

Jesus People: The Character and Content of Christian Mission

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Christ College CUMC Fall 2011 Syllabus

Week One: Who is God? (September 11/14, 2011)

Bible readings: Exodus 15, Psalm 114:1-2, Deut 33:1-5, Isaiah 6:1-3; Daniel 2:44, 4:3, 34-35; Zechariah 14:9, Matthew 6:9-10, Psalms 24, 47, 95-100.

Other reading: Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture*, 22-25; David Powlison, "AntiPsalm 23"; Christopher J. H. Wright, *Mission of God*, 23-47, 151-162.

The first century churches in Asia Minor were not a bunch of weaklings. On the outside, especially by the standards of their culture, they may have looked like it, and there are certainly areas where they needed grow in "courageous holiness". But should we see these Christians as harried, harassed? Eugene P. says no:

"These men and women from the moment of their baptism in the name of the Trinity, knew their lives as miracles of resurrection. The people who gathered each Lord's Day to sing their Lord's praises and receive his life were the most robust in the Roman empire.

They were immersed in splendors. They brimmed with life. Even when their zeal cooled, as it sometimes did, and their taut loyalties went a little slack, as sometimes happened, there was far more going on in their lives than in the Babylon-seduced lives of their contemporaries. And they knew it.

When they forgot, St. John reminded them. We must never forget that the pictures of wildly celebrative praise in heaven and catastrophic woes wreaked on earth...that all this stuff was made out of their daily traffic in scripture, baptism, and eucharist. In this heaven-penetrated, hell-threatened environment they lived their daily lives. Nothing . . . could equal it for depth of meaning and drama of incident.

There could not have been many dull moments in those lives, nor need there be in ours. When dull moments did come, they were recognized as the work of the devil and were chased by the apocalypse-informed imagination at worship." (Eugene Peterson, *Reversed Thunder* 70-71)

Week Two: What are human beings? (September 18/21)

Bible readings: Genesis 1-2, Daniel 7, Psalm 2, Psalm 8, 110; Revelation 2:26-27, Romans 8:15-23, 16:20, Ephesians 2:1-10

Other reading: Chris Wright, *Mission of God's People*, 48-62; 222-241.

Recommended reading/viewing: Richard Pratt, *Designed for Dignity*, 2nd ed., pages 1-23 (this is not included in your reading packet); Jason Hood, "The Idols of God," excerpt from forthcoming book (this is included in your reading packet); the music video by Jason Gray, "Remind Me Who I Am":
http://www.youtube.com/watch?feature=player_embedded&v=QSIVjjY8Ou8

No man, no matter who he may be, can ponder the magnificence sufficiently or express it adequately in words. We poor mortals, who are condemned and miserable sinners through our first birth from Adam, are singled out for such great honor and nobility that the eternal and almighty God is our Father and we are His children. Christ is our Brother, and we are His fellow heirs (Rom 8:17). And the dear angels, such as Michael and Gabriel, are not to be our masters but our brothers and servants. . . .

This is a grand and overpowering thought! Whoever really reflects on it—the children of the world will not, but Christians will, although not all of them either—will be so startled and frightened by the thought that he will be prompted to ask: 'My dear, can this really be possible and true?'

. . . [T]he world rates it a much higher honor and privilege to be the son and heir of a prince, a king, or a count than to be the possessor of God's spiritual goods, although by comparison all these are nothing but poor bags of worms and their glory sheer stench. Just compare all this with the ineffable dignity and nobility of which the evangelist speaks. . . . If we really believed with all our heart, firmly and unflinchingly, that the eternal God, Creator and Ruler of the world, is our Father, with whom we have an everlasting abode as children and heirs, not of this transitory wicked world but of all God's imperishable, heavenly, and inexpressible treasures, then we would, indeed, concern ourselves but little with all that the world prizes so highly; much less would we covet it and strive after it.

Indeed, we would regard the world's riches, treasures, glories, splendor, and might—compared with the dignity and honor due us as the children and heirs, not of a mortal emperor but of the eternal and almighty God—as trifling, paltry, vile, leprous, yes, as stinking filth and poison.

–Luther’s Works, 22:87-89

I got a crown up in-a that Kingdom, ain’t-a that good news!
I got a crown up in-a that Kingdom, ain’t-a that good news!
I’m a gonna lay down this world’, goin’a shoulder up a my cross.
Goin’a take it home-a to my Jesus, ain’t-a that good news

African-American Spiritual

Week Three: What does God want to do with humans? The Quest for True Humanity and Her Mission (September 25/28)

Bible Readings: Genesis 12:1-3, Matthew 28:16-20, Isaiah 6:1-3, Ephesians 1-4, Romans 8, 1 Cor 15

Other readings: Chris Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 63-94, 114-126

Recommended reading: Richard Pratt, *Designed for Dignity*, 24-37 (included in reading packet)

“God does not make junk, and God does not junk what he has made.”

Al Wolters

Week Four: What is God’s “Gospel of the Kingdom”? (1) The New Covenant Fulfillment of Old Testament Promises (October 2/5)

Bible readings: Ezekiel 36-37; Nehemiah 9; Daniel 9; Jeremiah 29, 31; Amos 9; Isaiah 40-66; Luke 3:16 and John 3:16

Other readings: Chris Wright, *The Mission of God’s People*, 179-198

“Jesus’ proclamation of the kingdom is nothing less than the message we already find in Gen 1:26-27.”

Peter Gentry

“Repent...that he may send the Messiah appointed for you, Jesus. He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore all things, as he promised long ago.”

Acts 2:20-21

Week Five: What is God's "Gospel of the Kingdom"? (2) The Ministry and Message of Jesus (October 9/12)

Bible readings: Luke 4; Matthew 8-10; Revelation 4-5

Other readings: Chris Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 201-220
"Jesus Shall Reign," by Issac Watts (hymn and reflections; included in reading packet)

Recommended Reading: Ben Witherington III, *Imminent Domain: the Story of the Kingdom of God and Its Celebration*

Week Six: A Kingdom of Priests: Living Sacrifices, Renewed Images, and a Nation of Mediators (October 23/26)

Bible reading: Romans 12:1-2; 1 Cor 4:8-17; Colossians 1:24, Philippians 2:1-11, 17; 2 Timothy 4:6

Other readings: Chris Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 96-111, 163-178

Week Seven: From Sojourners to Citizens (October 30/ November 2)

Bible readings: Jer. 29:1-13; Heb 3-4, 6, 10-13 (Jude; Rev 10-12, 2 Cor 3:17-18)

Other readings: Chris Wright, *The Mission of God's People* 114-126

The Bible does not warn us to flee from politics, art, commerce, etc., but from idolatry (1 Cor 10:14) wherever it arises.

Week Eight: Opposition on the way (November 6/9)

Bible readings: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Revelation 2-3

Other readings: Chris Wright, *The mission of God's People*, 244-261; Tim Keller, "Idolatry in a Postmodern Age"; C. S. Lewis, "The Great Sin" (both are included in reading packet; Keller is available online, <http://www.stevekmccoy.com/keller-idoaltry.pdf>)

Recommended reading: C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*; Russ Moore, *Tempted and Tried: Temptation and the Triumph of Christ*

"We would not be outwitted by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his designs."
(2 Corinthians 2:11)

"...their idols are silver and gold, made by the hands of men. They have mouths, but cannot speak, eyes, but they cannot see; they have ears, but cannot hear, noses, but they cannot smell; they have hands, but cannot feel, feet, but they cannot walk; nor can they utter a sound with their throats. Those who make them will be like them, and so will all who trust in them."
(Psalm 115:4-8)

Chapter Nine: Evangelism: Ambassadors of the King (November 13/16)

Bible readings: 2 Cor 5:17-21; Acts (esp ch. 17 [see Stott quote]); Rev 19; Matt 7, 25; Matthew 5:9-16; Romans 10:9

Other readings: Chris Wright, *The Mission of God's People*, 128-150; 265-286.

(Recommended Reading:

<http://www.matthiasmedia.com.au/2wtl/whowillbeking>, and evangelism program for kids—click through the seven page presentation, note the kingdom emphasis throughout)

"It is no marvel that the devil does not love field preaching! Neither do I; I love a commodious room, a soft cushion, a handsome pulpit. But where is my zeal if I do not trample all these underfoot in order to save one more soul?" John Wesley

“A foolish physician he is, and a most unfaithful friend, that will let a sick man die for fear of troubling him; and cruel wretches are we to our friends, that will rather suffer them to go quietly to hell, then we will anger them, or hazard our reputation with them.” Richard Baxter

“Perhaps if there were more of that intense distress for souls that leads to tears, we should more frequently see the results we desire. Sometimes it may be that while we are complaining of the hardness of the hearts of those we are seeking to benefit, the hardness of our own hearts and our feeble apprehension of the solemn reality of eternal things may be the true cause of our want of success.” Hudson Taylor

Praying Together

“You were slain, and with your blood you purchased for God persons from every tribe and language and people and nation.

You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth.”

In a loud voice they were saying:

“Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!”

Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all that is in them, saying:

“To him who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be praise and honor and glory and power, ∞ for ever and ever!”

Almighty God, you have given your Son Jesus Christ the name that is above every name

and have taught us that there is salvation in no one else.

Grant that as we and all your people rejoice in his comfort, love and peace,

we may always prove faithful by making known to the peoples of all nations the good news of forgiveness of all sin through faith in his name;

for the sake of Jesus Christ our Saviour,

Amen.

Revelation 20:14-21:5, 22-27

Death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire; and anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the lake of fire.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying,

“See, the home of God is among mortals. He will dwell with them as their God; they will be his peoples, and God himself will be with them; he will wipe every tear from their eyes.

Death will be no more; mourning and crying and pain will be no more, for the first things have passed away.”

And the one who was seated on the throne said,

“See, I am making all things new.” Also he said, “Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true.”