**Lecture 4: Faith in Jesus Christ (The Gospels and Acts)**

“When the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?” (Luke 18:8)

*Introduction*

*Biblical Theological Continuity*: *Salvation is by Faith Alone*

“Your faith has made you well [*sōzō*]” (e.g. Matt 9:22; Mark 5:34; Luke 18:42)

The healing of the paralytic (Matt 9:1–8; Mark 2:1–12; Luke 5:17–26)

The healing of the ten lepers (Luke 17:11–19)

The sinful woman who anoints Jesus (Luke 7:36–50)

7:50 “Your faith has saved you; go in peace”.

*Pistis* repeatedly takes people into a relationship with Jesus, and with God, which is much more profound and far-reaching than the one they sought. They look for help with one problem in this life and find themselves offered admittance to an eschatological community of the saved and the approaching kingdom of God.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Habakuuk 2:4

“the righteous shall live by his faith”

// “the righteous will be saved/made alive by faith”?

*Mark: Faith in God and/or Jesus?*

Faith in the gospel

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, and saying, “The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.” (1:14–15)

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. (1:1)

Faith in Jesus?

Mark draws us to recognize in the character of Jesus a specially designated human person embodying the divine prerogatives rather than a human embodiment of Israel’s God.[[2]](#footnote-2)

Authority to act for God, even in the divine prerogative of establishing forgiveness of sins, does not indicate ontological divinity or pre-existence.[[3]](#footnote-3)

“Who … is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?” (4:41)

David: “I will set his hand on the sea and his right hand on the rivers” (Psalm 89:25)

Moses: “Stretch out your hand over the sea and divide it” (Exodus 14:16)

Jesus answered them, “Have faith in God” (11:22).

2:5; 5:34; 9:21–22.

“Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe *in me* to sin…” (9:42)

“Son of David have mercy on me!” … “your faith has made you well” (10:48–52)

“You rule the raging of the sea; when its waves rise, you still them” (Psalm 89:9)

*Matthew: How much Faith is Enough?*

Great Faith

“with no one in Israel have I found such faith” (8:10)

“great is your faith” (15:28)

The Centurion (8:5–13)

The Canaanite Woman (15:21–28)

“It is not right to take the children's bread and throw it to the dogs” (15:26)

“dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me” (Ps 22:16)

“Not in insult then were His words spoken, but calling her forth, and revealing the treasure laid up in her” (Chrysostom)

The woman “thinks the door is closed on her,” but Jesus’s intent is “to make her try in faith to get through the cracks in the wood” (Calvin)

Little Faith

“little faith” (*oligopistos* 6:30; 8:26; 14:31, 16:8; cf. *oligopistia* 17:20)

“if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?” (6:30)

“O you of little faith” (8:26)

“what sort of man is this, that even winds and sea obey him?” (8:27)

“Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you.” (17:20 cf. Luke 17:6)

*Luke: Faith in Jesus is Grounded in God’s Word*

Zechariah (1:5–25)

Mary (1:26–38)

The Emmaus Disciples (24:13–35)

“slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken” (24:25)

It is striking that the two on the Emmaus road are not criticized for failing to recognize Jesus, but for not trusting or believing in the prophets, while when Jesus leaves them they ask each other whether they did not have an intuition of who it was, not from his appearance or even his actions, but from what he said to them about the scriptures. Visions of the risen Christ generate fear and amazement when they are recognized for what they are, but it is the word, written and spoken, whose power and importance for *pistis* Luke takes trouble to emphasize.[[4]](#footnote-4)

*John: Trust or Assent?*

The Purpose of John’s Gospel?

Now Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name (20:30–31)

He who saw it has borne witness— his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth—that you also may believe (19:35).

The Data

*pisteuō* (98); *oida* (84); *ginōskō* (57).

*pisteuō* + *eis*: “his name” (1:12; 2:23); “him” or “me” i.e. Jesus (2:11; 3:16; 4:39; 11:25 etc).

*pisteuō* + *hoti*: that Jesus is the “holy one of God” (6:69); that “I am he” (8:24; 13:19); that the Father sent Jesus (11:42; 17:8; 17:21); that Jesus is in the Father and the Father is in him (14:10); that Jesus has come from the Father (16:27; 16:30); that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God (20:31).

I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins… As he was saying these things, many believed in him (8:24–30).

“come to” Jesus (e.g. 6:35; 7:37)

“receive him” (1:12)

“to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God” (1:12; cf. 7:37–38).

Believing: Seeing, Hearing and Knowing

Seeing

Natural: “Jesus saw Nathaniel” (1:47 cf. 11:34).

Spiritual: “we have seen his glory” (1:14); you will “see the Son of Man ascending to where he was before” (6:62); “whoever has seen me has seen the Father” (14:8).

Natural leading to /symbolizing spiritual?

Hearing

Natural: “The two disciples heard him say this” (1:37).

Hearing that leads to believing (e.g. 4:42).

Hearing is equivalent to believing i.e. to rightly hear the word of Jesus is to believe (e.g. 6:60; 8:43; 8:47; 10:26–27).

6:60 This is a hard saying; who can [hear it] it?

To hear Jesus’s voice is a sign that one belongs to his flock (10:27).

Knowing

“we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (6:69).

4:42; 8:28; 11:22; 11:24; 11:42; 13:3; 18:4; 19:28

9:24; 9:31

Faith leads to knowledge

“even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father” (10:38)

Knowledge leads to faith

they “have come to know in in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me” (17:8)

Knowledge is faith

“we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Holy One of God” (6:69)

The Christological Foundations of Seeing, Hearing and Knowing

The Son “can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he *sees* the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise” (5:19; cf. 8:38).

“I have much to say about you and much to judge, but he who sent me is true, and I declare to the world what I have *heard* from him” (8:26; cf. 5:30).

“just as the Father knows me and I *know* the Father” (10:15 cf. 17:25).

Believing and Signs

Though he had done so many signs before them, they still did not believe in him (12:37)

“You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt … the signs, and those great wonders. But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear” (Deuteronomy 29:2–4)

4:46–53

“You do not believe because you are not among my sheep. My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me” (10:26–27)

Believing but not Believing

“many believed in him” (8:30) … “but now you seek to kill me” (8:40)

“many of the authorities believed in him, but for fear of the Pharisees they did not confess it” (12:42)

his disciples believed in him (2:11)

“you are clean” (13:10)

“they have believed that you sent me” (17:8)

“When therefore he was raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this, and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken” (2:22)

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me?” (14:10)

“Do you now believe?” (16:31)

“Yours they were, and you gave them to me, and they have kept your word. Now they know that everything that you have given me is from you. For I have given them the words that you gave me, and they have received them and have come to know in truth that I came from you; and they have believed that you sent me” (17:6–8)

“All that the Father gives me will come to me” (6:37).

“No one can come to me unless the Father who sent me draws him” (6:44)

Believing and Life

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever hears my word and believes him who sent me has eternal life. He does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life” (5:24)

‘the strongest affirmation of realized eschatology applied to the believer in the NT’

*Acts: The Spirit Makes Faith Possible*

If one comes to Acts after reading Paul’s epistles, one encounters *hoi pisteuontes* or *hoi pistoi* with no surprise. If, however, one comes to Acts after reading Luke’s gospel, Luke’s characterization of *hoi pisteuontes/pistoi* is a surprise. In the gospel *pistis* was a challenge, an achievement to be commended, and on at least one occasion work in progress. After Pentecost *pistis* becomes the common denominator of Christian identity: something that, once entered into, can apparently be all but taken for granted. Though Luke does not draw explicit attention to the change, it is a dramatic statement about the new world in which followers of Christ live and act after the resurrection that what was so difficult even for Jesus’ closest companions in his lifetime is now descriptive of the uncounted numbers to whom they preach.[[5]](#footnote-5)

*Conclusion*

1. Teresa Morgan, *Roman Faith and Christian Faith:* Pistis *and* Fides *in the Early Roman Empire and Early Churches* (Oxford: OUP, 2015),364. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. J. R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested by God: The Human Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 263. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Kirk, *A Man Attested by God*, 279. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 380. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Morgan, *Roman Faith*, 388. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)