

Paul and Jesus:

An Unholy Divide?



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# Different ideas and different approaches

*Jesus* 'kingdom of God' & attractive parables,

*Paul* 'justification by faith' 'propitiation' & complicated words & complicated theology

*Jesus* more open (eg to sinners, women etc),

*Paul* more authoritarian, patriarchal, pro the status quo (eg on slaves)

# Paul doesn't refer much to Jesus' life and teaching: why not?

- Parables?
- Miracles?
- Birth of Jesus?

# Conclusion of some....

*Jesus* – a Jewish prophet who taught in Galilee about the love of God.....

*Paul* - a mystical religion, created on the basis of his experience of 'Jesus' on the Damascus Road (+ some ideas from Greek religion). His Jesus a divine figure, dying & rising, whose death was a blood sacrifice for sin

Yes, his conversion was hugely important

**Acts 9:3** As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. **4** He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" **5** "Who are you, Lord?" Saul asked. "I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting," he replied.

# Different contexts but same message!

- Jesus in rural Jewish Palestine
- Kingdom of God breaking in, through Jesus
- Grace for sinners
- Paul in urban Greek-speaking Gentile world
- Righteousness of God coming, no longer through law but through Jesus
- Grace for sinners

# Paul's origins

- Born in Tarsus, South Turkey
- Traditional Jewish Aramaic-speaking family
- Sent to Jerusalem for education as Pharisee with top Rabbi Gamaliel
- Zealous student – wanting to uphold for the Jewish way and the Old Testament law
- Violent persecutor of the Christians



# Paul before his conversion

- **Galatians 1:13 For you have heard of my previous way of life in Judaism, how intensely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. 14 I was advancing in Judaism beyond many Jews of my own age and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.**



# Yes, his conversion was life-changing

**A sensational event changing his views:**

**Paul arch-enemy of the followers of Jesus discovers**

- **Jesus is alive,**
- **Jesus is merciful to sinners: grace not law!**
- **he Paul & his people have been on exactly the wrong track**

***'My gospel...came through a revelation of Jesus Christ' (Gal 1:12)***

# **The personal dimension**

**Gal 2:20 'the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me'**

**2 Cor 5:14-20 'the love of Christ compels us... we are ambassadors for Christ. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.'**



# A changed life

**2 Corinthians 11:24** Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. **25** Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, **26** I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false brothers. **27** I have laboured and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. **28** Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.

Would such a person invent a new religion?

# But does Paul care about the history & teaching of Jesus?

- 1 Corinthians 11:23 For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was betrayed took bread, 24 and when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, "This is my body which is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." 25 In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me."

*Notice:* Paul speaks of receiving and passing on the stories of Jesus.

*Notice:* Jesus sees his death as a forthcoming sacrifice

**‘I passed on to you what I also received.....’**

**1 Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, 4 that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day ....5 that he appeared to Cephas, then to the twelve. 6 Then he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom are still alive, though some have fallen asleep. 7 Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles. 8 Last of all, as to one untimely born, he appeared also to me. 9 For I am the least of the apostles, unfit to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.**



# Teaching of Jesus very important to Paul

## Compare

- *Paul* on celibacy....1 Cor 7:10,11 'To the married I say, **not I but the Lord**, that a woman should not be separated from a husband, but if she is actually separated, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband - and that a man should not divorce his wife' with
- *Jesus* on divorce Matt 19:3-12/Mark 10:2-12 (i) 'What God has joined, let no one separate', (ii) 'Whoever divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery'.

# Sermon on Mount

- Matt 5:43ff/Lk 6:27ff 'bless those who curse you, pray for those who maltreat/persecute you'
- Rom 12:14-21 'bless those who persecute, bless and do not curse'

Same emphasis on love...even of enemies

# Freedom from Old Testament laws: clean and unclean things

- Rom 14:14 'I know and am persuaded *in the Lord Jesus* that nothing is unclean of itself'
- Mark 7:18,19 'And he said....."Don't you know that nothing that enters a person from outside can defile him, for it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and goes out into the drain," cleansing all foods'

# Abba

Galatians 4:6 'God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying 'Abba Father'

Why 'Abba', Aramaic, in Greek letter?

Jesus, eg in Gethsemane Mk 14:36 'Abba, Father, let this cup pass from me'

Very unusual address for God, being the family word (Jeremias)

# Abba

- Striking characteristic of Jesus....
- Idea of Jesus as God's Son not original to Paul!

# Did Paul know the story of Jesus' virgin birth?

## Gal 4:4

- When the fulness of time had come
- God sent forth his Son
- Born of a woman
- Born under the law
- To redeem those under the law

## Luke 1-2

- Excitement at time having come....
- The child .. be called Son of the most high
- Mary
- Temple rites
- Redemption

# Paul knows about the apostles and their mission

- 1 Cor 9 Paul speaks of apostles and their work and their right to food & drink
  - v.14 ***The Lord commanded*** that those who preach the good news should get their living by the good news'
- Lk 9 & 10. Jesus sends out disciples, telling them to eat what is provided and says 'the labourer is worthy of his hire' (10:7).

‘This we tell you *by the word of the Lord*’

1 Thessalonians 4:15 (AD49)

**Paul speaks of**

‘the coming of the  
Lord...from heaven’

‘with a trumpet call &  
archangel’s shout’

the day of the Lord coming  
like a thief in the night

‘Christians who are ‘asleep’  
rising up to meet and be  
with the Lord

**Jesus in Matthew 24,25  
speaks of**

The Son of man coming on  
the clouds..with angels &  
trumpet call

The hour being unknown  
like a thief’s coming

The wise girls rising up to  
meet the bridegroom to  
go in and be with him



# So.....

Paul knows & echoes...

- The virgin birth
- Parables of Jesus

He gets from Jesus

- Ethical teaching (divorce, love enemies..)
- Jesus as Son of God (Abba)
- Jesus' death as a sacrifice
- Jesus coming again

# Letters are different from gospels and from gospel preaching...

- Paul told people about Jesus when evangelizing and establishing churches
- His letters are trouble-shooting letters dealing with problems that have come up: he can mention or echo teaching they have had already.....
- He doesn't say everything he believes in every letter!

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# Paul's own verdict

- 'Paul a slave of Christ Jesus....' (Romans 1:1)
- 'I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.' (Philippians 3:8)

# Paul's message for others

- 'I determined to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified' (1 Cor 2:2)
- 'We are Christ's ambassadors...We implore you on Christ's behalf: be reconciled to God' (2 Cor 5:20)

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