



Bread & Wine

*"For God so loved the world that He gave
His only Son, that whoever believes in Him
should not perish, but have eternal life."*

John 3:16



DECEMBER 2006

BREAD & WINE

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Cover Picture: The gift of God to the world that He loved is our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world. Those who believe shall not perish, but those who reject Him shall be condemned.

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CONTENTS

December 2006 • Vol. 1 No. 10

| | |
|--|----|
| Editorial <i>Russ Atmore</i> | 4 |
| Incarnational Casualty <i>Russ Atmore</i> | 6 |
| Kings & Stables <i>Russ Atmore</i> | 9 |
| God Sent His Son to Save Us <i>J. I Packer</i> | 11 |
| Expository thoughts on John 1:14 <i>J. C. Ryle</i> | 14 |
| The Son of My Love (poem) <i>Russ Atmore</i> | 17 |
| Jesus Cleanses a Leper (Mark 1:40 – 45) <i>Russ Atmore</i> | 20 |
| Bible Quiz <i>Kaitlin Atmore</i> | 23 |

Editorial

Russ Atmore

The season of Christmas is upon us once more and every year the craving for pleasure and the demand to have that craving satisfied only intensifies. The real meaning of Christmas is not simply hidden among the insatiable hunger to have these needs met, it is rather altogether lost. Christmas is not Christmas trees and holly that makes everyone so jolly. It's not about Santa Claus and reindeer with noses so bright. It's not about decorations and gifts. It's not about family and wonderful meals together. It's about Jesus.

Christians know that Jesus Christ is the real meaning of Christmas, and that He is not seen in the vanity of human hearts and promotion of so-called goodwill offered by the world. We should not be surprised at this, because the world does not know Him. What we should be surprised at, however, is that, as Christians we really seem to have lost the meaning of the incarnation in the promotion of Christmas. Indeed, we have relegated the birth of Jesus to a once a year event, when in fact the Incarnation, is a story that should be told regularly, both in the church and to the world. We need to realize that the death of Jesus could not have happened without his birth. These two truths are wedded together in the Scriptures, but somehow, we have torn them apart.

Simple proclamation of the Incarnation apart from the crucifixion means at best, an incomplete story. It's not the whole story, and what the world always needs, is the whole story. We should make it our business to tell the whole story.

We focus this month on the birth of Jesus. I always feel guilty thinking like that because we should not hesitate to think about or preach about the birth of our Savior at any other time during the year. Jesus has somehow being relegated to the end of the year as far as his birth is concerned. The incarnation is an eternal truth, not a once a year celebration.

We have included two great articles by J. I. Packer (Board of Governors Professor of Theology at Regent College, Vancouver, Canada) of and J. C. Ryle (1816 – 1900. Bishop of Liverpool, Church of England) on the birth of Christ which help remind us that we should have a true perspective at this time of year.

There are two articles related to Christmas. The one focuses on the entrance of our Lord into this world. It was not a grand entrance, but rather one of humiliation. The other is a poem from the perspective of Joseph, the man assigned the responsibility of being an earthly father to our Lord. I have tried to think how he might have thought as he watched Jesus grow and develop.

We provide the conclusion to Mark chapter 1 in our commentary as we focus on Jesus cleansing the leper. Mark certainly is turning out to be a riveting study in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ. He shines forth so clearly and is set apart from all others.

Our Bible Quiz tells the Christmas story, so be careful to follow the clues carefully. Failure to read instructions may land you in trouble, but I know that none of you are so unwise as to allow that.

May the Lord Jesus Christ bless you all this Christmas as you focus on Him.

Russ Atmore
Soli Deo Gloria

“They lose nothing who gain Christ.”
Samuel Rutherford

Incarnational Casualty

Russ Atmore

Last year (2005) we witnessed the demise of Christmas. Not that Christmas vanished or disappeared, but there was an effort to start the process along the road to achieving that goal. Even major retailers succumbed to the vociferous attack. It still awaits us to see what this year brings forth. My guess is that retailers who felt the pinch in company profits will be very reluctant to tread that path again this year. We'll do anything to please you, is their mantra, but if it hurts the back-pocket, forget it.

Exchanging the word *Christmas* for *Holidays* certainly made some Christians angry. I say some, because not all Christians celebrate Christmas the traditional way, and some not at all. Why do they do this? Well, because for them, Christmas is not the holiday per se, nor is it the name per se. No, Christmas is really about one thing – the Incarnation. Now I agree with this way of thinking ultimately. If we want to celebrate Christmas (which is not in the Bible, except as the doctrine of the Incarnation), then that's okay with me. But if you want to remove the Incarnation from the Bible or you want to stop churches from celebrating the Incarnation, then that's not okay with me.

The real meaning of Christmas is not what is portrayed by the world. The real meaning of Christmas is not a snowy white night with gifts and toys and all things nice. The birth of Jesus was anything but nice, warm and comfy feeling. It was dirty and poor. Jesus was not born in a palace, or a rich home, or even a hospital (there were none then). He was born in the filthy stable out back (perhaps of the inn that turned Mary and Joseph away – Luke 2:7).

The real meaning of Christmas is not even what's portrayed by Christian families or the Church sometimes. We lose sight (under the guise of giving) of why Jesus came. We try and connect our giving with the fact that God gave something to us and therefore it's a very nice thing if we give something to someone else. The Incarnation is not the justification for us in giving gifts (though we certainly should give gifts to each other), it is rather the by-product of the Incarnation. The theological meaning of the Incarnation is not that we give gifts to each other. The implication of the Incarnation (which is God with us), is that Jesus came to die a terrible death. When we think of the birth of Jesus we must not stop at his birth – we must go beyond and see the reason for his coming – it was that he might die for sinners.

If you knew that someone was born just so that they might die, how would you react to that or even look at the person involved? Certainly with new eyes! Even Mary pondered these things in her heart - Luke 2:19). She listened to Simeon's explanation for Jesus birth, and heard him tell her that a sword would pierce her own soul – Luke 2:34, 35). We can look back on the "Christmas story," recorded in the Gospels, and we should see with new eyes and new appreciation every time we read the account of our Lord's birth.

The Incarnation is a mystery, of course. How could God be man, and still remain God? The Babe in Bethlehem was the upholder of the universe even as he lay in that dirty manger. This is beyond us. How could he be sinless though he possesses our humanity? How could he be weak and impotent, yet be God omnipotent? How could he be so common, yet divine? These are a few of the sublime mysteries that stare at us in the face as we think of his birth.

The Bible tells us that because God so loved the world, he gave His Son (John 3:16). He sent Jesus into the world for the express purpose of saving the world, and our Lord has done just that. He has secured salvation for sinners by his sacrificial death. It was the Incarnation that brought this about in time. We know that in eternity past, the Triune God made these great eternal decisions – the Father would send the Son; the Son would come and die as vicarious (substitutionary) sacrifice, and the Holy Spirit would apply salvation through the power of regeneration to sinners. The Incarnation is mysterious yet so necessary.

The season of Christmas is frenetic. The pace is unrivalled in comparison to any other time of the year. This heaps pressure upon us to conform or be left behind. The world will unleash a bombardment of advertising

lunacy all intended to cause you to feel that you must part with your hard earned money (again), and so we tread the path to their back-pocket. As always, we recognize the need for balance and moderation. It takes nerves of steel almost to resist the fleshy onslaught. Our culture is fleshy and sensual (whatever it takes to make you feel important and good about yourself, but do they really care?), but we are commanded to be other-worldly (don't love this world or the things in the world – 1 John 2:15).

Don't lose sight this Christmas of the Incarnation amid all the hustle and bustle. Put Christ Jesus first in your hearts, in your families. The world treads underfoot those who want to be like them, but it has no answer to those who stand for Christ. The world has no answer to the glorious power of God, except scorn, derision, and abuse. Promote the Incarnation and what that means in your life this year. Promote the true meaning of Christmas, and refuse to be another incarnational casualty.

*“Christ is the Conqueror of death, and the Lord of life”
John Calvin*

Kings & Stables

Russ Atmore

I would have thought that if God were going to make a grand entrance into the world that He would have done it in magnificent fashion. We know how to throw fantastic shows to reward athletes and heroes. We know all about tickertape parades and fanfare. We pay good money to witness musical spectacles that take our breath away and leave us transported to other realms of delight. Knowing that we all love a good show, I would have arranged for Jesus to come in spectacular fashion. I would have definitely thought like this before I became a Christian, and now that I am a Christian, I would have tried to give the Lord a better entrance into life on planet earth. I mean, who wants to go to a dirty, smelly stable to see a King? Kings after all, are born in splendor and with announcement to everyone. There's great rejoicing everywhere. But it was not like this with Jesus!

When I read my Bible I begin to realize that the birth of our Lord was absolutely perfect. The Bible even tells us in Galatians 4:4, that when the time was right, God sent forth His Son. So the timing of Jesus' birth was in the hands of the Father, and who could ever say that God the Father has made a blunder. The birth of our Lord was the fulfillment of many Old Testament prophecies. Israel as a nation expected God to send Messiah to deliver them.

They lived their lives in this expectancy. It carried them through tough times. It gave them hope knowing that God had promised to deliver them. The incredible thing is that when God sent forth their Messiah they missed Him. Jesus was born in obscurity, just some tired animals trying to catch some sleep before another day's work. Just a few shepherds, who were trying to make sense of a heavenly vision, were there to see the King. Not much of a welcome, I'd say.

The mystery of the incarnation makes you think. No one can comprehend the fact that God became man. Jesus lost nothing of His deity in becoming a man. There was no subtraction from His person as God when He clothed Himself with our humanity. I know from Philippians 2:5-11 that our Lord humbled Himself and became a man. He came to serve (Mark 10:45) and to give His life for sinners like me. As the king of Israel, you would have expected Him to demand service and obeisance, for by birth and right, he could demand it. I know that one-day our Lord will blaze forth as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

The reason Jesus came the first time was to offer His life as a sacrifice for sinners. He came to make atonement, to propitiate God's anger against my sin. He came as a perfect substitute (He had no sin). He came as a Sin-Bearer. All of these concepts would have been understood by Israel for they are all found in the Old Testament. Like all men before them and after them, their hearts were hard and calloused, and they refused this King born in a stable. They wanted fanfare. They wanted to share in His splendor. They wanted to stand shoulder to shoulder with Him and see Him overthrow Rome. But it was not to be! Jesus came to overthrow hearts and souls. By His love He has conquered mine. I'm so glad He was born in a stable, for I have seen the wonder and the glory of it. I'll take this King and stable anytime for He has promised life to me forever.

“Christ’s humiliation was with Him from the Stable to the Cross, but now His exaltation is forever.”

Russ Atmore

God Sent His Son, to Save Us

J.I. Packer

“The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.” John 1:14

Trinity and Incarnation belong together. The doctrine of the Trinity declares that the man Jesus is truly divine; that of the Incarnation declares that the divine Jesus is truly human. Together they proclaim the full reality of the Savior whom the New Testament sets forth, the Son who came from the Father’s side at the Father’s will to become the sinner’s substitute on the cross (Matt. 20:28; 26:36-46; John 1:29; 3:13-17; Rom. 5:8; 8:32; 2 Cor. 5:19-21; 8:9; Phil. 2:5-8).

The moment of truth regarding the doctrine of the Trinity came at the Council of Nicaea (A.D.325), when the church countered the Arian idea that Jesus was God’s first and noblest creature by affirming that he was of the same “substance” or “essence” (i.e., the same existing entity) as the Father. Thus there is one God, not two; the distinction between Father and Son is within the divine unity, and the Son is God in the same sense as the Father is. In saying that Son and Father are “of one substance,” and that the Son is “begotten” (echoing “only-begotten,” John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18, and NIV text notes) but “not made,” the Nicene Creed unequivocally recognized the deity of the man from Galilee.

A crucial event for the church’s confession of the doctrine of the Incarnation came at the Council of Chalcedon (A.D.451), when the church countered both the Nestorian idea that Jesus was two personalities—the Son of God and a man—under one skin, and the Eutychian idea that Jesus’ divinity had swallowed up his humanity. Rejecting both, the council affirmed that Jesus is one divine-human person in two natures (i.e., with two sets of capacities for experience, expression, reaction, and action); and that the two natures are united in his personal being without mixture, confusion, separation, or division; and that each nature retained its own attributes. In other words, all the qualities and powers that are in us, as well as all the qualities and powers that are in God, were, are, and ever will be really and distinguishably present in the one person of the man from Galilee. Thus the Chalcedonian formula affirms the full humanity of the Lord from heaven in categorical terms.

The Incarnation, this mysterious miracle at the heart of historic Christianity, is central in the New Testament witness. That Jews should ever have come to such a belief is amazing. Eight of the nine New Testament writers, like Jesus’ original disciples, were Jews, drilled in the Jewish axiom that there is only one God and that no human is divine. They all teach, however, that Jesus is God’s Messiah, the Spirit-anointed son of David promised in the Old Testament (e.g., Isa. 11:1-5; Christos, “Christ,” is Greek for Messiah). They all present him in a threefold role as teacher, sin-bearer, and ruler—prophet, priest, and king. And in other words, they all insist that Jesus the Messiah should be personally worshiped and trusted—which is to say that he is God no less than he is man. Observe how the four most masterful New Testament theologians (John, Paul, the writer of Hebrews, and Peter) speak to this.

John’s Gospel frames its eyewitness narratives (John 1:14; 19:35; 21:24) with the declarations of its prologue (1:1-18): that Jesus is the eternal divine Logos (Word), agent of Creation and source of all life and light (vv. 1-5, 9), who through becoming “flesh” was revealed as Son of God and source of grace and truth, indeed as “God the only begotten” (vv. 14, 18; NIV text notes). The Gospel is punctuated with “I am” statements that have special significance because I am (Greek: ego eimi) was used to render God’s name in the Greek translation of Exodus 3:14; whenever John reports Jesus as saying ego eimi, a claim to deity is implicit. Examples of this are John 8:28, 58, and the seven declarations of his grace as (a) the Bread of Life, giving spiritual food (6:35, 48, 51); (b) the Light of the World, banishing darkness (8:12; 9:5); (c) the gate for the sheep, giving access to God (10:7, 9); (d) the Good Shepherd, protecting from peril (10:11, 14); (e) the Resurrection and Life, overcoming our death (11:25); (f) the Way, Truth, and Life, guiding to fellowship with the Father (14:6); (g) the true Vine, nurturing for fruitfulness (15:1, 5). Climactically, Thomas worships Jesus as “my Lord and my God” (20:28). Jesus then pronounces a blessing on all who share Thomas’s faith and John urges his readers to join their number (20:29-31).

Paul quotes from what seems to be a hymn that declares Jesus' personal deity (Phil. 2:6); states that "in Christ all the fullness of the Deity lives in bodily form" (Col. 2:9; cf. 1:19); hails Jesus the Son as the Father's image and as his agent in creating and upholding everything (Col. 1:15-17); declares him to be "Lord" (a title of kingship, with divine overtones), to whom one must pray for salvation according to the injunction to call on Yahweh in Joel 2:32 (Rom. 10:9-13); calls him "God over all" (Rom. 9:5) and "God and Savior" (Titus 2:13); and prays to him personally (2 Cor. 12:8-9), looking to him as a source of divine grace (2 Cor. 13:14). The testimony is explicit: faith in Jesus' deity is basic to Paul's theology and religion.

The writer to the Hebrews, purporting to expound the perfection of Christ's high priesthood, starts by declaring the full deity and consequent unique dignity of the Son of God (Heb. 1:3, 6, 8-12), whose full humanity he then celebrates in chapter 2. The perfection, and indeed the very possibility, of the high priesthood that he describes Christ as fulfilling depends on the conjunction of an endless, unfailing divine life with a full human experience of temptation, pressure, and pain (Heb. 2:14-17; 4:14-5:2; 7:13-28; 12:2-3). Not less significant is Peter's use of Isaiah 8:12-13 (1 Pet. 3:14). He cites the Greek (Septuagint) version, urging the churches not to fear what others fear but to set apart the Lord as holy. But where the Septuagint text of Isaiah says, "Set apart the Lord himself," Peter writes, "Set apart Christ as Lord" (1 Pet. 3:15). Peter would give the adoring fear due to the Almighty to Jesus of Nazareth, his Master and Lord.

The New Testament forbids worship of angels (Col. 2:18; Rev. 22:8-9) but commands worship of Jesus and focuses consistently on the divine-human Savior and Lord as the proper object of faith, hope, and love here and now. Religion that lacks these emphases is not Christianity. Let there be no mistake about that!

From: Concise Theology: A Guide To Historic Christian Beliefs

Expository Thoughts on John 1:14

J.C. Ryle

The passage of Scripture now before us is very short, if we measure it by words. But it is very long, if we measure it by the nature of its contents. The substance of it is so immensely important that we shall do well to give it separate and distinct consideration. This single verse contains more than enough matter for a whole exposition.

The main truth which this verse teaches is the reality of our Lord Jesus Christ's incarnation, or being made man. St John tells us that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us".

The plain meaning of these words is that our divine Savior really took human nature upon Him, in order to save sinners. He really became a man like us in all things, sin only excepted. Like ourselves, he was born of a woman, though born in a miraculous manner. Like ourselves, he grew from infancy to boyhood, and from boyhood to man's estate, both in wisdom and in stature (Luke 2:52). Like ourselves he hungered, thirsted, ate, drank, slept, was wearied, felt pain, wept, rejoiced, marveled, was moved to anger and to compassion. Having become flesh, and taken a body, He prayed, read the Scriptures, suffered being tempted, and submitted His human will to the will of God the Father. And finally, in the same body, He really suffered and shed his blood, really died, was really buried, really rose again, and really ascended up into heaven. And yet all this time He was God as well as man!

This union of two natures in Christ's one Person is doubtless one of the greatest mysteries of the Christian religion. It needs to be carefully stated. It is just one of those great truths which are not meant to be curiously pried into, but to be reverently believed. Nowhere, perhaps, shall we find a more wise and judicious statement than in the second article of the Church of England. "The Son, which is the Word of the Father, begotten from everlasting of the Father, the very and eternal God, and of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin of her substance: so that two whole and perfect natures, were joined together in one Person, that is to say, the Godhead and the manhood were joined together in one person, never to be divided, whereof is one Christ, very God and very man." This is a most valuable declaration, "sound speech, which cannot be condemned."

But while we do not pretend to explain the union of two natures in our Lord Jesus Christ's person, we must not hesitate to fence the subject with well defined cautions. While we state most carefully what we do believe, we must not shrink from declaring boldly what we do not believe. We must never forget that though our Lord was God and man at the same time, the divine and human natures in Him were never confounded. One nature did not swallow up the other. The two natures remained perfect and distinct. The divinity of Christ was never for a moment laid aside, although veiled. The manhood of Christ, during His lifetime, was never for a moment unlike our own, though by union with the Godhead, greatly dignified. Though perfect God, Christ has always been perfect man from the first moment of His incarnation. He that is gone into heaven, and is sitting at the Father's right hand to intercede for sinners, is man as well as God. Though perfect man, Christ never ceased to be perfect God. He that suffered for sin on the cross, and was made sin for us, was "God manifest in the flesh." The blood, with which the church was purchased, is called the blood "of God," (Acts 20:28). Though He became "flesh" in the fullest sense, when He was born of the Virgin Mary, He never at any period ceased to be the Eternal Word. To say that He constantly manifested His divine nature during his earthly ministry, would, of course, be contrary to plain facts. To attempt to explain why His Godhead was sometimes veiled and at other times unveiled, while He was on earth, would be venturing on ground which we had better leave alone. But to say that at any instant of His earthly ministry He was not fully and entirely God, is nothing less than heresy.

The cautions just given may at seem at first sight needless, wearisome, and hair-splitting. It is precisely the neglect of such cautions which ruins many souls. This constant undivided union of two perfect natures in Christ's Person is exactly that which gives infinite value to His mediation, and qualifies Him to be the very Mediator that sinners need. Our Mediator is One that can sympathize with us, because He is very man. And yet, at the same time, He is One who can deal with the Father for us on equal terms, because He is very God. It is

the same union which gives infinite value to His righteousness, when imputed to believers. It is the righteousness of One who was God as well as man. It is the same union which gives infinite value to the atoning blood which He shed for sinners on the cross. It is the blood of One who was God as well as man. It is the same union which gives infinite value to His resurrection. When He rose again, as the Head of the body of believers, He rose not as a mere man but as God. Let these things sink deeply into our hearts. The second Adam is far greater than the first Adam was. The first Adam was only man, and so he fell. The second Adam was God as well as man and so He completely conquered.

Let us leave this subject with feelings of deep gratitude and thankfulness. It is full of abounding consolation for all who know Christ by faith, and believe on Him.

Did the Word become flesh? Then He is One who can be touched with the feeling of His people's infirmities, because He has suffered himself being tempted. He is almighty because He is God, and yet He can feel with us, because He is man.

Did the Word become flesh? Then He can supply us with a perfect pattern and example for our daily life. Had He walked among us as an angel or a spirit, we could never have copied Him. But having dwelt among us as a man, we know that the true standard is to "walk even as he walked." (1 John 2:6). He is a perfect pattern because He is God. But He is also a pattern exactly suited to our wants, because He is man.

Finally, did the Word become flesh? Then let us see in our mortal bodies a real, true dignity, and not defile them by sin. Vile and weak as our bodies may seem, it is a body which the Eternal Son of God was not ashamed to take upon Himself, and to take up to heaven. That simple fact is a pledge that He will raise our bodies at the last day, and glorify them together with His own.

The Son of My Love (poem)

Russ Atmore

Old Joseph sat with gnarled hands
And wondered at the skill
gently displayed by his Son
He marveled at the plans
Made perfect by God's holy will
That made him father to such a one

Now tired and unable to lift the wood,
He sought instead to gaze
At the Son he called mine
He smiled and thought he could
Catch a glimpse of the timeless ways
Of the infinite God in time

With wonder he watched the lad
Who tenderly made the decision
To craft a new design
And with an aching heart so sad
He knew God's perfect precision
Would take away this Son so fine

To lose the company of his Son
Would break his heart in two
But this was the way
And though he would lose the fun
What could he do?
For God his Son could not stay

Joseph stood with a smile
And pondering what to say
embraced the man his Son had become
And with tears thought awhile
If he held him back would he stay
This boy he loved as his Son

Ah, no, the time of the story
Had to be just right
So the Son of his love would go
And take the path to glory
Amid suffering and blight
This the way he would know

Can you wonder with me today?
At the love of this man
For a Son he called his own
We never think to pay
The price of Joseph who can
Teach us we never walk alone

But now his Son of earth
Has conquered death for all
So we can live with him above
And worship him for his birth
And with Joseph, we too can call
Him, the Son of my love

Will you this Son now claim?
To be yours forever more
And will you yield your heart
To him who took your blame
And smote your sin so sore
And made you of him a part

Yes, this Son of Joseph's love
Is the one who must reign
over hell, and death and sin
Until we meet in glory above
We must follow in his train
And take our cross like him

*“We are never nearer Christ than when we find ourselves
lost in a holy amazement at His unspeakable love.”*

John Owen

Jesus Cleanses a Leper (Mark 1:40 – 45)

Russ Atmore

Scripture

Mark 1:40 – 45

Key Verse

“Moved with pity, he (Jesus) stretched out his hand and touched him and said to him, “I will; be clean.” --
Mark 1:41

Theme

The leper’s cleansing reminds us that we have been cleansed from sin – from its diabolical effects and from its long-term result (eternal death). This is the stigma of leprosy – it reminds others of who you are. Sin reminds us of who we are. Jesus can heal the leper and cleanse him from the stigma of his disease, and he does the same for us regarding our sins.

Exposition

Leprosy was considered the worst of all diseases in the ancient world. It probably covered many more conditions than we would think of today, when we think of leprosy. Any skin disease or irritation might bring the dreaded words from the priest, “unclean”. To be unclean meant separation from family and society. There was terrible stigma attached, so when the priest eventually might pronounce you clean, it would bring immense relief. Lepers were not permitted to live within cities or have normal relationships. They were excluded. The Bible speaks of leprosy in Leviticus 13 and 14. It never speaks of healing leprosy; rather it always speaks of cleansing leprosy. We find also that the Law could not help a person suffering from this disease - it only prescribed the harsh requirements for preventing further outbreaks and separated the unclean from loved ones. It could not change him, or heal him. It could only pronounce someone unclean or clean.

The leper who comes to Jesus is obviously in great distress (vs. 40). He comes *“imploring and kneeling.”* Somewhere in Galilee, this leper approaches Jesus during his ministry. This must mean that wherever Jesus was, this leper was somehow able to get near to the Lord and speak to him (cf. Luke 17:12 – the ten lepers stood at a distance). The leper addresses Jesus as one who can cleanse him. This implies that this leper knew about Jesus and his power to heal. Matthew’s account in Matthew 8:1 – 4, indicates that the man addressed Jesus as “Lord.” The leper is thus aware and sure of the fact that Jesus has the power to cleanse him. What he is unsure about, is whether Jesus will cleanse him. This is contained in his statement, *“if you will, you can make me clean.”*

Jesus is moved with compassion (pity) in verse 41, and it is our Lord’s compassion that prompts him to respond favorably to the leper. Notice also that Jesus reaches out and touches the leper before stating that he will cleanse him. No other person would ever have contemplated touching a leper. The rabbis taught that if a person touched a leper, that person also became unclean. In this miracle, Jesus demonstrates, once again the power of the kingdom of God

The power of Jesus is demonstrated through his touch. We do have many examples of Jesus touching others to heal them. The power to heal did not reside in his hands. The power to heal was his by virtue of who he was (cf. Mark 5:30; Luke 8:46). The leprosy is completely destroyed when Jesus speaks the word, “I will; be clean.”

Verse 43 might seem inappropriate at this stage in the narrative. Jesus sternly charges the man not to tell anyone about what had happened to him, but rather to go to the priest so that he could pronounce clean (vs. 44) and that the leper could then make his required offering (Lev. 14:2 – 32). We see here that Jesus fulfilled the law and had concern for it, contrary to what his enemies thought of him. The word for “*sternly charged*” stems from the idea of a horse snorting in impatience. It’s a noise that reflects anger, and so the word impresses the idea that the reaction of Jesus after cleansing him was swift and sharp designed to warn and bring something to the leper’s attention. Now why did Jesus tell this man so sternly to be careful about what he said to others about Jesus? He spoke in this way because Jesus knew that he (and his words) would be misunderstood by the people. His hour had not yet come. It is possible that Jesus also knew that this man was not as reliable as he should be, so he needed a severe and sharp rebuke. It was to no avail. This man went and did the very thing Jesus said he should not do (vs. 45). He is a reflection of those who come to Christ for salvation, hear the terms of salvation in terms of discipleship, and refuse to submit. It is as if they know better

What was the result of the leper’s disobedience? Jesus was unable to enter any town openly. He had to meet people in desolate places. Many cities were deprived of blessing due to this man’s disobedience. The basic lesson of being a disciple is that we do the Lord’s work his way, and not in our own way. If he speaks, we obey. We are reminded in these verses that Jesus is the central character. The leper would still be a leper had not Jesus cleansed him.

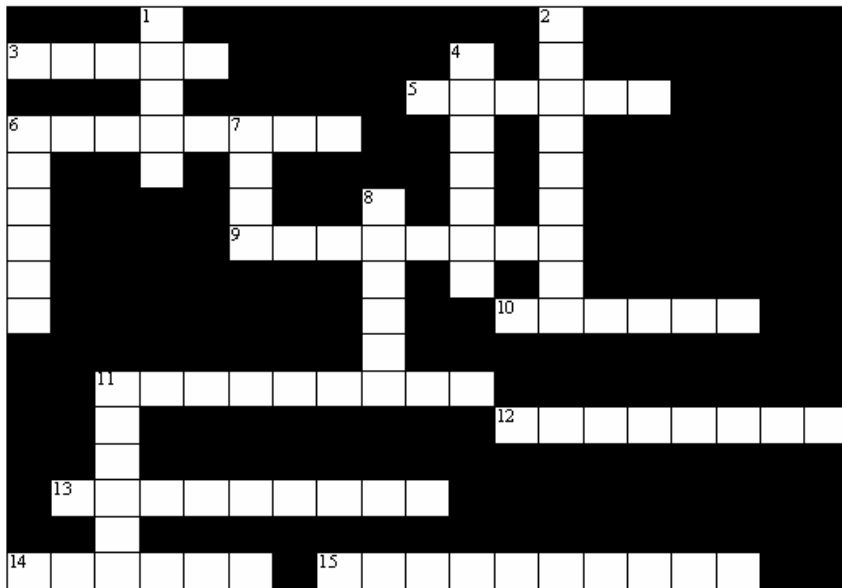
Application

In this first chapter of Mark, our attention has been drawn dramatically to Jesus. We all need cleansing from sin. This is only available through our Lord Jesus Christ. Sin like leprosy permeates our entire being. We are totally depraved, not in the sense of being the very worst that we could be always, but rather the potential to be that flows in the veins and in the nature of every human being. We are all overthrown by sin. We are all undone by sin. Cleansing is through the blood of Jesus – his work for us on the Cross. Jesus alone has the power to forgive us our sins and to free us from our sins. He is willing always to forgive and cleanse. Do not hesitate to come to him.

Bible Quiz

Kaitlin Atmore

Pay careful attention to the clues provided.



3. "...an _____ of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, 'Joseph...do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.'"

1. "She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name _____, because he will save his people from their sins."

12. "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord has said through the prophet: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him _____' – which means, 'God with us'"

6. (across) "In those days Caesar _____ issued a decree that a census should be taken of the entire Roman world."

7. "And everyone went to his own _____ to register."

9. "So Joseph also went up from the town of _____...to Bethlehem the town of David, because he belonged to the house and line of David."

4. "He went there to register with Mary, who was _____ to be married to him and was expecting a child."

13. "While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her _____, a son."

8. "She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a _____, because there was no room for them in the inn."

11. (across) “And there were _____ living out in the fields nearby... An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified.”

6. (down) “But the angel said to them, ‘Do not be _____. I bring good news of great joy that will be for all the people.’”

11. (down) “Today in the town of David a _____ has been born to you;”

14. “..he is _____ the Lord.”

5. “This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in _____ and lying in a manger.”

15. “...the heavenly host appeared with the angel, praising God and saying, ‘ _____ in the highest, and on earth peace to men on whom his favor rests.’”

2. “When the angels had left them and gone into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, ‘Let’s go to _____

and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has told us about.”

10. “When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were _____.”

“What health is to the heart; holiness is to the soul.”
John Flavel