



Excerpts from *The Great Physician*
For study related to the Bible Lesson July 26 – August 1, 2010

Introductory Note – *The Great Physician*, Vols 1 & 2 were written by Vinton Dearing, who was Professor of English at UCLA where he taught the English Bible as Literature for forty years. The book is a composite translation of the four Gospels, organized by event rather than book, and includes a commentary. Because of the composite nature of the translation and commentary, the excerpts below may cover more topics than the citation in the Lesson. These excerpts have been compiled by Doug McCormick. The paperback two-volume set of books is available for purchase on amazon.com and a hardback study edition will be available in August through Amazon.com and at vintondearing.com.

SECTION II – B8 (Matt 9:35,36)

WIDESPREAD TEACHING AND HEALING

[Matthew 9:35-39](#)

Continuing with Matthew. “And Jesus was going about all the cities and the villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom [namely, that it had drawn near], and healing every disease and every infirmity. And when he saw the crowds, he pitied them because they had been distressed and scattered like sheep not having a shepherd.²⁰⁵

“Then he says to his students, ‘The harvest [is] certainly great, but still the workers [are] few, so ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into His harvest.’”

As we shall see, Luke says Jesus used the same words to begin his ordination sermon, so-called, to seventy-two of his students, so he and Matthew may have had a written source for them, but because the idea would seem to be easy to remember in the same words each time, we may instead have independent testimony to what Jesus said, as well as further testimony that he repeated himself²⁰⁶

Footnotes

205. “Had been distressed and scattered”: literally, “had been skinned and thrown away”; I take the verbs as pleonastic past perfects.

206. See Luke 10:2. See also John 4:35-38.

SECTION II – B9 (Luke 15:3-6)

REPENTANCE

[Luke ch. 15-16](#)

Next comes a set of five parables on various aspects of repentance. The first three concern the joy we should feel when a sinner repents. The middle one of the three is the shortest, the last the longest, in accordance with rules for effective arrangement still adhered to. We remember best the last item in a series and next best the first item, a fact an author ought to take advantage of. Jesus also arranged the three parables in a climactic order. The first two and the first half of the third say only that we must rejoice at the

sinner's repentance. The last half of the third makes clear why we can freely do so. We have already read Matthew's version of the first parable.¹⁴⁷

The three parables are linked in their expression by the image of losing something, a sheep, a coin, and a son. The last is usually called the parable of the prodigal son instead of the lost son, but as we can see the father says that this son "had been lost and was found." In short, as we examine the interrelations of the three parables we cannot but be struck with their artistry as well as with their message.

Continuing, then, with Luke. "And all the publicans and the sinners were coming near to him to hear him. And the Pharisees and the scribes were grumbling to one another, saying 'This [scofflaw] welcomes sinners and eats with them.'

"And he spoke this parable to them, saying, 'Which man of you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, doesn't leave the ninety-nine in the desert and go after the one that's been lost until he'll find it? And finding [it], he puts [it] on his shoulders, rejoicing, and coming to [his] house he calls together [his] men friends and neighbors, saying to them, "Rejoice with me, because I found my sheep that's been lost." I say to you that likewise there will be [more] joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who have no need of repentance.

"Or, which woman, having ten drachmas, if she'll lose one drachma, doesn't light a lamp and sweep the house and seek diligently until she'll find it? And finding [it], she calls together [her] women friends and neighbors, saying, "Rejoice with me, because I found the drachma that I lost." Likewise, I say to you, there is joy in the presence of God's angels over one sinner who repents.' **[A drachma was the equivalent of a denarius, a days' wage for an agricultural worker.]**

"And he said, 'A certain man had two sons **[as his partners in the family business]**. And [one day] the younger of them said to [his] father, "Father, give me the part of the property that is coming to me." And he distributed [their] assets to [the two of] them.¹⁴⁸

"And not many days after, the younger son withdrew all [his assets] and went off on a journey to a distant country, and there he invested his property [in] living in debauchery. And when he had used [it] all up, a great famine happened in that land, and he began to lack. And he went and hired out to one of the citizens of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to satisfy himself with the carob pods that the pigs ate, and no one was giving [any] to him.¹⁴⁹

"But when he came to himself, he said, "How many employees of my father's have more loaves [of bread] than they need, but I perish here with hunger. I'll rise up and go to my father and say to him, 'Father, I sinned against heaven and in your eyes. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me as one of your employees.'"

"And he rose up and went to his father. But while he was still far off, his father saw him and had pity, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him.

"But the son said to him, "Father, I sinned against heaven and in your eyes. I'm no longer worthy to be called your son."

"But the father said to his slaves, "Quickly bring out [my] best robe and put it on him, and give him a ring on his hand and sandals on [his] feet, and bring the fatted calf, kill it, and we'll eat and enjoy [ourselves], because this son of mine was dead and came to life again, he had been lost and was found." And they began to enjoy [themselves].

"But his elder son was in the field, and as he came and approached the house he heard music and dancing, and calling one of the boys to him he was asking him what these [festivities] should be.

"And he said to him, "Your brother's come and your father killed the fatted calf, because he received him back in good health."

"But he got angry and wasn't intending to go in. And his father came out and was calling to him.

“But he said to his father in reply, “Look, I slaved for you for so many years and never went against your command, and you never gave me [so much as] a kid to enjoy [eating] with my friends. But when this son of yours came, who ate up your assets with prostitutes, you killed the fatted calf for him.”

“And he said to him, “Son, you’re always with me, and everything that is mine is yours. We had to enjoy [ourselves] and rejoice, because this brother of yours was dead and lived, and had been lost, and was found.””

Many readers note that God, maintaining His unalterable relationship with His creation, may be said in human terms to yearn over His children, as shown by the father’s running to the younger son when he was still far off and coming out of the house when the older son wouldn’t come in. We may also note that when the latter speaks angrily of “your assets” (instead of “his assets”) and “this son of yours,” the father replies gently, “this brother of yours.”

Continuing with Luke. “And he was also saying to [his] students, “There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and this [steward] was reported to him because [of the way] he invested his possessions. And he called him and said to him, “What [is] this I hear about you? Hand over the records of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.”

“And the steward said to himself, “What shall I do, because my lord takes away the stewardship from me? I’m not strong enough to dig [do manual labor]; I’m ashamed to beg.” [After a pause,] “I know what I’ll do, so that when I’ll be put out of the stewardship [people] will receive me into their houses [employ me].”

“And he called each one of his lord’s debtors to [him] and said to the first, “How much do you owe my lord?”

“And he said, “A hundred baths of olive oil [800-900 gallons].”

“And he said to him, “Take your contract and sit down quickly and write ‘fifty’ [that is, eliminate the illegal interest in kind you had agreed to pay].”

“Then he said to another, “And how much do you owe?”

“And he said, “A hundred cors of wheat [about 1100 bushels].”

“He says to him, “Take your contract and write ‘eighty.’”

“And the lord praised the steward who had been acting illegally, because he did wisely [to reform]. For the sons of this world are wiser than the sons of light [spiritually enlightened people] in [dealing with] their own kind. And I say to you, “make friends” for yourselves with [respect to] illegal wealth [that is, restore it], so that when [your dishonesty] will come to an end they’ll receive you into eternal shelters.

“He who’s trustworthy in a very little [way] is also trustworthy in a great, and he who disregards the law in a very little [way] disregards it also in a great. So if you weren’t trustworthy in [the matter of] illegal wealth who’ll trust the valid to you [here or hereafter]? And if you weren’t trustworthy in [the matter of] another person’s [wealth] who’ll give you your own [in wages and the life to come]? No steward can slave for two masters [with equal respect for both when they give contradictory orders], for either he’ll hate the one and love the other, or else he’ll cling to [the] one and look down on the other. You can’t slave for God and for mammon [wealth].” These last words we have seen in the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 6:24.

The parable of the unrighteous steward is one of the most difficult to appreciate fully. Its teaching is clear: trust God to supply your needs if you serve Him; if you have learned to heal spiritually you must earn your wages conscientiously or you will lose your ability to heal; more generally, whatever you wish to experience you must always do yourself to others. But have I correctly interpreted the details of the narrative?

I believe J. D. M. Derrett is correct in saying that the loans the steward made are what we call Morris-plan loans, that is, the amount treated as a loan included interest as well as principal. Loans of wheat and wine at fifty percent interest in kind are to be found recorded in several Egyptian documents of the second century

B.C. But Leviticus 25:36 and Deuteronomy 23:19-20 forbid adding interest either at the beginning or the end of the term of a loan when loaning to Israelites, allowing it only when loaning to Gentiles. Presumably the steward was Jewish and making loans to Jews, so his loans were illegal. He should have sold the wheat and oil and deposited the proceeds with bankers, whose fees as money-changers were legal and could be legally shared with depositors, as we shall see from the parables of the talents and the minas.¹⁵⁰

Continuing with Luke. “But the Pharisees [who were] interested in the financial well-being of the nation were hearing of all these [things] and they were deriding him.” The literal translation, “[who were] lovers of money,” is too strong, as the Talmud and Josephus show. Wealthy people tended to be Sadducees. But leading Pharisees believed in financial incentives in business and what has been called supply-side economics and the trickle-down theory of wealth. Hillel’s *prosbul*, to speak again of one example, made it possible for lenders to avoid canceling outstanding debts every seven years, as required by Deuteronomy 15:1-4. The Pharisees thought of the *prosbul* as benefiting the community by keeping the supply of loan funds from drying up when the seventh year approached, that is, by allowing the wealthy to observe the laws of lending in Leviticus 25:35-36 and Deuteronomy 15:7-8 without financial loss, and so conform to the law in Deuteronomy 15:9-10, which requires that lenders take no account of how near the seventh year is.

Continuing again with Luke. “And he [Jesus] said to them, ‘You’re those who make themselves righteous in the eyes of men [that is, espouse popular economic theories], but God knows your hearts, because [what is regarded as] high among men [is] abomination in the eyes of God.’” [It is wrong to look to manufacturing, agribusiness, trade and finance and their theories of limitation and motivation rather than to God and His laws of unlimited supply.]

“The Law and the Prophets [sufficed] until John [the Baptist], since when the good news of [the nearness of] the kingdom of God is spoken, and everyone forces [his way] into it. But it’s easier for the heaven and the earth to go away than for one ‘horn’ [a projection from the main line of a letter] of the Law to fall. Everyone who divorces his wife and marries another commits adultery, and one who marries a woman who has been divorced by her husband commits adultery.”¹⁵¹

The substance of the foregoing sentences is scattered about in Matthew. Luke may have bundled the teachings together here without any special purpose except to preserve them, but I suggest that they continue the train of thought about not slaving for God and mammon. Those who force their way into the kingdom of God are those who devise things like the *prosbul*, believing that the Law of Moses must sometimes give way when it sets limits on human nature. The Law of Moses is like a wife, human nature is like a divorced wife. It is adultery to align oneself with human nature instead of the Law. As we have seen and shall shortly see again, Jesus’ rules for divorce were even stricter than those in the Law of Moses.

Continuing with Luke. “And there was a certain rich man and he was wearing purple [an expensive color] and fine linen [expensive clothing], having a splendidly good time every day. And a certain beggar, Lazarus by name, had been thrown [down] before his door, covered with sores, and longing to satisfy himself from the [scraps] falling from the rich man’s table, and instead the dogs [who got the scraps to eat] were coming and licking his sores. And it happened that the beggar died, and he was taken off by the angels into Abraham’s bosom [that is, he reclined on Abraham’s right, the position of honor, at dinner with the righteous in the kingdom of heaven].¹⁵²

“And the rich man died too, and was buried. And in Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torments, and sees Abraham from far off, and Lazarus [reclining] on his right. And he cried out and said, ‘Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I suffer in this flame.’¹⁵³

“But Abraham said, ‘Child, remember that you received your good [things] in your life, and Lazarus likewise evil [whereas, as we have just seen, the Law of Moses says the rich man should have lent him what

he needed]. But now he's comforted here [for his righteousness], but you suffer [for your sins]. And besides all these [things], between us and you [people] a huge chasm has been established, so that those who intend to go through from here to you [people] can't, nor do they cross from there to us." [The sinner cannot escape punishment just because he doesn't like it, nor can the righteous mitigate the sinner's punishment just because he is sympathetic.]¹⁵⁴

"But he said, "So I ask you, father, to send him to my father's house, for I've five brothers, in order that he may testify to them so that they won't come to this place of torment too."

"But Abraham says, "They have Moses and the Prophets [the Bible]; let them hear them."

"But he said, "[That will] not [influence them], father Abraham, but if someone from the dead will go to them [in a dream or vision], they'll repent."

"But he said to him, "If they don't hear Moses and the Prophets, they won't be persuaded if someone from among the dead will rise.'"

Footnotes

147. Matthew 18:12-14; see p. 348.

148. Zebedee similarly had his sons, the apostles Peter and Andrew, as partners (Matthew 4:21-22 = Mark 1:19-20).

"That is coming to me": literally "that falls to [me]," "that belongs to [me]," "that is due to [me]" or "that is proper" "[Their] assets" is literally "the life," that is, means of livelihood.

149. "Invested": literally, "scattered," and usually translated "wasted." I believe the commercial meaning I have adopted comes from sowing grain. Jesus uses the word again in this sense, I believe, in the parable of the talents, Matthew 25:24.

"Hired out": the root meaning is "stick to"; the meaning here is similar to the old use of "bind" for becoming or taking an apprentice and in "bond servant." The same word is used in Matthew 19:5 for sticking to a wife.

It has been pointed out that the son is about to illustrate the beatitudes in a change of heart. He becomes poor in spirit, setting a high value on spiritual things; he mourns as he contemplates his present state and seeks to change it; he meekly turns back to his father, not asking special favors; he hungers and thirsts after food from heaven; he is merciful to those who joined him in his folly, taking all responsibility for it on himself; he is now pure in heart; he makes peace with his father; and his brother reviles him, and would persecute him if he could. See Mary I. Mesechre, "The Beatitudes and the Prodigal," *The Christian Science Journal*, XXIX (1911-1912), 478-483.

150. Derrett, *Law in the New Testament*, ch. 4, pt. 1, with important additional evidence in his *Studies in the New Testament*, I, 1-3. For a survey of other interpretations see David Landry and Ben May, "Honor Restored: New Light on the Parable of the Prudent Steward," *JBL*, 119 (2000), 287-309. Parable of the talents: Matthew 25:14-30. Parable of the pounds or minas: Luke 19:11-27.

151. "Sufficed": perhaps "prophesied"; see the parallel in Matthew 11:13. Matthew gives the teaching about the Law in 5:18, he gives the teaching about adultery in 5:32 and again in 19:9 (see also Mark 10:11-12, and for a discussion see p. 126).

152. See Luke 13:29 = Matthew 8:11-12 and John 13:23. "And instead" translates *alla kai*, literally "but and," which usually means "but also"; Turner, in Moulton, *Grammar*, III, 330, suggests "yes indeed."

153. Hades here means the place of the dead, the Hebrew Sheol. The old Testament says all go there, though Psalm 49:15 suggests that one can escape from it, and some interpret Job 19:26-27 similarly. Pseudo-Phocylides, apparently a Jew living in Alexandria somewhere between 50 B.C. and A.D., wrote, "Hades is [our] common eternal home" (Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, II, 578). Josephus, on the contrary, says the Essenes believed they had eternal souls that mounted upward when they died (*War*, 2.8.11 [II, 154-155]). In short, there was no agreement among the Jews in Jesus' day about the nature of the life to come, any more than

there is among Christians (or Jews) today.

On his deathbed Johanan b. Zakkai said he feared eternal damnation (Berakoth, 28b [IV, 2]), but R. Akiba, in the next generation, said people spent no more than a year in Gehenna ('Eduyyoth, II, 10). Akiba was interpreting Isaiah 66:23-24. Ben Zakkai may have been thinking of Daniel 12:2. Those who felt that time in Gehenna was limited for certain classes of sinners felt that these persons lived no more thereafter (Rosh Hashanah, 16b [I, 2]). The Seventh-Day Adventist doctrine of punishment in hell is similar.

Jesus made a distinction between Hades and the kingdom of heaven, but not necessarily a spatial one. As we see from his statements that "the kingdom of heaven has drawn near" (Matthew 4:17, etc.) and "is within you" (Luke 17:21), he thought of it as a mental or spiritual state. He would then have regarded Hades similarly. We may take it, then, that the parable is metaphorical. That is, if Jesus said there was neither marrying nor giving in marriage in heaven, we may conclude that there are no banquets there either in the usual sense. Christian theologians have never been able to decide whether there are real flames in the place of torment, and where it is, if they accept it as a place. Many have come to identify it simply as separation from God or as extinction (see *Los Angeles Times*, June 19, 2002, pp. 1, 20).

Many have combined some concept of heavenly and hellish places with heavenly and hellish states of consciousness. Thus Christopher Marlowe in *Dr. Faustus* makes the devil Mephistopheles say to Faustus, "this is hell, nor am I out of it" (I, iii, 78 in the so-called A-text of 1604, I. 74 in the B-text of 1616).

"On his right" is literally "in his bosom," so we find medieval sculptures sometimes have Abraham hugging a doll-sized Lazarus to his chest. Abraham's right would be the place of honor, and, as I have said, we ought to consider the possibility that every detail in a parable of Jesus has a double meaning, but it is also possible that Jesus placed Lazarus there just so it would be easy for Abraham, reclining on his left arm, to speak to him.

ABD, III, 15, points out that I Enoch 108:14-15 (scholarly consensus puts this part of I Enoch at the end of the second century B.C.), IV Ezra 7:36-38 (late first century A.D.), and the Apocalypse of Elijah 5:27-28 (first-fourth centuries A.D.) also say that the righteous and wicked could see each other. Literally translated, Luke 13:28 says the same.

For a historical survey of interpretations of the parable see *ABD*, IV, 266-267.

154. Law of Moses: Leviticus 25:35-36, Deuteronomy 15:7-8.

SECTION IV – B15 (Matt 4:23,24)

Mark 1:39 Matthew 4:23-25 Luke 4:44

Matthew now rejoins the others. Mark says: "And he went into all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and throwing out demons." (Luke says that Jesus "was preaching in the synagogues of Judea," but as "Judea" is a slip of the pen most manuscripts have "Galilee" instead.) **Matthew says:** "And Jesus went about in all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the good news of the kingdom [of God, that is, that it had drawn near and was knocking at the door, waiting to be recognized], and healing every sickness and every disease among the people. And his fame went out into all Syria [the next Roman province to the north, roughly modern Syria]. And they brought to him all those ill with different sicknesses and those in great pain, and demoniacs and epileptics and paralytics, and he healed them. And many crowds followed him [that came] from Galilee and the Decapolis [east of Galilee] and Jerusalem and Judea and across [east of] the Jordan [that is, from Perea]."80

Footnotes

80. For the word translated "epileptics" see pp. 340-341.

SECTION IV – B16 (Matt 10:1,8)

These verses are part of a much larger passage, on which Dearing makes extensive commentary in his book. Please see the book or contact me (doug_mccormick@email.com) for the excerpt if you are interested.

SECTION IV – B17 (John 15:12)

These verses are part of a much larger passage, on which Dearing makes extensive commentary in his book. Please see the book or contact me (doug_mccormick@email.com) for the excerpt if you are interested.

SECTION V – B18 (John 3:16,17)

NICODEMUS

John 3:1-21

Continuing with John. “There was a man of the Pharisees, Nicodemus by name, a ruler of [person of authority among] the Jews. He came to him [Jesus] by night, and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you come from God [as] a teacher, for no one can do these signs that you do unless God’s with him.’³⁴

“Jesus said to him in reply, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one will be born again he can’t see the kingdom of God.’

“Nicodemus says to him, ‘How can a person who’s an old man [like myself] be born? He can’t go into his mother’s womb a second time and be born, can he?’

“Jesus answered, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one will be born **[not of water and dust or clay but] of water [teaching] and Spirit** he can’t enter into the kingdom of God. What has been born of flesh is fleshly and what has been born of Spirit is spiritual. Don’t be amazed because I said to you, “You [people] must be born again.” The wind blows where it intends, and you hear its voice, but you **[Nicodemus]** don’t know where it comes from and where it goes. It’s the same with everyone who has been born of Spirit.” **In other words, material life has some awareness of the presence and work of Spirit but does not understand its source and purpose.**³⁵

“Nicodemus said to him in reply, ‘How can these [things] be?’

“Jesus said to him in reply, ‘Are you a teacher of Israel and don’t know these [things]? Truly, truly, I say to you that we speak what we know and testify to what we’ve seen, and you [people] don’t receive our testimony. If I said earthly [things] to you **[people, that is, compared the divine Spirit to the wind]** and you [people] don’t trust [me], how will you [people] trust if I were to say heavenly **[things, that is, as Paul put it, to “compare spiritual things with spiritual”]**?’³⁶

“And no one has gone up into heaven except him who came down from heaven, the Son of man. And just as Moses lifted up the [brass] serpent [on a pole] in the desert **[and those who saw it were healed of poisonous snake bites]**, so the Son of man must be lifted up, so that everyone who trusts may have eternal life in him **[the Son]**.”³⁷

Jesus’ words, “no one has gone up into heaven except . . . the Son of man,” appear to be contradicted by his later speaking of Abraham in heaven. Should we assume that he had second thoughts, or should we understand his words here differently? We may note that many manuscripts and hence the King James Version have “the Son of man who is in heaven.” Also, some of the committee which prepared the Bible Societies’ Greek text felt that this more common reading was correct. If so, then those familiar with spiritual healing are justified in saying that Jesus was here speaking of his true spiritual nature or conscious being, which never left the presence of God and is ever with man, though the man Jesus appeared on and disappeared from earth. Such an interpretation fits Jesus’ words to his apostles at the end of Matthew, “I’m

with you always.” We can understand Jesus’ words here then not as separating between the Son of God and other sons and daughters of God but between true spiritual being and seeming earthly being. As Paul put it, “flesh and blood cannot inherit [or, possess] the kingdom of God.”³⁸

Jesus’ words, “the Son of man must be lifted up,” are the first occurrence of an important theme in John’s Gospel (and in his only). It occurs twice more, in chapters 8 and 12. It is quite common for Christians to interpret these words and a later statement in chapter 3, “God . . . gave [the world] His only-begotten Son,” as referring to his crucifixion. We saw in the last chapter that Nicodemus may have known a spiritual interpretation of how the serpent lifted up by Moses brought healing: “Did the serpent keep alive? No; when Israel turned their thoughts above and subjected their hearts to their Father in heaven they were healed.” Jesus may then have meant that contemplation of what his crucifixion, resurrection and ascension proved about God and man would lift his followers’ thoughts above, and subject their hearts to their Father in heaven, the source of eternal life.³⁹

The word I have translated “be lifted up” may also mean “be exalted” or “be recognized for what he is” — indeed, it may have all three meanings at once. The New Testament never says in so many words what Jesus did to bring salvation, and neither does any creed adopted by the Christian church as a whole. Believers may therefore decide for themselves which views they will adopt.

The fact that spiritual healing continues today suggests that Jesus’ example in his life is not much less and perhaps no less important than his death for bringing salvation. As Paul wrote in Romans 5:10, “If, being enemies [of God], we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, by so much the more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his [the Son’s] life.” And as we read in II Timothy 1:8-10, “God . . . saved us and called us . . . not on the basis of our works but on the basis of His own purpose and grace [free gift], given to us in Christ Jesus before time began, but now manifested through the appearance of our Savior, Christ Jesus, who not only abolished death but also illuminated life and immortality through the good news [he brought].”⁴⁰

The phrase “born again” has come for many Christians to mean “saved,” in the sense that one has wholeheartedly accepted Jesus as one’s personal savior, a one-time confession of faith that will have its effect when we die and God sits in judgment on our souls. Those familiar with Christian healing as I have defined it think differently. They believe that salvation is the process of recognizing that the child of God has never been and can never be “lost.” The process is not always easy, humanly speaking, but it is part of “the strife of Truth with Falsehood” which truth must win.

The next words in John may be Jesus’, but I think they are more likely to be the author’s. If I am correct, John based what he says here on what Jesus said in Jerusalem at the end of his public ministry, so that the two passages would make another frame around the ministry.⁴¹ In any case, the words here define Jesus’ ministry: “For this is how God loved the world, namely, He gave [it] His only-begotten Son so that everyone trusting in him won’t die but has eternal life. For God didn’t send [His] Son into the world to judge the world but [to clarify what is right and what is wrong] so that the world will be saved through him. The person who trusts in him doesn’t judge himself, but the person who doesn’t trust has already [that is, automatically] judged himself, because he hasn’t trusted in the name of the only-begotten Son of God [that is, he hasn’t trusted that he himself is the Messiah’s]. And this is how he’s judged himself: the Light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness more than the Light, for their works were evil. For everyone who makes a practice of wicked [things] hates the Light and doesn’t come to the Light, so that his works won’t be punished. But the person who does the truth comes to the Light so that his works will be revealed, because they’ve been done in God.” The meaning of “in God” can be understood from some later words of Jesus, “the Son can’t do anything on his own; [he can] only [do] what he sees the Father doing. [What does this fact imply?] First, whatever He does, these [things] the Son also does in the same

way.”⁴²

Footnotes

34. “Ruler”: *archôn*, a general term but here probably meaning a judge and perhaps specifically a member of the judicial council that met in Jerusalem. See Bauer-Arndt-Gingrich-Danker, s.v.
35. “Not of water and dust or clay”: my interpolation rests on passages in the Dead Sea Scrolls where we find statements that man was made of these (1QHA, cols V, IX, XX; *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, ed. Florentino García Martínez & Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar [Leiden: Brill], 1997-1998, pp. 151, 159, 193).
- “Water [teaching]”: my interpretation depends on Jesus’ words in John 7:37, “If anyone’s thirsty [for righteousness], let him come to me and let him drink [learn].” See also Jose b. Jo’ezer’s words on p. 97.
- The words I have translated “born again” may also be translated “born from above,” but, as noted in IB and NIB concerning this passage (John 3:3), “from above” and “again” are alternate meanings of the word in Greek only, not in the language Jesus would presumably have been speaking with Nicodemus. The word “of” in the phrases “born of water,” “born of flesh,” “born of Spirit,” translates the word *ek*, which means “from,” “out of.” In Hebrew and Greek the words *ruwach* and *pneuma* mean both “spirit” and “wind.” Jesus here takes advantage of the fact, just as he did in replying to requests for a sign from heaven by saying that the people interpreted signs from heaven (the sky) daily.
- What I have translated as “flesh is fleshly” and “Spirit is spiritual” are literally “flesh is flesh” and “Spirit is spirit.” I wished to avoid a possible misunderstanding of the latter words, which might be taken to mean that God and man are the same.
36. “A teacher” is literally “the teacher”; hence TEV paraphrases, “a great teacher.” Paul: I Corinthians 2:13.
37. “Gone up into heaven”: the question, “who has gone up into heaven?” is found in Proverbs 30:4, where the writer is concerned with finding wisdom, which he treats as synonymous with the knowledge of God. Moses: Numbers 21:6-9.
- The order of the phrases in the original, “he who trusts in him will have eternal life,” seems to make a sequence “trusts in him,” but this sequence occurs nowhere else in the Gospels except Mark 1:15 (what is elsewhere translated “believe in him” or “believe on him” has a different preposition in the Greek, *eis* instead of *en*), so I think that “in him” goes with what follows rather than with what precedes it. Turner similarly says that “in” here and in Mark 1:15 means “in the sphere of” (Moulton, *Grammar*, III, 263).
38. Abraham in heaven: Luke 16:22-23. Bible Society editors: Metzger, pp. 203-204 (John 3:13). “I’m with you always”: Matthew 28:20. Paul: I Corinthians 15:50.
39. See John 8:28, 12:32, and 3:16.
40. In *IDB*, I, 312a, C. L. Mitton says, “The ‘blood’ of Christ is often mentioned [in the New Testament] as of special significance. This cannot mean the physical blood, but rather the life of Christ as it is yielded up to God in complete obedience to his will.” But Mitton is not, apparently, thinking of the whole life of Jesus, for earlier he interprets Ephesians 2:13, 18; 3:12 (and other passages) to mean that Jesus’ death was a specially important part of his atonement, which others share in by faith in him. For the question of who wrote II Timothy see Chapter I, note 32.
41. John 3:16-21. Compare John 12:44-50.
42. The word I have translated “has judged himself” might be translated “has been judged”; the forms of the reflexive and the passive are the same in this instance. The words “this is how he’s judged himself” are literally, “this is the judgment”; the word translated “punished” might be translated “revealed” or “condemned.”
- “The Son can’t do anything”: John 5:19.