



Awakenings

"Only by love is love awakened."

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Inside This Issue:

Page 2

A Green Tree and a
Nation of Dry Trees
The Final Eight
Prophecies of Jesus
in Luke
Part 8 of 9

Page 3

Testimonies

Page 5

Ministry Update:
Phoenix, AZ-AWC

Page 6

HeartGroup Testimony

Page 7

Schedule

Page 8

Featured Presentation

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A Green Tree and a Nation of Dry Trees

The Final Eight Prophecies of Jesus in Luke Part 8 of 9

by Herb Montgomery

Quotable Quotes

“The murder of Jesus does not validate the myth of redemptive violence, but rather the truth of the redemptive power of unearned suffering united with enemy love.”

—Herb Montgomery

Jesus turned and said to them, *“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ For if people do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?”* (Luke 23:28–31).

We’ve reached the eighth and final prophecy of the last eight prophecies of Christ in Luke’s version of the Jesus story. We will be returning to the fifth prophecy in Luke 27 for the ninth and final part of this series, but this week we are looking at Jesus’ words to the women weeping for him on his bloody march to Golgotha.

Jesus was just moments away from being crucified. Luke tells us that “a large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.” (Luke 23:27) It is difficult to discern whether these women were sincerely weeping for Jesus and Jerusalem’s rejection of him or because of the dashing of their hopes that this Jesus would be their Messiah. Days earlier this same crowd had ushered Jesus into Jerusalem. There is much that is missed in the details of Jesus’ entrance into Jerusalem by today’s Christians who still trust in militaristic saviors in our current global climate. Here Jesus is borrowing imagery used by Rome. It must be remembered that Caesar himself was referred to as the “son of God.” He was called “the savior of the world.” It was through the victories of

Rome (i.e., Caesar) that the political propaganda of Jesus’ day proclaimed that “peace on earth” would come. It was called the *Pax Romana*, the “peace of Rome.” When Caesar would approach a city within the Roman Empire, emissaries from the city would go out to meet the dignitary and escort him on his way into their city. They would welcome Caesar and the “peace” that Roman occupation brought to their lives.

At a bare minimum, the fact that Jesus used the image of taking honor thought to be due only to the “Lord” Caesar would have been interpreted as a threat to Rome and could have been met with swift retribution. This is why *“some of the Pharisees in the crowd said to Jesus, ‘Teacher, rebuke your disciples!’”* (Luke 19:39) They did not wish to bring on themselves the same retribution Caesar had recently exercised against the Galilean insurrectionists. (See Part 3.) As Jesus approached Jerusalem, the crowd was crying out, “Blessed is the **KING** who comes in the name of the Lord!” and “**PEACE** in heaven and glory in the highest!” But what must be noticed first and foremost is how Jesus was turning this imagery on its head. Where Caesar would have been riding a warhorse in his triumphal entry, Jesus came riding on the foal of a colt, a young donkey. Jesus was doing two things here—providing his own non-violent, enemy-embracing imagery in contrast to Rome’s violent warhorse imagery and pointing those present that day to the words of the prophet Zechariah:

“Rejoice greatly, Daughter Zion! Shout, Daughter Jerusalem! See, your

cont’d on page 3

Testimonies

I just want to thank you for all you give and the message you share! God's love has changed me and is healing my family. "Thanks" could hardly be enough but I just want you to know how deeply grateful I am. - *NG*

Thank you, Herb, for your messages on Peace. I cheer you on! Bless you for all you do. - *LG*

Herb, your message ten years ago kept me from giving up because of my then view of God. I truly appreciated being able to see you again recently hearing you once again. I truly believe you genuinely touched hearts and gave folks a whole new concept of God. God has given you a gift of presenting who Jesus reveals Him to be. You have my support! Godspeed. - *KR*

Just a quick note to share with you that you have greatly blessed our church! We are seeing Him much more clearly. Thank you, sincerely. - *PS*

A Green Tree... cont'd from page 2

KING comes to you, righteous and having salvation, lowly and riding on a **DONKEY**, on a colt, the foal of a donkey. I will **TAKE AWAY** the **CHARIOTS** from Ephraim and the **WARHORSES** from Jerusalem, and the **BATTLE BOW** will be broken. He will proclaim **PEACE** to the nations. His rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River to the ends of the earth." (Zechariah 9:9, emphasis added)

Jesus was trapping his audience once again in a catch-22. To admit that Jesus was their "King," as Jesus' fulfillment of Zechariah's words would indicate, would be to also accept this contrast between the imagery of violence used by Caesar riding a warhorse and the non-violent Jesus riding a donkey. He was announcing a non-violent, enemy-embracing "peace" revolution of love and enemy-forgiveness

in which the "warhorse," "war-chariot" and "battle bow" would all be laid down by Jerusalem so that the world could be *healed* of its violence rather than simply liberating Jerusalem from the Romans and allowing it to become another unstoppable, violent, world-dominating, empire. That was the catch. To embrace Jesus as King was to embrace the path of non-violence.

When Jerusalem came into view, Jesus stopped and wept. *"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you PEACE—but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come on you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the*

time of God's coming to you." (Luke 19:42-44, emphasis added.)

We covered this passage in Part 6, but suffice it to say here that this is the same crowd in our prophecy this week, not shouting in joy, but weeping in lamentation. Crucifixion meant defeat. These people did not want to embrace their enemies, to forgive the Romans, or to learn from this prophet of non-violence how to even love the Romans. No, they wanted a Messiah that would defeat the Romans and liberate Israel. (It should be noted that Rome would, by the fourth century, be defeated by the non-violent revolution Jesus began, yet this was not the kind of defeat those in Jesus' day desired.) For a Jewish Messiah to end up on a Roman cross meant that Rome had won. (Little did they realize that in reality Rome's defeat was just beginning.) Jerusalem had

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A Green Tree... cont'd from page 3

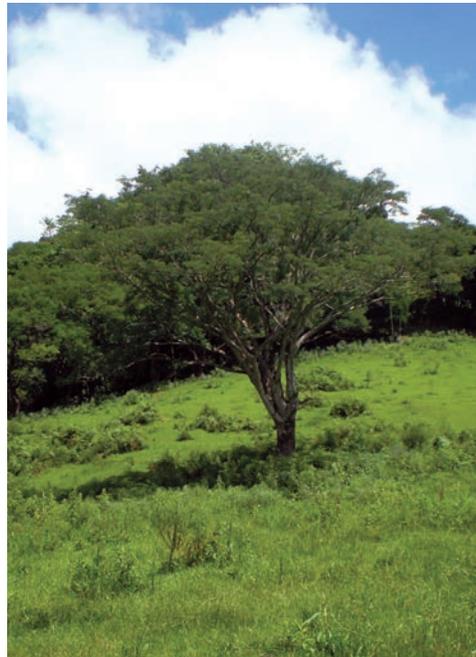
rejected Jesus and his non-violence in favor of a more militaristic hope of defeating Rome. Thus, Jesus proclaimed to those weeping:

“Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. For the time will come when you will say, ‘blessed are the childless women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ then ‘‘they will say to the mountains, ‘fall on us!’ And to the hills, ‘cover us!’” (Luke 23:28–30)

Jerusalem, rather than learning to love its Roman enemies, would continue on the path of an eye for an eye, retribution, retaliation, and violence against Rome. And what would be the result? That path would end in its annihilation by Rome. Jesus here was quoting the prophet Hosea, who centuries before had spoken those same words referring to the way Israel would be destroyed by Assyria. *“The high places of wickedness will be destroyed—it is the sin of Israel. Thorns and thistles will grow up and cover their altars. Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Cover us!’ and to the hills, ‘Fall on us!’.. I will come against the wayward people to punish them; and nations shall be gathered against them when they are punished for their double iniquity.”* (Hosea 10:8, 10) Jesus applied Hosea’s words to how Jerusalem would be destroyed by Rome.

“As the legions charged in [the Temple], neither persuasion nor threat could check their impetuosity: passion alone was in command...Most of the victims were peaceful citizens, weak and unarmed, butchered wherever they were caught. Round the Altar the heap of corpses grew

higher and higher, while down the Sanctuary steps poured a river of blood and the bodies of those killed at the top slithered to the bottom...Next [the Romans] came to the last surviving colonnade of the outer court. On this women and children and a mixed crowd of citizens had found a refuge—6000 in all. Before Caesar could reach a decision about them or instruct his officers, the soldiers, carried away by their fury, fired the colonnade from below; as a result some flung themselves out of the flames to their



death, others perished in the blaze: of that vast number there escaped not one.” Josephus, *The Jewish War*, Williamson and Smallwood, p. 359 (6.5.1; 271–76)

This is where the path of violence, of an eye for an eye, of retributive justice, and of retribution ends. Those who live by the sword die by the sword. An eye for an eye leaves the whole world blind!

Lastly, we come to Jesus’ final sentence to these weepers:

“For if people do these things when

the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (Luke 23:31)

Jesus was bringing to their minds the warning given by Ezekiel in the days when Babylonian captivity loomed on the horizon:

“Hear the word of the LORD. This is what the Sovereign LORD says: I am about to set fire to you, and it will consume all your trees, both green and dry. The blazing flame will not be quenched, and every face from south to north will be scorched by it. Everyone will see that I the LORD have kindled it; it will not be quenched.” (Ezekiel 20:47)

Jesus clearly was the green tree, bearing the fruit of non-violent, enemy-embracing love. This was the fruit the Father desired. This was the “will of the Father” that Jesus had referred to so many times. What Jesus is saying here is: “If Rome will do this to me—a prophet of non-violence, leading a subversive, peaceful revolution—if Rome sees non-violence, non-cooperation as a threat, how much more will they do this to Jerusalem when it—a dead tree—chooses the path of violence and insurrection under the headship of a militaristic messiah!” Jesus is proclaiming, “Do not weep for me. No, no! Weep for yourselves because the violent path you have chosen will end in horrifying events that are neither imaginable nor conceivable.”

What does this mean for us today?

The greatest victories of the church were won in its non-violent days before Constantine. This is how bloody and violent Rome was brought to its knees by pacifistic Jesus-followers. There were no Christian armies, and every true

cont'd on page 5

MINISTRY UPDATE

Phoenix, AZ—AWC

I'm seated in the Atlanta airport this morning, and I am still in awe of the weekend I have just had and the precious people I have just met. Leading into this weekend, I wanted to present a weekend version—an abbreviated version—of some of the topics I have presented in *The Jesus Dialogue* series. What was birthed instead was a weekend series I have chosen to entitle *On Earth as It Is in Heaven*. I'm hoping to get this series up on our website this week.

It is difficult for me to fully express in words how tremendously and positively the folk who worship at the AWC responded to my presentations this weekend. Once you listen to the presentations yourself, you will understand the awesomeness of what I'm about to share. In the last two decades, I have rarely visited a church that not only understood what I was sharing, but also embraced it to the degree that my new friends in Phoenix did this weekend. I was truly blown away.

I'll share with you what the pastor at AWC posted on his Facebook page at the end of the weekend:

"I've spent four decades organizing the theological framework of the gospel in my mind. The Holy Spirit,

through Herb Montgomery, only needed 4 sermons to totally collapse that framework...FOR THE BETTER! Thanks, Herb, for courageously sharing what God has put on your heart. I will never be the same!"

I wish each of you could have been there and witnessed the miracles God did in the hearts of those who participated over the course of this beautiful weekend. For those of you who support Renewed Heart Ministries, and for all of those who were praying for God to show up this weekend in Phoenix, thank you, thank you, thank you. Together we are putting on display the beauty of God and the character of love, and we are enlarging Christ's Kingdom here on earth as it is in Heaven.

I'm scheduled to return to this church in November of 2015, and I can hardly wait. The level of genuine love and the genuine embrace of Jesus' Kingdom that I witnessed this weekend still has me speechless. And to top it all off, as if it could not get any better, we now have a new *HeartGroup* here in Phoenix as well, which will be meeting, fellowshiping, sharing, and enlarging the Kingdom together.

Wherever this finds you (and I'm so excited I could pop!), the revolution starts now! May the beauty of who God is be put on display, may His Kingdom unobstructed come, and may His will, one day, once again, be done on this earth as it is in heaven. Come Lord Jesus!

A Green Tree... cont'd from page 4

Christian soldier was a martyr. It was martyrs who conquered Rome. Today Christians and non-Christians alike have to rediscover the sources of Christianity. It began, not as a religion, but as a pacifist movement of people placing their hopes in a non-violent Messiah or Lord, an enemy-forgiving, loving, and embracing revolution and a final resurrection whereby the world would be restored, renewed, and healed. We must come to realize that we have, to a great extent, abandoned the early Christian ideal of peace and non-violent action.

It is a curious thing that in the twentieth century the one great

political figure who made a conscious and systematic use of Jesus' principles for non-violent political action was not a Christian but a Hindu. What is more curious is the fact that so many Christians today continue to think of Gandhi as some kind of eccentric whose non-violence remains impractical, a sensational fad, or at best naïve. What may lie underneath all of this is the reality that we may have to admit that a Hindu, being oppressed by Colonial Christianity wedded to Empire, understood the meaning and intent of the non-violent Jesus' teaching more deeply than many post-Constantinian Christians.

Today we, much like Jerusalem

in Jesus' day, still hold to the idea that evil must be met with evil. Today we are faced with the same options Jerusalem had—non-violence or non-existence—both in our personal lives as well as in our global lives. According to experts, we live, every day, each moment, only five minutes away from total genocide of the entire human race either through global nuclear war or new developments in ecological science that could inflict irrevocable harm. All along those who claim to follow the Jesus of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are "straining gnats" while by their silent approval they are "swallowing camels."

cont'd on page 7

HeartGroup Testimony

I grew up in a family where God was known but was never a priority, love was there but never consistent, and prayers were never a family activity. I am the oldest of 8 and an only child between my mother and father, who had chose to go their separate ways before I was 2. I was what you could consider the black sheep, or the lost sheep. My Grandmother was a woman who believed in God and would always remind us of his existence every so often, but I don't recall ever going with her to church. As I grew older I was put into a Catholic school here on Oahu, and spent two very miserable years there feeling like an outcast who couldn't take communion at mass because I wasn't a baptized Catholic. I also had a teacher who had never failed to make me feel uncomfortable or uneasy about religion. As I got older, I became much more lost.

Years later, after a few years more of lost struggles, I got involved with a large congregational church, where I chose to have myself baptized. I chose to make the step there because the people there were very inviting and friendly and made me feel like I belonged there. I did well with attending church every weekend, but something was still missing, something that I never realized until now.

About a year ago I and my family were introduced to a HeartGroup here on the island. Wendell and Jo, who were friends of ours and who host the HeartGroup in their homes invited us to visit. Initially we would visit the HeartGroup about once a month to reconnect with those we love, and have worship discussions and fun and games that would lead to lessons about the Lord.

Eventually, we decided to show up to the HeartGroup every weekend for a meal and worship. I could feel myself growing and becoming more knowledgeable about the great Love within the Heart of the Lord. Still I had no idea how this wonderful group would take me to a level of life that I had never thought possible. I felt as if this is exactly what I needed and where I wanted to be. We have completely dedicated time each weekend to the Lord and to worshipping with our HeartGroup. This group of people made me feel that what I had to say would be heard, my problems would be addressed, my questions would always be

answered, my concerns became theirs, my sorrows filled their hearts and prayers, my happiness and joy became their relief, their teachings and love became my growth. And because of the effect we had on one another, in our gathering for the Lord, we called ourselves HeartGroup *Ohana* (family).

After being with my HeartGroup Ohana for about a year now, I can truly say that I have now a relationship with God. I had never understood even what that was or even what it meant before now. I now know that God listens, God will answer, God will take care of me. Through my Heart Group, my eyes and heart have finally opened up to the fact that I cannot live without the Lord in my life! I pray on everything now, I give God the full control of all I pray over, and all that I may forget to mention in prayer as well. I have been brought back to my Father, and could not have done it without the close relationships that have been built with my HeartGroup Ohana.

Thank you my HeartGroup Ohana for the constant guidance and teachings, and thank you Lord for EVERYTHING!

Church was never for me. I am more of a personal, one on one, interactive type of individual. I had always felt that something was missing. Perhaps it was my personal interaction and involvement that was lacking in the Church environment. Everyone is different, and can absorb things differently, but for me, my HeartGroup Ohana has taught me how to obtain something I never thought possible...a genuine relationship with a loving God!



Schedule

NOVEMBER 15-17, 2013

North Dakota State University
Fargo, ND
701.391.9131

JANUARY 9-12, 2014

North Cascade Adventist Church
Burlington, WA
360.757.7577

JANUARY 17-26, 2014

Cornerstone Adventist
Community Church
Coquitlam, BC CANADA
604.723.3433

JANUARY 31-FEBRUARY 2, 2014

Southpoint Adventist Church
Jacksonville, FL
904.448.4030

FEBRUARY 7-8, 2014

Eastgate Adventist Church
Walla Walla, WA
509.529.9933

A Green Tree... cont'd from page 5

The question is appropriately asked: "How are we today to live at the end of the world?" I'm suggesting we do so by beginning a new one, rooted in the non-violent teachings of the enemy-embracing, enemy-forgiving, enemy-loving Jesus. Non-violence, as Jesus taught it, is a steadfast love, in resistance, of those behind technologically advanced violence, behind the massive oppression that causes the masses to continually go hungry, and a global debt crisis that keeps the poor of this planet in slavery to larger and stronger empires. It is to love, in resistance, the conduits of violence in our local communities, our private and public relationships, and even within our families no matter what they do. It is the force of this kind of unrelenting love that can overcome anything.

To live the prayer of desiring Christ's "Kingdom" to "come...on earth as it is in heaven" is to believe in a Kingdom whose coming will cause "swords to be beaten into

plowshares." Or in language that would be more appropriate to our culture today, it is a Kingdom where technologically advanced forms of mass violence will be abolished and the world's masses will be freed from hunger and the poor freed from oppression.

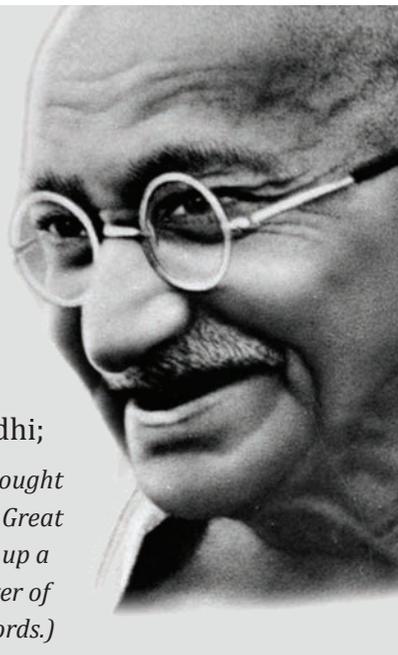
We will discuss the two prevailing views of how Christ's Kingdom will come in the final part of this series (Part 9) when we return to Jesus' words in Luke 17, and I will actually offer a third option. But to believe in Christ's Kingdom is to believe that a new world will eventually come into existence (one way or another) and to be working toward that end in our daily lives today, not just putting on display what such a world will look like! The Kingdom has come! The Kingdom is at hand! The Kingdom starts now! The Kingdom of God is within your power! All of these words, spoken originally by Jesus, are to be our proclamation to the world. His parting words in Luke were the promise of repentance *metanoia*

cont'd on page 8

"When your country and mine shall get together on the teachings laid down by Christ in this Sermon on the Mount, we shall have solved the problems not only of our countries but those of the whole world."

—Gandhi;

(Lord Irwin asked Gandhi what he thought would solve the problems between Great Britain and India. Gandhi picked up a Bible and opened it to the fifth chapter of Matthew and said these words.)



Quotable Quotes

"Jesus did not teach 'passive non-resistance.' To the contrary, he taught 'non-violent, non-cooperation.' There is a world of difference."

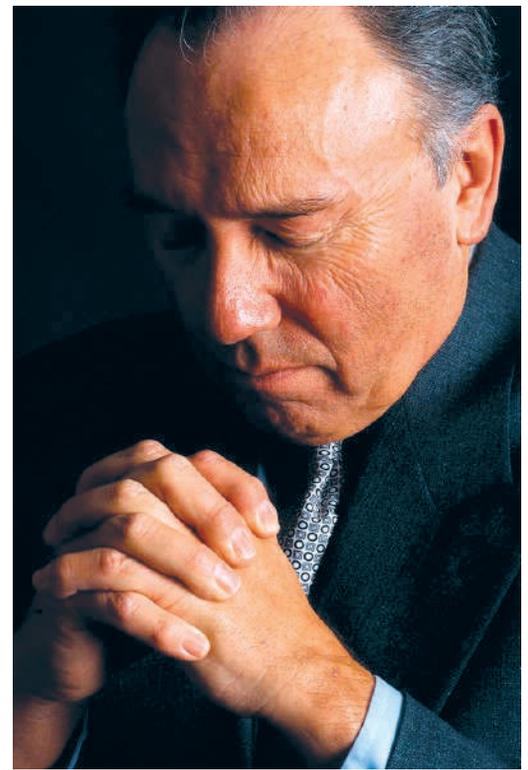
—Herb Montgomery;

Twitter Feed, October 21, 2013

for the forgiveness of sins” being “preached in his name *to all nations*, beginning at Jerusalem.” (Luke 24:47, emphasis added)

We live in that final time that offers humanity the same choice as the final eight prophecies of Jesus about Jerusalem in the book of Luke—the Kingdom or global holocaust. Where do we start? Put down this eSight right now, go into the bathroom, and look in the mirror. It starts right there. As the old adage goes, “As you are, so is the world.” It starts with one person at a time, beginning with today, not with Jerusalem but with *each one of us*. It starts with me. It starts with you. In our own lives, in our own spheres of influence, wherever this finds us today, will we be followers of the non-violent, enemy-embracing, enemy-forgiving, enemy-loving Christ? If non-violence does not begin here, it goes nowhere. The revolution starts now! Look deeply into that mirror, and by the power of God’s Spirit, let a new world begin today!

Till the only world that remains is a world where love reigns. ■



LUKE 6:27

Love for Enemies

27“*But I tell you who hear me: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. 29If someone strikes you on one cheek, turn to him*

Featured Presentation

The Jesus of the Gospels wasn’t going around offering people tickets for heaven when they die. Nor was he offering a way of escape from post mortem, eternal torment. On the contrary, Jesus went about from town to town with the simple proclamation, “The Kingdom Has Come.” As strange as this language sounds to us today, this “Kingdom” was rooted and grounded in a radically different way of seeing, experiencing, and living the love of God for oneself as well as becoming a conduit of this love for others. It is with the hope of deepening your encounter with God’s radical love for you and “this world” (John 3.16) that we are pleased to feature this month’s free presentation—*The Revolution* by Herb Montgomery.



Renewed Heart Ministries provides its resources free of charge. Jesus commanded, “Freely you have received, freely give.” We at RHM take this command very seriously. Philosophically we have a hard time charging money to people for things God has given us for free.

In order to do this, we are entirely dependent on the contributions of our supporters. If you would like to make a one-time gift or offer monthly support, please send your contributions to the following address:

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