

A Determination to be Crucified? Some Observations

Andrew Willie

Dr. J. Jaune's article on the image of Our Lord's Body on the Holy Shroud argues from that image that Jesus was complicit not only in His own death but in the excessive suffering which He incurred beforehand. The question is whether Scripture paints the same picture. The answer is, "almost, but not quite." Jesus **was** complicit, but not entirely willingly, as is shown in His coming to terms with his own prediction of his death in *John, 12,vs 27*. Here he says, " Now my soul is troubled and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'" Jesus' prayers in Gethsemane in the first three gospels have a similar tone. In these, He prays that the cup prepared for him will be taken from him. The image reminds us of a Eucharistic cup. In the end, however, Jesus accepts the Father's will. The Eucharistic element is extremely strong in the accounts of the feedings of the 5000. This is the only miracle to occur in all four gospels. In fact, in slightly different versions, Matthew and Mark tell its story twice. *John, 6,vs 51* relates this miracle to the Cross and the suffering He will experience, when Jesus says, " The bread which I give is my flesh: I give it for the life of the world." .

Luke's Gospel also relates Our Lord's death and resurrection to Baptism.

The verse concerned, *Luke 12,vs 30*, is in a section about division in families where it seems out of place. However, it reads, "I have a Baptism to be baptised with and how I am frustrated until it is accomplished."

Baptism was by total immersion and initially performed by John the Baptist and his disciples in the River Jordan. It was thought the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand and so people should repent. Baptism, as a washing clean from sin, followed, for Jesus alone, by the Father's gift of the Holy Spirit, *Mark 1 vs 9-11*. Christian Baptism emphasised rebirth. Still with total immersion, a candidate was buried in the waters, and after death there to the old self, a new person emerged. Now risen to a life in Christ, he or she was given the laying on of hands and received the Holy Spirit, In Jesus's case Baptism by John prefigured His death and resurrection and He was anxious for both.

Of importance were Our Lord's names and titles. Jesus itself is a variant of both Joshua and Yeshua. It is a common Jewish name, with a book of the Old Testament attached to it. In English it simply means, **the Lord Saves**. That is what Christians believe that Our Lord's death has done for humanity. He was generally thought of as the Son of Joseph, not in itself a denial of the incarnation, since adoptive fatherhood was recognised. Two possible titles, however, are full of ambiguity. One is the **Son of Man**, which Our Lord seems generally to have favoured. It could mean just an ordinary bloke, a Son of Mankind: however, in the Book of Ezekiel, it is the term by which God addresses the prophet so might be a prophetic claim. In Daniel,7, vs 13 and 14, the **Son of Man** is given special authority over all people by the Ancient of Days, another name for God. However, the vision is complicated by Our Lord's identification of the role with the

Suffering Servant found in *Isaiah*, especially *Chapter 53*. The other of these two titles is **Son of God** which Jesus endorsed simply by referring to God as Father. The title Son of God was used by Davidic kings, also generally for Israel itself and of godly people.

The title which clearly was extremely special was that of God's **Anointed One**, in Hebrew, **Messias** and in Greek, **Christos**. This was given to the military leader who would "Make Israel Great again." It was the expectation of the rabble who greeted Jesus as he entered Jerusalem the first Palm Sunday that this was His mission. However, with his healing of the Syrophenician woman's daughter, *Mark 7 vs 24-30*, He had already extended his ministry beyond Israel and He therefore knew that any Messianic claim could lead to a cruel and painful death.

The issue was clarified in a discussion that our Lord had with disciples above the city of Caesarea Philippi, *Matthew 18, vs 13-23*. Very beautiful then, the area is now an Israeli National Park. Here Jesus asked what was being said about Him, and followed this up by asking who the disciples thought He was. It was Peter who answered, "The Christ, the Son of the Living God" and Jesus saw the answer as the result of Divine Revelation: Jesus went on to speak of his own death and resurrection and earned a rebuke from Peter, who in return was told he was a mouthpiece for Satan, voicing the concerns not of God, but of men.

In fact, Our Lord is recorded in the first three Gospels as directly and accurately prophesying his own violent death and resurrection. This happens three times in successive chapters in each of these Gospels. Our Lord's Transfiguration, *Mark 9 vs 2-8*, prepared at least Peter, James and John who witnessed it for Our Lord's presence in his resurrection body - a matter which, by images made through radiation, the Shroud also records. Our Lord's flagellation and crucifixion about which Jaume has written both movingly and scientifically using the Shroud's blood-marks is the basis of the claim that Our Lord is the Christ. Our Lord's interpretation of what the Christ should do, namely suffer yet love humanity, differed from the traditional one, or did it? The faith which Jesus founded has its roots in the faith of Israel and by being in some ways different has conquered the world, not totally, but in ways which other religions including Judaism itself have not managed.

The way mobs behaved as a result of what happened in Southport, shows mobs have not altered much since Our Lord's Day! The situation may be even worse now as a result of social media. The Shroud certainly showed Our Lord's fatal wounds, but not the wounds of the words used by those who rejected Him and still do so, at their own peril.

