

Summary of Session 3: The Gospel According to Paul

I. The Gospel

- A. Four Gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke & John
- B. Paul:
 - 1) “set apart for the gospel of God” (Rom 1:1)
 - 2) “The gospel that was proclaimed by me is not of human origin... but I received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ” (Gal 1:11-12)
- C. Mark uses term “gospel” 8x; Paul uses the term 56x
- D. Joseph Fitzmyer SJ – the gospel is:
“Paul’s personal way of summing up the significance of the Christ-event, the meaning that the person, life, ministry, passion, death, resurrection & lordship of Jesus of Nazareth had & still has for human history & existence.”

II. Paul’s articulation of the gospel

- A. Built on two things:
 - 1) The apocalyptic hopes he shared with his fellow Jews
 - 2) His personal encounter with the risen Christ on the Damascus road
- B. Jewish apocalyptic hopes
 - 1) God’s intervention in history would result in end of the “present evil age” characterised by
 - Bondage to foreign powers
 - Disobedience to the Law
 - The reign of sin
 - 2) The “age to come” will replace the “present evil age”. God will
 - Defeat Israel’s enemies
 - Reconstitute Israel as his chosen nation
 - Establish his kingship over all the earth.
- C. Paul’s encounter with the risen glorified Christ
 - 1) This encounter is parallel to the awaited apocalyptic intervention of God
 - God has already fulfilled all his promises in Jesus Christ
 - Jesus Christ is representative of Israel
 - By the cross God metes out judgement on forces of evil opposing his kingdom
 - God vindicates Jesus by raising him from the dead
 - The cross is a sign of victory not shame.
 - 2) Paul’s apocalyptic view of the ages is modified
 - We are now in a period between “present evil age” & “age to come”
 - This period is the overlap or the boundaries of the ages
 - The “already-but-not-yet” era

III. Paul Before the Damascus Road Encounter

- A. Persecuted the Jesus Movement (Phil 3:6; Gal 1:13; 1 Cor 15:8-9)
 - 1) Claiming as Messiah one who is “accursed” (Deut 21:23; 27:26; Gal 3:10,13)
 - 2) Language threatened monotheistic faith of *Shema*

IV. Why Did Paul Change?

- A. Paul is certain that he saw Jesus (1 Cor 9:1)
- B. Paul fell in love with Jesus (Rom 8:35-39)
- C. The followers of Jesus were right (Rom 1:16)

V. Paul's Five Discoveries

- A. The resurrection was true (1 Thess 1:10; 1 Cor 15:1-8; Phil 3:10-11)
- B. Jesus is to be addressed as "Lord" (Rom 6:9; Phil 2:9-11; 3:8)
- C. Jesus must have been the Messiah Israel was waiting for (2 Cor 1:19-20)
- D. Grace – God's unconditional free gift (Rom 8:28-30)
- E. Jesus' followers have to be different (Phil 1:21; Gal 2:20; 1 Cor 11:1)

VI. Four Consequences for Paul

- A. Many things Paul previously held dear are now relativised (Gal 5:2-4, 12)
- B. Gentiles belong in God's Story (Rom 1:5, 13-14; 2:14; 11:13; Gal 2:6-10; 1 Thess 1:9)
- C. Paul had to write letters (2 Cor 10:10-11; 1 Cor 16:21; Gal 6:11; 2 Cor 3:3)
- D. All of creation belongs to God (Rom 15:19-20, 23-25)

VII. Concluding Remarks

- A. After Paul's encounter with the risen Christ on the way to Damascus
 - 1) Paul's experience is parallel to the awaited apocalyptic intervention of God
 - Realised on the level of his own personal history
 - Not of the nation Israel at large.
 - 2) God has fulfilled his promises in the person of Jesus Christ
 - 3) Paul's apocalyptic view of the ages changes
 - "Already-but-not-yet" era in between "present evil age" & "age to come"
 - We are called to participate in Christ's victory by living under the shadow of the cross
 - Anticipating the Second Coming of Christ
 - Suffering & pain have a new meaning – transformative.