



Awakenings

"Only by love is love awakened."

::::: The Official Newsletter of Renewed Heart Ministries :::::: Volume 8 :::::: Issue 5 ::::::



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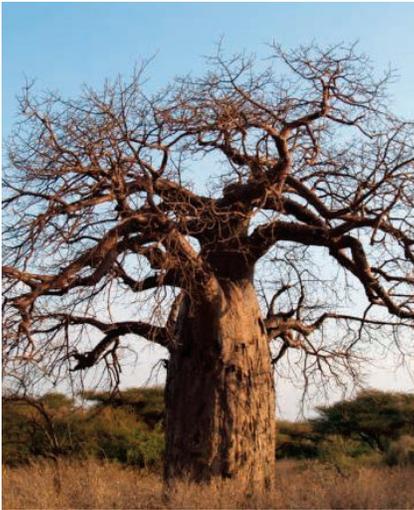
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Herb Montgomery



The End of Sacrificial Systems

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

Saying, *“The Son of Man must undergo great suffering, and be rejected by the elders, chief priests, and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.”* Then he said to them all, *“If any want to become my followers, let them deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For those who want to save their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will save it.”*

—(Luke 9:22-24)

Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be healed through him. —John 3:17 (emphasis added.)

The word placed in Jesus' mouth by John here is “sozo.” It can be and is often translated not as “saved” but rather as “healed” (see Matthew 9:21-22; Mark 5:23, 28, 34; 6:56). What we have here is not just a text in which the meaning of a word can be argued over by scholars. What we have here is the emphasis of an entire story. The story we find in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John is the story of a Jesus who went about “doing good and healing all who were oppressed by the devil, for God was with him.” (Acts 10:38, emphasis added.)

I want to share with you some thoughts regarding the Jesus story (the story of the Resurrected One) that truly are revolutionary. Also, I want to begin this week by giving a shout out to my new friend, Jarrod McKenna from Australia. Jarrod and I spent a little time dialoguing a couple weeks ago. Honestly, Jarrod challenged me on something I had said, and that challenge, along with some resources Jarrod recommended to me, got me thinking. So I went back to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John to see what I had missed, and sure enough, it was all right there. I want to thank Jarrod for pushing me. This has opened up yet another incredibly beautiful dimension to the events of the Jesus story that was there all along, but being culturally conditioned to a more domesticated and conventional reading of the Jesus story, I had missed it. I think, if I'm honest, we are all on a journey: we're in the process of allowing

the Jesus story to truly challenge the housebroken, Constantinian version of Jesus that has been given to us, the church, and the world at large.

If you want to squeeze the most out of this week's eSight, I would encourage you to go back and look at Jesus' Temple Termination in each of the gospels. (I'll be calling it Termination rather than Cleansing. I'm coming to believe that “Cleansing,” is a misnomer. What Jesus was doing there was not “cleansing” the Temple so that the system could continue in a purer state. Instead, Jesus was bringing the entire system and the way of life that it represented to an end.) You don't have to go back and read each Gospel's telling, but I think you will get so much more out of this week if you do. (That's how it happened for me.) You can find it in Mark 11, Matthew 21, and Luke 19. You can leave out John's version because it happens at the beginning of his gospel and focuses strictly on the “temple of his body” (as John's gospel was written primarily to confront the beginnings of Gnosticism in the early church).

Also, because this story repeatedly has been brought to my attention in an attempt to object to (or ignore) the nonviolent, peaceful teachings of Jesus, I would like to say that Jesus' actions in the Temple were not because of a violent fit of rage or an example of Jesus losing his temper. (That's Rembrandt's version not Mark's.) Mark has Jesus actually arriving at the Temple the night before, looking around, and seeing that it was already too late in the evening for what He hoped

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his actions would produce. So he retired to the home of his friends, Mary, Martha, and Lazarus, in Bethany for the night and came back the next day. (*“Then he entered Jerusalem and went into the Temple; and when he had looked around at everything, as it was already late, he went out to Bethany with the twelve.”*—Mark 11:11) Jesus’ actions in the Temple were premeditated, intentional, and purposeful, following a good night of “sleeping on it.”

What you’ll notice, if you do go back and read each version, is that (and these are oversimplified for the sake of space) Matthew and Mark orchestrate the events of their retelling in the order of:

- 1) Jesus’ Humble, Nonviolent Entry into Jerusalem (mimicking Caesar’s custom of entering a conquered province on a war steed. See Zechariah 9.10 cf. 9:9.)
- 2) The Cursing of the Fig Tree, and
- 3) The Termination of the Temple and Its Rituals.

Luke’s retelling presents:

- 1) Jesus’ Humble, Nonviolent Entry into Jerusalem,
- 2) (Luke omits the Fig Tree and replaces it instead with) Jesus’

Words Over Jerusalem, and

3) Jesus’ Termination of the Temple and Its Rituals.

If you take both versions, you begin to see that there is a dual purpose to what Jesus was doing in the Temple.

Very briefly, the first purpose is that Jesus, in his overturning tables and making it impossible for the Temple services to continue that day, was standing in His prophetic lineage from Jeremiah. He was prophesying what would be done to them just forty years later at the hands of Rome (see Josephus, War of the Jews) if they continued to fail to recognize this nonviolent coming of God to them, rejecting Jesus as an enemy-embracing Messiah, and holding out for a more militaristic Messiah to lead them against the Romans like Judah Maccabees led the Hebrew people against the Seleucids. Jeremiah had warned of the shattering of Jerusalem by Babylon in a similar illustrative fashion with the shattering of the clay pot at the garbage dump in the valley of Ben-Hinnom. (See Jeremiah 19:1-15). But this is not ALL Jesus was doing.

The second of the two purposes (and I’m indebted to Jarrod for opening my eyes to this) is also a part of the lineage of the prophet Jeremiah,

and is the purpose emphasized by Matthew and Mark. One the passages Jesus quotes during the story is found in Jeremiah 7:

“The word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD: Stand in the gate of the LORD’S house, and proclaim there this word, and say, Hear the word of the LORD, all you people of Judah, you that enter these gates to worship the LORD. Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: Amend your ways and your doings, and let me dwell with you in this place. Do not trust in these deceptive words: “This is the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD.” For if you truly amend your ways and your doings, if you truly act justly one with another, if you do not oppress the alien, the orphan, and the widow, or shed innocent blood in this place, and if you do not go after other gods to your own hurt, THEN I will dwell with you in this place, in the land that I gave of old to your ancestors forever and ever. Will you steal, murder, commit adultery, swear falsely, make offerings to Baal, and go after other gods that you have not known, and then come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, “We are safe!”—only to go on doing all these abominations? Has this house, which is called by my name, become a den

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New Book!

Servant God by a multiple authors including Herb Montgomery.

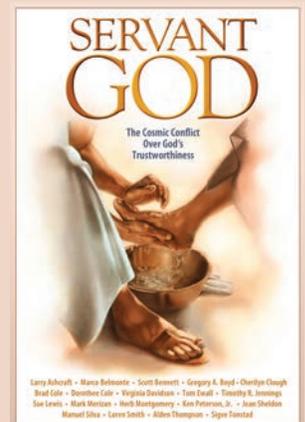
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The End of... cont'd from page 3

of robbers in your sight?" (Jeremiah 7:9-11, emphasis added.).

The cursing of the fig tree connected to the termination of the Temple by Jesus (in Matthew and Mark) is more than the end of Jerusalem as God's

elect, more than the end of animal sacrifice in religious worship. Matthew and Mark are whispering to us about the end of a way of life here on earth where aliens, orphans, widows, and innocent victims are sacrificed—which the Temple in Jesus' day (as well as Jeremiah's)

not only promoted, but more than that, it stood at the very heart of Jerusalem's religion and worship. (When we add the Divine to any system of oppression, the abuse becomes decisively compounded.) Jesus had come to bring an end to that way of life here on earth and to initiate the commencement of an entirely new and radically different way of life.

The rest of the story flows from cause to effect. Jesus' Termination of the Temple leads ultimately to the arrest of Jesus by the Temple Police. Jesus was subjected to multiple trials from each of the Powers that were positioned to benefit by that way of life, which Jesus' coming threatened to take away. The three sacrificial systems, which we will cover in a moment, united to crucify Jesus in the supreme act of deicidal injustice. God then overturned and conquered each of these sacrificial systems by Resurrecting Jesus, glorifying Him as the Christ.

The Resurrection (as pointed out by those such as N.T. Wright) marks the end of all Sacrificial Systems that demand the death of innocent victims for the benefit of the masses, of which the Temple in Jesus' day was simply a type. It matters not whether the Sacrificial System is Political, represented by Pilate, dependent on violence against political enemies as well as dependent on (what those such as Hauerwas, Yoder, and others call) a "religion of war" in which the present generation is sacrificed, like lambs to the slaughter, to sustain the belief that citizens are worthy of the sacrifices of past wars. It matters not whether the Sacrificial System is Religious, represented by Caiaphas, based on and rooted in fear where

MINISTRY UPDATE

Finding the Father in Arden
Arden, N.C.
April 25-26, 2014

To all of you who were praying for this event weekend in Arden, North Carolina, I want to give a deep, heartfelt thank you. Two years ago, I was invited to come to Arden to share a weekend from the content published in my book, *Finding the Father*. This past weekend was the long-awaited fulfillment of that invitation.

What is unknown to many is that my story of traveling from venue to venue each weekend sharing Jesus' Kingdom and His radical new way of seeing God, ourselves, and others actually began there in the Asheville area. Just a few miles away from where I was at last weekend was where I gave my first weekend seminar so many years ago now. It is always a time of deep nostalgia for me to return there.

*"What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? **When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must***

be done so that the church may be built up." (1 Cor. 14:26).

Again, Paul returns to the theme he laid out in chapter 12. The command is, *"When you come together, each of you" uses their God-given gifts for the common good. Why? Because, as Paul goes on to say, this kind of symbiotic sharing of love and ministry is essential and "must be done so that the church may be built up."*

This isn't an optional method for gathering that Paul outlines for us here. Paul is emphatic that "each one" of us should use our gifts "for the common good" and that it "must be done" for the "church" to be "built up".

You can quickly see how a Pastor-centric church will never operate in this way as Paul describes. Because with a professional expert in the room, everyone will always turn to that person and wait for instructions. But, Paul doesn't make any room for this aberration. Nor does anyone else in the New Testament scriptures.

An open meeting embraces Paul's instructions here and in other passages to operate as a true body where Christ is the head (Eph. 4:15) – the only head – and we all *"submit to one another out of reverence for Christ."* (Eph. 5:21).

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(as pointed out by those like Wink, Gerard, and others) Divine repercussions against its adherents are threatened if those deemed as “sinners” are not shunned, marginalized, scapegoated, and ultimately sacrificed (think World Vision) in an effort to maintain the favor of God or the gods. Nor does it matter if the Sacrificial System is Economic, represented by Herod, driven by greed, which (according to Brueggemann, and others) sacrifices the poor (see Luke 6:20, 24) at the bottom of society’s pyramid structures to maintain the lifestyle of the few positioned at top. (think Fair Trade). The story of the Resurrected One shows that the Presence of God is not found within the most exclusive “holy places” belonging to those “dirty rotten systems” as Dorothy Day call them (see Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). The true dwelling place of the Presence, according to the Jesus story, is found in the One shamefully suspended on a cursed tree at the orders of those united threatened Powers-that-be, whether political, religious, or economic. The story of the Resurrected One proclaims the beginning of a whole new world in which we need not fear the consequences of our nonviolent engagement—rooted in love and enemy-forgiveness—against those Systems and Powers. We stand in the Victory of Christ over each of these Sacrificial Systems—a Victory that has already been won. We are people standing in the light streaming from the empty tomb, following the Resurrected One.

The stories of the termination of the Temple, execution by crucifixion, and victory through resurrection, when seen in context, are where the synergy of multiple

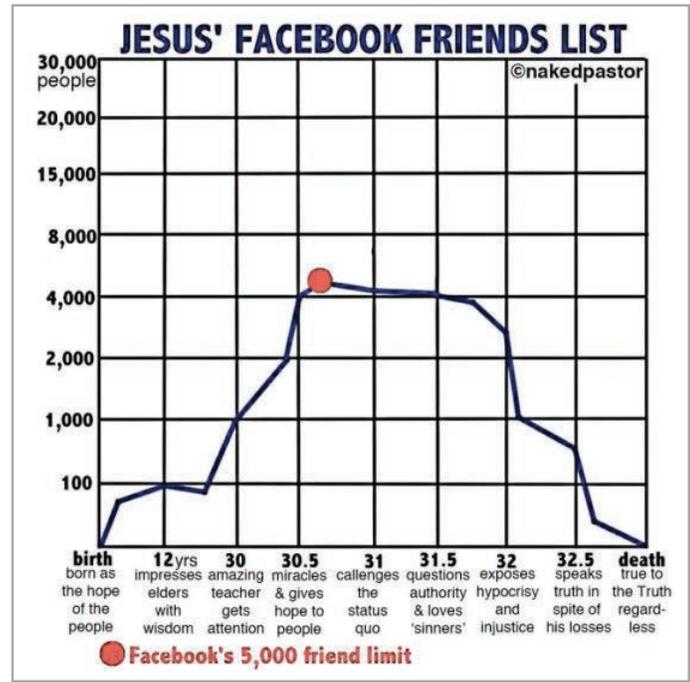
new ways of seeing God, themselves, and others in this world converged to produce an overall worldview paradigm-shift among Jesus’ followers. This was too significant, too exposing for the political (dependent on violence), religious (rooted in and based on fear), and economical (driven by greed) systems of the first century to tolerate (see John 3:20).

The story of the Resurrected One offers the same for us today. The Resurrection invites each of us to align our own stories with the story of Jesus and to embrace our crosses to put on display the reign of Jesus where His Kingdom is established once again, on earth as it is in Heaven (see Matthew 6:10).

We are not (as I have been accused of) arranging deck chairs on the Titanic. Jesus wasn’t arranging deck chairs on the Titanic, offering Jerusalem the chance to be the center of a whole new way of life even though the events of A.D.70 loomed in the distance if they did not cooperate. And when we follow Jesus in our world today, we are not doing that either. God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be healed.

If we would simply be open to learning how to recognize and then say “no” to the systemic evils of violence, fear, and greed, that alone would change everything.

Mahatma Gandhi, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., and many more represent



a long history of those who have extracted from the Jesus story ways in which the Sacrificial Systems of our own day can be and should be engaged. It is my personal belief that each of us, including those I’ve just mentioned, have played and continue to play a role, a part, in the process of enlarging Christ’s reign on earth. This is what each of us, as a follower of Jesus, is called to. Whether by driving out livestock and overturning money-

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Quotable Quotes

But Jesus answered, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?” They said to him, “We are able.” He said to them, “You will indeed drink my cup...”

(Matthew 20:22-23)

HeartGroups

WHAT IS AN OPEN MEETING?

By Keith Giles

An open meeting is one where everyone in the gathering is as free as anyone else to speak, or to share, or to teach, or to sing, etc., as the Holy Spirit leads them.

This sort of meeting is what Paul was describing in 1 Corinthians 12 where he begins by explaining how various spiritual gifts are distributed throughout the church and then uses a Body metaphor to describe how these gifts are designed to function in a practical way.

*“There are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit distributes them. There are different kinds of service, but the same Lord. There are different kinds of working, **but in all of them and in everyone it is the same God at work.**” (1 Cor. 12:4-6; emphasis mine)*

Right off the bat, Paul explains that there are different kinds of gifts, and also that the purpose of them is to work “in all of them” (the members of the church) and he emphasizes that “everyone” is expected to participate. Not only a select few. As he goes on to say in the next verse:

*“Now **to each one** the manifestation of the Spirit is **given for the common good.**” (1 Cor. 12:7)*

Here, he re-emphasizes that “each one” is given the spiritual gift “for the common good” of everyone else in the church gathering.

This tells us that the spiritual gifts are not to edify or build up the person using the gift, but to lovingly bless and minister to everyone else in the church fellowship. Therefore, the spiritual gifts are “in all of them”

and “everyone” is gifted to be a blessing “for the common good” of their brothers and sisters.

Notice that Paul doesn’t say that the manifestations of the Spirit are given for a select few, or to one man, but to “everyone” and that “each one” receives a different gift in order to be a gift to everyone else. This is the groundwork for an open meeting of Christians.

After listing a series of spiritual gifts that might be given to the members (“Message of wisdom”, “faith”, “gifts of healing”, etc.), Paul again says:

*“All these are the work of one and the same Spirit, and **he distributes them to each one, just as he determines.**” (1 Cor. 12:11)*

Just in case we’ve forgotten, Paul reminds us that “each one” receives a gift from God in the church in order to facilitate the work of the Spirit in the church when they gather.

Next, Paul goes on to explain that the Body (which is a metaphor for how the Church should function), is one, even though it is made up of many parts. He then takes time to illustrate how the church is designed on purpose to be a group of very different sorts of people. Not a homogenous cookie-cutter group of clones, but a gathering of people who are not like one another. He talks about how those who are “feet” cannot say they are not part of this body because they are not like the “hands”, and he goes on to stress that the “eyes” cannot kick out the “hands” because they are different. Therefore, differences are to be expected – even celebrated – and this is because the variety is part of what makes us a body of many parts. He closes the chapter by saying:

“But God has put the body together,

*giving greater honor to the parts that lacked it, so that **there should be no division in the body, but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it.***

*“Now you are the body of Christ, and **each one of you is a part of it.**” (1 Cor. 12:24-27)*

This is really only the groundwork for what an open meeting

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Schedule

JUNE 6-8, 2014

Southpoint Adventist Church
Jacksonville, FL
904.571.6399

JUNE 20-29, 2014

Christchurch New Zealand
Christchurch, New Zealand
+64 3 382 9527

JULY 11-13, 2014

West Lenexa Adventist Church
Kansas City, Kansas
913.422.7282

JULY 15-20, 2014

Kinship Campmeeting
Atlanta, GA
info@sdakinship.org

JULY 25-26, 2014

Illinois Family Camp Meeting
Galesburg, IL
630.856.2880

AUGUST 15-17, 2014

Kapolei HeartGroup
Kapolei, HI
808.224.7873

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of believers should look like. Paul explains how the gifts of the Spirit are distributed to everyone in the Church using the metaphor of a Body that is made up of different parts that serve different functions, and he makes the point that these parts are all essential for the life of the Body.

This means that if you are a follower of Christ, you have a spiritual gift from God. It means you have a very crucial role to play in the growth and development of the Church family where you are a member. It means that you matter. You are important. We need you, and you need all of us.

What I find fascinating is that Paul follows this chapter about how a gathering of believers can operate like a Body with an entire chapter on love. He does this twice more in Ephesians 4 and in Romans 12. Every time Paul talks about spiritual gifts in the Body, the very next thing he talks about is love. Why? Because the gifts are given in love, and they only work if we use them out of love to bless the brothers and sisters we love in order to help them to grow into the image of Christ who is love.

Later, in 1 Corinthians 14, Paul returns to this idea of how everyone in the Body is expected to operate together for the common good,

saying:

*“What then shall we say, brothers and sisters? **When you come together, each of you has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. Everything must be done so that the church may be built up.**” (1 Cor. 14:26)*

Again, Paul returns to the theme he laid out in chapter 12. The command is, “When you come together, each of you” uses their God-given gifts for the common good. Why? Because, as Paul goes on to say, this kind of symbiotic sharing of love and ministry is essential and “must be done so that the church may be built up.”

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changers' tables in a Temple, tearing up a passport in South Africa, going on a salt march in India, or participating in sit-ins and freedom rides in the white, evangelical, “Christian” South, the Jesus story calls out to us today to align our stories with the victory of Jesus—to embrace, yes, a cross, but also a resurrection. The Jesus story is calling us to love and forgive even those who are benefiting by the current structure (whether political, religious, or economic) when they mock, threaten, insult, accuse, hate, and if need be, “crucify” us for engaging them, as we put on display the radical reign of Christ. It is a story that whispers to us that a new world is here, if only we have eyes to see it (John 3:3).

The God of peace will shortly crush Satan under your feet. (Romans 16:20 cf. Genesis 3:15).

New Creation has come.

Now let's go enlarge the Kingdom.

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! —2 Corinthians 5:17 ■



Featured Presentation

This month's featured presentation is a presentation Herb gave last April in North Carolina. When the closing scenes of Jesus' ministry are considered narratively, profound revelations begin to surface. The early church saw the Resurrection as God's response to the murder of Jesus by the powers of politics dependent on violence, economics driven by greed, and religion rooted in fear. The Resurrection, for them, was the start of a whole new world, where they no longer needed fear the consequences of their engagement with those powers in enlarging Christ Kingdom here on earth as it is in heaven. They stood in the Victory of Christ over injustice, oppression, and violence, a Victory that had already been won. If you would like to take a fresh look at what the narrative of the Jesus story is announcing to us today in the 21st Century, we can't recommend this month's presentation highly enough.

—*A Divine Dream of Restoration* by Herb Montgomery. The Jesus story, when seen for what it is, is paradigm shifting indeed!



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