

The Program of Jesus

By Mark E. Moore

- I. Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand
 - A. This was the message of John the Baptist (Matt 3:2) as well as Jesus (Matt 4:17; Mark 1:15), as well as the Apostles after him (Mark 6:12).
 - B. Repent
 1. We tend to think of repentance as individualistic. The Hebrews thought of it as very much corporate. In fact, of the 27 times “repent” is used in the N.T. only two are individualistic (Luke 17:4; Acts 8:22). The baptism of Jesus may, in fact, represent Jesus repenting for the sins of the nation.
 2. Etymologically it means to change one’s mind. The actual definition is to transfer allegiance, not merely to feel sorry for a sin (Matt 21:32; Acts 3:19).
 3. Josephus called a rebel named Jesus, along with his brigands to “repent and believe in me” (Josephus, *Life* 110; cf. Mark 1:15). In other words, forgo the rebellion and adopt an alternative program.
 4. Implications: **We are called to a political campaign, not a moralistic crusade.** It would be ludicrous to acclaim Jesus as Lord and not live according to his rules. But to reduce him to a supervisor of morality (likened to Buddha or Confucius), is suicidal. He is calling us to change affiliation, to adopt a new mode of existence. He is calling us to execute the kingdom of God on this earth, not join a church and be good citizens.
- II. Kingdom of Heaven is at hand
 - A. First, it requires that God rules. This was the purpose of God’s Messiah, to usher Yahweh into Jerusalem (Eze 37:24-28). During the exile, God was thought to have abandoned Israel into the hands of her enemies as punishment for her sins.
 - B. Second, It brings the exile to an end through liberation and gathering
 1. Jesus fulfills the primary roles of the Messiah:
 - a. **King** at the triumphal entry.
 - b. **Founder** of a new nation through the Lord’s Supper.
 - c. **High priest** through the cleansing of the temple and atonement.
 2. The end of the exile is not geographic but ethnic. Jesus brings all Gentiles into one body (Eph 2:11-22).
 3. Jesus embodies the major hopes of Israel (You can trace this through the “I AM” statements in John): Temple, Sacrifice, Bread, Water, Shepherd, Torah even land (cf. Matt 2:15, “Out of Egypt I have called my son.” cf. Hosea 11:1)
 - C. Third, it has actual political connotations. This at least includes a socially identifiable group of people who adhere to certain principles and/or laws and espouse a particular world-view. They are known by their policies and often persecuted for them when they impact other social groups who have more power than they.
 1. Jesus was political
 - a. He died by execution, and this didn’t happen because he was a teacher of morality but because he was a very real threat to the system. The charge on the *titulus* was that he was a king.
 - b. His triumphal entry illustrates precisely this point (cf. Matt 21:13; quoting Isa 56:7 & Jer 7:11).

2. The church of Acts 20 times in 28 chapters stand before civil authorities of various sorts because their proclamation altered social structures. In short, they were a threat to the power base of the Jews and the economic structures of the Gentiles.
3. Historically, the church has been a political entity.
 - a. Countries like Rome and Russia fell because of the preaching of the gospel. Even Jerusalem fell in 70 A.D. because of Jesus. It will do no good simply to spiritualize these claims. The kingdom is more than the “rule and reign of God in the hearts and lives of men.” It is a social force to be reckoned with.
 - b. The problem is not with politics but with how we carry out the program of the kingdom. Rather than politics of power, we have the politics of the cross. Through self-sacrifice, we conquer. That is the way of the cross.