

Symbolism in the Gospel of Mark

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Christian theologians throughout history have failed to understand the significance of the (odd) appearance of the naked youth in the Gospel of Mark. The obvious reason for this failure, according to NT doctrine, is their unbelief and inability to commune with their own God of Truth (Jesus Christ) and receive insights. It is not the failure of the Master's message; it is the lack of understanding and faith in his promises that inhibits the perceptive faculties.

Jesus, within a Judaic historical context, revolutionises a limited, elitist, racist, exclusive, murderous, barbaric, tribal and most importantly impersonal God and grants all peoples in all places accessibility to Godhead through himself. The unapproachable, terrible, impersonal God becomes the immediate and hyper-personal God; in fact, intimacy with Jesus is imperative if we are to attain perfection!

Jesus accomplishes one of the major reformatory social events in human history. A quantum leap in the social and theological spheres occurred. The overthrow of the Jewish theocracy and the permanent elimination of the Jewish priest class was effected within a relatively short period; also, the impact the new religion would have on the militaristic Roman Empire was profound.

According to Christian teachings, the Teacher's message is lost on those who do not place Him (as opposed to a text) at the apex of their personal value system. However, for those who believe in his living presence – there are no secrets. Scripture opens like a flower; interpreting what others are unable to detect does not indicate that the interpreter is unusual or subversive, only that others may be 'dense'; the tendency to 'shoot the messenger' should be resisted in favour of an intelligent approach.

The following interpretation of the naked youth (symbolism) in Mark is philosophically and theologically sound. All experts are invited to proffer a more accurate interpretation if they are able – accurate theological interpretation is critical in ensuring we are not living a lie or a shared perversity.

Mark 14:

50 And they all forsook him, and fled.

51 And there followed him a certain young man, having a linen cloth cast about his naked body; and the young men laid hold on him:

52 And he left the linen cloth, and fled from them naked.

53 And they led Jesus away ...

Meaning can only be derived contextually; in the ideological and social context of the Middle East two millennia past, prevailing beliefs regarding the qualities of Deity were immutability, indestructibility, omnipotence, to mention a few. Mere mortals were/are unable to inflict damage or even pollute by touch, the higher order of Gods. The writers of the NT were faced with a dilemma regarding the arrest and subsequent abuse and murder of Jesus (supreme Christian God). Could the supreme God be polluted, abused and even killed by mere mortals? The answer within the social,

theological and philosophical context of the period was an emphatic negative! In addition to this dilemma, philosophical coherence and integrity had to be maintained in order for the teaching to be credible, appealing and rigorous.

Within any coherent theological context it is clear that mortals cannot kill the Supreme Creator. The death of the sustainer of all things would necessarily extinguish existence. In other words, kill God and you kill everything including yourself! We know that this did not occur with the 'death' of Jesus. The conclusion, for those with a sound mind, would indicate that either Jesus was not the supreme God or that he didn't die. However, neither option is acceptable in a Christian context.

The writers of the NT were faced with indicating that the essential character and incorruptibility of God was not compromised while at the same time adhering to a narrative integrity which would appear to subvert that very premise.

Parallel symbolism was utilised to indicate that God could not be defiled. The apprehension and subsequent murder of Christ was imperative to both the theme and plot. During the arrest/apprehension of Jesus a youth appears (out of the blue) in 'linen' attire - this is another contextual indicator that there is something special regarding this youth. The reader would note that both apprehensions (Jesus and the youth) were occurring in parallel time. As Jesus was indeed apprehended the youth evaded capture by fleeing in his pristine naked state. The would-be captors are left only with a garment!

We can comfortably deduce from this sequence of events that God's pristine incorruptibility remains inviolate while a (body) 'garment' remained in the hands of the captors. A clear distinction is made between the actual being and the 'garment' or vehicle of that Being. Philosophical, theological and thematic integrity was maintained by the deft use of parallel symbolism. I would add that the belief that the body is merely the vehicle of the soul on its journey to Godhead is not new - this knowledge was accepted as fact in the Far East and ancient Egypt thousands of years before the birth of Christ. Furthermore, Buddhist doctrine (600 BC) had been spread by monks along all the principal trade routes of the known world; scholars from all cultures were familiar with major doctrines of other cultures, especially if those doctrines impacted on their respective cultures.

Notwithstanding the effects of the Nicean 'editorial committee' on early Christian writings, a number of references remain in the New and Old Testaments that relate to the above interpretation.

Mark 8:

27 ...he asked his disciples, saying unto them, Whom do men say that I am?

28 And they answered, John the Baptist; but some say, Elias; and others, One of the prophets.

Matthew 16:

13 ...he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?

14 And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.

Malachi 4:5

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:

Matthew 17:

10 And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias (Elijah) must first come?

11 And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.

12 But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.

13 Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.

John 3:

3 ...I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

5 ...I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

7 Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

12 If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?

13 And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven.

When various 'Christian' groups are confronted with the above quotes, it is always amusing to observe literalists torturing plain text in their efforts to avoid the literal meaning. Avoidance and denial serve only to demonstrate how 'Christianity' – a once dynamic radical religion of transformation, bravery and social reformation – has degenerated into a haven for cowards and conservatives.

The original Christianity when compared to today's theological masquerade is far removed.

Peace to you all.

Cleaves Alternative News. <http://cleaves.lingama.net/news/story-100.html>