

On To Jerusalem It Is All About the Mission

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We have been following the ministry of the Second Power in Heaven, the Incarnated Messiah, while He was here on planet earth. Specifically, we have been looking at some of the points of ministry He performed and how He seemed to go out of His way, at times, to go to places that no good Jewish boy or girl would go to. The intent of Jesus was to shake things up a bit, He was preparing the ground for the coming of the Kingdom.

We have seen however, that the Kingdom was rejected when the religious leaders attributed the work of the Holy Spirit to Satan.

In other words, when Israel of its own free will rejected the kingdom offer, that decision was used by an all-powerful God to usher in the next major phase of His pre-ordained plan. This plan entailed both Christ paying the sin debt of the world by dying on the cross as well as God's present work in the interim age. (Woods 2016, Kindle Locations 1505-1507)

But for Jesus, the enemy was perceived as highly individualized—demonic powers who exercised control over actual men and women within the borders of Israel (even more so than TDan 5:10–13). From an eschatological perspective, Jesus was carrying out a new Exodus and Conquest, routing the enemy that had occupied the land and held individuals in his thrall. God's reign could not be established apart from defeating the occupying forces. By binding the strong man and plundering his property, Jesus actually advanced the kingdom. (Longman III and Reid 2010, Kindle Locations 1228-1232)

We have just finished covering two events in the life of Jesus and His disciples. Two events that took place at demon central.

Caesarea Philippi and Mount Hermon



(Bolen 2012, Used with Permission)

Jesus chooses that location, in the north, an area known for the worship of false gods and for the origin of the Nephilim. While there, He specifically and purposely called out the intelligent evil He came to earth to defeat in combat.

The enemy knows who Jesus is, but, as noted earlier, the forces of darkness do not know the plan. Jesus has baited them into action, and act they will. He has given them the rope, and they will eagerly hang themselves with it. Jesus will go to Jerusalem to drink from the cup that the Father has planned for him. But the instrument of death will be the catalyst that launches the kingdom of God in its full force. (Heiser 2015, 287)

Jesus and His disciples have been in Bashan. For the Jew living at that time, the events reflect a frontal assault on intelligent evil, the powers of darkness, at their very headquarters.

Colossians 1:13–17

“For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation: for by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, or dominions, or rulers, or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.” (NASB 2020)

Furthermore, Bashan, the divine mountain, is simultaneously the ‘infernial’ sphere from which the God of Israel promises to make his faithful return (v 23). This coincidence of the ‘celestial’ and ‘infernial’ levels is congruent with the Canaanite mythology that locates here the abode of its deified dead kings, the *mlk(m)/rpu(m)* that dwell(s) in *štrt/hdr’y*. Again the parallelism clarifies the issue, making plain the infernal character of Bashan through its being equated with *mēšūlōt yām*, these two lexemes being designations of Hell in the Hebrew Bible (TROMP 1969:56–64), not to be understood either as a simple literary merism indicating the cosmic sphere of Yahweh’s activity or as a mythological designation of the god Yam. Perhaps this is a similar case to that offered by the Mesopotamian town of Kutha, center of the cult to →Nergal, that afterwards became a name for ‘hell’ (HUTTER 1985:55–56), as was also the case with the Hebrew toponym *gê(’)* *hinnōm*, ‘Gehenna’. (Lete 1999, 162-163)

In other words, to the gentiles of the day, and to those Jews who had studied, Bashan is considered the gates of hell.

Once again, we understand what it is Jesus is doing, His church, His community of believers, will be made up exclusively of those who are being taken from the gates of hell. This is further reinforced with the exorcism that occurs immediately after in Mark 9.

After that, the tune changes.

Mark 9:14–29

“When they came to the disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and experts in the law arguing with them. When the whole crowd saw him, they were amazed and ran at once and greeted him. He asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” A member of the crowd said to him, “Teacher, I brought you my son, who is possessed by a spirit that makes him mute. Whenever it seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to cast it out, but they were not able to do so.” He answered them, “You unbelieving generation! How much longer must I be with you? How much longer must I endure you? Bring him to me.” So they brought the boy to him. When the spirit saw him, it immediately threw the boy into a convulsion. He fell on the ground and rolled around, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” And he said, “From childhood. It has often thrown him into fire or water to destroy him. But if you are able to do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Then Jesus said to him, “‘If you are able?’ All things are possible for the one who believes.” Immediately the father of the boy cried out and said, “I believe; help my unbelief!” Now when Jesus saw that a crowd was quickly gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, “Mute and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter him again.” It shrieked, threw him into terrible convulsions, and came out. The boy looked so much like a corpse that many said, “He is dead!” But Jesus gently took his hand and raised him to his feet, and he stood up. Then, after he went into the house, his disciples asked him privately, “Why couldn’t we cast it out?” He told them, “This kind can come out only by prayer.”” (NET 2nd ed.)

The focus is different now, before the disciples had been casting out demons, but without serious spiritual preparation as they were empowered with the power of Jesus. It was delegated power. Things are going to change now. Jesus is beginning the process of preparing them for life with Him not being with them physically, but that life would still involve spiritual warfare. In fact, it appears that spiritual warfare is assumed by Jesus to be the norm for His followers.

While Jesus’ power is again clearly displayed, as in Act One, the focus now is not on the impression made on the crowd but on the lesson which the experience taught the disciples. It thus belongs appropriately with the verbal teaching which predominates in Act Two, as an object lesson on discipleship and faith. It is an element in the gradual reorientation which the disciples are undergoing as they discover what it means to follow Jesus, and this lesson, like so many others in this part of the gospel, derives from the display of their own inadequacy. (France 2002, 361)

In this light, the problem of evil in the New Testament is not the classical-philosophical theistic problem of finding a particular transcendent divine purpose behind every particular evil: Jesus and his disciples assume that there is none. The “buck stops” with the evil beings, human or otherwise, who perpetrate the evil. For Jesus and his disciples, the “problem of evil” is simply the problem of overcoming evil by the power of God. It is the task of setting up the kingdom of the Father in a war zone where it is resisted. (Boyd 1997, 236)

Jesus is preparing His disciples for something new, a different kind of power, not delegated, but real. Jesus, in the book of John, re-emphasizes the real power He will be giving His followers.

John 14:12–18

“Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the

Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it. If you love me, you will keep my commandments. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Helper**, to be with you forever, even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you.” (ESV)

As Jesus and His disciples move south, there is a different type of training that now takes place. The disciples need to be prepared for the future.

Mark 9:30–32

“They went out from there and passed through Galilee. But Jesus did not want anyone to know, for he was teaching his disciples and telling them, “The Son of Man will be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill him, and after three days he will rise.” But they did not understand this statement and were afraid to ask him.” (NET 2nd ed.)

This is the second time Jesus has informed His disciples what is coming. The first was in Mark 8. They still do not get it. There will be one more prediction by Jesus yet to come. The enemy did not get it either for that matter.

Notice Jesus is going through Galilee, moving from the north to the south.

Judea became part of the Roman Empire following Pompey’s conquest (without a fight) in 63 BC. The boundaries of Roman Judea were largely identical to Judea/Yehud during the preceding Hellenistic and Persian periods, and to a lesser extent the Kingdom of Judah from the first temple period. (McKinny 2016, Lk 10:29-Jn 2:22)

The one clause which occurs here for the first time is παραδίδοται εἰς χεῖρας ἀνθρώπων. The present tense, followed by futures (ἀποκτενοῦσιν, ἀναστήσεται), emphasises that the future course of events is already decided, and the process has begun as they go towards Jerusalem. (France 2002, 371)

Jesus is teaching the disciples that what is going to take place has already been decided. It is the reason why He came. The disciples were usually not shy about asking questions, but this time they did not ask what He meant, they did not want to know the answer. Jesus is fixed on going to Jerusalem and ultimate victory, the disciples were more interested in positions of perceived power in the future kingdom.

Ever notice how when things get serious about spiritual things, someone always brings us back to earth wanting to know about seating arrangements, who will get the credit, etc. Many times, spiritual warfare is not just about the big things, but Satan will use whatever he can to disrupt what the Holy Spirit is doing.

We saw in Daniel 10, for example, that Satan can direct governments; an invisible “prince” was operating behind the kingdom of Persia. We saw in 2 Corinthians 4:4 that he prevents people from coming to faith in Christ by deception; he blinds their minds. He wields the power of death (Heb. 2:14); he persecutes believers (Rev. 2:10); he hinders—or even prevents—our service to God (1 Thess. 2:18); he alienates people and provokes schisms (2 Cor. 2:10–11); he plants doubts in our minds (Gen. 3:1–5); and he shapes sects and cults (1 Tim. 4:1). And if we consider the wide variety of sins that Scripture tells us are provoked by our adversary, it’s easy to get overwhelmed: anger, pride, worry, self-reliance, discouragement, worldliness, lying, and immorality are all his inspiration. (Ingram 2015, 52-53)

Intelligent evil—Satan, demons, the lesser gods who rule the nations—do not know everything. They do not have the mind of God, nor can they penetrate it. We tend to presume that because they are supernatural they are all-knowing. Not true. There is only one omniscient being—God. And he happens to be on our side. (Heiser, *Supernatural: What the Bible Teaches about the Unseen World - And Why It Matters* 2015, 103-104)

1 Corinthians 2:6–8

“However, when we are among mature people, we do speak a message of wisdom, but not the wisdom of this world or of the rulers of this world, who are passing off the scene. Instead, we speak about God’s wisdom in a hidden secret, which God destined before the world began for our glory. None of the rulers of this world understood it, because if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.” (ISV)

Mark 9:38–42

John said to him, “Teacher, we saw someone casting out demons in your name, and we tried to stop him, because he was not following us.” But Jesus said, “Do not stop him, for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon afterward to speak evil of me. For the one who is not against us is for us. For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you belong to Christ will by no means lose his reward. Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.” (ESV)

Again, the disciples are being prepared for a new world. Jesus is pointing out that as long as someone is ministering in His name, is one who is for us. In the past, it was one traveling with them, that may not be the case in the future and they have a lesson to learn.

Exorcism has been a prominent feature of the ministry both of Jesus and of his disciples, and from 3:14–15; 6:7, 13 it would seem that it is a special feature of the authority given to the Twelve. To find the practice carried out in the name of Jesus by someone unknown to them is therefore a severe blow to the disciples’ sense of identity, and undermines their special status. The issue of status, which underlay the teaching of vv. 33–37, is therefore still in focus. To make matters worse, this pericope follows hard on the story of the disciples’ failure in exorcism in 9:14–29. To see an ‘outsider’ apparently succeeding where they, the chosen agents of Jesus, have failed is doubly distressing. (France 2002, 376)

No one in the service of Jesus Christ has a corner on the Holy Spirit. Someone else is engaged in spiritual warfare on the behalf of Jesus and the disciples are bugged. This person has not graduated from the right school, they are not part of the in group, they are not doing things the way they do things, how can God be blessing their work over ours.

The cliquishness which too easily affects a defined group of people with a sense of mission is among the ‘worldly’ values which must be challenged in the name of the kingdom of God. (France 2002, 378)

In the book of Mark, we see in chapter 10 Jesus has moved south into Judea and beyond the Jordan, but has not set foot yet in Jerusalem.

He is teaching, but now He is being challenged by the religious leadership and He confronts a young religious ruler who has a problem giving up stuff.

Even though the conversation was cordial, it was another layer of spiritual warfare. Not everything is dark and demonic, the enemy lies and wants to hang people up on the here and now.

Mark 10:17–23

“As He was setting out on a journey, a man ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do so that I may inherit eternal life?” But Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone. You know the commandments: ‘DO NOT MURDER, DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY, DO NOT STEAL, DO NOT GIVE FALSE TESTIMONY, Do not defraud, HONOR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER.’ ” And he said to Him, “Teacher, I have kept all these things from my youth.” Looking at him, Jesus showed love to him and said to him, “One thing you lack: go and sell all you possess and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” But he was deeply dismayed by these words, and he went away grieving; for he was one who owned much property. And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, “How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”” (NASB 2020)

We go through life as consumers, shopping for the best toys we can find to make us happy, scouting out the best vacation spots to keep us rested and refreshed, and filling up our free time with diversion after diversion. After all, if life is a playground, our number one goal ought to be to enjoy it. Somewhere along the way, our Christian culture bought into the assumption that God's primary purpose for us is to have fun and be personally fulfilled. (Ingram 2015, 53)

Given the importance Americans attach to money, it is not surprising that people's giving to religious entities has also dropped precipitously in the last ten years. In 2014, nearly half of all adults (45 percent) gave no money to a church or other religious organization, a significant jump from the 36 percent who gave nothing in 2004. Among those who gave anything, the median total donations to religious organizations for the entire year was \$ 500— just half the average cumulative donations provided in 2004. In addition, whereas a miniscule 5 percent of adults tithed their income to religious organizations and churches a decade ago, only half as many did so in 2014 (slightly more than 2 percent)— the lowest proportion of adults to do so in the twenty-plus years the Barna Group has been tracking tithing. (Barna 2016, Kindle Locations 415-421)

The issue isn't only worshipping the false god of stuff, he has been around a long time. There is now the issue of complacency and allowing other things to get in the way of being a follower of Jesus Christ.

The ultimate end of a heightened investment in practical biblical instruction must be clearly understood. It would be the widespread embrace of a biblical worldview, wherein Christians possess sufficient scriptural knowledge and comprehension to make intelligent and biblically sound choices. With less than 10 percent of the adult born-again population currently possessing a biblical worldview, there is plenty of room for growth! (Barna 2016, Kindle Locations 641-644)

Giving is the lowest it has been in over twenty years of measurement. Most are tipping God, not giving.

And then there is the issue of Bible study, those of you who study the Bible are in the minority, most just simply are not interested.

Few population segments generate as much heat or garner as much attention as evangelicals. Although they comprise only 7 percent of the adult public, they have disproportionate influence in our culture. Their influence is driven by their strong conviction that the purpose of their life is to love God by serving and obeying Him, and that their Christian faith is meant to be lived wholeheartedly, not merely believed intellectually. Evangelicals are an example of a niche that is small but mighty. Even within church circles they are dwarfed by non-evangelical born-again Christians (who are about 30 percent of the population) and notional Christians (people who consider themselves to be Christian but have not confessed their sins and asked Christ to save them, a segment that constitutes about 40 percent of the population). In other words, among all of the adults who consider themselves to be Christian, evangelicals are outnumbered ten to one by those who do not embrace biblical positions on sin, salvation, and Scripture. (Barna 2016, Kindle Locations 737-745)

Matthew 7:13–14

“Enter by the narrow gate. For the gate is wide and the way is easy that leads to destruction, and those who enter by it are many. For the gate is narrow and the way is hard that leads to life, and those who find it are few.” (ESV)

2 Corinthians 13:5

“Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?—unless indeed you are disqualified.” (NKJV)

Matthew 7:21–23

“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord!

We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.' But I will reply, 'I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God's laws.'" (NLT)

The spiritual warfare of today is just as direct as it was when Jesus addressed the rich young ruler. The lies of the enemy continue to draw away too many from following Him.

Matthew 11:30

"For My yoke is comfortable, and My burden is light.'" (NASB 2020)

But we listen to the lies. The goal is to be like Christ. We are His siblings, we will be glorified, just as He is.

1 John 3:1–2

"See how great a love the Father has given us, that we would be called children of God; and in fact we are. For this reason the world does not know us: because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is." (NASB 2020)

Revelation 2:25–28

"Only hold fast what you have until I come. The one who conquers and who keeps my works until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron, as when earthen pots are broken in pieces, even as I myself have received authority from my Father. And I will give him the morning star." (ESV)

Joining God's divine family is inextricably linked to the New Testament concept of becoming like Jesus—becoming divine. The academic term describing this point of biblical theology is "theosis." As one evangelical theologian laments: The idea of divinization, of redeemed human nature somehow participating in the very life of God, is found to a surprising extent throughout Christian history, although it is practically unknown to the majority of Christians (and even many theologians) in the west. The concept of "theosis" has strong biblical roots, and extends from the divine council worldview, specifically the aspect of the original Edenic goal of having humans join the divine family. In the beginning, God made humans to image him, to be like him, to dwell with him. He made us like his heavenly imagers and came to earth to unite his families, elevating humanity to share in divine life in a new world. The message of "theosis" is that, in Christ, we are being transformed into his likeness—the perfect imager of God. The Spirit—who, as we saw earlier in our study, "is but isn't" Jesus—conforms us to Jesus' own image. Scripture is clear that immortality as a divinized human is the destiny of the believer, and that our present lives in Christ are a process of becoming what we are: (Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* 2015, 319-320)

Romans 8:29–39

"Those whom God had already chosen he also set apart to become like his Son, so that the Son would be the eldest brother in a large family. And so those whom God set apart, he called; and those he called, he put right with himself, and he shared his glory with them. In view of all this, what can we say? If God is for us, who can be against us? Certainly not God, who did not even keep back his own Son, but offered him for us all! He gave us his Son—will he not also freely give us all things? Who will accuse God's chosen people? God himself declares them not guilty! Who, then, will condemn them? Not Christ Jesus, who died, or rather, who was raised to life and is at the right-hand side of God, pleading with him for us! Who, then, can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble do it, or hardship or persecution or hunger or poverty or danger or death? As the scripture says, "For your sake we are in danger of death at all times; we are treated like sheep that are going to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we have complete victory through him who loved us! For I am certain that nothing can separate us from his love: neither death nor life, neither angels nor other heavenly rulers or powers, neither the present nor the future, neither the world above nor the world below—there is nothing in all creation that will ever be able to separate us from the love of God which is ours through Christ Jesus our Lord." (GNB)

Back to our text, Jesus, as shown in Mark, is moving towards the ultimate confrontation with evil. He is determined to go to Jerusalem. From the point He has the dual confrontation in the north, He has been laser focused on getting to Jerusalem and to do so on time.

Mark 10:32–45

“They were on the road, going up to Jerusalem, and Jesus was walking ahead of them; they were amazed, and those who followed were afraid. He took the twelve aside again and began to tell them what was to happen to him, saying, “See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be handed over to the chief priests and the scribes, and they will condemn him to death; then they will hand him over to the Gentiles; they will mock him, and spit upon him, and flog him, and kill him; and after three days he will rise again.” James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came forward to him and said to him, “Teacher, we want you to do for us whatever we ask of you.” And he said to them, “What is it you want me to do for you?” And they said to him, “Grant us to sit, one at your right hand and one at your left, in your glory.” But Jesus said to them, “You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” They replied, “We are able.” Then Jesus said to them, “The cup that I drink you will drink; and with the baptism with which I am baptized, you will be baptized; but to sit at my right hand or at my left is not mine to grant, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” When the ten heard this, they began to be angry with James and John. So Jesus called them and said to them, “You know that among the Gentiles those whom they recognize as their rulers lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. But it is not so among you; but whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.”” (NRSV)

Jesus gives clear teaching about what is coming, and all the disciples can do is maneuver for position. Jesus points out where they need to be, still, they are not quite there yet.

Mark develops the theme of the “way” in his Gospel, repeating the term *hodos* sixteen times, seven of which occur between 8:22 and 11:1—a section appropriately called Mark’s “Way” section. Thus, the leitmotif of “way,” established in the prologue by the echoes from Exodus, Isaiah, and Malachi, renders Jesus as the manifestation of Yahweh, the divine warrior and king who is making his way to his holy mount and throne. (Longman III and Reid 2010, Kindle Locations 1381-1386)

Next week...the triumph that is the cross.

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