



Adamstown Community Church

APRIL 2009

HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS

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John & his family are members of Adamstown Community Church and he has kindly made this outline extract available for our podcasting facility with the prayerful hope that it will be helpful to those who read it. The comments in each section are *John's own personal comments*.

The purpose of Harmony is appreciation of the chronological flow of Jesus' life.

Harmony #68 - In the Olive Grove - Gethsemane

Jesus Prays at Gethsemane, the olive grove on the Mount of Olives

Then Jesus went out as usual with his disciples and crossed the Kidron Valley. On the other side there was an olive grove [on] the Mount of Olives, called Gethsemane, and he and his disciples went into it. He said to them, "Sit here while I go over there and pray." He took Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, James and John, along with him, and he began to be sorrowful, deeply distressed and troubled. Then he said to them, "My soul is overwhelmed with sorrow to the point of death. Stay here and keep watch with me."

Going a little farther, he fell to the ground and prayed that if possible the hour might pass from him. "Abba, Father," he said, "everything is possible for you. My Father, if it is possible, may this cup be taken from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will."

An angel from heaven appeared to him and strengthened him. And being in anguish, he prayed more earnestly, and his sweat was like drops of blood falling to the ground.

Then he returned to his disciples and found them sleeping, exhausted from sorrow. "Simon," he said to Peter, "are you asleep? Could you not keep watch for one hour? Get up and watch and pray so that you will not fall into temptation. The spirit is willing, but the body is weak."

He went away a second time and prayed, "My Father, if it is not possible for this cup to be taken away unless I drink it, may your will be done."

When he came back, he again found them sleeping, because their eyes were heavy. They did not know what to say to him. So he left them and went away once more and prayed the third time, saying the same thing.

Returning the third time to the disciples, he said to them, "Are you still sleeping and resting? Enough! The hour has come. Look, the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise! Let us go! Here comes my betrayer!" [\[Mt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-42; Lk 22:39-46; Jn 18:1\]](#)

Jesus Arrested

Now Judas, one of the Twelve, who betrayed him, knew the place, because Jesus had often met there with his disciples. So while Jesus was still speaking, Judas, arrived [at] the grove, leading a large crowd armed with swords and clubs, [including] a detachment of soldiers and some officials, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, the Pharisees and the elders of the people.

Jesus, knowing all that was going to happen to him, went out and asked them, "Who is it you want?"

"Jesus of Nazareth," they replied.

"I am he," Jesus said. (And Judas the traitor was standing there with them.) When Jesus said, "I am he," they drew back and fell to the ground.

Again he asked them, "Who is it you want?"
And they said, "Jesus of Nazareth."

"I told you that I am he," Jesus answered. "If you are looking for me, then let these men go." This happened so that the words he had spoken would be fulfilled: "I have not lost one of those you gave me."

Now the betrayer had arranged a signal with them: "The one I kiss is the man; arrest him and lead him away under guard." Going at once to Jesus, Judas said, "Greetings, Rabbi!" and kissed him. Jesus asked him, "Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss? Friend, do what you came for."

Then the men stepped forward, seized Jesus and arrested him. When Jesus' followers saw what was going to happen, they said, "Lord, should we strike with our swords?" With that, Simon Peter, one of Jesus' companions, reached for his sword, drew it out and struck the servant of the high priest, cutting off his right ear. (The servant's name was Malchus.)

But Jesus commanded Peter, "No more of this! Put your sword back in its place," Jesus said to him, "for all who draw the sword will die by the sword. Shall I not drink the cup the Father has given me? Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of

angels? But how then would the Scriptures be fulfilled that say it must happen in this way?" And he touched the man's ear and healed him.

Then Jesus said to the chief priests, the officers of the temple guard, and the elders, who had come for him, "Am I leading a rebellion, that you have come out with swords and clubs to capture me? Every day I sat in the temple courts teaching, and you did not lay a hand on me [or] arrest me. But this is your hour - when darkness reigns. But this has all taken place that the writings of the prophets (the Scriptures) might be fulfilled." Then all the disciples deserted him and fled. A young man, wearing nothing but a linen garment, was following Jesus. When they seized him, he fled naked, leaving his garment behind. [Mt 26:47-56; Mk 14:43-52; Lk 22:47-53; Jn 18:2-11]

Comment

We are called to follow Jesus, but how often do we major on his 'sorrow unto death'? More often, our focus is on blessing. But this is the way to which Jesus calls us - obedience and the cross [Mt 10:38 and Mt 16:24 are sober reading in today's climate]. It is not an easy way, but it is a sure and certain way, and it is the way of joy. Those who have read *Pilgrim's Progress* (which was once considered essential reading for every Christian) will be reminded of those who did not come in through the hard way of the gate (conviction and repentance) but climbed in the easy way over the fence. This is a challenge to our priorities.

There are times when I can identify so much with Peter, and it is then that I see my weakness. How like Peter it was to act in human strength, ignoring God's hand in all this. We can so easily do things in our own strength, and it is as disastrous as Peter's impetuous act. Our constant reminder is: " 'Not by might, nor by power but by my Spirit', says the LORD Almighty" [Zech 4:6]. That is why I consider one of the most important scriptures for us to be Heb 12:2, because the Christian walk is all about looking to Jesus. And another is Rom 8:15, for we have been adopted as sons and have the Spirit of God within us, who cries out, "Abba, Father".

Harmony #69 – Jesus is questioned

Jesus Taken to Annas and Caiaphas

Then seizing [Jesus], they bound him and brought him first to Annas, who was the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest that year. Caiaphas was the one who had advised the Jews that it would be good if one man died for the people. Then Annas sent him, still bound, to Caiaphas the high priest [and] those who had arrested Jesus took him to the house of Caiaphas, where all the chief priests, teachers of the law and the elders had assembled. [Mt 26:57; Mk 14:53; Lk 22:54; Jn 18:12b-14, 24]

Peter's First Denial [1]

Simon Peter and another disciple [(John)] were following Jesus at a distance, right up to the courtyard of the high priest. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard, but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the girl on duty there, one of the servant girls of the high priest, and brought Peter in.

It was cold, and the servants and officials stood around a fire they had kindled in the middle of the courtyard to keep warm. Peter also was standing with them, warming himself. [Then he] sat down with the guards to see the outcome.

"You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus of Galilee, [weren't] you," the girl [who had been] at the door said [to] Peter, looking closely at him as he was seated there in the firelight.

But he denied it before them all. "Woman, I don't know or understand what you are talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway. [[Mt 26:58,69-70](#); [Mk 14:54, 66-68](#); [Lk 22:55-57](#); [Jn 18:15-18](#)]

The High Priest Questions Jesus before the Sanhedrin at night

Meanwhile, the high priest questioned Jesus about his disciples and his teaching.

"I have spoken openly to the world," Jesus replied. "I always taught in synagogues or at the temple, where all the Jews come together. I said nothing in secret. Why question me? Ask those who heard me. Surely they know what I said."

When Jesus said this, one of the officials nearby struck him in the face. "Is this the way you answer the high priest?" he demanded.

"If I said something wrong," Jesus replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?"

The chief priests and the whole Sanhedrin were looking for evidence against Jesus so that they could put him to death, but they did not find any. Many testified falsely against him, but their statements did not agree.

Finally two came forward and gave this false testimony against him: "This fellow said, 'I am able to destroy the temple of God and rebuild it in three days.' And 'I will destroy this man-made temple and in three days will build another, not made by man.'" Yet even then their testimony did not agree.

Then the high priest stood up before them and said to Jesus, "Are you not going to answer? What is this testimony that these men are bringing against you?" But Jesus remained silent and gave no answer. The high priest said to him, "I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God the Blessed One."

"Yes, it is as you say," Jesus replied. "But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven."

Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, "He has spoken blasphemy! Why do we need any more witnesses? Look, now you have heard the blasphemy. What do you think?"

"He is worthy of death," they all answered. [[Mt 26:59-66](#); [Mk 14:55-64](#); [Jn 18:19-23](#)]

Comment

Jesus is being put upon from every angle. This may seem to be a time to be disheartened. But listen to Jesus' words. Peter warmed himself by the fire, but our hearts are warmed by these words: "In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven." That is what we ache for, to see Jesus revealed in the splendour of his glory. Just one second of that outweighs everything we desire in this world, all put together. God has placed his Spirit in our hearts, and we know that Jesus is first among many brothers, and we are his - his brothers, his subjects, his bride, his servants, his body, his reward.

[1]

The four accounts of Peter's three denials appear so different at first as to be beyond reconciliation. However, starting with the perspective and firm conviction that the word of God is inerrant, as it claims to be, it is possible to resolve the majority of the apparent inconsistencies in this ordering of the account. There are a few minor additional matters you may spot that I have not specifically addressed, but they also present no problem once we commit ourselves to understanding that each individual account is correct but not necessarily complete, and represents a particular perspective of the underlying facts. One of the purposes of Harmony is to demonstrate this unifying principle. Another is to lay out the underlying facts by tying together the various accounts.

Harmony #70 – Jesus is rejected

The Guards Mock Jesus

The men who were guarding Jesus began mocking and beating him. They spit in his face and struck him with their fists. They blindfolded him [and] others slapped him and demanded, "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who hit you?" And they said many other insulting things to him. [\[Mt 26:67-68; Mk 14:65; Lk 22:63-65\]](#)

Peter's Second and Third Denials

As Simon Peter stood near the entryway warming himself, another servant girl saw him there and said to those standing around, This fellow was with Jesus of Nazareth.

He denied it again, with an oath: "I don't know the man!"

He denied it, saying, "I am not."

About an hour later, those standing there went up to Peter and one of the high priest's servants, a relative of the man whose ear Peter had cut off, challenged him, "Didn't I see you with him in the olive grove? Surely you are one of them, for you are a Galilean, your accent gives you away"

He began to call down curses on himself, and he swore to them, "I don't know this man you're talking about."

Immediately the rooster crowed the second time. The Lord turned and looked straight at Peter. Then Peter remembered the word Jesus had spoken to him: "Before the rooster crows twice today you will disown me three times." And he went outside and broke down and wept bitterly. [[Mt 26:71-75](#); [Mk 14:69-72](#); [Lk 22:58-62](#); [Jn 18:25-27](#)]

The council makes a decision at dawn

Very early in the morning, at daybreak, the council of the elders of the people, all the chief priests, with the elders, the teachers of the law and the whole Sanhedrin, came to the decision to put Jesus to death, and Jesus was led before them. "If you are the Christ," they said, "tell us."

Jesus answered, "If I tell you, you will not believe me, and if I asked you, you would not answer. But from now on, the Son of Man will be seated at the right hand of the mighty God."

They all asked, "Are you then the Son of God?"

He replied, "You are right in saying I am."

Then they said, "Why do we need any more testimony? We have heard it from his own lips." [[Mt 27:1](#); [Mk 15:1a](#); [Lk 22:66-71](#)]

Judas Hangs Himself

When Judas, who had betrayed him, saw that Jesus was condemned, he was seized with remorse and returned the thirty silver coins to the chief priests and the elders. "I have sinned," he said, "for I have betrayed innocent blood."

"What is that to us?" they replied. "That's your responsibility."

So Judas threw the money into the temple and left. Then he went away and hanged himself.

The chief priests picked up the coins and said, "It is against the law to put this into the treasury, since it is blood money." So they decided to use the money to buy the potter's field as a burial place for foreigners. That is why it has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then what was spoken by Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "They took the thirty silver coins, the price set on him by the people of Israel, and they used them to buy the potter's field, as the Lord commanded me." [[Mt 27:3-10](#)]

[Comment](#)

Romans 8 tells us in clear language the choice we have to either live according to the sinful nature or according to the Spirit. Here we see in Peter not a 'weak' man but a 'normal' man. By nature, we would all take Peter's path. The point is not that Peter was weak compared to others, but that we are all weak. Compare this to Peter's bold declaration of Jesus to the crowd of well over 3,000. The difference was the empowering work of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost and Peter's decision to walk according to the Spirit.

Yes, we are all like Peter by nature, but we are not like Judas. Because having by grace received the new life given us by the Spirit, we now belong to Jesus. We have been rescued from weakness and

through application and dependence, in partnership with the Strengthened within us, we are learning to live more and more every day as Jesus would have us live - in dependence upon him. And whilst weakness yet remains (and will do so until these perishable bodies are made imperishable), we know ourselves to be Jesus' subjects and friends, and not his enemies.

Harmony #71 – Jesus is questioned again

Jesus Before Pilate

Then the whole assembly rose and they bound him, led him away from Caiaphas to the palace of the Roman governor and handed him over to Pilate, the governor. By now it was early morning, and to avoid ceremonial uncleanness the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover. So Pilate came out to them and asked, "What charges are you bringing against this man?"

"If he were not a criminal," they replied, "we would not have handed him over to you."

Pilate said, "Take him yourselves and judge him by your own law."

"But we have no right to execute anyone," the Jews objected. This happened so that the words Jesus had spoken indicating the kind of death he was going to die would be fulfilled.

And they began to accuse him, saying, "We have found this man subverting our nation. He opposes payment of taxes to Caesar and claims to be Christ, a king."

Pilate then went back inside the palace, summoned Jesus and asked him, "Are you the king of the Jews?"

"Is that your own idea," Jesus asked, "or did others talk to you about me?"

"Am I a Jew?" Pilate replied. "It was your people and your chief priests who handed you over to me. What is it you have done?"

Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place."

"You are a king, then!" said Pilate.

Jesus answered, "You are right in saying I am a king. In fact, for this reason I was born, and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone on the side of truth listens to me."

"What is truth?" Pilate asked. With this he went out again to the Jews and announced to the chief priests and the crowd, "I find no basis for a charge against him."

When he was accused by the chief priests and the elders, he gave no answer. Then Pilate asked him, "Don't you hear the testimony they are bringing against you? Aren't you going to answer?" But Jesus made no reply, not even to a single charge - to the great amazement of the governor.

But they insisted, "He stirs up the people all over Judea by his teaching. He started in Galilee and has come all the way here."

On hearing this, Pilate asked if the man was a Galilean. When he learned that Jesus was under Herod's jurisdiction, he sent him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. [Mt 27:2, 11-14; Mk 15:1b-5; Lk 23:1-7; Jn 18:28-38]

Jesus Before Herod

When Herod saw Jesus, he was greatly pleased, because for a long time he had been wanting to see him. From what he had heard about him, he hoped to see him perform some miracle. He plied him with many questions, but Jesus gave him no answer. The chief priests and the teachers of the law were standing there, vehemently accusing him. Then Herod and his soldiers ridiculed and mocked him. Dressing him in an elegant robe, they sent him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends - before this they had been enemies. [Lk 23:8-12]

Comment

Pilate's question, "What is truth?" is one of the most profound and important ever uttered. It mirrors Jesus' high view of truth. The concept of truth as an objective reality is one that has been under siege over the past few decades. This is a subject for another time, but we might summarise this by saying that truth that is always true is either revealed (pre-modern), empirically determined (modern) or non-existent/unknowable (post-modern). I wonder which it is for you?

It is remarkable and quite frankly alarming that in a recent survey about 85% of American Christian youth who stated that the Bible is inerrant also stated that there is no such thing as absolute truth or truth that is true for everyone.

What would you say was Jesus' attitude to truth? How does that attitude vary, if at all, from our own? If anyone has any feedback on this point I would welcome it.

Harmony #72 – Jesus is sentenced

Jesus Again Before Pilate

Pilate called together the chief priests, the rulers and the people, and said to them, "You brought me this man as one who was inciting the people to rebellion. I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him. Neither has Herod, for he sent him back to us; as you can see, he has done nothing to deserve death. Therefore, I will punish him and then release him."

Now it was the governor's custom at the Feast to release a prisoner chosen by the crowd. At that time they had a notorious prisoner, called Barabbas, [who] was in prison with the insurrectionists who had

committed murder in the uprising. The crowd came up and asked Pilate to do for them what he usually did. So when the crowd had gathered, Pilate [said to] them, "It is your custom for me to release to you one prisoner at the time of the Passover. Do you want me to release to you the king of the Jews? Which one do you want me to release to you: Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" For he knew it was out of envy that they had handed Jesus over to him.

But the chief priests and the elders stirred up the crowd and persuaded [them] to have Pilate release Barabbas and to have Jesus executed.

"Which of the two do you want me to release to you?" asked the governor.

With one voice they cried out, "No, not him! Away with this man! Release Barabbas to us!"

"What shall I do, then, with Jesus who is called Christ, the one you call the king of the Jews?" Pilate asked them.

"Crucify him!" they all shouted.

Then Pilate took Jesus and had him flogged. The governor's soldiers took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole company of soldiers around him. They stripped him and put a scarlet robe on him, and then twisted together a crown of thorns and set it on his head. They put a staff in his right hand and knelt in front of him and mocked him. "Hail, king of the Jews!" they said again and again. They spit on him, and took the staff and struck him in the face again and again.

Once more Pilate came out and said to the Jews, "Look, I am bringing him out to you to let you know that I find no basis for a charge against him." When Jesus came out wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe, Pilate said to them, "Here is the man!"

As soon as the chief priests and their officials saw him, they shouted, "Crucify! Crucify!"

Wanting to release Jesus, Pilate appealed to them again. But they kept shouting, "Crucify him! Crucify him!"

But Pilate answered, "You take him and crucify him. As for me, I find no basis for a charge against him."

The Jews insisted, "We have a law, and according to that law he must die, because he claimed to be the Son of God."

When Pilate heard this, he was even more afraid, and he went back inside the palace. "Where do you come from?" he asked Jesus, but Jesus gave him no answer. "Do you refuse to speak to me?" Pilate said. "Don't you realize I have power either to free you or to crucify you?"

Jesus answered, "You would have no power over me if it were not given to you from above. Therefore the one who handed me over to you is guilty of a greater sin."

From then on, Pilate tried to set Jesus free, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you let this man go, you are no friend of Caesar. Anyone who claims to be a king opposes Caesar."

When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus out and sat down on the judge's seat at a place known as the Stone Pavement (which in Aramaic is Gabbatha). It was the day of Preparation of Passover Week, about the sixth hour.

While Pilate was sitting on the judge's seat, his wife sent him this message: "Don't have anything to do with that innocent man, for I have suffered a great deal today in a dream because of him."

For the third time he spoke to them: "Why? What crime has he committed? I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty. Therefore I will have him punished [again] and then release him."

But they shouted all the louder, "Crucify him!" With loud shouts they insistently demanded that he be crucified.

"Here is your king," Pilate said to the Jews.

But they shouted, "Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!"

"Shall I crucify your king?" Pilate asked.

"We have no king but Caesar," the chief priests answered.

When Pilate saw that he was getting nowhere, but that instead an uproar was starting, [he] decided to grant their demand. He took water and washed his hands in front of the crowd. "I am innocent of this man's blood," he said. "It is your responsibility!"

All the people answered, "Let his blood be on us and on our children!"

Wanting to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas to them, the one they asked for, and surrendered Jesus to their will. Finally Pilate had Jesus flogged [again], and handed him over to be crucified.

[\[Mt 27:15-30; Mk 15:6-15; Lk 23:13-25; Jn 18:39-19:16\]](#)

[Comment](#)

The choice the crowd made that day is the same choice that all people face today: To choose Jesus or to choose the popular alternative. The results today are not that different to that day about 1978 years ago.

We have made our choice. Now we need to make that choice known in the face of the majority who have rejected that choice.

If you had been there that day, knowing what you do now, would you have remained silent in the face of such vehemence, or would you have shouted out "Jesus!" That is the choice we face each day.

Pilate, for all the immense power of his position, was a weak man. There is no more dangerous combination. But we are all of us weak and that is why we need the Strengtheners.

Pilate is often portrayed as the 'enemy', but if we read this aright, we might find something to relate to. Pilate shows his humanity in his struggle with the decision before him, and his placing of his own security above what was right. Jesus states that Pilate's failure is sin, but we have all been there. We have all rejected the claim of Jesus at some point in our lives, and we have all placed our own desires above Jesus' lordship.

At the end, Pilate's words survive his sin and failure and stand clear as a testimony - even if one not of faith:

"I have examined him in your presence and have found no basis for your charges against him."

"... he has done nothing to deserve death."

"I have found in him no grounds for the death penalty."

"I find no basis for a charge against him."

"Here is your king."

"**Here is the man!**"

Harmony #73- Jesus is crucified

The Soldiers Mock Jesus

So the soldiers took charge of Jesus. Falling on their knees, they paid homage to him. After they had mocked him, they took off the purple robe and put his own clothes on him. Then they led him away to crucify him.

The Crucifixion

As they were going out, they met a man from Cyrene, named Simon, the father of Alexander and Rufus, was passing by on his way in from the country, and they seized [him] and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.

A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him. Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, 'Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!' Then 'they will say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' ' For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?"

Two other men, both criminals, were also led out with him to be executed. They brought Jesus to a place called Golgotha (which means The Place of the Skull). There they offered Jesus wine to drink, mixed with gall; but after tasting it, he refused to drink it.

Pilate had a notice prepared [with] the written charge against him and fastened to the cross above his head. It read: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, "Do not write 'The King of the Jews,' but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews." Pilate answered, "What I have written, I have written."

It was the third hour when they crucified him [9am]. Two robbers were crucified with him, one on his right and one on his left.

Jesus said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing."

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom.

"Let's not tear it," they said to one another. "Let's decide by lot who will get it."

This happened that the scripture might be fulfilled which said,

"They divided my garments among them

and cast lots for my clothing." So this is what the soldiers did. And sitting down, they kept watch over him there.

Near the cross of Jesus stood his mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to his mother, "Dear woman, here is your son," and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.

Those who passed by hurled insults at him, shaking their heads and saying, "So! You who are going to destroy the temple and build it in three days, save yourself! Come down from the cross, if you are the Son of God!"

In the same way the chief priests, the teachers of the law and the elders mocked him. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let this Christ of God, the Chosen One, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe in him. He trusts in God. Let God rescue him now if he wants him, for he said, 'I am the Son of God.' "

The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

One of the criminals who hung there hurled insults at him: "Aren't you the Christ? Save yourself and us!"

But the other criminal rebuked him. "Don't you fear God," he said, "since you are under the same sentence? We are punished justly, for we are getting what our deeds deserve. But this man has done nothing wrong."

Then he said, "Jesus, remember me when you come into your kingdom."

Jesus answered him, "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

[Mt 27:31-44; Mk 15:19-32; Lk 23:26-43; Jn 19:16-27]

Comment

The response of one thief: If you are God, then prove it.

The response of the other: Don't you fear God?

"The fear of the Lord," we are told, "is the beginning of wisdom" [Ps 111:10]. Attitude towards God is important. People either respect God or they don't. Those who feared God but did not know him are referred to as God-fearers and are at times mentioned as being "not far from the kingdom".

But this distinction applies also to those who do know God. What is our attitude towards God? Is it one of utmost respect? Does that respect translate to always placing his revelation above our own understanding? Does it translate to obedience? It is easy to say that we respect God and hold him in utmost reverence, but it is another thing to do it. And it is foundational to a right relationship with God, as it is the beginning of wisdom.

Harmony #74 – Jesus dies

The Death of Jesus

At about the sixth hour [noon] darkness came over the whole land until the ninth hour [3pm], for the sun stopped shining. And at about the ninth hour Jesus cried out in a loud voice, "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" - which means, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

When some of those standing near heard this, they said, "Listen, he's calling Elijah."

Immediately one of them ran and got a sponge. He filled it with wine vinegar, put it on a stick, and offered it to Jesus to drink. The rest said, "Now leave him alone. Let's see if Elijah comes to save him."

Later, knowing that all was now completed, and so that the Scripture would be fulfilled, Jesus said, "I am thirsty." A jar of wine vinegar was there, so they soaked a sponge in it, put the sponge on a stalk of the hyssop plant, and lifted it to Jesus' lips. When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished."

And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, "Father, into your hands I commit my spirit," he breathed his last, bowed his head and gave up his spirit.

At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people.

When the centurion and those with him who were guarding Jesus saw the earthquake and all that had happened, they were terrified, and exclaimed, "Surely this man was the Son of God!"

When all the people who had gathered to witness this sight saw what took place, they beat their breasts and went away. But all those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things.

Many women were there, watching from a distance. Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses, and Salome, and the mother of Zebedee's sons. In Galilee these women had followed him and cared for his needs. Many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem were also there.

Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. Instead, one of the soldiers pierced Jesus' side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water. The man who saw it has given testimony, and his testimony is true. He knows that he tells the truth, and he testifies so that you also may believe. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled: "Not one of his bones will be broken," and, as another scripture says, "They will look on the one they have pierced." [[Mt 27:45-56](#); [Mk 15:33-42a](#); [Lk 23:44-49](#); [Jn 19:28-37](#)]

Jesus' Burial

Now there was a rich man named Joseph, a prominent member of the Council, a good and upright man, who had not consented to their decision and action. He came from the Judean town of Arimathea and he was waiting for the kingdom of God. Now Joseph had become a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jews.

Going boldly to Pilate as evening approached, he asked for Jesus' body. Pilate was surprised to hear that he was already dead. Summoning the centurion, he asked him if Jesus had already died. When he learned from the centurion that it was so, he ordered that the body be given to Joseph.

With Pilate's permission, he came and took down the body [and] took the body away. He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of clean linen cloth [that] Joseph [had] bought.

This was in accordance with Jewish burial customs. At the place where Jesus was crucified, there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid. [This was Joseph's] own new tomb that he had cut out of the rock. Because it was the Jewish day of Preparation, and the Sabbath was about to begin, and since the tomb was nearby, they laid Jesus there [and] rolled a big stone in front of the entrance to the tomb and went away.

The women who had come with Jesus from Galilee, [including] Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joseph, followed Joseph and saw the tomb and how his body was laid in it. Then they went home and prepared spices and perfumes. [Mt 27:57-61; Mk 15:42b-47; Lk 23:50-56a; Jn 19:38-42]

Comment

The Holy of Holies was modelled, we are told in Hebrews, upon the true Holy of Holies in Heaven. Just as Heaven is the location of God's manifest presence within this created universe (heaven being itself created by the Word at the beginning), so the Holy of Holies was the location of God's manifest presence on earth during the period of the OT, one of the main purposes of which was to clearly show God's absolute holiness.

We must grasp the power of the OT revelation - any person who entered the Holy of Holies was instantly consumed, as sin cannot dwell in God's presence. If you had entered, you would have been consumed by fire. There was only one exception - the high priest. And only on one day of the year. And only carrying the blood of the sacrifice - the blood of the spotless lamb. Did this man tremble as he entered that place - you bet he did. It was like walking into a furnace; in a sense no less dangerous than what the three young men did in Daniel (the flames were there for any sin, and being a sinful man, without the blood he would have been consumed - he was 'covered' in the blood, protected from destruction - like a fireproof suit if you like).

If we do not grasp this, we will miss the awesome significance of these few words: "*At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom*" - far more awesome than the dead rising and bursting forth from their tombs and the creation itself shaking in 'grief' at the death of its Maker. These words are, in my mind, among the most profound of scripture. Jesus' death secured access into God the Father's manifest presence. Of course, that was subject to Jesus himself entering the true Holy of Holies as our Great High Priest and laying the blood of the sacrifice upon the true altar - once and for all time - fulfilling totally the requirements of the law. He did that I believe, for reasons I have previously explained, between his rising and his appearing to the Eleven - not after his ascension. It was therefore only after that final act that our freedom was truly won.

The manifest presence of God within us in the person of the Holy Spirit is something we take very much for granted, but something which the saints of the OT would marvel at and probably find incomprehensible - that the God of absolute purity who consumed all that entered his presence should make that presence manifest within individual people. Do we have any idea how incredible it is that the Spirit of God dwells within us? How are we so easily robbed of the wonder of it all?

Harmony #75 – Jesus conquers death!

The Guard at the Tomb

The next day, the one after Preparation Day, [the women] rested on the Sabbath in obedience to the commandment.

The chief priests and the Pharisees went to Pilate. "Sir," they said, "we remember that while he was still alive that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise again.' So give the order for the tomb to be made secure until the third day. Otherwise, his disciples may come and steal the body and tell the people that he has been raised from the dead. This last deception will be worse than the first."

"Take a guard," Pilate answered. "Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how." So they went and made the tomb secure by putting a seal on the stone and posting the guard. [[Mt 27:62-66](#); [Lk 23:56b](#)]

The Resurrection

After the Sabbath, at dawn on the first day of the week, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb. Just after sunrise, they were on their way to the tomb and they asked each other, "Who will roll the stone away from the entrance of the tomb?"

There was a violent earthquake, for an angel of the Lord came down from heaven and, going to the tomb, rolled back the stone and sat on it, on the right side. His appearance was like lightning, and his clothes were white as snow. The guards were so afraid of him that they shook and became like dead men.

As they entered the tomb they did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. While they were wondering about this, suddenly two [angels who appeared to be] young men dressed in white robes that gleamed like lightning stood beside them. In their fright the women bowed down with their faces to the ground, but [one of] the men said to them, "Do not be afraid, for I know that you are looking for Jesus the Nazarene, who was crucified. Why do you look for the living among the dead? He is not here; he has risen, just as he said. Remember how he told you, while he was still with you in Galilee: 'The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, be crucified and on the third day be raised again.' " Then they remembered his words. [Then the angel said,] "Come and see the place where they laid him. But go quickly and tell his disciples and Peter: 'He has risen from the dead and is going ahead of you into Galilee. There you will see him, just as he told you.' Now I have told you."

Trembling and bewildered, the women went out and fled from the tomb. Afraid yet filled with joy, they said nothing to anyone [on the way but] ran to tell his disciples. Suddenly Jesus met them. "Greetings," he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him. Then Jesus said to them, "Do not be afraid. Go and tell my brothers to go to Galilee; there they will see me." [[Mt 28:1-10](#); [Mk 16:1-8](#); [Lk 24:1-8](#); [Jn 20:1](#)]

The Guards' Report

While the women were on their way, some of the guards went into the city and reported to the chief priests everything that had happened. When the chief priests had met with the elders and devised a plan, they gave the soldiers a large sum of money, telling them, "You are to say, 'His disciples came during the night and stole him away while we were asleep.' If this report gets to the governor, we will satisfy him and keep you out of trouble." So the soldiers took the money and did as they were instructed. And this story has been widely circulated among the Jews to this very day. [Mt 28:11-15]

The Women Report to the Eleven

When they came back from the tomb, they told all these things to the Eleven and to all the others, [saying,] "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!". It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the others with them who told this to the apostles. But they did not believe the women, because their words seemed to them like nonsense.

So Peter and the other disciple [John] started for the tomb. Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first. He bent over and looked in at the strips of linen lying there but did not go in. Then Simon Peter, who was behind him, arrived and went into the tomb. Bending over, he saw the strips of linen lying there by themselves, as well as the burial cloth that had been around Jesus' head. The cloth was folded up by itself, separate from the linen. Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed. (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.) Peter, went away, wondering to himself what had happened. [Mk 16:9-11; Lk 24:9-12; Jn 20:2-9]

Comment

Pilate's words are interesting: "*Go, make the tomb as secure as you know how.*" Do we perhaps see an inkling of faith there? Is Pilate following in the footsteps of Nebuchadnezzar, another powerful ruler who sinned greatly [Dan 4:30] but then 'came to his senses' and exalted God in humility [Dan 4:37]? It is almost as though Pilate knew that there was nothing he, for all his earthly power, could do to keep Jesus in his tomb. Despite the enormity of his sin, I won't be surprised if I bump into Pilate one day.

And now to the most triumphant moment in all of the history of this universe. This is the basis of all we are about and without it "*we are to be pitied more than all men*" [1 Cor 15:19] and we may as well "*eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*" [1 Cor 15:32]. "*But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead*" [1 Cor 15:20].

For now, "*the last enemy to be destroyed is death*" [1 Cor 15:26], for it still claims us. But truly, we now laugh at death, for its victory is totally hollow: "*He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ*" [1 Cor 15:58]. Yes, death will claim us unless Jesus first returns, but we rejoice in the reality that will be made clear on the Great Day: "*Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?*" [1 Cor 15:55].

A mystery has been revealed to us: the defeat of death is certain - **death is dead, it just doesn't know it yet!**

Harmony #76 – Jesus reveals Himself

Jesus Appears to Mary Magdalene

Then the disciples went back to their homes, but Mary stood outside the tomb crying. As she wept, she bent over to look into the tomb and saw two angels in white, seated where Jesus' body had been, one at the head and the other at the foot.

They asked her, "Woman, why are you crying?"

"They have taken my Lord away," she said, "and I don't know where they have put him." At this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, but she did not realize that it was Jesus.

"Woman," he said, "why are you crying? Who is it you are looking for?"

Thinking he was the gardener, she said, "Sir, if you have carried him away, tell me where you have put him, and I will get him."

Jesus said to her, "Mary."

She turned toward him and cried out in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

Jesus said, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.' "

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples with the news: "I have seen the Lord!" And she told them that he had said these things to her. [\[Jn 20:10-18\]](#)

On the Road to Emmaus

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, "What are you discussing together as you walk along?"

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, "Are you only a visitor to Jerusalem and do not know the things that have happened there in these days?"

"What things?" he asked.

"About Jesus of Nazareth," they replied. "He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn't find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but him they did not see."

He said to them, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus acted as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, "Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over." So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, "Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?"

They got up and returned at once to Jerusalem. There they found the Eleven and those with them, assembled together and saying, "It is true! The Lord has risen and has appeared to Simon." Then the two told what had happened on the way, and how Jesus was recognized by them when he broke the bread, but they did not believe them. [\[Mk 16:12-13; Lk 24:13-35\]](#)

Comment

Mary had accompanied Jesus in his travels and had ministered to him. She would have known him by sight almost as well as anyone. The other two to whom Jesus appeared on the road were also Jesus' disciples and thus would have known him. And yet none of these three recognised Jesus.

It may be argued that this was because Jesus was now in a resurrection body. But notice the words: "they were kept from recognising him". What does this mean? We are told later that "their eyes were opened". And we seem to see a similar thing when Jesus says "Mary". This reminds us that it is God who enables us to see. He is the one who gives spiritual sight, which is faith. It is not an innate part of us. This faith should not be mistaken for the word 'belief' in the way in which we use it generically. Children may believe in Santa Claus until a certain age, but their eyes are not opened to see him, because he does not exist. Jesus does, and thus faith deals with the real world - seeing it as it really is.

Harmony #77 – Jesus reveals His resurrection body

Jesus Appears to the Disciples

On the evening of that first day of the week, when the disciples were together eating, with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, while they were still talking about this, Jesus himself came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you!"

They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost. He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds? Look at my hands and my feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have."

When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet and side. The disciples were overjoyed when they saw the Lord [but] they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement. He asked them, "Do you have anything here to eat?" They gave him a piece of broiled fish, and he took it and ate it in their presence.

[Jesus] rebuked them for their lack of faith and their stubborn refusal to believe those who had seen him after he had risen.

He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive anyone his sins, they are forgiven; if you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. He told them, "This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things. I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high." [\[Mk 16:14; Lk 24:36-49; Jn 20:19-23\]](#)

Jesus Appears to Thomas

Now Thomas (called Didymus), one of the Twelve, was not with the disciples when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord!"

But he said to them, "Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."

A week later his disciples were in the house again, and Thomas was with them. Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you!" Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here; see my hands. Reach out your hand and put it into my side. Stop doubting and believe."

Thomas said to him, "My Lord and my God!"

Then Jesus told him, "Because you have seen me, you have believed; blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Jesus did many other miraculous signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name. [[Jn 20:24-31](#)]

Jesus and the Miraculous Catch of Fish

Afterward Jesus appeared again to his disciples, by the Sea of Tiberias. It happened this way: Simon Peter, Thomas (called Didymus), Nathanael from Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples were together. "I'm going out to fish," Simon Peter told them, and they said, "We'll go with you." So they went out and got into the boat, but that night they caught nothing.

Early in the morning, Jesus stood on the shore, but the disciples did not realize that it was Jesus.

He called out to them, "Friends, haven't you any fish?"

"No," they answered.

He said, "Throw your net on the right side of the boat and you will find some." When they did, they were unable to haul the net in because of the large number of fish.

Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water. The other disciples followed in the boat, towing the net full of fish, for they were not far from shore, about a hundred yards. When they landed, they saw a fire of burning coals there with fish on it, and some bread.

Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish you have just caught."

Simon Peter climbed aboard and dragged the net ashore. It was full of large fish, 153, but even with so many the net was not torn. Jesus said to them, "Come and have breakfast." None of the disciples dared ask him, "Who are you?" They knew it was the Lord. Jesus came, took the bread and gave it to them, and did the same with the fish. This was now the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples after he was raised from the dead. [[Jn 21:1-14](#)]

[Comment](#)

Jesus has previously revealed himself, and here he reveals his wounds to Thomas. But the title I have chosen applies to two easily-ignored verses: "*with the doors locked for fear of the Jews, ... Jesus himself came and stood among them*" and "*Though the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them*", which I consider very important. Why is this so significant?

It is because the doors were locked. We are not being told here that Jesus knew how to pick locks, or

had a spare key he had somehow kept through his death and resurrection.

No, Jesus did what was impossible for us now; he stepped from outside the room into the room. Did he do so by walking through the wall? I do not think so; that would defy the very laws of physics he himself put in place as the Word (Jesus' miracles did not defy physical laws, only our usual experience of them [2]).

Jesus did something very simple; something for which his resurrection body was perfectly equipped. He stepped from earth to heaven and back again, bypassing the wall.

We are created to dwell in both earth and heaven, but have messed that up. There will be a new heaven and a new earth and we will inhabit both - forget images of floating on clouds. We will do what Jesus did here, only the heaven and the earth we will inhabit will both be perfected (no corruption on earth, either sin or decay, and no corruption in heaven, in the form of evil angels [1]).

Harmony #78 – Jesus' final earthly acts

Jesus Reinstates Peter

When they had finished eating, Jesus said to Simon Peter, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me more than these?"

"Yes, Lord," he said, "you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my lambs."

Again Jesus said, "Simon son of John, do you truly love me?"

He answered, "Yes, Lord, you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Take care of my sheep."

The third time he said to him, "Simon son of John, do you love me?"

Peter was hurt because Jesus asked him the third time, "Do you love me?" He said, "Lord, you know all things; you know that I love you."

Jesus said, "Feed my sheep. I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go." Jesus said this to indicate the kind of death by which Peter would glorify God. Then he said to him, "Follow me!"

Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?") When Peter saw him, he asked, "Lord, what about him?"

Jesus answered, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you? You must follow me." Because of this, the rumour spread among the brothers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"

This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.

Jesus did many other things as well. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that even the whole world would not have room for the books that would be written. [\[Jn 21:15-25\]](#)

The Great Commission

Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go into all the world, preach the good news to all creation and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Whoever believes and is baptized will be saved, but whoever does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will accompany those who believe: In my name they will drive out demons; they will speak in new tongues; they will pick up snakes with their hands; and when they drink deadly poison, it will not hurt them at all; they will place their hands on sick people, and they will get well." [\[Mt 28:16-20; Mk 16:15-18\]](#)

The Ascension

When he had led them out to the vicinity of Bethany, he lifted up his hands and blessed them. After the Lord Jesus had spoken to them, he left them and was taken up into heaven and he sat at the right hand of God.

Then they worshiped him and returned to Jerusalem with great joy. And they stayed continually at the temple, praising God. Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it. [\[Mk 16:19-20; Lk 24:50-52\]](#)

Comment

Why could not Jesus have remained on earth to assist us? After all, he is in a resurrection body now, eternal in both his divinity and humanity. And he was here for a while, so why not for good?

Jesus is the first-fruit, the first of many brothers. We will all one day be as he is in his humanity now - on the Final Day for which all who know him long.

However, Jesus is the first-fruit of the new creation - born before time, as it were. We are all new creations, but the reality has not yet been revealed in full. In Jesus, it is complete. And thus, the natural home of those for whom the new creation is complete is the new heaven and new earth. That is why Jesus' six weeks with us after the resurrection was yet another act of grace - necessary in order to demonstrate the fact of the resurrection.

When Lazarus was raised from the dead, he returned to a corrupt body. Not so Jesus.

Jesus has left the old earth to reside in the old heaven. One day both will be renewed to perfection, with no stain or taint in either (no sin, no demons) - on the Day that he returns in judgement.

In the meantime, corruption is everywhere in this earth. Not only where every human stands, but everywhere. Every aspect of this creation groans under the penalty of sin - which is the law of decay (what we know in science as the Second Law of Thermodynamics). This law operates upon everything. In heaven, however, the corruption is limited to the fallen spirits, who are finite created entities who have been cast out of God's presence [1].

Thus, in the presence of God the Father, no corruption exists, and that is the place for the Heavenly Man until the appointed time, of which even Jesus does not know, has come and Jesus is sent back to earth by his Father to bring all things to full completion.

Whilst Jesus, as the perfect divine man, no longer belongs here, he has sent his Spirit, who is not a man and who dwells within us [2].

[1]

We must be careful to distinguish between the four ways in which the word 'heaven' is used in the Bible. It can mean the physical atmosphere, physical outer space, the entire spiritual dimension or the manifest presence of God the Father within that spiritual dimension. The fallen angels were cast out of the manifest presence of God (of necessity, as corruption cannot dwell in his presence) but are nonetheless spiritual beings who exist in the spiritual dimension that is heaven.

We tend to think of the manifest presence of God as heaven, but it is larger than that.

Whilst there is no definite evidence either way, there are indications that the spiritual and physical dimensions are 'twins', which suggests that the spiritual dimension is as large as the physical universe - finite, but immense.

[2]

Think about this closely. The history of God with man is one of demonstrating his utter holiness and his inability to dwell with sin - hence the fire that consumed in the Holy of Holies. And yet, whilst to enter the manifest presence of God as corrupt flesh would be death, the Spirit dwells within us, despite our corruption. Yet another incredible sacrifice on the part of God in his purpose of completing a people prepared to dwell with him eternally.

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