Christ crucified'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 68-69) 'Jesus, the heavenly Son of Man made flesh is destined to be lifted up for all to see. He will hang on a cross like a condemned criminal... He will die in that way precisely because it is in that way that God has chosen to reveal His love for sinners... In consequence all who look in faith to Him... will never be subject to the death that is sin's penalty, but enjoy eternal life'.

[8] **John 3:19**

"Light is come into the world and men loved **darkness** rather than **light**"

Comments

John is using the expressions of **'light'** and **'darkness'** to teach the **'literal truth'** of how godliness and righteousness (**"light"**), of which the Lord was the living embodiment, is naturally rejected by sinful and fallen humanity that prefers ungodliness and unrighteousness (**"darkness"**).

Matthew Henry wrote 'Sinful works are works of darkness. The wicked world keep as far from this light as they can, lest their deeds should be reproved. Christ is hated, because sin is loved.'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 69) 'The disingenuous shun the searchlight of Jesus' presence and in so doing provide the evidence that they stand self-condemned. Sin invariably leads the sinner to hide himself from God even as Adam and Eve hid themselves from Him in the garden of Eden'.

[9] **John 4:10**

"Jesus answered and said unto her; If thou knewest the gift of God and who it is that saith to thee, Give me to drink, thou wouldest have asked of him and he would have given thee living water"

Comments

Here Jesus reveals to the Samaritan woman at the well **'the gift of God'** given to those who ask and he describes it as **'living water'** and contrasts the **'literal truth'** of this gift of God to His people with the **'literal water'** available from the well. What is the **'literal truth'** of what He meant by **'living water'**? It means of course to personally have Christ as Saviour and be indwelt by His Spirit – "He that hath the Son hath life" (1st John 5:12) "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ he is none of his" (Romans 8:9).

In his comments on this whole incident **Matthew Henry wrote** 'Christ asked a woman for water. She was surprised because he did not show the anger of his own nation against the Samaritans... Christ took the occasion to teach her Divine things: he converted this woman, by showing her ignorance and sinfulness, and her need of a Saviour. By this living water is meant the Spirit. Under this comparison the blessing of the Messiah had been promised in the Old Testament.' (*Cecil – see Isaiah 44:3*)

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 75-76) 'The Samaritan woman... is almost exclusively concerned with the provision of what will satisfy her physical needs, particularly thirst-quenching water... The welfare of her souls is not for her a matter of primary importance. Her reply (v 9) to Jesus' request for a drink of water... probably... is an expression of bewilderment "Well here is a strange thing – a Jew asking a Samaritan for a drink". Jesus at once points out to her that there can be no rapprochement (*restoration of friendly relations*) between Jew and Samaritan unless both accept the gift which God is prepared to bestow but which can be received from Jesus alone for He is the gift (see John 3:16). (*To be continued in next exposition on John 4:13- 14*).

[10] **John 4:13-14**

"Jesus answered and said unto her, Whosoever drinketh of this water shall thirst again. But whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst but the water that I shall give him shall be in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life".

Comments

Here the Lord confirms that **'the gift'** mentioned by Him in verse 10 of **'living water'** will be available to be drawn from an 'internal well' within the believer – it portray the **'literal truth'** that in the lives of believers, the indwelling Spirit will be spiritually an 'eternal life-giving source' that will never run dry.

In his comments on this whole incident **Matthew Henry wrote** 'The graces of the Spirit, and his comforts, satisfy the thirsting soul that knows its own nature and necessity. What Jesus spake figuratively, she took literally. Christ shows that the water of Jacob's well yielded a very short satisfaction. Of whatever waters of comfort we drink, we shall thirst again. But whoever partakes of the Spirit of grace, and the comforts of the gospel, shall never want that which will abundantly satisfy his soul.'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 76) ' Jesus alone can supply the living water which can satisfy every need and become the perpetual source of life... when Jesus explains to her that the water He is able to give her will free her for ever from thirst, she still thinks that it is some magical supply of ordinary water that He is offering her and that when she obtains it she will never have to visit the well again'

**Over the next verses the Lord confronts the woman with the reality of her sin and she recognises Him as the promised Messiah but in her unregenerate state she mistakenly took the reference to 'drinking water' that would lead to possessing "everlasting life" as being 'literal water' to be drunk – she did not understand the 'literal truth' that 'living water' referred to Christ Himself and His Spirit received through faith alone in Him alone – "He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting Life"
(John 3:36).**

[11] [John 4:34](#)

“Jesus saith unto them, My **meat** is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work”

[Comments](#)

Here the Lord refers to the task entrusted to Him by His Father as being His **'meat'** or 'food' – something that on a daily basis He had to 'get His teeth into'. He was teaching the **'literal truth'** of Him living a perfect, sinless life of obedience for His people and then dying as a perfect, substitutionary sacrifice of atonement for His people – a work that would 'reap a harvest' (see vv 35-38) of precious souls. The symbolism of **'meat'** was used to describe the **'literal truth'** of a task to be done and not something to be literally eaten.

In his comments on this incident **Matthew Henry wrote** 'Our Master has left us an example that we may learn to do the will of God as he did; with diligence, as those that make a business of it; with delight and pleasure in it. Christ compares his work to harvest-work.'

[12] [John 6:32-35a](#)

“Then Jesus said unto them, Verily verily I say unto you; Moses gave you not that **bread** from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true **bread** from heaven. For the **bread** of God is he who cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world. Then said they unto him. Lord, evermore give us this **bread**. And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life;**”

[Comments](#)

Here the Lord is likening Himself to **'bread'** to teach the **'literal truth'** that He is given as saving spiritual life-giving sustenance by His Father to God's people as they journey along their pilgrim path to heaven. He contrasts the eternal gift of Himself (**"The bread of life"**) to His people with the Manna supplied via Moses to the Israelites as they journeyed to the Promised Land. The **'literal truth'** was that that **'bread'** (Manna) was only able to sustain physical life for a limited period of time showing that the literal ingestion and digestion of baked **'bread'** does not lead to true spiritual and everlasting **'life'**. These words were also designed to contrast the person of Moses – 'a mere mortal' – with the person of Christ – 'surpassing deity'.

Matthew Henry wrote 'God, even His Father, who gave their fathers that food from heaven to support their natural lives, now gave them the true Bread for the salvation of their souls. Coming to Jesus and, and believing on him, signify the same (*Cecil - see verse 35b*). Christ shows that he is the true Bread; he is to the soul what bread is to the body, (he) nourishes and supports the spiritual life'.

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 94) 'He (*Jesus*) brings home to these insensitive Galileans the truth that it is a spiritual hunger for imperishable, life-giving food that He has come to satisfy, for it was to accomplish that task that He had been *sealed* with His Father's authority (v 27).

In a sermon on this passage **Pastor John MacArthur said** 'Now in this discourse Christ more than anything else presents His deity... in the discourse on the bread of life Jesus claims to be God... **Christ is stating by analogy His deity**, the fact that He is God... Jesus says in verse 27, and I'm reviewing, "Labour not for the food that perishes, but for that food which endureth unto everlasting life"... In verse 28 they say to Him, "What

shall we do that we might work the works of God?" How do we get in on all of this? ... He says, "Well, this is the work of God, you don't work, you believe...just believe, all you've got to do is believe and you can have this bread."... So that brings us to verse 30. He has claimed to be the One sent from God. He's told them He's the One they need... You say You're from God. You say You're the one to deliver this terrific bread.. "Well now,"... verse 31, "Our fathers did eat manna in the desert." ... "Listen, Moses gave us bread from heaven. What are You going to do?"... They're saying in effect ,.. Jesus, You provided enough food for 15 thousand people... not bad...however, Moses provided manna from heaven for hundreds of thousands of people every day for 40 years...can You top that?"... I love Jesus' reply... "Moses gave you not that bread from heaven, but My Father giveth you the true bread from heaven, for the bread of God...ah...is He, the person, who cometh down from heaven and giveth life unto the world." And with that answer, He absolutely annihilated their whole contrast... Incidentally, Moses' bread didn't last too long either... Moses' bread couldn't give life... Manna didn't keep them alive... True bread comes from heaven and gives life... It's a life-giving bread. It keeps you alive. It has power to keep death away. He's talking, of course, about spiritual death... "I'm greater than Moses because My bread is the real stuff. My bread is the true bread, spiritual bread, conquers death, gives life not only to Israel but to the world. And it comes right from God."... There's one phrase I want to remind you that's so very important... Verse 33, **"For the bread of God is He who cometh down from heaven."** Catch that? "Cometh down from heaven." That, folks, is the incarnation of Jesus Christ. **That statement is a tremendous statement on the fact that Christ is God.** That bread came down from heaven... **"Jesus said unto them, 'I am the bread of life.'"** Can't you just see them? Huh? He's the bread of life? What is He talking about? He says, "I am the bread of life. I'm not talking about some kind of physical loaves, I'm not talking about anything physical, I'm the bread of life. And I'm not talking about physical life, I'm talking about spiritual life."... **"He that cometh to Me shall never hunger and he that believeth on Me shall never thirst." Now you know He's not talking about physical things... There's no more hunger in the soul when you've met Jesus Christ. He becomes food and nourishment. He is the soul food that gives satisfaction'**

This passage is designed to shed light on 'The Person of Christ', His divinity, and so differs radically from what Christ will teach at the Last Supper as we will see [DV] in 'Part 3' of my response. In consequence this passage is not as Mr Keating claims **'the key biblical passage... in which Christ speaks about the sacrament that will be instituted at the Last Supper'**

[13] **John 7:37-39**

"In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, **out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit,** whom they that believe on him should receive for the Holy Spirit was not yet given because Jesus was not yet glorified".

Comments

This portion very much mirrors what we considered earlier in John 4:10 where **"the gift of God"** mentioned by Christ in His discourse with the Samaritan woman at the well was likened to **"living water"**. Here the terminology **"out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. But this spake he of the Spirit"** is even more explicit and clearly refers to the **'literal truth'** that true believers on the Lord Jesus Christ receive and are indwelt by God's gift to them of Himself in the person of the Holy Spirit who thereafter is a constant flowing source/river of influence in their daily lives.

Matthew Henry wrote 'The Spirit dwelling and working in believers, is as a fountain of living, running water, out of which plentiful streams flow, cooling and cleansing as water. The miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit we do not expect, but for his more common and more valuable influences we may apply. These streams have flowed from our glorified Redeemer, down to this age, and to the remote corners of the earth. May we be anxious to make them known to others'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (pp106-107) 'The departure of Jesus in death would also make possible that baptism of the Spirit which was to be the supreme gift of Jesus to all who believed in Him. (*Cecil – that 'baptism of the Spirit' occurs at conversion as 1st Corinthians 12:13 teaches*) Jesus promises to all believers, who are conscious of their need of it, the gift of thirst-quenching water which would become in them a perpetual source of refreshment (*Cecil – no need for repetitive 'topping-up' rituals*) both to themselves and others. Though no specific passage of Scripture is quoted this would in fact be a fulfilment of such prophecies as that of Zechariah that one day a fountain would be open to the house of David, and living waters would go out from Jerusalem (Zechariah 13:1; 14:8) and of Isaiah that God would pour water upon the thirsty (Isaiah 44:3; 55:1). The evangelist makes it clear that these words of Jesus about **"living water"** flowing **"out of his belly"** i.e. from the inmost natures of the believer, refer to **"the Spirit which they that believe on him should receive"** and he adds **"the Holy Ghost was not yet given because that Jesus was not yet glorified"**. Only when Jesus is glorified in a death, which, though brought about by the Jews is none the less a death of His own choice will the cleansing and refreshing power of the Spirit come in all its fullness to those who accept Him as Saviour'.

I would add that the glorification of Jesus was completed after He ascended back in triumph into heaven and that was when the promised gift of the Holy Spirit was outpoured for the last thing He said to His disciples immediately before He ascended was "But ye shall receive power after the Holy Spirit is come upon you... And when he had spoken these things... he was taken up" (Acts 1:8-9).

In his book 'Manners & Customs of The Bible' **James M Freeman wrote** (p 425) 'Every morning of the seven days of the feast proper, at day-break, a priest went to the pool of Siloam and filled with water a golden pitcher... He was accompanied by a procession of people and a band of music. On returning to the temple he was welcomed with three blasts from a trumpet, and going to the west side of the great altar he poured the water from the golden pitcher into a silver basin which had holes in the bottom through which the water was carried off. This ceremony was accompanied with songs and shouts from the people and with the sound of trumpets. It is supposed to have been designed to represent three distinct things.

1. A memorial of the water provided for their fathers in the desert.
2. A symbol of the forthcoming "latter rain".
3. A representation of the outpouring of the Holy Spirit at the coming of the Messiah.

In his book 'Israel's Holy Days in Type and Prophecy' **Dr Daniel Fuchs wrote (pp 78-79)** 'One of the ceremonies of the *Sukot* service (*Feast of Tabernacles*) was the libation of water procession each morning... It was *Hoshana Rabba*, on the last and greatest day of the Feast. See the crowds in the temple courts; watch the white-robed priests as they climb the steep ascent from Siloam to the Temple. They are carrying a golden vase of the water they just drew with joy from the well of Siloam. The water was poured into the basin near the altar. Then as the priest stood with his empty flask, a Man who had been watching cried with a loud voice: "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. Whoever believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him" (John 7:37-38).

These were strange words to say, anywhere, at any time. But in the Temple on *Hoshana Rabba*, they were not just strange, they were audacious. The entire libation-of-water ceremony celebrated God's provision of life-giving water to the Israelites when they were dying of thirst in the wilderness... **Our Lord was claiming that the miracle in the wilderness, when the rock gushed forth water ** pointed to Himself!** This is one of the messages of John's Gospel, where we also find our Lord claiming to be the fulfilment of other incidents under the Law: Jacob's ladder, the brazen serpent in the wilderness, and the manna'.

****** In his commentary on 1st Corinthians 10:4 **Geoffrey B Wilson wrote** (pp141-142) 'The manner in which the Israelites were supplied with water in the desert was no less miraculous [Exodus 17:6; Numbers 20] If Paul alludes here to the rabbinical legend that the rock from which the water gushed forth at Rephidim accompanied the Israelites on their journey, the word 'spiritual' ("And did all drink the same spiritual drink") clearly shows that he does so only to reject it; for as Findlay remarks 'we must not disgrace Paul by making him say that the pre-incarnate Christ followed the march of Israel in the shape of a lump of rock!' **"And that rock was Christ" – Although they discerned it not, Christ himself was the author of all their blessings; an assertion which requires His pre-existence and tacitly assumes His Deity by giving Him a title ("rock") which was used of Jehovah in the Old Testament.**

[Deuteronomy 32:15; Psalm 18:2; Isaiah 17:10]

[14] **John 8:12**

"Then spoke Jesus again unto them, saying, **I am the light of the world; he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life**".

Comments

5 verses prior to these comments the Lord had challenged a group of Pharisees who had been 'baying for blood' with these words "He that is without sin among you let him first cast a stone at her" – they had wanted an adulteress to be stoned to death –Of course none of them did 'cast a stone at her' as none of them would have been arrogant enough or foolish enough to claim to be totally without sin. In complete contrast the Lord now publicly proclaims "**I am the light of the world**" – He is using this terminology to teach the **'literal truth'** that in contrast to sinful, fallen humanity He alone is totally 'without sin' – intellectually He is total truth; morally He is perfect purity. His followers have access to and should seek to walk in that "**light**" unlike unbelievers "who loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For everyone that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved"
(John 3:19-20).

Matthew Henry wrote 'Christ is the Light of the world. God is light, and Christ is the image of the invisible God. One sun enlightens the whole world; so does one Christ, and there needs no more. What a dark dungeon would the world be without the sun! So would it be without Jesus, by whom light came into the world. Those who follow Christ shall not walk in darkness'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 113) 'During this same visit to Jerusalem for the festival of Tabernacles, while teaching near the treasury in the temple, Jesus made the further revelation of himself as *the light of the world* who opens the eyes of men's spiritual understanding and guides them into the truth about themselves and about what God has done to satisfy their most

urgent needs. **Such a revelation at this time was in keeping with the symbolism of the festival.**

The Israelites had been guided during their journey across the wilderness by a pillar of light in the sky; and this phenomenon was recalled to the minds of worshippers at Tabernacles by the ceremony of lighting the golden candelabra**. Jesus, the Word of God, whose life, as the Prologue has stated is 'the light of men' gives illumination to all who follow Him'.

** In the book 'The World Jesus Knew' **Anne Punton wrote** (p 160) 'Four huge candelabra were erected in the Temple courts. They were so high that the younger priests climbed up ladders to replenish the oil and trim the wicks which were made from the worn out trousers and belts of the priests. When they were lit, even the darkest alley received light from the. Shortly after the festival Jesus claimed, "I am the light of the world". Did the glow of these great lights still fill the imagination, ensuring that the lesson was easily discerned?

[15] **John 9:5**

"As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world".

Comments

In this case when the Lord declares Himself to be **"the light of the world"** He is teaching the **'literal truth'** that He alone can give 'spiritual sight' to all who are naturally born 'spiritually blind. He uses this title in the context of giving physical sight to the man born physically blind from birth. He gave 'spiritual sight' to multitudes whilst He was personally here 'in the flesh and He continues to give 'spiritual sight' as His gospel is preached to all who are 'born again' of His Spirit.

Matthew Henry wrote 'Christ cured many who were blind by disease or accident; here he cured one born blind. Thus he showed his power to help in the most desperate cases, and the work of his grace upon the souls of sinners, which gives sight to those blind by nature.

This poor man could not see Christ, but Christ saw him. And if we know or apprehend anything of Christ, it is because we were first known of him'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (pp 122-123) 'The record of the failure of the Jews because of spiritual blindness to recognise Jesus as the Apostle of God and the Light of the world is followed by the story of the miraculous gift of sight to a beggar born blind. This miracle is a sign that Jesus can open the eyes of the spiritually blind so that they can receive the complete sight which constitutes perfect faith. Faith means passing from darkness to light; and to bring men this faith, to give them the opportunity of responding when the divine Spirit draws them to Himself, is the primary purpose for which Jesus has been sent into the world. Through Him the activity of God is at work in those who, apart from Him, would be as devoid of spiritual sight as the blind beggar was of physical sight'.

[16] **John 10:1&7-9**

" Verily, verily I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber... Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep, All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers; but the sheep did not hear them. I am

the door, by me if any man enter in he shall be saved and shall go in and out and find pasture”.

Comments

Christ is here likening Himself to a dedicated shepherd who cares deeply for the survival and well-being of his sheep. Sheep are particularly vulnerable animals and so for safety, especially at night, they would enter into a sheepfold, an enclosure with only one door into it. Very often the ultra-caring shepherd would station himself overnight in that one entrance to the sheepfold and so Jesus is here using this metaphor of **“I am the door of the sheep”** to convey the **‘literal truth’** that He alone is the only way to safety and salvation as He later spelt out clearly in John 14:6.

Matthew Henry wrote ‘Christ is the Door. And what greater security has the church of God (‘the sheep’) than that the Lord Jesus is between it and all its enemies? He is a door open for passage and communication. Here are plain directions how to come into the fold; we must come in by Jesus Christ as the Door. By faith in him as the great Mediator between God and man. Also, we have precious promises to those that observe this direction. Christ has all that care of his church, and every believer, which a good shepherd has of his flock’

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (pp 128-130) ‘Because the Pharisees are blind leaders, they are also bogus shepherds, and come under the category of those designated in verse 8 “thieves and robbers”. All who claim to be caring for God’s flock but who do not enter into the sheepfold through the door, which is Christ Himself – all, in other words, who hold out before men and women the prospect of a higher and better life apart from the necessity of redemption through the blood of Jesus Christ, are deceivers, spiritual charlatans depriving men of salvation... believers, as they listen to the good Shepherd’s voice, will be united to one another in virtue of their common faith in Him who loved them and gave Himself for them; and they will be under the care of shepherds (faithful preachers/pastors) conscious that they have been sent by Jesus... Such shepherds will never use illegal means of entering the fold, as false shepherds in the parable did in order to carry out their murderous designs, but will go in and out through the door which is Jesus Himself’.

[17] John 10:11&15-16

“I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep... As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have that are not of this fold”.

Comments

God’s Word teaches clearly the purpose for which the Lord came into this world – **“Thou shalt call his name Jesus, for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21)** – the Lord is using the figurative language of **“sheep”** to convey the **‘literal truth’** that an elect group of people shall be saved as a result of His (‘the good shepherd’s’) redemptive mission here on earth.

Matthew Henry wrote ‘Christ is a good Shepherd... The Lord Jesus knows whom he has chosen, and is sure of them... See here the grace of Christ... it is plain, that he died in the

place and stead of men; to obtain their being set free from the punishment of sin, to obtain the pardon of their sin; and that his death should obtain that pardon. Our Lord laid not his life down for his doctrine, but for his sheep'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (pp 129-130) 'In the Old Testament the relationship between God and His people is often symbolised as that of a shepherd and his flock... Ezekiel... predicts the day when God will search for His sheep and bring them out from among foreign peoples and gather them from distant countries (see Ezekiel 34:11). This prophecy is now being fulfilled in Jesus, who has been sent by God as His good Shepherd and who will gather together the sheep at present scattered far and wide. The presence of this good Shepherd inevitably separates the sheep who belong to God's flock from those who do not... He is willing to lay down His life in perfect obedience as a voluntary sacrifice for the sheep... To their number will be added, as a result of the Gentile missions which will inevitably follow after Jesus has laid down His life and taken it again, "**other sheep... not of this fold**" (v 16)... the flock will be universal in character'.

[18] **John 11:11-14**

"These things said he; and after that he saith unto them, Our friend **Lazarus sleepeth**; but I go that I may wake him out of **sleep**. Then said his disciples, Lord, if he **sleep**, he shall do well. However Jesus spoke of **his death**; but they thought that he had spoken of taking of rest in **sleep**. Then said Jesus unto them plainly, **Lazarus is dead**".

Comments

Earlier I referred to '**the anagogical**' sense of Scripture defined by Alan Cairns as 'The anagogical sense... uses an interpretation which the New Testament itself appears to use'. '**The anagogical**' use by the Lord of "**sleep**" and "**sleepeth**" is clearly explained here by the Lord Himself that He is referring to the '**literal truth**' of "**death**" and being "**dead**".

Matthew Henry wrote 'A true Christian, when he dies, does but sleep; he rests from the labours of the past day.'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 137) 'The sleep from which Lazarus was awakened could not by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as a temporary sleep. On the contrary, it was the sleep of a man four days dead, whose body was already in the process of dissolution'.

[19] **John 11:24-25**

"Martha saith unto him, I know that he (Lazarus) shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day. Jesus said unto her, **I am the resurrection** and **the life**"

Comments

Martha has confirmed her belief that all who have died, including her brother Lazarus, will be resurrected back to life on "the last day". In response, Jesus declares that He is "**the resurrection** and **the life**" in order to teach the '**literal truth**' that He is the One who has power to resurrect the dead and to give them new life. As a demonstration and confirmation that He possesses such power and ability to

carry this out on “the last day”, He then raises/resuscitates Lazarus and brings him forth alive from the tomb (vv 43-44). But there is another **‘literal truth’** that we must not miss being taught here. Jesus said “**I am**” and not ‘I will be’ “**the resurrection and the life**”. Through the faithful preaching of His Gospel, the Lord is currently engaged in spiritually resurrecting sinners who are “dead in trespasses and sins” and giving to them eternal spiritual life – Paul wrote “And you hath he quickened (‘made alive’) who were dead (spiritually) in trespasses and sins”(Ephesians 2:1).

Matthew Henry wrote ‘To enlarge Martha's expectations, our Lord declared himself to be the Resurrection and the Life. In every sense he is the Resurrection; the source, the substance, the first-fruits, the cause of it.’

Bishop J C Ryle wrote ‘It seems that the house of Mary and Martha at Bethany was filled with mourners... By so doing they reaped a rich and unexpected reward. They beheld the greatest miracle that Jesus ever wrought. They were eyewitnesses when Lazarus came forth from the tomb. To many of them, we may well believe, that day was a spiritual birth. The raising of Lazarus led to a resurrection in their souls. How small sometimes are the hinges on which eternal life appears to depend!’

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 139) ‘Jesus at once tries to comfort her (Martha) with the assurance that her brother will rise again... Jesus now completely reorientates the faith of Martha by telling her that **He is the resurrection**... for to believe in Him is not only to be assured about the resurrection on the last day, but to experience here and now something of that eternal life to which the resurrection is the prelude’

[20] **John 12:24**

“Verily, verily, I say unto you, **except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone; but if it die it bringeth forth much fruit**”.

Comments

Here the Lord is using farming/agricultural language to figuratively describe His forthcoming death on the Cross in order to teach the **‘literal truth’** that only by His substitutionary sacrificial death can there be a harvest (“much fruit”) of precious saved souls. Having spoken prophetically of the sufferings and death of the Saviour in Isaiah 53:3-10 the prophet also stated in verse 11 “He shall see of the travail of his soul and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities”.

Commenting on Isaiah 53:10-12 **Matthew Henry wrote** ‘Come, and see how Christ loved us! We could not put him in our stead, but he put himself. Thus he took away the sin of the world, by taking it on himself. **He made himself subject to death**, which to us is the wages of sin. Observe the graces and glories of his state of exaltation. Christ will not commit the care of his family to any other. God's purposes shall take effect. **And whatever is undertaken according to God's pleasure shall prosper. He shall see it accomplished in the conversion and salvation of sinners. There are many whom Christ justifies, even as many as he gave his life a ransom for.**’

Commenting on the verse in focus, John 12:24 **Matthew Henry wrote** ‘A corn of wheat yields no increase unless it is cast into the ground. Thus Christ might have possessed his heavenly glory alone, without becoming man. Or, after he had taken man's nature, he might have entered heaven alone, by his own perfect righteousness, without suffering or

death; but then no sinner of the human race could have been saved. The salvation of souls hitherto, and henceforward to the end of time, is owing to the dying of this Corn of wheat.'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 148) 'For what is true in the natural world, Jesus goes on to say, is also true in the spiritual. The same divine principle that life comes through death is operative in both spheres. God kills to make alive. The grain of wheat must fall into the ground and die that it may produce fruit. Even so, eternal life for the many comes through the sacrifice of the One.'

[21] **John 12:35**

"Then Jesus said unto them, Yet a little while is **the light** with you. Walk while ye have **the light**, lest darkness come upon you for he that walketh in darkness knoweth not where he goeth"

Comments

Once more it is clear that Christ is referring to Himself as "**the light**" to convey the '**literal truth**' that He was the Promised Messiah and that He alone can give divine spiritual guidance and wisdom. Those who seek spiritual guidance and wisdom without recognising or looking to Christ are viewed by Christ as wandering aimlessly and in darkness. Now that Christ Himself is no longer present in the flesh here on earth does that mean that Christians have no source of "**light**" to refer to for divine spiritual wisdom, help and guidance? The answer is a resounding 'NO'. Christ demonstrated to the 2 downcast disciples on the road to Emmaus that the Scriptures testify of Him (see Luke 24:13-27 & 32) – something that the people He was addressing here failed to recognise for we read in the preceding verse 34 "The people answered him. We have heard out of the law that Christ abideth forever and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?" These people were clearly spiritually blind to the truth of the words of the Psalmist in Psalm 119:105 "**Thy word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path**".

Matthew Henry wrote 'The people drew false notions from the Scriptures, because they overlooked the prophecies that spoke of Christ's sufferings and death. Our Lord warned them that the light would not long continue with them, and exhorted them to walk in it, before the darkness overtook them. Those who would walk in the light must believe in it, and follow Christ's directions. But those who have not faith, cannot behold what is set forth in Jesus, lifted up on the cross, and must be strangers to its influence as made known by the Holy Spirit; they find a thousand objections to excuse their unbelief'.

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 150) 'Jesus can stay no longer to argue His claims with the unbelieving Jews. Instead He makes a final appeal to them to recognise the Light while it is still shining in their midst, and to believe the truth which He, the Light of the world, is disclosing'

[22] **John 13:8-10**

"Jesus answered him (Peter) If I **wash** thee not, thou hast no part with me. Simon Peter saith unto him, Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head. Jesus saith to him, He that is **washed** needeth not save to **wash** his feet but is entirely clean"

Comments

Jesus is here using the language of the everyday household task of washing to be clean to convey the 'literal truth' of a sinner being cleansed from the defilement and consequence of their sin by Christ alone.

Matthew Henry wrote 'Christ washed his disciples' feet, that he might signify to them the value of spiritual washing and the cleansing of the soul from the pollutions of sin... All those, and those only, who are spiritually washed by Christ, have a part in Christ. All whom Christ owns and saves, he justifies and sanctifies... The true believer is thus washed when he receives Christ for his salvation. See then what ought to be the daily care of those who through grace are in a justified state, and that is, to wash their feet; to cleanse themselves from daily guilt, and to watch against everything defiling'.

Bishop J C Ryle wrote 'Our Lord seems in effect to say "Thou wilt not be wise to object to the symbolical action which I am performing. Remember no one can be saved, or have any part in me and my work of redemption, unless I wash away his sins. Except I wash away thy many sins, even thou, Simon Peter, hast no part in me... it does not become thee to object to my doing and instructive and figurative act to thy feet, when I must needs do a far greater work to thy soul... The common assertion that this "washing" here spoken of is baptism seems to me unwarrantable. Our Lord never baptised anyone, so far as we can learn from Scripture... The "washing" here spoken of is something far above baptism.

No man or woman can be saved unless his or her sins are washed away in Christ's precious blood... He that is pardoned and justified by me is entirely "washed" from all his sins and only needs the daily forgiveness of the daily defilement he contracts in travelling through a sinful world. Once washed, justified and accepted by me, ye are clean before God... Once joined to Christ and cleansed in his blood, they are completely absolved and free from all spot of guilt and are counted without blame before God. But for all this, they need every day, as they walk through this world, to confess their daily failures and to sue for daily pardon. They require in short a daily "washing" of their feet, over and above the great "washing" of justification, which is theirs the moment they first believe'.

The apostle John deals with the subject mentioned in the last sentence of the quote from Bishop Ryle and that is the maintenance of 'fellowship' with God by believers on a daily basis. John wrote "If we say that we have fellowship with him and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth. But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ, his Son, cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness".

Pastor John MacArthur wrote in his Study Bible 'The cleansing that Christ does at salvation never needs to be repeated – atonement is complete at that point. But all who have been cleansed by God's gracious justification need constant washing in the experiential sense (Cecil – in order to maintain a clear conscience before God and sweet fellowship with God) as they battle sin in the flesh. Believers are justified and granted imputed righteousness (Philippians 3:8-9) but still need sanctification and personal righteousness (Philippians 3:12-14)".

[23] John 13:33

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you"

Comments

Judas has just departed from the scene of the last supper (v 30) and the Lord is alone with the remaining faithful disciples. Over the following 4 chapters He gives some of the most informative and heart-warming instruction to the men who would have the immense responsibility of proclaiming His Gospel once He had ascended back to heaven in triumph following the events at Calvary and subsequently the empty tomb. The Lord is here slipping into 'teaching mode' and he uses an affectionate paternal phrase "**little children**" to convey that **'literal truth'**. In Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament words we read this in relation to the Greek word '*teknion*' – "a little child" – is used only figuratively in the New Testament and always in the plural. It is found frequently in 1 John...; elsewhere in John's Gospel 13:33... It is a term of affection by a teacher to his disciples under circumstances requiring a tender appeal e.g. of Christ to the disciples just before His death' (*Cecil – the first thing the Lord is about to tell the disciples is that He is going to leave them so hence the need for 'a tender appeal' as He begins*)

Bishop J C Ryle wrote 'This is the only time our Lord ever calls His disciples His children. It was evidently a term of affection and compassion, like the language of a father speaking to children whom he is about to leave alone as orphans in the world; "My believing followers, whom I love and regard as my children". Observe that the expression is not used till Judas has gone away. Unbelievers are not to be addressed as Christ's children. "Yet a little while and I am with you" seems to mean "I am only staying a very little longer with you". The time is short. The hour approaches when we must part. Give me your best attention while I talk to you for the last time before I go".

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker** states (p 160) 'While the death of Jesus and His return to the Father are the occasions of His own supreme glory, for the immature disciples, now tenderly called "little children" they bespeak (indicate, suggest) grievous bereavement and interminable separation (v 33)'.

One final comment; if transubstantiation or 'Christ in the Eucharist' as Karl Keating titles his article is as essential for salvation and was supposedly alluded to in John chapter 6 to be later fleshed out at the last supper [in his words - 'chapter six of John's Gospel, in which Christ speaks about the sacrament that will be instituted at the Last Supper'] is it not really totally amazing that John includes absolutely no reference whatsoever in his Gospel to the supposed 'institution of the sacrament' – and keep in mind how John began to conclude his Gospel account in these words "And many other signs truly Jesus did in the presence of his disciples; which are not written in this book; **But these are written (excluding any reference to bread and wine at the Last Supper) **that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name"** (John 20:30-31)**

[24] John 14:6

"Jesus saith unto him (*Thomas*) **I am the way, the truth, and the life**; no man cometh unto the Father but by me".

Comments

In the preceding verse Thomas has stated that he, and he believes his fellow disciples also, haven't really grasped or understood the location to which the Lord is going and furthermore, wherever it is, they don't know the way to it. He's thinking solely in housing and geographical terms. The Lord uses the language of earth to

convey the **'literal truth'** that He alone is the way to eternal life which in turn leads to Heaven, the dwelling place of God the Father.

Matthew Henry wrote 'Christ is the sinner's Way to the Father and to heaven, in his person as God manifest in the flesh, in his atoning sacrifice, and as our Advocate. He is the Truth, as fulfilling all the prophecies of a Saviour; believing which, sinners come by him the Way. He is the Life, by whose life-giving Spirit the dead in sin are quickened. Nor can any man draw nigh God as a Father, who is not quickened by Him as the Life, and taught by Him as the Truth, to come by Him as the Way.'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 163) 'Thomas however questions whether it is possible for anyone, who has no definite knowledge of the final goal of a journey, to know the way that leads to it (v 5). His bewilderment is due to a failure to understand that, though the necessity of human language compels Jesus to speak of "going away" and of "a way to the Father" these terms have no spatial (*literally relating to space*) or material (*literally relating to material*) significance. The way to God lies in the knowledge of the truth about Him and in the experience of His life. It is precisely this knowledge and this experience which Jesus throughout His incarnate life, and supremely in His atoning sacrifice, is bringing within men's reach. Jesus Himself is therefore "the way", because He is the embodiment of "the truth" about God and His relationship with men; and by reason of this, "the life" that is inherent in His own words and actions, the very life of God Himself, is available for mankind. Because to know Jesus is to know the Father'.

Bishop J C Ryle wrote ' "I am the way, the truth and the life" – the fullness of these precious words can probably never be taken in by man. He that attempts to unfold them does little more than scratch the surface of a rich soil. Christ is "the way" – the way to heaven and peace with God... Christ is "the truth" – the whole substance of true religion which the mind of man requires. Without him the wisest heathen groped in gross darkness and knew nothing about God... Christ is "the life" – the sinner's title to eternal life and pardon, the believer's root of spiritual life and holiness, the surety of the Christian's resurrection life. He that believeth on Christ hath everlasting life'

[25] [John 14:16, 18 & 26](#)

"And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you forever"... I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you... the comforter, who is the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things"

Comments

Here the Lord employs legal terminology to describe the **'literal truth'** of the divine presence that will be gifted to all true believers through the permanent indwelling in their lives of God Himself. In verse 18 he Lord says that He "will come" to the believer. In verse 23 He states that He AND His Father will reside in the believer and in verse 26 this divine presence is identified as being through the Holy Spirit. The divine presence is there to assist, help, teach, guide and comfort the believer. In Vine's Expository Dictionary we read this definition of the Greek for "comforter" - 'parakletos... primarily a verbal adjective, and suggests the capability or adaptability for giving aid. It was used in a court of justice to denote a legal assistant, counsel for the defence, an advocate... In the widest sense it denotes a "succourer, comforter".'

Matthew Henry wrote 'The gift of the Spirit is a fruit of Christ's mediation, bought by his merit, and received by his intercession. The word used here, signifies an advocate, counsellor, monitor, and comforter. He would abide with the disciples to the end of time; his gifts and graces would encourage their hearts. The expressions used here and elsewhere, plainly denote a person, and the office itself includes all the Divine perfections. The gift of the Holy Ghost is bestowed upon the disciples of Christ, and not on the world. This is the favour God bears to his chosen. As the source of holiness and happiness, the Holy Spirit will abide with every believer for ever'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (pp 166-167) 'the Father will send at the request of the Son another Advocate, the Spirit who reveals the truth and abides for ever in the heart of the believer... While Jesus has been with them, He Himself has been their advocate... He has prayed for Peter that his faith may not utterly fail (Luke 22:32)... after Jesus has returned to the Father, the Holy Spirit which is His Spirit will continue to perform in a manner unrecognisable by and unintelligible to the world, the same office He has Himself discharged for them so lovingly while He has been with them on earth'

[26] **John 15:1, 2, 5, 8 & 16**

"I am **the true vine** and my Father is **the vinedresser**. Every branch in me that beareth not **fruit** he taketh away; and every branch that beareth **fruit**, he purgeth (prunes) it, that it may bring forth more **fruit**... I am **the vine**, ye are the branches. He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much **fruit**... In this is my Father glorified that ye bear much **fruit**... Ye have not chosen me but I have chosen you and ordained you that ye should go and bring forth **fruit** and that your **fruit** should remain"

Comments

Once more the Lord resorts to farming/agricultural language to describe Himself as "**the true vine**" and Christians as "**branches**" the '**literal truth**' of both His mission and the subsequent mission of His disciples – these missions have one common aim in mind – to bring forth "**fruit**" to the glory of God the Father, referred to as "**the vinedresser**". He is the one who 'planted' the Son here on earth that through His redemptive mission there would be much "**fruit**" (converts – please refer back to the comments earlier on John 12:24) – that "**fruit**" would of course be saved sinners who in turn then, through faithful preaching and lives of godly service, would likewise bring forth "**fruit**" (converts to Christ and godliness in their own lives – "fruit of the Spirit")

Matthew Henry wrote 'Jesus Christ is the Vine, the true Vine... Believers are branches of this Vine... The Father is the Husbandman. Never was any husbandman so wise, so watchful, about his vineyard... We must be fruitful. From a vine we look for grapes, and from a Christian we look for a Christian temper, disposition, and life. We must honour God, and do good; this is bearing fruit... Let us seek to live more simply on the fulness of Christ, and to grow more fruitful in every good word and work, so may our joy in Him and in his salvation be full'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (pp 173-175) 'Before Jesus engages in the last and fiercest strife against the prince of the world, He teaches His disciples by means of a simple allegory the demands their discipleship imposes upon them and the conditions under which it can become effective... it is natural that Jesus should frame His allegory in language that had been used to describe the people of God under the old dispensation. Israel had often been pictured

under the figure of a “vine”... Jesus’ description of Himself as “the true” or genuine “vine” implies that Israel had been an imperfect foreshadowing of what was found to perfection in Himself. He is what God had called Israel to be, but what Israel in fact had never become. With Him therefore a new Israel emerges, the members of which (Christians) draw their spiritual sustenance from Him alone... The branches of a vine are not self-centred or independent. They have no source of life within themselves. And the fact that they need constantly to be pruned makes it apparent that their life is drawn not from a source outside themselves, nor from themselves in isolation, but from the stem of the vine to which they belong’

[27] John 18:11

“Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath; the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?”

Comments

The Lord is embarking upon the climax to His mission here on earth. In the wake of Peter’s great declaration about Christ being the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16) He had told Peter and the other disciples how “he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed and be raised again the third day” (Matthew 16:21) and of course Peter had raised objections to that (Matthew 16:22) and was severely rebuked by the Lord for doing so (Matthew 16:23) . Here the Lord has just been betrayed by Judas, Peter has reacted violently and the Lord stops him and uses the language of ‘drinking a cup’ to remind Peter of what He had earlier told him and the other disciples in Matthew 16:21. The language of ‘drinking a cup’ was used to convey the ‘literal truth’ that He must die on the Cross and be raised again three days later.

Pastor John MacArthur wrote in his Study Bible ‘Peter’s impetuous bravery in verse 10 was not only misguided but exhibited failure to understand the centrality of the death that Jesus came to die. The “cup” in the Old Testament is associated with suffering and especially judgment i.e. the cup of God’s wrath (Psalm 75:8; Isaiah 51:17, 22; Jeremiah 25:15; Ezekiel 23:31-34)

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 195) ‘Jesus stays Peter’s hand before it perpetrates any further act of physical aggression; for evil can only be overcome if Jesus Himself drinks the cup of the wrath of God, and He is under a divine necessity to drink that cup alone and to drink it to the full’.

[28] John 19:26-27

“When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home”.

Comments

As He hangs dying on the Cross the Lord has the welfare of His soon to be bereaved mother, Mary, very much in mind and He lovingly entrust her future care into the hands of His disciple, John. In this instance He employs familial language

to convey the **'literal truth'** that the care that John should in future exhibit for Mary should equate to the care of a loving son for his mother.

Matthew Henry wrote 'Christ tenderly provided for his mother at his death. Sometimes, when God removes one comfort from us, he raises up another for us, where we looked not for it. Christ's example teaches all men to honour their parents in life and death; to provide for their wants, and to promote their comfort by every means in their power.'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (pp 210-211) 'Part of the work of Jesus the great High Priest is to create a new fellowship of the redeemed, and to unite human beings one with another by virtue of their common loyalty to Himself. So while He hangs on the cross He bids His mother and the beloved disciple find in their attachment to Himself the basis of a new spiritual relationship to one another. Beneath the cross Christian fellowship is born... all who enjoy it are drawn to one another by the consciousness that they are all brothers (*family*) for whom Christ died'.

[29] **John 21:15-17**

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonah, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my lambs**. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonah. Lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, **Feed my sheep**. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonah, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus said unto him, **Feed my sheep**'.

Comments

Here the Lord is using pastoral/farming language to convey the **'literal truth'** that He is here commissioning Peter to teach the truths of the Gospel and the Word of God to young and mature Christians alike, referred to by Him as “**Lambs**” and “**Sheep**” – Peter is to “**feed**” their souls with rich spiritual food.

Matthew Henry wrote 'No one can be qualified to feed the sheep and lambs of Christ, who does not love the good Shepherd more than any earthly advantage or object'

The 1960 Tyndale New Testament Commentary on John by **Professor R V G Tasker states** (p 230) 'Simon, humbled by failure (*having denied Christ three times*) and deeply penitent, three times declares his love, and three times receives the charge to feed Christ's flock, old and young alike, lambs as well as sheep'.

Pastor John MacArthur wrote in his Study Bible 'The word “**feed**” conveys the idea of being devoted to the Lord's service as an undershepherd who cares for His flock (see 1st Peter 5:1-4) The word has the idea of constantly feeding and nourishing the sheep. This served as a reminder that the primary duty of the messenger of Jesus Christ is to teach the Word of God (2nd Timothy 4:2). Acts 1-13 records Peter's obedience to this commission.'

Karl Keating posed the question '**Why do Fundamentalists and Evangelicals reject the plain, literal interpretation of John 6?**' – He is basically suggesting that the use of

'symbolic', 'metaphorical', 'figurative', 'allegorical' and legitimate **'anagogical'** language by the Lord and by the Apostle John to convey **'literal truth'** was a concept virtually foreign to John's Gospel.

The 29 examples that I have cited give the lie to this inference by Mr Keating and demonstrate that the Gospel of John is absolutely laced with **'symbolic', 'metaphorical', 'figurative', 'allegorical'** and legitimate **'anagogical'** language being employed by the Lord and by the Apostle John to convey **'literal truth'**

In Part [2] of my response to Mr Keating's article I will [DV] address the following

2. Is 'eating' part of a process to 'eternal life' as Mr Keating claims or is it a gracious, divine gift, evidenced by 'belief' received by faith alone?

Cecil Andrews – 'Take Heed' Ministries – 19th August 2011