

Thought for the day: 10-16 May 2021

by Paul Attridge

This week's thoughts for the day reflect on a 1999 science fiction film called '**The Matrix**'. The film is a story about how in a dystopian future, machines have taken over the world and have enslaved humanity, living off their energy. People live their whole physical lives in nutrifying pods oblivious, as their consciousness is held in a computer simulation where they live out simulated lives. A group of people have left the simulation, 'The Matrix', and fight the machines in the real world. One of them approaches Neo Anderson while he is in the Matrix and offers him escape ... The entire plot may be found here https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Matrix#Plot but also, I urge you to watch what is one of my favourite films.

Monday 10th

Taking the Red Pill

Morpheus, captain of a ship in the real world offers Neo either a red pill which will bring his life into the actual physical reality, or a blue pill to continue his life in the Matrix with no knowledge of what is real.

We are offered both pills by God. We can take the blue pill and worship other Gods such as money, alcohol, possessions or the pursuit of acceptance of earthly people and live a life outside of the salvation of Jesus, or take the red pill and see the true meaning of life.

In the film, Neo goes through a traumatic release into the real world, a blinding 'Road to Damascus' experience as in Saul's conversion.



'As he neared Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?"'

(Acts 9. 3-4)

'Jesus said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me".' (John 14.

6)

Tuesday 11th

Morpheus - The Forerunner

The captain who brings Neo to the real world and into the crew of his ship is called 'Morpheus'. He is a considered and intelligent man and a clear leader who people gather around and listen to.

Morpheus tells of the prophecies of 'The One', a man who will bring salvation to the human race and is yet to come.

He very clearly, in the Christian story represents John the Baptist. John was a great man, a holy man and to some the Messiah, but he knew that he was not Him, and God had

placed him on Earth as a forerunner, to point the way to the Messiah.

'John said, "I baptise you with water; but one who is more powerful than I is coming; I am not worthy to untie the thong of his sandals. He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire".' (John 1. 27)

'As soon as Jesus was baptised, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting on him.'
(Matthew 3. 16)



Wednesday 12th

The Oracle - Presentation

Morpheus has faith that Neo is 'The One', their Messiah, and shares this belief with Neo. Neo visits 'The Oracle' within the Matrix; she is a very old programme and, as such, has knowledge and wisdom beyond the mortals who inhabit the simulation.

Jesus was presented at the temple 40 days after his birth, as is the Jewish tradition. Simeon, who is close to God, sees that the Messiah, the Son of God, has been presented before him and he recites some of the most beautiful words in the bible, the Nunc Dimittis:

*'Sovereign Lord, as you have promised,
you may now dismiss your servant in peace.
For my eyes have seen your salvation,
which you have prepared in the sight of all nations:
a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and the glory of your people Israel.'*

(Luke 2. 29-32)

In the film, although The Oracle knew that Neo was The One, she did not tell him; he was not ready. Morpheus also did not know the result of the meeting.



How many of us are capable of great things but feel unready and unprepared? We know we should be doing more or doing different things, but we hesitate. We should have faith in Jesus Christ to accompany us on our journey in the same way that Morpheus had an unwavering faith that Neo would bring salvation to humanity within the film.

Thursday 13th

Miracles

One way Jesus revealed himself as the Messiah was to perform miracles: he healed the sick, raised the dead and, in the miracle that appears in all four gospels, fed the multitudes.

He was human but also God, so was able to command matter to do the unnatural for the good of God's people. Only God or Christ can do this.

In the film, Neo has special powers in the Matrix that are beyond any that a human has had before, although some have come close. He has super speed and strength and is able to break the laws of physics which exist for all others in the simulation. He has super-fast reactions so he can dodge a bullet in a fight and can fight many adversaries at once. He only uses these powers for good and does not take them for granted or perform them for entertainment – Jesus did this; his abilities were from God, of God and for God's work.

This examination puts me in mind of Jesus walking on water, another miracle performed not to astound but out of love for the disciples and to demonstrate the power of faith in God.

'Shortly before dawn Jesus went out to them, walking on the lake. When the disciples saw him walking on the lake,



they were terrified. "It's a ghost," they said, and cried out in fear.

But Jesus immediately said to them: "Take courage! It is I. Do not be afraid".'

(Matthew 14. 25-27)

Friday 14th

Trinity – Mary Magdalene

Trinity falls in love with Neo, a love not just for the man, but for The One. She is most often by his side and shows unwavering faith that Neo is the answer to prophecy. She defends him, cares for him and is there for him in times of pain.

In many stories from the gospels, Mary Magdalene appears and shows such faith in Jesus, she gives him what He needs, for example when she anoints him with oil. She is a sinner who shows complete faith in Jesus and humbles herself before her Lord. We need to show such humility and daily devotion to Jesus in both our prayer and our action, for that will bring us the salvation promised by Jesus' sacrifice.

"Ye see then how that by works a 'man' is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2. 24)

This goes against Paul's preaching but resonates more with me as a Christian.

As has been mentioned several times in our St Mary's bible study, women get a raw deal. Jesus redresses this somewhat in the bible with his even-handed dealings with women; with Mary, Martha, the woman who is about to be stoned for adultery, women who approach him for healing - and we were recently reminded that he greeted women first after his resurrection.

Trinity is a strong female character in the film and quite clearly the equals of the predominantly male crew of the ship. We have a long way to go until this represents both the Christian and secular life of today, but we pray hard for it.



"She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial. Truly I tell you, wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."
(Mark 14. 6-9)

Saturday 15th

Death and Resurrection

Neo is killed by the agents of The Matrix. He is killed both within The Matrix and within the real world. His friends are shocked, devastated and incredulous. The One has died, the person who would save them, who seemed to have great power. They weep; they are quiet.

The disciples, Jesus' mother and his followers wept at the cross in similar distress. When we attend Good Friday services, we too lower our heads at the sight of the cross and we weep. Jesus's death was real; he suffered real pain, he took his last breath and his heart stopped beating.

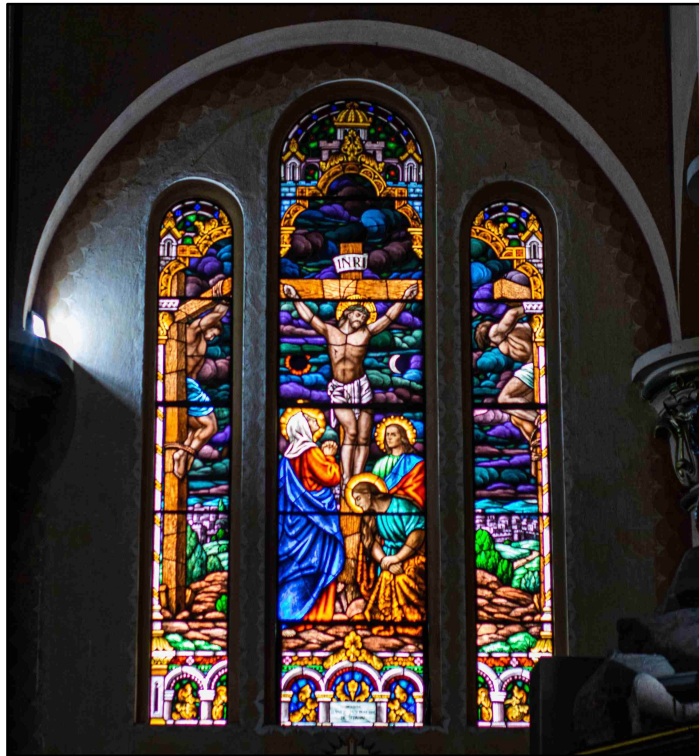
'When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit.' (John 19. 30)

Back to the film, and after a short time (less than three days), Neo gasps a new breath. Joy abounds. Neo has conquered death and he is changed; he is more.

We are currently in Eastertide, a glorious period where we often shout "Alleluia!" at the news of the risen Christ. It was made more joyous this year by some of us being able to gather with our friends to greet the dawn on Easter Sunday, and then each Sunday within the church buildings again. We pray and thank God that we should be able to meet fully to worship God together in the coming months. Each Sunday, of course, is a little Easter!

'And which now has been manifested through the appearing of our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and

brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.' (2 Timothy 1. 10)



Sunday 16th **Transfiguration - Change**

As I said yesterday, Neo is changed after his coming back to life. He has conquered death.

Neo, now, is at one with the Matrix; he sees the very substance of it before his eyes and sees the numbers that make up its code in front of his eyes. He now has the power to defeat the agents of The Matrix, the agents of evil and oppression.

Earlier in the gospels, Christ is transfigured. He appears different upon the mountain top, he is transformed.

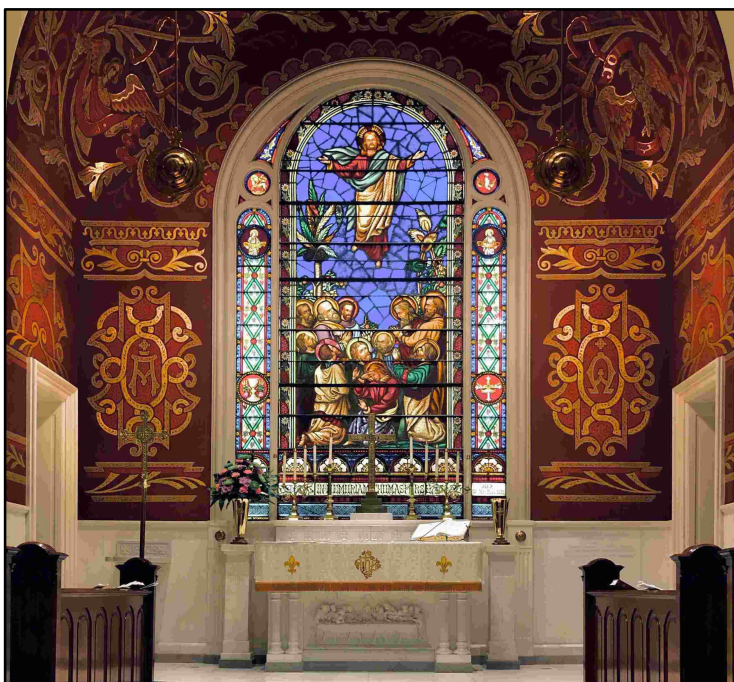
Transformation is a mathematical expression, too, for change, like the numbers Neo sees before his eyes.

Christ shows, in that moment, he is also a bridge between Moses, representing the Law, Elijah, the prophets, and the current time. In his lofty position amongst the clouds, he is a gateway between Earth and Heaven as the quote on Monday also showed.

Jesus appeared several times after his death. Each time he was not immediately recognisable, and he behaved in a way that was different, appearing and disappearing. Unlike the detractors on social media, the bodily risen Christ was not a revived corpse, he was changed and finally he ascended to Heaven to breakdown barriers further for us.

Neo fought the agents of evil and won.

The armour of God, toughened by the promised salvation of Christ's sacrifice, helps us fight the devil as we encounter him every day.



We, too, have God's never-ending, infinite love which we do not deserve but earn through His grace.

'Be strong and let us fight bravely for our people and the cities of our God. The LORD will do what is good in his sight.' (1 Chronicles 19. 13)