

Lent 2017
WHY DID JESUS DIE?
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Sequence

- Traditional narrative
- The need for an alternative
- Potential sources: New Testament to start with
- The Gospel of John
- Does it “fit” with the historical Jesus?
- Does it speak to us today?
- A prayer

Traditional narrative

And when I think of God,
 His son not sparing,
 Sent Him to die,
 I scarce can take it in;
 That on the cross, my burden
 gladly bearing He bled and died
 to take away my sin

- The Satisfaction (or Commercial) Theory
- The formulator of this theory was the medieval theologian Anselm of Canterbury (1034-1109), in his book, *Cur Deus Homo* (Why the God Man?).
- In his view, God’s offended honour and dignity could only be satisfied by the sacrifice of the God-man, Jesus Christ.
- Eventually: Penal Substitution
- Anselm offered some biblical evidence that the atonement was not a ransom paid by God to the devil but rather a debt paid to God on behalf of sinners.
- Anselm’s work established a foundation for the Western understanding of redemption and, more specifically, the Catholic understanding of Calvary, the Mass and the priesthood.
- Anselm’s work established a foundation for the Protestant Reformation, specifically the understanding of justification by faith.

Need for an alternative

- Depends on the historicity of Genesis 2-3
- Depends on a feudal idea of God
- Redemption (buying back) requires a price (punishment)
- Redemption is completed with the death of Jesus
- The resurrection has no place (the best miracle etc.)
- It has no connection with the life and ministry of Jesus
- The picture of God who cannot be merciful until he receives legal satisfaction is unappealing and unconvincing

Potential resources

- Taking seriously evil, sin and death
- Joining up the incarnation, ministry, teaching and the events of salvation
- Offering a consistent picture of God acting on our behalf
- Uniting the death and the resurrection as “constitutive” of salvation
- Rooted in the teaching of the New Testament
- Rooted in Jesus’ own understanding of his destiny

- The New Testament
- The historical Jesus
- Letters of St Paul
- Gospel of John

- The Letter to the Hebrews
- In dialogue with contemporary science
- In dialogue with the new theology of the cosmic Christ

Gospel of John

- The Fourth Gospel
- Read on Holy Thursday and Good Friday
- Lifting up: John 3:14-15 and throughout
- Love: John 3:16 and throughout
- New creation: John 1:1 and in other places
- Service: John 13:1-17
- Passover Lamb: John 1:19 and throughout
- John Gospel has a Last Supper (John 13-17)
- John's Gospel has not Lord's Supper
- See, however, John 6
- Prophetic actions
- The words and action over the the bread and wine
- The washing of the feet

John 13:1-17

(Full text repeated below)

John 13:1-2

John 13:1 Just before the **Passover** feast, Jesus knew that his **time** had come to depart from this world to the Father. Having **loved** his own who were in the world, he now loved them to the very **end**. 2 The evening meal was in progress, and the **devil** had already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, that he should **betray** Jesus.

- Passover no. 3
- Time = "hour"
- Loved
- To the end = 2 meanings
- Devil]
- Betray = "hand over"

John 13:3-5

3 Because Jesus knew that the Father had handed all things over to him, and that he had **come from** God and was **going back** to God, 4 he **got up** from the meal, **removed** his outer clothes, took a **towel** and **tied it around** himself. 5 He poured **water** into the washbasin and began to **wash** the disciples' **feet** and to dry them with the towel he had wrapped around himself.

- Incarnation
- Rose **13** times, almost always in reference to the resurrection of Jesus.
- Took off **18** times, usually in reference to Jesus' laying down his life.
- Wrapped only **3** times, but the links are fascinating (Peter in John 21)
- Water **21** times, but the contexts are also illuminating
- Washing **13** times. (The man born blind in John 9)
- Wipe **3** times only. (Mary in John 11-12)
- Feet an apparently "innocent" word **14** times (Lazarus in John 11; Mary in John 11-12; Jesus in John 20)

John 13:6-11

John 13:6 Then he came to Simon Peter. Peter said to him, "Lord, are you going to wash my feet?" 7 Jesus replied, "**You do not understand what I am doing now, but you will**

understand after these things.” 8 Peter said to him, “You will **never** wash my feet!” Jesus replied, “If I do not wash you, you have no **share** with me.”

9 Simon Peter said to him, “**Lord, wash not only my feet, but also my hands and my head!**” 10 Jesus replied, “The one who has bathed needs only to wash his feet, but is completely clean. And you disciples are clean, but not every one of you.”

11 (For Jesus knew the one who was going to betray him. For this reason he said, “Not every one of you is clean.”)

- Not understanding now
- “Never” lit. “into eternity” **12** times, with a special meaning
- Share = communion
- Impetuosity of Peter
- Baptism?
- Peter “voices” the shock of God serving humanity

John 13:12-17

John 13:12 So when Jesus had washed their feet and put his outer clothing back on, he took his place at the table again and said to them, “Do you understand what I have done for you?

13 You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and do so correctly, for that is what I am.

14 **If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you too ought to wash one another’s feet.** 15 For I have given you an **example**—you should do just as I have done for you. 16 I tell you the solemn truth, the slave is not greater than his master, nor is the one who is sent as a messenger greater than the one who sent him. 17 If you understand these things, you will be blessed if you do them.

- Reversal of roles
- Example = special meaning
- Tupos / hupotoposis
- Hupogrammos
- **Hupodeigma**
- Eikōn
- Charaktēr
- **Hupdeigma**
- An example of behaviour used for purposes of moral instruction, example, model, pattern
- An indication of something that appears at a subsequent time, outline, sketch, symbol
- See the Greek Old Testament

2 Macc 6:27 Therefore, by bravely giving up my life now, I will show myself worthy of my old age 28 and leave to the young a noble **example of how to die a good death willingly** and nobly for the revered and holy laws. When he had said this, he went at once to the rack.

2 Macc 6:31 So in this way he died, **leaving in his death an example of nobility and a memorial of courage**, not

only to the young but to the great body of his nation.

4 Macc 17:23 For the tyrant Antiochus, when he saw the courage of their virtue and their endurance under the tortures, proclaimed them to his soldiers as **an example for their own endurance**, 24 and this made them brave and courageous for infantry battle and siege, and he ravaged and conquered all his enemies.

John 13:1-17

- Salvation was an act of loving service
- In Jesus’ death and resurrection, God *served* humanity
- Christian service participates in God’s service of humanity in Christ
- NB: not mention of Adam, original sin, price to be paid etc.

- Lifting up: John 3:14-15 and throughout
- Love: John 3:16 and throughout
- New creation: John 1:1 and in other places
- Service: John 13:1-17
- Passover Lamb: John 1:19 and throughout

The historical Jesus

Mark 10:43 “But it is not this way among you. Instead whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, 44 and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of all. 45 For even the Son of Man did not come **to be served but to serve**, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

- Mark 10:35-45 = Matthew 20:20-28
- Luke 12:37; 17:7-8
- Luke 22:24-27

Luke 12:37 Blessed are those slaves whom their master finds alert when he returns! I tell you the truth, **he will dress himself to serve, have them take their place at the table, and will come and wait on them!**

Luke 17:7 “Would any one of you say to your slave who comes in from the field after ploughing or shepherding sheep, ‘**Come at once and sit down for a meal**’? 8 Won’t the master instead say to him, ‘Get my dinner ready, and make yourself ready to serve me while I eat and drink. Then you may eat and drink’?”

Luke 22:24 A dispute also started among them over which of them was to be regarded as the greatest. 25 So Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them, and those in authority over them are called ‘benefactors.’ 26 Not so with you; instead the one who is greatest among you must become like the youngest, and the leader like the one who serves. 27 **For who is greater, the one who is seated at the table, or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is seated at the table? But I am among you as one who serves.**

Does it speak to us today?

- Jesus’ gift was not up to God to offset his anger but down from God to reveal his love
 - Jesus’ lifting up heals humanity of the “disease” of death
 - The core is God’s breath-taking love, indicated by the washing of feet—so incredible is it hardly believable
 - 1John 5:10 In this is love: not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the atoning sacrifice for our sins.
 - Death and resurrection are joined
 - Jesus’ costly obedience, death and resurrection show God reaching out to humanity
 - Contemporary models: service, love, healing
- Do these teachings of John speak to us today?
 - What kind of disciple should I be?
 - What kind of church should we be?

A prayer

From the throne of grace, O God of mercy,
hear the devout prayer of your people.
As your Son is lifted high upon the cross,
draw into his exalted life all who are reborn
in the blood and water flowing from his opened side.
We ask this through Jesus Christ,
our Passover and our peace,
who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
holy and mighty God, for ever and ever. Amen.