

The Compass

Week 22

OT Readings: 2 Samuel 13:1-21:22

NT Readings: John 17:1 – Acts 1:26

Things to Watch for in Your Readings this Week

Old Testament

- While David repents of his sin with Bathsheba at Nathan's word (2 Sam. 12:13), the sin seems to set in motion disastrous consequences about which the narrator tells us in 2 Sam. 13-20. Civil war, palace intrigue, illicit sexuality and murder all plague David's house.¹
- There is plenty of material here for character studies: Joab and Absalom being negative examples! David is seen in a very realistic way² and as a complex person.
- Remember that God is always in the story, even if His actions and thinking are not revealed by the narrator. As you read, what hints does the narrator give about God's place in the story?

New Testament

- John 17:1-26 is Jesus' prayer to His Father with His disciples gathered together this one last time before the cross.
- John 18-19 highlight the trials and then the crucifixion; 20 the resurrection and 21 an epilogue. Important truths are found here: the nature of the kingdom (18:28-38), God's heart for unity (17:20-24), believing beyond seeing (20:26-29), a commissioning and imparting of the Spirit (20:21-22), among others.³
- Acts 1:1-8 prepares Theophilus (1:1), and us, for what is to come in this second installment of the Jesus story.⁴

Highlight of the Week: Who is God?

John 17:25-26. This quite remarkable statement reveals the depth of God's heart toward us. Jesus has accomplished part of His mission, revealing the Father (17:26), yet He says that He "will continue to do so." How so? He has made clear that the Holy Spirit will come to speak to them and lead them into the things that Jesus could not (16:12-15). Yet, what seems most central on Jesus heart and most immediate to the moment is this: in a few short hours He will be tortured and then executed on a Roman cross and God's greatest revelation will come to its final climax. All of God's intense desire, seen throughout the OT,⁵ to make Himself known and to love and be loved by His people now culminates in a great display of sacrificial love.⁶ Jesus says that this revelation of the depths of His love is for the purpose that we might experience the same love that Jesus Himself had with the Father. (17:26) In other words, the love seen in the cross is an invitation to us to enter into the same kind of relationship with the Father that Jesus had with Him - how amazing is that! What kind of a God is like that?!

Application: "What about me? How does this apply?"

John 17:3.⁷ If you were to ask "What is eternal life?" the typical answer would be, "Heaven of course." Not so says Jesus! Life, the kind that goes on forever, is not a location. It is not ticket we get punched when we say "the prayer," it is not a destination. It is something so much more profound and powerful – it is a relationship with a living God. The implications are enormous.

It means that I experience life to the degree that I seek to know God and actually know⁸ Him. Not information about, but a genuine and authentic, day by day, moment by moment life of experience with Him. Is this *your* experience? Are you hearing Him speak to you? Are you responding with a resounding "YES" to His written word and to His "inside you" voice? Is His character becoming increasingly clear to you? Is your passion for Him, your love for Him deepening and intensifying? Do you trust Him with everything and in everything? Are you relinquishing control of all to Him so that His life and power can flow into your life and circumstances?

Difficult Question of the Week

Acts 1:15-20. Q. "Was Judas 'predetermined' to betray Jesus? Was this a fulfillment of Scripture?"

What is clear is that after a night of prayer, Jesus chose twelve disciples for a special purpose and that Judas Iscariot was among them.⁹ At one point, Jesus told these twelve that they would sit on thrones and judge the twelve tribes of Israel. In other words, Jesus gave Judas a throne!¹⁰ Luke specifically reveals that Judas *became* a traitor, notice, not *was* a traitor from the beginning.¹¹

What about Acts 1:16 which seems to say that this was a “fulfillment” of Scripture? As in any case when a NT author uses the OT, we must look carefully at the original intent of the OT author (God/human) in the specific OT passage. In Acts 1:20, the OT Scripture references are passages out of two of David’s Psalms, Ps. 69:25 and 109:8. In neither case are these references about the future, let alone a betrayer of the Messiah. In fact, Ps. 69:25 is plural, not singular.¹² Peter, the speaker in Acts 1:16-20, seems to use these particular Davidic psalms as an **analogy** or illustration of should happen to those who are traitors. This, then, is not a predictive prophecy.¹³ Rather, Peter uses David’s experiences with betrayal as recorded in these Psalms as an illustration which is seen to be repeated in the case of Judas with Jesus.

Judas made a decision, a choice, to deny Jesus, to become his betrayer; it was not God’s intention for him.¹⁴

Copyright May 2012 by Mike Huckins

¹ Sin always has negative consequences, sometimes setting in motion, like ripples in a pool, events beyond the initial choice. While it is true that Absalom and Joab, e.g., have their own choices, David’s poor example no doubt contributed to the moral disintegration around him. Nathan’s word in 2 Sam. 12:10-12 seems to me to be God’s understanding of how the implications of David’s sin for his household and kingdom will play out. Perhaps David’s sin forces God to withdraw His blessing and protection in some way?

² The Bible’s descriptions of the Biblical kings are radically different from other “king accounts” of other nations in the ANE. The Bible tells it like it is, no glossing over or “spin.”

³ It is “dense” reading – it requires some time, reflection and meditation to take it all in!

⁴ The disciples are between the resurrection and Jesus’ ascension (1:9-11), a “period of forty days” (1:3). Ten days following the ascension, the Spirit will come at Pentecost (2:1-4). Notice in particular Acts 1:1, “all that Jesus *began* to do and teach.” We would expect Luke to have said something like, “did and taught,” indicating that Jesus ministry was completed with His ascension. Hardly! The first account (Luke’s Gospel) was only the first installment of Jesus continuing ministry, Acts is the second installment. The implication is extraordinary: Jesus continued His ministry **through His people by the Holy Spirit** – His disciples continued to do what He had modeled for them during His earthly mission – the kingdom of God and all that means. We are to do the same, because He is alive and continues His mission and ministry through us by the Holy Spirit!

⁵ You might remember how God revealed Himself in His name in Exodus and the significance of this throughout the OT. Jesus literally says here, “I have revealed your *Name* to them and will continue to reveal it.”

⁶ Rom. 8:31-39.

⁷ The NLT translation here is unfortunate. The NASU translate 17:3 this way, “This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”

⁸ If you remember from the OT, “to know” was not information but intimation: an experiential intertwining of our lives together with God’s. (Gen. 4:1)

⁹ Luke 6:12-13. Mk. 3:14-15.

¹⁰ I borrow this from Winkie Pratney who has a great message on the subject of Judas entitled “Judas Had a Throne.”

¹¹ Luke 6:16. It seems inconceivable, given the character of God, that He would “foreordain” someone to betray Jesus and then doom them for it.

¹² “May *their* place be deserted; let there be no one to dwell in *their* tents.” NIV (italics mine)

¹³ We must be careful when reading “fulfillment” not to automatically assume predictive prophecy. The NT authors can use the OT in a variety of ways and we must determine from context what they are in fact doing. We cannot impose our meaning on the author because we have some presupposition about predictive prophecy.

¹⁴ Someone might object, “Well, how could Jesus have been betrayed without a betrayer?” It wasn’t necessary for God to preordain any specific person in advance. Jesus had many enemies and there may have been dozens of options available to God to bring about the set of events He was after (Acts 2:22-23 – note that Judas isn’t even mentioned here). In my view, it is a very small view of God and an atrocious view of His character to insist that it was necessary for God to predetermine Judas to betray Jesus to bring about the events recorded.