The New Covenant – Gary Henecke

(John 4:23-26, 5:24-40, 12:20-33, 16:28-33)

Raedean and I united with Jesus on the day of Epiphany [January 6, 1963]; the evening text was Mark 8:34-38 Jesus called the crowd together with his disciples, and said to them, "If anyone wishes to follow me, let him renounce self and take up his cross, and so be my follower. Whoever desires to hold onto his life will lose it, but whoever forfeits his life for my sake and for the gospel will save it. Why what does it benefit a man to gain the whole world at the forfeit of his life? What could a man give to gain back his life?[8] Everyone who has been ashamed of me and my teachings in this apostate and sinful age, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when he comes in his Father's glory with the holy angels."

"On a spring morning in about the year 33 C.E., three men were executed by the Roman authorities in Judea." [1] At the request of the Hebrew temple hierarchy, the governor Pontius Pilate hanged the three publicly outside the western gate of the ancient city of Jerusalem. Two of the three, of whom the world has little memory, were terrorists. The third we profess to be the divine agent of the only true God – the Lord of the Hebrew covenant. It is what we profess that magnifies this execution. This event and its climactic finality at sunrise on the first day of the next week shook all of human history as its accompanying earthquake (at the time of the death of Jesus) and its Sunday morning aftershock (at the moment of resurrection) shook ancient Jerusalem.[2]

To the Romans the death of Jesus of Nazareth was but one execution among thousands deemed necessary to bring former autonomous peoples into submissive unity to the new world order. Jesus is condemned and hanged as "King of the Jews."[3] This of

[1] P. 1, E.P. Sanders, *The Historical Picture of Jesus*, The Penguin Press, 1993 – date edited

[2] Matthew 27:54; 28:2 [All references are taken from the Revised Standard Version Bible, 2nd edition 1971]

[3] John 19:9-21

course met with strong resistance from the temple rulers. Caesar's authority was not the issue for the religious priests and learned teachers who were assembled under Joseph Caiaphas. For them the issue was theological rather than political. This man claimed to be the Son of God.[4] The defining of orthodoxy and the issue of what and who Jesus was became the reason for their zeal. The priests: could embrace a foreign monarch but not God as defined in Jesus. They found it easy to cry, "*We have no king but Caesar*,"[5] but could not embrace the truth that the God of their ancestors was revealing himself in this Jesus of Nazareth. To do so would call for the reorientation of all their theological convictions. They were able to comprehend that Jesus was a threat to the temple system and to religion, as they had known it.[6] The issue for them was a crisis of doctrine and, in that, a crisis of life meaning and established order.

The death of Jesus on the cross at Golgotha was a meeting place of theological conflict and world politic. For Christians the revelation of God in Jesus is the culmination of all Israeli covenant and goals. In Christ the church defines the ancient Hebrew descendents of Abraham and the prophets and interprets their message.[7] In the crucifixion is found the final act of incarnation and ultimate revelation and fulfillment of Divine redemption. Therefore, any teaching, which purports to be Christian theology, must be an explanation and proclamation of the great God-event. If God is to be known he must be understood in the dying and rising of Jesus. The core of all we call Christian thought must be brought both to ponder that historic moment and to harmonize with that moment - not simply as a historical event but for the content and meaning of the Divine revelation – for doctrine and creed.

He is our peace, who has made us both one, and has broken down the dividing wall of hostility, by abolishing in his flesh the law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace, by abolishing in his flesh the

---

[4] John 19:7
[5] John 19:15
[6] John 11:48
[7] Matthew 5:17

law of commandments and ordinances, that he might create in himself one new man in place of the two, so making peace. (Ephesians 2:14-15)

The death of Christ (The Messiah) was all-inclusive. He tasted death on behalf of everything/everyone (Hebrews 2:9). On the cross, he fulfilled his mission as the cure for sin (John 1:29 *'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!*), and empowered humans to live beyond the flesh (Galatians 5:24 *And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.*), and destroyed the works of his enemy Satan (Hebrews 2:14 *Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage.*). However, just as certainly as his death ended the power of evil in the old creation, it served as a turning point in the universe to inaugurate the new creation. According to Ephesians 2:19-22 *So then you are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus himself being the cornerstone, n whom the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built into it for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.* he abolished in his flesh the law of the commandments in ordinances, that he might create the Jews and the Gentiles in himself into one new person. Christ in being put to death was working to create the one new person in him – in himself – Christ being the perfect One.

Christ's grand work of creation on the cross to produce the new person fulfills God's original intention in making humanity. In Genesis 1:26, *God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, according to our likeness, and let them have dominion".* The text refers to the singular "man" with the plural pronoun "them". The purpose seems to be to have a collective, corporate man possessing in his nature the attributes of all mankind – collectively. Because the old race of Adam failed God and failed in their creative nature - sin, Christ came to create the new humanity of the all nations and people to fulfill God's initial (creative) design.

In Paul's thought, the new humanity is the most significant aspect of the church. On the most basic level, the church is the assembly of the called-out ones – called out of Adam into Christ. The church is the household of God, composed of all God's children who possess the life of their God

(Ephesians 2:19). Even more, the church is the Body of Christ whose constituents, as members of Christ, are joined to Christ and are "of Christ" and well as "in Christ" (Romans 12:5 *we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.* - 1 Corinthians 12:12 *For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – Jews or Greeks, slaves or free – and all were made to drink of one Spirit.* The new creation implies that Christ is the life of the church. Christ is the life and the new person, which is fully expressed in and through Christ. Christ created the new person "in himself", that is, in Christ. The use of parallelism in this verse is critical: He abolished the law of the commandments in ordinances "in his flesh", and he crated the new man "in himself". He dealt with the segregating ordinances in his flesh that he might create the once divided Jews and the Gentiles into one new person in himself. The Greek word rendered in here can also have an elemental significance, meaning also with, implying that the new humanity was created with Christ as its divine essence. Christ is the Creator of the new life; he is the sphere within which the new person is created, the means by which the new person was created, and the essence with which that new person is created.

Of course, the believing Jews and the Gentiles are the many components of this collective new man. Yet in this new creation, there is neither Jew nor Greek, but Christ is all and in all (Colossians 3:10-11). Christ is everything in the church. What the believers are in their natural constitution by heritage in the flesh is to have no part in the new life. Their nationalities, their cultures, their social statuses, their religious ordinances and all other things, which distinguish and divide them, have all been annulled in the death and resurrection of Christ. All of God's redeemed, with their entire fallen being, have been co-crucified with Christ, and they have received Christ into their redeemed humanity as their divine life and essence (Galatians 2:20; Colossians 3:3-4) – hence they live raised to newness of life in Jesus their Lord. The substance of the new person is God's nature at work in redemption to constitute one entity. The redeemed believers compose the outward physical frame of the inward Christ in his inward life, content and person. The new person is filled with the newness of God's Spirit – the Spirit of Christ, who makes all things new (Revelation 21:5); the new man eventually consummates in the New Jerusalem _ God's home - Immanuel. Praise Christ for his new-man-creating death!