

## The Invincible Christ.

Our Bible reading for this evening is taken from the first Christian sermon ever preached, from the apostle Peter's message to a large crowd of Jews on the Day of Pentecost. I am reading from chapter 2 of the Acts of the Apostles, commencing at verse 22.

Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a man marked out<sup>1</sup> among you by God with mighty works and wonders and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves know.

Him, being delivered up according to the determined counsel<sup>2</sup> and foreknowledge of God, you, by the hands<sup>3</sup> of lawless men, have crucified and slain, whom God raised up, having loosed the pangs (or 'cords'<sup>4</sup>) of death, because it was not possible for Him to be held by it.<sup>5</sup>

I confess that this reading represents something of a peg for my message this evening. I shall return to it in due course. The subject of tonight's message is that of 'the Invincible Christ' ... of the One who couldn't be conquered or overcome.

We begin (where else!) in the gospel according to Matthew, where we find that:

### **Herod couldn't destroy Him.<sup>6</sup>**

Herod<sup>7</sup> the Great<sup>8</sup> (named as King of Judea by the Roman Senate several decades before<sup>9</sup>) plotted to destroy Jesus under the guise of wanting to worship Him. He directed the wise men from east, 'Go and search diligently for the young child; and when you have found Him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship Him also'.<sup>10</sup> It is clear that the subsequent slaughter of all Bethlehem's male children under the age of two was entirely in character. The first-century Jewish historian, Flavius Josephus, is on record as having said that Herod 'was a man of great barbarity towards all ... a slave to his passion'.<sup>11</sup>

Over a lengthy period, he murdered, not only some of his friends,<sup>12</sup> but many of his own family, including his once much-loved second wife Mariamne;<sup>13</sup> her brother, mother, and grandfather, together with his own uncle.<sup>14</sup> Three years before his death, he had two of his sons strangled in prison, and just five days before his death he had his eldest son stabbed to death. It is reported that Emperor Augustus once quipped, '*it is better to be Herod's pig than his son*'<sup>15</sup> – being an obvious pun on the Greek words for 'pig'<sup>16</sup> and for 'son'.<sup>17</sup> Caesar was alluding to the fact that Herod would not eat pork; for Herod, although an Idumean (an Edomite) by descent, largely lived as Jew.<sup>18</sup>

Herod was insanely protective of his status as king, and for him of all people to be asked, 'Where is He who is born king of the Jews?'<sup>19</sup> was a red flag to a bull.

But the threat posed by Herod's villainous scheme represented no problem to God. The One who sits in the heavens laughed,<sup>20</sup> and simply used two dreams ... as He would again a little later, first, to direct Joseph and the family back from Egypt to the land of Israel, and then, second, when Joseph was afraid to return to Judea on account of Archelaus (one of Herod's surviving sons), to direct the family to Galilee.

First now, the wise men were warned by God not to return to Herod as he had instructed, but to depart to their own country by another way. We are not told which route the Magi followed, but we can assume that it was certainly not the most convenient. And then, second, Joseph was warned by one of God's angels, 'Arise, take the young child and His mother and flee into Egypt; for Herod is about to seek the young child' – not to worship Him, but – 'to destroy Him'.<sup>21</sup> And there Joseph (and, of course, the young child Jesus) remained until the death of Herod soon after, 'that it might be fulfilled', Matthew added, 'which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, "Out of Egypt I called my son"'.<sup>22</sup>

So, no, Herod couldn't destroy Him!

Staying for now in the Gospel according to Matthew, we find, second, that:

**Satan couldn't corrupt Him.<sup>23</sup>** As some of us saw back in September, the central issue raised by our Lord's temptations in the wilderness of Judea was whether or not He could be persuaded to act independently of His Father – to go His own way, to do His own will.

He met the devil's three crowning temptations with three well-chosen texts of scripture, all three arrows being drawn from the quiver of the Old Testament Book of Deuteronomy, the so-called 'book of the wilderness'.

'If (since<sup>24</sup>) you are the Son of God', the devil opens, 'as declared by that voice from heaven at your baptism some six weeks ago<sup>25</sup>, command that these stones may become bread. Indeed, speaking of baptism, I seem to remember that rather strange Baptist man once saying to the Jews, "Do not think to say within yourselves, we have Abraham for our father; for I say to you, that God is able of *these stones* to raise up children to Abraham"<sup>26</sup>

'Now, surely, with the power with which *you* have just been anointed (and Malcolm has his eye particularly on Acts 10 verse 38, where we are told that Jesus had been 'anointed ... with the Holy Spirit and with power'<sup>27</sup>) you are able easily to make stones into bread, and so to satisfy your very real hunger'.<sup>28</sup>

And the Saviour's response? 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God. It was not then, our Lord was saying, that which *went into His* mouth which was of supreme importance – but that which *came out of God's!* His Father's word was of far greater importance to Him than bread – and He had received no word from His Father about making stones into bread! So, 'No', He replied in effect, 'I am content to stay hungry and await my Father's time. I trust God'.

Then 'the devil ... took Him into the holy city, and stood Him on the pinnacle (the wing) of the temple'. 'So you trust God and His word, do you?', the devil said in effect. 'All right, "then prove it'.

'Well, you know, don't you, that *His word* assures you that you can safely "cast yourself down" from here. For (and I know you like these words) "it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning you, and on their hands they shall bear you up, lest at any time you strike your foot against a stone"'.<sup>29</sup>

Note that please, "against a stone". It is as if the Tempter says, 'I acknowledge that stones may not only provide you with the opportunity to perform a miracle for the *sustaining of your life*, but they can also seem to pose a very real danger to *life itself*. But then, if you *trust* God so fully (and the Psalm from which my quotation is taken<sup>29</sup> more or less opens with the words, 'I will say of the Lord ... My God, in Him I will trust'), you have nothing to fear from stones. You need have no qualms about throwing yourself down, for you have God's specific promise to preserve you'. Clever!

And the Saviour's response?

'It is written again, "you shall not tempt the Lord your God" – "you shall not subject the Lord your God to the test" 'For me to cast myself down', the Lord was saying, 'would not be a case of trusting God, but of tempting God'. And so the One who, at the *first* temptation, refused to *doubt* God and His word, at the *second*, refused to *presume on* God and His word either!

Thirdly, and finally, the tempter dropped his mask and came out into the open. 'The devil', we read, 'led Him up into a high mountain<sup>30</sup> and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time'.<sup>31</sup> 'There ... do you see them? And *all* this authority will I give you, and the glory of them: for that is delivered to me; and to whomever I will I give it. If you therefore worship before me, all shall be yours', as Luke records the devil's words.<sup>32</sup>

His claim that the authority over the world's kingdoms had been 'delivered' to him was certainly stretching the point.

And yet, for all that, it was a genuine offer. For we read in Revelation 13, concerning Satan's 'Superman' of the end times (the beast which came up out of the sea<sup>33</sup> and out of the abyss<sup>34</sup>) that 'the dragon gave him his power, and his throne, and great authority', and then that 'all the earth ... worshipped the dragon, because he gave the authority to the beast'.<sup>35</sup>

God's promise to His anointed Son, the Messiah, was, 'Ask of me, and I shall give you the nations for your inheritance'.<sup>36</sup> But then and there, Satan offered our Lord a short-cut, the kingdom of all nations on the cheap. What a bargain! The kingdom without the cross; the glory without the suffering.

And the Saviour's response?

'Get hence ('begone'), Satan! For it is written, "You shall worship the Lord your God and Him only shall you serve". At which point, Luke concludes his account with the words, 'And when the devil had ended every temptation, he departed from Him for a season ('until an opportune time').

Satan had exhausted all his ammunition. He had pulled out all the stops. He had held back *nothing*, and he had achieved *nothing*.<sup>37</sup> Truly, as our Lord expressed it sometime later, when the 'ruler of this world' came, he had *nothing* in Him.<sup>38</sup> Not one of his 'fiery (flaming) arrows'<sup>39</sup> had found *any* combustible material in our Lord to ignite.

So, no, Satan couldn't corrupt Him!

Still in the first gospel, we find third that:

**Peter couldn't stumble Him.**<sup>40</sup> In the region of Caesarea Philippi, Jesus sharply rebuked Peter with the words, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are a cause of stumbling to me'.<sup>41</sup>

Matthew provides the background to those words by telling us that, 'From that time, Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day'. It was then, Matthew tells us, that 'Peter took Him aside, and began to rebuke him, saying, 'Be it far from you (better, either 'Pity yourself' or 'May God pity you'), Lord! This shall never happen (a double negative:<sup>42</sup> by no means, in no wise,) to you'.<sup>43</sup>

This is the second time in his Gospel that Matthew used the phrase, 'From that time'. The first was back in chapter 4, where Jesus began to present Himself to Israel as her Messiah.<sup>44</sup> Here the phrase signalled the turning point in our Lord's ministry, launching His preparation of His disciples for His forthcoming suffering and death on account of His rejection by His nation Israel (as represented by her leaders). His earlier declaration that the kingdom was 'at hand' (that it had drawn near) had been fine with Peter.

But, in Peter's reckoning, Messiah's suffering and death was most certainly not part of the program. According to Peter's agenda, the Son of man must go to Jerusalem, liberate Israel from the domination of Rome,<sup>45</sup> and then reign!

No, Peter didn't share the popular view about Jesus' identity. No, Jesus wasn't John Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the other prophets. He belonged to an altogether different category. He was 'the Christ (the Messiah), the Son of the living God'. But, though Peter didn't share the popular view about Jesus' identity, he most certainly shared the popular view of what the Messiah would be and would do.

And in Peter's violent outburst and objection, the Lord Jesus detected an echo of a second voice which He had heard three years previous. In Peter's confession, the Saviour could hear the voice of *His Father* at His baptism: 'This is my beloved Son'.<sup>46</sup> But in Peter's rebuke, the Saviour heard the hiss of *the serpent* in His wilderness temptations, attempting again to deflect Him from His God-appointed path to the cross.

A few moments earlier, He had spoken of Peter as a rock/stone.<sup>47</sup> Now He speaks of him as a 'rock/stone' of an altogether different kind, as a stumbling stone. For the apostle could not only be a living stone built into a spiritual house<sup>48</sup> (into Christ's 'church'<sup>49</sup>) he could also be a stone deliberately placed in the way for the Lord Jesus to stumble over.

But now it is Peter's turn to be rebuked!<sup>50</sup> Wheeling around on Peter, which brought the other disciples into view also.<sup>51</sup> 'Get behind me', Jesus said to him, 'You would be a cause of stumbling to me'.<sup>52</sup>

But, no, Peter couldn't stumble Him!

It is at this point that we part company with Matthew's gospel and move into the Gospel according to Mark.

And here we find that:

**The demons couldn't withstand Him.**

We will focus on just three incidents, in each of which we see plainly that no demonic power was able to resist our Lord's all-powerful command, 'Come out'.

First, we visit a spot close by some tombs near the village of Gerasa<sup>53</sup> in the vicinity of Gadara<sup>54</sup> on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. There Jesus was met by a man possessed by demonic powers, spoken of both as 'an unclean spirit',<sup>55</sup> and as 'many' unclean spirits.<sup>56</sup> Nobody and nothing could confine or restrain the pitiful man, not even shackles and chains – both of which had been tried many times.<sup>57</sup>

Just a short time before, when confronted with Jesus' power over an exceptionally violent storm on the lake, His disciples had questioned, 'Who is this, that even the wind and the sea obey Him?'<sup>58</sup> The demonic power which held this poor demented man in its grip entertained no doubt who He was! They knew Him to be the 'Son of the Most High God'.<sup>59</sup>

Here then was an altogether hopeless case. An unclean man, possessed by unclean spirits, and dwelling in a ceremonially unclean place, a place defiled by the bones of the dead.<sup>60</sup> Well, 'altogether hopeless' until Jesus came. And He accomplished with His word what no number of Gerasa's chains could ever have accomplished; for they were intended to restrain the man when he was possessed by a horde of demons, but Jesus set him free from the demons, from every last one! 'Come out of the man, unclean spirit!', He commanded.<sup>61</sup> Following which, we read, 'the unclean spirits came out',<sup>62</sup> and, with our Lord's express permission, they entered a nearby herd of pigs,<sup>63</sup> which soon drowned in the sea.<sup>64</sup> And when the local people came out to see what had happened, they found the onetime naked<sup>65</sup> and demon-possessed man 'sitting ... clothed and in his right mind'.<sup>66</sup>

Certainly, the demons of Gerasa couldn't withstand our Lord and His powerful command, 'come out of the man'.

Second, we rerun the video a little, back from chapter 5 to chapter 1, there to visit, not a spot close by some tombs near Gadara, but, one Sabbath day, a synagogue in Capernaum, a town on the other side of the Sea of Galilee.<sup>67</sup>

Here too we are introduced to 'a man with an unclean spirit'.<sup>68</sup> When Jesus rebuked the spirit and ordered him to 'be quiet ('to 'be muzzled') and' to 'come out of him',<sup>69</sup> the unclean spirit threw the man into convulsions, and cried out with a loud voice – but come out of him the spirit most certainly did.<sup>70</sup> Small wonder that all those in the synagogue were astounded (a very strong word), exclaiming, 'What is this? ... with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him'.<sup>71</sup>

The unclean spirit of Capernaum could no more withstand our Lord and His command, 'come out' than could the unclean spirits of Gerasa!

Running the video forward this time into chapter 9, we witness a scene (not by some tombs near Gadara, nor in a synagogue in Capernaum, but) at the foot of the so-called Mount of Transfiguration, where again a demonic power more than met its match in the all-powerful word of Jesus, 'Come out of him'.<sup>72</sup>

One of the crowd who met Jesus when He came down from the Mount entreated Him on behalf of his demon-possessed, mute, deaf and epileptic young son. 'If you can do anything', the desperate father pleaded, 'have compassion on us and help us'.<sup>73</sup> To which the Lord replied, 'If you can! All things are possible to him who believes'.

The child's<sup>74</sup> father thought the crucial question was whether *Jesus could* heal his son. Jesus explained that the crucial question was really whether *the father believed that He could* heal him.

Mark makes it clear that this was no ordinary, run-of the-mill demon. This was an exceptionally strong, particularly nasty and malicious spirit, who had successfully defied and resisted the combined attempts of nine powerless and embarrassed apostles to expel it.<sup>75</sup> But when He, our Lord, was brought in, and issued the order, 'You mute and deaf spirit, I command you, *come out* of him and never enter him again!' Yes, you are right, having first thrown the young boy into violent convulsions, the demon came out!

Here then we observe, over against nine *impotent* disciples, their one *omnipotent* Master!

The unclean spirit at the foot of the Mount could no more withstand our Lord and His command, 'come out' than could the unclean spirit of Capernaum or the unclean spirits of Gerasa!

No, **the demons couldn't withstand Him**. And, if you *still* have any doubt, you have only to ask Mary Magdalene, from whom no less than seven demons were expelled.<sup>76</sup>

It is at this point that we part company with Mark's gospel and move into the Gospel according to Luke.

And here we find that:

#### **The Pharisees couldn't trap Him.<sup>77</sup>**

We join the action when the Pharisees,<sup>78</sup> along with the chief priests and scribes,<sup>79</sup> sent their disciples, together with the Herodians,<sup>80</sup> as 'spies' with the express purpose of seizing upon something which Jesus said that would enable them to hand Him over to the authority of the governor.

After some sickly flattery, the unholy alliance posed their question, 'Is it lawful for us to give tribute to Caesar, or not?'<sup>81</sup> which was anything but the innocent question it seemed. For, when 'tribute to Caesar' had first been introduced by the Roman authorities some 25 years previous,<sup>82</sup> such was the fierce resentment and opposition this obvious sign of submission provoked, that it triggered a rebellion against Rome on the part of the more zealous Jews, led by Judas the Galilean, a fact noted years later by the Pharisee Gamaliel in Acts 5.<sup>83</sup> And Jesus was a Galilean!

The Herodians openly supported the reigning family of Herod with its pro-Roman sympathies, whereas the Pharisees and their disciples were anything but pro-Roman. Yet on this occasion these strange bedfellows gladly linked arms to make common cause against a common foe, namely, Jesus. And as they saw it, their carefully crafted question had Him well and truly caught between a rock and a hard place.

For in their eyes, if Jesus ruled that, as Jews, they *should* pay tax to the occupying Romans, the Pharisees would broadcast this to the people and thereby discredit Him in their eyes as one who supported that which was, to some at least, a God-dishonouring badge of slavery to the Gentiles.<sup>84</sup>

Alternatively, if Jesus ruled that, as Jews, they should *not* pay tax to the occupying Romans, the Herodians, as the political party, were well placed to report His teaching to the authorities and to charge Him with treason.<sup>85</sup>

Either way, the Pharisees and their sidekicks were confident that they had Him trapped.

But Jesus, we read, 'Perceived their craftiness' (their cunning, their trickery),<sup>86</sup> and refused to give the yes or no answer they wanted. Instead, He demanded, 'Show me a denarius'.<sup>87</sup> Not, please note, 'a coin' (just any coin), but, in effect, 'Show me the tribute ('the tax') money'.<sup>88</sup>

It was not that He and His disciples lacked the wherewithal to pay the stipulated tribute (Judas didn't carry their moneybag {their purse}<sup>89</sup> for fun), but it was essential that those who sought to ensnare Him should themselves produce the coin which would be used to pay the offensive tax.

On its one side, the coin in question bore the image of the emperor, and the inscription 'Tiberius Caesar, son of the divine Augustus', and on the other an inscription which Jews understood as describing Caesar as high priest.<sup>90</sup> As you can imagine, both inscriptions were highly offensive to the Jews. But, more than anything else, they hated this coinage because it was an evident symbol of their subjection to Rome.

But the fact that *they* possessed the coin proved that *they* both accepted and used it as lawful coinage. The Lord simply drew their attention to Caesar's 'image and superscription' on the denarius, which proved that it had been minted by and for Caesar, that, ultimately, it was *his* coin. It was only right therefore, He declared, for them to 'render' to Caesar that which belonged to Caesar.

And please note that, in His answer, our Lord did not use the word which the spies had. They had spoken in terms of tribute being 'given'<sup>91</sup> (as though it was a gift which might be withheld), but He spoke of the tribute being 'rendered' (being 'given back', being 'repaid'), as the payment of something owed, of a rightful due.<sup>92</sup>

The spies were foiled; 'they were not able ... to catch Him in what He said'.<sup>93</sup> No, the Pharisees couldn't trap Him!

At this point we move forward into the Gospel according to John, where we find that:

### **The Jews couldn't stone Him.**

The apostle records two separate occasions when the Jews attempted to stone<sup>94</sup> our Lord to death. The first is recorded in the closing verse of chapter 8, where we are told that 'they picked up stones to throw at Him'.<sup>95</sup> There is no small irony in the fact that a chapter which ends with the Jews' very real attempt to stone Jesus Himself had begun with the account of a hypothetical question which they had earlier put to Him about the possible stoning of a woman who had committed adultery.<sup>96</sup>

Our Lord's lengthy dispute with the Jews (which centred largely on the relationship which He and they had with the patriarch Abraham<sup>97</sup>) came to a climax when Jesus claimed, *not* 'before Abraham was, I was' (that is, that He had existed before Abraham), but 'before Abraham was ('before Abraham came into being'), I AM (stressing His timeless and eternal existence)'.<sup>98</sup> To the Jews, the implication of His words was clear. He was declaring Himself to be none other than the God of Abraham, who had appeared to Moses at the burning bush at Sinai.<sup>99</sup>

In their eyes, this was blasphemy, and their hands reached down to grasp stones for them (in accordance with their law<sup>100</sup>) to hurl at Him.

Without further explanation,<sup>101</sup> John simply records that Jesus slipped away from them and left the Temple precincts unharmed.<sup>102</sup>

The second occasion when the Jews attempted to stone Him is found towards the close of chapter 10.<sup>103</sup> This time, the Jews reacted violently to the Lord's claim, 'I and the Father are one'.<sup>104</sup> Minutes before, they had asked Him to tell them clearly whether or not He was the expected Messiah.<sup>105</sup> But He gave them more than they bargained for. He declared that He and the Father were perfectly one, implying that they were not only one in purpose and in power to preserve His spiritual sheep, but that they were one in nature, or, as He put it Himself, that 'the Father is in me and I am in the Father'.<sup>106</sup>

Again, as in chapter 8, the Jews regarded such a claim as 'blasphemy', because, in their eyes, it meant that He, a mere man, was making Himself God. And so they 'picked up stones again to stone Him'.

This time He caused the Jews to drop the stones, not by *immediately* withdrawing from them as in chapter 8,<sup>107</sup> but first by confronting and debating them,<sup>108</sup> and then by further eluding them and escaping 'out of their hand'.<sup>109</sup>

On both occasions, the Jews' attempts to stone Him failed. And this, scripture makes clear, for two main reasons.

First, that the timing was altogether wrong.<sup>110</sup> God had fixed the exact hour of our Lord's death,<sup>111</sup> and that had not yet arrived. And, in his Gospel, John makes it clear that, if at the Cross of Jesus *the Romans came too late* to take His life,<sup>112</sup> at these points in His public ministry *the Jews came too early!*

But it was not only the wrong time, 'stoning' was the wrong way and method of His death. Immediately prior to Jesus' crucifixion, the Jews had been compelled to explain to Pilate why they needed to refer the case of Jesus to him: 'It is not lawful', they said, 'for us to put anyone to death',<sup>113</sup> for execution was a power which the Romans reserved exclusively to themselves.<sup>114</sup> For his part, the apostle John then explained that 'this was to fulfil the word that Jesus had spoken, signifying by what manner of death He should die'.<sup>115</sup>

John was referring back to our Lord's words which He had spoken back in chapter 12, where the apostle had recorded Jesus saying, 'I, when I am lifted up from the earth (on the cross,

that is), will draw all types of people to myself' and where he (John) had added the same explanation, 'This He said, signifying by what manner of death He should die'.<sup>116</sup>

The Lord Jesus could be put to death only by crucifixion,<sup>117</sup> for it had been prophesied long before that He would be hanged on a tree,<sup>118</sup> that the men of Israel would be guilty of 'piercing' Him,<sup>119</sup> and, indeed, that His hands and His feet would then be pierced.<sup>120</sup>

So, no, most certainly, the Jews couldn't stone Him!

Still in John's gospel, we find that **Judas couldn't fool Him.**

Following His washing of His disciples' feet, the Lord had explained to the apostle Peter, 'You (plural) are clean, but not every one of you'. 'For', John explained, 'He knew who was to betray Him; which was why He said, "Not all of you are clean"'.<sup>121</sup> Jesus, that is, knew, not only that His hour had come for Him to leave the world,<sup>122</sup> and everything which was going to happen to Him,<sup>123</sup> but who it was that was about to betray Him.

Judas had failed to deceive Jesus as he had his fellow disciples. We are told way back at the close of chapter 6 that, 'Jesus knew from the beginning ... who it was that would betray Him'.<sup>124</sup>

It was this knowledge which explains why the Lord addressed Judas as He did in the Garden of Gethsemane, when, following Judas's hypocritical greeting and treacherous kiss, 'Jesus said to him, "Friend, do what you came to do".<sup>125</sup>

For we must note that the word which Jesus used<sup>126</sup> was not a word of intimacy and endearment, as He had used, for instance, of Lazarus of Bethany.<sup>127</sup> He addressed Judas, rather, as simply 'companion', as 'associate'. Make no mistake, our Lord was never insincere or hypocritical.

Rest assured, Judas couldn't fool Him.

And then, still in John's gospel, we find that **Pilate couldn't fault Him.**

We read in the King James Version that, during our Lord's civic trial, three times over Pilate, the then Roman governor, acknowledged, 'I find no fault in Him'.<sup>128</sup> True, the word properly signifies 'no ground of accusation', that Pilate was passing his verdict, 'I find no basis for a charge against Him'.

But it is possible that Pilate meant rather more. I have in mind his words to the crowd, when, having sought to divert the blame for the death of Jesus onto the Jews by taking water and washing his hands<sup>129</sup> in front of them, he declared, 'I am innocent of the blood of *this righteous man*'.<sup>130</sup> It may be therefore that Pilate had come to share his wife's assessment of Jesus.<sup>131</sup>

I think it fair to say that Pilate couldn't fault Him!

Finally for this evening, we move into the book of Acts, to the Bible passage which I read at the outset, to Peter's proclamation at Pentecost concerning the Lord Jesus, whom, the apostle said, following His crucifixion and death, God 'raised up, having loosed the pangs (or 'cords') of death, because *it was not possible for Him to be held by it*'.

I hardly need to say it, but here we find that **death could not hold Him**, that death was unable to maintain its grip on Him.

For die He most certainly had. In the following chapter, Peter, when addressing a Jewish crowd at the Temple, struck the sharp contrast, 'you *killed* the Author (the 'source', the 'originator') of *life*'.<sup>132</sup> They took the life, that is, of the giver of life.

Over seven centuries before, the prophet Isaiah had written concerning our Lord that, 'He was cut off out of the land of the living'.<sup>133</sup> Just think of that! The *Life-giver* Himself cut off out of the land of *the living!*

We have it on His authority that angels cannot die,<sup>134</sup> and yet He, the creator<sup>135</sup> and the Lord of angels,<sup>136</sup> did!

But, if His death declared Him to be a man (a real man), and not an angel, His resurrection declared Him to be much more than a man, that He was, indeed, not an angel, but no less than the Son of God.<sup>137</sup>

The apostle Peter wants us to know that, although therefore it *was possible* for *men* to put Jesus (having become a man Himself) to death, it *was not possible* for *death* to hold Him captive in its power.

In His case, death certainly did not have *the last word*. Ever since the fall of man, death had held undisputed sway over men, who, on account of the fear of death, were subject to lifelong slavery;<sup>138</sup> death, 'the King of terrors',<sup>139</sup> had well and truly 'reigned'.<sup>140</sup>

But it did not 'reign' over the Lord Jesus! Death was compelled to lay its sceptre at His feet when He conquered death and broke its tyranny.<sup>141</sup>

For He *didn't* side-step death as had Enoch<sup>142</sup> and Elijah.<sup>143</sup> He *didn't* escape from death's prison house temporarily as had several others, both in Old Testament days<sup>144</sup> and much more recently.<sup>145</sup> No, He totally vanquished death!<sup>146</sup>

Although, in one sense (as Peter knew well), Jesus' enemies had conspired against Him and had killed Him, in the final analysis, as the Lord Jesus Himself had earlier claimed, He had laid down His life of His own accord. He had, that is, laid down freely what no man could have ever taken from Him forcibly. And not only so, but, as He made clear, when He laid down His life, it was with His resurrection in view,<sup>147</sup> that He had the power, the authority, to take His life again.<sup>148</sup> And, what is more, He quickly exercised that authority; make no mistake, He didn't stay dead for long!<sup>149</sup>

So that, when, as the glorified Lord, He later revealed Himself to the apostle John on the Isle of Patmos, He declared Himself to be, not only 'the living One' who 'became dead', but One who was thereafter 'alive for evermore'.<sup>150</sup>

Yes, the Living One Himself had once entered that which was to Him the altogether alien territory of death. That was not only a realm – a province – which He had never entered before; it was also a realm (a region) which He would never enter (or ever need to enter) again. As the apostle Paul expressed it, 'Christ being raised from the dead, dies no more'.<sup>151</sup> Death had more than met its match.

Well do we sometimes sing:

Death cannot keep his prey,  
Jesus, my Saviour;  
He tore the bars away,  
Jesus, my Lord!<sup>152</sup>

No, most certainly, death couldn't hold Him!

Well, there it is then.

**Herod** couldn't destroy Him

**Satan** couldn't corrupt Him

**Peter** couldn't stumble Him

**The demons** couldn't withstand Him

**The Pharisees** couldn't trap Him

**The Jews** couldn't stone Him

**Judas** couldn't fool Him

**Pilate** couldn't fault

Him



**Death** couldn't hold Him

This is the wonderful Saviour, who was, who is, and who ever will be ...

**... the Invincible Christ.**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> 'Either Luke takes it to be implied by the context or ἀποδεικνύμενος must have a less technical meaning, a man marked out (... cf. 1 Macc. 14:23, ἐν τοῖς ἀποδεικνύμενοις τῷ δήμῳ βιβλίοις; other quotations in Wettstein). This would fit the view, suggested by v. 36, that it was at a time after his resurrection that Jesus was appointed Christ. Luke appears to mean that Jesus was brought to your attention by his mighty works; they did not constitute his appointment, or proof of his status, but made it clear that he was one who stood in a special relation with God, one through whom God was acting in a unique way', C K Barrett, A CRITICAL AND EXEGETICAL COMMENTARY ON THE ACTS OF THE APOSTLES, on Acts 2. 22.

<sup>2</sup> τῇ ὠρισμένη βουλή; cf. κατὰ τὸ ὠρισμένον, Luke 22. 22.

<sup>3</sup> Greek: singular. Cf. Mark 14. 41.

<sup>4</sup> God freed our Lord from death pangs, not birth pangs. 'A strange expression (since pangs are not normally said to be loosed), borrowed from Ps. 17:6 (LXX: ὠδίνες ἄδου περιεκύκλωσάν με, προέφθασέν με παγίδες θανάτου) or Ps. 114:3 (LXX: περιέσχον με ὠδίνες θανάτου, κίνδυνοι ἄδου εὔροσάν με). In each case the Hebrew seems to have intended not לָבַד, pang, but לֵבַד, cord', *ibid.* on Acts 2. 24. The LXX of Psalm 116 verse 3 reads, 'The pangs (ὠδίνες) of death compassed me'; the Hebrew reads, 'The cords (חבל) of death compassed me', *ibid.*, on Acts 2. 24.

<sup>5</sup> Acts 2. 22-24.

<sup>6</sup> Matt. 2 .8, 11-13.

<sup>7</sup> See ... <https://standpointmag.co.uk/text-janfeb-11-herod-the-terrible-or-herod-the-great-geza-vermes-reappraisal/>.

<sup>8</sup> The text doesn't say that paranoid Herod asked the age of Jesus, but what time the 'star' (the astral event) appeared; see Matt. 2. 7, 16. This astral event could well have preceded the birth of Jesus by several – even many – months even before the magi made their trip. Herod may also have allowed himself even a year leeway in the infant massacre. See Paul Maier, 'Date of the Nativity'. The nativity has its star, and the crucifixion has its darkness – heavenly signs. Justin Martyr claims that the Magi visited 'as soon as the child was born', Dialogue with Trypho ... 'the Magi from Arabia, who as soon as the Child was born came to worship Him ...', chapter 88. (Written in late 150s – i.e. about 120 years after death of the Lord.) ... **But see also**, 'when a star rose in heaven at the time of His birth, as is recorded in the memoirs of His apostles, the Magi from Arabia, recognising the sign by this, came and worshipped Him', chapter 106.

<sup>9</sup> Mark Antony 'called the senate together... and told them that it was for their advantage ... that Herod should be king; so they all gave their votes for it', Flavius Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Book 1, Chapter 14, Paragraph 4; cf. Antiquities, Book 14, Chapter 14, Paragraph 4. . Mark 'Antony persuaded Octavian and the Roman senate in 40 BCE to entrust Herod with the kingship of Judea', Geza Vermes.

<sup>10</sup> Matt. 2. 8.

<sup>11</sup> Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, Book 17, Chapter 8, Section 1.

<sup>12</sup> Notably, Costobarus, Lysimachus, Cadius (who was also called Antipater), and Dositheus, Josephus, Antiquities, Book 15, Chapter 7, Paragraphs 8-10. Herod also slew others, such as Sohemus, Mariamne's favourite eunuch.

<sup>13</sup> In 29 B.C. Mariamne was one of Herod's ten wives.

<sup>14</sup> 'Herod's sister Salome accused Mariamne of adultery with Herod's uncle Joseph - so he had Joseph killed. Herod's mother and sister continued to plot against Mariamne, and as a result Herod had Mariamne executed ca.28 BC. He also murdered her grandfather, her mother, and her brother', <https://www.drshirley.org/relg464/notes-herod.html>. He also executed some of his friends because he believed that they had betrayed him to Mariamne; <https://drmerrillsseminary.blogspot.com/2015/10/herod-great-his-infamous-family-herod.html>.

<sup>15</sup> 'Melius est Herodis porcum esse quam filium', Macrobius, Saturnalia, Book II, Chapter 4, Section 11.

<sup>16</sup> Υός ... υός. Hog or swine.

<sup>17</sup> Υιός.... υός

<sup>18</sup> See, 'On his father's side he was an Idumean-Jew, from a family of Idumean converts', Evie Gassner, How Jewish Was Herod? @ <https://www.thetorah.com/article/how-jewish-was-herod>.

<sup>19</sup> Matt. 2. 2. Note also how Caesar Augustus claimed for himself the title, 'Saviour of the World'. Unknown to him, a rival was born!

<sup>20</sup> Psa. 2. 4; 37. 13; 59. 8; cf. Prov. 1. 26.

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 2. 13.

<sup>22</sup> Matt. 2. 15; cf. Hos.11. 1.

'Josephus tells us much about Herod. The best word to describe his reign is 'overkill.' He murdered his *favorite* wife's father, drowned her brother--and even killed her! He executed one of his most trusted friends, his barber, and 300 military leaders--all in a day's work! Then he slew three of his sons, allegedly suspecting them of treason. Josephus tells us that "Herod inflicted such outrages upon (the Jews) as not even a beast could have done if it possessed the power to rule over men" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 17:310). Killing babies was not out of character for this cruel king. And killing them up to two years old--to make *sure* he got the baby Jesus lines up with his insane jealousy for power. Shortly after the birth of the Messiah, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem and inquired of king Herod where the *real* king of the Jews was to be born. The theologians of Herod's court knew the Scriptures well--in 'Bethlehem' they recited. Ironically, though they knew the Scriptures, they did not believe them! They did not even bother to travel the five or six miles to Bethlehem to see their Messiah.

But Herod believed the Scriptures! That is why he sent a corps of butchers to Bethlehem to slaughter innocent children, in hopes of destroying this rival to his throne. But he was too late. The magi had come and gone and Jesus was by now safe in Egypt'. See ... [http://www.bible.org/page.php?page\\_id=656](http://www.bible.org/page.php?page_id=656).

<sup>23</sup> Matt. 4. 1-11.

<sup>24</sup> With the meaning, 'since'. (Note the different word translated 'if' in Matt. 4. 9.) Satan does not aim to cast doubt on our Lord's sonship – it had recently been asserted both by the Lord Jesus, Luke 2. 49, and by God Himself, Luke 3. 22 – but to use it as a springboard for his first two temptations. The clause, 'If you are the Son of God,' assumes that such was the case. Our Lord's Sonship is the presupposition of the temptations. Satan did not tempt Jesus to *doubt* His divine Sonship, but to *presume* on it. They were temptations, not to question His status as Son, but to abuse it. They did not call in question whether He was the Messiah, but the kind of Messiah He should be.

<sup>25</sup> Matt. 3. 17. Following His baptism, Jesus was 'immediately' driven into the wilderness by the Spirit, Mark 1. 12, where He had spent the last 40 days, Matt. 4. 2; Luke 4. 2.

<sup>26</sup> Matt. 3. 9.

<sup>27</sup> It would have been no temptation for anyone else to turn stones to bread.

<sup>28</sup> 'The temptation which both Matthew and Luke agree in giving as the first, consists in the call addressed to Jesus to change stones into bread. Now it is self-evident that such a temptation, if it were to have any meaning, could only be made under certain conditions. Manifestly the person to whom it was addressed must, on the one hand, have been so constituted that he could feel a want of food, which at that moment could not be gratified in any ordinary way; and again, he must have been one who was supposed to possess the power of satisfying that want in an extraordinary and miraculous manner'. (<http://www.ccel.org/ccel/ullmann/sinlessness.pdf>, page 203.)

<sup>29</sup> Psalm 91, which the Rabbis taught was a Messianic Psalm.

<sup>30</sup> The expression 'into a high mountain' is not in the oldest Greek manuscripts, and is supplied on the basis of Matthew's account.

<sup>31</sup> Luke 4. 5.

<sup>32</sup> Luke 4. 6. Note the repeated 'I' and 'me' – because previously he had been careful to keep himself very much in the background.

<sup>33</sup> Rev. 13. 1.

<sup>34</sup> Rev. 17. 8.

<sup>35</sup> Rev. 13. 2-4.

<sup>36</sup> Psa. 2. 8.

The apostle Peter once summarised our Lord's public ministry in the words, He 'went about doing good, and *healing all that were oppressed of the devil*; for God was with Him', Acts 10. 38. Underline that, 'healing all that were oppressed of the devil'. And I note that our Lord's second specifically recorded miracle of healing was the cure of a man possessed by an unclean spirit, recorded for us in Mark 1. 23-26.

I suggest that the key to His casting out demons is to be found in the Wilderness Temptations which we considered last evening. And my reason for thinking this lies in our Lord's teaching in Matthew 12, Mark 3 and Luke 11, concerning the 'overcoming' and the 'binding' of the one He described there as 'the strong man'.

In his account, Matthew paints the background for us, recording that 'one was brought to Him (the saviour) who was demon–possessed, blind and mute; and He (the Lord Jesus) healed him, so that the blind and mute man both spoke and saw ...when the Pharisees heard it, Matthew adds, they said, This man does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons. But Jesus knew their thoughts, and said to them: Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and every city or house divided against itself will not stand. And if Satan casts out Satan, he is divided against himself. How then will his kingdom stand? ... But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. Or (that is, 'or to look at it another way') how can one enter a strong man's house and plunder his goods, unless he first binds (Luke uses the word 'overcomes) the strong man? And then he will plunder his house', Matt. 12. 22-29.

Clearly, when speaking of the one who overcame and bound the strong man, and took spoil from his house, Jesus was referring metaphorically to Himself and to Satan respectively. As I understand it, 'the binding of the strong man' took place in the wilderness, and that our Lord was saying that, having first bound the 'strong man' there, He had then proceeded to rob 'the strong man's' house as it were – expelling the devil's agents and minions with His word – for which, no doubt, people such as Legion and Mary Magdalene were grateful.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>38</sup> John 14. 30.

<sup>39</sup> Eph. 6. 16. There are no randomly fired 'darts' or arrows with the devil! Contrast 1 Kings 22. 34. And his quiver is *always* full.

<sup>40</sup> Matt 16. 21-23.

<sup>41</sup> Matt. 16. 23.

<sup>42</sup> 'The strongest kind of negation', Robertson's Word Pictures.

<sup>43</sup> Matt. 16. 21-22.

<sup>44</sup> Matt. 4. 17.

<sup>45</sup> In the first century, the elephant in the room was Rome. The Israelites wanted one thing and one thing only: liberation from Rome.

<sup>46</sup> Mark 1. 11.

<sup>47</sup> See , D A Carson, Expositor's Bible Commentary, and Davies and Allison, International Critical Commentary, on Matt. 16. 18.

<sup>48</sup> 1 Pet. 2. 5.

<sup>49</sup> Matt. 16. 18.

<sup>50</sup> 'Peter ... began to rebuke Him ... He rebuked Peter', Mark 8. 32-33.

<sup>51</sup> Mark 8. 33.

<sup>52</sup> Peter was 'not thinking the things of God, but the things of men', Matt. 16. 23 – he shared the popular view and expectation of what Messiahship involved – namely, that the Messiah would be a political and military figure. Peter saw no place in the programme for a suffering Messiah. This was, of course, the issue in the wilderness in Matthew 4. And the devil's alternative proposal then required that Jesus 'worship' him. The Lord detected that same 'hiss' at Caesarea Philippi; He could read the devil's 'small print'! Our Lord knew that it wasn't an option for Him, the incarnate Son, to simply 'take' the kingdoms and make them His. He must be given them – either by God, Psa. 2. 8, or by the great Usurper, Luke 4. 6-7.

<sup>53</sup> Mark 5. 1; Luke 8. 26. "The "Gerasa" of Mark 5:1 was probably Kursi/Gergesa", James R. Edwards, The Gospel according to Mark, The Pillar New Testament Commentary, page 154.

<sup>54</sup> Matt. 8. 28. See D A Carson, Expositor's Bible Commentary on Matt. 8. 28, and Robertson's Word Pictures on Mark 5. 1.

<sup>55</sup> Mark 5. 2, 8.

<sup>56</sup> Mark 5. 9, 12, 13.

<sup>57</sup> Mark 5. 3-4.

<sup>58</sup> Mark 4. 41.

<sup>59</sup> Mark 5. 7. 'While the men in the boat are doubting what manner of man this is, that even the winds and the sea obey Him, the demons come to tell them'. (Theophylact).

<sup>60</sup> Mark 5. 3.

<sup>61</sup> Mark 5. 8.

<sup>62</sup> Mark 5. 13.

<sup>63</sup> Numbering about 2,000, Mark 5. 13.

<sup>64</sup> 'Evidently the demons requested permission to enter the swine so they could destroy them', T E Constable.

<sup>65</sup> Luke 8. 27.

<sup>66</sup> Mark 5. 15.

<sup>67</sup> Matt. 8. 28.

<sup>68</sup> Mark 1. 23.

<sup>69</sup> Mark 1. 25.

<sup>70</sup> Mark 1. 26.

<sup>71</sup> Mark 1. 27. Demons cowered and quailed when they saw Him coming.

<sup>72</sup> Mark 9. 17-27.

<sup>73</sup> Mark 9. 22.

<sup>74</sup> Mark 9. 24: παιδίον.

<sup>75</sup> Mark 9. 17-18.

<sup>76</sup> Luke 8. 2; cf. Mark 16. 9.

<sup>77</sup> Luke 20. 20-26.

<sup>78</sup> Matt. 22. 15-16.

<sup>79</sup> Luke 20. 19-20.

<sup>80</sup> Matt. 22. 16.

<sup>81</sup> Luke 20. 22.

<sup>82</sup> In AD 6-7.

<sup>83</sup> Acts 5. 37. Cf. 'Now Archelaus's part of Judea was reduced into a province, and Coponius, one of the equestrian order among the Romans, was sent as a procurator, having the power of [life and] death put into his hands by Caesar. Under his administration it was that a certain Galilean, whose name was Judas, prevailed with his countrymen to revolt, and said they were cowards if they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans and would ... submit to mortal men as their lords', Josephus, Wars, Book 2, Chapter 8, Section 1.

'Now Cyrenius, a Roman senator, and one who had gone through other magistracies, and had passed through them till he had been consul, and one who, on other accounts, was of great dignity, came at this time into Syria, with a few others, being sent by Caesar to be a judge of that nation, and to take an account of their substance. Coponius also, a man of the equestrian order, was sent together with him, to have the supreme power over the Jews. Moreover, Cyrenius came himself into Judea, which was now added to the province of Syria, to take an account of their substance, and to dispose of Archelaus's money; but the Jews, although at the beginning they took the report of a taxation heinously, yet did they leave off any further opposition to it, by the persuasion of Joazar, who was the son of Beethus, and high priest ... Yet was there one Judas ... *who* ... became zealous to draw them to a revolt, who both said that this taxation was no better than an introduction to slavery, and exhorted the nation to assert their liberty', Josephus, Antiquities, Book 18, Chapter 1, Section 1.

<sup>84</sup> 'Zealots claimed the poll tax was a God-dishonouring badge of slavery to the pagans', D A Carson, Expositor's Bible Commentary on Matt. 8. 15-16a.

<sup>85</sup> Note how the charge of forbidding payment of tribute to Caesar sits between the charges of leading sedition among the people of Israel and of setting Himself up as a rival 'King' to Caesar, Luke 23. 2.

<sup>86</sup> Luke 20. 23.

<sup>87</sup> Luke 20. 24.

<sup>88</sup> Matt. 22. 19.

<sup>89</sup> John 12. 6 and 13. 29.

<sup>90</sup> The Jews understood "pontifex maximus" (lit. chief bridge-builder) in the sense of high priest.

<sup>91</sup> Luke 20. 22.

<sup>92</sup> 'The questioners had said δοῦναι ["to give"] (Mat\_22:17), as though of a gift which might be withheld; the Lord replies with ἀπόδοτε ["render to"], the payment of a rightful due', A H McNeile, The Gospel according to St. Matthew, on Matt. 22. 21.

'Jesus added that His questioners and all people who bear the image of God should also give Him what is His due, namely, their worship and service. Roman coins bore inscriptions claiming that the emperor was divine. Jesus repudiated that idea by referring to God as the person to whom people owed their primary allegiance', T E Constable.

<sup>93</sup> Luke 20. 26.

<sup>94</sup> 'They said, 'a glutton and a winebibber', Matt. 11. 19; Luke 7. 34. You can just see Jesus' opponents rolling that one round their tongues with relish. But do you know where the phrase comes from? It's actually a quotation from Deuteronomy 21, in which the Israelites are told what to do with a stubborn and rebellious son. The parents are to bring him to the elders of the town, and say 'This son of ours is stubborn and rebellious. He will not obey us. He is a glutton and a winebibber', and they must stone him to death. So there was more to the charge against Jesus than just that he went to too many parties. It was a way of saying: he is being profoundly disloyal to our traditions; he deserves to die', Wright, T. (1996). The Lord and His Prayer (pp. 37-38).

<sup>95</sup> John 8. 59.

<sup>96</sup> John 8. 3-5.

<sup>97</sup> John 8. 33-58.

<sup>98</sup> John 8. 58.

<sup>99</sup> Exod. 3. 1-15.

<sup>100</sup> 'Whoever blasphemes the name of the Lord shall surely be put to death. All the congregation shall stone him', Lev. 24. 16.

<sup>101</sup> 'The word ἐκρύβη, hid Himself, does not include, but rather excludes the idea of a miracle', Godet.

<sup>102</sup> John 8. 59.

<sup>103</sup> John 10. 31.

<sup>104</sup> John 10. 30.

<sup>105</sup> John 10. 24.

<sup>106</sup> John 10. 38.

<sup>107</sup> John 8. 59.

<sup>108</sup> John 10. 32-38.

<sup>109</sup> John 10. 39.

<sup>110</sup> 'They were seeking to arrest Him, but no one laid a hand on Him, because His hour had not yet come', John 7. 30; 'No one arrested Him, because His hour had not yet come', John 8. 20.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Rom. 5. 6.

<sup>112</sup> John 19. 32-33.

<sup>113</sup> John 18. 30.

<sup>114</sup> It is true that 'Josephus ... insists that the Jewish authorities had the right to execute any Gentile, even a Roman citizen, who trespassed into the inner part of the temple'. D A Carson, The Gospel according to John, on John 18. 31. But this exception applied only when a Gentile ventured into the inner court.

<sup>115</sup> John 18. 32.

<sup>116</sup> John 12. 32-33.

<sup>117</sup> Caesar Augustus appointed a Roman knight – one Coponius – to be the first governor of Judea, and, in so doing, not only brought the land under direct Roman rule, but put the power of execution in the hands of the Roman governor. This ensured that, when the Jews persuaded the then Roman governor to pass the death sentence on Jesus, He (Jesus) was put to death, not by the Jewish mode of stoning, but by the Roman method of crucifixion ... thereby fulfilling – literally – the word of Old Testament prophecy that Messiah's hands and feet would be pierced.

<sup>118</sup> Deut. 21. 23 with Gal. 3. 13.

<sup>119</sup> Zech. 12. 10; cf. Rev. 1. 7.

<sup>120</sup> Psa. 22. 16.

<sup>121</sup> John 13. 10-11.

<sup>122</sup> John 13. 1.

<sup>123</sup> John 18. 4.

<sup>124</sup> John 6. 64.

<sup>125</sup> Matt. 26. 49-50.

<sup>126</sup> ἑταῖρος. 'The Greek word denotes, not friendship, but companionship. It is used in rebuke, Matt. 20. 13 and 22. 13', A Carr, Cambridge Bible, on Matt. 26. 50.

'One who is associated with another ... Thus it may be a companion ... Matthew is the only NT writer to use ἑταῖρος. He does so three times, and always in the form of an address: ἑταῖρε ... It always denotes a mutually binding relation between the speaker and the hearer which the latter has disregarded and scorned', Rengstorf, TDNT, volume II, pages 699-701.

<sup>127</sup> John 11. 11.

<sup>128</sup> John 18. 38; 19. 4, 6.

<sup>129</sup> Cf. Deut. 21. 6-7 and Psa. 26. 6; Psa. 73. 13. 'After living several years among the Jews he detested, Pilate picked up one of their own customs and contemptuously used it against them', D A Carson, Expositor's Bible Commentary on Matt. 27. 24. With Pilate's, 'You see to it' to the crowd, v. 24, compare the chief priests', 'You see to it' to Judas, v. 4.

<sup>130</sup> Matt. 27. 24.

<sup>131</sup> Matt. 27. 19.

<sup>132</sup> Acts 3. 15.

<sup>133</sup> Isa. 53. 8.

<sup>134</sup> 'They cannot die anymore, for they are equal to angels', Luke 20. 36.

<sup>135</sup> Col. 1. 16.

<sup>136</sup> Col. 2. 10; 1 Pet. 3. 22.

<sup>137</sup> Rom. 1. 3 ... 'which asserts that, by the Resurrection, Jesus was 'defined as the Son of God with

power (a phrase which implies that pre-Pauline Christians knew that, already in his earthly life, Jesus had been the Son of God in another way, viz., in humiliation)', A M Hunter, 'Paul and his Predecessors', page 144.

<sup>138</sup> Heb. 2. 15.

<sup>139</sup> Job 18. 14.

<sup>140</sup> Rom. 5. 14-17.

<sup>141</sup> 2 Tim. 1. 10. 'Has rendered powerless'. καταργέω is 'to make of no effect', 'to render ineffective'. 'The Greek verb katargeō is not in itself conclusive, for it can be used with a variety of meanings, which must be determined by the context. Nevertheless, its first and foremost meaning is "make ineffective, powerless, idle or nullify"', John Stott, 'The Message of 2 Timothy: Guard The Gospel' (The Bible Speaks Today New Testament).

See also ... [https://www.wenstrom.org/downloads/written/word\\_studies/greek/katargeo.pdf](https://www.wenstrom.org/downloads/written/word_studies/greek/katargeo.pdf)..

<sup>142</sup> Gen. 5. 24.

<sup>143</sup> 2 Kings 2. 11.

<sup>144</sup> 1 Kings 17. 22; 2 Kings 4. 34-35.

<sup>145</sup> Heb. 11. 35; Luke 7. 14-15; Luke 8. 54-55; John 11. 43-44.

<sup>146</sup> 'Jesus had gone, as it were, through death and out the other side', N T Wright, 'Christian Origins and the Resurrection of Jesus: The Resurrection of Jesus as a Historical Problem'.

<sup>147</sup> 'I lay down my life, in order that I might take it again'. His resurrection was no afterthought.

<sup>148</sup> John 10. 17-18.

<sup>149</sup> Just as His body had been delivered from mutilation, John 19. 36, so it was delivered from corruption, Acts 2. 31.

<sup>150</sup> Rev. 1. 18.



<sup>151</sup> Rom. 6. 9.

<sup>152</sup> The third verse of 'Low in the grave He lay', by Robert Lowry (1826-1899).