

## **Intersection Conference 2017**

Costa Mesa, CA

### **Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom And His Concomitant Aims**

*As A Basis For Discipleship, Mission  
and Church Renewal*

#### **Part Two**

**Jesus, and his aims do not arise out of the blue;** they are precisely contextual. Introduction to Matthew (The Message)

The story of Jesus doesn't begin with Jesus. God had been at work for a long time. Salvation, which is the main business of Jesus, is an old business. Jesus is the coming together in final form of themes and energies and movements that had been set in motion before the foundation of the world.

Matthew tells the story in such a way that not only is everything previous to us completed in Jesus, we are completed in Jesus. Every day we wake up in the middle of something that is already going on, that has been going on for a long time, genealogy and geology, history and culture, the cosmos – God. We are neither accidental nor incidental to the story. We get orientation, briefing, background, reassurance.

Matthew provides the comprehensive context by which we see all God's creation and salvation completed in

Jesus, and all the parts of our lives – work, family, friends, memories, dreams – also completed in Jesus. Lacking such a context, we are in danger of seeing Jesus as a mere diversion from the concerns announced in the newspapers. Nothing could be further from the truth.

**Jesus was not abandoning Israel's history**, he was bringing it to its intended conclusion by an internal revolution of heart and mind: repent and place your confidence in what I am teaching!

Easier said than done: it means we have to abandon prior commitments, worldviews and the habits of the heart created by them.

Jesus' hearers, thinking only of their lives as they presently experienced them, heard Jesus as NUTS! They will did have *ears to hear*...but only to filter and manage him based their current assumptions, worldview, etc.

**The Aims/Vocation of Jesus:** his purposes/intention, performances and teaching is that which gives meaning to, and sets the trajectory of the church—the re-constituted people of God.

- *Intention* always comes from *vision* and relates *means* to it.
- This gives us a big hint for ministry, for church renewal: the fomenting of the people of God...

- Such a focus will always lead to a profound inner journey and outer journey to love for others/neighbor (Elizabeth O'Connor)

## **The Aims of Jesus:** (Meyer and Wright)

1. The return from exile construed not merely geographically, but with God's comprehensive, fundamental purposes for humanity in mind. "Return" includes reconciliation, regeneration, justification, sanctification, etc. Repentance is the cooperative, deep and profound human side of this divine action.

We might connect well with this in the notion of *heart-based* exile: mind (thought and feelings); soul; will; social self.

This is the reason, basis and telos of spiritual transformation...

Salvation (Sozo=healing and deliverance): as a free gift; Mt 5 "blessings"; covenantal love

The reign of God is not developed, controlled or achieved by humankind. Rather: it comes; appears; overtakes; comes upon; we see it; are in it; etc. We enter and receive...

But this requires repentance construed as *acceptance of an overture from God: a gift-that-reorients-life.*

2. The defeat of evil as shown in the casting out of demons, healing disease, the defeat of death and the spiritual transformation of humans, etc.

- a. Authority of God/his story
- b. Putting the world to rights (Wright)
- c. Light on the problem of pain, suffering, death
- d. Source of peace (see John)
- e. Source of hope and confidence: Co-laboring with God from the Garden to Rev 22.5 = we don't have to make things happen or control outcomes

3. The return of YHWH to Zion through Jesus and the on-going presence of the Holy Spirit in the people of God. The advent of Jesus changes Zion from a topographical designation to a relational one. The emphasis moves from the place someone dwells to *the person-in-relationship* who dwells there. Here *return* communicates redemption and reconciliation. Because of, and through Jesus, and through the Holy Spirit, God would now dwell with repentant humanity closely as he did in the garden.

- a. Entry into Jerusalem and cleansing of the temple

b. Zion/sacraments/holy space is now worldwide – where ever the people of God are

c. Fulfillment and expansion of Israel, not replacement

**The Aims of Jesus In His Words:** Jesus believed the Kingdom of God was coming in and through his life—his words and his work. His words and works were eschatological—inaugurating the last act of God to bring creation/history to its conclusion...

In this sense, he operated as a prophet announcing judgement and calling for repentance: wheat and chaff; sheep and goats; light and darkness...

We might think of it as discarding civil religion and finding *the little church* (work first with the *interested*); remnant thinking—without the pride or arrogance; rather *election to service*...as Paul:

Eph 3.8 – 10: this grace was given me: to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ, and to make plain to everyone the administration of this mystery, which for ages past was kept hidden in God, who created all things. His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms, according to his eternal purpose that he accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.

## MK 4:16, 17: **To Reveal the Kingdom (Reign) of God**

After John was arrested, Jesus went to Galilee preaching the Message of God (The Gospel of the Kingdom of God): "Time's up! God's kingdom is here. Change your life and believe the Message. (The Gospel of the Kingdom).

God's demand was radical and urgent—he pressed a decision on his hearers...a decisive break from life as the people had known it...*a self-eclipse*; an invitation to a new selfhood...

Repentance: a whole revamped view of God; self (sin); and neighbor. This is why appeals to ethnic, tribe or history are not sufficient: *do not presume to say within yourselves, we have Abraham as father*... (Mt 3)

Present analogy: civil religion; spiritual, but not religious, etc...

**Mark 1: 38**: Jesus said, "Let's go to the rest of the villages so I can preach there also. This is why I've come." He went to their meeting places all through Galilee, preaching and throwing out the demons.

*Table fellowship with sinners*...communion with condemned sinners first; conversion second...

**Luke 19.10**: the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost...

Healing divides in Israel; and making the two, into one people...

**Luke 4:43:** Don't you realize that there are yet other villages where I have to tell the Message of God's kingdom, that this is the work God sent me to do?" Meanwhile he continued preaching in the meeting places of Galilee.

## **To Complete God's Law**

**MT 5 (MSG):** Don't suppose for a minute that I have come to demolish the Scriptures—either God's Law or the Prophets. I'm not here to demolish but to complete. I am going to put it all together, pull it all together in a vast panorama.

The aims of Jesus do not come out of the blue: they arise precisely within the story announced by the Law (the training that exists to fulfill his will for humanity) and held to by the prophets of God. This narrative is more real and lasting than the stars in the sky and the ground at your feet. Long after stars burn out and earth wears out, God's Law (His agenda, and training for it) will be alive and working.

**To serve the will of God by serving humanity** MT 20:27, 28:

Whoever wants to be great must become a servant. Whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave. That is what the Son of Man has done: He came to serve, not be served—and then to give away his life

Which was the call of the first humans, Israel and now the church, to exist for the many who are held

hostage to other aims and other agendas; to sin—to “missing the mark” of God’s will—and addiction and evil that go with it). Jesus, in order to affect the great turn-around of Israel—as the expression of God’s will for humanity—took the judgment of God’s people upon himself.

**To subvert and correct common errors** Luke 12:49:

I've come to start a fire on this earth—how I wish it were blazing right now! I've come to change everything, turn everything rightside up—how I long for it to be finished!

**John 9: 39:** I came into the world to bring everything into the clear light of day, making all the distinctions clear, so that those who have never seen will see, and those who have made a great pretense of seeing will be exposed as blind.

**John 18:37:** Jesus answered; I was born and entered the world so that I could witness to the truth. Everyone who cares for truth, who has any feeling for the truth, recognizes my voice.

**John 12:** If anyone hears what I am saying and doesn't take it seriously, I don't reject him. I didn't come to reject the world; I came to save the world. But you need to know that whoever puts me off, refusing to take in what I'm saying, is willfully choosing rejection. The Word, the Word-made-flesh that I have spoken and that I am, that Word and no other is the last word. I'm not making any of this up on my own. The Father who sent me gave me orders, told me what to say and how to say it. And I

know exactly what his command produces: real and eternal life. That's all I have to say. What the Father told me, I tell you.

**To restore to God all humanity—Jews and outsiders alike** Luke 19:10:

Jesus said, Today is salvation day in this home! Here he is: Zacchaeus, son of Abraham! For the Son of Man came to find and restore the lost.

**John 3: 16 – 18:** This is how much God loved the world: He gave his Son, his one and only Son. And this is why: so that no one need be destroyed; by believing in him, anyone can have a whole and lasting life. God didn't go to all the trouble of sending his Son merely to point an accusing finger, telling the world how bad it was. He came to help, to put the world right again. Anyone who trusts in him is acquitted; anyone who refuses to trust him has long since been under the death sentence without knowing it. And why? Because of that person's failure to believe in the one-of-a-kind Son of God when introduced to him.

**John 10:** I came so they can have real and eternal life, more and better life than they ever dreamed of.

**John 12:** I am Light that has come into the world so that all who believe in me won't have to stay any longer in the dark.

**Mt. 28 18 -20 (MSG):** God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you

meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.

**Concluding thoughts:** Discipleship and ministry as *alignment with the aims of Jesus:*

*[Jesus said], It's urgent that you listen carefully to this: Anyone here who believes what I am saying right now and aligns himself with the Father, who has in fact put me in charge, has at this very moment the real, lasting life and is no longer condemned to be an outsider. This person has taken a giant step from the world of the dead to the world of the living. (John 5: 23-25, The Message)*

*Jesus said, "I am the Bread of Life. The person who aligns with me hungers no more and thirsts no more, ever. (John 6:35, The Message)*

*This is what my Father wants: that anyone who sees the Son and trusts who he is and what he does and then aligns with him will enter real life, eternal life. (John 6: 38-40)*

**Mt 5, (MSG):** What I'm saying is, *Grow up*. You're kingdom subjects. Now live like it. Live out your God-created identity. Live generously and graciously toward others, the way God lives toward you.