Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Sunday Mass Study Notes for Sunday, 4-30-2017



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. This week, as we did last week, we will open with the Gospel reading. Then we will move onto the first reading from the Book of Acts and then close with the continuing study from First Peter.

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading is from Chapter 24 of Saint Luke, which recounts the story of two men who met the risen Lord Jesus on the road to Emmaus, a city located seven miles northwest of Jerusalem. The context of the reading is just hours after Mary Magdalene reported the news to the disciples that Jesus had risen from the dead. A lot happened in the early hours of that first Easter morning. Mark and Matthew tell us that Jesus first appeared to Mary Magdalene (Mark 16:9, Matthew 28:9). According to Saint Paul, Jesus appeared to Peter at some point after Mary (1 Corinthians 15:5), and before the meeting with the eleven disciples, the timing of this appearance to Peter isn't known. The next appearance was to the men we will read about in Luke's account below. Not much is known about the exact identity of the two men. One of them is named Cleopas, about whom there is a tradition that he was the brother of Joseph, the husband of Jesus' mother Mary. The other person wasn't named.

Gospel Reading:

13 And behold, two of them were going that very day to a village named Emmaus, which was about seven miles from Jerusalem. 14 And they were talking with each other about all these things which had taken place. 15 While they were talking and discussing, Jesus Himself approached and began traveling with them. 16 But their eyes were prevented from recognizing Him. 17 And He said to them, "What are these words that you are exchanging with one another as you are walking?" And they stood still, looking sad. 18 One of them, named Cleopas, answered and said to Him, "Are You the only one visiting Jerusalem and unaware of the things which have happened here in these days?" 19 And He said to them, "What things?" And they said to Him, "The things about Jesus the Nazarene, who was a prophet mighty in deed and word in the sight of God and all the people, 20 and how the chief priests and our rulers delivered Him to the sentence of death, and crucified Him. 21 But we were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel. Indeed, besides all this, it is the third day since these things happened. 22 But also some women among us amazed us. When they were at the tomb early in the morning, 23 and did not find His body, they came, saying that they had also seen a vision of angels who said that He was alive. 24 Some of those who were with us went to the tomb and found it just exactly as the women also had said; but Him they did not see." 25 And He said to them, "O foolish men and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! 26 Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" 27 Then beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures. 28 And they approached the village where they were going, and He acted as though He were going farther. 29 But they urged Him, saying, "Stay with us, for it is getting toward evening, and the day is now nearly over." So He went in to stay with them. 30 When He had reclined at the table with them, He took the bread and blessed it, and breaking it, He began giving it to them. 31 Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. 32 They said to one another, "Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?" 33 And they got up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found gathered together the eleven and those who were with them, 34 saying, "The Lord has really risen and has appeared to Simon." 35 They began to relate their experiences on the road and how He was recognized by them in the breaking of the bread. (Luke 24:13-35)

The men testified that they knew about the report of the empty tomb (v. 24) and they had heard that Jesus was alive (v. 23). Somehow, their eyes were blinded to the reality of Jesus walking with them (v.16). It wasn't until Jesus ate with them that their eyes were opened to the reality of Jesus' identity (v. 31). Next, they immediately returned from Emmaus to Jerusalem in order to tell the disciples about their experience with their risen Lord (v. 33). By the time they made it back to Jerusalem it was Sunday evening. Luke said that the two men found "the eleven" gathered together, but we know that Thomas wasn't present and didn't see the risen Lord Jesus for eight more days (John 20:26). Possibly Thomas stepped away before the two men arrived, or Luke used the term "the eleven" in a general sense. Nevertheless, the two testified that Jesus really had risen from the dead, and confirmed that Peter had also seen Jesus (v.34, 1 Corinthians 15:5). The two men humbly recounted that it wasn't until Jesus broke the bread with them that they recognized Him (v.35).

The big ideas behind the Gospel lesson are first, Jesus is alive, and His resurrection was affirmed not

just by his disciples but by others. We can rest in the fact that the biblical account of Jesus' resurrection is true in part because it includes unflattering details about the behavior of people. The men on the road to Emmaus didn't recognize Jesus even though He explained the things concerning Himself to them (v. 27). Second, Jesus fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies concerning His coming. The Prophets predicted Jesus birth, life, death and resurrection in amazing detail. As a student of the Bible we have to be willing to admit that prophecy is much easier to interpret after the predicted events have occurred. When we read the story of the two men on the road to Emmaus, we know the secret that they didn't understand until later. The Prophets themselves struggled with these same things. Peter said in 1 Peter, just before the section we will be reading later today, "As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories to follow" (1 Peter 1:10-11).

Because of the complexities and nuances of the prophecies, I have oftentimes wanted to hear Jesus' explanation of the biblical prophecies to the two men. I have spent many hours pondering the Old Testament prophecies concerning Jesus with the significant advantage of hindsight of Jesus' death and resurrection. However, the men on the road to Emmaus didn't have the advantage of hindsight, their minds were buzzing with the events of the past several days (vv. 18-24). Finally, since the prophecies fulfilled concerning of the coming of the Lord Jesus are true, we can trust in the future fulfillment of the prophecies concerning Jesus' return. We can rest assured that Jesus will gather His elect when He comes to claim His Church. Paul said, "For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Jesus" (1Thessalonians 4:14).

Before we move onto the first reading, let's briefly look at the conclusion to the story of the two men on the road to Emmaus. As amazing as the story was about how the two men didn't recognize Jesus while they walked all the way to Emmaus and began to have dinner with him is what happened next in the two verses beyond the end of today's reading. Luke continued the account of the events that occurred after the men returned to Jerusalem to testify to the disciples:

36 While they were telling these things, He Himself stood in their midst. 37 But they were startled and frightened and thought that they were seeing a spirit. 38 And He said to them, "Why are you troubled, and why do doubts arise in your hearts? 39 See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have." (Luke 24:35-39)

The closing of this story brings out a fourth theological truth from the lesson. Jesus is alive in the flesh, not just in the Spirit. In the same way, one day we too will be alive in the flesh. Job said prophetically in the oldest Book in the Bible, "As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, And at the last He will take His stand on the earth. Even after my skin is destroyed, Yet from my flesh I shall see God; Whom I myself shall behold, And whom my eyes will see and not another. My heart faints within me!" (Job 19:25-27). We can rejoice in the fact that one day we will receive a glorified body similar to Jesus (1 John 3:2). Beyond that, the whole world will pass away and be restored to a new, beautiful creation (Revelation 21:1).

Introduction to the First Reading:

As we leave the Gospel lesson and move onto the first reading, we return to Acts Chapter Two and the era of the newborn Church. Peter, the uncontested leader of the Faith, set up boldly fulfilling Jesus' commandment to build His Church (Matthew 28:16-20). The context of the passage occurs 40 days after Jesus' resurrection. He was with his disciples, now called "apostles" teaching them about the kingdom of God. At the end of 40 days, Jesus ascended to heaven, leaving them with the charge to wait in Jerusalem for the power of the Holy Spirit. When the apostles were gathered to celebrate the Jewish Feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came from heaven and gave them the ability to speak in other known languages for the benefit of proclaiming the truth of the Good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. There were many Jews who were in Jerusalem for this festival, and, amazingly enough; they were able to understand the disciples who were speaking in their native language. It was a miracle, a sign from God that he was in their midst. But some mocked and said that the men were drunk. In the confusion of all of this, Peter got up and explained what was happening. As you read, take note of the words with capitalized letters, noting that these reflect quotations from the Old Testament Scriptures. Also remember what you learned from the Gospel lesson in terms of how Jesus fulfilled so many biblical prophecies.

First Reading:

14 But Peter, taking his stand with the eleven, raised his voice and declared to them: "Men of Judea and all you who live in Jerusalem, let this be known to you and give heed to my words.

**See Note Below [Omitted verses: 15 "For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, for it is only the third hour of the day; 16 but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel: 17 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHESY, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; 18 EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT And they shall prophesy. 19 'AND I WILL GRANT WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE AND SIGNS ON THE EARTH BELOW, BLOOD, AND FIRE, AND VAPOR OF SMOKE. 20 'THE SUN WILL BE TURNED INTO DARKNESS AND THE MOON INTO BLOOD, BEFORE THE GREAT AND GLORIOUS DAY OF THE LORD SHALL COME. 21 'AND IT SHALL BE THAT EVERYONE WHO CALLS ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.']*

22 "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, a man attested to you by God with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him in your midst, just as you yourselves know– 23 this Man, delivered over by the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God, you nailed to a cross by the hands of godless men and put Him to death. 24 But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power. 25 For David says of Him, 'I SAW THE LORD ALWAYS IN MY PRESENCE; FOR HE IS AT MY RIGHT HAND, SO THAT I WILL NOT BE SHAKEN. 26 'THEREFORE MY HEART WAS GLAD AND MY

TONGUE EXULTED; MOREOVER MY FLESH ALSO WILL LIVE IN HOPE; 27 BECAUSE YOU WILL NOT ABANDON MY SOUL TO HADES, NOR ALLOW YOUR HOLY ONE TO UNDERGO DECAY. 28 'YOU HAVE MADE KNOWN TO ME THE WAYS OF LIFE; YOU WILL MAKE ME FULL OF GLADNESS WITH YOUR PRESENCE.' 29 Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that he both died and was buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 And so, because he was a prophet and knew that GOD HAD SWORN TO HIM WITH AN OATH TO SEAT one OF HIS DESCENDANTS ON HIS THRONE, 31 he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that HE WAS NEITHER ABANDONED TO HADES, NOR DID His flesh SUFFER DECAY. 32 This Jesus God raised up again, to which we are all witnesses. 33 Therefore having been exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He has poured forth this which you both see and hear. Acts 2:14-33

*The section that was omitted in the reading dealt with Peter's proclamation that the coming of the Holy Spirit was a *partial* fulfillment of the Prophet Joel's prophecy. Paul also quoted from Joel's prophecy when he said in Romans, "anyone who calls upon the Name of the Lord will be saved" (Romans 10:13).

Several points arise from the text. First, note that although Peter did present firsthand testimony about Jesus resurrection (v.32) he based most of his address on Jesus' fulfillment of the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures. This makes sense, since Peter is addressing a primarily Jewish crowd. He reasoned with them based on their frame of reference for the expectations of the Messiah. Second, Peter compared the biblical patriarch David with Jesus, saying that King David was still buried in the famous tomb, but since Jesus rose from the dead there was no such tomb for this King. To this very day nobody celebrates the burial place of Jesus. Instead, people visit Jerusalem to view a grave that is very much empty! Third, Peter explained that Jesus was the fulfillment of the Davidic promises, the One whom God had exalted to His very right hand. This means that Jesus is exalted by God the Father to a position of the highest possible favor with God, a place of extreme power and sovereignty. Fourth, Peter's address was yet another occurrence of the biblical phenomenon "but God," something which has vast significance, but especially so in regards to God's only means of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Peter used this phrase (v.24a) just before he explained the miraculous events that had happened over the course of the past fifty days. The phrase occurs frequently throughout the Bible. In fact, a search through the Bible reveals that the phrase occurs at least 42 times, here are some highlights:

- "But God remembered Noah and all the beasts and all the cattle that were with him in the ark" (Genesis 8:1)
- "But God said, 'No, but Sarah your wife will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him'" (Genesis 17:9)
- "But God will redeem my soul from the power of Sheol, For He will receive me" (Psalm 49:15)

- "Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Luke 5:21c)

Finally, the text from Saint Peter's address in the reading today:

- "But God raised Him up again, putting an end to the agony of death, since it was impossible for Him to be held in its power" (Acts 2:24).

Jesus is the Capstone of the "but God" statements in the Bible! But for God's plan of salvation through Jesus' sacrifice once and forever (Hebrews 10:12) all of us would be destined to an eternity apart from God because of the necessity of the payment of our sin debt to our Holy God (Romans 3:23, Romans 6:23, Matthew 7:19). Let's pause for a moment and reflect upon some of the "but God" moments that have occurred in our own lives.

For our context, this passage in the book of Acts brings an important implication of the truth of "but God" to our lives. One theological truth is that Jesus' death was not an accident, but was the definite plan of God. If God was able to use this ultimate injustice to bring about our salvation, isn't it possible that He could use unresolved and unjust circumstances in our own lives for his redemptive purposes? We have a hard time trusting that God can work all things together for good, but this is a shining example of God's great ability to turn evil on its head and gain the victory. Let us pray for God to do this in our own confusing circumstances and insert the mentality of "but God" into our perspective.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

We conclude the study notes for today with the reading from 1 Peter. Peter addressed some of the same points that we discussed earlier in his address in the Book of Acts.

Second Reading:

17 If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth; 18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (1 Peter 1:17-21)

First, Peter emphasized the great and eternal value of Jesus' blood that He shed for us. He said that we ought to guard our behavior carefully (v. 17) because of the great price that Jesus paid for us through His blood. God paid a ransom for us (v. 17, "redeemed"), and that price was His Son Jesus. "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (John 3:16). Second, Peter affirmed the eternality and glory of Jesus as the One "foreknown before the foundation of the world" (v. 20a) who made a brief, physical

appearance on earth in order to bring us hope through His resurrection from the dead (v. 20). Finally, Peter emphasized the necessity of faith for salvation (v. 21). While the Jews exercised faith through the Old Testament sacrificial system, this verse points out the New Testament understanding of that system: faith is the basis for reconciliation and relationship with God. As we saw in the Gospel reading today with the 2 men on the road to Emmaus, even though glimpses of the way to God had been provided to the Jews through the prophetic Scriptures, it took Jesus to explain it to them for them to be able to understand. The Jewish sacrificial system prefigured the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus on the cross at Calvary. Jesus was the Passover Lamb, the one slain since before the foundation of the world (Revelation 13:8). In the same way that the disciples of Jesus didn't understand salvation through His sacrifice, we too require the explanation found in the New Testament for us to discover the only means of eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.

What does all of this mean to you as you walk with Jesus throughout your daily lives? First, but for God we would still be in our sins and the way to God would be closed. If we live with the truths of God in mind as we face challenges, we can find delight in them to know that God will work all things together for our good (Romans 8:28). Second, we must remember that even if men that spent several years with Jesus, or the Prophets themselves, didn't immediately understand God's plan of salvation through Jesus we too must not expect to become biblical scholars without study and leaning upon the wisdom of God through the inspired Scriptures. God calls us to study the Bible, for it is "precept upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, there a little (Isaiah 28:10). It's okay if we don't instantaneously comprehend deep insights and chiastic structures in the Bible! It's not that we lack information, but that we need to rely upon the Holy Spirit for interpretation and application. Jesus said, "But when He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come" (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit was the blessing that flowed out from God at Pentecost, a gift that put us in a privileged position above the Prophets, and even the angels (1 Peter 1:12).

Reflection Questions

1. We noted in the reading from the Book of Acts Peter's use of the phrase "but God" and followed up with a challenge to examine your life to recall some of your "but God" moments. We wish to extend this challenge to you by asking you to pray that God would bring one or two of these circumstances back to your memory. Share this testimony with someone who you sense may need your testimony of how God worked in your life.

2. Spend some time thanking Jesus for being the Lamb of God, redeeming you with His precious blood. What do you think would be a proper personal response to St. Peter's challenge to "conduct yourselves in fear" ("fear" meaning sober reverence for what has been done on your behalf)?

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For Further Study

For those that are on Facebook, consider posting a paragraph on the Christians for Christ Facebook page regarding one of your "but God" moments. You can find this site online at:

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