

JESUS' "TRIUMPHAL" ENTRY
AN ILL-FATED CHALLENGE TO AUTHORITY:
A SOCIAL HISTORICAL ANALYSIS
MARK 11:1-11

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ABSTRACT

Jesus' procession into Jerusalem (Mk. 11:1-11), is generally perceived as a celebration of Jesus' messiahship. The acquisition of the donkey, the reaction and proclamation of the disciples and the crowd certainly suggest so. Then suddenly, that joyous and celebrative mood disappeared. In the end, Jesus just entered Jerusalem, went to the Temple, took a look around and left. It was quite an anticlimax conclusion for such an occasion.

This thesis will argue against this popular perception in that, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Mk.11:1-11), represents an ill-fated challenge to authority. It will argue that Jesus went to Jerusalem to challenge the religious and political authorities there. Jesus' challenge was on behalf of, and was supported by the marginalised people, who had been suffering hardship, because of these authorities' oppressive regimes.

However, Jesus failed in his challenge. This is because not only was he arrested and was crucified by the same authority, but he also failed to deliver hope for the people. Jesus failed to liberate the people from their suffering as they expected him to do. That failure transformed the people from being supportive of Jesus' challenge, to being aggressive, shouting for him to be crucified. After the crucifixion, Jesus was buried, but on the third day, he rose from the grave and was resurrected from death.

From a Christian perspective, Jesus' challenge is successful because his resurrection has liberated us all from the slavery of sin and from suffering. His resurrection victory has empowered us to continue our responsibility and challenge of helping others, who are less fortunate than us. His sacrificial death has assured us of our freedom from earthly afflictions and hope in the Kingdom of God, if we truly place our trust and faith in him, to lead us in our journey through good and troublesome times.

DECLARATION

I declare that this work has not used without due acknowledgment of any material that has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma in another institution. I also declare that the work has not used any material, heard or read, without proper acknowledgment of the source.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

DEDICATION

In loving memory of my wife, Tekina Pueomalo Uilelea, whose struggle against cancer came to an end on Monday, 21st May, 2007, at 12:15 a.m.

*Your Courageous and Painful Struggle gave me Strength,
But Joy and Happiness Overwhelmed,
as You Rest in Peace with Our Lord,
Who declared to be with us, 'til the End.*

And to our lovely daughter
Eucharistia Maria Lalagofaatasi Visessio Saga

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I would like to take this opportunity, first and foremost to praise and to exalt our Triune God for his gracious love for us all. We are nothing without him and only through him, we are able to discern all things and to perform our duties, in service of him. May his name be glorified forever, Amen.

This work has been a challenge for me not only academically, but also my personal journey and it would have been impossible, without the much appreciated assistance from others. First, I would like to thank my supervisor, Rev. Dr. Tevita K. Havea, whose patience and valuable contributions has allowed me to complete this work. It has been an honour working under his guidance and leadership and I appreciate it very much the wealth of knowledge that I have learned from him. I would also like to acknowledge the valuable contributions from Rev. Dr. Afereti Uili of Biblical Studies Dept, Principal, faculty members, administrative staff, library staff and all the students in the Master programme here at Pacific Theological College, who had contributed immensely to this work. Thank you.

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To my mother, Mafa Lupeomanu, my family and my daughter, Eucharistia, thank you. You have been the beacons of hope that motivate and strengthen me during these challenging times and hope for the future.

List of Abbreviations

Biblical References¹

OT	Old Testament
Gen.	Genesis
Exod.	Exodus
Lev.	Leviticus
Num.	Numbers
Deut.	Deuteronomy
Josh.	Joshua
Judg.	Judges
1 Sam	1 Samuel
2 Sam.	2 Samuel
1 Kgs.	1 Kings
2 Kgs.	2 Kings
1 Chr.	1 Chronicles
2 Chr.	2 Chronicles
Ps.	The Psalms
Isa.	Isaiah
Jer.	Jeremiah
Ezek.	Ezekiel
Dan.	Daniel
Zech.	Zechariah
NT	New Testament
Matt.	The Gospel According to Matthew
Mk.	The Gospel According to Mark
Luk.	The Gospel According to Luke
Jn.	The Gospel According to John
Rom.	The Letter of Paul to the Romans
1 Cor.	The First Letter of Paul to the Corinthians
2 Cor.	The Second Letter of Paul to the Corinthians
Gal.	The Letter of Paul to the Galatians
Eph.	The Letter of Paul to the Ephesians
Phi.	The Letter of Paul to the Philippians
Col.	The Letter of Paul to the Colossians
1 Tim.	The First Letter of Paul to Timothy
Heb.	The Letters to the Hebrews
Jam.	The Letter of James
1 Pet.	The First Letter of Peter
1 Jn.	The First Letter of John
Rev.	The Revelation to John

¹ All biblical references contained within this discussion are from the *NRSV* of the Holy Bible, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1989), unless otherwise stated.

Bible Versions

GNT	GNT Friberg NT (UBS3/4) – (Greek)
NIB	New International Version (BR)
NIV	New International Version (1984) (US)
KJV	King James Version (1611/1769)
NKV	New King James Version (1982)
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version (1989)
WTT	Hebrew Old Testament WTT BHS (4 th Edition)

Others

ABD	<i>The Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> , Eds., et al, David Noel Freedman, 6 volumes, New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1992
AGAPE	<i>Alternative Globalisation Addressing Peoples and Earth</i> , Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005
BAGD	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , by W. Bauer, transl. and revised by W.F. Arndt and F.W. Gingrich, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, Cambridge: The University Press, 1957; second edition by F.W. Gingrich and F.W. Danker, London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979
BDAG	<i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> , by W. Bauer; third edition by Frederick William Danker, London and Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000
BCE	Before Common Era
RoR	<i>Religions of Rome</i> , by, Mary Beard, John North and Simon Price, Volumes One and Two, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i> , Eds., G. Johannes Botterweck and Helmer Ringgren, Volume II. Revised Edition, transl., John T. Willis, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1975; Volume V. transl., David E Green, Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1986
BibWok	<i>BibleWorks for Windows</i> , Version 4.0.035, @ 1998, LLC
CCCS	Congregational Christian Church in Samoa
CCDT	<i>Collins: Concise Dictionary and Thesaurus</i> , Third Edition, eds., et al, Lorna Gilmour, Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers, 2003
CE	Common Era
CECF	<i>Constructing Early Christian Families: Family as Social Reality and Metaphor</i> , ed., Halvor Moxnes, London, New York: Routledge, 1997
DJG	<i>Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels</i> , eds., et al., Joel B. Green, Downers Grove, Leicester: InterVarsity Press, 1992
EDNT	<i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i>
Ed(s).	Editor(s)
EncyBrit.	<i>Encyclopaedia Britannica</i> , 2004, CD-ROM

IDB	<i>The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible, An Illustrated Encyclopaedia: In Four Volumes</i>
JBT	<i>Journal of Bible and Theology</i>
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JETS	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i> (Lynchburg, Virginia)
Josephus, Ant.	Josephus, <i>Jewish Antiquities</i>
Josephus, War	Josephus, <i>The Jewish Wars</i>
JSNT	<i>Journal for the Study of the New Testament</i> (London)
JSOT	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i> (London)
JTS	<i>Journal of Theological Studies</i> (Oxford)
TDNT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> , Volume VI, Πε - P, Eds., Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, transl., Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Grand Rapids: WM. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1968
Macc.	Maccabees
MTh.	Master of Theology
NIDNTT	<i>The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology</i>
NovT	<i>Novum Testamentum: An International Quarterly for the New Testament and Related Studies.</i> (Netherlands)
NTS	<i>New Testament Studies</i> (Cambridge, United Kingdom)
PCC	Pacific Council of Churches (Suva)
PIBA	<i>Proceedings of the Irish Biblical Association</i> (Dublin)
PNAS	<i>Proceedings of the National Academic of Sciences of the United States of America</i>
RR	<i>Review for Religious</i> (St. Louis, Missouri)
SJT	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i> (Edinburgh)
Tacitus, Ann.	Tacitus, <i>The Annals</i>
Tacitus, Hist.	Tacitus, <i>The Histories</i>
Transl.	Translator(s)
WCC	World Council of Churches (Geneva)
Wig-Gre	<i>New Englishman's Greek-English Concordance & Lexicon: Break the Language Barrier Series</i> , by George V. Wigram and Jay P. Green, Lafayette: Sovereign Grace Publishers, 1982

Introduction

Jesus' entry into Jerusalem (Mk. 11:1-11) is generally portrayed as a triumphant procession of a victorious king, riding on a colt and marching towards his city and his people. It implies a celebration of Jesus' messiahship. The crowd intensified this mood when they spread their cloaks on the road and covered it with tree branches. They shouted messianic proclamations and praises of Jesus as he rode along. Then, the joyous occasion suddenly came to a halt. There were no welcoming speeches or revelling into the night, but instead, Jesus just looked around and left. There was no celebration at all. It came to nothing. I feel that the abrupt end to this so called joyous procession represents something else.

This thesis will argue that Jesus came into Jerusalem not only to emphasise his majesty and glory, which was his destiny, but he also came as a leader of an oppressed people. These people had been victimised by the processes of societies, as exemplified by the rules of both religious and political authorities. Jesus came to Jerusalem to confront these authorities and to challenge their administration, which had a direct bearing on these marginalised people's subsistence existence.

This thesis will therefore argue that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was an ill-fated challenge to authorities. Ill-fated in that Jesus ended up being arrested, tried and was crucified by the same authorities that he set out to challenge. It was also an ill-fated challenge because Jesus did not deliver what the people had hoped and expected of him, which was to liberate them from their suffering and slavery existence. For these reasons, the people and Jesus' disciples abandoned him.

The presupposition for this thesis is that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is the continuation of his opposition to the authorities on behalf of the marginalised people. This opposition started from Galilee and eventually ended up in Jerusalem, the seat of

power. Jesus died in the process. However, Jesus' resurrection from death had fulfilled his purpose of ensuring freedom and salvation for all humanity.

It is not the intention of this research to encourage subordination or rebellion against authority as authority is from God (Rom. 13:1). However, I feel that the issue of leadership might also be addressed in this research. That is, to encourage those in leadership roles to do what is right even if it means harassments, oppositions or endangering oneself in the process. I hope this research will help us to seek and speak the truth; to address potentially catastrophic issues, which others might turn a blind eye and to treat everyone equally. It might also contribute to the Church's ability to raise its prophetic voice, concerning matters of importance and to be seen as proactive and be involved in issues, which can have consequential impacts on humanity and our environments.

Fear of being endangered, being singled-out, being ostracised or banished can prevent us from performing our duties. This is a leadership challenge for us all. We must be encouraged to stand up for what we believe as Christians to be right; to oppose oppression and ill treatment of the less fortunate; to help the weak and the poor and to be true disciples of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, researching this topic might provide us with an alternative interpretation of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem to compliment other views and/or to shed new light into this event. It might fill in that gap of explaining the sudden shift of behaviour from joyous celebrative mood to an aggressive one. It might also help us to understand some unexplained accounts in this event, like investigating the donkey and its unnamed owner, which I feel has not been explained sufficiently in the generally accepted interpretations of this pericope. A plausible explanation, which I will argue, is that the whole event was pre-planned, which ties in with this notion of a challenge.

However, caution must be exercised because it is acknowledged that nearly all historical literatures from antiquity were the products of male historians and of the elite¹ since they possessed literacy. Therefore, ancient sources, like Flavius Josephus' accounts that are included herein must be read with this in mind.

This thesis consists of five chapters. The first Chapter will explain the Social-Historical method, which will be used to interpret Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem (Mark 11:1-11), as well as the Literature Review of current scholarly works on this topic. In Chapter Two, I will examine the social, economic, religious and political environments that existed during first century CE Palestine. It aims to establish the people's sufferings and their reactions against the authorities. It will also examine the cooperative nature of the relationship between the Jewish religious establishment and the Roman imperial authority, which sourced the people's hardship. Chapter Three analyses the concepts of Leadership and Authority in general, but within a political situation that was facing imminent changes. It aims to identify traits of a good leader in a changing environment. This chapter will also attempt to identify Jesus as a leader of, and for the people. Chapter Four will be the exegetical analysis of the so-called Triumphal entry pericope as recorded in Mark 11: 1-11 from the social-historical perspective. Finally, Chapter Five will consist of my own reflections on this topic and how Jesus' actions can be applied to our own current situation, as we encounter the challenges of many social issues that affect us today. This is to be followed by the Conclusion at the end.

¹ Susan R. Garrett, "Sociology of Early Christianity," in *ABD*, Volume 6, 89.

Chapter 1

Methodology and Literature Review

Methodology

The social-historical method of interpretation is a development in biblical exegesis, which shows a growing interest in the “social world of the Bible and the social dimension of its literature.”¹ Those who advocate this perspective argue that biblical texts are historical “records of dynamic social interchange among persons who lived in specific communities at particular times and places.”² Social-historical methodology aims to expose, examine and to explain the social features and the social dimensions of people and places described in the text and of the relationships between the texts, its authors and recipients. It analyses the “interrelation of the biblical texts and their social world, the conditions under which these documents were produced and circulated, and the specific socio-religious functions which they were designed to serve.”³ Therefore, the task of social-historical interpretation involves the blended analysis of its historical, grammatical and social dimensions.

However, Dale Martin points to a concern pertaining social science methodologies in general, due to “a spectrum of opinion about what precisely a social-

¹ John H. Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless: A Sociological Exegesis of 1 Peter, Its Situation and Strategy*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 1; see also: David G. Horrell, “Social-Scientific Interpretation of the New Testament: Retrospect and Prospect,” in *Social-Scientific Approaches to New Testament Interpretation*, ed., David G. Horrell, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1999), 3.

² Garrett, “Sociology of Early Christianity,” 89-90; see also: Trevor J. Burke, *Family Matters: A Socio-Historical Study of Kinship Metaphors in 1 Thessalonians*, (London, New York: T & T Clark International, 2003), 10-11.

³ Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 3, 8-9.

scientific method should be.”⁴ Scholars within this discipline have described their works in various terms like social historians, which implies a “continuation of the historical criticism with more emphasis on the social aspects of biblical issues.”⁵

Others refer to their work as social-scientific, by using sociology and anthropology models to explain biblical texts, “as we are approaching our subject in the light of our own questions.”⁶ Others prefer the name cultural anthropology or ethnography of ancient Israel or early Christianity.⁷ However, these different preferences do not correlate to separate independent methodologies. Although each has a specific emphasis, they do however, complement each other in the sense that they have all borrowed from the social sciences, sociology and anthropology to interpret early Christian literature and history. This thesis utilises the social-historical approach, but other areas of the social science discipline, like archaeological findings, will be included to clarify specific issues that will be discussed in this thesis.

Social-history implies a close connection with historical-critical method in examining the social historical context and social realities *of* the text and *in* the text. It also builds and further makes use of the ‘form criticism’ and its *sitz im Leben* (setting in life) to determine the social realities and origins of the historical information we now access. This is supported by Wayne Meeks in reference to the early Christians:

To write social history, it is necessary to pay more attention to the ordinary patterns of life in the immediate environment within which the Christian movement was born...the task of a social-historian of early Christianity is to describe the life of the ordinary Christian

⁴ Dale B. Martin, “Social-Scientific Criticism,” in *To Each its Own Meaning: An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and their Application*, eds., S.L. Mackenzie and S.R. Haynes, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press; London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1993), 107.

⁵ Martin, “Social-Scientific Criticism,” 103; Horrell, “Social-Scientific Interpretation of the New Testament,” 3; also Elliott, *A Home for the Homeless*, 2-3, Elliott says that even historical analysis involves some aspects of social events, but has been suppressed in favour of historical analysis.

⁶ Gerd Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians: Theology, Ethics, and the World of the New Testament*, transl., Margaret Kohl, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 232.

⁷ Martin, “Social-Scientific Criticism,” 103; Theissen, *Social Reality and the Early Christians*, 232.

within that environment – not just the ideas or the self-understanding of the writers.⁸

An important point raised here by Meeks is the ability to differentiate between the contents of any historical texts and the characteristics and qualities of the authors, which could and would have influenced the accuracy and bias of the information recorded. This differentiation becomes prevalent when the contents of texts and authors differ in time, place and context. To put this into perspective, Jesus' perceived triumphal entry into Jerusalem took place around 30 CE, and the Gospel according to Mark was written some thirty plus years later (before 70 CE), during the early church's development. It was a time of political upheaval, revolutions and the great revolt of 66-70 CE, and the destruction of the Temple. It was also a time of Christians persecution and oppositions from Jewish followers and from Roman rulers.

However, to determine the social realities of the people (at a particular time and place) in relation to the corresponding historical events, social-historians prefer using social theories⁹ to develop research frameworks, more so than adopting the idea of a specifically model-based approach.¹⁰ These social theories should allow an analysis of "any social phenomenon to generate a valid picture of societies as wholes."¹¹

⁸ Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1983), 2.

⁹ Raymond Boudon and Mohamed Cherkaoui, *Central Currents in Social Theory: Contemporary Sociological Theory 1920-2000*, Volume V, eds., Raymond Boudon and Mohamed Cherkaoui, (London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: SAGE Publications, 2000), in their Introduction to this volume, highlight the recognition and development of sociology since the beginning of the 20th century.

¹⁰ Horrell, "Social-Scientific Interpretation of the New Testament," 16; also Meek, *The First Urban Christians*, 2, Meek highlights the danger of using models to "fill in the gaps, where we do not have enough evidence."

¹¹ Talcott Parsons, *Sociological Theory and Modern Society*, (New York: The Free Press, 1967), discusses a variety of Social Actions, Social Institutions, Social Structures, and Social Changes with specific social issues like Influence, Power and Authority, Collective actions, Theory of Justice, Organisations, Structures of kinship, Families and Communities, Political ideologies, Power elite, and many more.

According to Gerd Theissen, these social aspects of a text would complement and enhance our understanding, by “clarifying the sources...and to localise the texts.”¹²

In Jesus’ procession, for example, the significance of Mount of Olives (Mk. 11:1) can be drawn from an analysis of historical occasions and eschatological importance of this mountain.¹³ The reference to Jesus as a carpenter (Mk. 6:3) is a starting point for analysing social relationships between employers and employees in those days, by studying local historical building projects of the time and archaeological evident unearthed so far.¹⁴ Thus, social-historians seek to recognize early societal life situation through the communities to which they belonged and to glimpse their lives through occasions mirrored in the texts.¹⁵

Adopting this social historical approach, I hope to bring to light the daily life reality of the common people¹⁶ in Greco-Roman Palestine. This is because, it is presumed that the majority of the crowd that participated in the procession to Jerusalem, were the common people. This was a class of people created by the religious demands and the progression of economic and political developments of the time.

The historical aspects of this research will focus on some of the relevant historical events that took place around this period, in relation to this research. It will examine these events’ significant impacts on the people’s existence as well as their importance

¹² Gerd Theissen, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition*, transl., Linda M. Maloney, (London, New York: T & T International – A Continuum Imprint, 1992), 15; Wesley Allen, *Reading the Synoptic Gospels: Basic Methods for Interpreting Matthew, Mark and Luke*, (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000), 33, Allen also highlights this need to investigate references that are foreign to us, “in order to understand the texts’ significance in its original context.”

¹³ Refer section on, “Mount of Olives,” Chapter Four.

¹⁴ Refer section on, “Jesus, the Carpenter,” Chapter Four.

¹⁵ Meeks, *The First Urban Christians*, 2.

¹⁶ These common people can be identified with families, rural peasant communities, their movements from rural to urban areas to seek employments or selling their labour. Within their mixed were the poor, the homeless and landless, the sick and the marginalised people whose reality was poverty, driven to this situation because of the changing economic and political environments of the time.

and relevance to this undertaking. So it will mainly be gearing to the questions of ‘what happened?’ and ‘when did it happen?’

The social aspects will focus on the relationships between these historical events and the people who shaped them and those who were affected by them. It will look at the questions of ‘why’ these events happened and ‘how’ they impacted the lives of the people concerned. It will examine the social structures within the family and society, the relationship between the wealthy elite and the poor as well as the religious and political structures existed within such societies.

Through these examinations and analysis, I hope to prove that Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem was an ill-fated challenge for the historical Jesus, not only because he died, but, the hope of those he led died with him. From this initial objective, I also hope to highlight the qualities of a strong leader who could and would stand up for his/her people during good and troublesome times. A leader that would both lead and serve his subjects and be prepared to face the consequences of being a leader, especially during these times of global changes and increase poverty throughout our modern world.

Literature Review

This Literature Review is intended to highlight some of the scholarly works available on this particular liberal reading of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Also, the viewpoints of those conservative scholars, who oppose such reading, will be presented as well as reviewing other works, which highlight other aspects of this thesis. These include the life of families and peasant communities in first century CE Palestine, the people’s mass movements against those in authorities and the reasons behind them and also the relationships between the people and the authorities. This review will also highlight the Roman’s working relationship and collaboration with the Jewish religious

leaders. This is to highlight their agendas not only politically but their religious ambitions for the Jewish people, as part of the Roman Empire.

General Literature Reviews:

***Binding the Strong Man*, by Ched Myers**

Myers¹⁷ encourages an open-minded approach in the interpretation of the Bible, in this case the Gospel of Mark. He has opened up a new dimension of reading the Bible – ‘daring,’ if I could adopt Daniel Berrigan’s foreword to Myers’ work. Myers sets out to “search for renewed direction and hope in our struggle to follow the way of Jesus in difficult times, and yet, to overthrow the structures of domination in our world.”¹⁸ Myer prefers military terms to interpret Mark’s gospel, which “retells the story of Jesus of Nazareth and his struggle with the powers of Roman Palestine”¹⁹ and the “exploitive weight of colonialism.”²⁰

Myers’ explosive theme starts right from the beginning of Mark’s Prologue (Mk. 1: 1-20), which focuses on “human cries and a messenger who heralds the advent of the one strong enough to wrestle the world away from the death-grip of the powers, who declares himself an outlaw.”²¹ This outlaw, as Myers views Jesus began assaulting the Jewish social order in Capernaum; construct a New Social Order and then a Direct Action Campaign with the Powers in Jerusalem.

For Myers, in this direct action campaign against Jerusalem, “Jesus comes not as a pilgrim, but to mount a non-violent siege on the ruling class.”²² The start of this

¹⁷ Ched Myers, *Binding the Strong Man: A Political Reading of Mark’s Story of Jesus*, (New York: Orbis Books, 1988).

¹⁸ Myers, *Strong Man*, xxix.

¹⁹ Myers, *Strong Man*, 4.

²⁰ Myers, *Strong Man*, 6.

²¹ Myers, *Strong Man*, 91.

²² Myers, *Strong Man*, 290.

Jerusalem campaign, with Jesus' triumphal entry into Jerusalem, according to Myers is a "misnomer."²³ Although it came to nothing at the end when Jesus just looked around and left, it was politically loaded and "deliberately planned and choreographed,"²⁴ which implies a well-orchestrated campaign against the authorities in Jerusalem.

***Bandits, Prophets and Messiahs*, by Richard A. Horsley with John S. Hanson**

Horsley and Hanson²⁵ provide some useful historical background information about peasantry community life in Jewish Palestine. These peasantry communities, which constituted an estimated 90% of the population, provided the vast majority of various movements against authorities. The peasantry was the dynamic force, which provided the original "source of historical change and its ramifications,"²⁶ which included the likes of the *Sicarii* or dagger men, who carried out a program of symbolic assassination against members of the priestly aristocracy.

There were also other popular messianic and prophetic movements which were reminiscent of the great oracular prophets of the Hebrew Scriptures. These movements were mainly directed "against the Jewish ruling elite and especially against Roman occupation."²⁷ However, these peasants were not capable of such movements without the leadership of some courageous characters who could rise up in times of distress against the established traditional leaders of societies. For Horsley and Hanson, these leaders were almost always from outside of the peasant communities.

Their examination of Israel's historical background from its origin up to Roman domination, and the various movements by the peasants, relays a message of hope for

²³ Myers, *Strong Man*, 294.

²⁴ Myers, *Strong Man*, 295.

²⁵ Richard A. Horsley with John S. Hanson, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs: Popular Movements in the Time of Jesus*, (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1985).

²⁶ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, xi.

²⁷ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, xv.

the oppressed. These “ideals of what life should be like,”²⁸ not only reflected the peasants’ happy memory of their past glory, but also gave them a purpose to rebel against an oppressive regime and for their “own survival.”²⁹ Also, their examination of the social-economic circumstances of Palestinian-Jewish society, ascertain why so many people were prepared to form movements and to join a brigand band. For Horsley and Hanson, these economic conditions can also “serve as a consideration of the conditions of other Jewish popular movements around the time of Jesus.”³⁰

The popular messianic movements, which were supported by the peasants, according to Horsley and Hanson, were “centred around a charismatic king, however humble his origin was, because the people were not looking at distinguished families for leadership.”³¹ For them, Jesus “shared the same basic concerns as other leaders, in responding to the concerns of the common people.”³²

Leaders of Mass Movements, by David Fiensy

Fiensy’s article³³ provides a pattern of leadership characteristics pertaining to mass movements in the Roman Empire as well as similar movements in Palestine. He concludes that “Jesus was a leader of a mass movement”³⁴ and the people followed him. However, Fiensy highlights the need to bear in mind that “the peasantry probably had a different interpretation of Jesus’ words than he himself had.”³⁵

²⁸ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 3.

²⁹ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 21.

³⁰ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 50.

³¹ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 115, they say that these families owed their positions to Herod.

³² Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 245.

³³ David Fiensy, “Leaders of Mass Movements and the Leader of the Jesus Movement,” *JSNT*, Issue 74, 1999, 3-27.

³⁴ Fiensy, “Leaders of Mass Movements,” 26.

³⁵ Fiensy, “Leaders of Mass Movements,” 27.

He identifies the different social stratification of Herodian Palestine, between the upper and lower classes, which represent 2% and 98% respectively of the population.³⁶ This classification clearly differentiates between the minority elite and the subsistence existence of the majority. This imbalanced relationship is nonetheless maintained to provide for the needs of both groups.³⁷

The mass were reluctant to rebel for fear of their “subsistence being threatened”³⁸ For Fiensy, the peasants do not want to restructure society, but simply to make their individual lives more tolerable.³⁹ However, this fear rendered them powerless to act, preferring to seek out a leader to provide a solution for their problem. Fiensy has argued that these leaders originated not from within the peasantry communities, but outsiders, who could “articulate grievances and organise for action, which has consequences beyond the peasants’ immediate problems.”⁴⁰ However, his argument does not imply that Jesus was wealthy or a member of the elite to be a leader but his credentials were achieved through association and working with these people.⁴¹

Fiensy also suggests that even before Jesus “began his ministry, his social circle was established.”⁴² Douglas E. Oakman⁴³ and Bruce J. Malina⁴⁴ support this line of argument that Jesus had prior contacts before his ministry. These suggestions also

³⁶ Santiago Guisjarro, “The Family in First-Century Galilee,” in *CECF*, 58, Guisjarro agrees with Fiensy’s assessment, which more or less reflects our own current global situation of wealth distribution (see: Figure 5.1, Chapter Five).

³⁷ Fiensy, “Leaders of Mass Movements,” 5.

³⁸ Fiensy, “Leaders of Mass Movements,” 8.

³⁹ This point is supported by B. Moore, *Social Origin of Dictatorship and Democracy*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1966), 457.

⁴⁰ Fiensy, “Leaders of Mass Movements,” 8.

⁴¹ Fiensy, “Leaders of Mass Movements,” 18.

⁴² Fiensy, “Leaders of Mass Movements,” 18.

⁴³ Douglas E. Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Question of his Day*, (Lewistown, Queenstown: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 175-204, says that Jesus had social contacts before his ministry.

⁴⁴ Bruce J Malina, “Jesus’ Out-Group Relationship,” in *Windows on the World of Jesus: Time Travel to Ancient Judea*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 93, explains the importance of having such contacts with others in an in-group networking environment. It “facilitates problem solving and friends are expected to go out of their way to do favours for each other, and are also expected to return the favour.”

support some scholarly views that the acquisition of the donkey in Jesus' procession was "pre-arranged."⁴⁵

Book Review, by Troels Engberg-Pedersen

Engberg-Pedersen's review⁴⁶ represents the conservative stance on biblical interpretation of Mark, where the emphasis should be on theology and Christology. He has however, summed up nicely Horsley's intention to present Mark's story of Jesus as "spearheading a widespread popular movement based in local village communities [in Galilee] that extends beyond Galilee."⁴⁷ This is in direct opposition to the rulers and ruling institutions in Galilee: Herod Antipas, and in Judea and Jerusalem: the Pharisees, the high priestly rulers and behind them the Romans empire.

Engberg-Pedersen then goes into discussing some of Horsley's arguments, which he mostly disagrees with. He concludes that "Horsley's attempt to connect Mark very closely with the historical Jesus, removes Mark from being a Christian book and that Horsley does not recognise a difference between Mark and Jesus."⁴⁸ His position on Horsley's work is summed up as "not successful, but sharpens our understanding of the political character of at least Mark's account and probably also of Jesus' activity, as being directed against any kind of human use of power."⁴⁹

⁴⁵ William L. Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark: The English Text with Introduction, Exposition and Notes*, ed., F.F. Bruce, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1974), 395, is of the same mindset when he says that the availability of the donkey suggests prearrangement with the owner; Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction, Notes and Indexes*, Second Edition, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1966), 454, Taylor asks a similar question of whether the instruction implied a previous arrangement with the owner of the colt.

⁴⁶ Troels Engberg-Pedersen, "Review of Richard A. Horsley's Book: Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plots in Mark's Gospel," *JTS*, Volume. 54 Part 1, April 2003, pp. 230-245.

⁴⁷ Engberg-Pedersen, "Review of Richard A. Horsley's Book," 231.

⁴⁸ Engberg-Pedersen, "Review of Richard A. Horsley's Book," 233.

⁴⁹ Engberg-Pedersen, "Review of Richard A. Horsley's Book," 245.

***The Last Week*, by Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan**

Borg and Crossan⁵⁰ reconstruct Jesus' daily activities during his last week in Jerusalem. This week "climax on Good Friday and Easter, it is Holy Week."⁵¹ They attempt to explain this last week, against the background of Jewish high-priestly collaboration with Roman imperial control, as given in the Gospel According to Mark.

For them, Jesus' procession was one of two processions that entered Jerusalem on the same day for the beginning of Passover celebration. The other was the Roman column of imperial cavalry and soldiers, led by Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor. Pilate's procession displayed not only "imperial power, but also Roman imperial theology."⁵² It also embodied the power, glory and violence of the empire that ruled the world. However, Jesus' procession was a "pre-arranged counter-procession."⁵³ These processions embodied the "central conflict of the week that led to Jesus' crucifixion."⁵⁴

For Borg and Crossan, Jerusalem took a major transformation from being the centre of the sacred geography of the Jewish people to a city that became the "centred of a domination system, marked by political oppression, economic exploitation to religious legitimization."⁵⁵ It was a system that was controlled by a few wealthy families at the top, including the "high priest and members of aristocratic families."⁵⁶

Jesus' procession represented many other revolutionary movements that were "directed against Jerusalem and the Temple because of its collaboration with the

⁵⁰ Marcus J. Borg and John Dominic Crossan, *The Last Week: A Day-by-Day Account of Jesus's Final Week in Jerusalem*, (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 2006).

⁵¹ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, vii.

⁵² Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 2.

⁵³ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 3.

⁵⁴ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 2.

⁵⁵ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 7-8.

⁵⁶ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 16.

domination system.”⁵⁷ For Borg and Crossan, Jesus’ procession was also the “proclamation of the kingdom of God, addressed primarily to the peasants.”⁵⁸

Pontius Pilate, by Joan E. Taylor

Taylor’s⁵⁹ intention in this article is to show that Pontius Pilate, who ultimately handed over Jesus to be crucified, was more than just a loyal Roman governor of Judaea. According to Taylor, Pilate “appears deliberately offensive to Jews and Samaritans and uncaring about their sensibilities.”⁶⁰ Taylor’s study of Pilate’s coinage and inscription highlights Pilate’s determination to promote Roman religion in Judaea. These symbolisms celebrate the religious roles of the emperor and also the imperial cult.

Taylor also points out that “Pilate’s position alone carried within it a religious dimension,”⁶¹ much to the dismay of the Jewish pilgrims. She supports this by stating that massive temples were built throughout Roman territories to honour the Roman gods and emperors, like the great temples for Roma and Augustus in Caesarea Maritima.⁶² For Taylor, Pilate’s construction of these temples was his way of honouring the emperor and promoting the imperial cult and Roman religion.⁶³

To further support her argument, Taylor also mentions Philo of Alexandria’s account of Pilate setting up ‘shields’ and ‘statues’ in his palace, which were strongly associated with the imperial cult. This was not to honour Tiberius, but rather to annoy the Jewish multitude. Through these examples, Taylor concludes that “Pilate was

⁵⁷ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 20.

⁵⁸ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 25.

⁵⁹ Joan E. Taylor, “Pontius Pilate and the Imperial Cult in Roman Judaea,” *NTS*, Volume 25.4, October 2006, pp. 555-582.

⁶⁰ Taylor, “Pontius Pilate,” 556; also see: *RoR*, Volume One, 321, Beard supports a similar view.

⁶¹ Taylor, “Pontius Pilate,” 556.

⁶² Taylor, “Pontius Pilate,” 570.

⁶³ Taylor, “Pontius Pilate,” 575.

determined to maintain, if not advance, the Roman imperial cult and Roman religion in Judaea.”⁶⁴

Specific Literature Reviews: Mark 11:1-11

“This triumphal entry was not as triumphant as Jesus had hope.”⁶⁵ This is Darren Larson’s conclusion, after comparing Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem with ancient Greco-Roman triumph processions. Jesus was not welcomed at all, which implied that “they did not recognize Jesus as they should have.”⁶⁶ This is one of many different views about this pericope. Generally, it has been held as having Messianic significance,⁶⁷ which alludes to the fulfilment of the Prophet Zechariah’s prophecy (Zech. 9:9).

Others⁶⁸ however, do not agree with the above assessment, in particular Myers and Horsley,⁶⁹ who highlight a political dimension to Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. They argue that this was a political demonstration to highlight the plight of the oppressed and marginalised people, against the political and religious leaders, located at Jerusalem, as Myers puts it: “The episode resembles a carefully choreographed street theatre, [which] is politically loaded, [but] Jesus does not intend to fight.”⁷⁰

⁶⁴ Taylor, “Pontius Pilate,” 382.

⁶⁵ Darren Larson, “Jesus’ Triumphal Entry?” at <http://darrenlarson.blogspot.com/2007/04/jesus-triumphal-entry.html>, April, 2007, visited on 9th July, 2008.

⁶⁶ Larson, “Jesus’ Triumphal Entry?” 2.

⁶⁷ Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 1966, 451; A.E.J. Rawlinson, *St Mark: With Introduction, Commentary and Additional Notes*, (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd., 1925), 150; C.S. Mann, *The Anchor Bible, Mark: A New Translation with introduction and Commentary*, (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1986), 432; Sherman E. Johnson, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St. Mark*, (London: Adam & Charles Black, 1960), 186; Henry Barclay Swete, *The Gospel According to St Mark: The Greek Text with Introduction Notes and Indices*, (London: MacMillan and Co., Limited / New York: The MacMillan Company, 1898), 236; D.E. Nineham, *The Pelican New Testament Commentaries: The Gospel of Mark*, (Middlesex, New York, Victoria, Auckland: Penguin Books, 1963), 291.

⁶⁸ Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark*, transl., Donald H. Madvig, (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1970), 227; Morna D. Hooker, *A Commentary on The Gospel According to St Mark*, (London: A & C Black, 1991), 256; C.E.B. Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark: An Introduction and Commentary*, ed., C.F.D. Moule, (Cambridge: University Press, 1963), 352.

⁶⁹ Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark’s Gospel*, (Louisville, London, Leiden: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

⁷⁰ Myers, *Strong Man*, 294-295.

Hugh Anderson thinks likewise but unsure if “Jesus himself aimed at a demonstration that he was a Messiah not of the Davidic warrior type of popular expectation, but rather like the peaceful king of Zech. 9:9.”⁷¹ For Myers, Jesus’ procession is a “kind of parody, contrasting Jesus’ destiny of the cross with the popular messianic expectations of the disciples, crowds and the readers.”⁷² However, R. Otto thinks that Jesus’ procession and the accompanied “acclamation is eschatological but not messianic.”⁷³ Even David Bruce Taylor questions if such an event ever took place, as Mark explained it, because of the contrasting imagery used of “a victorious and triumphant King, yet humble and riding on an ass.”⁷⁴

R.T. France alludes to the theatrical aspect of Jesus’ procession, pointing out the significance of Jesus riding into Jerusalem. For France, this (riding) becomes the “centre of attention, [as] this was a deliberate departure from his normal practice of travelling by foot. Jesus was aiming to be noticed [and] he could be said to have engineered the outburst of joyous proclamation by the crowd.”⁷⁵ This nationalistic mood of the crowd does play into the messianic expectation of the people, which is further implied to, by Jesus riding on the donkey.

The first part of the pericope – Jesus’ instruction to acquire the donkey implies Jesus’ “supernatural power,”⁷⁶ as opposed to those who argue that this was a pre-

⁷¹ Hugh Anderson, *New Century Bible Commentary: The Gospel of Mark – Based on the Revised Standard Version*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., / London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Publ. Ltd., 1976), 260.

⁷² Myers, *Strong Man*, 296.

⁷³ R. Otto, *The Kingdom of God and the Son of Man*, transl., F.V. Wilson and B.L. Woolf, London, 1938, cited by Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St Mark*, 1966.

⁷⁴ David Bruce Taylor, *Mark’s Gospel as Literature and History*, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1992), 261.

⁷⁵ R.T. France, *The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary of the Greek Text*, eds., Howard Marshall and Donald A. Hagner, (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company / Carlisle: The Paternoster Press, 2002), 428.

⁷⁶ Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 624.

planned arrangement.⁷⁷ The pre-arranged argument suggests that Jesus knew the owner of the donkey, who was already with Jesus. This owner, which the title, the Lord (ὁ κύριος), is referred to (Mk. 11:3) and not Jesus.

Lamar Williamson sums up this pericope by stating that: “the main point about the colt is that Jesus took the initiative to arrange and the preparation occurred through the divine foreknowledge and according to plan.”⁷⁸ As for the acclamation, he says that: “the participants are wrong in their expectation that Jesus will restore the fortunes of Jerusalem, yet they are right in their hope that he is the Messiah.”⁷⁹ In the end, the whole event came to “nothing”⁸⁰ and the “triumphal entry must have seemed very insignificant.”⁸¹ Jesus just took a look around and left.

Conclusion

This literature review reveals two specific arguments. One is from the theological perspective, where the messianic and extra-ordinary powers of Jesus is emphasised. The other argument however, revealed the social-political elements of Jesus’ procession, in relation to the struggle of the marginalised people, who followed Jesus around. It was a struggle against a system of domination, favoured and maintained by the few, wealthy elite families and those in power.

⁷⁷ Malina, “Jesus’ Out-Group Relationship,” 93; see also: Robert G. Bratcher and Eugene A. Nida, *Helps for Translators, Volume II: A Translator’s Handbook on the Gospel of Mark*, (Germany: United Bible Societies, 1961), 343.

⁷⁸ Lamar Williamson, *Mark: Interpretation – A Bible Commentary for Teaching and preaching*, (Louisville: John Knox Press, 1983), 203.

⁷⁹ Williamson, *Mark*, 204.

⁸⁰ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 436.

⁸¹ Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark*, 227.

Chapter 2

The Social, Economic, Political and Religious Environments in First Century CE Greco-Roman Palestine

Introduction

*Woe to you who make unjust decrees and who write oppressive laws,
to turn aside the needy from justice and to rob the poor of my people of their right,
that widows may be your spoil and that you may make the orphans your prey.*

(Isa. 10:1-4)

A common characteristic of every human being is the need for a home and a family. Everyone needs a place to belong to and a place for “refuge and safety.”¹ This family unit forms the basis of human communities. The reciprocated interactions between the individual persons and their communities build up one’s characters, values and beliefs, as well as the communities’ social order, cohesion and way of life.² These attributes would be upheld and fiercely defended, if challenged by alien influences and concepts.

This would have been the same with communal family life in Greco-Roman Palestine.³ The Israelite historically had been subjected to foreign rule for many years

¹Michael F. Trainor, *The Quest for Home: The Household in Mark’s Community*. (Collegeville: A Michael Glazier Book, The Liturgical Press, 2001), 1.

²Horsley, *Whole Story*, 39.

³Lisa Sowle Cahill, *Family: A Christian Perspective*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 18. I have adopted this ‘Greco-Roman Palestine’ term to highlight the mixture of different cultures that were blended together in Palestine, which render a pure Jewish perspective impossible.

(see: Appendix 1.1), which would have influenced their ways of life.⁴ They had also “inherited a long tradition of resistance to these oppressive foreign rules.”⁵ This resistance was to defend their cultural and religious values and also their inherited promised land. These values of sentimental importance were being affected and threatened by these outside influences.

This chapter will identify, describe and analyse the social, economic, political and religious environments that were prevalent before, during and after the time of Jesus, with emphasis on the Greco-Roman influences upon the common people. It will also examine Jesus’ involvement in this process and how he was perceived and received by his followers and the authorities alike.

The purpose of this chapter is to identify the living conditions that the people (i.e. peasants⁶) lived and experienced, and the impact of the economic, religious and political systems of the time. It hopes to establish the people’s suffering,⁷ hardship and fear⁸ due to the burdens of the Jewish religious leaders and the Roman imperial authorities.⁹

⁴Neemia Tangaroa, “Jesus and the Political Authorities: Mark’s Teaching for Kiribati Christians’ involvement in Politics.” M.Th Thesis, Pacific Theological College, 1990, 1, this is what Tangaroa refers to as a ‘story of a people who constantly struggled for their identity against foreign domination.’

⁵Horsley, *Whole Story*, 36.

⁶ Philip F. Esler, “Family Imagery and Christian Identity in Galatians 5:13 to 6:10,” in *CECF*, 13, describes a peasant as any member of a class of persons who till the soil as small landowners or as agricultural labourers. Peasants in the Greco-Roman world comprised various groups, such as those who own their land, those who rent land from others and landless agricultural labourers; Milton Moreland, “The Jesus Movement in the Villages of Roman Galilee: Archaeology, Q, and Modern Anthropological Theory,” in *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q*, ed., Richard A. Horsley, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 162, 167–173, Moreland provides the composition of the Roman Galilee population, which by the time of Jesus was a cross-cultural mixture of different nationalities and cultures during Assyrians and Hellenistic periods.

⁷ Andrew Sung Park, *The Wounded Heart of God*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 10, states that suffering is the pain of the victim, which reflects the “critical wound of the heart, generated by unjust repression, social, political, economic and cultural oppression.”

⁸ Fiensy, “Leaders of Mass Movements,” 7-9; but according to Moore, *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, 479, when peasant protest turns to rebellions, it would never be succeeded without the leadership help of someone from outside the peasantry.

⁹ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 30.

Social Environment

Families

In an agrarian society like Palestine,¹⁰ a person's life was embedded in the family and village affairs, which created the "fundamental forms of social life."¹¹ The basic social unit in this society was the family household, which provided an individual with "identity, support, protection, status, wealth and honour."¹² This family entity involved a two dimensional emphasis where it extended vertically to include ancestors and descendants and horizontally to include relatives, slaves, freed persons with legal bonds to the family, servants and even property.¹³ Therefore, belonging and holding a place within this family household created one's identity and status through which, one could enjoy the goods and benefits provided by the community.

The community was organised by the social category of "honour and shame,"¹⁴ where, among other characteristics of this inter-personal relationship, those with higher status channelled social and material goods to the poor of society.¹⁵ This privileged position within the community was attained by either "being born a male into a high-

¹⁰ Moreland, "The Jesus Movement in the Villages of Roman Galilee", 159, classifies Roman Galilee as an agrarian society in the midst of a struggle to conform to the pressures of a colonial administration.

¹¹ Cahill, *Family*, 19; Horsley, *Whole Story*, 38.

¹² Trainor, *The Quest for Home*, 19.

¹³ *Great Books of the Western World: The Works of Aristotle – Volume II: Politics*, eds., et al, Robert Maynard Hutchins, (Chicago, London, Toronto, Geneva, Sydney, Tokyo: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 447; Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.3, at http://www.constitution.org/ari/polit_01.htm, visited on 22nd May, 2008.

¹⁴ Esler, "Family Imagery and Christian Identity in Galatians 5:13 to 6:10," 121-149, provides a comprehensive discussion on this concept of honour and shame; see also: Myers, *Strong Man*, 198-200, for discussion on Socio-Cultural Dynamics of Honour and Shame; Halvor Moxnes, "What is Family," in *CECF*, 32, Moxnes discusses honour and shame from a husband and wife perspective; also see: Philip F. Esler, "The Mediterranean Context of Early Christianity," in *The Early Christian World*, Volume I, Ed., Philip F. Esler, (London and New York: Routledge/Taylor and Francis Group, 2000), 16-18.

¹⁵ David Friedrich Strauss, *The life of Jesus Critically Examined, with an Introduction by Peter C. Hodgson*, ed., Peter C. Hodgson, (London: SCM Press, 1972), 126, points out that this group was not only poor, but also powerless.

status political family or on the basis of one's influence, expertise or past record.”¹⁶ But that honoured position could also be lost and replaced with its opposite, shame. In the family context, the father was the head of the family and held this honoured position,¹⁷ followed by the sons in order of their birth and then the women.¹⁸

These peasant families worked the land in small villages “where kingship and loyalty were primary values.”¹⁹ However, this traditional way of life changed during foreign occupation. A peasant family, for example, survived under duress and were constantly being subjected to stress and crises.²⁰ Roman imperial rule and their imposition of Herod as king while maintaining the Jewish Temple-state constituted three official layers of rulers over the people, “demanding their produce.”²¹ They were required to provide tributes to Rome and to pay extraordinary taxes to the Roman client kings. They also had to meet their required tithes to the Temple as part of their religious obligations, while still, they had to produce enough to feed their families and animals while putting aside some seeds for next year's planting.

It was the surplus extraction that cemented the peasants' fate of poverty. A peasant farmer could have up to half his harvest extracted as rent while small landowners were subjected to land tax that ranged from one-quarter to one-half of the harvest. They also had to contribute their obligatory tithes according to the tithing structure stipulated in rabbinic tradition:²²

¹⁶ K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 198.

¹⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.7, at http://www.constitution.org/ari/polit_01.htm, visited on 22nd May, 2008.

¹⁸ Bruce J. Malina and Richard L. Rohrbaugh, *Social-Science Commentary on the Synoptic Gospels* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1992), 310-311, male honour was about protecting family's integrity and chastity of women.

¹⁹ John Stambaugh and David Balch, *The Social World of the First Christians*, (London: SPCK, 1986), 91.

²⁰ Sean Freyne, *The World of the New Testament*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 8-22.

²¹ Horsley, *Whole Story*, 36; Myers, *Strong Man*, 51-52.

²² Myers, *Strong Man*, 52, citing this tithing structure provided by A'haron Oppenheimer.

1. a tenth of the harvest as *terumah* (sacrifice or gift²³) for the priest;
2. a tenth of the remainder as a first tithe to the Levites;
3. a tenth of the remainder as a second tithe in the first, second, fourth and fifth year, and the poor man's tithe in the third and sixth year of the sabbatical cycle.

There were other factors that affected the economic and social viability of peasant families. There were military expeditions through their territories, local banditry rebellions against local and foreign rulers, violent confrontations between resentful tenants-workers and their landlords (cf. Mk. 12:1-9), to increase economic pressures from different layers of authority's hierarchical order.²⁴ These circumstances placed a peasant family under enormous stress and pressure. For those families who were struggling to cope or were in debt, they stood to lose their inheritance land.

This was one of the important factors that determined an individual or a family's wealth and social standing within the community: the ownership of land. This was the main source of wealth and it constituted the "basis of the domestic economy."²⁵ The family produced from the land crops for consumption, essential trading and to meet various obligations.

The Jews had a special relationship with the land as their perpetual holding, an everlasting gift from their God *Yahweh* that was promised to their ancestors (cf. Gen. 17:8). Land was not to be sold as it belonged to God and humans were mere aliens and

²³ James Strong, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*, Updated Edition, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2007), 1594.

²⁴ Richard A. Horsley, *Galilee: History, Politics, People*. (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1995), 201, 220-221; see also: Marcus Tullius Cicero, *De Officiis, Book I: Moral Goodness*, transl., Walter Miller, LOEB Classical Library, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1913), at http://www.constitution.org/rom/de_officiis.htm#book1, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/De_Officiis, last modified on 17th May, 2008, visited on 22nd May, 2008, from a wealthy man's perspective, who "seek riches partly to supply the needs of life, partly to secure the enjoyment of pleasure. With those who cherish higher ambitions, the desire for wealth is entertained with a view to power and influence."

²⁵ Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," 43.

tenants (cf. Lev. 25:23). According to the traditional inheritance law (cf. Lev. 25:25-28),²⁶ family members have responsibilities for the land and to each other. They were responsible for redeeming the land of a kinsman who had fallen into debt and to restore it to its original owner or his heirs.

However, the minority²⁷ ruling elite and the influential upper class' tendency to increase their economic resources would acquire land by purchasing them or by other means as Santiago Guijarro explains:

The common procedure was to lend money to peasants with economic troubles, forcing them to pledge their land as guarantee of repayment...the peasant was unable to pay his debt and lost the land. Then if he was lucky, he would remain as the tenant of his own hereditary land, with the obligation to give the new owner a part of its produce, the less fortunate ones would end up as paid labourers.²⁸

Such dealings effectively placed many families into more hardship. They were left with more debt, forcing them to borrow from extended family members²⁹ and into the lower end of social strata within society (see: Appendix 1.3). As a result, members of peasant families were dispersed to look for employment as tenants or day labourers³⁰ (cf. Matt. 20:1-7) in order to survive. It also meant that the power of the father-figure as the head of the family was weakened considerably. These families had also lost the ability to help and support their relatives, due to the fact that they themselves had been forced to live at the margin of subsistence.³¹

²⁶ This inheritance law could have contributed to the people's demise in particular the younger brothers who were left landless.

²⁷ Esler, "The Mediterranean Context of Early Christianity," 11-12, this minority group represented about 1% to 5% of the population. They were mainly based in cities but held large amount of land in rural areas, from which the peasants (tenants or paid labourers) produced agricultural products. The elite would demand a large portion of this as surpluses to support their luxurious life style in the city and distributed some to the citizenry to significantly enhance their honoured status.

²⁸ Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," 44; see also: Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 16-18; Esler, "The Mediterranean Context of Early Christianity," 13.

²⁹ Trainor, *The Quest for Home*, 22; Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day*, 149, says that debt was one of the major mechanism, whereby the rich kept getting richer and the poor, poorer.

³⁰ Cicero, *De Officiis*, 1.150-51.

³¹ Moxnes, "What is a Family," 25, states that the changes in land ownership affected peasant households who had been forced off the land into an existence as wage labourers.

Peasant Communities

The Gospel of Mark's story prominently focuses on the rural villages of Galilee. These communities were always hostile toward the capital city Jerusalem, from which "rulers sponsored by the Roman Empire maintained a tenuous control of the population."³² Myers agrees with Horsley's assessment that Mark's story of Jesus is about the "common people and the Gospel reflects the daily realities of disease, poverty and disenfranchisement of the voiceless masses that characterised the social existence of first-century Palestine."³³

Roman imperialism impacted the lives of the Palestinian people as they controlled both the land and people via the Jewish religious leaders and the few wealthy aristocratic elite. Also, changes in government leaderships had often followed devastated confrontations and hardship, such as the destruction of Magdala in 63 BCE by the army of Cassius, the governor of Syria. He reduced 30,000 Jews to slavery³⁴ and killed the rebel leader Peitholaus.³⁵

³² Horsley, *Whole Story*, 27-51, argues that Mark as a story about a renewal movement among a people subjected by empire has been obscured in its reading as a religious literature. That is, the Gospel of Mark is commonly understood in terms of Christ dying for people's sins and a presentation of Jesus as Son of God. But for Horsley, Mark as a story is about a movement among imperially subjected people, who had repeatedly rebelled in direct opposition to their own native as well as imperial rulers; But living under foreign ruler violated God's instruction: "You may indeed set over you a king whom the Lord your God would choose... You are not permitted to put a foreigner over you, who is not of your community." (Deut. 17:15).

³³ Myers, *Strong Man*, 39.

³⁴ Marcus Porcius Cato, *On Agriculture*, 2.7, at <http://www.soilandhealth.org/01aglibrary/010121cato/catofarmtext.htm>, visited on 23rd May, 2008, states that slavery conditions varied in antiquity, but agricultural and plantation slaves were worse off than the household slaves; also see: Diodorus of Sicily, *Library of History*, 34/35:2.1,2,4, who describes that the slaves were marked, treated with heavy hands, granted the most meagre care with the bare minimum of clothing and food and were mostly beaten beyond all reason; However, Albert Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral dimensions*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 105, discusses "slave management" and proper treatment for slaves, no violence, outrage or insult, but reasonable whipping is said to be necessary.

³⁵ Josephus, *War, Books I-III*, 1.180, transl., J. Thackeray, (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1927), 85; Josephus, *Ant., Books XII-XIV*, 14.120, transl., Ralph Marcus, (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1933), 511.

When Herod the Great died (4 BCE), the Jews revolted, but Varus, the then governor of Syria restored order by setting the rebel leader Judas and the town of Sepphoris in Galilee on fire. Varus also sold the rest of the town's inhabitants as slaves, while he ordered the 2,000 rebels to be executed by crucifixion.³⁶

It was not always the physical afflictions that the peasantry endured. Some Roman officials' activities were deliberate acts of psychological and mental challenges to degrade and to humiliate the people. Philo of Alexandria, cited by Taylor, recorded Pilate setting up shields in Herod's place, "not in order to honour Tiberius, but rather to annoy the Jewish multitude."³⁷ Also, Tiberius, the procurator of Judea sent Pilate by night to bring into Jerusalem images of Caesar known as standards. By morning the people were alarmed and outraged. They begged Pilate to remove the standards in respect of their ancestral laws. The angry city mob was joined by huge influx of people from the countryside to protest against Pilate.³⁸

When an uprising broke out against Alexander Jannaeus' (104–76 BCE) oppressive regime, he responded by crucifying 800 of his opponents and slaughtered their wives and children before their eyes.³⁹ In 40 BCE, an aggressive young Herod, after subduing the resistant Jews with the help of the Roman legions, became a Roman client king of the Jews. For the Jewish population, he was the symbol of an oppressive tyranny. He maintained tight control by means of foreign mercenaries, strategically arranged fortresses and military colonies around the country and a service of informers.

³⁶ Josephus, *Ant.*, Books XV-XVII, 17.288-295, ed., Allen Wikgren, transl., Ralph Marcus, (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1963), 507-509; see also: Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ (175 B.C. – A.D. 135)*, Volume I, eds., et al., Geza Vermes, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1973), 332.

³⁷ Taylor, "Pontius Pilate," 575.

³⁸ Josephus, *War*, 2.169-171, 388-390.

³⁹ Josephus, *Ant.*, 13.372-383, 412-418.

The Roman conquest of Palestine was particularly hard on the Galileans because whenever the Roman armies conquered and reconquered the area, “they started in Galilee with devastating effects.”⁴⁰ The Romans treated the inhabitants brutally and their armies burned and destroyed towns and either slaughtered, crucified or enslaved their entire population. Flavius Josephus provides more examples of such ill-treatments of the people:

- Many resented Herod’s building projects, devoted to Hellenistic civilisation, and against their religion and customs.⁴¹ He built two new cities – Sepphoris and Tiberias with heavy taxations and forced labour.
- Herod’s economic exploitation weighed heavily on the peasantry and many opposed his regime. He kept stringent control over the people and their activities. Punishment for disobeying was execution.⁴²
- Herod maintained a much feared personal police force, known for torture, used not only on dissidents but also on those who fell into disfavour.⁴³
- Archelaus continued his father’s legacy by suppressing a demonstration against the execution of Judas and Matthias, by killing 3,000 men.⁴⁴
- People were enslaved or killed; their towns and properties destroyed because of their tardiness in raising taxes.⁴⁵ Cassius enslaved the people of Gophna, Emmaus, Lydda and Thamna for not paying taxes.⁴⁶

⁴⁰ Horsley, *Whole Story*, 33.

⁴¹ Josephus, *Ant.*, 15.365, 176, relays that Herod built massive fortresses and splendid cities, of which the two greatest were new and largely pagan foundations: the port of Caesarea and Sebaste on the site of ancient Samaria. In Jerusalem he built the fortress of Antonia and a magnificent palace. His most grandiose creation was the rebuilding of the Temple. He also embellished foreign cities—Beirut, Damascus, Antioch, Rhodes—and many towns. But, he was fearful of offending the Pharisees, with whom he was always in conflict because they regarded him as a foreigner.

⁴² Josephus, *Ant.*, 15.366–369, 176–179.

⁴³ Josephus, *War*, 1.488–497, 230–235.

⁴⁴ Josephus, *Ant.*, 17.200–218, 462–473.

⁴⁵ Josephus, *War*, 1.180, 219–220.

⁴⁶ Josephus, *War*, 1.219–222, 103–105; Josephus, *Ant.*, 14.271–275, 594–596.

- Pilate took funds from the Temple treasury to finance an aqueduct to bring water into Jerusalem, the Jewish people protested and many were killed, from the blows of the soldiers' clubs while others were trodden to death.⁴⁷
- Herod committed the most ruthless cruelties of all the tyrants. He reduced the nation to helpless poverty and their virgin daughters were corrupted and their wives debauched as victims of drunken violence and bestiality.⁴⁸

These examples highlighted the cruelty faced by the peasantry. But these afflictions became the motivational factors that drove the people to stand united and to oppose those in authorities through rallies, mass movements and rebellious exploits, even though it meant enslavement and persecution.

Mass Movements

The exploitations, the social turmoils and the political atrocity affected the people physically and emotionally. Being landless removed them from being agricultural producers, only to be shovelled into the realm of the poor and the marginalised of society. These represented hopelessness. Their cries fell on the deaf ears of their own leaders and their plight was ignored by the foreign powers. These conditions drove the peasants to strike back. They were seething with anger and resentment, as Aristotle states:

Who is very poor, or very weak, or very much disgraced, finds it difficult to follow rational principle, grows into violent and least likely to shrink from rule, which are injuries to the state.⁴⁹

⁴⁷ Josephus, *War*, 2.176-177, 390-393.

⁴⁸ Josephus, *Ant.*, 17.306-308, 512-515.

⁴⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 4.11, at http://www.constitution.org/ari/polit_04.htm, visited on 22nd May, 2008; also R.T. France, *The Evidence for Jesus*, (London, Sydney, Auckland: Hodder & Stoughton, 1986), 53, France says the people resorted to armed revolts on the belief that God's people should not be subjected to slavery by pagan power.

The Jewish historian, Joseph Klausner, confirms this resentment against foreign rules, when he observes the political conditions of affairs from 67 BCE to 39 CE:

Scarcely a year went by without wars or other disturbances: wars, rebellions, outbreaks and riots, and all of them with their concomitant of incessant bloodshed. This state of things prevailed from the rise of Antipater, the father of Herod, till the rise of Agrippa I, the grandson of Herod.⁵⁰

The people's long history of being suppressed and being subjected to foreign imperialism could not be endured forever.⁵¹ The memory of a free Israel from slavery in Egypt, the occupation and taking possession of the land, the time of national pride during the reign of King David was still "edged deeply in their thoughts."⁵² Longing for that peace, prosperity and harmony and to be liberated kept that beacon of hope alive, while waiting for a messiah to deliver them.

Occasionally, they organised rallies to express their frustrations and to voice their concerns. Some participated in daring acts of defiance as recorded by Josephus when the Jewish complained about Caesar's images being installed in Jerusalem:

Pilate after threatening to cut them down...signalled to the soldiers to draw their swords. Thereupon the Jews...flung themselves...on the ground, extended their necks, and exclaimed that they were ready rather to die than to transgress the law. Overcome at such intense religious zeal, Pilate gave orders for the immediate removal of the standards from Jerusalem.⁵³

They were also involved in mass movements⁵⁴ of protest and even engaged in popular revolts by taking up arms and engaging in guerrilla warfare against the might of

⁵⁰ Joseph Klausner, *Jesus of Nazareth: His Life, Times and Teaching*, transl., Herbert Danby, (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1929), 167.

⁵¹ Martin Hengel, *Victory over Violence*, transl., David E. Green, (London: SPCK, 1975), 71, reflects on the suffering that the Jewish nation endured against oppressive exploitation, brutality, and disappointed hopes.

⁵² Horsley, *Whole Story*, 33-36.

⁵³ Josephus, *War*, 2.172-174, 390.

⁵⁴ W. J. Heard, "Revolutionary Movements," in *DJG*, 688-698, relays that these revolutionary movements were Jewish responses to the injustice of Israel oppressors, particularly the Roman Empire.

the Roman military, as exemplified by the Maccabees' revolt (168–37 BCE)⁵⁵ and the great revolt (66–70 CE). Nearly all of these events were anti-Roman in orientation but almost all of them were directed against the Jewish ruling elite. This was not at all unexpected and the arrogant rich and powerful had even anticipated the people's reactions as Horsley and Hanson point out:

The wealthy and powerful tend to use and abuse their power in ways that are detrimental and unfair to the peasants, and the peasant-producers build up hostilities and resentments which make the powerful anxious lest the poor strike back at them.⁵⁶

Such attitudes by those in authority could only highlight the abuse by the elite that fuelled numerous conflicts and confrontations between the two sides. Other liberation movements like social banditries and brigands existed and they were perceived as champions for the common people who enjoyed the support of local peasants.⁵⁷ They were also seen as executioners of justice where the authority failed.⁵⁸ This was a common reality throughout the Greco-Roman world, as a reflection of the peasantry's "general discontent."⁵⁹

⁵⁵ Calvin J. Roetzel, *The World That Shaped the New Testament*, Revised Edition, (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 15, explains the effect of this movement, which "weakened the power and influence of the Israeli urban elite and gained political autonomy and religious liberty."

⁵⁶ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 2.

⁵⁷ Josephus, *Ant.*, *Books XX, General Index to Volumes I-X*, 20.113-117, ed., G. P. Goold, transl., Louis H. Feldman, (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press/William Heinemann Ltd., 1965), 60-63; Josephus, *War*, 2.228-231, 412-415, alludes to this relationship in an incident in Beth-horon when the bandits robbed Caesar's servant Stephen, the villagers were willing to suffer the consequences of sheltering the brigands.

⁵⁸ Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.118-136, 62-73, records that when the Samaritans murdered a Galilean on his way to Jerusalem and the governor Cumanus did nothing about it, the Judeans appealed to the brigands led by Eleazer ben Dinai for help. The brigands went into Samaria and they sacked and burned some villages.

⁵⁹ Tacitus, *Ann.*, *Book III*, 3.40-46, transl., Alfred J. Church and William Jackson, eds., et al., Robert Maynard Hutchins, (Chicago, London, Toronto, Geneva, Sydney, Tokyo: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 54-56, tells of Julius Florus and Julius Sacrovir from Gaul who revolted under pressure of heavy debt and also against perpetual tribunes, oppressive usury, cruelty and arrogance of their governors in 21 CE. They took their own lives when under attack by Roman legionaries; Josephus, *War*, *Books IV-VII*, 7.438, ed., G. P. Goold, transl., J. Thackeray, (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1928), 627-629, Josephus also mentions a Jonathan from Cyrene, a weaver by trade, who led some people in revolt, but was defeated by Catullus, the governor of Libyan Pentapolis, in 70 CE.

In the Jewish context, it was not surprising to find banditry against Roman occupation. Josephus mentions a Hezekiah, a brigand-chief and his gang ravaged the districts on the Syrian frontier. He was put to death by Herod, together with many of his gang.⁶⁰ Herod was also instrumental in suppressing the cave-dwelling brigands, who were supporters of Antigonus Maccabee,⁶¹ who were “inflicting on the inhabitants evils, no less than those of wars.”⁶² From this account, it appeared that some banditry, like this cave-dwelling gang, were attacking some peasants who had been “collaborating with authorities.”⁶³ However, some people were prepared to fight and die, rather than enduring slavery conditions, under foreign rule, as Josephus points out:

An old man who had been caught inside...the caves with his wife and seven children...they begged him to let them slip through to the enemy, [but] he cut down each of his sons as they came to the mouth of the cave, and then his wife. After throwing their bodies down the steep slope, he threw himself down too, thus submitting to death rather than slavery.⁶⁴

Due to Herod's efficiency, there was hardly any uprising during the time of Jesus.⁶⁵ Even after Herod, his son Archelaus maintained tight control throughout the region. The reign of the Roman governors thereafter, particularly Pontius Pilate (26–36 CE), saw the continuity of such tyranny. The people were subdued with military violence and any suspicious activities like protests and mass movements were efficiently dealt with. That lethal and quick suppression of potential threats was evident

⁶⁰ Josephus, *War*, 1.204, 95.

⁶¹ “The Hasmonia priest-princes,” *EncyBrit.*, Antigonus was the son of Aristobulus and therefore a legitimate Hasmonian who fought against Hyrcanus and Antipater. He was installed by the Parthians as king and high priest in Jerusalem in 40-39 BCE but was killed by Herod the Great in 37 BCE.

⁶² Josephus, *War*, 1:304, 142.

⁶³ Horsley and Hanson, *Bandits*, 64-65, state that the peasants who had joined forces with Herod were known as the Galilean gentry. These were the ‘inhabitants’ that the banditry attacked for being collaborators with the enemy.

⁶⁴ Josephus, *Ant.*, 14.429-430, 670-673.

⁶⁵ This assumption is based on the lack of reports on such activities during that time, but this is not to say that there weren't any such activities. We know from Josephus of three rebel leaders during the time of Jesus: Simon the slave (4 BCE – Josephus, *Ant.*, 17.273-276), whose head was cut off by Gratus, a Roman army officer; Athronges the shepherd (4 BCE – Josephus, *Ant.*, 17.278-285), killed; Judas of

during Jesus' ministry, as illustrated by the death of John the Baptist and why Jesus was being 'observed' by the authority (cf. Mk. 3:6), as the multitude of people gathered around him.

Jesus Movement

The spread of Jesus' miraculous ability to heal the sick and his proclamation of the kingdom of God reached the surrounding regions of Galilee (cf. Mk. 1:28). However, his perceived disregard for the law about Sabbath (cf. Mk. 2:23-3:5), drew bitter condemnation by the religious authorities. Jesus' fame and his activities got him arrested. He was taken over to the Council of chief priests, the elders and the scribes where they condemned Jesus to death on charge of blasphemy (cf. Mk. 14:61-64). They took him to Pontius Pilate who sealed Jesus' fate by handing him over to be crucified on the charge of being King of the Jews (cf. Mk. 15:6-15). They insulted and treated him as a "liberator."⁶⁶ They flogged him before being handed over to be crucified between two revolutionary bandits.

Execution by crucifixion was a form of tortured death that the Romans reserved for the worst criminals and for insurrectionists and rebels⁶⁷ against the imperial order.

Galilee (6 CE – Josephus, *War*, 2.433), killed; and of course John the Baptist (27 CE – Matt. 14:1-12), killed by Herod.

⁶⁶ William Loader, *Jesus and the Fundamentalism of His Days*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmann Publishing Company, 2001), 23; see also: Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus*, 90-95, they reinforce this point by saying that "crucifixion was an institution of humiliation, torture and execution designed to deal with the people considered most threatening to the establishments and its institutions...it was designed to strike fear into the hearts of any who would dare pose a threat to the status quo." However, Justin J. Meggitt, "The Madness of King Jesus: Why was Jesus Put to Death, but his Followers were not?" *JSNT*, Volume 29.4, eds., et al., David G. Horrell, (London: SAGE Publications, 2007), 379-413, Meggitt says that it did not take much to end up on the cross in the empire, if you were a non-citizen and of low status and that under Pilate's rule, ending up on the cross seems to have been reasonable easy thing to achieve, as the governor had a reputation for repeatedly executing people without trial; Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Jesus and the Politics of Interpretation*, (New York, London: Continuum, 2000), 166, Fiorenza says that Jesus' movement was just like other Jewish movements, which sought the liberation of Israel from imperial exploitation.

⁶⁷ Martin Hengel, *Crucifixion: In the Ancient World and the Folly of the Message of the Cross*, (London: SCM Press, 1977), 22-38, for discussion on the history of crucifixion from its barbaric form to the Roman punishment.

According to Horsley, Mark represents Jesus as a rebel executed by the military governor of the Roman occupying forces in Judea.⁶⁸ Punishment by execution was also used on other rebel leaders with prophetic or royal claims,⁶⁹ before and after Jesus.

There is no doubt that many people followed Jesus. This is confirmed by Josephus when he wrote that Jesus was a “wise man who won over many Jews and many of the Greeks.”⁷⁰ Indeed, there was a Jesus movement. Unlike the rebellious and military nature of other movements, Jesus’ movement was a non-violent challenge. Myers supports this when he says that Mark’s “narratives present Jesus’ revolution without recourse to an organised strategy of violence.”⁷¹ It was a movement of compassion⁷² (cf. Matt. 9:36; Mk. 6:36-ff; Mk. 8:2-ff; Matt. 15:32) for those who had been dealt with injustice, discrimination and exploitation. It was a movement for the

⁶⁸ Horsley, *Whole Story*, 41-42.

⁶⁹ Fiensy, “Leaders of Mass Movements,” 12-14, some of these leaders claimed they were kings of the Jews including Judas of Galilee (6 CE); Josephus, *Ant.*, Books XVIII-XIX, 18.85-87, ed., G. P. Goold, transl., Louis H. Feldman, (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press/William Heinemann Ltd., 1965), 60-63, the prophetic leaders like the Samaritan (37 CE), who attracted many people to his claim that he would show them the sacred vessels that Moses buried on Mount Gerizim. He was put to death along with many people by Pilate; Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.97-99, 52-55, Theudas (44 CE) was an impostor who claimed that he was a prophet and that he would part the Jordan River so that people would have safe passage. Fadus, the procurator of Judaea killed and imprisoned many people while Theudas was beheaded; Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.169-172, 92-93, an Egyptian (55 CE), came to Jerusalem claiming to be a prophet and told the people to follow him to Mount Olive, where he would command the walls of Jerusalem to fall down so that they could enter the city. The procurator Felix killed 400 people and took captive another 200, but the Egyptian escaped; other leaders like Menahem (66 CE) and Simon bar Giora (66 CE) also claimed royal status. Menahem broke into Herod’s armoury and took weapons to arm his followers and returned to Jerusalem like a veritable king. He was captured and tortured before being put to death – Josephus, *War*, 2.433-449, 492-499; Simon built up quite an army of followers to attack Jerusalem and he commanded them like a king. He marched into Jerusalem against the Zealots via Idumea leaving behind destruction and devastation of the land – Josephus, *War*, 4.503-544, 150-161. He was brought to Rome, where he was executed – Josephus, *War*, 7.154-155, 550-551.

⁷⁰ Josephus, *Ant.*, Book V-VIII, 8.63, transl., J. Thackeray and Ralph Marcus, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press and London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1934), 49-50.

⁷¹ Myers, *Strong Man*, 47.

⁷² William Loader, *The New Testament with Imagination: A Fresh Approach to Its Writings and Themes*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), 22-26, views Jesus’ movement not as a challenge to the law and scripture, but beyond that by putting God at the centre of attention and God’s compassion for the people – “People matter – What we say and do needs to be good news for the poor in our world if we truly mean to follow Jesus”; see also: Marcus J. Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time: The Historical Jesus and the Heart of Contemporary Faith*, (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1994), 46-61; David C Tolley, “Aesthetic Christology and Medical Ethics: the Status of Christ’s Gaze in Care for the Suffering,” *SJT*, Volume 61.2, 2008, 160, Tolley characterises compassion as that which “compels people to suffer with those in need.”

marginalised people who lived in subsistence existence because of the political and economical pressures of the time.

Economic Environment

We have often heard of the expression ‘the rich gets richer and the poor gets poorer.’ This is the reality of capitalism where wealth maximisation is paramount over people and limited natural resources. With globalisation at full throttle, exploitation and abuse is widespread. We are now living in a society where some minority get far more than they need and the majority get little or nothing. This “selective awarding of life necessities is enforced by government and law and is justified by culture and ideology, including religion.”⁷³ Our present situation perhaps mirrors the reality of the peasant-aristocracy partnership of Greco-Roman Palestine.

However, from the peasants’ perspective, maintaining this imbalanced relationship was to ensure their survival in the new realm of “Hellenistic political economy of market exchange.”⁷⁴ This required increased agricultural productions to meet the demands from a wider market outside of their community, which was different from their traditional form of exchange through reciprocity and redistribution.

Reciprocity and Redistribution

Reciprocity is generally a mutual exchange of goods, services or privileges, which perhaps could be traced to tribal clan-based system as Thomas Carney explains:

Among members of a family, goods and services are freely given (full reciprocity). Among members of a cadet line within a clan, gifts would be given; but an eye would be kept on the balanced return-flow of counter-gifts (weak reciprocity). Where distant tribal kin were involved, the element of watchful calculation grew greater, the time

⁷³ Norman K. Gottwald, *Hebrew Bible in Its Social World and Ours*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993), 282.

⁷⁴ Myers, *Strong Man*, 48.

within which the counter-gift would be made grew less (balanced reciprocity). Outside the tribe, mutuality ends (negative reciprocity).⁷⁵

It is a system of mutual assistance for family members' benefit and welfare. It was similar but also different with the concept of patron-client relationship, which existed between a person of wealth and influence (patron) and a free client. The client acknowledged his loyalty and dependence on the patron and received support and protection in return. This is exemplified by Josephus' account of Herod's generous will for Augustus Caesar and his wife Livia, as reciprocity of the client (Herod) to his patrons (Augustus and Livia).⁷⁶ Therefore, reciprocity was an exchange system where you received what you needed through gifts or monetary donations or that you got what you paid for. These interactions formed the basic mechanisms for the traditional Jewish economy and land was the central factor.

By contrast, redistribution means that "exchanges are under central control, where goods and services are collected to a central distribution point and distributed to whomever the controlling party wishes."⁷⁷ In effect, it was a system of taking away from the peasant producers the control and enjoyment of their own produce. However, only a small portion of these goods and service were redistributed to "groups in society that do not farm but must be fed for their specific goods and services in turn."⁷⁸

Land was also captured during military expeditions and Rome occasionally awarded these to native dynasties or was given as compensations, pay or pensions for the huge influx of veterans who had settled in Palestine.⁷⁹ Even the new rulers seized land for themselves and benefited from it as Josephus recorded that Herod Antipas

⁷⁵ Thomas F. Carney, *Shape of the Past: Models and Antiquities*, (Kansas: Colorado Press, 1975), 176.

⁷⁶ Josephus, *Ant.*, 17.190, 458, Herod left Caesar 10 million pieces of coined silver and 5 million pieces of silver for Caesar's wife, Livia (Julia).

⁷⁷ Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus*, 113.

⁷⁸ E. R. Wolf, *Peasants*, (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1966), 3-4.

⁷⁹ Myers, *Strong Man*, 51.

received 200 talents a year from his land properties in Galilee.⁸⁰ The holders of these large estates received and enjoyed enormous returns from their land-holdings, while the day-labourers struggled with their small wages to meet their debt or tax payments. Borrowing to make ends meet was common as an account from an Egyptian papyri shows that a “peasant Kronion (100 CE) and his likes were chronically short of cash and constantly going into debt.”⁸¹

The central control of this redistribution system rested on the ruling aristocracies and is characterised as “hierarchical oppression and economic dispossession.”⁸² They legalised this exploitation through their systems of “structures and laws about land ownership, taxation, indenture of labour through debt, and so forth.”⁸³ These systems ensured that the high percentage of the society’s wealth ended up in the coffers of the few wealthy and powerful, while the rest struggled.

Market Exchange

The Roman Empire encouraged extensive trade networks⁸⁴ that were controlled by small numbers of powerful family interests. While the peasants still operated a barter system of exchange, which emphasised the reciprocity principle, the ruling elite focused more on maximising product extraction from the peasants, not only to indulge on their extravagance lifestyle, but also to create more wealth. It also meant tightening

⁸⁰ Josephus, *Ant.*, 17.317-320, 518-521.

⁸¹ Naphtali Lewis, *Life in Egypt under Roman rule*, (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 71.

⁸² Tat-siong Benny Liew, “Tyranny, Boundary and Might: Colonial Mimicry in Mark’s Gospel,” *JSNT*, Issue 74, 1999, 7.

⁸³ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 7; see also: Richard A. Horsley, “Moral Economy and the Renewal Movement in Q,” in *Oral Performance, Popular Tradition, and Hidden Transcript in Q*, ed., Richard A. Horsley, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 149-150, Horsley relates the unjust seizure of the peasantry’s produce in taxes and their indebtedness to wealthy creditors, which threatens their subsistence. These debts could not be cancelled but had to be paid.

⁸⁴ Esler, “The Mediterranean Context of Early Christianity,” 11, terms this ‘advanced agrarian,’ which was characterised at a technological level by the use of the plough that allowed cultivation of a much large area of land than among horticulturists, thus facilitating the production of agricultural surpluses.

their control over flow of production⁸⁵ for their own benefits, without any considerations for the peasants' struggle.

But the shift from local distribution to a wider market network traversing regional boundaries placed the peasant producers under difficulty as they struggled to meet the extra demands.⁸⁶ It simply meant that they had to work even harder to produce enough, in order to meet the need and demand of the wider market. But poor harvest would have dire consequences for the peasants. Without a good harvest, they would have to resort to credit borrowing, exposing them to the potential risk of debts that must be honoured.⁸⁷ When this happened, they would have to offer their land as collateral. Failure to repay the loan meant only one thing and that was losing their land. This was one way of forcing the peasants from their land and "to the consequent break up of families."⁸⁸ The peasants therefore were disadvantaged under such system.

For the local elite, this market network necessitated moving from the urban centres to cities⁸⁹ where they were more protected and benefited from these economic

⁸⁵ Beside agricultural produce, fishing industry was also part of life in Galilee, where Peter and the sons of Zebedee were all fishermen. Fishing was also controlled by the elite, who sold fishing rights to brokers (*telonai*, commonly translated as 'tax collectors' or 'publicans'), who in turn contracted with fishers. The fishers received capitalisation along with fishing rights and were therefore indebted to the brokers, see: Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus*, 106–112.

⁸⁶ Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," 45; also, Aristotle, *Politics*, 1.9, at http://www.constitution.org/ari/polit_01.htm, visited on 22nd May, 2008, Aristotle relates that: "When the use of coin was discovered, there arose the other art of wealth getting, namely, retail trade; which was at first probably a simple matter, but became more complicated as soon as men learned by experience whence and by what exchanges the greatest profit might be made."

⁸⁷ The Jewish traditional principle of cancelling debt and release of debt-slaves every seven year (cf. Exod. 21:2-6; Deut. 15:1-5, 9, 12-18; Lev. 24:39-43), was effectively nullified by the introduction of a new contract that guaranteed the payment of debt – *prosbol*, by Hillel; see also: Horsley, "Moral Economy and the Renewal Movement in Q," 148; Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of His Day*, 73, also relates Hillel's *prosbol* and Josephus' account about the burning of debt archives at the beginning of the Jewish War, highlighted the heavy indebtedness in the pre-70 CE period.

⁸⁸ Esler, "The Mediterranean Context of Early Christianity," 13.

⁸⁹ There are different views and perspectives regarding urban centres. Moses Finley, *The Ancient Economy*, 2nd Edition, (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1985), 126-126, argues strongly that the urban centre or ancient city was a 'consumption centre', parasitically living off the produce of the surrounding countryside, while not engaging much in production and offered little in return. Donald Engels, *Roman Corinth: An Alternative Model for the Classical City*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 42, Engels however argues to the contrary saying that ancient city did provide for the surrounding areas or further afield. He provided Corinth as an example, calling it a 'service city'. This is certainly true of a sea-port city like Corinth.

arrangements. It also meant severing once and for all, any “personal assistance to the needy tenants.”⁹⁰ The peasants relied on these relief services in times of extreme threats, for their survival. The elite’s departure and neglect of their moral obligation to the poor expounded the peasants’ struggle and fuelled their hatred toward authorities. However, from the rulers’ perspective and those who were in control, this extended market networks meant more income, particularly from tax revenues.

Taxation

We have come to realise so far the enormous implications of this oppressive requirement upon the peasants. Taxation is the imposition of compulsory levies on people by the governments, to finance government expenditures. For agrarian societies in Palestine, the benefit for paying taxes was minimal if any, but the sole purpose for collecting these taxes and other compulsory contributions, was to benefit the elite.⁹¹ The authorities used most of these collections for their own benefits and only a small portion was redistributed back for the people. Gerhard E. Lenski has argued that the top 5 percent on any agrarian society might control 50–65 percent of their territory’s goods and services via taxations and tributes:

On the basis of the available data, it appears that the governing classes of agrarian societies probably received at least a quarter of the national income of most agrarian states, and that the governing class and ruler together usually received not less than half. In some instances their combined income may have approached two-thirds of the total.⁹²

⁹⁰ James C. Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1976), 175.

⁹¹ Richard A. Horsley, “Introduction: Jesus, Paul, and the ‘Art of Resistance’: Leaves from the Notebook of James C. Scott,” *Semeia Studies: Hidden Transcripts and the Art of Resistance, Applying the Work of James C. Scott to Jesus and Paul*, ed., Richard A. Horsley, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004), 1, points out that all civilisations have been based on the domination and exploitation of the vast majority of people by an elite ruling class.

⁹² Gerhard E. Lenski, *Power and Privilege: A Theory of Social Stratification*, 2nd Edition, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 228; see also: Esler, “The Mediterranean Context of Early Christianity,” 11-12.

Other accounts corroborated this information about taxation in the Greco-Roman Palestine. Demetrius I Soter, king of Syria (162–150 BCE) abandoned his right to receive the value of one third of the sown crops and the value of one half of the fruits of the trees (cf. I Macc. 10:20⁹³). Herod the Great, claimed 25-33 percent of Palestinian grain within his realm and 50 percent of the fruit from trees. There were other additional direct poll (head) taxes and indirect taxes on transit trade and market exchanges. Beside these, Jews paid their obligatory tithes to the Temple authorities as well as other commitments like offerings and sacrifices – (see: Figure 2.1 below).

Figure 2.1 Taxation in Greco-Roman Palestine⁹⁴

Rome and Herod	Tax (if known)
Soil tax	$\frac{1}{4} - \frac{1}{2}$ (grain, orchards)
Head tax	1 denarius per year
Market taxes (cities)	
Transit polls	
Port taxes (shipping)	
Access rents (city-controlled resources)	
Labour for state projects (roads, aqueducts, building projects, etc.)	
Jerusalem Temple	Tax (if known)
Soil tax	Tithe (support for priests)
Head tax	$\frac{1}{2}$ shekel per year
Sacrifice	Animals, agricultural products
Vows	Dedicated material goods

Under such pressure, the people protested and rebelled against such discriminatory systems and its operating and controlling institutions. For some Jewish peasants, the Temple could be seen as representing such institutions. It was the temple

⁹³ Jonathan A. Goldstein, *I Maccabees: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (Garden City: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976), 406-407.

⁹⁴ Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus*, 114, but amounts vary from other scholars.

that became the collecting and distributing centre for the Jews' obligatory religious commitments and their compulsory contributions to foreign rulers.

The Temple Institution

The Temple itself was the central focus of the Jewish religious life, representing their covenantal relationship with their God *Yahweh*. It was also seen as the physical presence of *Yahweh* amongst his people, regulating their lives. That is, through rituals and sacrifices performed by the priests, God would forgive the people's sin and provide for their needs. It was also a "place of prayer and of teaching for the first Christians."⁹⁵ That emphasis changed significantly as Borg and Crossan argue:

Though the temple had always been religious important, it now became the central economic and political institution in the country and the centre of local collaboration with Rome...It had the defining features of ancient domination systems: *rule by a few, economic exploitation, and religious legitimization*.⁹⁶

'Religious legitimization' refers to the central place occupied by the Temple within this domination system. The Temple was perceived to be the dwelling place of God, the mediator of forgiveness through sacrifices, the centre of devotion, and the destination of the pilgrimage. The obligatory contributions from the peasants and from every Jew went to the Temple and were done so as their religious obligations. Simply stated, these were given in the name of their religion. No matter whether you were poor or not, every Jew was obliged to faithfully contribute.

When Rome removed Archelaus from power over Judea and Samaria in 6 CE, they substituted their control in the region with the Temple and its authorities, high priest and priests. They facilitated a centralised control system over the collection of

⁹⁵ Geir Otto Holmas, "'My house shall be a house of prayer': Regarding the Temple as a Place of Prayer in Acts within the Context of Luke's Apocalyptic Objective." *JSNT*, Volume 27.4, 2005, 400.

⁹⁶ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 15–16, (italic emphases are those of Borg and Crossan) argue that this was a two-layered domination system: "the local domination system centred in the Temple was subsumed under the imperial domination system that was Roman rule."

tithes, redistribution, payments of taxes⁹⁷ and even the market exchange economies in this Jewish context. The Temple treasury stored all this wealth from Jewish pilgrims. Traditionally, high priests came only from priestly families – Aaron’s descendants. But by the time of Jesus, high priests were appointed by Rome or its agents from wealthy or preferred families only, in what Josephus referred to as the “buying of the high priestly families.”⁹⁸

Recent archaeological excavation in Jerusalem confirmed this wealth, pointing to the “opulence of the upper class and the role they played in the domination system: they shaped it, enforced it and benefited from it.”⁹⁹ Archaeologists have also discovered that the high priestly families built themselves lavish mansions on the hill overlooking the Temple.¹⁰⁰ The Temple in this sense symbolised oppression and their collaboration with Rome brought protests and revolts from the people.

This was nothing new. The first Temple was political in the sense that it was considered a chapel of the kings of Judah (Amos 7:13). Jeremiah proclaimed God’s judgement against the people for treating the house of God (Temple) as a den of robbers (Jer. 7:11), which Jesus also did in Mk. 11:17. An account from the Qumran scroll, recorded a wicked priest, who:

...upon attaining rule over Israel, became proud in his heart, deserted God and acted faithlessly against the law for the sake of riches. He robbed and collected the wealth of the men he seized and he heaped sinful iniquity upon himself.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Horsley, *Whole Story*, 113, this role of the priests was like walking the fine line of adhering to the Romans rule and at the same time, trying to be sensitive to the people’s needs and perceptions. Failure to pay taxes was tantamount to rebellion.

⁹⁸ Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.213, 112-115.

⁹⁹ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 18.

¹⁰⁰ Horsley, “Moral Economy and Renewal Movement in Q,” 152.

¹⁰¹ *The Dead Sea Scrolls: Study Edition*, eds., Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar, Volume One: 1Q1 – 4Q273, (Leiden, Boston, Köln: Brill / Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 17.

Josephus also recorded one Jesus, son of Ananias, who warned against Temple corruption for seven years, before the Temple was destroyed by the Romans (70 CE).¹⁰² From these examples, John Elliott is right to say of the Temple as the “centre of political and religious control, [which] is both the scene and object for conflicts – arrests and imprisonment, criticism of the Temple leadership, lynching and murder.”¹⁰³

Moral Economy

This is what James Scott refers to as the “peasants’ sense of the moral structure of their society.”¹⁰⁴ The peasants, like the elite have social and moral responsibilities toward the community. However, such responsibilities presented the peasants with the problem of feeding themselves. With so much emphasis on meeting the demands of others,¹⁰⁵ a peasant household needed a certain level of resources to discharge its necessary ceremonial and social obligations. To fall below this level was to risk starvation or perhaps to fall into a permanent situation of dependence.¹⁰⁶

But in order for the peasants to function in such capacity, they needed a parcel of land to cultivate. Thus, working the land and their relationship with the elite was a “traditional mean of insurance”¹⁰⁷ for the peasants. It ensured their daily stability as well as maintaining that connection to the elite by means of their produce. Anything that threatened this would be detrimental to their very survival, in particular the elite’s preference to move away from the urban environment to city living.

¹⁰² Josephus, *War*, 7.301-309, 462-467.

¹⁰³ John H. Elliott, “Temple versus Household in Luke-Acts: A Contrast in Social Institutions,” in *The Social World of Luke-Acts: Models for Interpretation*, ed., Jerome H. Neyrey, (Peabody: Hendrickson, 1991), 211-240.

¹⁰⁴ Scott, *Moral Economy of the Peasant*, 189.

¹⁰⁵ John Dominic Crossan, *The Historical Jesus: The Life of a Mediterranean Jewish Peasant*, (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1992), 45.

¹⁰⁶ James C. Scott, *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Form of Peasant Resistance*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 236-240.

¹⁰⁷ Moreland, “The Jesus Movement in the Villages of Roman Galilee,” 165.

Failure to adhere to this moral economy can enhance our understanding of why and when the peasants protested. To shed light on this point, we must account for the elite's illegitimate claim on "what was judged to be the minimal culturally defined subsistence level"¹⁰⁸ for the peasants. However, this biased and quantitative measure of subsistence living, contradicted the ancient Israelite' covenantal law codes that called for the needy to be cared for (Exod. 22:21-27; Lev. 19:10, 15; Deut. 24:12-15). The elite's preference for wealth creation had eroded their moral responsibility for the marginalised people. The people in turn responded in protests and revolts.

This whole notion of economic constraints upon the peasants can be summed up in Gottwald's view that different economic structures are linked together by a "common thread of economic inequity and oppression, and a common thread of struggle against needless economic suffering, a struggle fuelled by religious convictions and aspirations."¹⁰⁹ It is indeed an imbalanced relationship forged on greed and abuse,¹¹⁰ under such economic exposure, political and religious turmoil.

Political and Religious Environment

Economically, the people had to endure an oppressive Temple dominated system, which controlled the whole Palestinian population, but itself was dominated by the authority of the Roman Empire. The same kind of domination structure could be seen in the political arrangement between the Jewish religious rulers and their Roman

¹⁰⁸ Horsley, "Moral Economy and Renewal Movement in Q," 145-148. However, the ancient Israelite had different covenantal law codes, which governed their responsibility to a needy neighbour, sabbatical rest of the land, the sabbatical release of debts and debt-slaves, redemption of the land by the next of kin. These constituted the social mechanisms by which the Israelite attempted to keep each household economically viable. I feel that these constitute the basis of subsistence for the peasants, as contrasted with the elite's perspective.

¹⁰⁹ Gottwald, *The Hebrew Bible in Its Social World and in Ours*, 346.

¹¹⁰ Cicero, *De Officiis*, Book I: *Moral Goodness*, at http://www.constitution.org/rom/de_officiis.htm#book1, visited on 10th May 2008, fittingly describes the attitude of the rich toward the poor: "of all forms of injustice, none is more flagrant than that of the hypocrite who, at the very moment when he is most false, makes it his business to appear virtuous."

superior. Even though the Jews appeared to be in control of their own religious affairs, it was influenced by Rome through control and patronage of the Jerusalem priesthood.

Unlike the elected office bearers of modern democratic governments, the Palestinian rulers of Jesus' time were either hereditary rulers or those appointed by Romans political authority. The territories of Palestine were governed as independent states by hereditary rulers, client-kings and governors or by Roman prefects and procurators, who served at the will of Roman emperors (see: Appendix 1.2). These rulers had the backing of the Roman auxiliary troops headquartered in Caesarea and the legions stationed in Syria. In the Jewish context, the ruling class as presented in the Gospel of Mark were by three distinct groups: the Herodian nobility, the scribes and the Jerusalem clerical aristocracy. The latter two groups combined, were the dominant Temple authority, who controlled all Temple affairs in collaboration with Rome.

Jewish Religious Leaders

The Old Testament relays to us the turbulent history of Israel as God's chosen people. It was this God *Yahweh*, who selected Aaron and his sons as priests (Exod. 28:1) over the people, creating a priesthood of perpetual ordinance (Exod. 29:9). The priests' sole purpose was to serve God and whom God had sanctified to be holy (cf. Lev. 21:1-24). The Levites were also selected to serve as assistants to the priests (Num. 3:6-7; 4:37). The priests constituted the traditional religious leaders of the Israelite, which eventually became known as the Sadducees. They dominated the Temple and its priesthood for centuries until the Second Temple was finally destroyed in 70 CE,¹¹¹ which marked their exit from office and history.

¹¹¹ *EncyBrit.*, according to tradition, 18 high priests served in Solomon's Temple (c. 960–586 BC) and 60 in the Second Temple (516 BC–AD 70).

The Sadducees represented the wealthier elements of the population - high priests, aristocratic families and merchants. They forged a good relationship with the Roman rulers and were influenced by Hellenism, which paralleled their claim of birth, social and economic position,¹¹² advocating social stratification. They were conservative in religious matters, but their wealth and collaboration with the Roman rulers aroused hatred from common people. As defenders of the status quo, the Sadducees viewed the ministry of Jesus with considerable alarm and apparently contributed in his trial and death.

In the second century BCE, however, bribery led to several reappointments of the high priestly office. These rearrangements saw non-priestly families ascending to this sacred office, drawing opposition from other sects like the Pharisees. They opposed the Sadducees in beliefs and teachings¹¹³ and they constantly tried to remove control of the Jewish religion away from the Temple priests – the Sadducees.¹¹⁴

During Jesus' ministry, Jerusalem was governed by the high priest Caiaphas (cf. Matt. 26:57; Jn. 18:13), under the Roman procurator Pontius Pilate. He was assisted by a council of chief priests, the elders and the scribes (cf. Matt. 26:57-59; Mk. 14:53; Luk. 22:66). He had the difficult balancing task of being accountable to, and mediating between the Romans and the local population. However, he was more interested in

¹¹² Andrew D. Clark, *First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World: Serve the Community of the Church - Christians as Leaders and Ministers*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 7, says that priests were honorific posts, earned not through skill and training, but on the grounds of wealth and social standing.

¹¹³ Clinton Bennett, *In Search of Jesus: Insider and Outsider Images*, (London and New York: Continuum, 2001), 25, the Pharisees believed that the Law that God gave to Moses consisted of the Written Law and the Oral Law, i.e., the teachings of the prophets and the oral traditions of the Jewish people. Whereas the priestly Sadducees taught that the written Torah was the only source of revelation. They refused to go beyond the written Torah. They denied the immortality of the soul, bodily resurrection after death, and the existence of angelic spirits.

¹¹⁴ "Pharisee," *EncyBrit.*, the Pharisees emerged as a distinct group shortly after the Maccabean revolt (165–160 BCE). They founded the institution of synagogue and gave it a central place in Jewish religious worship, outside and separate from the Temple. They asserted that God should be worshipped even away from the Temple and worship consisted not in bloody sacrifices, the practice of the Temple priests, but in prayer and in the study of God's law.

keeping Rome happy, when he said: “If we let him [Jesus] go on like this, the Roman would come and destroy both our holy place and our nation” (Jn. 11:48). “It is better to have one man die, than to have the whole nation destroyed” (Jn. 11:50).

His political stance was foremost to maintain order and to see that tribute was paid, in order to please Rome, rather than to accommodate the need of the people. This mis-guided priority contradicted their divine sanctioned responsibility of serving God. They had been blinded by the enormous wealth created within their temple structure. Also, their collaboration with Rome and the Herodians had muted out the cries of the suffering majority.

The Herodians

The Herodians conspired with the Jewish religious leaders to entrap Jesus into making anti-Roman statements, in order to destroy him (Mk. 3:6). They perceived Jesus as a threat to their hold on power (cf. Matt. 2:3-20) and their presence also posed an “immediate threat to Jesus.”¹¹⁵

The Herodians’ rise to power was due to their ability to secure the help of powerful patrons and in shifting alliances.¹¹⁶ They systematically “executed the traditional aristocracies to ensure themselves against power struggles”¹¹⁷ and confiscated their land and wealth. They ruled in all or parts of Palestine and neighbouring areas (see: Appendix 1.2).

¹¹⁵ Sean Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels: Literary Approaches and Historical Investigations*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 137.

¹¹⁶ After Caesar’s assassination, Herod sided with Cassius and Brutus against Octavian and he was made governor of Syria – Josephus, *War*, 1.204-225, 94-105. But within a year, Cassius was dead, and after siding with Mark Antony (Antipater’s friend), Herod was confirmed as king over Palestine, but it took three years to secure his throne with Roman military backing, Josephus, *War*, 1.282-286, 132-135. Antipater was given Roman citizenship with exemption from taxes in 47 BCE by Julius Caesar for providing military support and this citizenship was shared by the rest of the succeeding Herodian family members, Josephus, *War*, 1.194, 90-91.

¹¹⁷ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 13; see also: Sean Freyne, *Jesus, A Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus-Story*, (London, New York: T & T Clark International – A Continuum Imprint, 2004), 146, Freyne states that the Herodian dynasty presses down and lords over their subjects.

Herod the Great was born in southern Palestine and his father, Antipater¹¹⁸ was an Edomite (an Arab from the region between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Aqaba). Thus Herod, half-Jewish of Arab origin, became the ruler of the Jews, a point of even more resentment from the Jewish population. When Herod ruled as Roman's client-king of the Jews, he reduced the power of the high priests and restricted their role to their religious function in the Temple. He appointed and deposed of seven high priests during his reign and replaced them with candidates of his own choosing.¹¹⁹ This was in violation of the Jewish tradition that the high priest was to serve for life and was normally hereditary (cf. Exod. 28:1, 30, 41, 43; 29:9).

Herod and his sons' construction and building programs were of grand scale, which relied heavily on taxes and forced labour from mainly the peasant communities. Most of these massive monuments, new towns, cities and temples were dedicated in honour of and homage to their patrons – Greco-Roman Emperors and goddesses, to his families and close friends and even memorials of Herod himself.¹²⁰ In reality, these constructions were for the benefits of his created elite and associates, but also created employment opportunities for builders and artisans.

Other major constructions like the harbour port at Caesarea were to cater for the increase flow of export and import goods from both Palestine and the wider regions of the Mediterranean, as new economics of market exchange and foreign trade flourished.

¹¹⁸“Herod,” *EncyBrit.*, Antipater was a man of great influence and wealth, who increased both by marrying the daughter of a noble from Petra in southern Jordan, the capital of the rising Nabataean kingdom.

¹¹⁹ Sean Freyne, *The World of the New Testament*, (Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1990), 59; also, Josephus, *Ant.*, 15.267, 126-127, states that Herod “gradually corrupted the ancient way of life,” from which the people suffered considerable harm.

¹²⁰ Josephus, *War*, 1.401-421, 188-199; Freyne, *Galilee, Jesus and the Gospels*, 137-138; see also: Achim Lichtenberger, “Jesus and the Theatre in Jerusalem,” in *Jesus and Archaeology*, ed., James H. Charlesworth, (Grand Rapids, Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2006), 288, these were intended to have an effect on his subjects and the Roman Empire.

It also catered for people with the means to travel, bringing in wealth, trade and their own cultures into the Galilean region.

Many of the temples Herod built indicated his connection with the political and polytheistic religion of Rome,¹²¹ which completely overshadowed his Jewish monotheistic belief. These were also points of resentment by the Jewish pilgrims and were seen as against their religion and culture. However, to his credit, Herod also rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem.

The relationship between the Herodian family in Palestine and the emperors in Rome can be characterised as “aristocratic empire.”¹²² It was a form of political control in which the privileged aristocrats ruled agrarian peasants and lived from the peasants’ labour. It conformed and encouraged social stratification and the flow of benefits tended to be one-way, mainly in the upward direction. It embraced and bred exploitation, while the sale of office and judicial decisions to the highest bidder was common, which constituted the abuse of power.

Although the Herodians were kings and rulers of the Palestinians in all or parts, their appointment by the Roman authority was a clear indication that they were the extended arm of Roman imperialism, spreading Roman political rule, their ideologies and religions in Palestine.

Roman Imperial Rulers

Rome’s control over her vast territories throughout the empire was possible because of their genius administrative skills through their provincial system, which

¹²¹ Taylor, “Pontius Pilate,” 575.

¹²² Hanson and Oakman, *Palestine in the time of Jesus*, 67.

categorised the acquired territories as either Senatorial or Imperial provinces.¹²³ Senatorial provinces were under the direct control of the senate, who appointed the governors, whereas the Imperial provinces were under the direct control of the Emperor and military legions were deployed there for security reasons, like Judaea. Although the system genuinely allowed for local cultures and customs to have their say, it became in reality a breeding ground for corruption as these office bearers tried to capitalise and to gain as much as possible during their term.

The Romans also ruled through a system of client kings, as illustrated by the reign of Herod the Great, provided that they did not interfere with or superseded the Roman authority and objectives. These administrative arrangements (kingships and provincial rulers) were the instruments that brought in the annual tribute, which was the blood-line of the Roman imperialistic machinery.

This administration brilliance also contributed to the realisation of the Roman strategy of bringing together “different ethnic groups and their political units under a single government.”¹²⁴ This was the Roman Republic’s vision that was by the first century CE, carried out under the audacity of the Emperor. It became a reality through a network of personal alliances with the ruling classes of these ethnic groups. It simply meant imposing Roman cultural and religious influences upon their subjects. This was an easier transformation because it hitch-hiked upon the Hellenistic ideologies that had already been felt throughout the region, by the conquests of Alexander the Great. It can

¹²³ Freyne, *The World of the New Testament*, 52–53, the governors of senatorial ranks had supervisory powers over the equestrian order, which was represented by the procurators, like Pontius Pilate. In reality, the Emperor had the sole authority to bestow upon any Roman, the right to rule any province.

¹²⁴ J. Fears, “Rome: The Ideology of Imperial Power.” *Thought*, Volume 55.216, 1980, 98; However, Erich S. Gruen, “The Expansion of the Empire under Augustus,” in *The Cambridge Ancient History*, eds., Allan Bowman, Edward Champlin and Andrew Lintott, second edition, volume 10, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 194-197, Gruen argues that this expansion was “not strategic but to project power, resiliency and dynamism.”

also be said that this context helped the spread of Christianity throughout the region and beyond.

Although these conquered provinces exercised religious autonomous, their “Roman officials favoured Roman gods”¹²⁵ and they regularly practiced religious matters according to Roman guidelines. This preference of Roman gods was believed to bring fortune as Cicero affirmed: “Jupiter is called Best and Greatest because he does not make us just or sober or wise but healthy and rich and prosperous.”¹²⁶ This perception perhaps prompted Pilate to set up shields at Herod’s place and bringing into Jerusalem images of Caesar¹²⁷ known as standards, with the implied intention of bringing success. But this action enraged the people.

Also, Pilate’s coins in Judea and inscription excavated in Caesarea confirmed his intention of “promoting Roman religion in the form of imperial cult.”¹²⁸ The Roman Officials were also encouraged to “perform the annual *vota* (vows followed by sacrifice) for the emperor and the empire and even the rabbis in Palestine noted the prevalence of the practice.”¹²⁹ The political dimension of Roman imperialism was indeed accompanied by a specific strategy of spreading and imposing Roman religious aspects upon her subjects. This strategy did not go well with the Palestinian Jewish population, who fiercely opposed and resented it.

¹²⁵ *RoR*, Volume One, 320.

¹²⁶ Cicero, *On the Nature of the gods*, 3.87, 2.60-62, cited by *RoR*, Volume Two, 34-37.

¹²⁷ Plutarch, *Plutarch’s Lives: Demetrius and Antony, Pyrrhus and Caius Marius – Antony*, 33.1, transl., Bernadotte Perrin, (London: William Heinemann Ltd./Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1920), 209, Julius Caesar was worshiped as a god after his death; also see: Cicero, *Philippic*, 2.110-111, cited by *RoR*, Volume Two, 222.

¹²⁸ Taylor, “Pontius Pilate,” discusses Pilate’s coins, 556-564, and on inscription, 565-575.

¹²⁹ *RoR*, Volume One, 320.

Summary

Life as a peasant in Greco-Roman Palestine can be characterised as a struggle for survival. It was a reflection of the daily reality that existed then, which was attributed to a few arrogant greedy elite and the ever imposing political environments of being a subjected people, living under imperial colonialism. These oppressive regimes inflicted upon the people much hardship and suffering physically, mentally and spiritually and they were economically exploited to the full.

The Greco-Roman's influences and ideologies impacted the Palestinian population differently. It was the few aristocratic families with political connections to (or collaboration with) imperial rulers who benefited from it, while the majority suffered. This created an environment of poverty, hunger, displacement, indebtedness, slavery, and even anger and resentment from the peasant societies. It also led to both non-violent protests and fatal confrontations with those in authorities. They had imposed upon the people grave injustice and desolation, in order to advance their course and to reap the benefits.

In the Jewish context, there were no clear distinct divisions between its socio-economic-political-religious administrations as such, because the temple high priestly aristocracies held these different responsibilities. It was a four-in-one authoritative entity, sponsored and controlled by the Romans, in return for subduing the population and the collection and payment of the required tribute. It was an arrangement that operated under the veil of culture and religious legitimation, which benefited only these Roman collaborators, at the expense of the people. This relationship was at the core of the peasants' resentment of their own leaders and imperial rulers, because they had had direct bearings upon their subsistence existence and the struggle they endured.

The mass movements that resulted from these harsh conditions were the last resorts for the peasantries to address their grievances with those in power and to improve their ways of life. However, they could not commit to such acts because they feared for their existence being destroyed. Instead, they supported and even participated in these activities, if someone else was prepared to lead them.

The leaders of these movements were themselves victimised by these oppressive regimes. They had experienced the misery endured by the people while the few elite families took advantages of the situation. These leaders had taken it upon themselves as their responsibilities and callings to lead and challenge those in power, on behalf of these marginalised people. It was an undertaking that identified these leaders as rebels and their movements as revolutionary by the authority and they were truly treated as such when captured. So what kind of personalities one must have to undertake such role? What differentiate them from the ordinary people? These issues pertaining to leadership qualities as well as power and authority will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter 3

Leadership, Authority and Power and the Concept of Challenge

Introduction

*But whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant,
and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.*

(Mk. 10:43-44)

We all strive to be successful in any endeavour we may undertake. However, we may be sometimes blinded by focusing solely on that purpose without reflecting upon the consequences of our action upon others. We are responsible and we should be held accountable for our every action, regardless of status and standing within our societies. It is also our responsibility to care and to love one another, as our Lord Jesus Christ has commanded us to do so.

This chapter will examine the issues of leadership, authority and power as well as the concept of challenge. What constitute a leader and how can an ordinary person become a leader? What is authority and power and what roles do these phenomena play in our lives and societies? What is a challenge? Is there a relationship between these three different phenomena and how do they relate to Jesus' procession into Jerusalem? These questions will be discussed in this chapter in relation to the discussion in Chapter Two and also with analogy to some recent historical events.

Leadership

Concept of Leadership

Leadership refers to the state or position of being a leader, which requires special leadership qualities or skills.¹ How does one acquire these skills and do these skills guarantee us solutions to different situations? Do we have to attend specialised institutions to learn these skills or can we rely upon our own life experiences and/or natural abilities? Of course, everyone is different with different perceptions as to what constitute leadership and what qualities a leader must have to be effective in that leadership role.

We live in an ever-changing world where we seek solutions only to be provided with more questions, where accepted norms are constantly being challenged. It is a changing world where one must be able to adapt in order to cope. It is a changing world where we “need the courage to let go of most of what we have cherished and to see the world anew.”²

It is this leadership role in a changing environment that will be emphasised in this discussion for two reasons: (1) Jesus in his ministry and in his role as a leader was advocating a new teaching of a new heavenly kingdom, in contrast to the established status quo of religious observance and political obedience. (2) His ministry and challenge to the authority was to bring change and relief to the struggling people. The established systems of domination and exploitation must be changed. Jesus’ ministry and message re-kindled the fading hope of the people due to the burden of being a subjected people to domestic and foreign oppression.

¹ A. S. Hornby, *Oxford Advanced Learner’s Dictionary of Current English*, Sixth Edition, eds., Sally Wehmeier and Michael Ashby, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 729.

² Margaret J. Wheatley, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, Third Edition, (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2006), 7.

These observations will define, as far as this thesis is concerned, the relevant leadership qualities required of a leader in times of chaotic change. In order for a leader to lead, there must be followers and the “only lead of a genuine leader is foresight, and a leader’s impact is measured by his effect on followers.”³ That is, to be effective, the leader must focus on the purpose and mission of the group.⁴ The leader must also incorporate that purpose with participation from group members so that the mission of the group can be achieved while also fulfilling the needs of the members. Concurrently, the leader must also guard against any internal and outside threats⁵ that would curtail the group’s purpose.

Qualities of a Leader

Different situations call for different leadership qualities. A simple illustration is needed to clarify this assumption. A minister/leader in taking a youths’ camping trip must be patient and be tolerant. S/he must have organisational skills and must be familiar with the geographical environment. Skills in first aid application and hazard control are important. S/he must sometimes be assertive and be strong in order to have control on all different aspects of the trip. That same minister cannot use the same skills to deal with a death within the congregation, where sensitivity and the ability to sooth a broken heart are required. S/he is relied upon to console and at the same time bring spiritual message of hope and comfort. Therefore, a leader needs a variety of leadership skills in order to lead others.

³ *The Private Writings of Robert K. Greenleaf: On Becoming a Servant Leader*, eds., Don M. Frick and Larry C. Spears, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Imprint, 1996), 285.

⁴ James M. Antal, *Considering a New Call: Ethical and Spiritual Challenges for Clergy*, (Alban: The Alban Institute, 2000), 44-50, also emphasises the importance of preparation, when called to lead an organisation, a church parish or any other leadership role.

⁵ Jackson W. Carroll, *As One with Authority: Reflective Leadership in Ministry*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1991), 98.

In our capacity as ministers of the Word, we are entrusted with a great responsibility to lead and to serve God's people (both Christians and non-Christians), so that we can all share in God's blessing and gift of salvation. It is therefore a calling where we need to reach out to those people, but not to force upon them our own convictions. It is a calling not to pursue our own selfish ambitions but to serve and be humble before God and others, and for us to deny self.⁶ We must be able to effectively communicate and to listen to others if we are to help those in need.

Perhaps, an effective way of identifying leadership quality skills is by analysing some of the great biblical and historical leaders. These leaders confronted different situations, but resulted in a changing environment for the people they led.

Joseph was just a 'dreamer' who was sold as a slave by his brothers (Gen. 37:28), but ended up as second only in command to Pharaoh (Gen. 41:40) and a saviour to his brothers and people (cf. Gen. 45:4-8). But that road was not easy. His experiences⁷ ensured his humility and maturity and "through God's enabling,"⁸ to carry out the great responsibilities entrusted upon him. That humility allowed Joseph to see beyond his brothers' anger and jealousy and forgave them. His maturity and perseverance allowed him to deal with life's disappointments and failures that he encountered. His organisational and planning abilities ensured the people's survival during the severe famine and his people's legacy in history. He was also loyal to his superiors, but his

⁶ Larry Deason, *One Step Closer to Jesus: Losing Life, Finding Life – Lessons in Genuine Discipleship*, (Lady Lake: Life Communications, 1993), 9-10; George G. Hunter III, *How to Reach Secular People*, (Nashville: Abington Press, 1992), 55-72, Hunter provides some useful tools for approaching secular people, which reflect the need of the people. These are strategies used by commentators and congregations reaching secular people.

⁷ Gen. 37:1-41:57, relays that Joseph's brothers hated him and planned to kill him, but eventually sold him as a slave. He was falsely accused by his master's wife of idolatry and was put to prison.

⁸ Kenneth Prior, *Perils of Leadership: Overcoming Personal Battles*, (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 17; see also: Gen. 39:3, which states that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands.

greatest quality as a leader was his steadfast reliance on God, in serving the needs of others. To love God and to glorify his name is to help his people in need.

Moses' lack of control over his emotions landed him in trouble. He tried to avoid his calling⁹ and his weaknesses reflected "an underlying sense of inadequacy."¹⁰ Moses was raised up within Pharaoh's court, yet he chose to suffer with the people of God. He had to face the challenges of confronting an oppressive regime as well as dealing with the rejections from the people of Israel. Moses' inadequacy allowed him to put his trust in God and be humble before God (Exod. 3:6). This act of humility transformed Moses from being inadequate to a fearless leader who confronted a tyranny and the patience to lead the ever unfaithful and ungrateful people to freedom.

James and John, sons of Zebedee craved power and glory by asking Jesus to grant them seats at both his sides (Mk. 10:37). Such behaviour could arouse jealousy and divisions within a group, but being in a leadership role is not by right or because of one's wealth.¹¹ Although the motive at the time was prestige and status, but subsequently, they were true to their words by drinking the same cup as Jesus did. To be a great leader is to have the willingness to assume a humble role, to suffer for the sake of others and even to the point of giving up one's life so that others may be saved.¹² Their obedience and allegiance to Jesus cost James and John their lives but in

⁹ When God called Moses to bring His people, the Israelite, out of Egypt, Moses came up with numerous excuses: "Who am I that should go" (Exod. 3:11); "But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me" (Exod. 4:1); "I have never been eloquent, neither in the past nor even now; please send someone else" (Exod. 4:10-13).

¹⁰ Prior, *Perils of Leadership*, 27; There are also numerous biblical accounts of leaders who fall within this category: Gideon said that he was the weakest and the least in his family when God called him to deliver the Israelite from the hand of Midian (cf. Judg. 6:14-15); Jeremiah tried to avoid God's calling by saying that he did not know how to speak, for he was only a boy (Jer. 1:6).

¹¹ Prior, *Perils of Leadership*, 120-130, provides some suggestions as to why James and John made such a request: Perhaps the privilege of being the inner circle had gone to their heads; they felt that they were socially superior because their father could afford paid servants; John was socially well connected because he was known to the high priest (Jn. 18:15); their mother also declared the same ambition for her sons (Matt. 20:21).

¹² Loader, *The New Testament with Imagination*, 22.

that act, they gained true prominence, unlike the superficial glory that they selfishly sought before. It was only then that they achieved greatness.

The apostle Paul was constantly facing personal criticisms and rejections from church members.¹³ Ironically, he dealt with such criticisms by emphasising the importance of his office while keeping a low and humble view of himself (Rom. 1:1; Eph. 3:7-8).¹⁴ He identified himself with the personal criticisms: the worst of sinners (1 Tim. 1:15); of the flesh (Rom. 7:14); the fool (2 Cor. 11:16), but he performed his office with “meekness and gentleness of Christ” (2 Cor. 10:1), and because of “the grace of God that is with me” (1 Cor. 15:10). Therefore, Paul was not easily offended by these personal criticisms because he was capable of accepting “injury without resentment and praise without pride.”¹⁵ His conviction of that higher calling of his office enabled him to deal with his critics and people in general “with sensitivity and understanding.”¹⁶

From our social-economic-political discussion in Chapter Two, first century CE Greco-Roman Palestine’s emphasis on wealth and status became the benchmark for selection and appointment to leadership positions. The local elite leadership sought to please Rome while “enhancing their personal status and honour within their local community.”¹⁷ This autocratic leadership is perhaps an equivalent of some recent historical dictatorships, where one person or a small group possesses absolute power over the population, without effective constitutional limitations.

¹³ Paul had to cope and defend himself against heretics like the Judaizers at Galatia (cf. Gal. 1:6-10); the personal attacks and the way they questioned his motives, his methods and message, criticising his character and appearance and even his authority as an apostle, e.g. not crafty with words (1 Cor. 2:1-5); his apostleship (9:1-2); not being able to visit (2 Cor. 1:15-17); or handling money (12:14-17).

¹⁴ Rom. 1:1, “I Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God.” Eph. 3:7-8, “Of this gospel I have become a servant according to the gift of God’s grace...Although I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to me to bring to the Gentiles the news of the boundless riches of Christ.”

¹⁵ George B. Duncan, *Pastor and People*, (Waco: Word Books, 1972), 97.

¹⁶ Prior, *Perils of Leadership*, 170.

¹⁷ Clark, *First-Century Christians in the Graeco-Roman World*, 145.

Adolph Hitler of Germany and Joseph Stalin of Russia are just two examples of modern dictatorships. They influenced and encouraged their people to follow them, resulting in the development of historical events that had impacted their people, their countries and the world at large. Their socialist/communist perspective, fostered on the Marxist idea of revolution,¹⁸ attracted the people. Unfortunately, the people became victimised by their leaders' "oppressive apparatus of totalitarian regimes."¹⁹ Despite their indifferent political ambitions, they demonstrated brilliant leadership qualities and their abilities to influence and to change people. Their oratory brilliant, their skilful execution of the art of persuasion and manipulation, ensured that the people were convinced and followed their leadership.

But unlike the dictatorship nature of Hitler and Stalin, Mao Zedong (Tsetung) of China and Gandhi of India's revolutionary leadership attracted praises and supports from the common people. The people of China's struggle against foreign rulers ended when Mao declared Communist victory in 1949: "The Chinese people have stood up."²⁰ Mao's leadership philosophy included "sharing, planning, working together and showing understanding in relation to one another, seeking help, solving differences immediately and by emphasising the power of the people."²¹ Gandhi's legacy can be identified with his "belief in the significance and power of non-violence,"²² which

¹⁸ Bastiaan Wielenga, *Introduction to Marxism*, (Bangalore: Centre for Social Action, 1991), 160-226, discusses at length the objective conditions for revolution; see also: Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Communist Manifesto: With an Introduction by A.J.P. Taylor*, (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1967), 79, they emphasise that revolution is the product of class struggles between bourgeois (capitalists, wealthy) and proletarians (labourers).

¹⁹ Keith W. Clement, *What Freedom? The Persistent Challenge of Dietrich Bonhoeffer*, (Bristol: Bristol Baptist College, 1990), 4.

²⁰ Raymond L. Whitehead, *Love and Struggle in Mao's Thought*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1977), 5, says that no matter how one judges the ensuing record of People's Republic of China, that moment marked unity and peace for the people and national integrity was restored.

²¹ Mao Tsetung, *Quotations from Chairman Mao Tsetung*, (Peking: Foreign Language Press, 1966), 104-119.

²² Peter D. Bishop, *A Technique for Loving: Non-Violence in Indian and Christian Traditions*, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1981), 82.

requires “faith, sacrifice and honesty.”²³ It was a legacy that had “aroused stronger emotions or touched deeper chords of humanity.”²⁴

In my Samoan context, one leader came to mind regarding his efforts to free Samoa from British colonial rule, administered through New Zealand government. Tupua Tamasese Lealofi III, one of the four paramount chiefs of Samoa at the time, was leading a peaceful demonstration for Samoa’s independence,²⁵ but was fatally shot by the New Zealand police, in what is now commonly referred to as ‘black Saturday’ in Samoa’s history. While lying on the road bleeding to death, his dying wish was for the demonstrators and for the Samoan people to remain calm and to keep the peace – “*Samoa, fīfīlemū*.”²⁶ Although Tupua’s effort ended in tragedy, it was perceived by the Samoans as a courageous attempt to achieve his people’s need of steering their own destiny. He was a leader who literally gave his life for his people’s freedom.

Jesus’ Leadership

Theologically, Jesus’ vicarious death was for the salvation of humanity from the bondage of sin. Historically, he was crucified as a rebel leader, whose entry into Jerusalem was “virtually a proclamation of rebellion.”²⁷ These are just two of numerous

²³ *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi: XXII (December 1921-March 1922)*, (Delhi: The Publication Division – Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1966), 116.

²⁴ B.R. Nanda, *Mahatma Gandhi: A Biography*, (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1958), 7.

²⁵ Malama Meleisea, *The Making of Modern Samoa: Traditional Authority and Colonial Administration in the History of Western Samoa*, (Suva: Institute of Pacific Studies of the University of the South Pacific, 1987), 139-151; see also: Malama Meleisea et al., *Lagaga: A Short History of Western Samoa*, eds., Malama Meleisea and Penelope Schoeffel Meleisea, (Suva: University of the South Pacific, 1987), 132-146, the struggle for Samoa’s independence was orchestrated by a movement called the ‘Samoan League’ but became known as the ‘*O le Mau*’ – Samoan public opinion (1920-1945). It was a movement born out of the majority of Samoans and some Europeans’ discontent with New Zealand administration’s policy of ignoring local contribution in decision making. Despite the people’s anger and set back, it was their respect of Tupua’s dying wish that prevented an all-out civil war between the supporters of the *Mau* movements and those who supported the New Zealand administration.

²⁶ It literally translates as ‘Samoa, be calm.’

²⁷ James D.G. Dunn, *Jesus Remembered: Christianity in the Making*, Volume 1, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 623; However, Rudolf Bultmann, *Jesus and the Word*, transl., Louise Pettibone Smith and Erminie H. Lantero, (London: Collins/Fontana, 1958), 14, is sceptical about our ability to know the Jesus of History due to a lack of sources. The Gospels he

perspectives expressed about Jesus, both by Christians and non-Christians.²⁸ It is then not surprising at all to hear Jaroslav Pelikan says that “regardless of what anyone may personally think or believe about him, Jesus of Nazareth has been the dominant figure in the history of Western culture for almost twenty centuries.”²⁹

However, Jesus within his social-economic-political-religious environment was encouraging a social, non-violence demonstration on behalf of the peasants. He blessed the poor and condemned the rich (Luk. 6:20, 24). He talked about the forgiveness of debt (Matt. 18:23-33; Luk. 11:4). He spoke of subverting traditional family relationships (cf. Mk. 3:35) and hierarchical order (cf. Mk. 10:43-44). He interrupted and overturned Temple normal operations and accused Temple authority of using the prayer house as a den of robbers (cf. Matt. 21:12-17; Mk. 11:15-19; Luk. 19:45-48; Jn. 2:13-16). Jesus did all these and much more, which invited condemnation and hostility from religious and political leaders.³⁰ But that did not prevent him from confronting those authorities, for the sake of the majority, marginalised people.

argues have their origin in the Hellenistic Churches, reflecting ‘the Christ of faith’ not the historical Jesus; see also: Rudolf Bultmann, *The History of the Synoptic Tradition*, transl., John Marsh, (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1963), 370; Helmut Koester, “Jesus the Victim,” *JBL*, Volume 111.1 Spring 1992, 10, Koester agrees that Jesus’ death was a political execution by Roman authorities, but Christians later assigned this responsibility to the Jewish authorities; Sharyn Dowd and Elizabeth Struthers Malbon, “The Significance of Jesus’ Death in Mark: Narrative Context and Authorial Audience,” in *The Trial and Death of Jesus: Essays on the Passion Narrative in Mark*, eds., Geert Van Oyen and Tom Shepherd, (Leuven, Paris, Dudley: Peeters, 2006), 1, Dowd and Malbon suggest that Jesus, by ‘giving his life’ (cf. Mk. 10:45) freed us from captivity and slavery. His death was to perform ‘for many’ the service of liberation from bondage and oppression.

²⁸ Mark Allan Powell, *The Jesus Debate: Modern Historians Investigate the Life of Christ*, (Oxford: A Lion Book, 1998), discusses a variety of opinions expressed about Jesus, from Hermann Samuel Reimarus (1694-1768), who claimed that Jesus was an “unsuccessful political claimant who thought that it was his destiny to be established by God as king of the restored people of Israel”, to modern scholars’ quest for Jesus – Ernst Kasemann; Gunther Bornkamm; Norman Perrin. He also discusses the most recent scholars – Marcus Borg, Richard Horsley, John Meier, E.P. Sanders, Geza Vermes and Ben Witherington, whose ‘third quest’ regarded Jesus as an eschatological prophet in first-century Judaism; see also: Gregory W. Davis, *The Historical Jesus Question: The Challenge of History to Religious Authority*, (Louisville, London, Leiden: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), Davis also discusses this drift between theological and historical emphasis.

²⁹ Jaroslav Pelikan, *Jesus through the Centuries: His Place in the History of Culture*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 1.

³⁰ Bruce J. Malina, “Was Jesus a Rebellious Son?” in *Windows on the World of Jesus: Time Travel to Ancient Judea*, (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 2-5, cites some instances when Jesus appears to have placed “his honour and that of his family in question” when he says that his true

We have also identified that Jesus was a compassionate³¹ leader, whose actions and teachings attracted a lot of people who followed him (cf. Matt. 4:25; Mk. 5:21; 6:34; 9:15; 10:46; Luk. 6:17; 9:37; 12:1; Jn. 8:2; 12:9). Even long after his death, resurrection and ascension, a movement that bore his name, Christianity,³² continued to grow despite persecutions and inhumane treatments of those who proclaimed to be Christians, as related by Tacitus:

Nero fastened the guilt and inflicted the most exquisite tortures on a class hated for their abominations, called the Christians. Christus, from whom the name had its origin, suffered the extreme penalty during the reign of Tiberius, at the hand of Pontius Pilate...[Christianity] again broke out not only in Judea the source of the evil, but even in Rome...arrest was made of all who pleaded guilty...mockery of every sort was added to their deaths. Covered with the skin of beasts, they were torn by dogs and perished, or were nailed to crosses, or even doomed to the flames and burnt, to serve as nightly illumination, when daylight had expired.³³

Even some Christians were simply being punished for proclaiming and maintaining their Christian faith, according to Pliny the Young, writing to the Emperor Trajan:

I have never been present at an examination of Christians...whether it is the mere name of Christian which is punishable, even if innocent of

brothers, sisters and mother are those who do the will of God (cf. Mk. 3:31-35; Matt. 12:46-50; Luk. 8:19-21); Jesus appears to dispute his mother in public place (cf. Jn. 2:1-11); he was accused of being a “glutton and drunkard” (Matt. 11:19; Luk. 7:34). These instances point to Jesus as a rebellious son according to the Deuteronomy law (cf. Deut. 21:18-21). However, Malina concludes that Jesus should not be categorised as ‘rebellious’, because of his higher status as the ‘beloved of God’ that people should listen to him. I agree with Malina, that Jesus was not a rebellious son, but on the ground that Jesus’ public ministry has distinguished his ‘relationships’ from the personal to the public arena. It is by no mean a separation of the two, but just a realisation of the nature of his ministry, to cater for all his people, yet maintaining that special relationship with his mother, sisters and brothers.

³¹ Loader, *The New Testament with Imagination*, 23.

³² Robert E. Van Voorst, *Jesus Outside the New Testament: An Introduction to the Ancient Evidence*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 46, discerns Tacitus’ reference to Christ as the originator/founder (*auctor*) of Christians (*Christianoi*) and the emergence of Christianity, but not because Christ named this movement as such, but Christ was the founder of the movement that bore his name.

³³ Tacitus, *Ann.*, *Book XV*, 15.44, transl., Alfred J. Church and William J. Brodribb, eds., et al., Robert Maynard Hutchins, (Chicago: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 168.

crime...I have asked them in person if they were Christians...If they persist, I order them to be led away for persecution.³⁴

These are just two examples of the cost of being a Christian during times when Christianity was seen as evil. These events did not even dissuade those Christian martyrs from proclaiming their faith. So why did these people remain loyal to Jesus Christ and Christianity in the face of such cruelty? It is no doubt about the effect of the Risen Lord event and the subsequent missions of the apostles, which embedded deeply within Christians that indebtedness to God's grace and salvation, incarnated in Jesus Christ. Through Jesus, people encountered God and Jesus "became the historical event that provided the focal point for the Christian experience of God."³⁵

Before those events, there was a Jesus of Nazareth, whose influence was a testimony to his leadership qualities. He was concerned for the welfare of the marginalised people, which had been perpetuated by social stratification and imperialism. He did not just teach them, he responded to their needs. He was not afraid to speak out against the status quo and he was prepared to challenge the authority, even if it meant, sacrificing his life.

Jesus sought out and stayed with the poor and the sinners (cf. Mk. 2:17). His leadership and teaching had authority, which gave these marginalised people hope, an alternative freedom, offered by the kingdom of heaven.³⁶ They followed him, as they saw in him an end to their problems and struggle.

³⁴ Pliny, *Letters, Books VIII-X, Panegyricus*, transl., Betty Radice, (London, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 287.

³⁵ Roger Haight, *Jesus: Symbol of God*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 2002), 57.

³⁶ John K. Riches, "The Social World of Jesus," *Interpretation: JBT – The Historical Jesus*, Volume 50, No. 4, October, 1996.

Authority and Power

Concept of Authority and Power

The Apostle Paul reminds us that “there is no authority except from God and those authorities that exist have been instituted by God” (Rom. 13:1).³⁷ Literally and considering our discussion so far, it appears to imply that God approved of or even caused this suffering faced by the people. This may not be so because Paul’s assertion refers to the institution of authority as it originates from God. This divine authority is absolute, whereas human authority is partial and limited but must be respected.³⁸ That is, exercising this human authority is subjective and a matter of personal preference.

That authority empowers us to act and we are therefore responsible and accountable for discharging that authority. However, our wavering human nature indicates our inability to be firm, resolute, decisive and steadfast in our beliefs, roles and responsibilities. We are also susceptible to factors like selfishness, manipulation and coercion that could easily blind us and break down our integrity and dignity as human beings. We could easily be influenced by outside forces, which will affect our ability to lead, govern and to serve those people in need.

Authority refers to (i) power to command, control or judge others, (ii) a decision making organisation or government, (iii) a position that has the power to command, control or judge others.³⁹ Power is (i) ability to do something, (ii) a position of control,

³⁷ This assertion is in contrast with the author of Revelation, who exhorted his addressees to resist the idolatrous demands of a demonic imperial cult, even Acts situates the young church in a world of the rich and powerful, see: Roetzel, *The World That Shaped the New Testament*, 1.

³⁸ *The Authority of the Word of God: Primarily as Mediated in Holy Scripture – Report of the Commission set up by the Division of Studies of the Australia Council for the World Council of Churches*, (South Australia: National Conference of Australia Churches, 1959), 3; see also: W.A. Whitehouse, *The Authority of Grace: Essays in Response to Karl Barth*, ed., Ann Loades, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd., 1981), 113, Whitehouse contrasts the sanctity of Christians with worldly conditions.

³⁹ *CCDT*, 56; see also: BDAG, 262, the Greek word *δύναμις* is rendered as “potential for functioning in some way, power, might, strength, force or capability.” This reference is used of God (Matt. 22:29;

(iii) a person or group having authority, (iv) a state with political, industrial or military strength.⁴⁰ Authority and power therefore mandate those in such positions to perform their duties, but governed by an agreement or constitution.

Authority and power can be gained by being appointed, selected or being elected to those positions. However, there are other means like, a successful hostile take over in the corporate environment, a military coup or a defeat in a military campaign will also result in authority and power being obtained by force. A military coup in particular will result in unlimited authority and power, disregarding the written law of the land, as necessity may require, and can also lead to abuse and discrimination. Such behaviours are common where dictatorship prevails and also in imperialistic administration.

Responsibilities and Obligations

To be in a position of authority and power is effectively a right to lead a group of people for a particular purpose, based on the leader's qualities and how the followers perceive those qualities.⁴¹ Without the people, a leader has no mandate to lead and has no authority and power to command and control. In our modern society where the cry for equality, gender, rights, status, equal opportunity and so forth, is an on-going issue, but it deems leadership unnecessary. That is, if we strive for equality in those areas, in its literal sense, with the assumption that everyone would be the same on equal footing, it would present a chaotic society⁴² of individuals focusing on their own thing. There

Mk. 12:24; Mk. 14:62), of Jesus (cf. 1 Cor. 5:4; 1 Pet. 1:3) and of the Holy Spirit (Luk. 4:14). It is also used to refer to "an entity or being" (cf. Rom. 8:38; 1 Cor. 15:24; Eph. 1:21).

⁴⁰ *CCDT*, 746.

⁴¹ Carroll, *As One with Authority*, 14.

⁴² I am not however, discrediting or against the struggle for equality in our modern society, particular in our Pacific context, where I feel, the Pacific is generally lacking behind other regions when it comes to gender equality and equal opportunity. But, by 'chaotic society,' I mean that if we are all the same – wealth, status, etc, we are all individuals pursuing our own personal affairs without a care for anyone. We would be like mechanical beings who are just going through the motions of living, without thinking or helping others, and without hope of improvements or success, not only as individuals, but as a group working together.

would be no sharing, caring and no common ground to work together for a common purpose to benefit that society. Therefore, we need a certain level of status within our society so that it can function in an orderly manner and to achieve its purposes, while accounting for its members' specific needs.⁴³

Leaders must be empowered with the relevant authority to lead for the benefits of our societies. A leader's responsibilities and obligations require due care and diligent exercise. That leader is expected to execute that power and authority with total commitment and conviction for the benefits of the society as a whole and for its individual members. It is a position to be revered due to the nature of its origin, but not to be abused for personal benefits. As a divine institution, our stewardship role in discharging or neglecting the relevant responsibilities and obligations accompanying that institution will also be divinely judged.

Jesus has commissioned us with the authority to continue his work (cf. Matt. 28:16-20). It is our duty to ensure that everyone benefits and be assured of God's gracious love, by proclaiming and baptising everyone in the name of our Triune God. This commissioning has obligated us to be identified with and to place our trust and hope in the Risen Christ,⁴⁴ which could then be passed on to the people we serve, when they too, accept and continue to proclaim God's Word.⁴⁵ As we have been

⁴³ Rev. Dr. Tevita Koloa'ia Havea stated this idea in our discussion, *Social World of the Pauline Missions*, March, 2008. Dr. Havea is a lecturer in New Testament and also the Head of Biblical Studies Department at the Pacific Theological College, Suva, Fiji.

⁴⁴ William Countryman, *Biblical Authority or Biblical Tyranny? Scripture and the Christian Pilgrimage*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 31; see also: Paul J. Achtemeier, *Inspiration and Authority: Nature and Function of Christian Scripture*, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1999), 145.

⁴⁵ Graham Shaw, *The Cost of Authority: Manipulation and Freedom in the New Testament*, (London: SCM Press, 1983), 11-13, asks the questions about the perception of Christianity as 'oppressive' in the sense that the Christian Bible appears to be contradictory: promising freedom but enforcing obedience, promising reconciliation but sanctioning divisions? These however must be checked against the social realities of time.

commissioned by the authority of Christ, it is also our responsibility as leaders to continue that relationship with those we serve, especially the poor and the oppressed.⁴⁶

In Greco-Roman Palestine's context, it became apparent that the rise to political and religious power of certain individuals was established on the basis of wealth or family background. Their authority also "grew in proportion to the honour and esteem in which they were held by the community."⁴⁷ For the rural peasants whose labour had contributed so much to these individuals' wealthy status, they considered that authority with resentment and viewed it as oppressive. Even the Jewish religious authority was seen through the same lens as they compounded and ignored the peasants' struggle, while preferring to please their Roman masters. These circumstances might have attracted the people to Jesus' movement. They saw in him a new authority with a message of hope that could liberate them from their suffering.

Jesus' Authority

Christians believe that Jesus is God incarnated in human flesh (c.f. Jn. 1:1-18). He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matt. 28:18) as he had conquered all⁴⁸ through his life, death and resurrection. His authority is unlimited, extending over the heavenly hosts (Heb. 1:6; 1 Pet. 3:22) and employs them for the service of his kingdom - the saving of souls. His authority also extends over all the earth when he bought us all with his sacrificial death, which binds us all to him in obedience, honour and worship. With that authority, he has also commissioned us to save souls.

⁴⁶Joerg Rieger, *Remember the Poor: The Challenge to Theology in the Twenty-First Century*, (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998), 11-12.

⁴⁷Clarke, *First-Century Christians in the Greco-Roman World*, 210.

⁴⁸Achtemeier, *Inspiration and Authority*, 144, talks of Jesus' sovereign authority over people, over forces of evil and over nature as well. But behind the Gospels' account is a central character of Jesus of Nazareth, who also points to the God whom he call 'father' and who exercises control over his fate.

Unfortunately, some people who followed Jesus and also those who were offended and threatened by his ministry did not understand Jesus' authority. Some certainly did not accept it, but instead questioned his authority (c.f. Matt. 12:24; 13:54-56; 14:25-26; Mk. 2:6-7; 4:38-41; 6:1-6; 11:27-28; 14:53-72, etc.).⁴⁹ The Gospel according to John perhaps highlights these two points pertaining to Jesus' authority and the people's reactions to it. First, Jesus is the Word becoming flesh and that Word was at the beginning of creation and through him, all things came into being⁵⁰ (cf. Jn. 1:1-4). Jesus therefore, has authority over all things. Second, the Word became flesh and he was in the world, but the world did not know him or accepted him (cf. Jn. 1:10-11). This implies our inability to recognise Jesus and our refusal to accept his authority, over our worldly ambitions, which are our sources of benefits, status and of course our position of authority.

Historically, the Jewish prophets foretold that a messiah would come to uphold justice and righteousness on earth (cf. Isa. 9:6-7), and to suffer for the people's transgressions and sins (cf. Isa. 52:13-53:12). The prophet Isaiah also foretold that this messiah was to bring good news to the oppressed, to proclaim liberty to the captives and to release prisoners (cf. Isa. 61:1-2). Jesus fulfilled this prophesy (cf. Luk. 4:21). John the Baptist heralded the arrival of Jesus as the messiah, which attracted and drew many people to him on accounts of their struggle and their hope for a better future. These social elements and the reality of the people's situation at the time, together with Jesus'

⁴⁹ These verses are some examples of the people (Jesus' disciples included) and the authorities' reactions to Jesus' teachings and claims, e.g., when Jesus cured a demoniac who was blind and mute, the Pharisees accused him of collaborating with Beelzebul, the ruler of demons (Matt. 12:24); When Jesus appeared to his disciples walking on water, they were terrified and fearful that they referred to Jesus as a ghost (Matt. 14:25-26); The scribes accused Jesus of blasphemy when he healed a paralytic and told him that his sins were forgiven (Mk. 2: 6-7); Jesus told his disciples of having little faith during a storming lake crossing (Mk. 4: 38-41); see also: Eugene Hensell, "Mark's Gospel and Jesus' Radical Humanity," *RR*, Volume 64.4, 2005, 426.

⁵⁰ Colin J.D. Greene, *Christology in Cultural Perspective: Marking out the Horizons*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 34.

grown popularity and miraculous deeds, forged and bonded this special relationship between Jesus and the people.

Therefore, from the social-historical perspective, Jesus' authority and power was established through the anticipated purpose of his mission, which the people had drawn to be identified with. They placed their hope of freedom on Jesus to deliver on that expectation. That relationship gave Jesus the authority and power to lead the people and to bring their grievances to the authorities.⁵¹ His challenge was to confront these leaders on their attitudes toward the people, their responsibilities and obligations for the people and their ruling structures, which had caused much sufferings and hardship for the people.

Challenge

Concept of Challenge

Challenge denotes various meanings: (i) demanding or stimulating a situation, (ii) a call to engage in a contest, fight or an argument, (iii) a questioning of statement or fact, (iv) an order to stop and be identified or even making a formal objection to a juror for example.⁵² In relation to this discussion, to challenge someone is accusing that person of some wrong doing, especially as being unjust. It is a call to confront someone or to defy boldly their authority and decision making, which had negatively affected the challenger, represented mainly by the marginalised people.⁵³ In this sense, a challenge is an action that is perceived as threatening, provocative, stimulating, or even inciting to

⁵¹ Burton L. Mack, *Mark and Christian Origins: A Myth of innocence*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 238, relates that Jesus' authority and power through his miracles and healing powers, is not so much in terms of teachings and interpreting of Scriptures, but more so in pronouncing judgements against worldly authorities.

⁵² *CCDT*, 142.

⁵³ Rieger, *Remember the Poor*, 95, suggests that this ignorance of the marginalised people's social dilemma raises theological questions, which must be addressed through theology.

arouse an eventual point of interaction and/or confrontation between the challenger(s) and the person(s) being challenged.

In this context of a challenge, Jesus was leading a challenge against the Jewish religious leaders and their Roman-sponsored masters in Jerusalem. It was a challenge born out of compassion for the marginalised people, who had suffered under these oppressive regime, with the purpose of (i) obtaining relief and solutions to the people's struggle; (ii) providing them with hope for the future; (iii) confronting the authority to re-examine their policies toward the people, and (iv) for the authority (Jewish religious leaders) to change their leadership institutions and practices to reflect the social realities of the people they were supposed to be leading, instead of their selfish behaviour, hidden under the veil of religion.

Sadly, this social phenomenon of rich man-poor man division still exists in our own time and space.⁵⁴ It had manifested itself in different forms⁵⁵ and in numerous struggles⁵⁶ throughout the centuries, yet, maintaining the same substance of social stratification and divisions among people and societies. This social reality has also

⁵⁴ José Comblin, *Called for Freedom: The Changing Context of Liberation Theology*, transl., Phillip Berryman, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1998), 7-9, from the Catholic perspective talks of a period (before the fourteenth century), when the Western Church continued to give attention to the poor, when the Pope struggled for the poor against the empire (the rich). This was also evident during Pope Leo XIII's defence of the rights of the workers against the exploitation of the industrial revolution.

⁵⁵ We have discussed in Chapter Two the shift from the traditional barter and redistribution systems to that of large scale product commercialisation during the Greco-Roman empire (refer section on, "Market Exchange"). This same effect was also evident during the Industrial Revolution and now the concept of globalisation is just another form of exploitation that further fuels this widening-gap between the rich and the poor, despite the numerous implied advantages offered by these systems.

⁵⁶ James Massey, *Down Trodden: The Struggle of India's Dalits for Identity, Solidarity and Liberation*, (Geneva: WCC Publications / Risk Book Series, 1997), 15, tells of the Dalit's struggle against the Aryan colonisation, which reduced the Dalit's status to the level of non-human or non-existent, the Muslim period (700-1700 C.E.) continued this policy and the British rule thereafter. The missionaries started to address the poor India's situation, however, upheld the caste system of social stratification; Herman Beseah Browne, *Theological Anthropology: A Dialectic Study of the African and Liberation Traditions*, (London: Avon Books, 1996), talks of the black Africans' struggle for identity being suppressed by cultural oppression and against 'apartheid rule'; Robert S. Goizueta, *Liberation, Method and Dialogue: Enrique Dussel and North American Theological Discourse*, (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 4-25, discusses the double oppression of most Latin Americans at the hands of both foreign and local elite who appropriate for themselves the benefits of development, due to dependency and subordination factors; Michael Amaladoss, *Life in Freedom: Liberation Theologies*

contributed to the emergence of religious and secular liberation movements and the de-colonisation process, as countries and island nations sought independence from their colonial rulers. But it is a process that had rarely been achieved without challenges, both violent and peaceful. It is also a process I feel, of desperation and of a final resort to resolve differences,⁵⁷ after a long and a strenuous struggle, often enduring silenced sufferings and conditions tantamount only to slavery. Some of these challenges had however, toppled these authoritative regimes, (like Africans' struggle against apartheid rule), which had resulted in freedom for the people – freedom to act, freedom to speak and the freedom to maintain our integrity and dignity in relation to others and to God.⁵⁸

Biblical Examples of Challenge

Daniel expressed his willingness to obey and to serve his God, even though he was enslaved in Nebuchadnezzar's court. His wisdom became his weapon not only to assimilate himself and his friends to the social requirements of their pagan environment, but also as a mean to serve Israel and his God.⁵⁹ Daniel's extraordinary gift of wisdom allowed him to excel and was promoted to be a ruler of the province of Babylon (cf. Dan. 2:46-49, very similar to Joseph's rise in Pharaoh's court), as well as overcoming some hurdles along the way.⁶⁰ In doing so, Daniel, as a subjected slave to imperial rule, defied his rulers' idolatry practice of worshiping idols. In that same act of defiance, he

from Asia, (Anand: Gujarat Sahitya Prakash, 1997), relates the struggle of the poor Asians through liberation theology, when in fact, it was a direct result of economic exploitation and oppression.

⁵⁷ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), expresses a view that the resistance of any oppressed people does not begin with revolt, although that is usually the point where the oppressors first notice the problem.

⁵⁸ Axel D. Steuer, "The Freedom of God and Human Freedom," *SJT*, Volume 36.2, 1983, 163.

⁵⁹ Hugh S. Pyper, "Reading in the Dark: Zechariah, Daniel and the Difficulty of Scripture," *JSOT*, Volume 29.4, June 2005, 490.

⁶⁰ Karel Van Der Toorn, "Scholars at the Oriental: The Figure of Daniel Against its Mesopotamian Background," in *The Book of Daniel: Composition and Reception*, Volume One, eds., John J Collins and Peter W. Flint, (Boston, Leiden: Brill Academic Publishers, Inc., 2002), 43, relay a Babylonia tradition that the lions in Daniel's story were not real lions but stand for human adversaries and it serves as a metaphor for the hostility and competition among the court sages.

glorified his God as the Almighty, all-powerful God, who could save his people from any harm (cf. Dan. 3:21-30; 6:16-23). It was a challenge fought with wisdom, total dependence on God and a certain amount of bravery, but not with swords and other weapons of war.

But unlike Daniel, most of the revolutionary challenges mentioned in Chapter Two involved force as a way of addressing and trying to solve the issue of people's suffering. From the Maccabean's guerrilla warfare against the mighty Roman military machine to the Dagger Men of the great revolt against the corrupt priesthood, they all preferred to fight in order to right what had been wronged. After enduring these oppressive regimes and corrupted practices for a long time, the last resort was to fight for freedom, instead of a diplomatic solution. Jesus used both approaches. He countered the scribes and the Pharisees' questions and objections with words of wisdom and teachings with authority. He also took action in entering Jerusalem in a procession and cleansing the Temple, to drive home his point.

Jesus' Challenge

The Jewish religious leaders wanted to get rid of Jesus who was "shaking both the foundations of Jewish community life and the order of Temple-worship and the Torah."⁶¹ This implies that they were aware of the threat posed by Jesus' ministry and movement. It is also an indication that they perceived Jesus' actions as a challenge to their social, political and religious traditions.⁶² Why was Jesus such a threat?

There was a clear disparity and inequality between the rich and the poor in antiquity before, during and after the time of Jesus' ministry. There was the reluctant of

⁶¹ Martin Hengel, *The Charismatic Leader and His Followers*, ed., John Riches, transl., James C.G. Greig, (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1968), 40.

⁶² Stephen E. Smith, "A Divine Tragedy: Some Observations on the Dramatic Structure of Mark's Gospel," *NovT*, Volume 38, July 1995, 212, relates that Jesus' teaching and healing cause the

the rich to give up their possessions to benefit the poor (cf. Matt. 19:16-22; Mk. 10:17-22; Luk. 12:33-34). Also the Epistle of James clearly highlights the injustice upon the poor by the rich (cf. Jam. 5:1-6), the incompatibility of having worldly goods and the practice of brotherly love (cf. 1 Jn. 3:17) and a warning for the rich not to store goods but to distribute to those in need (cf. 1 Tim. 6:17-19). These are just some references that reflect “Jesus’ attack on the accumulation of wealth by the rich.”⁶³ They also point to Jesus’ mission of helping the poor and a reminder for us to do likewise.

The Gospel according to Matthew also indicates Jesus’ challenge for the poor. “Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of those who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matt. 25:40; cf. Matt. 25: 34-46). Jesus described those who help the unfortunates as his brothers. They recognised and helped the needy and they were rewarded with blessings and inherited the kingdom of God. Those who were able to help the needy with their treasured wealth, but did not do so were accursed to the eternal fire of hell. It is not a mere condemnation of the rich or prioritising the poor, rather it is our attitude toward the needy and our duty to care for the less fortunate.

Throughout the Gospels’ accounts, Jesus appeared to “challenge conventions”⁶⁴ and even openly contradicted the prescribed rules of religious living, regulated by, but seldom followed by the religious leaders. He openly defied religious purity observations regarding washing of hands and food before eating: “whatever goes into a person from outside cannot defile, since it enters not the heart, but the stomach and goes out into the sewer” (Mk. 7:18-19). He disregarded keeping the Sabbath holy in favour of helping a person in need (cf. Mk. 2:27-28; 3:1-6). He ignored purity rituals by

authorities to begin plotting his death, but Jesus ‘refuses to be deflected from his course, despite the inevitability of the fate to which it leads.

⁶³ C.I. Itty, *Julio de Santa Ana / Good News to the Poor: The Challenge of the Poor in the History of the Church*, transl., Helen Whittle, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 1977), 19.

⁶⁴ Carl R. Holladay, *A Critical Introduction to the New Testament, Interpreting the Message and Meaning of Jesus Christ*, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2005), 112.

approaching or touching dead bodies (cf. Mk 5:41; Luk. 7:13-15; Jn. 11: 38-44). He challenged the social setting of status, ranks and positions, which the rich upheld dearly as his parable of the great dinner indicates (cf. Matt. 22:3-10; Luk. 14:15-24). This parable implies an open invitation for all – “invite anyone you find to the wedding banquet” (Matt. 22:9), and, “go out into the roads and lanes, and compel people to come in” (Luk. 14:23).

The nature of such an invitation indicates that there would be no segregation based on social benchmarks – wealth, status, posts, etc., but different classes of people, sexes and ranks were all equal. All was welcome to the banquet table. This was an attack on the institution of “table fellowship as a map of economic discrimination, social hierarchy, and political differentiation.”⁶⁵ It was also a challenge on the social relations of honour and shame as well as patron and client, which was an excuse to justify and enhance the existence of such discriminatory and unfair relationships.

Another major division between Jesus and the religious leaders was Jesus’ perceived ability to forgive sins. Like John the Baptist, Jesus “pronounced forgiveness [of sin] apart from Temple sacrifice.”⁶⁶ He forgave the sins of a paralysed man and empowered him to walk, much to the objection of some scribes, who accused Jesus of blasphemy. (cf. Mk. 2:3-12). The high priest echoed this charge against Jesus when Jesus confirmed his identity as the Messiah and the Son of the Blessed One (Mk. 14:61-64). Jesus’ forgiveness of sins and his admission of being the Messiah was a challenge directed at the Temple institution itself and its authority’s belief and conviction.

Jesus’ challenge was a simultaneous attack on the social, economic, political and religious elements of the ruling establishments. He had “dared to challenge the

⁶⁵ John Dominic Crossan, *Jesus: A Revolutionary Biography*, (New York: HarperSanFrancisco, 1995), 68, suggests that in this scenario where everyone is invited regardless of status, and mixing together – female and male, free and slaves, socially low and high and even the pure and impure.

⁶⁶ Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 21.

centre”⁶⁷ – Jerusalem, the “social order of the day and indicted the elite who dominated it.”⁶⁸ It was a challenge designed to de-stabilise the status quo of social segregation and religious legitimization that benefited a very small portion of the population, while the majority suffered.

Summary

There can be no leader without any followers. That relationship mandates and empowers the leader with the authority and power to pursue the group’s particular purpose and mission. But that authority and power does not necessarily translate to the attainment of the group’s purpose and mission. To achieve that objective, a leader must also possess relevant and appropriate leadership skills to perform his/her duties confidently and professionally.

Numerous groups are formed for a variety of different reasons, but our discussion in this chapter has highlighted groups of marginalised and oppressed people, who had followed the leadership of a prominent individual to challenge and to effect changes to their social, economic, political and religious contexts. The biblical and historical examples mentioned herewith, in terms of leadership, have shown the qualities and skills that these leaders exhibited, in leading and achieving their missions, for the benefits of the people they led, despite the many obstacles they encountered.

These qualities have also been attributed to Jesus and that Jesus has been identified as possessing these qualities in leading a challenge against the authority. He has been empowered with authority to lead, on behalf of, and for the benefits of the people.

⁶⁷ Sean Freyne, “Jesus a Jewish Galilean: A New Reading of the Jesus Story,” *PIBA*, Issue 28, 2005, pp. 106-123.

⁶⁸ Borg, *Meeting Jesus Again for the First Time*, 31.

Chapter 4

Exegesis: A Social-Historical Analysis

Jesus' "Triumphal" Entry into Jerusalem: Mark 11:1-11

Introduction

I have not come to bring peace, but a sword.

(Matthew 10:34)

Present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God.

*Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds,
so that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and
perfect.*

(Rom. 12:1-2)

Before going to Jerusalem, Jesus' ministry had been concentrated so far in Galilee and the surrounding areas. This experience allowed Jesus to encounter the hardship faced by the people because of the deeds of their religious leaders and the burden of being subjected to foreign power and control. Jesus had experienced this human tragedy first hand and he had been responding to such situations.

He helped the poor, healed the sick, fed the hunger, comforted the mourners and made them all to believe in themselves. For the crowds' part, they followed Jesus in Galilee and on his way to Jerusalem. They had been waiting for the much proclaimed messiah who would liberate them from these oppressive regimes and they perceived Jesus to be the one. As they followed him, they were amazed at his extraordinary abilities to control demons (Mk. 1:21-28; 5:1-14; 9:17-29), to heal the sick (Mk. 1:30-

31; 1:40-45; 2:1-12; 3:1-6; 5:21-43; etc.) and even argue against Jewish establishments.¹ They listened to his teachings of a new heavenly kingdom (Mk.1:15), giving them hope of liberation from this worldly hardship.

This brought curiosity and then suspicious and hatred to those in seat of power in Jerusalem,² both the Jewish authority and their Roman masters. The Jewish authority, which normally did not see eye to eye with each other, had bonded together to bring about Jesus' demise by discrediting him and even plotting his death (cf. Mk.3:6; 12:1-12; 14:1-2; 14:63; 15:13-15). But Jesus did not run away for he was not a coward. He went to them and entered Jerusalem in a procession. What he had offered the crowd in Galilee was not enough. He had to take up things with the authorities in Jerusalem.

The objectives of our discussion in the last two chapters were first, to identify Jesus with the people's suffering due to the economic and the political systems of the time, and secondly, to establish his ability to lead and to help those in need, by challenging these systems. These aspects of Jesus' character can be clearly demonstrated with the feeding miracles (cf. feeding of 5,000 people - Matt. 14:15-21; Mk. 6:35-44; Luk. 9:12-17 and Jn. 6:5-13, and, on another occasion, 4,000 people - Matt. 15:32-38; Mk. 8:1-9). The people were hungry and perhaps some had no place to call home. Jesus could not send them away, but showed them compassion³ by providing them food. But the sheer number (5,000 and 4,000 men, excluding women and children) is a clear indication of the number of people who had been affected by the

¹ Graham Stanton, *The Gospels and Jesus*, second edition, (Oxford: University Press, 2002), 51.

² Gundry, *Mark*, 623, refers to Jerusalem as Mark's centre of attention; also: Borg and Crossan, *Last Week*, 5-30, agree with Gundry's assessment of Jerusalem as central to Mark's story. It has been central to the sacred imaginations of both Jews and Christians and its association are both positive and negative. It is the city of God and the faithless city, the city of hope and the city of oppression, the city of joy and the city of pain; Hugh Anderson, *New Century Bible Commentary: The Gospel of Mark*, (Grand Rapids: MW. B. Eerdmans Publ. Co., / London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott Publ. Ltd., 1976), 259, Anderson says that Jerusalem is regarded as the centre of opposition to Jesus.

³ Myers, *Strong Man*, 39; see also: Footnote 72, Chapter Two.

brutality of the oppressive systems that existed at the time, which drove them to their present state.

Helping these people in Galilee was not enough; Jesus must go to Jerusalem, if he were to be effective in challenging the authority. The procession into Jerusalem in itself did not constitute the beginning of Jesus' challenge, but it represented a culmination of events that had taken place beforehand, and signalled further altercations to come. However, the procession event marks Jesus and his followers' direct challenge to the actual seat of authority, in Jerusalem, as this chapter will argue.

The Procession

Myers describes Jesus' procession into Jerusalem as a "misnomer, for the procession is neither unambiguously triumphal nor does it actually enter Jerusalem."⁴ This assertion highlights the fact that Jesus' procession differs significantly from a Greco-Roman 'triumphal procession proper.' It represents a challenge to the authorities and it marks the beginning of a decisive confrontation in which "neither side will be in a mood to compromise."⁵

Roman Triumphal Processions

The ceremony of triumph for a Roman military victory was "marked by rituals that gave honour to the gods as well as to the successful commander."⁶ Such a military victory was only granted by the senate, when the victorious commander killed at least 5,000 of the enemy. The ceremony began with the victor waiting outside the city wall, where the senate and the magistrates would meet him and to whom he would surrender

⁴ Myers, *Strong Man*, 294.

⁵ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 428.

⁶ *RoR*, Volume Two, 144.

his command.⁷ The victorious commander would be dressed in the costume of Jupiter Optimus Maximus, processed on a chariot through the city, accompanied by the leading men of the state, by his victorious army and then by his captives and spoils of war. The occasion lasted about three days and it ended with the offer of sacrifice to the god, at the temple,⁸ and the selling of the slaves.

Plutarch described the triumph of Aemilius Paulus, following his victory over king Perseus of Macedon (167 BCE).⁹ The first two days of a three-day celebration were for the display of the spoils of war and of the captured Macedonian weapons, transported on two hundred and fifty chariots. This was followed by 3,000 men bearing silver coins in vessels. On the third day, the procession was headed by young men carrying silver and gold offering cups, followed by the defeated Perseus himself and his household, his comrades and friends. Following these were 400 golden wreaths, which were sent to Aemilius as prizes of victory. The victorious Aemilius himself was last, clothed in purple robe shot with gold, riding on a chariot, and he held a spray of laurel in his right hand, followed by his generals' chariots in their ranks and divisions.

Also, Augustus was regularly welcomed on his travels, both within and outside Rome.¹⁰ Gaius Caligula was so popular with the people that whenever he came or went, his life was endangered from the crowds that met him or saw him off.¹¹ Diodorus also notes that the cities of Asia greeted Mithridates after his victory over the Romans (1 BCE): "wherever the king appeared, the cities poured forth to meet him, their people

⁷ "Roman Triumph," at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_triumph, last modified 15th May, 2008, visited on 23rd May, 2008.

⁸ *RoR*, Volume Two, 145.

⁹ Plutarch, *Lives, Dion and Brutus, Timoleon and Aemilius Paulus: Aemilius Paulus*, 32-34, transl. Bernadotte Perrin, (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1918), 441-447.

¹⁰ Suetonius, *Books II, The Deified Augustus*, 53.1-3, Volume One, transl., J.C. Rolfe, ed., G.P. Goold, (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1913), 231-232.

¹¹ Suetonius, *Books IV, Gaius Caligula*, 4-5, Volume One, transl., J.C. Rolfe, ed., G.P. Goold, (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1913), 423.

clothed in festive garb and rejoicing greatly.”¹² Cicero also recalls that as pro-consul of the province of Asia, he was met in the customary way: “the extraordinary throngs of people have come to meet me from farms and villages and every homestead.”¹³

In each of the above examples, as the victorious commander, ruler or any dignitary approached the city, a band of municipal officers and other citizens, including the social, religious, and political elite, would proceed some distance from the city in order to meet them, well in advance of the city wall. There would have been welcoming speeches, followed by expressions of praise and gratitude for the character, nobility and great works of the victor.¹⁴ After this, the guest was then escorted back into the city by those who had gone out to meet him.

Jewish procession/Victory Celebration

We must also remember the rebel leader Menahem, son of Judas, who broke into King Herod’s armoury and distributed arms to his followers and other brigands. With armed guards surrounding him, he returned to Jerusalem in the state of a king. He became the leader of the revolution and directed the siege of the palace.¹⁵ There was also the triumphant rebel leader, Simon Maccabaeus, who rode victoriously into Jerusalem, (after expelling the men of Akra from the citadel). His followers uttered praises and waved palm branches to the sound of lyres and cymbal and lutes and hymns

¹² Diodorus Siculus, *Universal History*, 37.26, at: <http://www.attalus.org/refs/Diod.html>; *Memnon, History of Heracleia*, translated from Jacob’s text (FGrH_434) at: <http://www.attalus.org/translate/memnon2.html#22>, last modified 24.08.07, visited on 24th April, 2008.

¹³ Tullius Cicero, *Letters: Atticus*, 5.16, ed., Evelyn Shuckburgh, at: <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/cgi-bin/ptext?layout=;doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.02.0022;query=text%3D%23216;loc=A%205.15>, visited on 24th April, 2008.

¹⁴ S. MacCormack, *Art and Ceremony in Late Antiquity*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1981), 3-6), observes that rhetorical elegance was a well-developed and important phenomenon of political life, as early as the first century BCE.

¹⁵ Josephus, *War*, 2.433-435, 492-493.

and songs, because a great enemy had been smashed and driven out of the city (cf. 1 Macc. 13:51).

The Old Testament account of King David bringing back the ark of God from captivity in Philistine,¹⁶ closely resembles the Roman's victory celebration of triumph. David and the people of Israel were dancing with songs and lyres (2 Sam. 6:5). They were rejoicing with shouts and with the sound of trumpets, as well as making offerings before the Lord. David was at the forefront of all this. He was girded with a linen ephod. The joyous celebration ended with David handing out food for the people, before they went back to their homes (cf. 2 Sam. 6:12-19).¹⁷

During David's numerous war victories over his enemies,¹⁸ he brought all the spoils of war (prisoners, chariot horses, bronze, silver and gold) to Jerusalem and subjected his victims to pay tribute to him. Upon hearing of David's triumph, King Toi of Hamath, sent his son Joram to meet David with gifts of silver, gold and bronze (cf. 2 Sam. 8:1-8).¹⁹ All these, King David dedicated them to the Lord.²⁰

Jesus' Procession

Jesus' procession then, differs significantly from the Greco-Roman's 'triumph procession' as described above, and as Brent Kinman observes:

“First, the traditional triumph could only be held at Rome, second, the triumph was given to a qualified Roman magistrate, third, the triumph

¹⁶ The Ark of God was captured by the Philistines (cf. 1 Sam. 4:1-11). They took it to Ashdod, Gath, and then Ekron, where God struck the people with tumours and they were terrified and they wanted the Ark removed from them (1 Sam. 5:1-12). It was then taken to Beth-shemesh (1 Sam. 6:15) and finally, it was taken to the house of Abinadab at Kiriath-jearim, where his son, Eleazar had charge over the Ark for some twenty years (cf. 1 Sam. 6:19-7:2).

¹⁷ Josephus, *Ant.*, 7.85-86, 404-405.

¹⁸ He conquered the Philistines, Edomites, Moabites, King Hadadezer of Zobah, Arameans of Damascus and subjected them to a tribute (cf. 2 Sam. 8:1-8).

¹⁹ See also: Josephus, *Ant.*, 7.107, 416-417.

²⁰ There is also an obscure mood of a victory celebration when David conquered Jerusalem. King Hiram of Tyre sent gifts of cedar trees, along with carpenters and masons to build David a house. He developed the city and the kingdom for the sake of his people and David became greater and greater, because the Lord was with him (cf. 2 Sam. 5:9-12).

procession was held over a course of several days, and fourth, the triumph was fundamentally a military honour.”²¹

Therefore, the generally accepted interpretation of Jesus’ procession into Jerusalem as being triumphant is far from the Greco-Roman’s triumph welcome, designated for a victorious commander or ruler. Even the OT victory celebrations differ significantly from Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem. Although there was a crowd there, the absence of any social, religious and political elite (according to the Gospel of Mark), was a sure snub for Jesus’ arrival into Jerusalem. This implies that even the authorities recognised Jesus’ coming as a threat to religious and political security. Only Jesus’ supporters whom they had been travelling together and perhaps some from Jerusalem (Jn. 12:12), were there to cheer him into Jerusalem, but the authorities were not, indicating a rift between them.

The joyous celebration and the nationalistic mood of the procession can only highlight the different expectations of the crowd and Jesus. Jesus knew the result of this challenge. He would suffer and die on the cross, as his three predictions indicate (cf. Mk. 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34).²² The crowd however, had certainly built up their messianic expectation of Jesus as the saviour warrior, who would liberate them from the authorities.²³ The crowd was expecting a bloody confrontation as King David did, but Jesus knew he had to suffer and be humiliated, so that his people may be freed and be saved.

²¹ Brent Kinman, “Parousia, Jesus’ “A-Triumphal” Entry, and the Fate of Jerusalem (Luke 19:28-44),” *JBL*, Volume 118.2, Summer 1999, 280.

²² Parallel versions of these predictions are: (Matt. 16:21, 17:22, 20:18-19; Luk. 9:22, 44, 18:31-33; cf. Jn. 8:21-30, 12:27-36, 13:21).

²³ Refer section on, “Who was Jesus of Nazareth?” below, Chapter Four.

Mount of Olives (ὄρος των Ἐλαιων)

As Jerusalem is mentioned first (Mk. 11:10) before Bethphage and Bethany (two small towns on the slope of Mount of Olives), it indicates that Jerusalem is indeed the target to reach, making it the “centre of attention.”²⁴ The mentioning of Mount of Olives is significant in relation to the upcoming challenge, as it is from here that Jesus would base and launch his operation. To corroborate this claim, it is important to examine some historical and biblical events, which mention this Mount of Olives, to draw out its significance and its important contributions to this concept of challenge.

Josephus²⁵ tells a story of one Egyptian false prophet who came to Jerusalem and gathered about thirty thousand supporters. Under the premise that he would command the wall of Jerusalem to fall²⁶ and gained entry into the city, he would overpower the Roman garrison, thereby liberating the people and him, as a ruler over them. Although his plan was foiled by Felix, it was from Mount of Olives that he would launch his ambitious assault unto the city.

The closeness of the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem's walls made this series of hills a grave strategic danger for the city defenders and an ideal look-out spot to survey the city, beyond its walls. The Roman commander Titus had his headquarters on the northern extension of the ridge during the siege of Jerusalem in 70 AD.²⁷ The whole hill would have provided a platform for the Roman catapults that hurled heavy objects over the Jewish fortifications of the City.²⁸

²⁴ Gundry, *Mark*, 623; see also: Footnote 2, Chapter Four.

²⁵ Josephus, *Ant.*, 20.169-172, 92-93; Josephus, *War*, 2.261-263, 424-425.

²⁶ Josephus, *War*, 2.262, 424-425, states that this Egyptian false prophet would force an entrance into Jerusalem.

²⁷ Tacitus, *Hist.*, *Book V: AD 70*, 5.1 and 5.9, transl., Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, eds., et al., Robert Maynard Hutchins, (Chicago, London, Toronto, Geneva, Sydney, Tokyo: Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc., 1952), 295, 297; Josephus, *War*, 5.106-134, 230-239, Josephus records that during the siege, Titus surrounded the city with arrays of soldiers and war machineries, while he maintained one legion on Mount of Olives.

²⁸ Josephus, *War*, 5.268-270, 284-285.

In the OT, the Mount of Olives is designated as the place of the future eschatological revelation of God's glory (cf. Zech. 9:1-9; Ezek. 11:23).²⁹ This event alludes to a victory of Yahweh over the nations, the coming of the new king of the line of David and the return of the exile.³⁰ But it was to be on Mount of Olives, from which the judgement of the enemies of Israel would take place and that "the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as when he fights on that day, his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives" (Zech. 14:2-4).

Although Mount of Olives is synonymous with military actions as explained above, it is also symbolic of the judgement against Israel's oppressors. Jesus' procession therefore was not to fight (as in a military battle) for people's liberation, but it was to bring judgement and justice *against* the authorities in Jerusalem and justice *for* the people.

Who was Jesus of Nazareth?

This section aims to highlight the people's perception of Jesus of Nazareth and his perceived mission to liberate the people. It also aims to determine how Jesus saw himself in relation to his ministry and how he was to bring justice *for* the people. It is however, not a detailed examination of all the different titles, attributed to Jesus, but just brief explanations (of some titles) from Mark's perspective.

Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah (ὁ Χριστός)

The very beginning of Mark's Gospel gives us an indication of the central character of Mark's story – "Jesus Christ, the Son of God" (Mk. 1:1). When Jesus first appears (Mk. 1:9), he is identified as 'Jesus of Nazareth.' This title also appears at the

²⁹ Lane, *The Gospel According to Mark*, 394.

³⁰ P.D. Hanson, *The Dawn of Apocalyptic*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975), 293.

end of Mark's account (Mk. 16:6), which seems to frame/envelop the whole story, as an indication of the centrality of this character, Jesus. So, who is this Jesus?

The first title 'Jesus' is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua³¹ (Yehoshua), which means 'Yahweh is deliverance,' or simply the 'saviour' (cf. Mt 1:21). This OT hero perhaps provides us with background knowledge, against which this Jesus is to be understood. Thus, Jesus is to be the saviour of the people. The second title 'Christ' is so closely identified with Jesus that it has virtually become like a second name, Jesus Christ. Christ is derived from the Greek word *κύριος* (= 'messiah' in Hebrew), which means 'anointed.'

In the ancient east, both persons and things were anointed by having sweet-smelling oil poured or smeared over them.³² To anoint someone is to declare that person as a king, chosen by God, but anointed by God's agent.³³ Anointing the king is to make him holy, similar to the character and function of a priest. The anointed king's prime objective is to rule over the people and to save them from suffering at the hands of foreign aggressors (cf. 1 Sam. 9:16). Jesus is therefore, not only the saviour, but also king over the people.

The third title 'Son of God' is evident in Jesus' baptism, in which the voice from heaven identified Jesus as Son of God, the Beloved (cf. Mk. 1:9-11; Luk. 3:21-22).³⁴

³¹ Joshua conquered Canaan and settled the Promised Land, by leading the Israelite in an invasion across the Jordan River. He took the important city of Jericho and then captured other towns in the north and south until most of Palestine was brought under Israelite control. He divided the conquered lands among the 12 tribes of Israel and then bade farewell to his people (cf. Josh. 23:2-16), admonishing them to be loyal to the God of the covenant.

³² S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, transl., G.W. Anderson, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1956), 4, when cultic stone was anointed, it was set aside as a holy stone for worship to deity, when a temple was consecrated, the building, several parts and the holy vessels were anointed.

³³ Paul J. Achtemeier, *Proclamation Commentaries: Mark*, Second Edition, ed., Gerhard Krodel, (Eugene: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 1986), 54, says that Jesus' anointment as king was done during his baptism. Examples of anointed kings: God chose Saul and later David to be kings over Israel and the prophet Samuel anointed them both (cf. 1 Sam. 9:16, 10:1 and 1 Sam. 16:12-14; 2 Sam. 2:4 – the people anointed David, king over Judah; 2 Sam. 5:3 – David anointed as king over Israel).

³⁴ Matthew's account of Jesus' baptism (cf. Matt. 3:13-17) relates that the crowd heard the voice from heaven, identifying Jesus as the Son of God.

Both Mark and Luke imply that only Jesus heard the voice from heaven, and not the crowd. Mark's Christology emphasises this 'secrecy' motif to highlight the people and the disciple's blind faith in Jesus and his mission. This blindness was evident when the crowd turned against Jesus and his disciples deserted him, when he was arrested. This secrecy in Mark's account however, only serves to conceal Jesus' true identity as Jesus Christ, the Son of God, so that his mission and God's purpose for him could be fulfilled. Jesus was to suffer in order to save the people.

Jesus, the Son of Man (ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ ἀνθρώπου)

In the OT, the phrase Son of Man (= "one like the son of man," Dan. 7:13, *KJV*, *NKJ* = כֶּבֶד אֱנוֹשׁ *WTT*) and its equivalents,³⁵ is used to denote the weakness and frailty of man in contrast to the might and character of God. In the book of Ezekiel, the translation "mortal" (Ezek. 2:1; 3:17 = son of man), denotes a person who is "conscious at once of his humble status as a man and of the dignity of being God's emissary."³⁶ In the book of Daniel, the "one like a son of man" indicates a figure, which represents God's rule over the earth and its inhabitants.³⁷ Morna Mowinckel however, on the basis that Daniel's figure comes with the clouds of heaven, depicts Yahweh's victory over Israel's enemies and the nation's restoration:

We can conclude from Dan. vii. that about 200 BCE or earlier there was in Judaism a conception of a heavenly being in human form ("one like a man"), who, at the turn of the age, the dawn of the eschatological era, would appear, and would receive from God delegated power and authority over all kingdoms and people.³⁸

³⁵ *TDOT*, Volume II, 159-165, other phrases are: בֶּן־אָדָם - *ben 'ādhām*), (יֵשׁ - '*ish*) or (עֲנוֹשׁ - '*nôsh*).

³⁶ E.G. Jay, *Son of Man, Son of God*, (London: SPCK, 1965), 34.

³⁷ Morna D. Hooker, *The Son of Man in Mark: A Study of the Background of the term 'Son of Man' and its use in St Mark's Gospel*, (London: SPCK, 1967), 11.

³⁸ Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*, 352; cf. Mk. 13:24-27.

This phrase “Son of Man” occurs eighty five times in the Bible (*NRSV*), eighty two of them in the Gospels,³⁹ with Jesus as the speaker.⁴⁰ In most instances, Jesus’ utterances imply that the Son of Man possesses authority that is exercised over the power of evil and that it greatly influences the lives of men (cf. Mk. 8:38; 13:26; 14:61-62; Matt. 26:64; Luk. 21:27; etc.). This authority includes the forgiveness of sin (Mk. 2:10), which identifies Jesus as the Son of Man (cf. Mk 2:5; Luk. 7:47-50).⁴¹

Two points can be deduced from this discussion. First, Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man with authority, which created further division between him and the authorities. Second, Jesus as the Son of Man has the authority not only to forgive sins, but, also the authority to bring justices *for* the people and justice *against* their aggressors, through his suffering.⁴² In Mark’s account, Jesus’ self-proclaimed identity as Son of Man conceals his divine identity as the Son of God,⁴³ but it also reveals his destiny, which is to suffer, in order to accomplish God’s plan in him.⁴⁴

³⁹ *BibWok*.

⁴⁰ This evidence had prompted Jay, *Son of Man*, 33, to say that this phrase was not the invention of the early Church and that because Jesus was the speaker, he was in fact referring to himself; see also: Seyoon Kim, *Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament*, 30: *The ‘Son of Man’ as the Son of God*, (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1983), 5, Kim concludes that the Gospels indirectly identify the Son of Man with the Son of God, because of the divine Sonship of Jesus.

⁴¹ A.J.B. Higgins, *Jesus and the Son of Man*, (London: Lutterworth Press, 1964), 27, is of the opinion that “Jesus in speaking of the Son of Man as another figure, the Son of Man in heaven who, he declares, forgives sins on earth through himself as the representative.”

⁴² Achtemeier, *Proclamation Commentaries*, 59.

⁴³ Harry L. Chronis, “To Reveal and to Conceal: A Literary-Critical Perspective on ‘the Son of Man’ in Mark,” *NTS*, Volume 51.4, October 2005, 465.

⁴⁴ Jack D. Kingsbury, *The Christology of Mark’s Gospel*, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 100-101.

Jesus, the son of David (*ὁ υἱὸς Δαυὶδ*)

God promised King David that his descendant would rule forever (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-14). Jesus continued that perpetual rule,⁴⁵ through his blood link to David, as recorded in Jesus' genealogy (cf. Matt. 1:1-17; Luk. 3:23-38). This reference to Jesus as the son of David supports the royal implications of Jesus' procession.

The title 'son of David' is used three times in the Gospel of Mark. Firstly, when the blind man Bartimaeus asked Jesus to have mercy on him and to cure him (cf. Mk. 10: 46-52). Secondly, it is used during Jesus' procession with its royal and messianic implications (Mk. 11:1-10), and lastly, during Jesus' teaching in the Temple (Mk. 12:35-37), where Jesus questioned the scribes' identification of the Messiah with the son of David.

In the first two occasions, it was the people (Bartimaeus and the crowd) who called Jesus the son of David and bearer of David's kingdom. It was this misunderstanding on the people's part that reflected their misconception about Jesus and his mission. They were looking for a victorious king who would restore Israel to its former Davidic glory.⁴⁶ The disciples also fell trapped into this ideological blindness, which may explain their actions, when Jesus was arrested. They were scared. They fled and abandoned Jesus. Jesus' question (Mk. 12:35) simply highlights this mis-guided expectation of a Davidic restoration. Jesus should not be identified as the son of David, in reference to David's victories in battles to ensure Israel's freedom, but, Jesus' victory and justice for the marginalised people would not be fought and won with weapons, but through humility and suffering.

⁴⁵ Jesus was not however recognised as such in his life time, but accused of being a king of the Jews, which led to his crucifixion.

⁴⁶ Refer Footnote 52, Chapter Two and Footnote 18, Chapter Four.

Jesus, the Lord (ὁ κύριος)

The word Lord in the OT (יהוה, אדוני) and in the NT (ὁ κύριος) usually refers to the divine names of God.⁴⁷ But the Greek word ὁ κύριος has a variety of references. In the Greco-Roman era, it was used to address someone in a socially superior position, like a slave's master (cf. Eph. 6:5, 9). This basic notion implies "superior status and certain power and authority."⁴⁸ It also came to be used for deities (cf. 1 Cor. 8:5) and for the emperors.⁴⁹

In the NT, ὁ κύριος is also used to refer to Jesus (Luk. 10:1), to human masters (Acts 16:19), to an angel (Acts 10:4), or to a Rabbi (Matt. 8:6). This reference to 'the Lord Jesus' is quite prominent in Acts (cf. Acts 1:21; 8:16; 9:17; 21:31; etc.) and the apostle Paul often uses the fuller phrase 'the Lord Jesus Christ' (cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2; Gal. 1:3; Phi. 1:2; etc.), in reference to the risen Jesus. It became an expression of the Christian faith as Thomas declared: "My Lord and My God" (Jn. 20:28).

This reference to Jesus as Lord is hardly reflected in Mark's account, (except perhaps in Mk. 2:28 and 5:19), and definitely out of context in this procession pericope. Most commentators⁵⁰ have argued that ὁ κύριος in the context of Jesus' procession refers to the owner of the donkey, who was already with Jesus. This assumption supports the pre-arranged plan argument, of acquiring the donkey.

⁴⁷ S.E. Johnson, "Lord (Christ)," in *IDB*, K-Q, eds., et al, George Arthur Buttrick, (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), 151; see also: Martin Rose, "Names of God in the OT," in *ABD*, Volume 4, 1008.

⁴⁸ Larry W. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2003), 108.

⁴⁹ Suetonius, *Book VIII, Vespasian, Titus, Domitian*. Volume II. transl., J.C. Rolfe, (Cambridge, London: Harvard University Press, 1914), 347-348, states that Domitian was often referred to as "Our Master and our God," see also: S.R.F. Price, *Rituals and Power: The Roman Imperial Cult in Asia Minor*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), 18; Duncan Fishwick, *The Imperial Cult in Latin West*, (Leiden: Brill, 1987), 22.

⁵⁰ Just to name a few here: Bratcher and Nida, *Helps for Translators*, 343; Nineham, *The Gospel of Mark*, 295; Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 454; Hooker, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St Mark*, 258; France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 432, although France alludes to ὁ κύριος as the owner of the donkey, he also suggests that it may refer to God.

Jesus, the Liberator

Jesus was concern with social, religious and political issues, which affected the marginalised people. Although the central theme of his teachings was about the kingdom of God as expressed through the reality of his life and ministry, it also “referred to the historical, social and political sphere.”⁵¹ This implies that the kingdom of God is established by the will of God, but it involves human beings, who are subjected to social and political situations.

This kingdom therefore is the hope that Jesus offered to those who had suffered because of the injustices of the world. It is also addressed directly to the poor, the marginalised and those who could barely survive. Jesus’ ministry targeted these people (cf. Mk. 2:17; Matt. 5:3; 11:5; Luk. 14:8; etc), and as Jon Sobrino puts it: “the kingdom of God is coming for the poor and outcast; it is impartial and therefore causes scandals.”⁵² But, in reality, the only way to transform that injustice on the people is to take action, and Jesus did just that.

He helped these marginalised people and he did more than that, he went to Jerusalem to confront those authorities, who created this outcast class of people. He suffered and died for that cause.⁵³

Jesus, the Carpenter (τό τέκτων)

Only Matt. 13:55, “Is not this the carpenter’s son?” and, Mk. 6:3, “Is not this the carpenter?” offer a glimpse of Jesus’ (and his father Joseph) occupation as carpenters. While τέκτων is translated as “carpenter” (*NRSV*, *KJV*, *NKV*, *NIV*, *NIB*), it is also

⁵¹ Haight, *Jesus, Symbol of God*, 76.

⁵² Jon Sobrino, *Jesus the Liberator: A Historical-Theological View*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, 1993), 100.

⁵³ Tom Wright, *The Original Jesus: The Life and Vision of a Revolutionary*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1996), 17, says that Jesus was like all the other failed messiahs, whose protest was liquidated by the occupying forces.

rendered as “wood-craftsman and carpenter,”⁵⁴ or one working with wood.⁵⁵ Other translations provide slightly different meanings of a builder or craftsman.⁵⁶ The word *τέκτων* then appears to refer not only to wood-working specifically but it also involves working with other materials like stone and metal.⁵⁷ It implies that a *τέκτων* would not limit himself to working with only one material. He could move from stone to metal to wood as the “need or opportunity arose and while he could probably specialize in one material if that was advantageous, he did not normally restrict himself in this way.”⁵⁸

However, the lack of information available to us regarding Jesus’ ‘silenced years,’⁵⁹ and the limited sources cited herewith as well as Jesus’ prominent references to building and construction terms in his teachings,⁶⁰ will point to Jesus as a *τέκτων*, a

⁵⁴ *BibWok*.

⁵⁵ Wig-Gre, 832, translate *τέκτων* as “woodworker”; Joseph H. Thayer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*, Fourth Edition, (New York: T & T Clark, 1901), 618, renders it as “a worker in wood, carpenter”; BAGD, 809, translates it as “carpenter, wood-worker, builder”; *EDNT*, Volume 3: *παριδεύω – ὠφέλιμος*, eds., Horst Balz and Gerhard Schneider, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1993), 342, *τέκτων* is referred to as “one who makes, produces” when referring to woodworking.

⁵⁶ *NIDNTT*, Volume 1, A-F, ed., Colin Brown, (Exeter: The Paternoster Press, 1975), 279, renders *τέκτων* as “builder, workman, craftsman, trade. In secular Greek, *τέκτων* is a builder in wood, stone or metal”; *TDOT*, Volume V, 220-223, *τέκτων* is equivalent of Hebrew חָרָץ (*hārāš*), meaning, to cut, plow, engrave or craftsman. This *hārāš* is in connection with the building or ornamentation of the temple or tent of meeting, when it comes to wood – Exod. 35:35; 38:23; 2 Sam. 5:11; 1 Chr. 14:1; 2 Kgs. 22:6 2 Chr. 24:12; Ezra. 3:7, but *hārāš* in its Hebrew usage refers to mainly working with stone; J. P. Louw and E. A. Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament Based on Semantic Domains*, Second Edition, (New York: United Bible Societies, 1989) 1.520, translates *τέκτων* as “one who uses various materials (wood, stone metal) in building - builder, carpenter.”; BDAG, 995, translates *τέκτων* as “one who constructs builder, carpenter” which signifies a worker both in wood and stone.

⁵⁷ Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of his Day*, 177, (citing McCown (1928)), who says that *τέκτων* was usually applied only to worker in wood.

⁵⁸ Ken M. Campbell, “What was Jesus’ Occupation?” *JETS*, Volume 48.3, September 2005, 508.

⁵⁹ Elizabeth Clare Prophet, *The Lost Years of Jesus: on the Discoveries of Notovitch, Abhedananda, Roerich, and Casprari*, (Livingston: Summit University Press, 1984), asserts that according to ancient Tibetan manuscripts, Jesus secretly withdrew from the home of Mary and Joseph at age thirteen and joined a merchant caravan to India and the Himalayas, where the priests welcomed him, taught him to read and understand the Vedas, to cure by the aid of prayer, to teach, to explain the holy scriptures to the people and to drive out the evil spirits from the body of men.

⁶⁰ The following examples of Jesus’ parables and teachings using building and construction terms, include different kinds of constructions: barns (Luk. 12:18), watch towers (Matt. 21:33), vineyards (Matt. 20:1), houses (Matt. 7:24-27; Jn. 14:2), palaces (Luk. 7:25), inns (Luk. 10:34), temples (Mk. 11:11), ramparts (Luk. 19:43-44), and cities (Matt. 5:14). Jesus also refers to parts of houses such as housetops (Matt. 10:27), storehouse (Luk. 12:24), upper-level rooms (room upstairs Mk. 14:15), guest rooms in large dwellings (Luk. 22:11), wedding halls (Matt. 22:10). Jesus also alludes to a variety of constructions, such as ovens (Matt. 6:30), sewers/toilets (Matt. 15:17), tombs/graves (Mt 23:27-29),

builder or craftsman, and more than just a carpenter or wood-worker.⁶¹ This conclusion implies that Jesus may have worked around Galilee and the surrounding regions as a builder craftsman and may have even travelled to Jerusalem and beyond,⁶² during Herod Antipas' numerous building projects, which required and necessitated that these workers travelled around to labour on these projects.⁶³ S.J. Case even suggests that Jesus may have worked in building projects in Sepphoris, to support his widowed mother and younger siblings.⁶⁴ Also, as a general rule, these craftsmen of antiquity often exported their labour, rather than the products.⁶⁵

Biblical Evidence

Jesus' own ministry does provide evidence of prior contacts with people before the beginning of his ministry in Galilee. The calling of the first disciples in Mark (Simon and Andrew, 1:17; John and James, 1:20; Levi, 2:14) are "quite abrupt and on

millstones (Luk. 17:1-2), ramparts/barricades (Luk. 19:43), fences (Matt. 21:33), animal stalls/mangers (Luk. 13:15), wells (Luk. 14:5), gates/entrances (Jn. 10:9), threshing floors (Matt. 3:12), wine presses (Matt. 21:33); These examples point to Jesus' knowledge of construction activities: the act of quarrying stone and selecting the crucial cornerstone in Matt. 21:42-44; the decoration of tombs (Matt. 23:27-28); the most vital aspect of construction, building on a bedrock foundation against building on sand (Matt. 7:24-27); and another vital aspect of construction, cost analysis prior to building (Luk. 14:28-30); the reference to the condition of timber—green vs. dry (Luk. 23:31); the reference to digging deep in Matt. 21:33; and the possible criticism of the construction quality of a tower in Luk. 13:4. In light of all this knowledge of the building trade it is hard to resist the conclusion that Jesus was involved in construction.

⁶¹ Craig A. Evans, *Non-canonical Writings and New Testament Interpretation*, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1992), 235-236, recalls a tradition, which tells a story of Jesus stretching two uneven beams to the proper length, that Joseph cut at different lengths.

⁶² Aristotle, *Politics*, 6.4, at http://www.constitution.org/ari/polit_06.htm, visited on 22nd May, 2008, states that "builders, mechanics, traders or labourers can readily come to the assembly, because they are continually moving about in the city and in the agora."

⁶³ Lee Martin McDonald and Stanley E. Porter, *Early Christianity and its Sacred Literature*, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), 55, relates Herod's building projects, including the harbour in Caesarea, palaces, fortresses, aqueducts and the Temple; see also: Footnote 41, Chapter Two.

⁶⁴ S.J. Case, *Jesus, A New Biography*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago, 1927), 201-205, suggests that Jesus may have even moved on to work on Tiberius, during the beginning of Pilate's procuratorship. The Gospels however never place Jesus in these cities, but argument may shed light into Jesus' social circumstances, as he grew up as the sole provider for his family.

⁶⁵ V. Gordon Childe, *What Happened in History*, (New York: Penguin, 1964), 248, 266.

the surface ‘eschatological’ in nature.”⁶⁶ They simply left their natural surrounding and livelihood behind and followed Jesus (Mk. 10:28).

A person could not just left everything behind and followed someone, unless they knew that person. This suggests that Jesus had prior contacts with these people through his carpentry work. During his Galilean ministry, Jesus was located around the Sea of Galilee (cf. Matt. 4:18, 15:29; Mk. 1:16, 3:7; Luk. 5:1, 8:22; Jn. 6:1). Jesus might have known this fishing community before and might have even done some work for them, perhaps building their fishing boats.⁶⁷

According to Mark’s account, this was Jesus’ first time going to Jerusalem. However, we know from other gospel accounts that Jesus knew people in Jerusalem. He was in Simon the leper’s house at Bethany (Mk. 14:3). He also knew of and loved Lazarus and his sisters Mary and Martha (cf. Jn. 11:1-6), also in Bethany. How could Jesus know of these people, if he had not been to Jerusalem before? The only obvious conclusion is that he had been to Jerusalem before and he knew people there.

The OT account of King Solomon building the original Temple relays to us that he conscripted forced labour out of all Israel. The levy numbered thirty thousand men (1 Kgs. 5:13); seventy thousand labourers (engravers, timber cutters, designers, etc.) and eighty thousand stone cutters from throughout Israel (2 Chr. 2:2, 17-18) for this project. He even asked and was sent a skilful artisan, from King Hiram of Tyre. Aristotle also affirms the importance of a builder within a society: “a state is made up of four sorts of people who are absolutely necessary; these are a weaver, a husbandman, a

⁶⁶ Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of his Day*, 186.

⁶⁷ Oakman, *Jesus and the Economic Questions of his Day*, 182, citing McCown, “HO TEKTŌN.” 1928, 173-189.

shoemaker, and a builder.”⁶⁸ It implies that builders were an integral part of a state because of the required developments and infrastructure constructions.

The apostle Paul was a tent maker by trade. He met, worked and stayed with people of the same trade (like Aquila and Priscilla), who provided for him during his mission travels (see Acts 3:2-3; cf. 1 Cor. 16:5-6; 2 Cor. 8:1-7). In his teachings, the apostle often uses building metaphors⁶⁹ to emphasise his message of the Gospel: “like a master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it” (1 Cor. 3:10).

The evidence suggests that Jesus travelled, met and formed close associations or “out-group relationships”⁷⁰ with a variety of people. These associations would be helpful in assisting Jesus with the logistic organisation of his travel arrangements,⁷¹ and this trip to Jerusalem provides two examples of this assumption. First, they helped organised this trip by providing him with the donkey, which he rode on, during the procession (Mk. 11:2-3). Secondly, they supplied him and his disciples with an upper-room, for their Passover meal (Mk. 14:12-15). These were either as favours to Jesus for services already rendered or to be settled later, according to the ‘reciprocity concept.’⁷²

This line of argument does point to the possibility that Jesus may have travelled around as a builder and met people who would help him with his travelling, when necessary. It must also be remembered that Jesus was a devout Jew (cf. Luk. 2:46-47) and that all pious Jewish males were to present themselves before God in the Temple three times a year (Deut. 16:16). He must have attended all the Jewish religious and

⁶⁸ Aristotle, *Politics*, 4.4, at http://www.constitution.org/ari/polit_04.htm, visited on 22nd May, 2008.

⁶⁹ These are some of the building metaphors used by Paul: master builder (1 Cor. 3:10); God’s building (1 Cor. 3:9); we have a building from God (2 Cor. 5:1); rooted and built up in him (Col. 2:7).

⁷⁰ Malina, “Jesus’ Out-Group Relationship,” 93, explains the importance of having such contacts with others. It “facilitates problem solving and friends are expected to go out of their way to do favours for each other, and are also expected to return the favour.”

⁷¹ Strauss, *The life of Jesus Critically Examined*, 201, however, alludes to Luk. 2:41 that Jesus’ parent went to Jerusalem every year for the Passover festival from his twelfth year onward and became acquainted with the people there.

⁷² Refer section on, “Reciprocity and Redistribution,” Chapter Two, in particular, Footnotes 75 and 76.

festival celebrations in Jerusalem, since the age of twelve (Luk. 2:41-42). This is to suggest that from the social-historical perspective, Jesus knew people in Jerusalem, which allowed him to pre-plan these arrangements in anticipation of his coming to Jerusalem.

The Plan Revealed

Jesus told the two disciples that in the next village, they would find a “colt died there” (Mk. 11:2). The disciples went and found a “colt tied” near a door (Mk. 11:4). This accusative passive participle δεδεμένον indicates that someone tied the colt at the exact location, according to some prior instructions. The owner of the colt is not mentioned,⁷³ but some “bystanders” (Mk. 11:5) were there. Were they mere bystanders who happened to be there at the time, or were they part of Jesus’ wider circle of associations, whom he met during his working travel?⁷⁴ Were they holding the donkey until Jesus got there as previously planned, and upon hearing a pre-arranged password would release the colt to the messengers?⁷⁵

The donkey will be returned straight away (Mk. 11:3), is a condition for using the donkey: ‘you can use it, but you have to return it straight back, when you finish.’ It is part of negotiating for something you need and that you have to abide by it. Jesus previously arranged for the acquisition of the donkey and now, he was laying out the planning details for the disciples, to make it easier for them to obtain the colt (cf. Mk. 11:2-3). These pre-arranged details are starting to be revealed, as the challenge is now in motion.

⁷³ Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 455, suggests that the owner of the donkey was already with Jesus and the word ὁ χύριος refers to this owner, and also the subject of ἀποστέλλει, rather than Jesus.

⁷⁴ Refer section on, “Jesus, the Carpenter,” Chapter Four, in particular, Footnotes 70 and 71.

⁷⁵ Refer section on, “The Bystanders,” below, Chapter Four.

The Colt/Donkey (τό πῶλον)

The term πῶλον is defined as a “young animal, foal”⁷⁶ or a colt (Mk. 11:2). In the Gospels’ accounts, the term πῶλον is generally interpreted as pointing to messianic implications of Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem.⁷⁷ This royal/kingly emphasis is reinforced by the phrase: “a colt that has never been ridden” (Mk. 11:2), thus, pointing to its sacred purpose.⁷⁸ This messianic interpretation, in particular Matthew’s emphasis on Jesus as the coming king (Matt. 21:5), alludes to the Prophet Zechariah’s prophecy:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. He will cut off the chariots from Ephraim and the war-horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off, and he shall command peace to the nations (Zech. 9:9-10).

This passage, which records a king riding on a donkey, implies humility. This is in reference to a suffering servant whose mission was to provide justice where injustices occurred⁷⁹ and relief for the poor, due to economic and political oppressions. Carol and

⁷⁶ BDAG, 900, translates πῶλον as ‘the colt of a horse, or young animal’ with a qualification - eg a young donkey; *TDNT*, 959, relates πῶλον as a ‘foal,’ the young of the horse or ass. In the OT, it refers to a ‘young ass’ from the Hebrew word (פֶּרֶךְ) as in Gen. 32:16. In Zech. 9:9, which echoes Gen. 49:11, πῶλον (=פֶּרֶךְ) is a young ass. This is the general reference for πῶλον in Mk. 11:2, 4, 5, 7, as a colt (*NRSV*, *KJV*, *NKV*, *NIV*, *NIB*.) However, this reference to πῶλον as a young animal, reflected Homer’s original translation of a ‘colt of a horse that is old enough to use.’ This usage prompted W. Bauer to argue that the ‘colt’ in view must have been that of a horse, since when the term πῶλον appears without further qualification (i.e. ‘of a camel,’ or ‘of an ass’), it normally has equine associations, see W. Bauer, “The Colt of Palm Sunday,” *JBL*, Volume 72, 1953), pp. 220-229.

⁷⁷ Refer Footnote 67, Chapter One; see also: Sasson J, “Ass,” *Interpreter’s Dictionary of the Bible*, (Nashville: Abingdon, 1976), 72-73. This royal connotation is also evident in the appointment of Saul as Israel’s first king. His father’s donkeys got lost and Saul was sent to find them and that led him to Samuel who anointed him as king, as instructed by Yahweh (cf. 1 Sam. 9:1-10:24). In Greek, the donkey was associated with the Syrian god, Dionysus.

⁷⁸ Williamson, *Interpretation – Mark*, 202.

⁷⁹ This relationship between the humble donkey and its implied reference to humility and justice can also be compared to the silent lamb that has been led to be slaughtered (cf. Isa. 53:7; Jer. 11:19; Acts 8:32; Rev. 13:8) for the sake of the people’s sin. The eschatological vision of the Lamb, as the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power (Mk. 13:24-26; Luk. 21:27), to bring final judgement to the world (cf. Rev. 14:14), is intriguing. In both occasions, the two animals – donkey and lamb, which are both quite, humble and obedience, to imply justice and judgement for the oppressed and against the oppressors, is a stimulating idea that would certainly warrant a distinct and perhaps further studies; Johnson, *A Commentary of the Gospel According to St. Mark*, 186, citing Sanh. 98a, “R. Yehoshua ben Levi [c.250]” attempts a connection between the ‘Son of Man coming in the clouds’ and ‘poor and riding on an ass’ by reasoning that: “If they (Israel) are worthy of him, he comes on the clouds; if they are not worthy of him, poor and riding on an ass.”

Eric Meyers support this point when they say that עֶבֶד refers to a king in a political sense, who depended on divine help and that the “king will not benefit socially or economically by his position.”⁸⁰ That is, in this challenge, the people stood to benefit, not the historical Jesus. But the king is to “rule his people in righteousness, which includes justice *for* the poor.”⁸¹

Psychology of Humility

The humbleness of the donkey indicates the humility and majesty of its rider. It can also be viewed psychologically as “the strength that is in vulnerability, and the victory that is in innocence.”⁸² This ‘reverse psychology’ is reflected in the contrasting human expectations of the coming Messiah and the reality of that event in Jesus Christ. Daniel's prophecies of the coming Messiah, as a descendant of King David (Dan. 7: 13:14; 9:25-26; cf. Ps 110:1-7),⁸³ was perceived as a mighty warrior, who would avenge Israel's tormentors and would eventually rule over all nations. Yet Jesus Christ (whom Christians believe to be the prophesied Messiah of the OT) came to us in the lowest, the most humble way possible – born in a manger, amongst the animals, and he came humble and riding on a donkey.

This difference in expectation and reality is also evident in Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem. The authorities in Jerusalem knew that Jesus was coming and refused to welcome him.⁸⁴ In their perception of Jesus as a rebel, they would have also anticipated

⁸⁰ Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Meyers, *The Anchor Bible: Zechariah 9-14, A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, (New York, London, Toronto, Sydney, Auckland: Doubleday, 1993), 128-129, relates עֶבֶד to a ‘suffering servant,’ who depended on divine help.

⁸¹ Ralph L. Smith, *World Biblical Commentary, Volume 32: Micah-Malachi*, (Waco: Word Books Publisher, 1984), 256.

⁸² John Eaton, *The Circle of Creation: Animals in the Light of the Bible*, (London: SCM Press Ltd., 1995), 30.

⁸³ “Messiah,” *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation Inc., at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Messiah>, last modified on 11th March, 2008, visited on 10th May, 2008.

⁸⁴ Refer Section on, “The Procession,” Chapter Four. This refusal reinforces the perception that the authorities treated Jesus' coming to Jerusalem as a challenge to their power structures.

his arrival to cause disturbances in the city, as with the nature of such uprisings⁸⁵ (cf. Matt. 21:10). Hence, they would most probably have expected Jesus to be on horseback, riding into the city (implication of a mighty warrior, on a quest of a military campaign). Jesus came riding on a lowly donkey instead. (Mk. 11:7).

Was Jesus making a mockery out of the authorities' (in particular the religious leaders) superficial expectations, as they did the prophesied Messiah? Our thoughts, expectations and ways are different from God's plans for us. Mockery is a psychological challenge and strategically, it is an offensive technique to ridicule with the purpose of throwing the opposition off-guard, by appearing worthless or foolish. Perhaps, it also indicates what Jesus thought of the authorities, as if to say that their worth is equivalent to that of the donkey.

The royal image of riding on a donkey, with its connotations of humility and majesty can be contrasted with military imageries of riding a horse (implied references to might, strength, power, and authority), as symbolic aspects of political domination. However, Absalom's attempted mutiny against his father King David's throne (cf. 2 Sam. 18:9-15), highlights a contradiction of the above-mentioned stereotyping.

On his challenge for the throne and the ensuing battle, Absalom rode on a mule (a hybrid of a male donkey and a female horse) but was caught in the thick branches of the oak, when his mule went under it, and he was left hanging there, between heaven and earth (2 Sam. 18:9).⁸⁶ The point is, a donkey (in Absalom's case – the mule) could be used as a mean of transport to challenge something or someone, and even the status quo. In Jesus' procession, the use of the humble donkey certainly fits the occasion, as it was a challenge by the poor and the lowly.

⁸⁵ Refer Section on, "Mass Movements," Chapter Two, particularly Footnotes 49, 50 and 59.

⁸⁶ This example emphasises the usage of the animal as a mean of transport in the concept of a challenge, rather than the results.

Cultural and Economic Importance

Donkeys are tough desert-adapted animals, and their ability to carry heavy loads through arid lands enabled farmers to move farther and more frequently.⁸⁷ Domestication of the donkey also allowed large-scale food production and redistribution in the nascent Egyptian state and expanded overland trade in Africa and western Asia.⁸⁸ They are an integral part of a family economy in desert land regions and are considered as animals (beasts) of burden. The light speedy breeds of donkeys are good for riding, the sure-footed small ones are used as pack animals, while the larger, heavier breed draws carts or carries loads on its back. This larger donkey does not require much food.⁸⁹

For the farmers, the donkeys would have provided the much needed help like, pulling of the plough, ideal for transportation (they could carry up to 30 percent of their own weight), and they were sure-footed and easily manoeuvrable animals,⁹⁰ making them suitable for working the land. These important contributions of the donkey in large farm operations, is evidenced in Cato's list of inventory for equipments and structures, which were necessary for the cultivation of the land and for planting.⁹¹ For

⁸⁷“Donkey,” *Wikipedia, the Free Encyclopedia*, Wikimedia Foundation Inc., at <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Donkey>, last modified on 12th March, 2008, visited on 10th May, 2008.

⁸⁸ Stine Rossel et al., “Domestication of the Donkey: Timing, Processes, and Indicators,” *PNAS*, Volume 105.10, March 2008, at <http://www.pnas.org/cgi/content/full/105/10/3715>, published on line on 10th March, 2008, visited on 10th May, 2008.

⁸⁹ Kenneth J. Raedeke, “Donkey,” in *The World Book Encyclopedia, Volume 5: D*, (Chicago: World Book Inc., 2007), 308.

⁹⁰ Eaton, *The Circle of Creation*, 24.

⁹¹ Marcus Porcius Cato, *On Farming (Agriculture)*, at <http://www.soilandhealth.org/01aglibrary/010121cato/catofarmtext.htm>, visited on 23rd May 2008, lists the donkeys and asses among the required tools for farming - for planting olives: 3 ox herds, 1 donkey-driver, 1 swineherd, 1 shepherd: total 13 persons; three yoke of oxen, three asses to be harnessed for carrying dung, 1 ass, 3 largish carts, 6 ploughs with ploughshares, 3 yokes complete with straps, 6 ox harnesses; 1 harrow, 4 hurdles for dung, 3 hampers for dung, 3 packsaddles, 3 rugs for the asses, etc.; for planting vines: 10 labourers, 1 ox herd, 1 donkey-driver, 1 withy-cutter, 1 swineherd: total 16 persons; 2 oxen, 2 asses for carts, 1 ass for the mill; 3 wine-presses complete; enough vats for five vintages, 2 funnels, 3 wicker strainers, 3 strainers to remove *flor*, 10 pitchers for must; 2 carts, 2 ploughs, cart yoke, vine yoke, 1 ass yoke; 1 bronze table, 1 grindstone; harnesses for oxen, harnesses for asses, 3 rugs, 3 packsaddles; 3 strainers for wine-lees, 3 donkey-mills, 1 pushing-mill.

the individual farmers, the donkeys would have been the only ‘extra-hands’ that they could rely upon, in their manual labour-intensified existence, as producers for the rich.

The donkey can then be perceived as symbolic of the people’s suffering, as economic exploitation flourished in Greco-Roman Palestine. It is ironic therefore that the lowly donkey, as a symbol of people’s hardship, was used by Jesus as a mean of transport, to challenge the very source of that exploitative-dominated system, represented by the authorities in Jerusalem. The donkey can also be interpreted as the animal of endurance, to highlight the people’s will and strength to bear their suffering and to stand up against their exploitation.

Why Riding on a Donkey?

Why did Jesus choose to ride a donkey on this occasion, instead of walking as his usual practise? Most scholars⁹² have suggested that this was to fulfil Zechariah’s prophecy of a royal and messianic procession (cf. Zech. 9:9). The use of the donkey certainly points to this fulfilment, which Matthew explicitly portrays (Matt. 21:5). However, the royal and nationalistic mood of the crowd in verses 8-10, complements well the assumption that Jesus chose to ride instead of walking, so that the authorities would know that he had arrived. This noisy demonstration (procession) aimed to get attention, which Myers compares it with a “carefully choreographed street theatre,”⁹³ with a political aim.

Jesus did not try to stop it, but, this unexpected reaction from the crowd fitted in well with his intention. That is, riding on the donkey was entirely engineered in order

⁹² Among many scholars with similar views are: France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 429; Cranfield, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 352; Williamson, *Mark – Interpretation*, 202; Gundry, *Mark*, 629; Rawlinson, *St Mark*, 150.

⁹³ Myers, *Strong Man*, 294.

to be noticed, a strategy aimed at forcing the authorities to respond.⁹⁴ It also implies that Jesus was not afraid of those in power in Jerusalem, even though he was well aware of the outcome. Instead, riding into Jerusalem was indeed a powerful statement that portrayed his claim to authority.⁹⁵ The disciples and the crowd cooperated well with this intention, which forced the authorities to react (cf. Luk. 19:39-40; Mk. 11:18-19).

The Crowd (οἱ πολλοί)

The crowd is only described as a ‘large crowd’ (Mk. 10:46) and it appears that they had accompanied Jesus and the twelve, heading into Jericho (Mk. 10:46), and also approaching Jerusalem (Mk. 11:1), assuming that the translations “they” in both occasions refer to both Jesus, his disciples and the crowd. That is, the crowd was not from Jerusalem, but had accompanied Jesus, certainly from beyond Jericho and perhaps from Galilee and the surrounding regions, going to Jerusalem.⁹⁶

Although some of them might have been Jewish pilgrims on their way to Jerusalem for the Passover festival, most of them would have been following Jesus during his Galilean ministry. They would certainly make up of day labourers, farmers and fishermen,⁹⁷ and those people whom Jesus helped, fed, healed or cured (cf. Matt. 20:34; Mk. 10:52; Luk. 18:43). The majority of them would have come from the peasant class, who had suffered much, under the religious and political systems. They had been touched and were drawn to Jesus and they would again stand to be the chief beneficiaries of his ministry and this challenge to Jerusalem.

⁹⁴ France, *The Gospel of Mark*, 428.

⁹⁵ Morna D. Hooker, *Black's New Testament Commentary: The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, (Peabody: Hendrickson Publishers, 1991), 257, suggests that “Jesus ‘decision to ride this last stage of the journey looks like some kind of claim to authority.

⁹⁶ However, John’s account of the same event alludes to two groups that make up the οἱ πολλοί. First, there was the crowd who followed Jesus after he raised Lazarus from the grave (Jn. 11:19, 31, 45), and second, there was the crowd who came to Jerusalem for the festival, who went out to meet Jesus (Jn. 12:12). Both groups then followed Jesus into Jerusalem.

⁹⁷ D.F. Watson, “People, Crowd,” in *DJG*, 606.

There were however, some people of wealthy status among the crowd, who could afford to have cloaks or outer garments (*ἱμάτια*). Not only that, but they were willing to loose them, by spreading them on the road, for the donkey to walk on (cf. Mk. 11:7-8). From this observation, it is fair to say that the crowd consisted of a cross-section of the population, some Pharisees, some well-off supporters, but mainly the peasants.

Their reaction to Jesus riding on a donkey was perhaps spontaneous and unexpectedly nationalistic. The sight of Jesus on a donkey automatically and consciously transported them back to the prophets' prophecies of a heroic and victorious king riding on a donkey toward Jerusalem,⁹⁸ who would be their saviour from their oppressors. This would appeal and perhaps, a confirmation of their own expectation, that Jesus was indeed the liberating saviour they had been waiting for.⁹⁹ This expectation of hope and liberation convinced them to follow Jesus into Jerusalem, regardless of whether he was riding on a donkey or a horse or walking.

The crowd's rejoicing and shouting in verses 9-10¹⁰⁰ is from Ps 118:25-26: "Save us, we beseech you, O LORD! O LORD, we beseech you, give us success! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord." This Psalm was composed as a "royal song of thanksgiving for military victory, but set in the context of a processional liturgy."¹⁰¹ This Psalm and others (Ps. 113-118) were sung during the Feast of Dedication to commemorate the re-cleansing of the Temple by Judas Maccabaeus in

⁹⁸ This again invokes the messianic aspects of Jesus' coming to Jerusalem, just like Solomon riding on a mule to his enthronement (1 Kgs. 1:38-40) and perhaps the use of a donkey in the oracle of Judah (Gen. 49:10-11).

⁹⁹ Taylor, *Mark's Gospel as Literature and History*, 261, argues that Jesus' riding on a donkey, may have been his way of communicating to the people that he was the Messiah of prophecy, but not the Messiah of their dreams, as in a mighty warrior, who would liberate, them from foreign rulers.

¹⁰⁰ Mk. 11:9-10: "Hosanna! Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the coming kingdom of our ancestor David! Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

¹⁰¹ Leslie C. Allen, *World Biblical Commentary, Volume 21: Psalms 101-150*, eds., David A. Hubbard and Glenn W. Barker, (Waco: Word Books, Publisher, 1983), 124; Mitchell Dahood, *The Anchor Bible, Psalms III: 101-150*, (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1970), 155, Dahood also alludes to this Psalm as a thanksgiving for a military victory; Hans-Joachim Kraus, *Psalms 60-150: A Commentary*, transl., Hilton C. Oswald, (Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1989), 395-400.

165 BCE (cf. John 10:20-22). This was also modelled on the Feast of Tabernacles, which included the carrying of branches by the people, which were actually called Hosanna.¹⁰²

The Hebrew word for 'Hosanna' is *הוֹשַׁנָּה* (cf. 2 Sam. 14:4, 2 Kgs. 6:26, = *ῥοσαννᾶ*), literally means 'save now!' or 'May God save' or 'I pray.'¹⁰³ It simply indicates a cry for deliverance or salvation. In the Jewish context in first century CE, this literal interpretation may well be an appeal to God to save his people from foreign domination. It is, therefore, entirely possible that the crowd were hailing Jesus as their deliverer, and at the same time, celebrating that coming victory with the acclamation of joy or shout of praise and to welcome the would-be victor into Jerusalem.

The crowd and the disciples emphasised this rejoicing and praising to signify the arrival of their saviour and messiah. The two disciples covered the donkey with their cloaks. The crowd even spread their cloaks on the road and some cutting branches from the field to cover it, as Jesus travelled on it, riding on the donkey. The crowd's actions and behaviour indicate their acceptance and honouring of Jesus as saviour and liberator.

The Disciples (*οἱ μαθηταί*)

The disciples in this pericope were the 'willing participants' who, as true followers, did as they were told and carried out Jesus' instructions without any questions (cf. Mk. 11:2-7). In this incident, their performance resembles a true soldier's sworn oath to obey the commands of his/her officers, which also render their reliance on the wisdom and goodness of the officers.¹⁰⁴ This behaviour characterises the disciples' willingness to obey and to follow Jesus' instructions. Perhaps a lesson learned from

¹⁰² Nineham, *The Gospel of Mark*, 293; see also: Hooker, *The Gospel According to Saint Mark*, 256.

¹⁰³ BDAG, 1106.

¹⁰⁴ "Military Law," *EncyBrit.*; see also: *Orders and Regulations for Soldiers of the Salvation Army*, (London, The Campfield Press, 1972), 79-80.

their previous experiences in doubting Jesus (cf. feeding miracles, Jesus stills the storm and walking on water, etc.). However, have they really accepted him as the Messiah, as Peter confessed? (Mk. 8:27-29). Have they really trusted him enough to blindly follow his every command and to put their trust in his every word?

Their obedience and actions in this pericope suggest so, but when problems occurred, they abandoned Jesus. They could not keep awake with Jesus during his hour of distress and grief (cf. Mk. 14:32-42), one betrayed him (cf. Mk. 14:44-46), while “all the disciples deserted him and fled” (Matt. 26:56). Peter’s confession took a 180 degree turn from proclaiming Jesus as the Messiah to completely denying Jesus’ existence (cf. Mk. 14:66-72). They abandoned Jesus because they were afraid of being caught and ended up in prison, or even worse, persecuted as rebels. Just as the crowd turned against him (cf. Mk. 15:13-15), the disciples abandoned him, when they realised that Jesus was not, after all, the messiah they hoped for, who would physically overthrow the aggressors and liberate them. Their hope had been dealt a great blow when Jesus was arrested.¹⁰⁵

Bystanders (τινες τῶν ἐκεῖ ἐστηκότων)

As previously discussed, the ‘bystanders’ who allowed the disciples to take the colt, may have been ‘associations’ of Jesus, whom he met during his travels.¹⁰⁶ They were there to ensure that the donkey was to be released only to Jesus and to no one else, as planned. Jesus told the two disciples exactly what was to happen (vv. 2-3), and his instructions (plan) were precisely executed (vv. 4-6). The bystanders did their part not

¹⁰⁵ This assumption plays on our natural instinct and feeling when hope becomes hopeless. But Jesus’ arrest marks the imminent suffering he would face, as Isaiah’s suffering servant, who would reconcile us to God, see: Mark Gignilliat, “Who is Isaiah’s Servant? Narrative Identity and Theological Potentiality,” *SJT*, Volume 61.2, 2008, pp.125-136; see also: Wright, *The Original Jesus*, 20.

¹⁰⁶ Refer, Footnote 41, Chapter Two and Footnotes 62-65 and 70-71, Chapter Four.

only by releasing the colt, but first, had to obtain from the disciples the pre-arranged code: “The Lord needs it, and he will send it back here immediately” (Mk. 11:3b).

Jesus revealed this to the disciples before they left, to ensure the release of the donkey. The adjective ‘immediately’ implies a temporary use of the donkey and that it will be sent back straight away. These phrases ‘contemporary’ and ‘sent back immediately’ together, indicate Jesus’ fate. He will not be able to bring back the donkey himself but someone else will do that, once its purpose has been achieved.

The Greek perfect participle ἐστηκότων occurs three other times in the Gospels,¹⁰⁷ but its English translation ‘bystanders’ occurs seven times, also in the Gospels.¹⁰⁸ In all these occurrences, the bystanders were actively involved in the story and played important roles in their different contexts. Without the bystanders’ involvement, Peter’s denial of Jesus would not have come to light and the bystanders in Jesus’ crucifixion highlight the differences in human thoughts and God’s plan.¹⁰⁹ Needless to say, the bystanders who minded the donkey until Jesus’ disciples got there were not just mere bystanders.¹¹⁰ They played an important role in the plan, which supports the assumption that they were also part of the pre-arranged plan, in Jesus’ coming to Jerusalem.

¹⁰⁷ *BibWok*, Matt. 27:47; Mk. 9:1 and Luk. 9:27. Matthew’s account uses ἐστηκότων to refer to the bystanders in Jesus’ crucifixion who said: “This man is calling for Elijah” (Matt. 27:47). Both Mk. 9:1 and Luk. 9:27 use ἐστηκότων to refer to “there are some standing here who will not taste death until they see that the kingdom of God has come with power.”

¹⁰⁸ Four times, it refers to bystanders who accused Peter of being with Jesus, which he denied (Matt. 26:71, 73; Mk. 14:69, 70); twice in Jesus’ crucifixion (Matt. 27:47, Mk. 15:35); and is used in Luke, when Jesus said to the bystander, to take the one pound from the wicked slave and give it to the one with ten pounds (Luk. 19:24); see also: Richard E. Whitaker and John R. Kohlenberger III, *The Analytical Concordance to the New Revised Standard Version of the New Testament*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company / New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 88.

¹⁰⁹ This difference is emphasised in the discussion on, “The Colt/Donkey,” Chapter Four.

¹¹⁰ *CCDT*, 122, defines bystander as “a person present but not involved, an onlooker or a spectator”; see also: *The Oxford English Dictionary: Volume I: A-B*, eds., et al, James Murray, (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1933), 1239.

The Social Elite

Mark's account does not mention any involvement by the social elite of Jerusalem (referring to the Pharisees, scribes, high priest and priests, influential aristocrats, Herod or even Pilate), which contradicts the 'triumphal entry' argument, if compared to a proper Roman triumph.¹¹¹ That is, the presence of the social elite during the Roman triumph celebration is a sign of honour and respect for the person being welcomed. This was not the case with Jesus' procession. The absence of the upper class elite also confirms the division between Jesus' teachings and social behaviour, and the authorities' convictions and systems of operation. Thus, they perceived Jesus as a threat to the status quo, and he was therefore, not welcome to their city. Jesus must be eliminated (Mk 3:6; cf. Jn. 11:48, 50), before his influence on the people increased, and before Rome intervened, which only meant, destruction of the city and the people.

However, Luke recalls some Pharisees in the crowd, who confronted Jesus to order his disciples to stop their praising and joyous acclamation of the one who comes in the name of the Lord (Luk. 19:39). This was an open objection to Jesus' procession, especially the events that had taken place. Even though the Pharisees (representatives of the authorities) were present, they were certainly not shouting for Jesus. This is an indication that the authorities were keeping an eye on Jesus and his activities (cf. Mk. 2:6-8, 16, 24; 3:22; 7:1-12, etc.).¹¹² They were there not to welcome Jesus, but to observe and to put a stop to his activities.

¹¹¹ Refer section on, "Roman Triumphal Processions," Chapter Four.

¹¹² Refer section on, "Peasant Communities," Chapter Two.

The Entry – v.11

Jesus finally entered Jerusalem after all the commotion of verses 1-10. At this stage according to the Roman triumph proper,¹¹³ Jesus was expected to offer sacrifices to God, to complete his triumphal entry, if that was the case. Unfortunately, that did not happen, but instead, Jesus just entered Jerusalem, took a look around the Temple and then left (Mk. 11:11). This concluding verse of the procession looks more like the scouting phase of the challenge that was now truly underway. He took a look around to familiarise himself and to take notice of what has been happening there. From this observation, he would organise and plan his next move: a more direct encounter against the Temple authorities. He then returned to his base of operation, Mount of Olives.

Instead of offering a sacrifice to honour God, as with a triumphal entry, we hear from verses 15-19 that, the next day, Jesus rather disrupted the Temple operations, much to the dismay of the authorities (Mk. 11:18). The authorities reacted accordingly, by plotting his death. Jesus' challenge and his strategy of riding into Jerusalem, supported by the crowd's spontaneous, nationalistic mood (Mk. 11:7-10) had worked in that, the authorities had duly noticed his arrival in Jerusalem. But, his activities (Mk. 11:1-10; 11:15-19) had created outrage and instilled fear for the authorities that an uprising might result from it, which would give the Romans an excuse to destroy them (cf. Jn. 11:48-50).

Although the end (Mk. 11:11) appears to be an anticlimax as nothing happened, there is a great deal of suspense in the air and a sense of anticipation of what would follow. So far, the procession had demonstrated the power of the people, who had been united under a leader, to stand up against the authority's oppressive regime. It had served notice to the authorities that Jesus and his followers had arrived, and they would

¹¹³ Refer Section on, "Roman Triumphal Processions," Chapter Four.

not remain silent anymore about their situation. They had signalled their intention by proclaiming victory with shout of joy and praises. It was an indication of their confidence and trust in their leader Jesus, to liberate them.

This had also created turmoil in the city (Matt. 21:10), and instilled fear in the authorities, who could not do anything to Jesus, for fear of the crowd's reaction (cf. Jn. 11:46-53, 12:19). There was more in store for the religious leaders. Jesus would next cleanse the Temple. He would overthrow and overturn the corrupted practices of the priesthood, in order to bring the Temple into its proper order and practices, fitting for a house of prayer, instead of a den of robbers (Mk. 11:17).

The Ill-fated Challenge

Jesus was challenging both the Roman and Jewish rulers' authority. He was now coming to Jerusalem, riding on the donkey, a sure sign of challenging the authorities, by putting a claim to that authority¹¹⁴ (cf. Luk. 23:2). Jesus' action and implied claim are quite significant and noticeable,¹¹⁵ since he had walked everywhere, throughout his ministry.

Jesus' procession was seriously undermining peace and security in Jerusalem, considering its timing. That is, the Roman authority usually boosted security details, by providing extra soldiers, during any pilgrim festivals, in this case, the Passover festival.¹¹⁶ A great multitude of the pilgrims would come to Jerusalem, which usually meant some demonstrations and disruptions. Jesus' procession did just that by turning the whole city into turmoil (cf. Matt. 21:10-11).

¹¹⁴ Johnson, *A Commentary on the Gospel According to St Mark*, 186, argues that Jesus' triumphal entry was a sign of Jesus' leadership with authority from God, but with peace and humility; see also Rawlinson, *St Mark*, 151, Rawlinson says that the entry was a demonstration designed to win over the masses and secured Jesus the leading position in the city.

¹¹⁵ Refer section on, "Why Riding on a Donkey," Chapter Four.

¹¹⁶ Josephus, *War*, 2.223, 411.

The next day was even worse. He entered the Temple and drove out those who had made a business and a profit from Temple's operations (cf. Matt. 12-13; Mk. 11:15-17; Luk. 45-46; Jn. 14-16). This direct and confrontational approach would have supported the people's expectation of Jesus as the liberator. He condemned and accused these Temple operators as thieves. These were the priests and the high priest,¹¹⁷ who performed these functions within the Temple. Together with the Pharisees, the scribes, the Herodians and even Pilate, they orchestrated Jesus' arrest and crucifixion.

Jesus was then arrested because of one of his own disciples' greed, Judas Iscariot. He betrayed Jesus to the authorities for thirty pieces of silver (cf. Matt. 26:14-16; Mk. 14:10-11). Jesus was now in the mercy of the authorities. They now had the opportunity to fabricate a charge that would bring a death penalty, according to Roman law (cf. Jn. 18:31-32), by accusing Jesus of being a king of the Jews (cf. Matt. 27:11; Mk. 15:2; Luk. 23:2-5; Jn. 18:33-38). This accusation would undermine Herod's position as Tetrarch ruler of Galilee, and against Pilate as the governor of Judea. Such an accusation would certainly be punishable with execution.¹¹⁸ Their plan worked and Jesus' challenge had become yet another failed attempt to overthrow the status quo and the authorities had succeeded in putting down that threat.

The crowd and the disciples' disloyalty constitute the most ill-fated part of this planned challenge, when they abandoned the cause. The crowd and Judas switched sides. The disciples fled in fear, the crowd turned hostile toward Jesus, when their hope of liberation and assurances of a better kingdom appeared futile. There was so much promise, but now, their leader had been arrested. Jesus had "failed." This turn of emotions indicated the people's disappointment in yet another failed messiah. As far as

¹¹⁷ Refer sections on, "The Temple Institution" and "Jewish Religious Leaders," Chapter Two.

¹¹⁸ Refer Footnotes 67, 68 and 69, Chapter Two.

they were concerned, Jesus was now one of a long line of messiahs who promised so much, but failed to deliver.¹¹⁹ Now, their hope had been squashed.

However, the disciples and some of the crowd's guilty conscience and fear (during Jesus' arrest and crucifixion), and their renewed enthusiasm after the resurrection spurred them on to continue Jesus' ministry and teachings,¹²⁰ which they had now fully comprehended. Although he was arrested, tried and executed by crucifixion, he came back to life after three days, just as he predicted (cf. Mk. 8:31, 9:31, 10:33-34). That event signalled Jesus' victory over death and his victory over worldly powers.

The people, especially the disciples had now realised that Jesus' challenge was a different kind of liberation for all. It was a challenge that was not to be fought with weapons but, where they themselves would have to bear the price, so that others may be saved and live.

Summary

The "triumphal entry" perception, which describes Jesus' coming to Jerusalem, is far from being a triumphant entry, as the above discussion confirms. The procession did not enter Jerusalem and all the necessary rituals for such an occasion were not followed, according to Roman traditions. In particular, there was the absence of the Jewish authorities and of Jerusalem's elite in Jesus' procession. But, considering the evidence presented in this thesis, Jesus' coming to Jerusalem was to confront the seat of

¹¹⁹ Rowan Williams, *Christ on Trial: How the Gospel Unsettles Our Judgement*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company and Toronto: ABC Publishing, Anglican Book Centre, 2000), 6, says that Jesus holds back from revealing who he is because people's expectation of him as the "triumphant deliverer" cannot portray the truth about him.

¹²⁰ Robert C. Tannehill, "The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," in *Issues in Religion and Theology 7: The Interpretation in Mark*, ed., William Telford, (Philadelphia: Fortress Press / London: SPCK, 1985), 136, the disciples were encouraged to proclaim the good news of the risen Lord, in their "continuing relationship" with Jesus.

authority there, on behalf of the marginalised people, whose livelihood had been affected by the authority's dominating systems.

The unfolding events during this demonstration and the certainty of what the disciple would find as per Jesus' instructions, certainly point to a pre-arranged plan as opposed to another school of thought, which emphasises Jesus' supernatural knowledge. Theologically and as faithful Christian believers, we accept that conclusion of Jesus' extraordinary powers wholeheartedly. But, from the social-historical perspective as per discussion above, Jesus' preparation for this trip was pre-arranged, just as we would, when travelling. Preparation ensures the efficient and effectiveness of travelling, and it will also contribute tremendously to the success of the trip.

However, no matter how thorough our planning could be, but, without the full co-operation of other people, and their perception of imminent failure on the leader's part, the whole mission would come crashing down and fall apart. Jesus' disciples and the crowd did just that, in this journey to Jerusalem. As such, the general triumphal entry emphasis on this pericope is more like the ill-fated challenge that this pericope represents, when the leader, Jesus, was arrested and eventually executed. The people's hope for liberation had been crushed.

Chapter 5

Reflection and Application

Introduction

Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation.

(Mark 16:15)

Jesus' plan and intention of challenging the authority became stuck when he was arrested and his followers turned against him. However, what do we make of Jesus' sacrifice in relation to the expectations of the marginalised people of his time? What can we, in our own context, learn from Jesus' life and ministry, as he responded to the need of the people by helping them and speaking up against the status quo? How can this event contribute to our own calling and ministry, given the current situation of exploitation and poverty, due to an empire-like¹ economic globalisation?

These questions will be dealt with in this chapter, to allow us to digest the meaning of Jesus' actions in Jerusalem, in light of our own calling as servants of Christ.

¹ *AGAPE: Alternative Globalisation Addressing Peoples and Earth – A Background Document*, Justice, Peace and Creation Team, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2005), 2, at: http://overcomingviolence.org/fileadmin/dov/files/wcc_resources/studyguide_books/Alternative_Globalization.pdf, visited on 30th June, 2008, reflects women's perception of globalisation as an empire, as the "coherence of economic, cultural, political and military powers that constitute a global system of domination directed by powerful nations and organisations"; This was confirmed by the World Council of Churches' 9th Assembly in Brazil, 2006, *AGAPE: A Call to Love and Action, 9th Assembly, 14-23 February, 2006, Porto Alegre, Brazil*, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2006), at: <http://www.wcc-assembly.info/en/theme-issues/assembly-documents/3-preparatory-and-background-documents/alternative-globalization-addressing-people-and-earth-agape.html>, visited on 30th June, 2008, "The participants in the *AGAPE* process shared their concerns about the growing inequality, the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few and the destruction of the earth, all aggravating the scandal of poverty in the South. In recent years the escalating roles of political and military power have strongly surfaced. People all over the world experience the impact of imperial forms of power on their communities."

Jesus' Sacrifice

To the people who followed Jesus and his movement, Jesus 'failed.' He was arrested and was executed by crucifixion. Jesus failed to deliver the people's hope of a new kingdom (cf. Mk. 1:15), that he often talked about. Jesus failed to overthrow the authority's oppressive systems and the ruling regime, which the people expected him to do as their saviour and liberator. His challenge was, instead, thwarted and was suppressed by the same authority and its political machinery that he set out to challenge.

The marginalised people lost their hope of a new beginning and they were very disappointed. They showed that when they turned against Jesus at the end and yelled out: "Let him be crucified. Crucify him" (Matt. 27:23; Mk. 15:14; Luk.23:20; Jn. 19:6, 15). The Jewish religious leaders, although shaken and fearful (cf. Mk. 11:18; Luk. 19:39, Jn. 11:48, 50), were victorious at the end, when they fabricated false charges of blasphemy against Jesus (cf. Mk. 14:56-57). These charges stuck and the Roman rulers (represented by Pontius Pilate) washed their hands of any guilt and were forced to hand over Jesus to be crucified. The Roman authority had the power to overturn the charges against Jesus, but they did not and sentenced him to death. The authorities had managed to subdue and overcome Jesus' threat.

Jesus was indeed crucified and buried, but he rose again, after three days. Jesus lives. However, the chief priest, priests and the elders denied this by devising a plan of bribery to stop the truth being known (cf. Matt. 28:11-15).² They still had not accepted Jesus and had not recognised who he really was, even when they were told of Jesus' resurrection from death.

² Matthew also records the chief priest and the Pharisees approaching Pilate to post guards at Jesus' tomb to ensure that his disciples would not try to steal his body, in order to fulfil Jesus' predictions (cf. Matt. 27:62-66). Were they just over-cautious or was it a sign of paranoia? It does however imply that they were aware of Jesus' miraculous power and perhaps a hint of fear, that Jesus' words might come true?

Even Jesus' disciples did not believe the good news that Jesus was alive (cf. Mk. 16:13; Luk. 24:11, 36-40; Jn. 20:25), until he appeared to them, talked with them and ate a meal with them (Luk. 24: 41-43; Jn. 21:12-13).³ It took some convincing, but they finally accepted Jesus as being alive again, which opened their eyes to his teachings and predictions before his death. "Thus, it is written, that the Messiah is to suffer and to rise from the dead on the third day, and that repentance and forgiveness of sins is to be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem" (Luk. 24:46-47, cf. Luk. 24:6-7).

Theologically, Jesus accomplished his mission, as set forth by his Father. Through his suffering, death and resurrection, the people received their freedom from the bondage of sins that had inflicted mankind since the fall of Adam and Eve (cf. Gen. 3:1-24). Jesus' resurrection has also shown that suffering and even death can no longer slave God's people because there is hope in life after death at the Kingdom of heaven.

The reality of Jesus' resurrection and the emergence of the Christian movement subsequently, is testimony to the truth that Jesus gave the people victory over earthly afflictions. It is a victory of liberation far removed from the people's expectation. It is not a victory using military powers and weapons, by overthrowing the established worldly authority, but a victory where Jesus himself became the sacrificed victim, for our sake.⁴ It is a victory over the power of evil, a victory that is incorporated in suffering in serving our God (cf. Rom. 6:16-20; 1 Cor. 7:22-23; Gal. 5:1, 13).

³ We also hear from John's account that some of the disciples went back to their past occupations as fishermen, after the events of Jerusalem. It implies that when Jesus was arrested, their hope of a new beginning evaporated with it, so they went back to their old life style to support themselves and their families (cf. Jn. 21:1-3).

⁴ Helmut Koester, "Jesus the Victim," *JBL*, Volume 111.1, 1992, 9, relates the effect of Jesus' death to his disciples as a "denial of all values of a world order that had made Jesus its victim"; see also: Michael Taylor, *Poverty and Christianity: Reflections at the Interface between Faith and Experience*, (London: SCM Press, 2000), 43, Taylor says that Jesus' love for all prepared him to suffer at a great cost – his life.

This is the new order of a realised eschatology in our salvation, which the disciples/apostles and early missionaries were encouraged to proclaim, in order to vindicate the rejection, suffering and death of Jesus. They imitated their Risen Lord, Jesus Christ in their own ministries (cf. Acts 2:43; 3:1-9, 5:12-16, 9:32-35, 13:9-12; 13:44-47, 17:5-9, etc.). The Gospel of John also demonstrates this vindication aspect of Jesus the victim, when his death reconciled the people to God and gave them the power to become children of God (cf. Jn. 1:1-5, 9-14).

In this perspective, the early Christians' proclamation of the Risen Christ as the King of all kings and Ruler of the world had a political implication. That is, Jesus the victim (crucified and buried) was and is proclaimed as the Ruler over the established authoritative political order. However, that proclamation only fuelled the authorities' hatred and anger, which resulted in the subsequent suffering and persecution of the early Christians.⁵ Unfortunately, that reality still exists today throughout the world, while many more people are choosing not to hear that Good News of Jesus' resurrection and God's grace for us all

To follow Jesus is to serve others in humility and to suffer from intimidations and oppositions from other religious beliefs and economic prosperities. This certainly does not make an appealing or an attractive option for people to follow and to serve our Lord Jesus Christ and our God. Who would want to live a life of serving others, when the world offers an attractive alternative of individualistic wealth and success? Jesus Christ gave his life for us. He demonstrated that it is not an easy journey to follow his way. However, the assuring benefits and the enjoyment of life everlasting by being reconciled to God and to be called children of God, as affirmed by Jesus' resurrection, should serve as an encouragement for us to follow him, by serving others.

⁵ Refer Footnotes 33 and 34, Chapter Three.

The victory of Jesus' resurrection has strengthened us to proclaim God's gracious love for us all. It has equipped us to face life's difficulties and has encouraged us to struggle forth in faith and in total dependence on God to lead us. He has promised to be with us always with the guidance of the Holy Spirit that will allow us to discern all things and be subjected no more, to anyone's scrutiny (cf. 1 Cor. 2:15). Without this knowledge of God's gifts for us, we are foolish and are still subjected to the punishment of the cross.

Our Responsibility for those in Need

Jesus responded to the plight of the people whose existence had been greatly affected by the oppressive and dominated religious and political systems of the time. He helped them. He even went to Jerusalem, the religious and political seat of power, to confront the leaders there, on behalf of the people. Jesus' response to the need of the people is a constant reminder that words of encouragement and of hope for those who are less fortunate are not enough. Words must be followed up with concrete actions as Jesus did. He died in the process and gave up his life for the people.

That event took place over two thousand years ago. Unfortunately, the world has not become a better place since, where equality, caring and sharing (among other things) should have been common, if we followed Jesus' teachings. The reality of our present situation is the expansion of the then Roman imperialism, as expressed in our current economic globalisation on a world scale. This globalisation phenomenon has impacted the experience of everyday life. It reflects the free flow of commodities and ideas and the "standardization of cultural expressions around the world."⁶ It implies

⁶ "Globalisation," *EncyBrit*.

and calls for “homogenisation of culture, of production and consumption, and way of life,”⁷ as well as fostering social relations between “distant localities.”⁸

Globalisation simply means that national isolation and separation, international borders and geographical locations are no longer relevant as economic growth and development today focuses on a one global economy. It is this economic freedom where the elite wealthy minority seek to further their grip on power and wealth, by exploiting the resources and people of less developed countries.⁹ It has led to an imbalanced wealth distribution globally (see Figure 5.1 below)¹⁰ and the increase in poverty and the number of poor people in the world. It is Greco-Roman imperialism two thousand years later, but at a global scale.

Figure 5.1 Distribution of World Wealth – 2000 CE

- Top 20% of world population controls 83% of the world’s wealth
- Next 20% controls 11% of the world’s wealth
- Bottom 60% controls only 6% of the world’s wealth

⁷ Jon Sorbrino and Felix Wilfred, “Introduction: The Reasons for Returning to this Theme,” in *Globalisation and Its Victims*, eds., Jon Sorbrino and Felix Wilfred, (London: SCM Press, 2001), 14.

⁸ Manfred Ernst, “Introduction to Globalisation,” in *Globalisation and the Re-Shaping of Christianity in the Pacific Islands*, ed. Manfred Ernst, (Suva: The Pacific Theological College, 2006), 25.

⁹ The leaders of the less developed nations are welcoming foreign investors because they provide jobs and income for the people and government. They have also implemented specific policies and regulations to allow foreign companies to operate there with minimal cost to the companies, but for low wages (and sometimes sub-standard working conditions) for the employees; see also: Steward Firth, *Globalisation and Governance in the Pacific Islands*, (Canberra: The Australian National University, 2006), 1; Willy Brandt, *North-South: A Programme for Survival – A Report on World Poverty*, (Pan Books, 1980), 8, Brandt suggests the need to reverse the relentless flow of resources from South to North, in particularly, debt repayments, that had crippled these economies.

¹⁰ *AGAPE: A Background Document*, 10.

Despite its numerous implied economic benefits,¹¹ globalisation has also contributed to people's suffering, people's displacement, poverty, inequality, famine and military conflicts around the world. This is not to mention the environmental impacts like air, water and land pollution, unpredictable and more dangerous weather conditions, rising sea levels, ozone depletion and much more.

Is this because we have failed as Christians to understand Jesus' challenge for the marginalised people? Have we failed to stop or address issues of economic developments over the welfare of the people and the groaning creation? Has Jesus died for nothing because we have neglected to uphold his teachings and ministry? We have been empowered with the knowledge and wisdom of God's grace and gifts for us to continue his will through our ministries and callings. We must respond accordingly by helping others and to care for God's creation.

Jesus, during his ministry condemned wealth accumulation at the expense of the poor (cf. Matt. 19:16-22; Mk. 10:17-22; Luk. 12:33-34). He also targeted the poor and the marginalised people of his society. In our present situation, WCC has been actively involved, since its inception, to bring to light the issue of poverty in the world, due to globalisation. This involvement became apparent through the development of an alternative economy of life, *AGAPE*.¹²

¹¹ Just to name a few here: Job and income creation for the people and government (but can also lead to unemployment due to automation and new technologies), new technological resources and expertise, new knowledge, capital injection to local businesses, and so forth.

¹² The development of the *AGAPE* process was the result of issues raised in WCC's 8th Assembly in Harare (1998), which highlighted the injustice, inequality and poverty in the world. It led to the development of the *AGAPE* document, as an alternative economy of life to the economic exploitation of globalisation. This document was adopted in WCC's 9th Assembly in Porto Alegre, Brazil, 2006, where the participants in the *AGAPE* process shared their concerns about the growing inequality, the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few and the destruction of the earth. It calls upon member Churches to voice these issues in their perspective contexts and to actively involve in protesting against the negative effects of globalisation. *AGAPE* emphasises equality, solidarity, sharing and caring for one another and for creation.

WCC has increasingly called upon and encouraged member Churches to “raise their prophetic voices”¹³ and to act so that changes are made for the benefit of all. These changes include transforming life around us and to respond to the needs of all human beings, in particular, those who are suffering, oppressed and being marginalised, as well as sustaining our environment. It is a call to move away from reflecting on the causes of poverty, to a more direct “active identification with the poor and solidarity with their cause.”¹⁴ In doing so, we proclaim Christ.

Many United Nations (UN) and other Humanitarian and Aid organisations like, the Red Cross, are actively involved in combating poverty and other disasters around the globe. However, we as individuals or groups of people can contribute as well. We will certainly not make an impact or even a dent globally, but it is also our duty to help those in need, within our immediate surroundings.¹⁵

We can contribute to these Aid organisations during their appeals for help. We can give a poor beggar on the street something; even a twenty cent coin will make a difference between having a meal or not. We can help our neighbours, friends and anyone who needs help. Giving and sharing is part of the Pacific way that relates to Jesus helping the poor. Eteuati Tuioti, perhaps appropriately summarises how best we can help those who are less fortunate than us, when he said: “Our duty is to earn more, save more, but most of all, is to give more.”¹⁶

¹³ *AGAPE: A Background Document*, 4-7.

¹⁴ Lewis S. Mudge, “Ecumenical Social Thought,” in *A History of Ecumenical Movement*, Volume 3, 1968-2000, (Geneva: World Council of Churches, 2004), 280.

¹⁵ Bryant L. Myers, *Walking with the Poor: Principles and Practices of Transformational Development*, (Maryknoll: Orbis Books, World Vision, 1999, 12th Printing, 2006.), 63-ff, states that the poor are not isolated by themselves or living in poor communities. They are among others who are not poor.

¹⁶ Rev. Dr. Eteuati Tuioti is the principal of the Methodist Piula Theological College, in Samoa, gave this insight during one of our many discussions about the issue of poverty, here at Pacific Theological College, June, 2008.

It is our responsibility to help those in need, to give so that others may survive and live, and to serve others in humility, honesty and love. Jesus said: “Just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me” (Matt. 25:40). Your reward will be blessings from the Father and an inheritance in His Kingdom.

Leadership Role in Present Context

Jesus led the people by examples through words and actions. He was not afraid to speak out against the religious leaders and the political administration’s policies and protocols, which had negative effects on the people. He spoke out against their strict religious laws that prevented helping those in needs. He condemned wealth accumulation by the rich, which compounded the poor people’s suffering. The worst part of this process; it was the poor people who contributed to this wealth through tributes, taxes and religious obligatory contributions, that should have been re-distributed back to those in need, but instead, ended up in the wealthy elite’s coffer.¹⁷

By going to Jerusalem (the procession), Jesus took it upon himself to confront the authorities for the sake of the people, despite the overwhelming odds against him from the establishment, and the fact that he knew the outcome for him – death. He was prepared to give up his life in order for the authorities to take notice of the plight of the marginalised people. He was committed to the course. He believed in his mission of helping the poor, with total dependence and obedience to his Father, who sent him for that purpose.

Jesus has set the example for all his followers to follow. Our mission is to imitate Jesus in our own ministry. It is a mission that requires the incorporation of our own experiences and re-interpreting the Bible in light of our perceived understanding of that

¹⁷ Refer section on, “Economic Environment,” Chapter Two.

experience.¹⁸ This will help us to better understand our reality and God's mission for us. Our present context is greatly influenced by the economic need to increase wealth, growth and globalisation. These have created under-class societies of poor people and poverty throughout the world.¹⁹ This understanding of our present reality and Jesus' own ministry, as argued in this discussion, should provide us with a clear set of objectives that must be put into action.

We need to eliminate poverty. We must address and take action to bring about even distribution of wealth and sustainable use of our limited resources, equality, peace and justice and taking better care of creation. We need to raise our voices against globalisation and the spread of economic growth and development, at the expense of indigenous people, land, sea, water and air resources. We need to speak out against biased policies and regulations that favour the rich over the poor. We need to stand up against western 'one-policy-fit-all' attitude that does not reflect our own unique and specific situation here in the Pacific.²⁰ We need to encourage living simply and within our own means and to examine our own ideologies and perceptions of reality.

To put these into action, we need courage. Individually and collectively, we can make noise and we can work together to force the authorities to take notice and perhaps implement relevant remedies to correct past wrongs and to prevent potential future threats.²¹

¹⁸ Charles Van Engen, *Mission on the Way: Issues in Mission Theology*, (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1996), 39, relays his understanding of the hermeneutical circle of Liberation theology, which links Bible and mission.

¹⁹ Taylor, *Poverty and Christianity*, 29, states that "suffering for the most part is a product of history and a creation of people."

²⁰ This view expresses the need to localise these western policies to suit the needs of local people and to cater for specific situations in these less developed countries, which depend on foreign aids for survival.

²¹ History reminds us that the French revolution, powered by the people, brought about the down fall of the monarchy there; see also: *AGAPE – Background Document*, In compliance with International Monetary Fund's strict policies, Bolivia, privatized its water and sewage supply through a 40 year lease to a private company. This led to increased in water rates and the people protested. When martial law failed to quell protests and death to protesters, the government withdrew the contract. A US

Fear of intimidations, ridicule, threats and punishment should not prevent us from performing our duties and responsibilities. Jesus showed us that. However, this is not to suggest that we engage in violent activities that will result in confrontations with the oppositions, or may even result in destruction and death, no!²² Standing up to what we believe to be right does not mean we have to act violently, in order to prove our point. Violent does not solve anything; it only brings about further division and distrust. But speaking out against issues that would have negative consequences upon people and environment must be encouraged and supported, without fear of repercussion.

In my own Samoan context, it is considered culturally insensitive or even taboo to defy or to speak out against our *matai* (chiefs) or against our elders.²³ This cultural aspect has been incorporated into the religious sphere, when Christianity was introduced, where it is inappropriate (or unheard of) to speak out against the minister/pastor and more so within the Church²⁴ setting, against the elder minister. This act of respect has hindered lay people and younger ministers from speaking out against some ambiguous decisions being made at the top. However, people are now starting to express themselves by questioning issues that affect them. Personally, it is not a sign of

company that won the contract launched a US\$25 million claim against Bolivian government, but international outcry forced the company to back down; In Argentina, IMF policies on privatisation resulted in a staggering \$146 billion debt by 1999, until the economy collapsed in 2001. Before these policies, Argentina was a society of 60% middle class, after the collapse, 60% of the population was under the poverty line. The people protested, declaring that they had had enough of growing poverty, unemployment and impunity for those who had looted their country's resources. These protests resulted in the installation of five presidents in less than two weeks.

²² A decision by the leader of the opposition, Mr. Morgan Tsvangirai to stop running against Mr. Robert Mugabe's brutality regime in Zimbabwe's recent Presidency vote (July, 2008) highlights the point I am making. His fear for the safety of his supporters, with some who had already been victimised and killed by Mr. Mugabe's loyal supporters, prompted Mr. Tsvangirai to pull out from the run-off election for the country's President.

²³ It is a tradition that has been handed down orally (I received this from my parents and grandparents), that doing so is forbidden and it would bring shame, dishonour and even bad luck from the spirits of ancestors. In the village setting, speaking up against a *matai* will be met with a severe penalty that must be honoured by the family, and a formal traditional apology from your family chief, within the village council.

²⁴ This is within my own Church – Congregational Christian Church in Samoa (CCCS), where the highest authority is the General Assembly, followed by the Committee of Elder Ministers. Each district region is headed by an Elder Minister, with various amount of parishes (from 4-15) in each district.

disrespect, but it reflects the need to understand and to clarify matters that concern everyone, which must be encouraged.

This is also a challenge for our Church leaders to address the concerns of the people, considering the present global crisis²⁵ that has affected everyone in one way or another. The effects²⁶ of economic development and of globalisation on less developed nations and particular on our island nations here in the Pacific, are something our Church leaders must address. Our Churches in the Pacific should be at the forefront of the fight against global warming. They should speak out against the exploitation of our natural resources and people. We stand to lose a lot more if we do not act. It is about time our Pacific Churches should put *AGAPE*²⁷ into action to combat these, for the sake of our people, our children now, and for our future generations. We owe it to the people and to the future that we do this now.

It is a daunting task, but together, it can be done. We do not depend on other people to do it for us; we have to do it ourselves. Jesus did not wait for someone else to help the people, he did it himself and he even went to the authority to confront them of their oppressions against the people. He was able to do that because he believed in his mission, he was sincere in helping people and he placed his trust and dependence on God.

²⁵ These world crises include globalisation, climate changes, shortage of food supply, increase fuel costs and so forth. Although the Pacific island nations are not major contributors to these matters, they stand to be impacted the most, due to their dependence of foreign aids for their lack of capital and expertise, their small and lowland areas and vulnerable to natural disasters.

²⁶ To name a few examples here: The local fishermen are catching less and less fish (tuna level is now threatened) because of large fishing fleets operating within Pacific waters; exploitation of labour – in American Samoa, when the USA government passed the minimum wage legislation (2006), a cannery company operated in American Samoa threatened to shift its operation elsewhere (they were paying workers, less than half of the minimum wage passed). A deal was struck in the company's favour and they are still operating there. Small islands like Tuvalu, Kiribati, Tokelau and others will disappear altogether, if rising sea level continues; etc.

²⁷ PCC has its own program similar to WCC's *AGAPE* initiative. It is called, *Island of Hope: A Pacific Alternative to Economic Globalisation – Report of the Churches' Conference on Economic Globalisation – Island of Hope*, Nadi, Fiji, 12-18 August, 2001, (Geneva: World Council of Churches,

Abraham placed his trust in God, when he was told to sacrifice Isaac (cf. Gen. 22:1-19). David relied on God, more than mortals for his protection from his adversaries (cf. Ps. 118:7-8). The apostle Paul encourages us to do the same: “I can do all things through him who strengthens me” (Phi. 4:13). With God on our side, who can oppose us? We can raise our prophetic voice as loud as we can, and it will be even more effective, if we act on it as well. We can do that, when we rely and put our trust in God.

Our duty is to speak out against these issues and to put them into action. It requires good planning and preparation, closer cooperation and sharing of information between all stakeholders – the people, Churches, governments, Non-Government Organisations (NGOs), regional and international organisations. Lines of communications must be cleared and understood (a two-way process) by all involved. This lack of communication I feel, is where *AGAPE* and Island of Hope initiatives have failed to be implemented, here in the Pacific. They have not been communicated to the grass root levels – the people, and there have been no initiations from the top or from our leaders of putting these programs into action.

Summary

Jesus’ ministry is a reminder of our Christian responsibility to those who are less fortunate than us. It is our duty to help them and to act on their behalf. It is our calling to seek justice for those who have been discriminated against, hope for the marginalised and to share God’s grace and love. Jesus’ victory in his resurrection has empowered us and has encouraged us to face life’s difficulties, as we continue that challenge of helping each other, in the face of social, economic, religious and political barriers.

2001). Unfortunately, it has not been put into action because, it has not been communicated to grass root levels at local congregations.

Conclusion

Jesus responded to the need of the people. He helped them. He fed them. He provided them hope of a better place in the kingdom of heaven. It was a better place where there would be no more suffering, no more discrimination, no more poverty and everyone would be free.

For the people, Jesus represented a beacon of hope and a brighter future. They perceived him to be their saviour and liberator. They saw and they were amazed at many miraculous acts, which he performed that no mere human being could do. The cripple and the lame became mobile again, the blind received their sight, the demonically-possessed were freed of their tormentors, the sick were healed, and even the dead rose, which could not be done with magic. These extraordinary signs drew the people to Jesus. They believed in him and they followed him.

The people had experienced the destruction of their traditional way of life by the authorities' dominating systems that oppressed and exploited them and their resources. They also had to endure brutality and gruesome acts of murder, execution, being sold as slavery or burned at the stake, being raped or even killed for sport. They had to endure devastations from wars, rebellious revolts, internal tribal fighting, famine, droughts, bad harvest, robberies, and so forth, as they struggled to look after their families and for their own survival, while serving the few wealthy elite families, who shaped, controlled and benefited from these dominated systems.

These oppressive conditions, together with the promise of hope and the perceived possibility of liberation being offered by Jesus, attracted the people to follow him around Galilee and even up to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was the seat of power, where the Jewish religious leaders operated from, in collaboration with their Roman masters.

Jesus had to go there, if he was really going to help the people because he could not do that from Galilee. He had to confront the authorities in Jerusalem.

Jesus entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey and the people cheered him on. His procession into Jerusalem was engineered to get the authority's attention. He went there to challenge the authorities' oppressive regime that had caused hardship for the people. He challenged the religious leaders' strict observance of the law at the expense of helping those in need. He challenged their economic wealth and wealth accumulation while the people suffered, were made homeless, poverty-stricken and hungry. He challenged their system of social stratification and segregation. He went to Jerusalem to command the end to these oppressive systems and to denounce those who benefited from them.

However, the authority met Jesus' challenge and Jesus lost. They arrested Jesus for disturbing the peace and crucified him as a rebel. Jesus failed to deliver his promise of hope for the people. He failed to liberate the people from the power of the authority and its dominated and exploited systems. He failed to overthrow these powers, as the people expected him to do. He was arrested and was executed by the very authority, which he went to Jerusalem to challenge.

As a result, Jesus' disciples became scared, confused and were overwhelmed by the events unfolding before their eyes. Their leader had been arrested and was crucified and what were they to do now? They denied ever knowing him. They fled in fear that they too might get arrested and put to death. They hid in locked rooms for fear of the authorities. Some went back to Galilee doing what they did before meeting Jesus. They had wasted their time with this Jesus.

The people were disappointed. Their hope had been squashed when Jesus was arrested. That disappointment turned into anger during Jesus' trial when they shouted

to crucify him. No longer were they shouting joy to proclaim his arrival into Jerusalem, they were now shouting to take him outside the city and be crucified. To the people, Jesus was just another pretender to be a messiah and just like other pretenders before him, he suffered the same fate.

From the evidence presented and discussed in this thesis, it is certain to conclude therefore, that Jesus' procession into Jerusalem was a direct challenge to the authority there. It was a challenge *against* the authority's oppressive regime. It was also a challenge *for* the people, who had suffered under this regime.

In light of the above argument and conclusion, I can confirm my hypothesis, that Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was not a triumphal entry as people perceived it to be. Instead, Jesus' entry into Jerusalem was an ill-fated challenge to the authority, for the reasons presented above.

However, although the historical Jesus failed in his challenge when he died, his resurrection gave the people and us all victory over earthly sufferings and difficulties. It is a victory that has assured us all hope of everlasting happiness and a place in his kingdom, if we choose to drink his cup, carry his cross and to follow him. Our mission is to continue to follow and imitate him, just as he served and suffered in this world, so that others may be freed and be saved. We have been empowered by Jesus' ministry and resurrection to serve others and to endure that same path, in serving him.

May his name be glorified and praised forever, Amen.

Appendixes

Appendix 1.1

Timeline of Israel under Foreign Rule.¹

700 BCE 600 BCE 500 BCE 400 BCE 300 BCE 200 BCE 100BCE 0 CE 100 CE 200 CE

Assyrian Reign: 727 – 626 BCE

Babylonian Period: 626 – 538 BCE

Persian Period: 600 – 424 BCE

- They captured Babylon - 538 BCE
- Israel returned from Babylon – 458 BCE

Inter-Testament Period: 424 – 5 BCE

Macedonian Supremacy: 337 – 165 BCE

- Judaea annexed to Egypt by Ptolemy Soter – 320 BCE
- Antiochus the Great took Jerusalem – 203 BCE
- Antiochus annexed Judaea to Syria – 198 BCE
- Antiochus desecrated Jerusalem temple – 168 BCE

Maccabean Period: 168 – 37 BCE

Syria became a Roman province – 66 BCE

Roman Rule*

63 BCE – 180 CE

* A more detailed break-down of Roman rule over Palestine is shown in Appendix 1.2 below.

¹ *BibWok*, this Timeline is a brief summary of some of the events that took place in history of the Israelite/Jewish people, starting from the Assyrian empire up to the time of Jesus Christ.

Appendix 1.2

One Hundred Years of Roman Rule over Palestine.²

Judea (Judea, Samaria, Idumea)	Galilee and Perea	Northern Territories (Iturea, Gaulanitis, Trachonitis, Batanea, Auranitis)
	Herod the Great Client-king 37- 4 BCE	
Archelaus Ethnarch 4 BCE – 6 CE	Herod Antipas Tetrarch 4 BCE – 39 CE	Herod Philip Tetrarch 4 BCE – 34 CE
Roman Prefects and Procurators		Herod Agrippa I 37- 40 CE
Coponius 6-9 CE Marcus Ambivius 9-12 Annius Rufus 12-15 Valerius Gratus 15-26 Pontius Pilate 26-36 Marcellus 36-37 Marullus 37-40		
	Herod Agrippa II 40-44 CE Roman Procurators	
	Fadus 44-46 CE Tiberius Alexander 46-48 Ventidius Cumanus 48-52 Felix 52-60 Porcius Festus 60-62 Albinus 62-64 Gessius Florus 64-66	
	First Judean Revolt 66-70 CE Temple destroyed 70 CE	

² K. C. Hanson and Douglas E. Oakman, *Palestine in the Time of Jesus: Social Structures and Social Conflicts*, (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998), 68.

Appendix 1.3

Family Types in First Century Palestine.³

<i>Family Type</i>	<i>Large</i>	<i>Multiple</i>	<i>Nucleated</i>	<i>Scattered</i>
<i>House style</i>	Palace: big mansion (<i>domus</i>)	Courtyard house	A single room house	Homeless
<i>Components of the basic family group</i>	Father, mother, unmarried children and married sons with families	Two or more conjugal families	Father, mother, one or two sons and some other relatives	Hard to tell
<i>Support from the kinship group</i>	Mutual support and solidarity, interchange of favours	Support and solidarity in cases of need	Little capability to help because they live in the margin of subsistence	No support from their relatives
<i>Access to resources, ownership</i>	They control most of the revenues (taxes) and own big pieces of land	Some possess land or other resources (fisheries), some receive part of the surplus of the elite (retainers)	Some own small pieces of land, some have lost lands (tenants, day labourers)	They have neither land nor jobs, maybe beggars
<i>Social level</i>	Rulers, high clergy, prominent landowners, business owners	Retainers, priests, military men, modest land owners	Peasants, craftsmen	Unclean and degraded, expendable
<i>Resident in</i>	Big cities	Cities and towns	Country (peasants)	Cities and country
<i>Approximate percentage</i>	1 per cent	9 per cent	70-75 per cent	15-20 per cent
<i>Examples</i>	Herod and the important people in Galilee (Matt. 6:21)	Fishermen, tax collectors (Mk.1:16-20; Matt. 2:14)	Jesus, farmers and day labourers (Mk. 12:1-11; Matt. 20:1-16)	Beggars and sick people (Mk. 5:25-34; Matt. 10:46-52)

³ Santiago Guijarro, "The Family in First-Century Galilee," in *CECF*, 58.

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