

North Chesterfield MMA 2008-2009

WEDNESDAY 1 JULY 2009

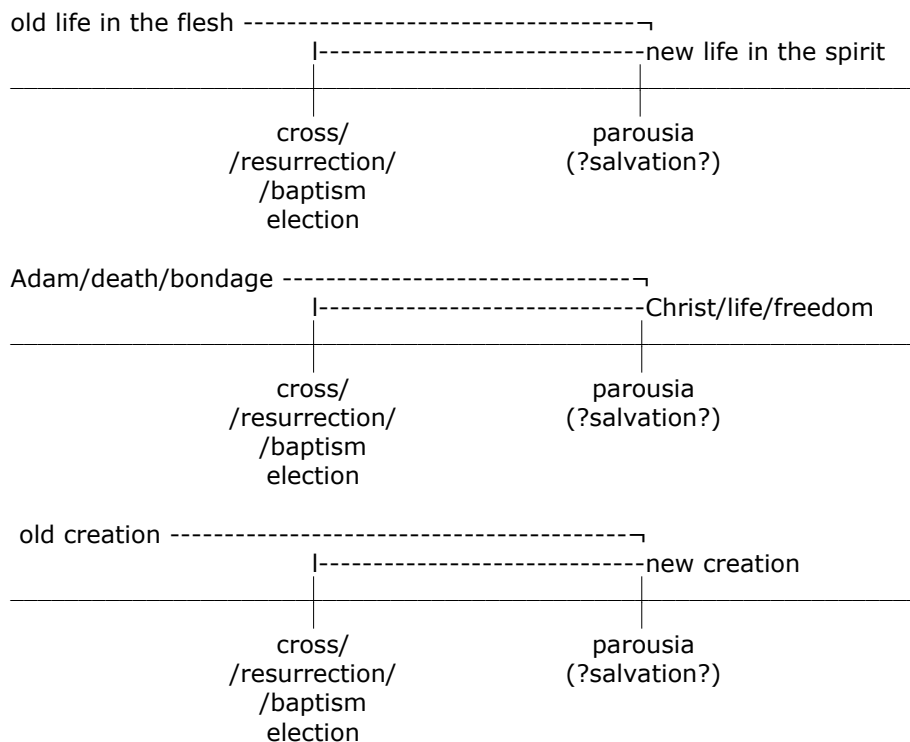
Paul

Definitely Paul: Romans, 1 Corinthians, 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, 1 Thessalonians, Philemon
Probably Paul, most to least likely: Ephesians, Colossians, 2 Thessalonians, Titus, 2 Timothy, 1 Timothy (these last three are sometimes known as the pastoral epistles).

- Paul wrote letters. Paul answers particular situations, theology emerging as he does so. Context determines content.
- Content is partially a response to opponents, so opponents set the agenda. But we don't always know who opponents are, or details of the dispute. To some extent, I get the feeling that he makes it up as he goes along, just as you and I might, so is not always consistent.
- Paul's letters predate gospels. 1 Thess earliest AD40-50. Galatians 50s. Philippians 60s.
- Paul sometimes refers to letters that are now lost: 1 Cor 5.9; Col 4.16.
- Paul was a Greek speaking Jew from the Diaspora. He was a Pharisee, "zealous for the traditions of my ancestors." Gal 1.14
- Paul had an experience of the risen Christ. Acts 9.3-6. 1 Cor 15.9. He wanted to share that experience with as many people as possible.
- Paul was in dispute with the Jerusalem Church about Gentiles. Gal 2.11-15.

According to Paul, human beings are weak creatures with natural desires. This is supposed to mean that they are constantly dependent on God, but instead humankind has turned its back on God. How can this situation be resolved? According to Paul only by the death and resurrection of Jesus.

- Sin leads to death. Sinful flesh can only be dealt with by killing it.
- Jesus' death summed up what humankind has been, and draws a line under it.
- Jesus' resurrection marks the beginning of a new life, no longer subject to sin and death.
- transition from death to life must be experienced by individuals and communities.
- new life means new awareness of God, new values, new morality, new identity.
- When do we move from death to life? According to Paul it has a beginning, but is also a continuing process - we are all in the process of being saved - 1 Cor 1.18, 15.2; 2 Cor 2.15. Not clear how.



Paul and the death of Christ

- The death of Jesus is at the centre of Paul's theology and Paul's gospel. The claim that a crucified man could be Messiah is offensive to Jews. Deut 21.23.
- Christ as new Adam; sacrifice for sins. 1 Cor 15.20-22, Romans 5.12-21 Is this "substitutionary atonement" (propitiation)? "representative atonement"? (expiation).

Paul and the Law

Paul did not believe Christians should keep the whole Law. All that is required is to respond in faith to God's gracious gift in Christ, and then to live life in the Spirit. Paul therefore abandons Torah.

Paul: who is Jesus?

- the crucified, the last Adam, the coming one, the beloved Son.
- Messiah.
- Wisdom of God. Col 1:15-20; Phil 2:5-11. 1 Cor 1:24, 2:7.
- Lord: Rom 10:9 1 Cor 12:3. Designated Son of God at resurrection (Romans 1), OR pre-existent and divine (Phil 2)?

Paul and Christian

Three images in describing what it means to be a Christian:

- to be justified by faith alone
- to be "in Christ", and a new creation
- to live in the power of the Spirit. The Spirit
 - provides proof that we are children of God
 - giver of gifts
 - means of signs, wonders, and miracles

Paul, women and men

- Egalitarian texts include: Gal 3.28; 1 Cor 7.4,8; 1 Cor 11.4
- Women leaders: Rom 16.1,3,6,7; 1 Cor 1.11; Phil 4.2-3
- Patriarchal texts: 1 Cor 11.3,5,7; 1 Cor 14.33ff

The conclusions you come to will be those you want to reach. Which texts are authentic?

Paul believes men and women are different and distinct. He thought of himself as a Pharisee and a Hebrew. But now the family of God is enlarged, and those who were outside the covenant can now be part of it. Gentiles are not Jews. Women are not men. Within the family of God, we are all both different and equal – so in Christ, there is neither male or female.

Other epistles

- Hebrews: not Paul. Kind of summary of purposes of Christ. Superiority of NT over OT. Uplifting stuff.
- Catholic or general epistles
 - James: calls for patience. Stresses value of works (as opposed to faith). Luther didn't like it!
 - Peter 1: steadfastness and perseverance under persecution; practical duties of a holy life; example of Christ and other motives to patience; counsels to pastors and people. Includes the harrowing of hell (into the creeds).
 - Peter 2: OT references, Enoch.
 - John x 3: to counter Gnostic heresies, inc that Jesus came only as spirit.
 - Jude: warnings.

Apocalypse (revelation, unveiling)

Unclassifiable. Protestants, catholics, orthodox have differing views on interpretation and value. Only NT book not read in Eastern Orthodox worship.