

‘THE ONE FOR THE MANY’: Concepts and Biblical Passages

RT Walker, September 2022

The topic, *How is Jesus ‘the one for the many’?* is a topic at the heart of Christian faith but one that requires *the whole bible to be put together & in particular, certain key topics from the Old & New Testament*. Here is a brief one page *aide-memoire* of the *jigsaw* of concepts and biblical passages pointing to & applying to Jesus:

Concept of One and Many - there are two inter-twined concepts here, the concept of the *corporate oneness of the many* (where all are bound up together and actions of one effect all), and the concept of *one acting for the many*, as a representative, or as a mediator, e.g. Moses, the High Priest in Israel, Jesus. Cf. also the *king* in Israel.

High Priest - the role of the High Priest in carrying the names of all Israel on his garments as a sign that he represented all the tribes of Israel & implicitly all Israelites: see *Exodus 28.1-30*, and for his actions on the day of atonement, *Leviticus 16-17*. Tho’ not liturgical, David as king had a similar relation to Israel, cf. *Ps 22, 40, 51*.

Meaning of Sacrifice - the ultimate meaning of sacrifice is not negative (as in something we give up, or the death of an animal) but positive (as in the wholehearted, ongoing dedication of our lives to God in service). The blood in animal sacrifice symbolizes here not death but life. It is a sign that the life of the animal offered up to God represents the real meaning of sacrifice, the continual offering up our own hearts and lives to him. It is also important that in the Old Testament (OT) it is ‘God [who in grace] provides the sacrifice, the sacrifice of another’ (*Incarnation, 40*). ‘One for the many’ is vividly symbolized by the laying of Israel’s sins on the one, the ‘scapegoat’ sent out of the camp of Israel into the wilderness (*Leviticus 16.20-22*), just as Jesus died outside the city walls.

‘Died for our Sins’ - *1 Corinthians 15.3, 1 Peter 2.24*. See also *all of Hebrews esp. 5, 9, 10.12-14*.

‘Suffering Servant’ - *Isaiah 52.1 - 53.12*, the pivotal passage detailing how the servant’s suffering & death had come to be understood *retrospectively* as his bearing the sin of the many that they may be accounted righteous.

‘In Christ’ - ‘*in Christ*’ is a crucial phrase in Paul which means *inside* or *within* the person of Christ (not outside him) and therefore only accessible by union and communion with Christ in faith through his Spirit - the classic passage here is *Ephesians 1* which is full of the phrases ‘in Christ’ / ‘in him’ etc. Hence Paul in *Philippians 3. 7-10*, forsaking his righteousness, wants to be found ‘in Christ’ and his righteousness.

‘The Faith of Christ’ - passages in *Romans 3.22, 26, Galatians 2.16 (x2), 20, Philippians 3.9*, are usually mistranslated as ‘faith *IN* Christ’, in place of the Greek ‘the faith *OF* Christ’. Properly understood, our faith is Christ’s own faith, gifted to us through his Spirit, the gift of participation in *HIS* own faith, and not only that but in all that he is for us in his risen

humanity. A striking similar instance of the failure to translate *pistis* (faith) correctly is *Colossians 2.12* where the Greek reads ‘being buried with him in baptism, in whom you were also raised through *the faithfulness of the working of the God* who raised him from the dead.’

‘The Second Adam’ - the one new man, representing all: *Romans 5*, & see *1 Corinthians 15.21-22* – note how the ‘indicatives’ of *Romans 5*, confirmed in *Romans 6.1-10* are not followed by ‘imperatives’ till *Romans 6.11-19* & chapters *12 - 16*. See below for the critical importance of this. Note also the ‘*active & passive obedience*’ of *Jesus*.

‘One has died for all; therefore all have died’ - pivotal statement, *2 Corinthians 5.15*. Cf *Hebrews 2.14*.

Many = All: ‘Ransom for many’ = ‘For all’ - it is important that ‘many’ is not intended to mean ‘many, but not all’ but simply ‘the many’ as *opposed to* ‘the one’. Thus when *Jesus* says in *Mark 10.45* that *he came ‘to give his life as a ransom for many’* this is interpreted by *Paul* in *1 Timothy 2.1-6* as ‘a ransom for all’. ‘For there is one mediator between God and men, the man *Christ Jesus*, who gave himself as a ransom for all’ (*1 Tim 2.5-6*). Similarly ‘the one and the many’ of *Rom 5* has to be interpreted by *Paul’s 2 Cor 5.15*.

The meaning of baptism as a participation in the one baptism of *Christ*: see the sequel to *Romans 5* in *Rom 6*. We died with *Christ* in the baptism he completed for us on the cross, rose with him in his resurrection and therefore must ‘reckon’ ourselves to be what we are in *Christ*, reckon ourselves dead, freed from sin, not because we are not dead (or free) & hence must ‘reckon’ ourselves to be so when we are not, but because we **ARE DEAD** & therefore must live out the reality of what we are, reckoning ourselves to be what we actually **ARE in Christ**.

‘Indicatives before imperatives’¹ - *Paul* always puts the ‘indicatives’ (statements of *what God HAS DONE*) before the ‘imperatives’ (statements of *what we must do*), e.g. *2 Cor 5.19-20*; or the indicatives of *Rom 1-11*, then the imperatives of *Rom 12.1-2 to the end of 16*. The imperatives are an outcome of the indicatives. The gift of sharing in *Christ’s* faith is ours, but it is always a response to *God*, to what he is and has done. And our response is itself a gift of *God*, the gift of participation in *Christ’s* own response of faith for us.² If we invert the order of indicatives and imperatives, we turn the gospel upside down and destroy it.

Indicatives and imperatives inseparable: NO ‘antinomianism’ (lawlessness)!!!: Romans 5 & 6 inseparable.

Looking necessarily through, but beyond the words of Scripture to the living Word, Jesus Christ in his person, God and man, one person, who in his one person IS our life (Col 3.3-4), who in his risen humanity is the one and only perfect man, who by grace, gifts us to participate in his risen life, as branches in the vine, sharing through the Spirit the fruit of the Spirit, participating in Christ’s own characteristics (Gal 5.22-23).

¹ No one puts this better than *James B. Torrance* in his book, *Worship, Community and the Triune God of Grace*.

² For the relation between *Christ’s* faith and ours, see *T.F. Torrance, The Mediation of Christ*, chap. 4, esp. 78-98.