

LENTEN BIBLE STUDY --- "JESUS ACCORDING TO JESUS"

Lesson 2 --- "Jubilee!" --- The Kingdom of God

Leviticus 25:8-12 and Luke 4:16-21

I. Returning to the scene: Jesus in his hometown Nazareth synagogue

^ Jesus reading from the Isaiah scroll (Isaiah 61:1-2 and 58:6)

^ "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (4:21) ... Jesus identifying with the Isaiah prophecy. Jesus saying "this is who I am, this is what I am about to do".

^ The phrase "the acceptable year of the Lord/the year of the Lord's favor" (4:19).

^ This often overlooked phrase (including intentionally in the previous lesson) is now considered THE interpretative key for this entire scene. This is expressed clearly in Sharon H. Ringe's Union Theological Seminary, NYC, dissertation and now book, JESUS, LIBERATION, AND THE BIBLICAL JUBILEE. Images for Ethics and Christology.

II. "The acceptable year of the Lord/the year of the Lord's favor"?

^ Sharon Ringe and others insist this refers to Leviticus 25 and the 50th year of Jubilee!

^ The Book of Leviticus centers on holiness (being set apart from the world in devotion to God). The countless "do this" and "don't do that" in Leviticus represent specific acts of holiness.

^ Leviticus 25 centers on the Sabbath/the 7th day of rest, the most holy day. Then the Sabbath/7th year. Jewish farmers would measure their fields in 1/7 parcels, allowing one parcel per year to have Sabbath rest, not to be cultivated, for its renewal.

^ Then the Sabbath of Sabbath years (Leviticus helps us with the multiplication, "so that the period of seven weeks of years gives forty-nine years" (25:8).

^ Describe what then is to happen (25:9)?

This is the source of the Charles Wesley hymn, "Blow ye the trumpet blow. The year of Jubilee has come. The year of Jubilee has come" ...

The 50th Year! The Year of Jubilee! Liberty ... homecoming ... reclaiming family land ... release from debts ... fairness in interpersonal relationships ... an every 50 year social makeover! Primarily JUSTICE! All of God's people to be treated the way God intends people to be treated, to be treated as the children of God they are. Overturning the accumulation of wealth in the hands of the few. Overturning those losing family land through usury, "hostile takeovers," and the like.

^ When did this happen? When did the Covenant people observe Jubilee as they sought to obey the

hundreds of other "thou shalt" and "thou shalt not" in the Law? Seemingly never. According to Robert Alter in THE FIVE BOOKS OF MOSES, the rabbis quickly found "justification" for Jubilee not being practiced.

^ Why was Jubilee not practiced? Why IS Jubilee not practiced?

^ What is the place of Jubilee here in Nazareth? In Jesus' identity and mission? Scholars seem to be unanimous that Jesus understands Jubilee as a Kingdom vision.

III. Of the greatest importance for "Jesus According to Jesus" --- The Kingdom of God is Jesus' principal teaching and vision

^ Gospel summary statements of Jesus' ministry:

Mark 1:15 --- "The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom has come near (or is at hand), repent, and believe in the Good News" (NRSV).

Matthew 4:17 --- "From that time Jesus began to proclaim, 'Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven has come near.'"

Matthew 9:35 --- "Then Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom."

^ Jesus in the Lord's Prayer: "Thy Kingdom come" (Matthew 6:10)

^ There are twenty-five Kingdom of God references in the Gospel of Matthew alone. Many of these found parallels in Mark and Luke. Jesus also mentions the Kingdom of God in the Gospel of John (3:3).

^ Jesus' parables are Kingdom of God parables: "The Kingdom of God is like" ...

IV. What is the nature of the Kingdom of God according to Jesus?

^ Jesus in the Lord's Prayer "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done on earth as it is in Heaven" (Matthew 6:10). The Kingdom of God is the situation when and where God's will is done, specifically on earth as well as in Heaven.

^ What is the nature of the Kingdom of God according to Jesus' others words and deeds?

... The Blessed in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-11) ...

... Children and the child-like (Matthew 18:3-4; 19:14)

... The humble shall be exalted and the exalted shall be humbled ... the first shall become last and the last shall become first ... those who seek to save their lives will lose their lives ... those who give their

lives will receive their lives

... The hungry will be fed, the thirsty will be given drink, prisoners will be visited, the naked will be clothed (Matthew 25:31-46)

... Tax collectors and harlots will enter the Kingdom of God before the self-righteous (Matthew 21:31)

... Healing of body, mind, and soul (Matthew 12:28 and parallels)

... "the weightier matters of justice, and mercy and faith" (Matthew 23:23)

... Others ...

^ How do we put these and other Kingdom of God images together? Again, the situation where God's will is being done on earth as well as in Heaven.

V. The Kingdom of God as announcement, promise, but also challenge and invitation

^ "The Kingdom of heaven/God is at hand" ... the verb means something not fully present but dawning, on rushing, so close and so real as it to demand response. Jesus' specific challenge and invitation for again, "repent and believe" ...

Repent --- turning more Godward ... in our hearts and lives

Believe --- a radical/core trust in Christ ... believing in Christ's faithfulness, in the truth and reality of Jesus' words ... inward belief leading to outward life actions ... being Kingdom disciples as part of the Kingdom Church living Kingdom lives ... what does this mean?

What are inward Kingdom life/Church consequences?

What are outward/social Kingdom life/Church consequences? Where does God's persistent Biblical call to justice among God's people fall in the Christian life?

Closing --- from THE HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME ... "Someday" ...