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Exodus in the New Testament

David Lau

Exodus Sermon #12

Readings: Exodus 23:10-17 (*The Sabbath law and the three annual festivals*)
Exodus 23:20-33 (*God's promise to lead Israel victoriously into the promised land*)

Sermon Texts: Acts 15:10-11; Galatians 4:8-11; Colossians 2:13-17

Acts 15:10-11 [Peter speaking]: "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."

Galatians 4:8-11 – But then, indeed, when you did not know God, you served those which by nature are not gods. But now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain.

Colossians 2:13-17 – And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ.

I think we would all agree that the Ten Commandments of God, even to this day, teach us what is right and what is wrong. From these words which God Himself spoke centuries ago from Mt. Sinai to the children of Israel, we learn with absolute certainty that murder, stealing, adultery and idolatry are wrong and that honoring our parents is right.

But then a question comes about that Third Commandment, the commandment pertaining to the Sabbath. God did say, "**The seventh day is the Sabbath of the LORD your God. In it you shall do no work**" (Exod. 20:10). The words were plain. And the seventh day was Saturday. God told His people that they should not work on that day, for it was the day on which God rested after having created the world in six days before it. God repeated this commandment a number of times in the Law given through Moses. To the people living under the old covenant the Lord decreed: "**Six days you shall do your work, and on the seventh day you shall rest.**" In fact, God even commanded His people that those who violated the Sabbath day by unlawful working should be put to death.

Now we know that in our own congregations we make no effort at all to remember Saturday as a holy day of rest, as the Israelites of old did. Does this mean that we are breaking God's commandment and doing something wrong? There are many who contend that we are doing wrong in this matter. The Seventh Day Adventists and the Seventh Day Baptists, for example, teach that Saturday is still God's holy Sabbath and will remain so until the end of the world. Therefore they believe that it is sinful for anyone to work on Saturday, although they do not try to enforce the penalty of death for those who break the Sabbath.

There are others who teach and confess that God still wants us to work for six days and rest on the seventh; however, they say that God has changed the day of rest from Saturday to

Sunday. At one time this was the way the Presbyterians understood this commandment. The Westminster Confession of 1646, accepted by many Presbyterians and others, states that the day of Sunday is to be used entirely for worship or in "the duties of necessity and mercy" and that Christians should not spend any of their Sunday time in "worldly employments and recreations." Apparently, in our time there are very few who would insist on this requirement.

Now in contrast to the teaching of Seventh Day Adventism and the statements of the Westminster Confession, Martin Luther has said in his Large Catechism: "As far as outward observance is concerned, the commandment was given to the Jews alone. They were to abstain from hard work and to rest.... Therefore, according to its literal, outward sense, this commandment does not concern us Christians. It is an entirely external matter, like the other ordinances of the Old Testament connected with particular customs, persons, times, and places, from all of which we are now set free through Christ" (*The Book of Concord*, Tappert edition).

The question we want to consider today is whether Luther was right in making such a statement about the Sabbath and other Old Testament ceremonies. Is it true that Christ has set us FREE FROM THE YOKE OF OLD TESTAMENT CEREMONIES, or are we still obligated to observe the days, festivals and ceremonies which God commanded the Israelites to observe? The only one who can answer this question is God Himself, and He has provided the answer in the three texts that we shall consider from the New Testament.

However, let us first consider what this yoke of Old Testament ceremonies was that controlled the lives of the Israelites. The Sabbath law was only a small part of that yoke. Our first reading from Exodus 23 mentioned the three chief festivals of the year: the Feast of Unleavened Bread or Passover, the Feast of Harvest and the Feast of Ingathering. God's command concerning these festivals was clear: **"Three times in the year all your males shall appear before the Lord GOD"** (The Lord Jehovah). After the Temple was built, this meant making journeys to Jerusalem. Then also there were all the laws concerning animal sacrifices, all the laws concerning clean and unclean food and the law concerning circumcision. No one denies that these laws came from God and were binding on the Israelites who lived under the old covenant. But are we supposed to follow them today?

In the early years of the New Testament church there were some who insisted "Yes." They came to be known as the Judaizers. They said that Christians must observe circumcision, because God commanded it, and therefore those who were uncircumcised could not be saved (Acts 15:1). They said similar things about the food and drink laws, the Sabbath laws and the other ceremonial regulations commanded in the Law of Moses (Acts 15:5). After all, they said, God gave us these laws. God spoke the Third Commandment and mandated circumcision. How can we change God's laws or omit any of His commands? Their arguments must have carried significant weight. I imagine that if we had lived in those days, many of us would have had a hard time resisting or refuting what they said.

Nevertheless, the fact is that God Himself has set us FREE FROM THE YOKE OF OLD TESTAMENT CEREMONIES through Jesus Christ. We think first of circumcision. Some of the early Judaizers insisted that everyone, including Gentiles, had to be circumcised in order to be saved. They too had to keep the Law of Moses in order to be saved. This question came up at a meeting in Jerusalem, where Peter said: **"Why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they."**

To make obedience to any of God's commandments as necessary for salvation is wrong, for the only way of salvation is Jesus Christ, the Savior whom God sent to take away our sins. We are saved by His grace, that is, by God's free gift of Jesus, not by obedience to any commandments, whether they come from God or man. So how can anyone say that circumcision and obedience to God's Law are necessary for salvation? None of our fathers nor we have ever been able to bear such a yoke or burden as this.

Then again, someone may say: True, we cannot be saved by obedience to God's commandments, for we are saved by grace. But still, God wants us to obey the commandments in order to show our love for our Savior, for **"this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments."** Therefore as Christians we shall want to do the things God commands us, and we shall want to refrain from doing the things He forbids. Just as we don't want to commit murder or adultery or stealing, so we don't want to break God's Sabbath laws or food laws.

Right here at this point we need to identify the mistake. God's laws about murder, adultery and stealing are repeated in the New Testament. Thus we are assured that these commandments are still God's will for us today. Certainly, He wants us to refrain from murder and adultery. But what about the Sabbath commandment? This commandment has not been repeated in the New Testament? In fact, it is specifically nullified, so that it is no longer a matter of conscience for Christians living under the new covenant. The apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians: **"Let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ."** You notice that the Sabbath law is put on the same level as laws about clean and unclean food and also made the same as laws regarding Passover and other festival days. All of these laws were temporary in nature. They were part of the Old Testament "shadow of things to come" in the New Testament age. When Christ arrived as foretold and completed His work of perfectly obeying God's laws in our place and dying for our sins, these laws were fulfilled. And as a result of what Jesus did for us and for all, these laws became outdated and obsolete. Naturally, it would take time for the Jewish Christians to realize this truth and to put the new freedom from the yoke into practice. But the fact remains that Christ's vicarious obedience and atoning sacrifice have made all the Old Testament ceremonies unnecessary as a shadow pointing ahead to the reality. Once the substance or reality has arrived, the shadow serves no purpose in portraying what is to come.

With anguished concern Paul wrote to the Galatians that they should realize the fact that they no longer had to be bound to such regulations and ceremonies. **"Now after you have known God, or rather are known by God, how is it that you turn again to the weak and beggarly elements, to which you desire again to be in bondage? You observe days and months and seasons and years. I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain."**

Christ has set us free from all the Old Testament ceremonies and regulations. Let us rejoice in this freedom and not revert to any bondage under the Old Testament yoke. When Christ was nailed to the cross, that event brought an end of the old covenant. Paul says: **"He has made you alive together with Christ, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. Therefore let no one judge you regarding the sabbaths."** You see, it is Christ's life of obedience and death on the cross that have changed things for us and for all believers in the New Testament age. Before He did these things in our place, God wanted His people to observe the Sabbath rest as a way to anticipate and await what Jesus would do for them one day. But now that Christ has lived, died and won for us the true rest of the forgiveness of sins, the mere shadow of Sabbath rest is unimportant, along with all the other Old Testament ceremonies. No one should dare to make any of these things a matter of conscience, and this holds true also for Sabbath laws applied to Sunday.

Luther was right. Through Christ we truly are FREE FROM THE YOKE OF OLD TESTAMENT CEREMONIES. This freedom is important. Paul says: **"Stand fast in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage"** (Gal. 5:1). As New Testament Christians we are free to choose our own times, places and forms of worship, provided that we do not teach false doctrine or sin against the law of love, but rather strive to glorify God, exalt Christ and serve our neighbor by the worship we carry out in Jesus' name. The Word of God is the one thing needful, and when that Word is rightly used, the time,

place and method are all made holy by the Word of God which is spoken. We are saved by grace, not by obedience to law, even God's Law; and we are free to worship our God of grace outside of and without the interference of any prescribed yoke of rules and ceremonies. God be praised. Hallelujah! Amen!

Exodus Sermon #13

Readings: Exodus 24:1-11 (*Israel agreed to the terms of God's covenant*)
Exodus 24:12-18 (*Moses on the mountain in the presence of God*)

Sermon Texts: 2 Corinthians 3:2-6; Hebrews 9:15-22

2 Corinthians 3:2-6 – You are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read by all men; clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart. And we have such trust through Christ toward God. Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.

Hebrews 9:15-22 – And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives. Therefore not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you." Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission.

The word *blood* occurs more than 400 times in the Bible. Many of these occurrences are in the Old Testament books of Exodus and Leviticus, where God laid out for the children of Israel the ways in which He wanted them to worship Him. Some people do not like the sight of blood, and I suppose I would have to count myself as one of them. For that reason I probably would not have made a very good priest in Old Testament times, for the work they did revolved around the constant preparation of animal sacrifices and the handling of animal blood. Of course, there are many today who have to deal with blood all the time in their chosen professions. We think of doctors, nurses, lab technicians and those who make their living in connection with the killing of animals. Consider also a trend in the entertainment industry in which numerous movie and television directors seem willing to show as much blood as the viewing public will take, apparently for no other reason than to gain more viewers, to increase the show's ratings or to sell more tickets at the box office.

The blood mandated in the Bible, however, has served a beneficial purpose, for it was commanded by God, who only does what is right and good. Our Bible readings from Exodus 24 describe how blood was involved in the ratification of God's covenant with the children of Israel. This covenant was a binding two-sided contract between Jehovah and the people He claimed for Himself. The Lord gave them His laws and commandments, and they on their part promised to follow Him by faithfully obeying all that He told them to do. God on His part promised that if they obeyed His laws, He would be their all-providing God and they would be His blessed

people, living in the inherited land under the safety and well-being of His providence. The ratification ceremony included a reading of the commandments of God, which Moses had written down in a book called the Book of the Covenant. This book included much more than what we know as the Ten Commandments. After Moses read everything in the book, the Israelites declared their agreement: **"All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient."** The ceremony included many animal sacrifices, in which the blood of the slaughtered animals was set aside. Half of the blood was sprinkled on God's altar, and half of the blood was sprinkled on God's people. As Moses sprinkled the blood on the people, he said to them, **"This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you according to all these words."** We note that the shedding and sprinkling of blood was a necessary and very important part of the ratification ceremony.

Today our New Testament texts direct us to consider THE BLOOD OF GOD'S COVENANTS, focusing not only on the blood that was shed and sprinkled on God's Old Testament people in connection with the giving of the Law, but especially on that blood which the Bible calls the "blood of the new covenant," poured out by our Lord Jesus Christ on the cross.

The text from the letter to the Hebrews refers to the blood of God's Law covenant in these words: **"Not even the first covenant was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, 'This is the blood of the covenant which God has commanded you.' Then likewise he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry. And according to the law almost all things are purified with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no remission."**

The first covenant, as we said, was a two-sided covenant of Law. God gave His commandments, and the people promised to keep them. The substance of the Lord's covenant with Israel was this: **"If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people"** (Exod. 19:5). But as the history of the Old Testament bears out, the children of Israel did not keep God's covenant. They did not obey His voice. In the next sermon we shall recall the incident where they actually worshipped a golden calf and called that calf their god. Because of their sins the first covenant would become for them nothing but a covenant of condemnation. **"The letter kills,"** Paul says. That is, the letter of God's Law would condemn the children of Israel for their sins, and in fact, the letter of God's Law also kills us, for we too are sinners and do not do what God commands us.

Nevertheless, in His steadfast love for lost sinners God did not want any of them to face the eternal condemnation which they deserved. Thus there had to be a second covenant, a "new covenant" or testament, as the Bible calls it. Under the terms of the old covenant there can be no favorable outcome, for no one is perfectly obedient to what God commands and requires. But as our text from the book of Hebrews says, Jesus **"is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant."** The "new covenant" is a covenant offering redemption and forgiveness of sins. The new covenant is a one-sided dispensing of God's love and grace, freely given to us in Jesus Christ.

How is it possible that the new covenant can accomplish what the old covenant failed to do? The answer is in the blood. Under the old covenant there was plenty of bloodshed – **"the blood of calves and goats,"** offered by generations of people throughout the Old Testament age. But this blood was not sufficient; it did not and could not take away the transgressions of the people. Nevertheless, the blood sacrifices continued to be done according to the provisions of God's Law. The people continued to offer these sacrifices through the priests, because God wanted them to see what their sins would ultimately cost. In a vivid and visual way the animal sacrifices were pointing ahead to the only sufficient blood sacrifice which God Himself would provide as the sure basis of the new covenant.

Under the new covenant the blood is not the blood of animals, but the blood of the Mediator Himself, Jesus Christ. Yes, the Mediator had to die in order to redeem His people. He had to shed His blood to win forgiveness for us. As the Hebrews text points out, the new covenant is really a last will and testament, which only goes into effect when the one who made the will has died. **"For where there is a testament, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is in force after men are dead, since it has no power at all while the testator lives."**

So, if in Old Testament ceremony there had to be shedding of blood as the prescribed way not only to ratify the old covenant, but also to provide a symbolical way to understand atonement and remission of sins and to cleanse the book and sacred utensils and the people too, how much more must the same be true of the new testament? The testator must die. His blood must be poured out. Only in this way can there be actual remission of sins and real redemption of the people. For it is written: **"It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sins"** (Heb. 10:4) On the other hand, it is said of Jesus: **"The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin"** (1 John 1:7). And again it is written: We were redeemed **"with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot"** (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

The blood of Jesus Christ not only has the power to remove our guilt; it also has the power to change our lives. Yes, **"the blood of Christ"** has the power to **"purge our conscience from dead works to serve the living God"** (Heb. 9:14). And this is how it works. The Law of God, though written on tablets of stone and firmly declaring the holy will of God, could not and did not succeed in getting the Israelites to keep any of it. This Law did nothing but curse and condemn them, and even the animal blood they shed in connection with the old covenant worship did not take away their sins or bring about an improvement in their lives.

Now here comes the powerful impact of the new covenant of God's forgiveness of our sins, as it is authorized and made effective by the shedding of the blood of Jesus Christ, the perfect Son of God. This new covenant is not like the letter of Law; it does not consist in commands and instructions that we must carry out in obedience to the holy and almighty God. The new covenant is Jesus Christ doing for us what we could not do for ourselves. The new covenant is Jesus demonstrating God's supreme love and winning the complete forgiveness of all our sins. And through the good news of Jesus that we hear, the Holy Spirit gets into our hearts. As Paul says, **"The Spirit of the living God"** goes to work in our hearts and does some writing of His own. He does not write with ink, nor does He write on tablets of stone. The Holy Spirit writes **"on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart."** The Holy Spirit conveys the blessings of Jesus and His sacrificial death to our hearts, and thus the Spirit gives life to us, for **"the letter (of the Law) kills, but the Spirit gives life."**

The lives we live as Christians are truly written by the Holy Spirit through the heart-changing impact of the Gospel. We ourselves become **"an epistle of Christ"** written by the Holy Spirit, **"known and read by all men."** Of course, all of this is possible only through the blood of Jesus Christ, which cleanses us from our sins and leads us into a life of service for God. Through the working of the Holy Spirit this is exactly what Jesus' blood of the new covenant is able to accomplish. Jesus' blood is not actually or literally sprinkled on us in our church services, as the blood of the old covenant was sprinkled on the people of Israel. But the power of Jesus' blood to cleanse us before God and sanctify us in the conduct of our lives – that power is proclaimed to us in our services, and in this way we are, in a manner of speaking, sprinkled with His blood and so become eager to do His will as a way to show our love for Him who poured out His precious blood for us.

"Behold the Lamb of God! Into the sacred flood
Of Thy most precious blood My soul I cast.
Wash me and make me pure and clean,
Uphold me thro' life's changeful scene, Till all be past. Amen" (TLH 165:2).

Exodus Sermon #14

Readings: Exodus 31:18-32:14 (*The incident of the golden calf*)
Exodus 32:19-28 (*Moses dealt with the idolatry*)

Sermon Texts: Acts 7:37-41; 1 Corinthians 10:6-7, 11-14

Acts 7:37-41 [Stephen speaking]: "This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.' This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us, whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, saying to Aaron, 'Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.' And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands."

1 Corinthians 10:6-7, 11-14 – Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play."

Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

On the mountain top the Lord God gave to His servant Moses a written copy of the Ten Commandments, written on two tablets of stone with the finger of God. The very first commandment was this: "You shall have no other gods before Me. You shall not make for yourself any carved image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth; you shall not bow down to them nor serve them" (Exod. 20:3-5).

The Israelites had heard the Lord God speak these words to them from the top of Mt. Sinai. Moses had written these words also in a book and had read them aloud to all the people. They had said, "All the words which the Lord has said we will do." A solemn covenant was made between God and His people, ratified by the sacrifice of animal blood and concluded with a festive meal eaten by 70 elders of Israel in the presence of the glory of God. Now Moses was on the mountain top, receiving more instructions from the Lord and receiving God's Law written in stone. And what were the children of Israel doing at the foot of the mountain, while Moses was receiving the commandments of God? They were worshipping a golden calf. They were calling this calf the god who had brought them out of the land of Egypt. Around this golden calf they were having a wild celebration that included eating, drinking, dancing and sexual immorality.

What a contrast we see between the holy God and His holy commandments and the behavior of the Israelites, who were supposed to be God's people! The Lord said to Moses: "They have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them. They have made themselves a molded calf, and worshipped it and sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your God, O Israel, that brought you out of the land of Egypt.'"

This sad scene at Mt. Sinai has been repeated many, many times in many different ways. God's people have often been led away by THE ALLURE OF IDOLATRY, and let us never think

that we are not in danger from this same fatal attraction. The apostle Paul says to us New Testament Christians: **"All these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, on whom the ends of the ages have come. Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall."** THE ALLURE OF IDOLATRY is still as strong as it ever was, and we need the warning provided in the example of the Israelites and God's help provided in the words of our texts.

The Israelites were attracted to idolatry because of their unbelief. Their leader Moses had walked up Mt. Sinai into the consuming fire of the presence of God, and he did not return for forty days. Moses' brother Aaron was in charge, together with a man named Hur. When the people came to Aaron and said, **"As for this Moses, the man who brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him,"** Aaron did not try to build up their faith in the Lord God and His promises. He weakly went along with their request to make them a visible god that they could see, worship and rejoice in. Perhaps Aaron was afraid the people were getting bored and restless and wanted to provide something for them to do. At Aaron's direction they broke off their golden earrings, and Aaron fashioned their gold into a calf. No doubt, they had seen the Egyptians do this kind of thing many times in their practice of heathen idolatry, and it may have seemed like an exciting way to worship. Perhaps they did not even realize that what they were doing was idolatry. After all, they were claiming to worship the Lord who had brought them out of Egypt. With the golden calf they were simply giving a visible form to their Lord, in a way similar to what the Egyptians had done. It was exciting to see this calf, the work of their own hands. It was fun to have a religious celebration with food and drink, dancing and playing. What better way to spend their idle moments than in this religious holiday of their own making!

God, however, calls what they were doing idolatry – the sin of worshipping an idol or another god. Though they attempted to call the golden calf by the name Jehovah (Exod. 32:5), this calf was not the LORD. This calf was not even an acceptable representation of the LORD, for God had never described Himself to them as a golden calf. In describing the actions of the Israelites centuries later, Stephen said, **"In their hearts they turned back to Egypt."** The Lord had set them free from their slavery in Egypt, but in their hearts they were still attracted to the idolatrous ways of the Egyptians. As Stephen also said, **"They made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands."**

This idolatry was combined with self-indulgent actions that the true LORD God could never approve. **"The people sat down to eat and drink and rose up to play."** This "playing" included some kind of dancing and unrestrained behavior, very likely acts of sexual immorality, which were known to occur in the idolatrous feasts and rituals of many heathen people in the ancient world. The people were so wild that after Moses came down from Mt. Sinai, threw the stone tablets out of his hands, burned the calf, ground it to powder and made the people drink it in water, there were still some who were celebrating. These were the ones Moses commanded the Levites to put to death, and so three thousand Israelites lost their lives that day.

THE ALLURE OF IDOLATRY has always been extremely dangerous. It was dangerous for the Jews to whom Stephen was speaking, as recorded in the book of Acts. These Jews prided themselves on being the children of the true God. They identified themselves as people who renounced the pagan idols of the Gentiles and worshipped one God only – the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the God of Moses. The fact is, however, that they too were committing idolatry, even as Jewish people today are committing idolatry in their claims of worshipping the same God as their ancestors. What is this idolatry? Well, we know that God wants His people to worship Him as He has described Himself to them. God told Moses to tell the people: **"The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear."** This Prophet came in the person of Jesus Christ, but the Jews did not hear Him or listen to Him, even as Jewish people today do not listen to Him or acknowledge Him as the Messiah. Any worship of God that does not include the worship of Jesus, God's Son, whom He has sent to be the Messiah, is idolatry. And so Jesus Himself declared God's judgment on those who reject Him: **"All should**

honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:23).

The Israelites of old rejected Moses and the Law he gave them by worshipping a golden calf. The Jews of Stephen's time and today as well are even worse off, for they are rejecting not Moses, but the Prophet like Moses, the One whom God promised to send. They are rejecting God's own Son, Jesus Christ. Do you think anyone can really worship God without worshipping Jesus as God and without listening to Jesus' Word? The Jews, Muslims, Jehovah's Witnesses and unitarians in churches and lodges of various kinds may think they are worshipping the true God, but they are actually worshipping an idol. For it is written: **"Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father either"** (1 John 2:23). God identifies Himself as Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Anyone who does not worship Him as such a God is worshipping an idol. And though this idol is still called God, even as the golden calf was called the Lord of Israel, God Himself calls such religion idolatry and says to us: **"My beloved, flee from idolatry."** Hence it would be idolatry for us to participate in the worship of any group or organization that denies Jesus as God. Do not be lured into such an organization by the promise of that which appeals to the flesh: eating, drinking, dancing and all kinds of fun. Paul gives us God's warning: **"These things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them."**

Today the attraction from idolatry may come to us in a somewhat different form than the golden calf of the Israelites or the Christless worship found in modern-day organizations. Today it seems that the devil is making headway in getting people to think about God in a different way than He really is. For example, they portray God as one who cannot ever and will not ever punish persons by sending them to eternal destruction. God's hatred of sin is toned down. God's judgment of hell for unbelievers is denied. You see what has happened. People who talk about a god who will not punish unbelievers are actually acknowledging an idol. They are not confessing and worshipping the true God. Though they have not fashioned their god from gold earrings, they have manufactured him in their own minds. Such a god as they want him to be does not exist, which certainly means that their god is an idol.

So also, those who describe God as not condemning homosexuality or divorce or fornication are really setting up an idol, for such a god as they are inventing for themselves is not the true God. God reveals Himself to us in the Scriptures. Anyone who rejects the way the Bible describes God is really rejecting God's own identification of Himself. Though he may call God by the same name, his god is no longer the true God. Thus the god who tolerates false teachings is not the true God. The god of the feminist movement is not the true God. The god who rewards people for good works and takes them to heaven on their own merits is not the true God. All of these gods are nothing but golden calves, and the people who confess and worship such gods are simply rejoicing in the works of their own minds.

We also need to remember what Martin Luther once wrote: "That upon which you set your heart and put your trust is in reality your god." The desires of the heart so easily become the secret idols in our lives. Of course, we would not think of offering prayers to a god called our own *understanding* or our own *family* or our *money and possessions*. And yet these things or persons can become idols for us when we love or trust in them more than we love or trust in the true God. Solomon says: **"Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding"** (Prov. 3:5). David warns us in Psalm 62: **"If riches increase, do not set your heart on them."** Even the members of our own families can become secret idols. Our Lord Jesus said: **"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me"** (Matt. 10:37).

The true God is the God who spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai and gave him **"the living oracles,"** as Stephen reminds us. The true God is the God who promised to send His Son and then sent Him. The true God is Father, Son, Holy Spirit. The true God is not a god who says what we want Him to say and does what we want Him to do. The true God condemns our lusts and

desires and saves us by grace alone. The true God is Jesus, who kept God's Law that we have failed to keep, who died for all of our sins on the cross, who rose from the dead in victory on the third day. Because of our faith in Christ which God has given to us, John includes us in the closing of his first epistle: **"The Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life. Little children, keep yourselves from idols."** Amen!

An Exegesis of Psalm 22:1-18:

The Cost behind the 23rd Psalm

Paul Tiefel, Jr.

* The article below was written and presented in conference as a sermon study designed for Lent. In this issue we offer the author's introduction to the overall series and his treatment of the first two texts. His exegesis and homiletical treatment of the remaining texts will follow in an upcoming issue.

It will be told of the Lord to the coming generation. They will come and will declare His righteousness to a people who will be born, that He has performed it (Ps. 22:30b-31 NAS).

Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth" (John 17:17).

Psalm 23 is certainly the most well-known of all the 150 Psalms in the Old Testament. Perhaps that is due to its short length, which enables it to be easily memorized. No doubt, its tender scenes and peaceful pictures have endeared this Psalm to many. But it is probably also the most misunderstood and misused of the Psalms. Some use it to arouse superficial feelings that God is good, no matter what. We can hardly go to a funeral, even that of an unbeliever, without a reference to "The Lord is my Shepherd." TV programs and movies use these sacred words to bring realism to the fictional funerals portrayed on the screen. How sad it is to sugarcoat death with a vain use of this Psalm.

The world's superficial use of Psalm 23 is based on an ignorance of the great cost behind the beautiful expressions contained in these six verses. How many who recognize the peace of Psalm 23 know anything about the suffering of Psalm 22? If the LORD is my Shepherd (Ps. 23), it is only because He bought that position with the sacrifice of His life (Ps. 22). Consequently, this exegetical and homiletical study proposes a Lenten series based on Psalm 22, with targeted reference to specific verses of Psalm 23 and the Passion history itself. The intent of this article is to provide brief exegesis of the Psalm 22 texts, support passages, sermon thoughts and suggested outlines, all of which the preacher may use as starter material for potential Lenten sermons. May the Spirit bless both our study and preaching of His Word.

There is a heading to the Psalm, which is given its own verse number in the Hebrew, but in most English translations the heading is combined with the second verse in the Hebrew text to comprise the first verse in the English text. In Hebrew the heading reads as follows:

לְמַנְצֵחַ עַל-אַיִלַת הַשָּׁחַר מִזְמוֹר לְדָוִד

The heading translates thus: *To the chief musician on the deer of the dawn – a psalm of David.* "Deer of the dawn" could be a reference to the following:

- a. a well-known melody to be used with this Psalm;
- b. or the morning hour;
- c. or our Savior's passion on Good Friday morning (Luther).

In his *Exposition of Psalms* (pp. 194-195) Leupold covers the debate over authorship and the interpretation of who is speaking. We confess that the Spirit wrote by inspiration through

David and that the speaker is the Messiah Himself. Also, we offer these additional thoughts from the commentators:

Leupold, p. 194:

"This is the noblest of the passion psalms. It is sanctified in a singular sense by Christ in that He used its opening words in the extremity of His agony on the cross."

Keil-Delitzsch, *Old Testament Commentaries: Nehemiah to Psalm LXXVII*, p. 1060:

"In no Psalm do we trace such an accumulation of the most excruciating outward and inward suffering pressing upon the complainant, in connection the most perfect innocence [sic]."

Keil-Delitzsch, p. 1062:

"The Psalm so vividly sets before us not merely the sufferings of the Crucified One, but also the salvation of the world arising out of His resurrection and its sacramental efficacy, that it seems more like history than prophecy."

We want to underscore that last thought. The unbiased reader who studies the first 18 verses of Psalm 22 and then reads a harmony of the Passion history must then be astounded by the relationship between prophecy and fulfillment. The prophetic utterance and the historical fulfillment were separated in time by nearly 1000 years and communicated in different languages! Yet we have a masterpiece of precision, which testifies to the authorship of the Holy Spirit taking place through verbal inspiration. The Passion story is not about a mob gone wild and running rampant over social justice. It is the unfolding of what God ordained in eternity – the plan determined by God's immeasurable love for sinful and rebellious mankind. Good Friday was no accident of human injustice, but the predetermined execution of divine justice to bring about salvation for all people.

We can observe in the Greek text of the Gospel accounts the repeated use of precise words and phrases from the Septuagint. The incredible similarity led Keil-Delitzsch to make this observation:

"Fulfillment and prediction so exactly coincide, that no more adequate expressions can be found in writing the gospel history than those presented by prophecy" (p. 1068).

In the proposed study of the verses selected for each Lenten sermon text, I have suggested a related passage from Psalm 23 (given in italics), presented the Hebrew text with brief notes on some of the words, offered my own translation, listed other related support passages, expounded a few sermon thoughts and formulated a working theme and parts. It is our hope and prayer that the preacher can add and build on what is here offered.

The following is an overall theme for the series and a descriptive outline of the texts selected from Psalm 22.

Looking Forward to the Shepherd's Suffering

1. He suffers the agonies of hell, forsaken by God (vv. 1-5).
2. He suffers verbal abuse (vv. 6-10).
3. He suffers alone, surrounded by pressures (vv. 11-13).
4. He suffers great physical pain (vv. 14-15b).
5. He suffers death (vv. 15c-17).
6. He suffers the loss of all material goods (v. 18).

Sermon text #1

Psalm 22:1-5: Jesus suffers the agonies of hell, forsaken by God

"Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever" (Ps. 23:6).

2 אֵלֵי אֵלֵי לָמָּה עֲזַבְתָּנִי רְחוּק מִיִּשׁוּעָתִי דְבַרֵי שִׁאֲגָתִי:
 3 אֱלֹהֵי אֶקְרָא יוֹמָם וְלַיְלָה וְלֹא תֵעָנֶה וְלִילָה וְלֹא-דוֹמְיָה לִּי:
 4 וְאַתָּה קָדוֹשׁ יוֹשֵׁב תְּהַלּוֹת יִשְׂרָאֵל:
 5 בְּךָ בָטַחְוּ אֲבוֹתֵינוּ בָטַחְוּ וְהִפְלִטָמוּ:
 6 אֲלֵיךָ זָעַקְנוּ וְנִמְלָטוּ בְּךָ בָטַחְוּ וְלֹא-בוֹשׁוּ:

Notes on Psalm 22:1-5: In these notes given for selected Hebrew words, material in quotation marks comes from Gesenius' *Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon*. The verse number listed first (preceded by v.) corresponds to the verse number of the English text, and the verse number in parentheses indicates the verse of the Hebrew text.

- v. 1 (2) - עֲזַבְתָּנִי Qal Perf of עִזַּב "to loosen the bands, to let go a beast from its bonds; to leave a person," used very frequently of the relationship between God and man, often of man forsaking God
- מִיִּשׁוּעָתִי salvation – related to the Hebrew name Joshua and the Greek name Jesus
- שִׁאֲגָתִי fem. n. sing. w/ suff. "roaring of a lion" (cf. v. 13); "also, cry of a wretched person, wrung forth by grief." Groaning seems to reflect the pain, not the volume.
- v. 2 (3) - דוֹמְיָה fem. – "silence; rest, quiet, ease from pain" – I chose the "relief from pain" concept, although it could mean there is "no stopping to my calling," which would imply no relief from the pain.
- v. 3 (4) - תְּהַלּוֹת praises, similar to Hallelujah
- v.5 (6) - בּוֹשׁ "to be ashamed," not so much from "the idea of blushing but rather in that of paleness and terror.... Specifically it is – to fail in hope and expectation."

Exegete's translation of verses 1-5

My God, My God, why have You left me? Far away from My salvation (are) the words of My screaming.
 O My God, I call by day, but You do not answer; and by night, but there is no relief for Me.
 You are holy, sitting midst the praises of Israel.
 In You our fathers trusted. They trusted You, and You delivered them.
 To You they cried, and they were delivered; in You they trusted, and they were not disappointed.

Other References

Luke 23:46a: And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice....
 Matt. 27:46, 50: And about the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up his spirit.
 Mark 15:34, 37 (parallel to Matt. 27)
 Psalm 37:25, 26, 28: I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread. He is ever merciful, and lends; and his descendants are blessed. For the LORD loves justice, and does not forsake His saints; they are preserved forever; but the descendants of the wicked shall be cut off.
 Hebrews 5:7: Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear.

Sermon Thoughts

How shall we put into words or into our heads the deep implications of the opening verse? God gave us a visual aid in the darkness that covered the earth. And the excruciating cry of Jesus surely was the audio aid. Consider this observation from Keil-Delitzsch:

"But inasmuch as He places himself under the judgment of God with the sin of His people and of the whole human race, He cannot be spared from experiencing God's wrath against sinful humanity as though He were himself guilty" (p. 1065).

Now it isn't really accurate to use the word "though," for God says that "He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21). Therein is the unfathomable mystery of salvation. The holy Jesus is sin; thereby we sinners are righteousness. Here we also see the punishment of God upon sin: He forsakes or leaves it.

Consider the excruciating (Latin: *from the cross*) cry, and recall the divine Father-Son relationship: eternal, perfect, never a harsh word or argument. More than once, the Father had said about Jesus: "This is My beloved Son in whom I am well-pleased (Matt. 3:17, 17:5). But now? The Son of God was forsaken by God!

Jesus was accustomed to pray, and all of His prayers had been answered (cf. the raising of Lazarus, meals, night-scene on the mountain top, the Lord's Supper, even the Garden of Gethsemane), but now there was no answer (v. 2).

Of course, Jesus was not ignorant of God's nature, for God has earned for all eternity the praises of His people (v. 3) for being so faithful and ready to answer prayer. God's children throughout time have counted on and received His help in time of need (vv. 4-5). The repetition of thought in verses four and five emphasizes this truth. But in the hour of need for God's own Son there is no help (cf. also v. 11). Indeed, we can say that in the most crucial hour of the human race, the very cross-roads for sinners, Jesus was alone, without God – and that is the agony of hell!

However, this work of the Good Shepherd is what guarantees that "I shall dwell in the house of the LORD forever." Goodness and mercy must follow me all my days because of this suffering of hell carried out by my Substitute. He was forsaken because of me; I will never be forsaken because of Him.

Theme: *The Shepherd suffers the agonies of hell when He is forsaken by God*

1. No Jesus for Jesus (no savior for the Savior)
2. No answer to His prayer

Hymns (TLH): 140:1-4, 174, 402

Responsive Psalm: 27

Sermon text #2

Psalm 22:6-10: Jesus suffers verbal abuse.

"He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake" (Ps. 23:3).

7 וְאַנְכִי תוֹלַעַת וְלֹא-אִישׁ חָרַפְתָּ אָדָם וּבְזוּי עָם:
8 כָּל-רְאִי יִלְעָגוּ לִי יַפְטִירוּבְשָׁפָה יִנְיֵעוּ רֹאשׁ:
9 גַּל אֶל-יְהוָה יִפְלֹטְהוּ יִצִּילֵהוּ כִּי חָפֵץ בּוֹ:
10 כִּי-אֶתָּה גָחִי מִבֶּטֶן מִבְּטִיחִי עַל-שְׂדֵי אֲמִי:
11 עָלֶיךָ הִשְׁלַכְתִּי מִרְחֹם מִבֶּטֶן אֲמִי אֵלַי אֶתָּה:

Notes on Psalm 22:6-10:

- v. 6 (7) - תֹּלְעֵת fem. "a worm, specifically one which springs from putrefaction" – not really our earthworm, but a lower form, hence the translation *maggot*
- חִרְפַּת fem. const. "reproach, scorn, contempt"
 - בְּזוּי Qal Pass. Ptc. masc. sg. "despised," cf. Isaiah 53:3
- v. 7 (8) - יִלְעֲנוּ Hiph. Imperf. of לַעַג "properly to stammer, speak in a foreign language; to mock at, deride, prop. to imitate any one's voice in stammering, by way of derision" – suggesting the idea of *mimic*; even *impersonate* seems to be appropriate.
- יִפְטִירוּ Hiph. Imperf. of פָּטַר "to split, to cleave; Hiphil to open the mouth wide, as in scorn," only occurrence with *lip*, seems to be not so much the shooting out of the lip, but simply opening the lips
 - יִנְעוּ Hiph. Imperf. of נָוַע "to move to and fro, vacillate – used of the staggering of drunkards, ... of leaves shaken by the wind; Hiphil to wag the head, as in derision"
- v. 8 (9) - גָּל Qal. Imperative of גָּלַל to roll – though an imperative form, English translations render as an indicative. If regarded as a true imperative, it expresses the content of the mimicking introduced by v. 7 and is a mocking of the words of the Savior. *Roll upon Jehovah* is an excellent motto for the Christian faith and life and vividly describes our committing all things to His care.
- v. 9 (10) - עַל־שָׂרִי How is the עַל to be understood? To understand it as the object of the trusting seems grammatically correct, but taking it as a temporal clause makes more sense in light of the context.

Translation of verses 6-10:

But I am a maggot and not a man; a scorn of mankind and despised by the people.
 All who see Me mimic Me. They give lip and wag the head.
 "Lean on Jehovah! Let Him deliver Him; let Him rescue Him, since He delights in Him."
 For You are the One bringing Me forth from the belly and causing Me to trust from My mother's breasts.
 On You I was cast from the womb. From My mother's belly You (are) My God.

Other References

- Psalm 37:5 Commit your way to the LORD, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass.
- Isaiah 53:3 He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.
 And we hid, as it were, our faces from him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.
- Ps. 35:21-25 They also opened their mouth wide against me, and said, "Aha, aha! Our eyes have seen it." This You have seen, O LORD; do not keep silence. O Lord, do not be far from me. Stir up Yourself, and awake to my vindication, to my cause, my God and my Lord. Vindicate me, O LORD my God, according to Your righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me. Let them not say in their hearts, "Ah, so we would have it!" Let them not say, "We have swallowed him up."
- Matt. 27:39-43 And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, "You who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let

Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God.'"

Mark 15:29-32 (parallel account to Matthew 27)

Luke 23:35 And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, "He saved others; let Him save Himself, if He is the Christ, the chosen of God."

Hebrews 12:3 For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

Sermon Thoughts (and some questions)

While we do say that God forsook Jesus and that the people despised Jesus, can we ever say that God the Father despised Jesus?

Which pronoun (He or Him) applies to Jesus in verse 8b ("...since He delights in Him")? Is it God the Father delighting in God the Son, even as Jesus claimed? Or is it God the Son delighting in God the Father, expressed here as a challenge to the Son's trust? It's a mocking of Jesus either way.

Verbal taunting can be one of the hardest types of suffering to endure. All of us can identify with the kind of ridicule which comes our way when we blunder. That's hard enough to bear patiently. But then, as here in the case of Jesus, there is the kind of mocking which comes when one is innocent and in the right. How many of us can refrain from protesting, from proving our innocence? This was indeed a moment of severe temptation for our Savior. Should He silence the mockers with His power, or should He continue to endure their taunts and strive to obtain salvation, even for them? It almost seems sacrilegious to call the Creator "a worm" and the God-Man "no man," but Christ calls Himself these things, for in His humiliation that is what He was. Note Leupold on verse 8: "The baseness of it all consists in this, that a man's faith in God is the point at which he is attacked" (p. 199).

Consider also Kretzmann on verses 9-10. He writes in the second volume of his Old Testament commentary:

"Note that the human mother of Christ is referred to four times in this passage, and it is remarkable that in the entire Old Testament a human father is never mentioned or suggested, only a mother, Is. 7,14; Gen. 3,15" (p. 80).

It is utterly amazing that the Good Friday participants quote these verses so fully. Did they do so unwittingly, as further divine irony of man's sins and additional demonstration of verbal inspiration? Or did they quote these verses on purpose to heighten the insult to this Messianic pretender? Given mankind's usual ignorance of God's Word, the former would appear to be the case.

Not only has Jesus given us an example of suffering verbal abuse by praying to God and trusting God, but what He patiently endured here was done for our salvation – that is, for the atonement of all our sins, which include our failures to patiently endure difficult circumstances with trust in God to see us through. He trusted God in spite of all outward appearances. Great were the results. Whatever our earthly lot, we can be sure that God is leading and will continue to lead us on the path of righteousness for the sake of the Shepherd who suffered for us. Part of the righteousness we now have by imputation is that steadfast and complete trust in God which our Savior carried out in our place and showed here on the cross.

Theme: *The Shepherd suffers the slurs of sinners (or the slurs of His sheep)*

1. The verbal insults to Jesus
2. The danger they posed to us
3. His enduring trust in God who blessed Him from His mother's arms

* This outline does not adequately cover verse six and is rather heavy on alliteration. Hence another suggestion below, which incorporates the Psalm 23 verse connected with this text.

Theme: *The Shepherd restores my soul*

1. By becoming a "maggot" (His humiliation – v. 6)
2. By withstanding the verbal taunting to prove Himself (His temptation – vv. 7, 8)
3. By trusting God who blessed Him from His mother's arms (His active obedience – vv. 9, 10)

Hymns: 151 (esp. v. 4), 143 (esp. v. 2)

Responsive Psalm: 70

(To be continued)

The Son of Man as Preacher Interacting with His Congregation¹

William Henkel

* The translation of part II, "Der Menschensohn als Prediger im Umgang mit seiner Gemeinde" (*Theologische Quartalschrift*, 22:2, April 1925, pp. 91-107), is here offered by Norman Greve as our third installment in the series "The Son of Man in His Interaction With the Children of Men." Scripture references and other material contained in parentheses were original inclusions by the author. Anything enclosed in brackets has been provided at the discretion of the translator or the editor.

Is this not a risky, daring venture – to treat a theme such as this? Does not the Son of Man tower too high over us, also as preachers, for us to dare to hope to evaluate Him correctly or to characterize Him fittingly? Is not the yardstick which we are accustomed to apply too small when it is a question of measuring the Preacher come from God in His all-excelling greatness? And does not the danger lie near at hand that we, in striving to let Him be our model, trespass beyond the limits set for us and forget who we are? And finally, are not the materials missing which are needed to produce a picture of this Preacher which is accurate in every feature? Can we be certain that even a single one of His sermons has been preserved as an exact transcript [*in ihrem Wortlaut*]?² It would be foolhardy to shove aside these considerations as wholly unfounded. We must grant them a certain justification.

When it is a question of extracting from Christ's sermons guiding principles for our sermons, the disparity between Him and us must be drawn into view. He who truly knew what was in man [John 2:25] and is separate from sinners and higher than the heavens [Heb. 7:26] often dared to speak differently than we, who cannot know hearts and are sinners like those to whom we preach. It is also highly probable that none of His sermons have come down to us in their original wording, but that the evangelists present only extracts from separate sermons. Yet in spite of all these considerations, there can be no doubt that the study of Christ's sermons furthers us in our calling, and they can offer us the chief guiding principles for our preaching. We indeed deal with the same human hearts; we should proclaim the same gospel and for the same purpose as He did. And if His sermons have not been transcribed word for word by the evangelists, yet the Holy Ghost has caused such extracts to be drawn from them as are useful for instruction, which includes instruction for the preacher who wants to know what and how he should preach. And there is no question that the extracts presented do not blot out the characteristics of Christ's preaching style, but do retain their individuality, as is already taught by a cursory comparison of the reported sermons of Jesus with those of the apostles.

Preaching the kingdom of God³

We ask first: what did the Son of Man preach? We can answer briefly: the kingdom of God. That already follows from the characteristic introduction to many of His sermons: "The kingdom of heaven is like...." He does not first explain to His hearers that He desires to speak of the kingdom of God. It goes without saying that He must speak of it, and He assumes that His hearers expect nothing else from Him. In the sermon which Matthew presents as the first example of His manner of preaching, the Sermon on the Mount, He at once steps into the middle of the kingdom of God with the first sentence: "Blessed are the poor in spirit [*die geistlich Armen*], for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." He has indeed come to establish the "kingdom of God" – that is, the New Testament kingdom of God – through the blood of the New Testament. What else now can He preach than the "gospel of the kingdom" (Matt. 9:35)?⁴ The goal of His whole teaching activity is to reveal the magnificence of this kingdom to His people, to win them for the kingdom and to make them fit for this kingdom.

His mission was made immensely more difficult for Him by the fact that His people thought that they already knew the kingdom of God. But, except for a few, they certainly did not. Already for centuries they had formed the most perverted and unspiritual conceptions of it. For them it was something external in its essence, its laws and its possessions. It was something that existed outside a man and could leave his inner life undisturbed. It was no kingdom of grace and truth, whose King goes forth "to uphold the truth for good and the wretched with right" (Ps. 45:4),⁵ but rather an earthly kingdom of power, whose lord obtains victory for Israel over the Romans and other political enemies, and with whose splendor even the kingdom of David and Solomon can not compete. And just as the kingdom itself was something external, so too was the righteousness which its citizens needed to have: physical descent from Abraham, observing the additions of the elders, parading about in outward forms of fatherly piety and ceremonial purity. In brief, external membership in the Jewish congregation sufficed to achieve citizenship rights in the kingdom of the Anointed.

A necessary polemic in His preaching

If the gospel of the kingdom was to win hearts, Christ first needed to destroy this illusion of the kingdom of God, which as a poisonous worm had, for generation after generation, gnawed more deeply into the soul of the Jewish people and poisoned their religious life. For that reason He devoted a great portion of His teaching activity to this preliminary task. Thus His preaching was in no small part a polemic. Unceasingly and with relentless severity He assessed and condemned the kingdom thoughts and kingdom hopes with which His people were deceiving themselves and were cheated out of His spiritual leadership. "The kingdom of God," He declared to the Pharisees in Luke 17:20, "does not come with outward appearance." No external advantages secure citizenship rights in it – no physical descent from Abraham, no outward membership in the Jewish congregation. "Many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven; but the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness" (Matt. 8:11-12). Outward ceremonial cleanness does not make one fit for the kingdom of God. Washing the hands, cleaning the drinking cups and pitchers, and observing the regulations of the elders as to outward conduct are not parts of the "righteousness of God." That comes out of the heart (Mark 7:1-7, 21-23).

Christ's polemic against the delusion concerning the kingdom of God, against the fleshly darkness of His people engendered by this delusion and against the false prophets, who have led and still lead His people astray, was nowhere sharper and more unsparring than in the Sermon on the Mount. "Unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees" – He here calls out to His hearers in relentless earnestness – "you will by no means enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20). Then in a long list of examples He pointed out to them how miserable and threadbare that righteousness was through which the Pharisees wished to

enter the kingdom of heaven, and He plumbed before their eyes the unimagined depths of the divine law (Matt. 5-7).

Preaching God's kingdom according to its true nature

However, His preaching is not mere polemic. He not only tears down, but He also builds up. He not only destroys the false hopes concerning the kingdom, but He also announces that the true kingdom of God is near and reveals its true form. It is an inner kingdom; it rules the inner life of man. It is the reign of God in the human heart (Luke 17:21); it is not an earthly, but a spiritual kingdom (John 18:36ff.).

It is a *kingdom of truth*,⁶ whose King was born and came into the world to witness to the truth and whose citizens are of the truth, who listen to the voice of truth, recognize the truth, are led into all truth and are sanctified in the truth (John 18:37, 8:32, 16:13, 17:17).

It is a *kingdom of righteousness*. To be sure, the Pharisees and scribes said of its King, "He receives sinners" (Luke 15:2). He did not deny this, but then added regarding those righteous in the Pharisaic sense that the publicans and harlots will come into the kingdom of heaven before they will (Matt. 21:31). Indeed, His kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness – a singular, wonderful righteousness to be sure, the "righteousness of God" (Matt. 6:33). It is righteousness that is characteristic of the Savior-God. He has planted it and brought it about in His Son (John 3:16), who has come into the world "not to be served, but to serve and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45), so that in His name repentance and remission of sins should be preached to all nations (Luke 24:47), and all who hear His word and believe are thus righteous and do not come into judgment (John 5:24). All citizens of the kingdom of God are clothed with this righteousness, which their Melchizedek⁷ acquires for them and bestows upon them (Matt. 22:1-14). It is their life's element [*Lebenselement*]. After they have once tasted it, they hunger and thirst after this righteousness their whole life long (Matt. 5:6), let their light shine (Matt. 5:16) and devote themselves to a righteousness better than that of the Pharisees (Matt. 5:20).

It is a *kingdom of love*. The One who is love has worked it out and brought it to pass with great sacrifice (John 3:16). All its citizens are objects of the love of the Father and of the Son (John 16:27; 13:34). They love one another (John 13:35) and even the wicked are not excluded from their blessed, beneficial, intercessory love (Matt. 5:38-47).

It is a *kingdom of peace*. Not in the sense that its citizens enjoy perpetual external peace. By no means! "Do not think that I came to bring peace on earth. I did not come to bring peace but a sword. For I have come to 'set a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law'; and 'a man's enemies will be those of his own household'" [Matt. 10:34-36 NKJ]. But they have His peace, the Master's peace (John 14:27), which He has won for them and which His word, His gospel, establishes (John 16:33). This is an inner peace; it is the peace of the human soul, which knows that it is free from the pressing burden of the law and is at one with its God (Matt. 11:29).

It is a *kingdom of life*. All other kingdoms are kingdoms of death. Not the kingdom of Christ. Here is pure life. Here there are no dead ordinances, no dead works and no worship consisting of dead formality. The word of Christ is spirit and life (John 6:63), and His disciples worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23). He has come that they may have life in full abundance (John 10:10). He is the bread of life (John 6:35), the way, the truth and the life (14:6), the resurrection and the life (11:25). He has the words of eternal life (6:68), which whoever keeps shall not taste eternal death (8:51), but has passed [*hindurchgedrungen*] from death to life (5:24).

It is a *kingdom of glory*. Not of earthly glory. Its King had here on earth no place to lay His head (Matt. 8:20). Men called Him an ally of Beelzebub (Matt. 12:24); they captured Him as a murderer and nailed him to the cross (Matt. 26:55). And His supporters are a little flock (Luke 12:32), are hated by all men (Matt. 10:22) and must bear their cross (Matt. 10:38). But they are the salt of the earth (Matt. 5:13), the light of the world (5:14) and the blessed of the Father

(25:34). It is His good pleasure to give to them the kingdom (Luke 12:32), which has been prepared for them from the beginning of the world (Matt. 25:34). The kingdom of heaven is theirs (Matt. 5:10); they have a part in the glory which has been given to Christ (John 17:22), who will come again in His glory and sit upon the throne of His glory to judge the world (Matt. 25:31).

This is the kingdom which Christ preaches and which He, in numerous pictures and in a long series of parables, has presented according to its essence, its many relationships and its glorious future. His presentation is Christocentric. *He is the center point of the kingdom of God*, around which everything revolves and out from which one surveys the entire domain. Every teaching of the kingdom of God, whether it be of redemption (John 3:16) or of the new birth (John 3:1-15) or of the forgiveness of sins (Matt. 9:5) or of sanctification and good works (John 15:5) or of the resurrection of the body (John 11:25) and of judgment (Matt. 25:31) or of any other thing – all are presented in the closest connection to Him. He is the light of the world and every truth of the kingdom of heaven is a ray which this Sun emits. Therefore everything depends on whether one knows Him and believes on Him. If the Jews do not believe that He is the one through whom God will establish His kingdom, they must die in their sins (John 8:24). This is eternal life: that one knows the only true God in Him whom He has sent (John 17:3).

Preaching God's kingdom only as spiritual themes (no social gospel)

It must yet be demonstrated that Christ preached only the kingdom of God and knew of no other theme for preaching. Modern preachers who speak on worldly themes cannot appeal to Him. At that time too there would have been sufficient occasion to speak of things which do not directly touch on the kingdom of God. There was, for example, the large field of politics, in which the Jews of that time took no small interest. How happy the Sadducees, especially those who played a leading role, would have been to see Jesus making it clear to the Pharisees and their following what foolishness and what madness every attempt to shake off the Roman yoke was, and that political safety would come to the Jews only when they insured for themselves the friendship of the mighty, invincible Roman nation. How gladly the Pharisees would have induced Jesus to declare Himself expressly on the questions of whether or not it was proper to give tribute to Caesar, how one should act wisely toward his oppressor and what one could do to avenge the disgrace done to the people of God by the uncircumcised. But Jesus did not speak of this. It is frankly remarkable how painstakingly He avoided entering into the burning issues of the day. When He found Himself compelled to speak of the state, as for example in Matthew 17:24-27, 22:21 and John 19:11, He did so in few words, and not for the purpose of teaching statecraft or of expressing Himself on the worth of various forms of government or of setting forth either monarchy or democracy as the ideal worth seeking. Rather, He always had as His only purpose to portray the kingdom of God in its many relationships.

Just as little did Jesus preach on social themes. Such themes too were near at hand. The social conditions of that time were nothing short of exemplary [*musterhaft*].⁸ How much poverty, how much need, how much bitter necessity there was! Even a social institution such as slavery was universal in the Roman Empire. But instead of designing a new social order and urging its introduction, Jesus spoke in His preaching only of what the individual owes his neighbor. When He was anointed by Mary in Bethany and Judas grumbled at the squandering of 300 denarii, which should have been used to benefit the poor, there indeed was an opportunity to address the social issue. Then Jesus could have said, "One should not come to help the poor with a few charitable gifts, but should be concerned about giving them lasting help. One must so shape conditions that no poor are brought into existence. One must remove capitalism, the root of evil, from the world." But He answered as though He had no interest at all in the social problem: "The poor you have with you always."⁹ Yes, in His sermons themselves He did not address such things which stand in loose connection to the kingdom of God, but do not touch its inmost being. For

example, He did not speak of the form of the New Testament worship service nor yet of church government. He recommended no definite order for public worship and no congregational or synodical regulation. He established only one principle, which no congregational or synodical regulation dare violate: One is your Master, and you are brethren under one another (Matt. 23:8).

Why did Christ not speak about these matters? First of all, He had no time for that. He "has come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). "I must preach the gospel of the kingdom of God..." He said in Luke 4:43, "because I was sent for this purpose." He was able to devote only three short years to this mission, and it would not be His fault if Israel did not know the things that belong to his peace [*seinem Frieden dient*].¹⁰ So He had to make the most of every minute by attending to the lost sheep of the house of Israel and proclaiming to them the joyful tidings of the kingdom of God near at hand.

Secondly, Christ restricted Himself in His teaching activity to the proclamation of God's kingdom also on sound pedagogical grounds. His disciples, whom He selected to be His messengers, should not become pedants [*Kleinigkeitskrämer*]. They should learn that empty and transient matters should not be placed on an equal level with things eternal and true, nor should the things of this world be made equal to the things of the world to come. They should also learn that even in the kingdom of God one must distinguish between the important and the unimportant, between form and content, between husk and kernel. How necessary that was! The entire church mentality [*Kirchenwesen*] of that time was one of hair-splitting, formalism and slavish literalism. Jewish theology was so wooden that it could bring forth no pleasant fruit, and it was so hardened that no life could come forth from it. It was a shallow, unspiritual casuistry, to which a parallel can scarcely be found in church history. So the disciples, through whom Christ wanted to build His Church, needed to learn that the kingdom of God consists not in forms, but in spirit and life.

Finally, Jesus did not preach on political, social or similar themes because He wanted to stress over against the Jews that the kingdom of God is of a purely spiritual nature; that it does not make earthly conquests with the sword or through shrewd statecraft and clever diplomacy; that it wishes only to gain hearts and to exercise its influence in this way; that its citizens remain a "little flock," against whom the world ceaselessly contends with its wisdom, might, splendor and glory, and who would necessarily succumb to these attacks, if it were not the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom (Luke 12:32).

Learning from the Master Preacher

Since we are disciples of the great Master, the theme of our preaching will also be the kingdom of God and nothing else. It is certainly timely to stress this. Thirty or forty years ago,¹¹ it would have been less timely. At that time hardly anyone among us gave a thought to expounding political or social questions of the day from the pulpit or to speaking of other things of this world or of this life apart from their connection to the kingdom of God. Indeed, I dare not assert that this was always done with a proper understanding of God's kingdom and its mission in the world. Otherwise, it could never have occurred, for example, that a Lutheran pastor, when requested to preach a sermon favorable to the Temperance Movement, vigorously declined, since this was not a matter of the kingdom of God, but then preached against the Temperance Movement and made freedom to drink a matter of God's kingdom.¹²

Certainly many will take exception: should we preach only the kingdom of God? But what does this mean? It indeed does not mean that we should only report on the history of the kingdom of God or merely present the truths of the kingdom of heaven. We should rather use both of these for doctrine, for reproof, for correction and to be sure, apply them to the entire life of man, both within and outside the church. "You are the light of the world; you are the salt of the earth," Christ says to the members of His church. The church should then shine into the dark places of the world with its light. In every area of life it should be the salt which holds the corruption in check. And how necessary it is for the world that the church permeates every

condition with its salutary influence – particularly in our time! The world faces moral bankruptcy and no longer knows if it is coming or going. Should not the church then zealously participate in solving all the problems with which the world is struggling? Should it not seek to gain a hearing on all political and social questions and thus show the blind world the road to recovery, which can check the besetting moral decay and morally improve and ethically elevate humanity?

One might ask further: should it not do this for its own sake? Must it not do this? For otherwise the world will get to be too much for it, and all the conditions of the world will take such a form that there is no longer any room for the church. Then its every possibility of existence is cut off, and it must migrate to the moon if it wants to live its faith. Are not conditions such that already now a Lutheran whose conscience is bound to the word of God causes offense everywhere in public life [*im öffentlichen Leben überall anstößt*], so that he does not even consider many occupations, which are God-pleasing in themselves, and earning bread is made more difficult for him? Have not some already tried often enough to restrict our church's freedom of movement? Do not the church's enemies ceaselessly threaten it with laws which would, in large part, make its educational work impossible? Must not the church then, in the interest of self-preservation, seek to gain influence over the social, the political and all other relations in this world and to this end make use of its political power? But if this is so, can the church then restrict itself to presenting the truths of the kingdom of heaven? Must it not rather use these truths to shine into the entire human life, yes the political and social life also? Must it not uncover defects wherever these may occur, propose and support reforms, come out for or against political measures, and in general vociferously raise its voice against all injustice and lend assistance by all means permitted in the commandments, so that righteousness may dwell upon earth? Does not preaching the kingdom include such endeavor?

The kingdom of Christ is, as we learn from His preaching, a spiritual kingdom. Therefore the church deals exclusively with spiritual things. It has been called to help effect the gracious will of God toward sinners. God wishes for all people to be helped. He was in Christ and reconciled the world to Himself and now desires that the word of reconciliation be spoken to it, so that it is reconciled with God [2 Cor. 5:19-20]. To help this will of God to be realized is the one great mission of the church. It should proclaim to the world the glad tidings of its reconciliation and offer to it salvation in Christ as a free gift of grace. If the world rejects it in unbelief, then the church has no commission to use any other means to improve it ethically or to better it morally. Whoever rejects this salvation is under the curse, and the church has no mandate to him. It is really all the same to God whether the world rejecting His salvation is lost with or without civic righteousness, whether it sinks deeper and deeper into the morass of sin or is lifted up a little morally. Therefore it can never be the mission of the church to reform the world as such or to increase its civic righteousness. That would not be a spiritual work, but a work lying in the natural realm, for which it has no time and no promise. Only if we think that civic righteousness coincides with the "righteousness of God," as it does for many sectarian preachers, could we as a church occupy ourselves with political and social reforms and not be aware that we are playing the fool [*ohne bewussterweise Allotria zu treiben*]. A church roused by God to be His preacher and purchased by Christ's blood to rescue souls is wasting its time trying to make the world, which is hostile to God, respectable and honorable; it [the church¹³] will one day have to answer for it.

Nevertheless, the word of Christ remains: "You are the salt of the earth." Just as salt preserves food and makes it palatable, so the church should seek to curb the decay in this world, so that God in His wrath does not spew it out of His mouth as disgusting, rotten food and destroy it through His final judgment. But it should not do this for the sake of the world as such, but for the sake of the elect who are still in the world and whom God wants to lead out of the world, unite with Christ's flock and eternally save. The church should also be salt for its own sake, so that the evil of the world might not increase to the point that the Christian can no longer lead a quiet and peaceable life or live his spiritual calling. The church does not become this kind of salt

by allowing itself to become entwined with the world's affairs. Nor does it become this kind of salt by using its political might and external influence to carry out political reforms and to transform the world outwardly. History teaches rather that under such circumstances the salt has each time lost its flavor [*dumm geworden ist*, cf. Matt. 5:13a];¹⁴ that is, the church has always lost its nature as salt and become a worldly kingdom. No, just as the church has become salt simply and solely by its knowledge of Christ brought about through the gospel, so also it can become salt to the world only by its witnessing of Christ. It is salt to the world when it lives its one great calling, preaches the salvation of God and wins souls to Christ. The better it succeeds at this, and the more souls it leads out of the world to Christ, the more successful it will be in curbing the corruption, weakening the power of the world and its princes and increasing its own power.

The witnessing of Christ, the gospel, is the only trowel and the only sword given to the church. With the gospel it builds, and with the gospel it wards off the enemy. The weapons of its warfare are spiritual. If it uses earthly arms and weapons, if it seeks to reach its goals and to gain victory through clever diplomacy and political machinations, if it sets guile against guile and force against force, then it has forgotten its calling and, in addition, has set out for a territory in which the enemy is superior to it, according to Christ's word: "The children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light" [Luke 16:8]. The word of the Master finds application here: "All who take the sword will perish by the sword" [Matt. 26:52]. It must refrain from doing what it cannot accomplish through the gospel. When the gospel does not protect it, it must suffer. It should humbly and penitently suffer and say to itself, "It is your fault that the world is so evil; you have not been salt to the degree that you should have been." And it should find comfort while suffering by being mindful of the words of its Master: "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" [John 16:33].

Recognizing specific dangers to our God-given task

That we do not see clearly here, that we indeed want to preach only the kingdom of God, yet preach a hybrid kingdom, which is half spiritual and half worldly – that is the second danger which threatens us and against which we should strengthen ourselves through the study of Jesus' preaching. This danger threatens us chiefly on two grounds. First, we are surrounded by churches with Reformed confessions and are exposed to their influence. Now it is characteristic of Reformed theology that it fails to recognize the purely spiritual nature of God's kingdom. Modern Reformed theology externalizes [*veräußert*] the kingdom to such a degree that next to nothing still remains of its spirit and nature. In our country they teach a kingdom of God which by and by overcomes the world, reforms it and transforms it into a model state which is ruled according to Christian principles and in whose democratic constitution the righteousness of God's kingdom finds its fullest expression.¹⁵

However, the danger of preaching an externalized kingdom of God does not grow only out of our surroundings. No, we conceal the tendency toward this within ourselves. We are of the earth and therefore earthly. The heart does not want to tear itself loose from this world, to which it is bound with a hundred roots. It is hard for us to fix our eyes steadfastly on the future city which we seek. We gladly build our huts here, and therefore we gladly give the kingdom of God a form by which it can dwell in our earthly huts and can fit in with our earthly dreams. Add to this the fact that we hold the heavenly treasure in earthly vessels. It must be this way, for in our present mode of existence it is not conceivable to have content without forms. But because the forms are earthly and the content is heavenly, the eyes easily remain fastened on the former and are satisfied with the external form of God's kingdom. Thus the temptation to treat the kingdom of God in a superficial manner and to strip it of its spiritual-heavenly [*geistlich-himmlischen*] nature comes upon us not only from without, but also from within. This externalization usually takes a different form in our church than in Calvinism. While they take pains to transform the kingdoms of this world into a visible kingdom of God, the Lutheran church in times of decay, as a

rule, makes a worldly kingdom out of the kingdom of God. The church receives the form of an earthly kingdom, which is governed by officials with worldly authority and in which external laws and principles matter [*gelten*] instead of the gospel and in which all life gradually hardens.

The kingdom of God is a kingdom of truth, in which the one, eternal truth given and embodied in Christ rules and brings itself to bear in the heart. If our church deteriorates, the truth becomes merely "pure doctrine," which it receives as an inheritance from the fathers, which it strives for with fleshly zeal and of which it is proud, when it also confesses with the mouth that it is indebted to the grace of God. For the sake of this "pure doctrine" it looks down upon other churches with disdain, without considering that one can have the pure doctrine and yet can be without the truth, or that pure doctrine without the heart's involvement engages only the understanding and becomes a glittering lie with which one deceives himself.

Christ's kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness, the righteousness of God, which is grasped in faith and produces fruits of righteousness. In its place Lutheran orthodoxism places the confession of the dogmatically correct doctrine of justification, which as a dead matter of the understanding does not make fruitful and sanctify the inner life. It makes of that love which, according to Christ's word, is a mark of the citizens of His kingdom a fraternal activity [*vereinsmässige Liebestätigkeit*] (obviously, this should not be condemned in itself).¹⁶ This makes it possible for someone to purchase his freedom from the burdensome obligation of love with an annual contribution, so that he does not need to trouble himself over his dear neighbor and, indeed, can offer proof to God and man, black on white, that he has satisfied the obligation of love. And matters of dispute between brethren he does not allow to be decided according to love, but according to ecclesiastical by-laws. He consults pastoral rulings which the fathers have set down; he exhumes yellowing theological *Gutachten*¹⁷ and diligently investigates whether a case has been decided in them two, three or four hundred years ago, which bears some similarity with the case in controversy. He perhaps also gathers Scripture passages which permit application to the case according to the letter, but not according to the sense and spirit. He secures for himself the services of a wise clerical controversialist, who then beats down and overcomes all considerations raised in love by misusing Bible passages, by using the opinions of the fathers, by referring to ecclesiastical regulations and by constructing syllogisms of logic.

The kingdom of God is a kingdom of life. If our church begins to harden into dead forms and more and more extinguishes the life which comes from God and is hidden in God, then it will seek to delude itself and others with an appearance of life. It becomes rather stirred up, displays a noisy bustle, has many irons in the fire everywhere, must be active in every field and be involved in every work. For this purpose it establishes association after association; it becomes a jack-of-all-trades [*ein Hans-in-allen-Gassen*] and offers its services so insistently that no one can escape from it anymore. But all of this is really no genuine expression of life; it does not flow from a living fellowship with God and does not wish to lead to this living fellowship. It flows rather from the unconscious desire to produce for itself a substitute for life in God, in which it no longer finds satisfaction. Because it no longer cultivates fellowship with God in the word, preaching the gospel seems to it to be an inferior work, one which cannot justify its existence. Therefore it must display an effectiveness whose usefulness is immediately clear, so that no one is tempted to deny it the right to continue and it does not lose confidence in itself.

Finally, a deteriorating Lutheran church also externalizes the glory which is characteristic of the kingdom of God. It no longer sees this glory in the jewel of truth which Christ gives it or in the robe of righteousness with which He has clothed it or in its marriage to the fairest among the children of men or in its inheritance as God's adopted children. No, all of that does not impress the world, which has eyes only for outward glory. How it wants to be glorious in the eyes of the world! Therefore the King's daughter now becomes completely glorious outwardly. She adorns herself with things for which the world has eyes. She gathers large congregations and builds large synods. She constructs costly churches and shapes their worship services in such a way that they offer something even for the eyes and ears of unbelievers. Her charitable institutions compete

with those of the state. Her association halls and club rooms are just as elegant as those of the world and stand open to it. Her influence in civil life is inferior to no one's, and the state reckons with her might. The business world woos her favor, and everyone bows to her dignitaries. But the inner glory, with which she once pleased Christ, is gone, and He can no longer say of her, "You are dear to Me, O worthy maiden."

Has this externalizing of the kingdom of God already begun in our church? Only those who willfully shut their eyes and refuse to see, or those who are already blinded by the glamour of the earthly glory and can no longer see, will deny this without reservation. We do not say that our church has completely lost its inner glory. To assert that is also to shut the eyes and not want to see. There still remains in it, thanks be to God's mercy, many of the "glorious parts" with which Christ has clothed it. But the beginnings of the externalizing process are present. We consider it neither edifying nor necessary in the portrayal of the deteriorating Lutheran church given earlier to point out details of this incipient externalization. It will, of this there is no doubt, quickly gain ground, if in our preaching it is not hindered, but rather is given support. Hence nothing is now less in place than hammering on the pure doctrine which we have more than others as the frequent indication of the outward blessing God has bestowed upon our church work, upon our outward size, significance and power.¹⁸

Whoever among us desires to preach in a way that fits the times, let him preach that the kingdom of God does not come with outward appearance. It cannot be recognized by outward size and earthly splendor. It has nothing in common with the kingdoms of this world, but it is a purely spiritual kingdom. It is a kingdom of truth, righteousness, love, peace and life – a kingdom which is from God – and one of inner glory.

This comes hard for us, especially in this age which makes everything superficial. Therefore we must let this preach to ourselves first of all. We must go to the great Preacher come from God. We must go into His preaching and diligently immerse ourselves in His preaching of the kingdom, as set down in the four Gospels. No other preaching than His is so suited to overthrow our fleshly thinking about the kingdom of God and to convince us of its spiritual nature. If it has fulfilled its work in us, then we know to preach the gospel of the kingdom to others. And if our preaching is done in weakness and not powerfully, like that of the Master, yet surely it is still not in vain. We will be useful for our times, reveal to individual souls the true glory of God's kingdom and oppose the externalization of the church, if we preach what the Son of Man has preached.

Endnotes

¹ Wilhelm Friedrich Henkel (1868-1929) was born in Brandenburg, Germany. He came to America in 1882 and was educated at Northwestern College in Watertown, WI and also at the Wisconsin Synod seminary, located then in Milwaukee. During the years 1891-1912 he was pastor at congregations in Wauwatosa, Maple Creek and Morrison, WI, before serving as professor, first at Watertown (1912-1920) and then at the Wauwatosa seminary (1920-1929).

² Henkel's conclusion here seems to be that in the New Testament texts we are not given a transcript of the Lord's discourses. What we have is a truncated, yet completely accurate version of what Jesus said – more of a verbally inspired summary or extract than a verbatim transcription. The Sermon on the Mount, for example, may have been quite a bit longer than what the Spirit has caused to be written.

³ All headings within the article are an editorial addition.

⁴ NKJ: Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom [κηρύσσων τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς βασιλείας], and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

⁵ The chosen wording for the Psalm 45 quotation is a translation of Henkel's German quotation, which appears to be taken from the 1912 edition of Luther Bibel.

⁶ To set forth a distinctive prominence in listing the kingdom's chief characteristics, the

italicizing of key words has been added.

⁷ Melchizedek means "King of Righteousness."

⁸ The German adjective *musterhaft* (here translated "exemplary") has the connotation of a good example, which does not fit the context. Other meanings suggested are "perfect, classical, standard, model" (*Cassell's New German Dictionary*, 1939 ed.). Perhaps the word choice reflected some intent of irony on the part of the author.

⁹ John 12:7-8: But Jesus said, "Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always."

¹⁰ Cf. Luke 19:42: "If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes." Note that the NKJ rendering of τὰ πρὸς εἰρήνην σου, i.e. the underlined words above, were translated in German (Luther Bibel 1912) as *was zu deinem Frieden dient*.

¹¹ What follows in the rest of the article includes occasional references which Henkel has made to conditions and experiences taking place over 75 years ago. At the editor's discretion material deemed to be overly dated or difficult to follow for other reasons has been omitted. Occurrence of these omissions is indicated by endnotes 12, 15 and 18.

¹² The rest of the paragraph, consisting of Henkel's remarks on congregational trends taking place within his synod prior to and during that time, has been omitted.

¹³ We believe that the intended antecedent of the German pronoun *es* in this last clause (*wird es einst zu verantworten haben*) is *Eine Kirche* at the beginning of the original sentence, not *die gottfeindliche Welt*.

¹⁴ NKJ: "You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned?"

¹⁵ At this point the author seeks to give evidence of his claim by using a quotation presumably drawn from a Reformed source. Henkel's introductory words and the rather lengthy quotation, comprised of multi-page citations from Prof. James H. Snowden's book *Is the World Growing Better*, have been omitted, along with a related footnote.

¹⁶ The adjective in brackets, *vereinsmässige*, is a cognate of *Verein*, which means "club, society, association." It is the opinion of the translator that Henkel may have held concerns here that various organizations were claiming the time and influencing the attitudes of Christians and thus disrupting them from faithfully expressing Christian love.

¹⁷ *Gutachten* means "judgment; advice, expert opinion."

¹⁸ A lengthy sentence pertaining to theological education at that time has been omitted from the end of this paragraph.

(To be continued)

Book Reviews

Douglas Judisch: *An Evaluation of Claims to the Charismatic Gifts*, Concordia Seminary Press, 1985, reprinted by permission of Baker Book House, 96 pages.

This short book, at one time available as a "Baker Biblical Monograph" (copyright 1978), was reprinted by Concordia Seminary Press over 20 years ago. Nevertheless, for our purposes today it appears to be a timely companion volume to consider with the article that appeared in the *Journal of Theology*, Vol. 44, No. 3 (Sept. 2004), entitled "The Gifts of the Holy Spirit, Speaking in Tongues and Extra-Biblical Revelation." In that article the writer, David Schierenbeck, made reference to the special gifts of 1 Corinthians 12:8-10 (prophecy, speaking in tongues, interpreting what was spoken in tongues, gifts of healing and five others) as ending in the apostolic age. This book provides a convincing argument for that conclusion. The basic premise is that the New Testament church has been founded on the teaching of the apostles, as intended and designed by the Lord Jesus. This premise also involves the formation of the canon of the New

Testament Scriptures. While and until the inspired writings were gathered, the Spirit of God confirmed the word of the apostles as His Word by supplying special gifts (see 1 Cor. 12). But part of the premise also holds that once all the apostles died and since the canon of the New Testament has been established, our theology now is determined by the same apostolic word, given and revealed to all believers by the Spirit. The need for confirming signs has passed.

The author Douglas Judisch, at the time a professor at Concordia Theological Seminary in Ft. Wayne, Indiana, has outlined the presentation of his argument in the introductory chapter. Each of the six parts of the outline has its own chapter, listed in order below. A brief conclusion and an appendix which gives the supporting testimony of the Church Fathers bring the book to a close, after these main chapters are presented.

1. The Means of Authentication
2. The Means of Distribution
3. The Purpose of Prophetic Gifts
4. The Explicit Testimony of Paul
5. The Explicit Testimony of Daniel
6. The Implicit Testimony of Zechariah

Chapter 1, "The Means of Authentication," has thirteen supporting theses presented on pages 17-26. To this reviewer the theses enumerated below are of note:

2. Words taught by God demand from us complete acceptance and obedience (Deut. 18:18-19; II Thess. 2:15; 3:14).
3. But not all utterances represented as being words taught by God actually are such (Jer. 14:13-15, 23:9-40).
4. Utterances that are represented as being words taught by God when they actually are not such demand from us rejection (Deut. 18:20; Jer. 23:16, 23-40, II Thess. 2:2-3).
6. If an utterance represented as being words taught by God has received the personal sanction of an apostle or of a man personally authenticated as a prophet by an apostle, we can conclude that the utterance actually is words taught by God.
7. We know of no other test by which we could determine if an utterance represented as being words taught by God actually is such.
9. But no utterance of postapostolic times can receive the personal sanction of an apostle.
12. Any utterance of postapostolic times represented as being words taught by God, therefore, demands from us rejection.
13. We conclude therefore that any utterance of postapostolic times represented as being prophecy or utterance in unlearned tongues by the power of the Spirit must be rejected.

The writer presents sound exegesis and pertinent parallel passages to answer a difficult question: How are we to understand the gifts of 1 Corinthians 12? Clearly, we do not have these same gifts in the same measure today. So we are left either to redefine the gifts or to recognize that they no longer exist. This book offers a sound, Bible-based argument for the latter proposition. At a point in time the Holy Spirit had given special gifts to confirm the word of the apostles as true Bible doctrine. As our reliable, God-given way to confirm Bible doctrine today and also to supply the complete revelation of God to man, the Spirit provides to us that same apostolic word which He has carefully inspired, recorded and preserved as the New Testament Scriptures.

– Paul Tiefel, Jr.

Martin Greschat: *Martin Bucer – A Reformer and His Times*, translated from German by Stephen E. Buckwalter, Westminster John Knox Press, 1990, 2004, paperback, 340 pages.

Besides the two famous Martins of the Lutheran Reformation (Martin Luther and Martin Chemnitz) there was a third Martin who was very important and influential in his time: Martin

Bucer, of whom his biographer says, "Few figures of the Reformation have been as neglected as this sixteenth-century theologian, churchman, statesman, and Christian" (p. vii).

Martin Bucer, or Butzer, was born in 1491 and was therefore only a few years younger than Martin Luther. Bucer became a Dominican monk already at the age of fifteen. After having studied theology in Heidelberg and Mainz in Germany, Bucer became a Catholic priest, probably in 1516, just one year prior to the publication of Luther's *Ninety-Five Theses*. He was much influenced in his thinking by the Dominican teacher Thomas Aquinas and the contemporary scholar Erasmus of Rotterdam.

Bucer met Luther for the first time in April of 1518 in Heidelberg, where Luther presented and defended 28 theological theses and 12 philosophical theses (see *Luther's Works*, Vol. 31, pp. 37-70). Bucer was mightily impressed both by Luther as a person and by his theology, especially Thesis 1 and Thesis 25. Thesis 1 says: "The law of God, the most salutary doctrine of life, cannot advance man on his way to righteousness, but rather hinders him." Thesis 25: "He is not righteous who does much, but he who, without work, believes much in Christ." It seems that from this time on, Bucer agreed with Luther "that Christians must place their trust solely in Christ, not in their own deeds and accomplishments" (p. 28).

Bucer's agreement with Luther's theology made life dangerous for him. He renounced his monastic vows in April of 1521, found refuge in various towns in Germany and was excommunicated by the Roman Catholic Church. In 1523 Bucer arrived in Strasbourg, which became his headquarters until 1549, when he left Germany for England. During his years in Strasbourg Bucer supported the Reformation together with other leaders such as Matthew Zell, Wolfgang Capito, Caspar Hedio and the young John Calvin, who in 1538 found refuge in Strasbourg for three years after his first attempt at reforming Geneva and before his second stay in that city. In fact, Bucer can rightly be called Calvin's teacher and mentor. In 1539 Calvin wrote about Bucer that he, "on account of his profound scholarship, his bounteous knowledge about a wide range of subjects, his keen mind, his wide reading, and many other different virtues, remains unsurpassed today by anyone, can be compared with only a few, and excels the vast majority" (p. 148).

Bucer's theological writings indicate that the chief emphasis in his presentation of the gospel was the ethical and moral effects which the gospel has. Since God has loved us in Christ, we should love our neighbors and show that love in our lives. He wrote commentaries on many books of the Old and New Testaments. He had a good understanding of both Hebrew and Greek.

Together with his fellow-reformers in Strasbourg, Bucer preached and wrote against the Roman doctrine of the Mass. He proclaimed the authority of the Bible above the church, and he opposed the enforced celibacy of the priests. Reforms in worship were introduced and defended by Bucer and the other reformers. Bucer "rejected priests' liturgical garments, the altar, and any form of ritual. Holy water and candles were to be done away with, as well as oil, salt, and consecrated water at baptisms. A simple table, prayers, psalms sung in German, a sermon – that was it. The Lord's Supper was celebrated every Sunday, and those attending were given the cup as well as the bread" (p. 63). All Roman Catholic Masses in the city were banned in 1529, the year of Luther's catechisms and his debate with Ulrich Zwingli on the Lord's Supper.

One of Bucer's chief aims in his ministry was to close the gap between Zwingli and Luther in their understanding of the Lord's Supper. At first he definitely sided with Zwingli (up to and including 1529), but later he and Luther seemed to have come together in the Wittenberg Concord of 1536. However, events finally proved that he was in line with Zwingli rather than with Luther. Bucer's biographer says: "Bucer concluded that he just had to work at finding the right wording that would satisfy both sides of the conflict. Solving the controversy over the Lord's Supper became his overriding concern" (p. 74). Initially, Bucer became the object of Luther's anger when he translated and published some of Luther's writings and in these writings changed Luther's teaching on the Lord's Supper to agree with Zwingli. It took a long time before Luther put any confidence in anything Bucer said.

Bucer was present at and participated in the famous Marburg Colloquy of 1529 between Luther and Zwingli. In fact, it was to Bucer and not to Zwingli that Luther spoke the well-known words: "It is obvious that we do not have one and the same spirit" (p. 93). Perhaps we could call Bucer a conservative unionist. Even though he did not agree with Luther's understanding of the Lord's Supper, he did not consider the difference so important as to prevent church fellowship. This attitude, of course, has become the prevalent view in the Protestant and Lutheran church world today, but it was not the position of Martin Luther and the Lutheran confessions. Bucer believed that doctrinal unity was an impossible dream, for he wrote in 1530: "I for one have never met two people who believed exactly the same thing" (p. 94).

The Lord's Supper disagreement prevented the non-Catholics from presenting one united confession at Augsburg in 1530. The Lutheran leaders presented the *Augsburg Confession*; Zwingli presented his own confession called the *Fidei Ratio*; Strasbourg and three other cities presented their confession known as the *Confessio Tetrapolitana* (the Confession of the Four Cities). All of these confessions were, of course, rejected by the Roman Catholic theologians and princes.

Bucer kept on trying to resolve the Lord's Supper controversy. His efforts along this line led Zwingli in 1531 to break with Bucer. Luther, on his part, was still willing to meet with Bucer. Their discussions finally led to the Wittenberg Concord of 1536, which came as close as anything ever came to bring the majority of Protestants together on the doctrine of the Lord's Supper. The crucial question was whether "unbelievers as well as believers actually received the body and blood of Christ in their mouths with the Lord's Supper" (p. 137). Bucer had denied this, but Luther affirmed it. After lengthy discussion Luther said to the group, as recounted by Greschat: "We have now heard every one of you answer and confess that you believe and teach that the true body and blood of the Lord are given and received in the Holy Supper, and not just bread and wine.... You take exception to including unbelievers, but you do confess, as Saint Paul does, that the unworthy receive the body of the Lord.... We do not want to quarrel over this. Since this is how matters stand with you, we are in agreement, we recognize and accept you as our dear brethren in the Lord, as far as these articles are concerned" (p. 138).

The Wittenberg Concord of 1536 was accepted by all those present, but it was rejected by the successors of Zwingli in Switzerland. Even those who accepted it were not all agreed in their interpretation. Greschat concludes: "Whether or not Christ was also present for those who did not believe anything at all, that is to say, for unbelievers, was ultimately left undecided" (p. 138). This conclusion has the confirmation of the above quotation from Luther. It seems that the rather strange distinction between the unworthy and the unbelievers made the Wittenberg Concord possible. Luther encouraged Bucer to muster support for the document from the Zwinglians, but this never happened, and later agreements between Strasbourg and the Zwinglians indicated that the matter had not really been resolved at all.

Church discipline, infant baptism, the rite of confirmation and church polity were other major interests of Bucer, to which he devoted his time and energy. He even tried to bring about a reconciliation between the Protestants and the Roman Catholics, but his efforts ended in failure.

After Luther's death in 1546 and the defeat of the Protestants in the war after his death, Bucer left Strasbourg to go to England, where he never felt quite at home. He wrote to John Calvin in 1549: I "live now in a country ...whose language I do not know, whose food I cannot get used to, whose way of life is unfamiliar – and, finally, a country in which I see no clear perspective of achieving something for the Lord through my efforts" (p. 246).

Martin Bucer married a former nun, Elisabeth Silbereisen, in 1522. She died of a plague in 1541, which also took the lives of three of their children in 1541 and two more of their children in 1542. Bucer said of his wife that she "relieved me, for the past twenty years, entirely of all household duties and child-care, and looked after everything in an honest and circumspect fashion" (p. 201). Bucer seemed to have difficulty remembering how many children he had. In 1542 Bucer was joined in marriage to a remarkable woman named Wibrandis, who has the

distinction of having been married to four of the leading reformers of the time, all of whom preceded her in death: Ludwig Keller of Basel, Johannes Oecolampadius of Basel (who participated in the Marburg Colloquy of 1529), Wolfgang Capito of Strasbourg (Bucer's associate and close friend) and Martin Bucer. Wibrandis had children from her other marriages; she helped Bucer with his remaining children, including a mentally handicapped son; and she and Martin had a daughter of their own named Elisabeth.

His wife and some of their children were with Bucer in England when he died in 1551 at the age of 59. His last years were difficult because of illness. He may not have been easy to live with towards the end. The rules he laid down for students living in his home have been preserved. "They had to get up every morning at four. After prayer they had to light up the house and get the fires going in the stoves. The main work of the students consisted of copying Bucer's manuscripts – no easy task in view of the Strasbourg reformer's almost illegible handwriting. They also were to keep careful record of all incoming and outgoing mail, as well as give private lessons to Bucer's infant daughters. They were to wait on the family during meals as well as take care of and wash Bucer's clothing. One of the students was always expected to accompany Bucer wherever he went.... The thoroughness with which Bucer regulated even the smallest details gives ample reason to assume that life under his roof was not necessarily simple – especially if one considers that his wife Wibrandis was hardly less domineering" (pp. 247-248).

It is good to have this biography of Martin Bucer, written by a professor of church history from Giessen, Germany and now available to us in English. We cannot put this Martin on the same level with the other two Martins, Luther and Chemnitz, because of his unionistic and compromising tendencies. Nevertheless, we hope that through his faith in Jesus Christ this Martin will join the other two in the resurrection to life on the last day.

– David Lau
