

The Jesus we never knew x09 VPBC 26 Feb 2017

LUKE 4: (13) 14 - 30 (READ)

“The Messiah’s Manifesto”.

(A public declaration of principles, policies, or intentions, especially that of a political party.)

A creed is a **manifesto** of religious or spiritual beliefs).

Continuing our theme for this year “the Jesus we never knew” and **we return to the way Jesus’ uses his power and for what ends – what is it going to achieve.** This is always a significant issue in the world as we know. So, what is being tested here as we look at his declarations and practices is just what kind of Messiah Jesus going to be and what sort of Kingdom he is bringing in. What is the character of this Kingdom that is being brought into the world by his presence – his incarnation?

Even today many in the world are confused about what power Jesus is seeking to exert in our lives. (They are confused even at times by the Church itself about the person of Jesus. L.J. Ross in the book “Angel” describes Jesus as “**the beardy one, with sandals and a castle in the sky**”.)

Jesus is about God’s Kingdom on EARTH (as in heaven) – not about fairy tale castles in the sky. Just how different would his rule it be from the rule of say the Herods or the Romans? How different is it from the rule of Putin or Trump?

LUKE chooses to place the significant incident of Jesus reading and preaching in the Nazareth Synagogue immediately after the Trails in the Wilderness(v13). But he also acknowledges that much has transpired since that happened: Jesus has been powerfully speaking and ministering healings in GALILEE and especially in the important town of CAPERNAUM. The people of Nazareth have already heard about this when Jesus turns up in Nazareth and as per his habit attends the Synagogue.

Like notable visiting rabbis he is handed the scroll to read and invited by implication to comment on it – to preach. As is the custom he stands to read from the scroll and then sits to comment. He is handed the scroll of Isaiah and selects two portions to read from. (**Isaiah 61: 1 & 2 and then 58:6**).

As he sits and all eyes are on him he claims that as he read the Scripture that the prophecy about the anointed Messiah was fulfilled in his person. Quite a claim! JESUS says: Look no further - Messiah – anointed one, the Christ is here and this is my mission, my manifesto.

Jim Punton quote in Roger Dowley’s autobiography p87. (All God’s promises are yes and amen in Jesus. So, all the Messianic promises are yes in Jesus).

“If references to “CHRIST” in the NT were habitually read as references to “MESSIAH” (the 2 words having the same meaning – anointed) with all its OT connotations, it becomes inescapable to the reader that Jesus and the Apostles were importing into the

proclamation of the Good News of the Kingdom all the “explicit” Messianic principles of OT righteousness and justice: that when the long awaited Messiah was identified in the person of Jesus as “Christ”, (Acts 2: 36; 3:20; 5:42; 9: 34) it was self-evident to those who had been looking for the coming of the Messiah that Jesus was inaugurating, amongst much else, God’s liberation from oppression as foretold by the prophets.”

This is the sort of King and Kingdom – the Messianic Kingdom in ISRAEL.

But “Israel” the small OT people of God is now extended to embrace all of those in the Gentile nations who accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Christ/Messiah. So the OT promises are binding on us as the New Israel e.g. Deuteronomy 15: 4 “there will be no poor among you if only you will obey the voice of the LORD your God”. (See the comments made about the believing community who followed the Risen Jesus: Acts 2 and 4 – life among the Believers). The Messiah in Jesus comes to establish a just community where righteousness is valued and “no one claims what they have belongs to them alone”.

Luke’s Gospel is very much about the inclusion that Jesus’ Gospel brings: as opposed to an exclusive community which excludes others. Jesus from his birth includes the marginalised: shepherds and Gentiles. Dr Luke himself is a Gentile writer among a Bible of all Jewish writers. He writes in “street Greek” and with Paul seeks to reach out to the Gentiles with the message. **Belonging to God’s Kingdom is about membership of a Body – not an exclusive club. Luke’s early chapters make it plain that this Jesus is the awaited Messiah:**

Mary in the prophetic Magnificat (Luke 1) declares what the child she gives birth to will do (v55). It’s in line with OT prophesies about Messiah.

Zechariah (vv67 – 79) prophesies about his son John and also how he will prepare the way for the Messiah.

Angels (2:8-12) declared a Saviour who was both Messiah and Master. They spoke of peace – a shalom just community on earth.

Simeon also prophesied over Jesus...and then **Anna** arrived and prophesied and praised God.

So, Luke goes out of his way to show all those who point to Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah – anointed One. And in the synagogue at Nazareth it is Jesus himself who declares that Isaiah’s prophesies are about him. In verse 18 Jesus himself using the empathic 3 times and says – it’s ME. Luke notes that Jesus is strong in the Spirit. Also those listening to him are amazed at the graciousness and authority of his words.

He declares that he is calling the outcasts IN. Also, he speaks in Jubilee terms about a redistribution of wealth and a more just society. At first, they are pleased because they believe that they will benefit. BUT THEN JESUS BLOWS IT AS HE DECLARES THAT THE BLESSINGS OF MESSIAH ARE ALSO FOR THE GENTILES.

He uses Scriptural history to point out that this is not the first time that God has chosen to bless the foreigner, the Gentile even before those of Israel. In the case of both Elijah and Elisha the foreigner was blessed.

Elijah (*1 Kings 17: 8 fol*) was helped and became a blessing to the widow of Zarephath in Sidon. There were many widows in Israel not used or blessed.

Elisha (*2 Kings 5: 1 – 14*) cleansed the leper Naaman of Syria rather than lepers of Israel.

Jesus knows that in Nazareth they want him to perform miracles as he had already done in other parts of Galilee especially Capernaum – he declines saying a prophet is not recognised by his own. (A bigger statement than it at first appears. John also declares that Jesus *came to his own but his own knew him not. John also says he writes his Gospel so that they may know that Jesus is The Messiah*). The men throw him out of the synagogue, banish him from the village and take him to the cliff edge to throw him over to kill him. (See also *6:11 and John 5:18*). He escapes. As far as we know he never returned to Nazareth

The Jesus we never really knew challenged tradition, customs, prejudices and still does if they are contrary to God's perception of justice. He made it plain that he came not just for the Israel of the Jews but also the unclean and unholy Gentiles if they would receive him and believe in him.

He declared Good News for the POOR.

What does “the poor” mean here in Luke's Gospel? Well it's not enough to say that it means the poor in Spirit (Matt 5:3) or the economically poor it refers to peoples' STATUS – i.e. the POWERLESS. Maybe born into it “ascribed” poverty or achieved “performance status” poverty but could be a great hindrance to progress of any sort: e.g., could be a birth defect or disability, could be born a slave like Philemon or many others.

Jesus is quoting Isaiah and saying that when Messiah comes the poor, the captive, the oppressed are INCLUDED not excluded in God's Kingdom. Jesus comes to reverse old restrictions amongst those who will receive him and his RULE. Jesus' message is an affront to any who won't come in through the same door as the poor. (So to the Pharisees and the Essenes Jesus message is a stumbling block that will trip them up and cause them to fall). THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS ONLY OPEN TO THOSE WHO WILL RECEIVE JESUS AND HIS MESSAGE.

The kingly message of Jesus is “to be exercised in pardon, healing and liberation”. (Caird p86) “*This Gospel leaves no room for privilege*”, (Caird p87)

Jesus inaugurates the Messianic Age – the acceptable year of God...and shocks, horrifies the men of the Nazareth Synagogue. In their nationalistic fervour, they could not accept his message.

In the Epistles, e.g. Peter further developed the understanding of a new Nation of Priests (1P2:9,10). We from many nations and tribes are now the New Israel under King Jesus – the anointed Messiah. We are to live justly, to love mercy and walk humbly with God. We are to welcome all who will receive Jesus as King and offer hospitality to all. God has chosen to use us the – the weak and foolish things of this world to confound the wisdom of this world. (*Corinthians*).

But all too often we have domesticated the Good News and simply become a respectable people who do not live by the declared values and purposes of Jesus. We have treated the Lion Jesus as if he and his message were a fluffy kitten to sit and be stroked in our laps instead living by the Jesus Manifesto and the values of King Jesus and we have not lived as the new community.