

Chapter Three: the Good News and the Suffering Servant

In this chapter, we shall present some important biblico-theological points regarding Jesus' ministry, and, at the same time, we shall recapitulate some of the things said earlier, with a view to greater clarity and comprehension of our arguments.

At the heart of Jesus' proclamation is the "gospel," the "Good News," as shown by the important synthesis of his message in Mark 1:15, which we translate as it would have sounded in Aramaic (or also in Hebrew): "The time is fulfilled, the Kingdom of God has drawn near, return and believe the Good News." We have here five very important elements. First, Jesus situates himself in those Jewish circles who awaited redemption, conceived of as a great change in the state of things (in Greek, the *peripeteia*, the sudden turn around in the story). It's even possible that Jesus formed part of, or at least was familiar with, circles who calculated the time of God's final intervention, such as Enochian circles or the "Daniel group," and Qumran. What is certain is that, for Jesus, with his ministry the time of waiting for salvation had been (ful)filled; cf. Luke 3:9; Gal 4:4; 1 Cor 10:11; Eph 1:10; LXX Dan 8:23.

Second, Jesus uses the concept of the kingdom or kingship of God in order to indicate the change which will take place in the world when the powers of evil, headed by the demons, and, ultimately, by Satan, come to their end; see Mark 3:22-30; cf. Luke 10:18. In accordance with the extensive use that Jesus makes of the concept of the Son of man, taken from Dan 7, we can very well suppose that Jesus shares the apocalyptic outlook of that chapter, which is otherwise common to eschatology in general: in the End, the state of creation will return to what it was in the beginning, according to the Creator's original intention. In Dan 7, we are told how, from the chaotic sea, the beasts came out which until then had had dominion over Adam, human being, the opposite of what God had wanted, according to Gen 1:28. But in the End Time, seen from a distance by Daniel the visionary, this dominion will be taken away from the sea beasts (seemingly not as tamed as Gen 1:2 would have led us to believe), in order to be given (or returned, with a surplus) to "one like a son of man," that is, the human being, to whom also shall be given the kingdom, power, dominion and honor, over all peoples, etc., Dan 7:14, for ever. The passage oscillates between a collective conception (those who are to receive the kingdom

are the saints of the Most High) and an individual one (“one like a human being” who travels on clouds), but ancient Jewish tradition had already seen in the “son of man,” who came with or on clouds, the Messiah, who would sit on a throne beside the “Ancient of Days,” God, Dan 7:9. Certainly, in the Parables or Similitudes of 1 Enoch, the Son of man is an individual, combined and identified with the figures of the Messiah and the Chosen one of Dt-Isa.²⁹

Daniel 7, which begins the second part of that book (and which is classic apocalyptic), represents the end of human history as it has been since Adam’s fall. The Creator’s original intention had been spoiled and frustrated through sin, giving rise to the first and prototypical Exile, the expulsion from the garden of Eden. In the End Time, God would take away dominion from the “beasts” (the pagan empires, but really all agents of wickedness) and would return it to the being who should have exercised it without interruption, “Adam,” Gen 1:28; Dan 7:12-14. But there was still a time left for suffering and purification, Dan 11:31-35; 12:1-13. How much time was still left before final salvation? This salvation was seen as the definitive end of “exile.” This was what Daniel was pondering, that is, the prophecy of Jeremiah: Dan 9:1-3; Jer 25:11-12; 29:10-14. This prophet had foretold that “seventy years” would pass before the “exile” ended, meaning the state before salvation, when one is far from God, still in sin, enslaved. The anonymous prophet just before the end of the Babylonian exile, whom we call “Second Isaiah” (Dt-Isa), had consoled the people with the good news of the end of exile, Isa 40:1-11, but even after return to the holy Land, Zechariah asked when the “seventy years” of Yahweh’s anger would end, Zech 1:12. That is, mere return to the Land in conditions of sin and oppression (to begin with, foreign domination), was not yet the end of “Exile.” Now, Daniel is given the key for understanding what Jeremiah had really said: the Hebrew word —only consonants were written at the time— *š b ‘ y m*, had to be read as vocalized in two different ways, *šavû’îm* (= weeks) and *šêv’îm* (= seventy), so that it would produce the total of 490 (7 x 70) years, which referred to a time long after

²⁹ In Psa 110, the Messiah sits at the right hand of God; see Mark 12:35-37; 14:61-62; Heb 1:13. Jewish tradition also made use of Psa 80:18 in order to identify the Messiah with the Son of man. Even more subtle are the creative rabbinic interpretations which make of *the fallen* (in Hebrew, *hannôfeleth*) hut of David, Amos 9:11, a reference to Bar Nafle or Bar Nifle (“son of the clouds,” from Dan 7:13) as a messianic title, taken from the monarchic list in 1 Chr 3:24, which ends with Anani, revocalized to *Anane*, “with the clouds” (Midrash Tanhûma, Toledot s. 20).

“Daniel” (who is in Babylon, according to the apocalyptic fiction of the second half of the book), that is, the Maccabean period. According to the chronologies of the time, 490 was not a bad calculation. This sevenfold punishment, an exile extended seven times, corresponds to the sevenfold punishment of the curses for breaking the covenant in Lev 26:18-33, linked to the sabbatical rest of the Land, Lev 26:34-43. Thus did the Chronicler understand it, 2 Chr 36:20-21 (at the end of the Hebrew Bible, that is, the Jewish canon).

On the other hand, the 490 years can be seen as a period of ten Jubilees, 49 x 10. This is how 11QMelchizedek saw it, a Qumran document which is extraordinarily important for the understanding of Christian origins. We shall quote its second column as presented in the edition indicated in the footnote below.³⁰

Col. II 1 [...] ... [...] *2* [...] And as for what he said: *Lev 25:13* «In [this] year of jubilee, [you shall return, each one, to his respective property]», concerning it he said: *Deut 15:2* «Th[is] is *3* [the manner of the release:] every creditor shall release what he lent [to his neighbor. He shall not coerce his neighbor or his brother, for it has been proclaimed] a release *4* for G[od]». Its interpretation] for the last days refers to the captives, who [...] and whose *5* teachers have been hidden and kept secret, and from the inheritance of Melchizedek, who *6* will make them return. And liberty will be proclaimed for them, to free them from [the debt of] all their iniquities. And this [wil]l [happen] *7* in the first week of the jubilee which follows the ni[ne] jubilees. And the d[ay of atone]ment is the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee *8* in which atonement shall be made for all the sons of [light and] for the men [of] the lot of Mel[chi]zedek. [...] ... over [the]m ... [...] accor[ding to] a[ll] their [wor]ks, for *9* it is the time for the «year of grace» of Melchizedek, and of [his] arm[ies, the nat]ion of the holy ones of God, of the rule of judgment, as is written *10* about him in the songs of David, who said: *Ps 82:1* «Elohim will [st]and in the assem[bly of God,] in the midst of the gods he judges». And about him he sai[d: *Ps 7:8-9* «And] above [it,] *11* to the heights, return: God will judge the peoples». As for what he sai[d: *Ps 82:2* «How long will you] judge unjustly and show partial[lity] to the wicked? [*Se]lah.»* *12* Its interpretation concerns Belial and the spirits of his lot, wh[o ...] turn[ing aside] from the commandments of God to [commit evil.] *13* But, Melchizedek will carry out the vengeance of Go[d’s] judgments, [and on that day he will fr]e[e them from the hand of] Belial and from the hand of all the spirits of his lot.] *14* To his aid (shall come) all «the gods of [justice]; and h]e is the one w[ho ...] all the sons of God, and ... [...] *15* This [...] is the day of [peace about whi]ch he said [... through Isa]iah the prophet, who said: [*Isa 52:7* «How] beautiful *16* upon the mountains are the feet [of] the messen[ger who] announces peace, the mess[enger of good who announces salvati]on, [saying to Zion: your God [reigns.]] *17* Its interpretation i[s] the anointed of the spir[it] as Dan[iel] said [about him: *Dan 9:25* «Until an anointed, a prince, it is seven weeks.» And the messenger of] *19* good who announ[ces

³⁰ *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition. Volume 2 (4Q274-11Q31)* (F. García Martínez – E.J.C. Tigchelaar, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill; Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1997), 1206-1207.

salvation] is the one about whom it is written that [...] 20 «To comfort the [afflicted], its interpretation:] to instruct them in all the ages of the world [...] 21 in truth ... [...] ... [...] 22 [...] has turned away from Belial and will return [...] ... [...] 23 [...] in the judgment[s of] God, as it is written about him: [Isa 52:7 «Saying to Zion: your God rules.» «Zion» is] 24 [the congregation of all the sons of justice, those] who establish the covenant, those who avoid walking [on the path] of the people. And «Your God» is 25 Melchizedek, who will free them from the hand of Belial. And as for what he said: Lev 25:9 «You shall blow the horn in all the land of

Let's see what this means for the understanding of Christian origins. First, it speaks of the Jubilee, when each exiled person or slave who had been sold returned to his land and family, since all his debts (for which he was exiled or sold) were remitted. The word "remission" (in the above text, "release"), is in Hebrew *šemittah*; it comes from Deut 15:1-6, which is linked to the great "liberty" of the Jubilee in Jer 34:8-16. But the more important term is *d'rôr*, the "liberty" of Lev 25:10, of Jer 34:8 (which never actually took place), and, especially, of Isa 61:1. It is this latter passage that Jesus reads in his first speech in Luke 4:17-22, when he says that that prophecy had been fulfilled "today." So that in primitive Christian tradition, there is the idea of a final Jubilee which must be fulfilled; we can very well see in the Lord's Prayer a clear echo of this final forgiveness and pardoning of all debts.³¹ The Lucan version reads "forgive us our sins, for we ourselves forgive our debtors" (Luke 11:4).

That everyone return to land, family and home, that is, that the Exile end, is the great biblical hope. The whole Pentateuch reflects the desire to enter into the Promise, of possessing the Land on which all the Fathers ("Patriarchs") wandered as pilgrims, Heb 11:13.³² The Hebrew Bible ends with the admonition to *go up* to the Land (2 Chr 36:23), to make the return home, the *'aliyah*, the word for "immigration" (literally, the "going up") to Israel today. Jesus himself seems to situate himself in this perspective. In Mark 1:15, what he proclaims, as the kernel of his message, are five things: 1) the time (of eschatological expectation and waiting) is ended; 2) the Kingdom of God has drawn near; in the central position, providing the interpretive key, 3) *return* (in the double-sense of

³¹ Heb 4:1-11 speaks of the Sabbath "rest" which awaits us; Josh 1:13 speaks of entry into the Land as "rest," but in verse 15 there is mention of those who have yet to enter the rest. Rev 14:13 speaks of the rest which those who die in the Lord enjoy, and 22:1-5 is the return to Eden, for the curse is over.

³² See my article "Welcoming the Foreigner: A Biblical Theology View," *Josephinum Journal of Theology* 11.2 (Summer/Fall 2004) 226-234.

repent and return to the Land, that is, end your exile of self-estrangement from God and his Promise); 4) and believe (the obedient trust which justified Abraham, Gen 15:6; cf. Hab 2:4) 5) the Good News (of Isa 40:9; 52:7; 61:1), that is, the announcement that Exile has ended.³³

The final Jubilee, like all Jubilees (Lev 25:9), would take place on the great Day of Atonement, Yom Kippur, when all sins were forgiven, including the worst ones, Lev 16:16. It was the only day that the high priest could enter the Holy of Holies, with the blood of the young bull and of the he-goat, in order to expiate sins. This is what the Epistle to the Hebrews considers to be a mere figure (“type”) fulfilled by Jesus, Heb 9, the eternal high priest according to the order of Melchizedek, Heb 7 (Jesus’ sacrifice is the “antitype”).

Our Qumran text speaks of the victory of Melchizedek over Belial (or Beliar), the “devil” in the Judaism of the time (see 2 Cor 6:15). The Testament of Levi, in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, describes the eschatological priest in terms which remind us of Jesus (see TestLevi 18), but what we are most interested in now is verse 12, which says that the eschatological priest shall bind Belial. In Mark, Jesus, the “holy one of God” (a priestly epithet in Psa 106:16) is the “stronger one” (Mark 1:7) who can bind and plunder the devil, 3:22-27, even when he is called Legion (the Greek text of 5:4 says: “and no one was strong [so as] to tame him”).

The Qumran Melchizedek text puts into play “the anointed (messiah) of the spirit” of Isa 61:1, who proclaims Good News to the *‘anawîm* (“afflicted, poor in spirit”), and links this with the anointed one in Dan 9:24. It is in this chapter 9 of Daniel, in Dan 9:2, that Jeremiah’s famous prophecy of the seventy years is considered (Jer 25:11-12; 29:10). That is how long the Exile, the time before final salvation, would last. The “seventy years” of Jeremiah (cf. Zech 1:12) become ‘seventy weeks of years’ in Dan 9:24-27, that is, the ten Jubilees of the Qumran document, or 490 years. This will also be the fulfillment of the Good News of Isa 40, the first chapter of the “Book of the Consolation of Israel” (cf. Luke 2:25-32), the passage which became the basis for going into the

³³ I follow the late Harmut Stegemann, who indicated that John the Baptist baptized on the other side of the Jordan (John 10:41) in order to symbolize the entry (“return”) of the “converted” Jew (who had returned to God and to the Land). The term “land of promise” is found in Heb 11:9. By the way, the Baptist, in the eschatological role of the prophet Elijah who had returned, baptized on the other side of the Jordan probably precisely where Elijah had been taken up, 2 Kgs 2:6-13, and where he could be expected to return.

desert to prepare the way of the Lord both for Qumran (Community Rule VIII:12-14) and for John the Baptist (Mark 1:2-3; Luke 3:1-6).

What has all this to do with Mark's gospel? We know that the "Good News" of Isaiah has an important place in Jesus' preaching, and in Mark's presentation of it (and of Jesus' ministry).³⁴ Rikki Watts wrote his doctoral dissertation at Cambridge University on this topic, and published it as "Isaiah's New Exodus in Mark." The evangelist provides the key to this understanding by the mention of Isaiah in Mark 1:2, when in reality he has begun by citing Malachi. But we know that "gospel," in Hebrew *b'ešôrah*, has an important role in Jesus' message, and that the origin of this concept, with this particular meaning, comes from Isa 40. "Second Isaiah" recycles, reutilizes, the saving event *par excellence* for Israel, the exodus from Egypt, in order to speak of a new exodus which will far surpass the first, prototypical one. This new exodus is based on Yahweh's power as Creator to make a new creation, and the New Exodus will in fact be a new creation.³⁵ Except that this did not occur with the return from Babylon to the Holy Land, but was postponed to the times described in "Third Isaiah," that is, later passages in that book, as are chapters 56-66, the "apocalypse of Isaiah" in chapters 24-27, Isa 35 and Isa 19:16-25. Important among these passages, but related to "Second Isaiah," is Isa 61:1-2, to which Luke gives a "programmatically" place which reflects quite well Jesus' historical ministry, even as Mark presents it.

We have said that the whole Hebrew Bible can be summarized as the book of the Jew in exile who seeks, awaits, to go back home, to his fatherland, to his family, to the place he most desires. This would be the great Jubilee, and this is how the Qumranites saw it. This is the hope about to be fulfilled that John the Baptist preaches. He represents the reawakening of prophecy after some four hundred years in which it had disappeared (see 1 Macc 4:46; Psa 74:9). And the symbolism behind John's activity revolves around

³⁴ Note that expressions such as "messenger of good" in the Qumran quote above, which comes from Isa 52:7 (see also Isa 40:9; 61:1; Nah 1:15; 1 Chr 10:9; Jer 20:15; LXX Joel 3:5; 1 Sam 31:9; 2 Kgs 7:9, etc.), are different translations of the same underlying words in Hebrew or Greek; other translations are "herald of glad tidings, he who brings glad tidings, messenger of good tidings, messenger of good news," etc. The Greek form could be very literally translated "evangelizer."

³⁵ See Isa 43; 48:20-22; 49:8-12; 52:7-12 (just before the "Fourth Song of the Suffering Servant"). Isa 54:5-10 links the idea of Yahweh's marriage to Israel, never broken, to the "eternal covenant" in the days of Noah, that "covenant" (more of a promise) that marks a new creation (cf. Gen 1:28 with 9:1-2), whose sign is the rainbow.

Mal 3's eschatological message, and the crossing of the Jordan as a sign of "returning" (conversion) to the Lord, and its reward, the return to the Land as the sphere of salvation. This is the new covenant of Jer 30-31, especially Jer 30:1-3 and 31:31-34. The Qumranites also considered themselves to be the community of the new covenant, Damascus Document 6:19; 8:21; 20:12.³⁶

But in order to cross into the Land, to enter into salvation, a great purification was necessary. The Enochian circles had already spoken of the insufficiency of the cleansing with water represented by the flood during Noah's time; Yahweh had even had to "water-down" (pardon the pun) moral requirements: the post-diluvial world is not a return to the conditions of Eden, where non-violent vegetarianism was the norm (cf. Gen 1:29-30 and 9:2-6).³⁷ No, the definitive purification would require fire.

This is where we enter into one of the principal topics in the Judaism of the late Second Temple period, the final purification or refinement. The final judgment is by fire, Isa 63:19-64:1; 66:15-16. Jesus quotes Isa 66:24 in Mark 9:48-49 (some would see Nero's fiery persecution in Rome, 64 C.E., in the background). Fire refines, as occurs with precious metals: Dan 11:35; 12:10.³⁸ The righteous one is also purified thus: see Wis 2:18-20; 3:1-7, an important passage in Jesus' Passion (cf. Matt 27:43); see 1 Pet 1:7; 2 Pet 3:7-12; cf. 1 Cor 3:10-15.

Mal 3 speaks about the purification of the Levites, the demoted branch of the priesthood which was opposed to that of the Zadokites, who had emerged as dominant,

³⁶ Their Community Rule, 1:16, speaks of "crossing" (and not merely "entering") into the Rule of the Community, in order to establish a covenant with God, in a way very similar to Deut 29:11, which literally says that the post-wilderness community is about to *cross* into the covenant. This is the "other covenant," one separate (different) from the one made at Horeb (the deuteronomistic term for Sinai), Deut 28:69 (29:1 in some Bibles), which has been identified with Jeremiah's new covenant; cf. Jer 31:31-34 and Deut 30:6-14 (see Jer 4:4; 9:25). The deuteronomistic editors of the books of the prophets put their hand most heavily in their favorite prophet, Jeremiah (he had been protected by Shaphan's family, closely associated with the deuteronomistic reform in 2 Kgs 22). The parallel passages in Deut and Jer are impressively similar.

³⁷ See the discussion of 1 Enoch in my "A Theological Introduction to the Christian Bible." The Enochian world was densely populated with unclean spirits; fire was necessary in order to purify it (1 Enoch 10:6), and the temple cult was no solution. Regarding this, see the important book by GABRIELE BOCCACCINI, *The Roots of Rabbinic Judaism, An Intellectual History from Ezekiel to Daniel* (Grand Rapids – Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2002), especially page 91, and that of his mentor, PAOLO SACCHI, *L'apocalittica giudaica e la sua storia* (Brescia: Paideia, 1990), which exists in English translation, *Jewish Apocalyptic and Its History* (ET by William J. Short; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1990).

³⁸ See also Community Rule 3:4-12; 4:11-26 in Qumran. Here lustral purification (with water, as in baptism) is combined with purification by fire and by the "spirit of truth," which will result in a new creation.

especially during the Babylonian Exile.³⁹ This is said in the context of the coming of the Lord (*ha-adôn*) to his temple, with mention of the desired “angel of the covenant.”⁴⁰ This passage is placed right at the beginning of Mark, occupying an important place. By the way, this “messenger” or “angel” (in both Hebrew and Greek, one same word means both things) is that of the exodus, Exod 23:20, the angel who will lead Israel to the Land.

John the Baptist came with a water baptism “with a view towards” (*eis*, “unto”) forgiveness of sins; according to Stegemann, this baptism did not actually forgive sins, but only prepared the person who had repented (converted) for the final purification. This would be by Holy Spirit and fire, as indicated by the Q passage in Matt 3:11 and Luke 3:16. This is what is fulfilled on Pentecost, Acts 2:3-4; it is this Holy Spirit who, through faith, purifies hearts (we could say, “circumcises” hearts, Col 2:11; Rom 2:29; Phil 3:2; cf. Acts 2:37). This is what grants one the new heart, a pure one, of Ezek 36:25-27.⁴¹

But Jesus himself must undergo a new baptism, one of fire; Luke 12:49-50; cf. Mark 10:38; 9:49. Jesus, the Anointed of the Spirit of Isa 61:1 (Acts 10:38), offered himself in his Passion by this same Spirit, Heb 9:14. It was his own blood which sprinkled the Holy of Holies on the eschatological Yom Kippur; this is the meaning of Rom 3:25 (the Greek *hilastērion*, inadequately translated “sacrifice of atonement, propitiation, mercy-seat, expiation,” corresponds in the LXX to the Hebrew *kappôret*, the cover of the Ark of the Covenant; this was what was sprinkled with blood on Yom Kippur, Lev 16:14; Heb 12:24; cf. 1 John 5:6-8).⁴²

³⁹ In Mark 2:26, where Jesus “mistakenly” says “Abiathar” instead of Ahimelek, some have seen a slight against the Sadducean priesthood, descendants (real or claimed) of Zadok, who ousted Abiathar when the priests under him supported the loser at the time of the struggle for succession to David’s throne; Solomon won, and vanished Abiathar to Anathoth, Jeremiah’s hometown; see Jer 1:1; 1 Kgs 2:26-27. See my discussion in “A Theological Introduction to the Christian Bible.” In 1 Chr 24:3, Abiathar is not mentioned: rather Zadok is “mistakenly” given Ahimelek as his partner in the priesthood. In 24:6, it is “mistakenly” said that Abiathar was Ahimelek’s father (see 1 Sam 22:20). I am of the opinion that there are no real errors in the Bible (in order for an error to be such, it must be unintentional). What appears to be error may well be intentional, in order to convey some other message (e.g., saying “Jeremiah” in Matt 27:9).

⁴⁰ Cf. Isa 42:6; 49:8; 55:3; 59:21; 61:7-8; Zech 9:11-12; Heb 13:20.

⁴¹ Water is also associated with final salvation: Ezek 47; Zech 13:1-2; 14:8, 16-17, and with the Holy Spirit, John 4:10-24; 7:37-39, etc. Cf. Ezek 39:21-29.

⁴² Jesus also ‘became sin’, like the scapegoat of Lev 16; this is the meaning of 2 Cor 5:21; cf. Heb 13:11-13. Jesus made himself a “guilt- or sin-offering” (*peri hamartias*, Rom 8:3, as in LXX Isa 53:10, in Hebrew *ašam*). See chapter 7 of the Epistle of Barnabas, where Christ is likened to the scapegoat. According to the rite described there, the scapegoat was insulted and mistreated; scarlet thread was placed around its head. When Christ returns, the Jews will recognize him in his likeness to the goat, and will understand why, on Yom Kippur, there should be two goats “well-matched”; cf. Lev 16:5-10.

And this brings us to Isaiah's "Suffering Servant." There is no doubt that it has an important place in the New Testament, but let us look at its use in Mark in particular. I am speaking about Isa 52:13-53:12, the famous "fourth song" (in reality, a poem) of the Servant of Yahweh. In much of the New Testament, Jesus' Passion was viewed through the prism of this poem. There are several important passages in Mark: 10:45, where it is said that the "Son of man" came to serve and give his life as a ransom for many, preceded by 10:44 (call to be a slave, *doulos*, of the other).⁴³ "Many" corresponds to the Hebrew *rabbîm*, which appears five times in the fourth song (even though in Isa 53:12^a is usually translated "great"). This word becomes something like a technical term in certain eschatological groups, as is seen in Dan 11:33; 12:2, 10, and in Qumran.⁴⁴ Jesus also uses it in Mark 14:24, when he says that his blood will be poured forth for "many." In fact, the Servant "pours himself out," or pours out his soul (Hebrew *nepheš*, which Westermann says can here be translated "blood"), Isa 53:12. The Hebrew verb is 'arah ("to empty, pour out"), which corresponds exactly to the Greek verb *kenōō*, as in Phil 2:7.

The Servant, according to the best interpretation of Isa 53:10 (this poem in general presents great textual and interpretive difficulties), 'put himself as *ašam*', a type of "global" expiatory offering.⁴⁵ Here the LXX translated *peri hamartias*, which it usually uses for other types of "sin offerings" (e.g., in Lev 16:27; cf. Heb 13:11). This is the expression which Paul uses for Jesus' sacrifice in Rom 8:3. This represents a cultic view of Jesus' sacrifice, based on the sacrificial cult of the Old Testament.

In Mark 1:40-45, Jesus cleans or purifies a leper. A leper who followed the ritual prescribed in Leviticus for his purification would offer an *ašam*, Lev 14:12-14, 17, 21, 24-25, 28. An unblemished lamb was offered. The woman who gave birth could also

⁴³ This corresponds to the 'ebed (slave or servant) of Yahweh in the four poems (see page 17 above) in Dt-Isa which have been applied to Jesus, although the LXX uses *pais*, "child or servant" in Isa 42:1; 52:13, and *doulos* ("slave or servant") in 49:5, 7.

⁴⁴ The group which led the anti-Syrian resistance, those pious Jews faithful to Torah who resisted until death (martyrdom) in Daniel, called themselves *maskîlîm*, often translated "wise teachers or leaders," Dan 11:35; 12:3, 10. They will "justify" many, Dan 12:3, like the Servant in Isa 53:11. The name *maskîlîm* is taken from the verb *sakal* ("be prudent, prosper, teach") in Isa 52:13. The *maskîl* ("instructor") is an important figure in Qumran, but we also find the plural *maskîlîm*, e.g., in 4Q418 fragment 81 v. 17.

⁴⁵ JACOB MILGROM, the great Jewish scholar, in his *Leviticus. A Book of Ethics and Ritual* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 46, says that: "The verb 'ašam describes the syndrome of sin, guilt, and punishment. It has a psychological dimension. Wrongdoing creates guilt and fear of punishment, and conversely suffering reinforces the feelings of guilt. Thus we find one word bridging all expiatory offerings: 'ašam.'" Bibles usually translate it as "guilt offering" or "sin offering."

offer a lamb, Lev 12:6. As in the case of the leper, the priest “made expiation, expiated” for her, Hebrew verb *kipper*. Interestingly, in the LXX translation of Lev 12:7, the expression, “the flow of her blood,” is used, the same as in Mark 5:29, when Jesus heals the woman with the blood flow. This could indicate that this woman, who had suffered from an impure discharge (menstruation) which had made it impossible for her to have sexual relations for twelve years, would finally conceive and give birth, falling under the regulations of Lev 12 (purification for the woman who gave birth), and not that of Lev 15:24-30 (purification for menstruants). She had been in a situation similar to Jairus’ daughter, dead at the age of twelve, who would have never given birth if God had not saved her, Mark 5:23, 41-42.

Lepers and bleeding women who were poor could offer pigeons, Lev 14:21-22, 30-32 (see 5:7-13; there were people so poor who could not buy even pigeons: they could offer cereal); Mary and Joseph offered two pigeons, according to Lev 12:8 (see the case of the bleeding woman in Lev 14:21-22). These sacrifices are in the background of the temple act, Mark 11:15, when Jesus overturned the tables of the pigeon sellers (or of “doves,” it is the same thing, always the same Greek word in Mark and in LXX Lev, *peristerá*, plural *peristerái*).

The Servant was seen, at least in Qumran, as having cultic, expiatory functions. In fact, the word *yazzeḥ* in Isa 52:15 is probably simply the Hebrew verb meaning “to sprinkle,” the same as in Lev 16:14-15 and many other places (see also Isa 63:3, regarding the “grapes of wrath” which sprinkle [or here, more likely “spatter”] Yahweh’s vestments); cf. Heb 9:13-14; 12:24. The presence of this verb in Isa 52:15 caused perplexity, and the LXX translated “startle,” and was followed by almost all modern versions (but the Vulgate and other versions do have “sprinkled;” the Nova Vulgata has “disperse” — or “spread,” a sense used by Catherine of Siena in regards to fire and Jesus’ blood). The good Qumranites understood it ritually. According to one of the first great scholars of the Dead Sea Scrolls, William H. Brownlee, at 1QIsa^a 52:15, in the great scroll of Isaiah found in Qumran, we should understand that the Servant will sprinkle many nations, perhaps because of his own anointing (= sprinkling) by the Spirit.⁴⁶ The

⁴⁶ See “The Servant of the Lord in the Qumran Scrolls, I,” *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 132 (1953), 10.

“anointed of the Spirit,” in 11QMelchizedek (unless there are various redemptive figures in this document), would make atonement on Yom Kippur, in the tenth Jubilee. After stating that Melchizedek, in this document, is a “divine hypostasis,” the great Qumran scholar, Rabbi Joseph M. Baumgarten says that we find another figure with a similar expiatory role in 4Q541, an Aramaic fragment regarding the “eschatological priest” we already know from the Testament of Levi. The good rabbi tells us that

Despite this glorification, he is depicted as the object of rejection and calumny on the part of his antagonists, much like the Suffering Servant in Isaiah. Yet, he is to atone for all the children of his generation [I omit the Hebrew quotation].

Here, too, scholars have been inclined to limit the eschatological priest’s atonement function to expiation through sacrifice, although neither 4Q541 frg. 9, nor its parallel, *Testament of Levi* 18 make mention of any priestly sacrifice. The claim that [“atone for,” in Hebrew] always refers to ritual expiation is contradicted by the occasional usage in both biblical and Qumran Hebrew of this phrase for divine forgiveness (Jeremiah 18:23; CD 4:10; 4Q221 4:4). Moreover, even if we take [*kipper*] in the sense of expiation, the allusion to the hostile disparagement suffered by the priest suggests that like the Suffering Servant of Isaiah (Isaiah 53:10) his humiliation was itself considered to constitute an [*ašam*], a guilt offering for the sins of his generation.⁴⁷

If, on the one hand, the Qumranites, in their Isaiah scroll, at Isa 52:15, understood “sprinkle” ritually, on the other, in their famous Temple Scroll, they could leave out “sprinkle” when describing the Yom Kippur ritual. Concerning their shortened version of Lev 16:15 in 11QTemple 26:3-7 (the “Temple Scroll”), the great Jewish scholar Lawrence H. Schiffman tells us that the Qumran version omits the words

“and he shall sprinkle it (the blood) on the (ark) cover and before the (ark) cover.” This is because the author of our scroll views the meaning of the biblical root [*kipper*] in ritual context as a technical term for the sprinkling of blood, in accord with usage later found in rabbinic literature; hence, it was enough to use this verb even without specifying the further details of the practice.⁴⁸

We have arguments here for understanding the “fourth song” of the Suffering Servant in a ritualistic-expiatory sense. That is, we can understand the enigmatic “thus he

⁴⁷ “Messianic Forgiveness of Sin in CD 14:19 (4Q266 10 I 12-13),” in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls. Technological Innovations, New Texts & Reformulated Issues* (D.W. Parry – E.W. Ulrich, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill Academic, 1999), 540.

⁴⁸ “The Case of the Day of Atonement Ritual,” in *Biblical Perspectives: Early Use & Interpretation of the Bible in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Proceedings of the First International Symposium of the Orion Center, 12-14 May 1986* (M.E. STONE - E.G. CHAZON, eds.; Leiden – Boston – Köln; Brill: 1998), 187.

shall sprinkle many nations,” Isa 52:15, in the sense of atonement (expiation) as on Yom Kippur, Lev 16:14-15, 19, when blood is sprinkled. This is how Heb 9 seems to understand it.⁴⁹ But there is more. The Servant “shall lift up” the sins of many, Isa 53:12. This Hebrew verb *nasa* has the meaning “to remove sins,” for example, in Lev 10:17, and in the passage which is so important for us, Lev 16:22 (regarding the scapegoat on Yom Kippur). In Isa 53:4, the Servant “lifted up” (= “removed”) our infirmities; this is how Matt 8:17 understands it, applying it to Jesus.⁵⁰

Now, how can we relate the “Suffering Servant” with the rest of Second Isaiah? The “Servant” is usually Jacob–Israel in Dt-Isa. But this identification does not seem applicable to our four poems. The Jewish scholar Harry M. Orlinsky years ago summarized the arguments in favor of considering the subject of Isa 53 as an individual, and not a collectivity (i.e., Israel):

The treatment is entirely individualistic. Unlike the people Israel, which did not keep silent in the face of destruction and exile, which was not cut off from the land of the living, and which deserved the divine punishment of destruction and exile because of transgression of the covenant, the servant in 53 is one who apparently did not complain, who ostensibly did not survive, and who experienced suffering through no fault of his own.⁵¹

The only difficulty in considering the four Servant poems (usually taken to be Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12) as referring to an individual not identifiable with the people Israel lies in 49:3, where “Israel” appears after “my servant.” Orlinsky (80-88) is among those who insist that “Israel” is a gloss, absent from a medieval Hebrew manuscript (“Kennicott 96”), an addition which causes syntactic and grammatical difficulties. But the greatest problem is that the Servant in this poem (the second of the four) has a mission *to Israel*. Many commentaries, therefore, see in “Israel” a gloss that reflects later tradition, that of the collectivistic interpretation of the Servant in general, that is, one applied to all the instances of “servant” in Dt-Isa. However, many scholars

⁴⁹ Regarding “sprinkle, spatter,” some (like Brownlee, regarding Qumran; see footnote 46 above) see a reference to Ezek 36:25; thus also Heb 10:22. But the Hebrew verb in Ezek 36:25 is different from that of Lev 16:14-15, 19, and Isa 52:15, although the meaning is similar.

⁵⁰ See the similar use of the Greek verb *lambanō* (“take”) in Matt 5:40; 15:26. Interestingly, in Aramaic, “to be lifted up” as the double meaning “to be exalted” (like the Servant in Isa 52:13) and “to be crucified;” this is how Jesus uses it in John 3:14; 8:28; 12:32; cf. Ezra 6:11 (an Old Testament passage in Aramaic).

⁵¹ “The So-Called ‘Servant of the Lord’ and ‘Suffering Servant’ in Second Isaiah,” *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 14 (1967) 20-21.

see disciples of Isaiah as the ones who are responsible for Dt-Isa (end of Babylonian Exile), just as further disciples in this “movement” are behind a good deal of what we call “Third Isaiah” (Tr-Isa, Isa 56-66). The “original Isaiah,” the eighth-century prophet Isaiah of Jerusalem, started a movement which grew to include disciples. We are dealing with a minoritarian movement which suffered persecution by other Jews; the “Suffering Servant” would then be the model for them, and, in order to clarify their identity, or at least their socio-religious situation, scholars such as Joseph Blenkinsopp begin by looking at the group of “servants” in Tr-Isa (also referred to as ‘those who weep or mourn, tremble, chosen ones’, etc.; see Isa 65:11-15, 22; 66:5, 14), and work their way back to the anonymous “Dt-Isa” and his socio-religious situation.

Whatever we are to make of this, Mark identifies Jesus with the Suffering Servant, as does much (if not indeed all) of the New Testament, and as Jesus probably himself did (see Acts 8:26-35). The most important passage in Mark is 10:45, “for also the Son of man did not come to be served but to serve, and to give his life (“soul,” as in Isa 53:12) as ransom (in Greek, *lútron*) for many.”

Lútron has a cultic meaning. It usually translates (although almost always using the plural, *lútra*) terms derived from the Hebrew verb *kipper* (or from the root *k p r*), the verb for “expiation or atonement.”⁵² At times it means “to appease,” as in Exod 21:30, regarding the redemption price for someone gored by an ox (verse 32 is famous: it is the one that provides that thirty sheqels of silver is the price of the slave or servant who was gored, see Zech 11:12; Matt 27:3). Very important, as we shall see later, is the “ransom price” (*kōpher*) in order to enter into the Land, Exod 30:12. This was the principal reason for the tables of the moneychangers that Jesus overturned in the temple; they were placed there during Passover, when pilgrims paid their annual tax (a half-sheqel, Exod 30:14). In some places in the LXX, *lútra* translates another very important Hebrew word regarding “salvation,” that related to the *gō’ēl*, the rescuer/redeemer or blood avenger (thus in Lev 25:24-28). Clearly, when Jesus spoke about giving his life as a “ransom for many,” with the echoes of the Servant reflected in Mark 10:45, we can see another reference to the cultic aspect of his death. But how can we relate this to the theme of “Second Isaiah”?

⁵² The singular *lútron*, as in Mark 10:45, appears in Prov 6:36; 13:8.

The great theme of Second Isaiah is the “Good News” of Israel’s return to the Land, after having paid “doubly” for its sin (Isa 40:2; cf. Jer 16:18; Isa 61:7; Zech 9:12). There is certainly no return to the Land without a new heart, without conversion, Deut 30:1-14; Ezek 36:16-36; Jer 30-31. There are certainly references to the “servant of Yahweh” in Isaiah (Isa 42:19) that bespeak a humbled Israel, who suffers paradigmatically, who thus becomes a “light to the nations,” Isa 42:6; 49:6; 51:4.⁵³ Oscillation between individualistic and collectivistic interpretations or use of concepts is common in the Bible. The Son of man (or “one like” him) is individual and collective in Dan 7:13-15, 18, 22, 27 (he becomes definitively an individual in 1 Enoch). The covenant with David (2 Sam 7:1-17) is democratized in Isa 55:3, as collective guilt becomes individualized in Ezek 18. Jacob himself is “Israel,” and Jesus can also be seen as Israel; it is thus that he is called out of Egypt, Matt 2:15 (see Hos 11:1; cf. Exod 4:22; Psa 89:27-28), and that he was tempted in the wilderness for forty days (as Israel in Deut 8:1-6).

So there is no “return” to the Land without purification. John’s baptism was not enough; Jesus speaks of another baptism he requires, Mark 10:38; 14:22-24, 36; Luke 12:49-50. This is how he will fulfill his *exodus*, according to the Greek text of Luke 9:31. Now, a “ransom,” *kōpher*, had to be paid in order to enter the Land, Exod 30:12-16, “for the expiation (*kipper* verb) of your lives.” Both the Hebrew text (*kôl ha-’ôvêr*) and the Greek (LXX, *hosoi paraporeúontai*) of Exod 30:13 say “all who cross over,” meaning “to the Land.”⁵⁴ In Hebrew, this is the root whence comes the very word “Hebrew,” *’ivrî*, “the one who crosses over” (see Gen 14:13, regarding Avram the Hebrew). This rescue price in Greek is *lútra*; it is what Jesus came to give, in the form of his life, according to Mark 10:45 (although here the singular is used, *lútron*). This price is only valid for those who really *cross over* into the new covenant (see the Hebrew text of Deut 29:11, “so that you cross over into the covenant [*l’ avr^eja bib^e rîth*] of Yahweh your God”).⁵⁵ The

⁵³ This language is applied to Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:46-47.

⁵⁴ The rescue or ransom price applies to those 20 years and up, precisely those who were not to enter the Land, according to Num 14:29, that is, the rebellious murmurers in the desert, the whole generation that must die.

⁵⁵ The great Qumranites spoke in the same terms of their community; 1QS 1:16, in the Community Rule, it literally reads “all who enter into the rule of the community shall cross into the covenant” (*y{’}’bwrw bbryt*). They also considered themselves the community of the “new covenant,” CD 6:19; 8:21 (in the “land of Damascus,” in other words, of voluntary exile with the expectation of the final Return). That is why they

concrete form in which Jesus paid this price was by assuming the sufferings of the Servant of Yahweh; it is thus that we can relate the Good News in Second Isaiah to the expiatory sacrifice of the Servant: he shall sprinkle the nations, as on Yom Kippur, Isa 52:13; cf. Lev 16:14-16; he offers his life as an *ašam*, the global offering for removal (purification) of sins, guilt and its punishment, Isa 53:10; and Jesus “lifts up” (removes, expiates, purges) the sin of “many,” Isa 53:12; cf. Lev 16:21-22 (and also our “illnesses,” whatever they may be, Isa 53:4, as in Matt 8:17). In his action in the temple, Jesus overturned the tables of the moneychangers because there would no longer be a need to pay the ransom price for crossing into the Land, or for maintaining the temple, Exod 30:12-16; 38:24-28.

also called themselves the “converts (or returnees) of Israel who left the land of Judah and dwelt in the and of Damascus,” CD 6:5. Damascus here comes from Amos 5:27.

