

Lord, Save Us From A Proof-text Faith

Week 1

Riddle

We've been reading the Christmas story backwards. How extraordinary that

people met God when they met Jesus and that Isaiah helped Matthew see one of the factors behind it.

Jesus was born in a one-horse town like Bethlehem, and that Micah helped Matthew see why.

Jesus had to be whisked off to Egypt, and that Hosea helped Matthew make sense of it.

Jesus' birth led to those babies' death, but how comforting that Jeremiah helped Matthew see that it fitted into a pattern.

Jesus then grew up in another one-horse town, and how funny that Matthew notes how this also fits the prophets but doesn't tell us how.

John Goldingay

Lord, Save Us From A Proof-text Faith
RJS, Jesus Creed, May 23, 2017

1. The meaning of the Old Testament is not confined to the intent of the original authors or the understanding of the original audience. While this is an important aspect of our understanding, it is not the sum total.
The experience of the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus led the Evangelists and the early church to a whole series of Aha! moments, where things formerly hidden became clear.
2. The Evangelists emphasize the storyline, they do not see Scripture as a compendium of “*oracles, proof texts, . . .*” References to specific passages or events are intended to conjure up the entire context, not merely the specific quote or allusion. We need to be immersed in the story as the early church, Paul, and the Evangelists were.
3. The New Testament story us transfigures and continues Israel’s story, it does not negate or replace it.
4. All four of the Evangelists portray Jesus as the embodiment of Israel’s God. Each does it a little differently, but the same general theme runs through all four. They use Israel’s Scripture to make this point. In particular, Matthew, Mark, and Luke portray Jesus as doing the things that the God of Israel does or will do in Israel’s Scripture. “*The Gospel narratives, precisely through their reading of the Old Testament to identify Jesus, force us to rethink what we mean when we say the word “God.”*”
5. This means that we read the Gospels not as flat history, but as a call to discipleship.

. . . Richard Hays bio

Richard Hays

1. Methodist upbringing in Oklahoma
2. First degree in English literature
3. Why he switched from English literature to New Testament Studies
4. He was ordained in the Methodist church. Although he now holds an academic position at Duke Divinity School, he is more concerned that his writing should speak to the church than that it should be academically recognized.
5. Book that has influenced him most: T.S.Eliot, *Four Quartets*
6. Friend of N.T.Wright. Their work is complementary: N.T.Wright is a historian, Richard Hays a literary scholar.

. . . seeing with, not thro' the eye

This Life's dim windows of the Soul
Distorts the Heavens from Pole to Pole
And leads you to Believe a Lie
When you see with, not thro' the Eye. William Blake

"What we ordinarily take to be "real" is in fact a distorted picture of the world, and it is only the revelatory power of God's word that casts a true light on the landscape of human experience and, at the same time, heals our capacity to see."

"When he speaks of what we see through "eyes of faith," he refers to the very concrete and radically disturbing vision of embodied reality offered us by the biblical narrators and by the prophets and apostles. In this vision of the world, the truth about human life is given only in Scripture—that is to say, only through the mysterious working of God in the election of Israel and the death and resurrection of Jesus."

(Richard Hays on Paul Minear, quoted in Hays' article *Reading the Bible with Eyes of Faith*.)

(Mark 8:22–26). After putting saliva on the blind man's eyes and laying hands on him, Jesus asks, "Can you see anything?" The man replies, "I can see people, but they look like trees walking around." Then, Mark tells us, Jesus laid hands a second time on the man's eyes, "and he looked intently" (interestingly, the verb is διαβλέπω—in light of Blake's poem, I am tempted to translate it "he looked *through* the eyes") and "his sight was restored, and he saw everything clearly." I fear that, most of the time, even if we have been touched by Jesus, when we biblical scholars look at the text of Scripture, we see trees walking. (Or perhaps in some cases, we see trees chopped down, split, and stacked into piles of firewood.) It is my devout hope, however, that we are entering a new historical moment in which we will again be touched by Jesus so as to find our sight clarified.

. . . Emmaus Road

Luke 24:13-35.

Now that same day two of them were going to a village called Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem. They were talking with each other about everything that had happened. As they talked and discussed these things with each other, Jesus himself came up and walked along with them; but they were kept from recognizing him.

He asked them, “What are you discussing together as you walk along?”

They stood still, their faces downcast. One of them, named Cleopas, asked him, “Are you the only one visiting Jerusalem who does not know the things that have happened there in these days?”

“What things?” he asked.

“About Jesus of Nazareth,” they replied. “He was a prophet, powerful in word and deed before God and all the people. The chief priests and our rulers handed him over to be sentenced to death, and they crucified him; but we had hoped that he was the one who was going to redeem Israel. And what is more, it is the third day since all this took place. In addition, some of our women amazed us. They went to the tomb early this morning but didn’t find his body. They came and told us that they had seen a vision of angels, who said he was alive. Then some of our companions went to the tomb and found it just as the women had said, but they did not see Jesus.”

He said to them, “How foolish you are, and how slow to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not the Messiah have to suffer these things and then enter his glory?” And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself. . . .

As they approached the village to which they were going, Jesus continued on as if he were going farther. But they urged him strongly, “Stay with us, for it is nearly evening; the day is almost over.” So he went in to stay with them.

When he was at the table with them, he took bread, gave thanks, broke it and began to give it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight. They asked each other, “Were not our hearts burning within us while he talked with us on the road and opened the Scriptures to us?”

We will return to this passage when we look at Luke.

Notice for now that the two disciples had all the facts—they knew the OT and they had heard about the resurrection, but they were still sad. They hadn’t pieced it together. Even when Jesus explained it, they didn’t get it.

When did understanding come to them?

. . . blindness

There's something else at work spiritually:

"He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Lk. 8:8

To you it has been given to know the secrets of the kingdom of God, but for others they are in parables, so that 'seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. . . Take care then how you hear, for to the one who has, more will be given, and from the one who has not, even what he thinks that he has will be taken away' Lk 8:10,18.

More on blindness:

2 Cor 3:14-18

But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away. Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit. cf. Ex 34:33-35

There's an ethical aspect to this as well. Sin blinds us. Willful sin blinds us especially.

The person that truly wants to follow Jesus will understand. *If anyone's will is to do God's will, he will know whether the teaching is from God or whether I am speaking on my own authority.* Jn. 7:17

Lk.10:21 Understanding spiritual truths does not require the same skills or background as understanding academic arguments. A child can understand Biblical truth that an adult doesn't.

Hays says his academic work consists in explaining to other academics what is obvious to the person in the pew.

. . . The OT

THE OLD TESTAMENT

How do you think of the Old Testament? As a series of stories about heroes? Or what?

Challenge: Could you put together a summary (not necessarily chronological or in the order of the books of the Bible) of the OT showing how God has revealed himself?