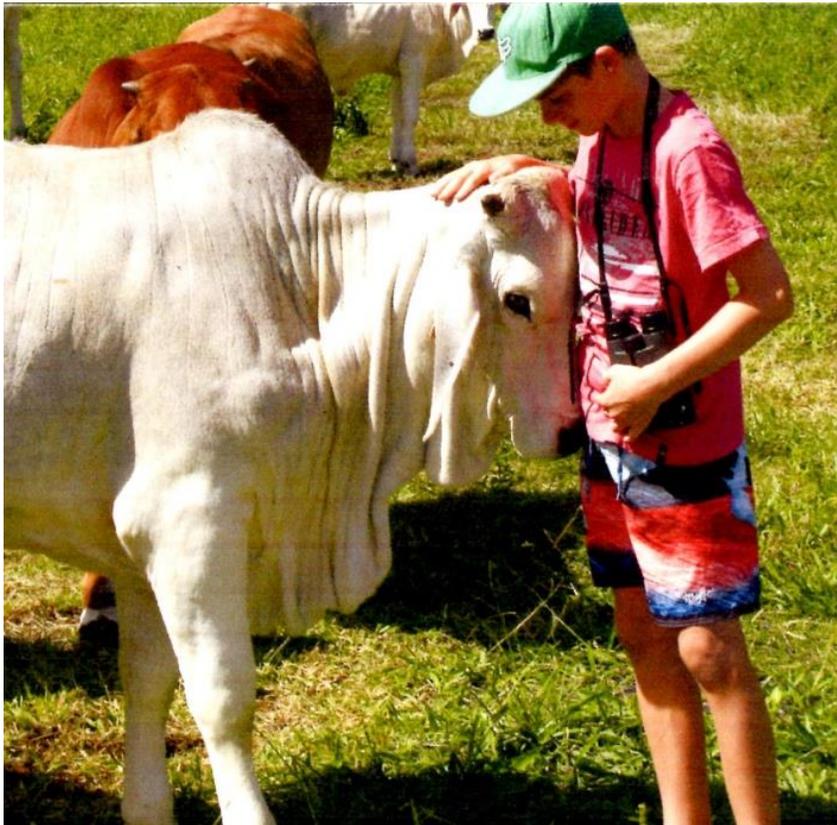


THE KINGDOM OF GOD

GOD'S GOVERNMENT OVER YOUR LIFE AND MINE



THE GOOD NEWS

“From that time, Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent; for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand” (Matthew 4:17)

“...and this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in all the world, for a witness to the nations; and then the end shall come”, (Matthew 24:14)



The evangelical **man-centred gospel** commonly preached in the churches is that Jesus has saved us humans from our sins. This may be true, but Matthew 4:17 tells us that the message Jesus preached was: ‘REPENT; for the KINGDOM OF HEAVEN is at hand!’ What is the connection between these two ideas?

To understand that we need to remind ourselves that Jesus was preaching a **God-centred gospel**, something that was good news for God. That does not mean that the Kingdom gospel is not good news for man, it is; but only indirectly, **only in so far as we repent**, i.e. **bring our minds into harmony with God’s program and thinking.**

JOHN POTTER

IN THE BEGINNING



Genesis 1 tells us that, 'in the beginning God created the heaven and the earth'. Heaven we understand to be the universal space; and the earth we understand to refer to matter in space and our planet in particular. The Greek word for the universe and all that is in it is *cosmos*. And the first question we might ask is: 'Why did God create a *cosmos*?'

Revelations 4:11 tells us that God created the *cosmos* for His own pleasure. We can understand this; we have the same kind of creativity built into our nature, we create things out of some inner drive and experience a deep sense of satisfaction when we produce something that seems to be worthwhile. Presumably this gives us some idea as to how God feels about the *cosmos*. When he completed it He looked at it and said: "That's good!"

WHY GOD CREATED HUMANS

Our second question is: why did God create humans? Apparently His main motivation was pleasure but it seems that He also had some purpose for us in the scheme of things, for He said, 'be fruitful and multiply, fill the earth and **subdue it**, and **have dominion** over the fish... and the fowl... and every living creature' (Gen.1:28). Then He placed the first man in a garden to **till it and keep it** (Gen.2:15), i.e. food production and gardening which pays attention to the conservation of resources)

We gather from these statements that we were created to be stewards of the *cosmos*, to manage things on God's behalf. We were created with senses (so that we could relate to the physical world) and the ability to relate to God on a one to one basis (so that we could work with Him). That makes us a door way for the Spirit, which is God, to manage the physical world **through us**. A wonderful and challenging occupation!



In God's plan, our relationship with Him was not to be robotic but a partnership in which we operated as free agents. We get an insight into how God intended us to relate to Him from Genesis 2:19 which tells us that God brought all of the animals and birds He had made to the first man Adam 'to see what he would call them'; and whatever Adam called them 'that was their name'! Amazing!

THE FALL

The first humans did not use their free agency to good purposes. They were 'conned' by a demon possessed serpent, handed to the devil control of the *cosmos*, and worse; because they were God's access point, they **caused God to be isolated from the creation** which He loves! Not a good result!

God's response was to curse the serpent (which gave itself to the enemy), put enmity between the devil's seed and the seed (singular) of the woman (i.e. Jesus), multiply pain for the woman at child birth and cause her to be

under the man's authority. He also cursed the ground with weeds so that Adam would have to work hard for his sustenance, and evicted them both



from the Garden of Eden! This is pretty much how things are today for the common man. This all seems rather harsh but all we can say is: God knew what He was doing – for our good and His.

REDEMPTION

In 'the fullness of time' (when God was ready) the Creator God sent the Word of God in human form (Jesus) to planet Earth. His purpose in this action was to regain control of the *cosmos* (which He loves, John 3:16)) and to offer humans the chance of being reinstated in their job of managing God's affairs on planet Earth.



Key scriptures are II Corinthians 5:19 and Colossians 1:20 which tell us that God in Christ was **reconciling** the whole *cosmos* to Himself. To understand what that means we need to know that the Greek word translated 'reconciling' is *kat-allasson*, a market term which refers to the business of money changers. The prefix *kat* indicates the direction of movement from the higher to the lower; *kat-allasson* means to ex-change a coin of high value for a number of coins of lower value, so that a person may have change in their pocket for purchasing goods at the market. From this we understand Paul to be saying that Jesus (a personage of very high value) gave Himself to the devil in exchange for the *cosmos*, i.e. **everything** including us. The deal was made. Jesus handed Himself over to be crucified and God regained control of His own creation. Well, not exactly, but **legally the deal was done**. God had redeemed (bought back) the *cosmos*. This is the Gospel, the good news of the Kingdom of God!

THE CONFLICT CONTINUES



On the third day after His crucifixion, Jesus rose from the dead and carried captivity captive. This was bad news for the devil; his agents had killed Jesus but they could not keep Him dead. So the devil did not hand everything over to God as he was legally committed to do. Rather, he continued to enslave humans and set them over God's land to manage it on his behalf. That is largely how we find the present world. Well not quite. There are a number of people who have offered themselves to God for His

purposes and to this army God has committed the task of **taking back His land!**

This project is not optional for us. We understand is that we were 'bought with a price' and are 'not our own'. God opened the door for us to resume fellowship with Himself by His own actions. And He did not do this so that we might feel 'good'; He did it in order that we might be reinstated as stewards of His Kingdom, having dominion over the creation, doing those good works which God had 'ordained that we should walk in them' (Ephesians 2:10). We were not saved in order to go to heaven, we were saved so we could assist God get His creation plan back on the table!

THE TASK

The immediate task at hand is to get the devil off God's land. One commentator put it this way: 'It is like playing doubles in tennis with the Lord; when it comes to dealing with the devil; God says "yours"'. But, having said that, we need to remember we are not called to do these things without reference to the Lord. Jesus is the Army Commander and He will give us the battle strategy. We are able to keep in touch with Him because He has placed His Spirit within us; and when the Spirit is released, through the veil (John 7:38-39) we enjoy a close and rich relationship with Him.

Some people have argued that this relation gives us the whole counsel of God, but it is more realistic to say that the Holy Spirit within gives us snippets of information appropriate to the situation, i.e. sufficient information for the task in hand. Jesus called these snippets 'the keys of the Kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 16:19); Paul called them *pneumatikon*, spiritual things – a word of wisdom here, a word of knowledge there, supernatural faith, etc.

To operate out of divine instruction is the normal life of the active Christian. Jesus said that those who put His instructions into practice will find that 'whatever they bind or loosen **shall be bound and/or loosened, having already** been bound and loosened in heaven' (Matt.16:19). [Check your

Greek Interlinear Bible, it is not the way many translations have it]. Our job is relatively easy, we just do what Jesus tells us to do and trust Him for the consequences. This type of **agency** the Bible calls 'faith'. Faith is not trust; it is acting in obedience to what God has told us to do.

SEASONS

God understands our weaknesses, our relatively feeble capacity to act as His representatives on the planet. He has arranged for the 'taking the land' to be a seasonal occupation in which there are times of rest and times of action. This is revealed in the patterns in Old Israel in which God's people celebrated two seasons each year: the Year of the Priests (which starts in the first month Nisan – about mid-March in the Julian Calendar) and the Year of the Kings (which starts with the Feast of Trumpets, i.e. on the first day of the seventh month Tishri – about mid-October). During the first six months of the year, God deals with the spiritual forces – we sit around praying, receiving insights from the Lord as to what is going on in the heavens; most of the time we are simply resting in the 'battle tower'.

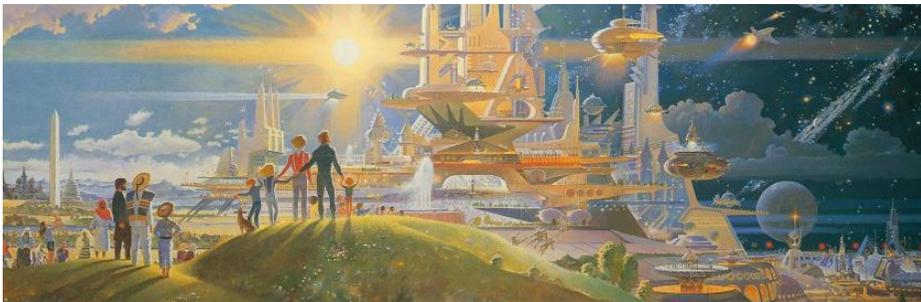


Trumpets (Rosh Hashanah – New Year) is the alarm that tells us that it is time to become active, to **move out to take the land** which God has cleared of spiritual opposition. As we follow the Commander in Chief's instructions we are successful. This pattern will continue until Jesus shall have put down all rule, all authority and all power (I Corinthians 15:24).

A NEW HEAVEN AND A NEW EARTH

God's last act in relation to this old cursed world will be to stop speaking! The elements will fly apart, releasing enormous quantities of heat (II Peter 3:13). We are not concerned about this, rather 'we look for new heavens and a new earth, according to God's promise', a *cosmos* that is run according to God's plan and purposes'. Paul tells us that the whole creation has been groaning and travailing in pain but now looks with eager expectation for the appearance of the 'sons of God' (those who work with God and do things His way), knowing that it too will be soon released into the glorious liberty that God's children are already starting to enjoy (Romans 8:19-22).

Brothers and sisters in Christ, we are set for a wonderful eternity, clothing planets with beautiful vegetation and animal life for our Father God's good pleasure. But in the meantime, we have a job to do. Peter says it this way: '...seeing that this old planet shall be dissolved we should be living out our lives in all holiness (commitment to God's purposes) and godliness (doing it God's way). No-one said it would be easy but the end result seems to me to be worth it. Beside which, we were bought with a price and do not really have any other option but to serve the King of Kings, i.e. if we want to have a future! Every good wish for success in taking some land for Jesus!



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