

It's About Life

Rethinking our Theological Categories in light of the Bible and its implications for Christian Life.

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• Some reading...

- Carroll, V., and Shiflett, D., *Christianity on Trial* (Encounter Books: 2001).
- Dumbrell, W.J., *The Search for Order: Biblical Eschatology in Focus* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1994).
- Kline, M., *Kingdom Prologue* (Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, 1993).
- Stark, Rodney, *For the Glory of God: How Monotheism Led to Reformations, Science, Witch-Hunts, and the End of Slavery* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).
- Stark, Rodney, *The Rise of Christianity: How the Obscure, Marginal Jesus Movement Became the Dominant Religious Force in the Western World in a Few Centuries*, (Princeton: Princeton University, 1996).
- Stark, Rodney, *The Victory of Reason: How Christianity Led to Freedom, Capitalism, and Western Success* (New York: Random House, 2005).
- Walton, John, *The Lost World of Genesis 1* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 2009).
- Watts, R. E., "On the Edge of the Millennium: Making Sense of Genesis 1" in *Living in The Lamblight: Collected Essays from the Geneva Society*, ed. Hans Boersma (Vancouver: Regent College, 2001), 129-151.
- Watts, Rikk E., "The New Exodus/New Creational Restoration of the Image of God" in *What Does It Mean to be Saved?* ed. John J. Stackhouse, Jr. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2002), 15-41.
- Website: Edwin Judge, Athens and Jerusalem: <http://www.gospelconversations.com/who-are-we/edwin-judge/>

• Before we begin

A. Two Questions

1. Why *ARE* we here? Christian ambivalence about creation and our place in it.
2. What is being Christian actually about anyway?

B. Keeping Perspective

1. God does not change... even if our understanding of him does.
2. The truth has not changed ... only our perception thereof.
3. Our trust is in God's character, not our ability to understand everything.

Session 1: What is Creation?

Sunday, 8.09.2015 a.m.

• Introduction

A. Revelation 21: God's plan for creation : have we missed something?

B. The New Jerusalem ...

1. from heaven ... to earth : who is dwelling with whom?
2. dimensions : 12,000 stadia (approximately 1,500 miles) — size of first century known inhabited world
3. why a cube (1 Kgs 6:20; 2 Chr 3:8; cf. Ezek 42:16-20; 45:2)?
4. what is missing (v. 22)?

A cosmic Holy of Holies ...

... the size of the known world ...

... where God dwells with humanity ...

... on earth.

• Israel's Scriptures

A. Ancient Documents: *their* language, thought-world, and genre (“two horizons”—our modern and their ancient standpoint).

B. Genre and meaning — guiding the reader.

1. Guiding the reader
 - a. Form—the literary shape.
 - b. Content—what is said.

2. A question of truth ... e.g. the Simpsons, trees (Isa 55:12), tigers, and William Blake.

3. Metaphor — from the known to the unknown : a powerful way of telling the truth because the “literal” truth is not always the best way of communicating the *significance* of the truth (e.g. Jesus “I am the true vine”).

• Genesis 1: Form and Content

A. Form:

1. Repetition, poetry and narrative.
2. Opening sentences in the ancient world: “formless and empty” (Gen 1:2).
3. Literary Structure:

Day	Structuring	Filling	Day
3	water / land	land animals / humans	6
2	waters above / waters below	birds / fish	5
1	day / night	sun / moon and stars	4

a. Increasing complexity as we move from heaven to earth—sounds like?

b. Sequence and structure: forming and filling.

B. Content:

1. “Twelve hours”: can a day represent an “age” given morning to evening (cf. Ps 90:4, and Exod 20:11)?
2. Some questions as to intention and meaning:
 - a. relative complexity?
 - b. why twelve hours?
 - c. only during daylight?
 - d. flightless birds and amphibians?
 - e. Gen 2:4-7: no plants before humanity but Gen 1 says otherwise.

• **Genesis 1 in Content: Creation Stories in the Ancient Near East.**

- A. Horizons: their thought-world, how the ancients told stories of origins, their key concerns and language.
- B. Sumerian (3rd mill., B.C.), no epic poems.
 - 1. Early division between heaven and earth.
 - 2. Nammu, watery goddess, becomes mother of heaven and earth.
 - 3. increasing order emerges and humans, previously animals, become a special creature.
- C. “Babylonian”: *Atrahasis* and *Enuma Elish*.
 - 1. *Enuma Elish*.
 - a. Tiamat, seawater, and her husband, Apsu, fresh groundwaters, emerge first from primeval chaos.
 - b. Ea, the god of the heavens, builds his palace upon Apsu’s water-corpse.
 - c. Marduk defeats Tiamat creating heaven and earth from her watery carcass.
 - d. humans created from the rebel god Kingu’s blood to perform forced labor for the gods.
 - 2. *Atrahasis*.
 - a. The gods and humans not differentiated.
 - b. Weaker gods, the *Igigi*, do menial tasks.
 - c. *Igigi* rebel, humans created, by mixing clay with the blood of a god.
- D. Gen 1: Uses the standard language ancient readers would have employed and understood. The ancient concern was the origin of the ordered world.

• **Israel and the Exodus**

- A. Genesis: written by whom, when, and with what culture in view?
- B. Egypt’s Ideological narrative : the cyclical sustaining of creation...
 - 1. Amon-Re, the sun-god, brings light and life to Egypt, through his defeat of the Apophis.
 - 2. Pharaoh, son of Amon-Re, embodiment of Re’s champion, Horus, and the Urea.
- C. Moses, Aaron, and the gods of Egypt.
 - 1. Staff-turned serpent : Pharaoh’s war crown and his magicians’ wands
 - 2. Discerning the pattern : ten (nine-plus one) plagues and the dissolution of good order of Egypt *and* the seven (six-plus one) creation narrative.
- D. A new creation at the *Yam Suph* (“Sea/Lake of Reeds,” Ex 14):
 - 1. Light/darkness, a wind over the face of the deep, dry land appears.
 - 2. Egyptian dead on the seashore—defeated by Apophis the chaos monster of the deep.
- E. Egyptian creation narratives – no unitary or common creation story.
 - 1. Creation emerges from the deep, the darkness, the formlessness and emptiness, and the wind.
 - 2. One deity creates ... through speech—no preexistent material is used (cf. Ps 33:6).
 - 3. Creation as acts of separation — sequence:
 - a. Re first creates light out of darkness, and only after this the sun-god.
 - b. stars, then the pairings of fish and birds, animals and humanity.
 - 4. Special role to humans; man is formed of clay as the god’s own images.
 - 5. Humanity enlivened by breath of the god.
- F. Truth claims and significance of Genesis 1: a polemic against the failed gods of Egypt?
 - 1. Yahweh, not the gods of Egypt, is responsible for the good order of creation; he alone defeats Apophis.
 - 2. Thus...
 - a.. “Formless and empty” means lacking productive and life-sustaining structure and substance.
 - b. “*Bara*” (“to create”).

- (i) God alone is the subject: he alone “*bara*”s.
 - (ii) Emphasis is less on the creation of “matter” or “stuff” but on organization into a flourishing functioning entity.
 - c. three levels of a world that functions for people.
 - (i) the seasons of growth.
 - (ii) rain and weather.
 - (iii) food, animals, and humans who rely on both.
 - 3. The three basic structures of the ancient world:
 - a. night/day = agricultural seasons
 - b. waters above / below = weather and rain to water the earth
 - c. dry land : plants and food
 - d. ... *plus time... twenty four hours the basic unit*
 - 3. Not where stuff came from, nor how long... but WHO was behind this flourishing for US?
 - 4. Gen 1’s highly stylized form and “unrealistic” content reveals that it is neither straight poetry nor straight narrative but a stylized-liturgical account that is true but in its own terms. Genesis 1 employs, as we would expect, the characteristic language of its day, of the ancient world, to speak about creation.
- Yahweh, Israel's God, and not the deities of Egypt is the creator.*

• Creation as God’s Palace-Temple

- A. “Babylonian”
 - 1. Ea builds a palace-temple on the body of the watery god Apsu.
 - 2. Marduk creates heaven (and earth) from Tiamat’s body.
- B. Ancient Canaan: Baal’s victory temple is a microcosm.
- C. Egyptian Temples.
 - 1. At various sites associated with the original creation mound. The pyramids: stylized replicas of the original cosmic mound?
 - 2. Microcosm: the universe in miniature representing the deity’s rule over the cosmos.
 - a. ponds representing the primordial waters.
 - b. pylons and great court: horizons of the first sunrise.
 - c. hypostyle pillars: reeds arising from the primordial swamp.
 - d. raised sanctuary: first mound of creation.

BUT the BIBLE and Israel?

- D. Biblical conceptualization of creation:
 - 1. As architecture, Yahweh as builder (Job 38:4-20).

the **foundations** of the earth (Ps 18:15; 82:5; 102:25; 104:5; Prov 8:29; Isa 24:18; 51:13,16; 2 Sam 22:8,16; Zech 12:1; cf. 2 Sam 22:8), the **pillars** of the earth and of the heavens (1 Sam 2:8; Job 9:6; Ps 75:3; Job 26:11), **beams** of the heavens (Ps 104:3); the heavens’ **windows** (Gen 7:11; 8:2; Isa 24:18; Mal 3:10; 2 Kgs 7:2; Ps 104:2), the stretching out of the heavens like a **canopy/tent** (Isa 40:12,22; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12; 48:13; 51:13; Jer 10:12; 31:37; 32:17; 51:15; Amos 9:6; Zech 12:1; Job 9:8; Ps 102:25; 104:2-3), and **storehouses** (Deut 28:12; Jer 10:13; 50:25; 51:16; cf. Ps 33:7; 135:7; Job 38:22).
 - 2. Creation as Yahweh’s palace-temple (Isa 66:1; cf. Exod 20; Ps 93)—“The fullness of the earth is his glory” (Isa 6:3); Philo, *De Spec Leg I.66*.
 - 3. The Tabernacle and its furniture.
 - a. water basin and pillars—seas and mountains outside the organized world.
 - b. Menorah, Table of Shewbread and Incense—light, food, and sweet clouds of the holy place (earth).
 - c. Veil and Ark of the Covenant—behind the blue heavens and God’s throne.
 - 4. A new creation moment: Yahweh’s descent on Mt. Sinai.
 - 5. Ark: God’s footstool upon the earth—a sign of his dwelling here.

• **The New Testament**

- A. God's abundant provision (1 Tim 6:17).
- B. God's love for his creation (John 3:16).
- C. The focus of the Lord's prayer (Matt 6:9-10).
- D. The destiny of creation (Rom 8:19-21).
- E. The Eschaton: reigning on earth (Rev 5:9-11); destroying the destroyers (11:18); God's dwelling with us (21:2).

Questions: But what about ...?

- A. "The passing away of heaven and earth" (Rev 21:1)? The new creation of 2 Cor 5:17.
- B. 2 Peter:
 - 1. "The heaven and earth kept for fire" (2 Pet 3:7)? But who is to be destroyed (2 Pet 3:7b)?
 - 2. Cosmic annihilation (2 Pet 3:10)? A cosmic Mt Sinai.
- C. Paul
 - 1. Minds on things above (Col 3:1-2)? Priorities of the kingdom of heaven.
 - 2. Heavenly citizenship (Phil 3:20)? Live on earth as citizens of heaven, not of Rome.
- D. John 14:3: not "take away" but "take to oneself" (Matt 1:20, 24) ... marriage language in the New Jerusalem.

• **Our World**

- A. We are not going to heaven—heaven, and God, is coming here to be and dwell with us.
- B. Creation is God's good gift—he intends to dwell here with us.
 - 1. Seven times declared "good" in Genesis 1.
 - 2. Denigration of matter is demonic—it is destined for redemption not annihilation.
 - 3. Good NOT perfect — an open universe in which we can create...
- C. The Cosmos, although needing to be tamed and given to us to provide our needs, is a holy place—not to be defiled or abused (Rev 11:18).
- D. ... but neither is it to be worshipped.
- E. Being Christian is to work with God in redeeming his creation, re-dedicating his temple-palace.

Session 2: Who are We?

What does it mean to be Human: Made in the Image and Likeness of God

Sunday, 8.09.2015 p.m.

• Introduction

A. Two questions:

1. What does the Bible mean by “Image of God”?
2. What is the nature of our humanity and personhood (a Christian anthropology)?

• Made in the Image of God

A. What is the last thing placed in a temple?

B. Speaking to the Ancient Context: The formation, animation, and installation of images of the gods in the ancient world (Beckerleg).

1. Formation of the Image.
 - a. in the round—physicality is essential.
 - b. not a “photograph” but a pictograph, a functional representation (cf. Deut 33:17; the golden calf, Exod 32).
2. Animation of the Image.
 - a. opening of the eyes, ears, mouth, and animation of the limbs.
 - b. indwelt by the fiery breath-spirit of the deity.
... the very presence of the god upon the earth...
3. Installation-enthronement of the image in the god’s temple-house.
 - a. what is done to the image is done to the god.

• Israel’s Scriptures

A. Last “day” in Genesis 1: humans made in God’s image and placed in their palace/temple = the cosmos.

B. Not “zoomorphic idolatry”—our making the gods in our image or that of beasts—but “monotheistic anthropology”—God has made us in his image.

God’s word to a pagan world : I made you a temple, and you, in my image.

C. All humanity is made in God’s image.

1. ... not just Pharaoh : Pharaoh alone the embodiment of the presence of the gods upon the earth—his image alone along with the god’s in Egyptian Temples — everybody else is there to do his bidding.
... who comes into the well-watered and flourishing Garden called Delight?

2. ... not just Israel: All humanity.

D. Being human is a blessing and honor (“crowned with glory and honor,” Ps 8).

1. The pinnacle of God’s creation.
2. His “image” in his cosmic Temple.
3. He gave us our senses (Exod 4:11) to act as his agents in his Temple.
4. Responsible to do the work of, and to safeguard, his “Delightful” garden sanctuary (Gen 2:15; Num 3:7).

• Our World

A. Being human: a blessing or a curse? “I’m only human...”

One is never so spiritual as when one is truly human and never so human as when one is truly spiritual?

B. Imaging Yahweh.

1. His character: his justice, righteousness, mercy, and grace which undergirds our identity as his image-bearers.
 2. His creativity—the Christian imagination and human inventiveness: we call into being that which was not.
 3. Relational beings—a personal God.
 4. Includes both male and female, slave and free, Jew and Gentile (Gal 3:28).
- C. Physical embodiment—our bodies are integral to imaging God in this cosmos.
1. We are not just “thinkers” (Descartes) but embodied agents (McMurray).
 2. Our physical bodies are:
 - a. essential for us to be present to the world and to imitate God in his flourishing creation-Temple by bringing order, for the good, and ultimately for peace.
 - b. not just something we have but is integral to our being human—which is why God heals them.
- D. Relating to Others.
1. Every act of injustice or abuse against another human being is done “to” God’s image and is therefore an act of high treason against him.
 2. Love of God and of neighbor (Mt 7:12).
 3. No discrimination based on ethnicity, gender, or status.

• **Why this Emphasis on Humanity?**

- A. Remember: creation is still God’s garden-Palace-Temple—caring for it is not a later addition BUT its presupposition.
- B. The problem with the environment is not the environment, but ... people. We are the ones who have to change, if we are not to come under God’s judgment for destroying the earth, his Temple, his Palace.
- C. What creation needs, and what the story of salvation is about, is the re-creation of its Priest-King gardeners.

Session 3: Who is Israel?

Israel: God’s “First-Born Son” and the Beginning of a New Humanity.

Monday, 8.10.2015 p.m.

• Eden—The “Delightful” Sanctuary

A. The Basic Outline

1. Creation
2. Rebellion
3. Abraham
4. Moses and the Exodus — Yahweh Comes!
5. Conquest : God’s Kings — David and Solomon
6. Israel’s failure — the Exile

• Creation and Rebellion : Eden—The “Delightful” Sanctuary—and Long Descent into Night

A. Humanity’s Role: to do the work, and to safeguard the sanctity of the garden-temple called “Delight” (= Eden; Gen 2:15).

1. Same language as used of the Tabernacle (Num 3:7-8).
2. Imitating God by carrying on his work of “gardening” and bringing order.

B. Seeking to be Like God: listening to the ‘serpent.’

1. Reaching for autonomy in how we acquire the knowledge of good and evil (Ps 1; Gen 12:6; Dan 4; Ezek 31) — deciding for ourselves how learn about what is right and wrong (cf. Stanley Fish and *post-modernity*).
2. But because we are made in God’s image, to reflect his character enlivened by his indwelling spirit, to learn from him, in relationship with him, autonomy means the image bearers’ self-annihilation.

C. The long descent into night: Cain, Lamech and the “sons of the gods.”

1. Abuse of power: jealousy, murder, wickedness (Gen 4:8, 23bf; 6:5).
2. Abuse of women (Gen 4:23; 6:2).
3. Abuse of our image-nature: idolatry and pretensions to deity (Gen 4:5; 6:2).

Israel—A New Adam-Humanity

• Abraham

A. A New City

1. God’s revelation is on his initiative.
2. Trust in God’s character (not our capacity to derive truth with our wisdom).
3. A willingness to leave what he knows.
4. The promise of a new nation (and a new city; cf. Heb 11:10).

B. A New Nation — “I am my brother’s keeper” — a blessing to be a blessing to all nations (Gen 12).

• Moses and the Exodus — Inaugurating Moment in Israel’s History (5 books!)

A. Moses and the Burning bush—Yahweh’s initiative and the unexpected

1. Uncanny, strange and yet accessible to the senses—i.e. in history, not by metaphysical speculation.
2. Remote—away from the halls of civilization and human wisdom.
3. Room for choice and decision.
4. Personal encounter—revealing of a name—I AM who I AM (Exod 3:14).

C. Yahweh's self-revelation.

1. The "keeping" God who cares for his people... descent into their present experience (Exod 3:7-9).
2. "I AM who I AM"—Israel is not to imagine Yahweh in terms of its previous experience of the gods.
3. "... with a mighty hand and outstretched arm" (Deut 5:15; cf. 4:34-38; 7:18-19; 9:26; etc.; Jer 32:20-22; various Pss)—greater than Pharaoh, "the Lord of the Mighty Arm."
4. The one true creator God—responsible for all the good order that Egypt thought was due to its deities (Exod 12:12; 15:11; 18:11; 34:10; Num 33:4; Deut 1:30; 3:24; 4:34; 10:12; 26:18; cf. Exod 19:16).
5. so that his glory/name (= reputation) will be known to Israel (Exod 6:2-8; 10:2; Deut 5:24), Egypt (Exod 7:5; 9:29; 14:17-18), and the nations (Exod 9:16; 32:12).

D. Israel: Yahweh's First-born Son (Exod 4:22; cf. Deut 32:18)—over against Pharaoh, "son of Amon-re."

1. Wisdom terminology: learning to be human from one's "father."
2. The heir of his creation.
3. Therefore to be "holy as I am holy" (Lev 11:44-46; Deut 26:19).
4. A "mixed multitude came up with them" with the possibility of joining Israel (Exod 12:38-49)—the beginning of the blessing to the nations—in the context of celebrating Passover (cf. Jesus in the gospels).

E. At the mountain (Yahweh's descent in a new creation moment):

1. Yahweh's presence—utterly central to Israel's existence. It is only because "I AM" that Israel can "become" —"if your presence does not go with us..." (Exod 33:15-16).
2. Israel is to reflect God's character—the Torah and "Becoming Human 101"
3. repudiating Adam and Eve's autonomous ethics.

F. The True Character of the I AM

1. Assuming Egypt knew—the golden calf and the smitten rock... (Exod 17, 32-34)—the blessing to the nations.
2. Yahweh identifying with the smitten rock, not the virile bull of Egypt.
3. Called forth by Israel's idolatry : Yahweh's compassion and justice: "The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness ..." (Exod 34:6; cf. Ps 145:9).
4. The God who wills to be present — to his people and to his creation.
5. A new Adam and a new Eden: blessing of a land flowing with milk and honey (Exod 3:8; Deut 6:3).

G. God's Example people (Dt 4:6-8) : Living out Abraham's call — the people who keep their brothers

1. Yahweh's Torah: Israel's great wisdom and understanding before the nations.
2. Yahweh's presence: a real God who actually is near to them.
3. Israel: Yahweh's priest-people and cult-image in his holy Temple-land.

• **God's Ideal Kings — David and Solomon**

- A. David—the exemplary son (Ps 2)—to whom the nations come (2 Sam 21:15-22; 23:8-29).
- B. Solomon: knowledge and light to the nations (1 Kings 4:29-34).
- C. The climax of the Exodus: God's fixed dwelling among his people (1 Kgs 6:1).

Wisdom and Presence, Israel's as God's gardener-priests in a land flowing with milk and honey.

• **Israel's Rebellion : EXILE**

- A. Israel's Rebellion — autonomous Davidic Kings who are a law unto themselves
 1. Idolatry, Immorality, and Injustice (Isa 1:10-20), a new expulsion from the garden—death in exile (Ezek 37).
 2. Because God is holy (e.g. Isa 1:4; 5:19) and Israel has become just like the nations... re-created in the image of the blind and deaf idols she worships... (we become what we worship; Isa 6; Pss 115; 135).

- God will raise his mighty arm against his own people (Isa 1:24-25; 5:25; 8:11; 9:12-21; 10:4; Jer 21:2-5) and refuse to have compassion on or heal them (Isa 6:10; 9:17; Jer 13:14).

• Israel's Hope : Return from Exile

- A. Based on God's faithful character (cf. Mal 3:6). As he had acted in the past so he will act in the future: a new creational/new exodus... from exile (e.g. Isa 11:15-16; 40:1-11; 48:20-21; Jer 16:14-15; 23:6-8).
 - The mighty God's personal intervention with his outstretched hand and his return to his people (as in the Exodus; Isa 40:1-11; 63:11—64:12; cf. Mal 2:17b—3:5).
 - Through a true "Servant" Israel (Isa 42:1-9; 49:1-12) who:
 - sees and hears,
 - brings sight to Israel, and light to the nations (cf. Isa 2),
 - effects the new Exodus as God's "mighty arm" through his utterly unexpected suffering and death (Isa 52:13-53:12) as he is rejected by Israel (50:4:11) but finally vindicated by God.
- B. Resulting in the restoration of God's image/true humanity in faithful Israel and the repentant nations
 - sight, hearing, mobility—(Isa 35:5-6).
 - a new spirit and a heart of flesh (Ezek 36:25-28).
 - a re-newed covenant with the Torah written on their hearts (Jer 31:31-34).
 - a resurrected Israel living in a blessed land (Ezek 36:6-12; Joel 2:18-27) under a true Davidic shepherd (Isa 9, 11), a truly human king who will overcome the beastly nations (Dan 7), with God again dwelling among them in a restored Temple (Ezek 34-48; cf. Isa 9, 11; Dan 12).
 - God's spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28-32) as the nations come to restored and glorified Zion (Isa 2:2-4; 19:18-24; 60-62; Zech 14:16).
 - But a division in Israel between the faithful remnant and rebels (Isa 65-66; Ezek 20:33-38; Mal 3:5-18).

G. Summary:

- One good God created the cosmos as his Temple with humanity as his image (CREATION).
- In reaching for autonomy we lost our humanity and creation was given over to decay (FALL).
- God elected (chose) Abraham and Israel, and covenanted with them to be his new humanity, a light to the nations ...
- ...delivering them at the (EXODUS).
- He gave them a new Eden and dwelt among them (CONQUEST and DAVID/SOLOMON).
- Israel repudiated God's image for idols, God's presence departed and they were cast out of the garden land (EXILE).
- BUT God will not abandon his temple nor his image and promises to again redeem his people in a new creational new exodus.

• Back in the Land...

- A. Living out the story by means of...
 - Institutions of Temple, Synagogue, and Torah.
 - Obeying Yahweh: no other gods, Sabbath and other feasts, ritual purity and food laws, circumcision and racial purity.
- B. But... the problem of Rome—where is Yahweh's promised return to his people?
- C. Waiting for Yahweh—who should Israel be?
 - High Priests and Aristocrats—conservative pragmatism.
 - Zealots—"No King but Yahweh" : a militant nationalism.
 - Pharisees—Torah intensification.
 - Essenes—studying end-times, and maintaining purity by withdrawal.
 - The ordinary people of the land.

Session 4: Setting things Right: Jesus: God's "only begotten Son"

Tuesday, 8.11.2015 p.m.

• Jesus—Reconstituting Israel and His Mission and Message

A. Baptism: a new Exodus and a new Israel, servant-messianic-son (Mk 1:10-11; Ps 2:7; Isa 42:1).

1. Spirit/wind over the water and forty days in the wilderness.
2. Temptation: will he betray his sonship and use his power for himself, coercion, or religious manipulation?

B. Mighty Deeds — not miracles but mighty acts, works, and signs.

1. What Jesus did..
 - a. Restoring the image: blind, deaf, mute, and lame.
 - b. Casting out of unclean spirits.
 - c. Of storms and pigs: who is this?
 - d. A new exodus and new provision in the desert (Mk 4:35ff).

A New Creational Restoration of the Image of God

2. Can we believe them?

- a. Some 37 individual accounts: against the trend in the Graeco-Roman world which had long begun to move away from wonders.
- b. Not for his own glory, but to help others.
- c. This very specific collection is unlike any in the ancient world.
- d. Why invent what no one expected? Not associated with Israel's messianic hope.

3. A God of Compassion... (Mk 6:34; Mt 14:14, 20:34; Lk 7:13) : the Lord is good to all, and has compassion on all that he has made (Ps 145:9).

The Kingdom of God: The Reign of God has begun... (Mk 1:14-15)

C. Mighty Words :

1. What is God like? The day-laborers (Matt 20:1-16).
2. What is holiness? People-keeping before Sabbath-keeping (Mk 2:1-3:6; Lk 7:36-50; 15:1-32; 19:1-10; Jn 8:1-11).
3. Greater than Moses: Yahweh's new Torah on a new Sinai (Mt 5-7).
 - a. Congratulations to the poor in Spirit (5:3).
 - b. Do unto others as you would have them do to you—the Law and the Prophets (7:12).

4. *Who IS this?*

- a. defeats Satan (Mk 1:13; 3:27; cf. Isa 49:24-25).
- b. able to do whatever he wants (healing the leper; Mk 1:40; cf. Wis 12:17-18).
- c. forgives sins (Mk 2:5-11; cf. Exod 34:6-7; Isa 43:25).
- d. Israel's bridegroom (Mk 2:19-20; Hos 2:14-18; Isa 54:6-8; 62:4-5).
- e. Lord of the Sabbath (Mk 2:28; cf. Exod 20:10; Isa 58:13).
- f. embodies and brings Torah's life and good (Mk 3:4-5; Deut 30:15).
- g. summons Twelve (Mk 3:13-19).
- h. controls the sea (Mk 4:35-5:20).
- i. shines in brilliant white on the mountain (Mk 9:3).
- j. claims a loyalty appropriate only to God (Mk 10:21, 29; e.g. 8:34-35).
- k. reconstitutes the Passover around himself (Mk 14:12-24).

5. Mysteriously... the very presence of Yahweh himself among us (Mk 1:2-3 & Isa 40:3/Mal 3:1).

D. Hostility and Rejection: Israel's idolatrous view of what it means to be Israel...

1. Early plotting his death (Mk 3:6) and blaspheming God's Spirit (Mk 3:28-30; Isa 63:10).
2. Calling the twelve—reconstituting Israel around himself.
3. Speaking in parables:
 - a. the central importance of the parable of the soils (Mk 4).
 - b. the warning : be careful how you hear!— the repetition of Isaiah's judgment on an idolatrous-hearted people who have rejected God's offered salvation (Isa 6).

Israel's view of holiness had become demonic

E. A new way of being Israel—The Transfiguration.

1. A new holiness—take up your cross (Mk 8:34-38).
2. A new Sinai, the true presence, and the new Torah—this is my beloved son, listen to him! (Mk 9:7).
3. The nature of Israel's God—not primarily about power, but the divinely authoritative “the son of man” (Mk 2:10, 28) must die (Mk 8:31-38; cf. Isa 50, 53).

F. The Climax of the Covenant.

1. Cursing of the fig-tree and the demise of the safe house for insurrectionists (Jer 7 in Mk 11:12-22).
- a symbol for fruitless Israel; the Temple offers no protection to rebels.
2. Mount Zion cast into the sea (Mk 11:23-24)—“every mountain and hill made low” (Isa 40:4)—and the Israel-vineyard given to others (Mk 12:1-12).
3. Not one stone upon another (Mk 13, *par.*).
4. The Trial of the Son of Man (Ps 110 and Dan 7 in Mk 14:62).
 - a. Ps 110: a new priest king who sits at God's right hand while his enemies are defeated.
 - b. Dan 7: defeat of the beasts and the vindication of God's new humanity.

G. Jesus' death and Resurrection: a new Covenant, and a new Passover.

1. A new covenant—in his blood (Exod 24:8 and Isa 53:11-12 in Mk 14:24)—and a new Passover for a new humanity.
2. The meaning of Jesus' death — God himself swallowing up our death
3. A new Temple : the rejected stone now the keystone of a new Temple (Mk 12:1-12) (Mk 12:10; John 2:19; 7:38).
4. The Resurrection (N.T. Wright, *The Resurrection of the Son of God*).
 - a. Embodied but transformed.
 - b. Only in Jewish tradition but so different from expectations... something like this must have happened.
 - c. Resurrection is vindication not proof of Jesus' deity.

H. The LORD Jesus Christ (Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*).

1. Earliest Christians stubbornly monotheist.
2. But within a decade or so, giving Yahweh-devotion to Jesus (cf. 1 Cor 8:6)!

I. Into the World—Paul among the Greeks.

1. Cruciform discipleship (1 Cor 1:18-25).
2. Marks of the new people of God — no longer Torah, Sabbath, food laws, circumcision, or Passover
 - a. Fruits and gifts of the Spirit—imitating God (Gal 5:16-26).
 - b. Becoming Authentically human—if anyone is in Christ they are a new creation (2 Cor 5:17; Gal 2:20).
 - c. The people-Temple of the Holy Spirit.
3. Life in the Spirit, imitating Jesus, until He comes...

Final Thoughts (perhaps for another time) A Genuinely Human Life

• The Gospel and the World

The Christian Birthday Party and the Question—turning water into wine.

• Israel's Scriptures

A. The Biblical Vision

1. Flourishing in the blessed land (see above).
2. The wisdom of Ecclesiastes (2:24-26; 3:12-13; 5:18-20; 9:7-10; 11:9-10).
 - a. life in its fullness if God's good gift; he is pleased with what we do.
 - b. but to base our identity on these things, on our human activity, is vanity *because* in themselves they are not sufficient, and in the end we all die.
 - c. follow one's heart and the desire of one's eyes but know that God sees and judges.

We do not have LIFE in ourselves, but even so we are to enjoy our lives in the light of God's good and just character, for this is what God made us to do.

B. God's Promise for all peoples (e.g. Isa 25:6-10)

1. On "this mountain" — a cosmic mount Zion.
2. A rich feast of rich food and well-aged wines.
3. The shroud of death removed.

• The New Testament

A. The Promise Fulfilled in Jesus (John).

1. The Kingdom of God *means* the gift of Eternal life (3:16; 5:26; 17:1-3).
2. The true Gardener (20:15) and breakfast on a beach (21:12-13).
3. The God of the living (Mk 12:27; 1 Pet 1:3-4)... our work in the Lord is no longer in vain because of the Lord (1 Cor 15:58).

• Athens and Jerusalem — Towards the City of God

A. The Cosmos

1. Athens: changeless *versus* changing : the cosmos is eternal, unchanging, perfect, and cyclical; escape upward, via the ascending soul, to the pure heavens from the gross, deceptive earth.
2. Jerusalem: open, changing, and full of possibility for development; the heavens *and* the earth are GOOD and REAL and TRUE.

B. How we know

1. Athens: only by pure logical demonstration (calculation); the changing earth cannot be real nor true.
2. Jerusalem: by the senses (1 John 1:1) and testing (experimentation); all of creation is REAL,

C. What it means to be human

1. Athens: a pure finely grained soul trapped in a tomb like body; virtue = male values : prowess, appearance, and persuasion; Plato's *Republic* : unchanging and oppressive; Aristotle : ethics = maintaining the golden mean, nothing to excess.
2. Jerusalem: psycho-somatic unity; body and soul belong together to form the image of God and hence all have equal value : in Christ, no longer Jew or Greek, male nor female, slave nor free; household and the family; Christ as head, everyone else as the Spirit gifts.

• The End of the Matter

- A. Creation is God's astonishing gift of life
- B. The utter centrality of the earth from Gen 1 to Rev 22—there is very little about an other worldly heaven.
- C. Embodiedness is a gift and thus the promise of the resurrection.
- D. As God's image we are made for the earth to tend and to enjoy—indwelt by his Spirit to embody his creatorly and cruciform character.
- E. The fundamental biblical division = creator and creation.

• Our World

The CEO, the Church, and the World

- A. True Holiness...
 - 1. The moral police of the universe?
 - 2. What if true holiness is a Spirit-filled life that brings the life of God to others?

"I have come to give you life and more abundantly..."