

Why Jesus Came

By

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“I CAME THAT THEY MAY HAVE LIFE, AND MAY HAVE IT ABUNDANTLY.” (John 10:10)

These words were uttered by Jesus in the midst of severe conflict between Himself and His enemies. After His feeding of the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, the people were ready to make Him King. They said “This is of a truth the prophet that comes into the world” (John 6:14). We see from this that these Jews interpreted Jesus to be the Messiah “the prophet,” for in the Old Testament scriptures there was this one stream of thought, that a prophet was to come to whom all the world was to listen (Deut. 18:19). But we see something else, that these people were under a false impression; for they thought this prophet was to be an earthly king, a political king, who would have power to subdue enemies and provide for them all the material necessities, just as Jesus had done with regard to their physical appetites.

But Jesus “perceiving that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, withdrew again...” Then it was that he began to make it clear that his mission was to save man from sin in order to give him eternal life. He carefully pointed out that while God had given temporal bread through Moses, He was now going to give them the bread of life in Christ, “and the bread I will give is my flesh for the life of the world” (John 6:51). When He stuck to this teaching in spite of all their arguments, they decided that it was “a hard saying” and began to leave Him.

Jesus could walk no more in Judea “because the Jews sought to kill him” (John 7:1).

In spite of the danger, He went up to Jerusalem anyway. Again, He was confronted by the Jews, who, when they could not withstand His claims, began to smear Him and to say, “Thou are a Samaritan and have a demon.” After Jesus healed a blind man on the Sabbath His enemies set upon Him and were ready to stone Him.

It was during the very height of this bitter and violent rejection of Jesus by the Jews that He began to speak concerning Himself as the Good Shepherd, who came for the purpose of giving man abundant life.

“The thief comes not, but that he may steal, and kill and destroy: I came that they may have life, and may have it abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep” (John 10:10–11).

In this episode, which is recorded by the beloved apostle John as historic fact, we see in miniature the attitude of the world throughout history, and especially an attitude that has taken its grip upon the world in our own day.

First, it is the object of the religious world in general to make of Jesus an earthly King, with a political government through which He may force all men to come to terms with one another and by which He can provide men with bread — all the loaves and fishes they desire — without their having to work for it. It is the express aim of the major

denominations, working toward a united church, to bring about a world church which can bring force to bear upon the members for the purpose of setting up such a government.

Those who refuse to go along with this effort to make an earthly political Kingdom out of the Church, which is Christ's body, are accused of being extremists, and sometimes are subtly smeared as being just a little bit off, with a mental hang up, or, in other words, mad, just as Jesus was accused of being.

Many in the conservative churches, even though they oppose the one world church movement, still have the idea of making Jesus a political King. They say that since He was rejected as King the first time, He will be made an earthly King the second time He comes and will rule the world from Jerusalem, where the temple worship is to be restored and that this will be done with the wholesome approval and support of the Jews. It is hard to see why He would reject a Kingship of this world the first time, and accept one at His second advent.

Second, man is still seeking for the pleasures of this world, rather than seeking to enter into eternal life. He things that to make Christianity relevant the abundant life must be lived here and now. It is true that there is no peace and joy in anyone's life as long as he is estranged from God, and that the only way back into God's grace is through Jesus Christ. But it shouldn't take too much reflection to see that Jesus did not promise an "abundant life" in this present world. There are three things to make this obvious. 1) Jesus said that He would lay down His life for the sheep, and it is upon that basis that the abundant life is given. Now, we know that this present life is not due to the fact of Christ's death. But that life that is to come, that is, eternal life, is possible to us only because Christ has met the penalty for sin by His death. This is the theme in these sermons which John recorded. It was just because of His insistence upon this fact: that men would have eternal life ONLY through Him, that the Jews were so bitterly against Him, for they believed, and still do believe, that they are entitled to God's favor by virtue of Judaism. But Jesus said that abundant life is given by virtue of His laying down His life for the sheep. That life is not life in this present world, but the eternal life that is to come at the time of the resurrection.

2) Jesus explained to his disciples soon after this that in the world they would be hated of all men, that they would suffer tribulation and persecution, as He did, and finally many of them would be slain. This has been borne out in history. What of Stephen, whose life was snuffed out soon after he had embraced the Christian faith? What of the early Christians who were scattered abroad with persecution, and the apostles who were persecuted and imprisoned and slain? Is that "abundant" life?

And what of Bunyon, Milton, Wycliff, Huss, and Luther? Did they enjoy a life of ease and abundance? We know better. They lived with a view to a Kingdom not of this world. And what of the millions of Christians that have been tortured, persecuted and slain by communists and socialists who have set about to change the world order? Walter Rauschenbusch said in "Prayers of the Social Awakening", "Help her (the Church) to proclaim boldly the coming of the Kingdom of God and doom of all that resists it... Give here faith to espouse the cause of the people..." Rauschenbusch was referring to the cause of socialism, the Kingdom of God being a Socialist state, with the plain statement that all who oppose it are to be destroyed. To be slowly murdered in a communist slave-labor camp — is that abundant living? Hardly! Men who promise abundant life NOW do not talk about persecution and conflict with the world. In contrast, they are aligning

themselves with the socialist movement which promises equality to all men, immunity from any kind of discrimination, and virtually does away with prisons — except for those run by the psychiatrists and mental health officials. The modern idea of abundant life, espoused by conservative and liberals alike, is that the Christian is at peace with the world, avoids conflict with it, enjoys its good will and cooperates with it for the sake of security and pleasure.

Jesus emphasized the sharp division between His Kingdom and that of the world, and prepared His disciples for the world's hatred. Such hatred was to increase near the end of history, rather than decrease. It is perhaps an unexpected switch in our day, that the hatred is to come from the very ones who claim to be "the church," and who hate us for the same reason the Jews hated Jesus, because we will not cooperate in setting up their kingdom on earth. But this should be no surprise, for He warned us that Satan would deceive the world. It would hardly be a deception if it were clearly labeled and was the very thing everyone expected and recognized.

Paul called this life a warfare. Of course, there is no warfare if we all line up with the ruler of this world! But what if most churches line up with that ruler? Then does it not follow that the warfare must be conducted against those very ones?

So while men are promising "abundant life" for this world — plenty of "things," peace with this world, fun and play, satisfying leisure, they are doing exactly what Satan is doing, deceiving the whole world. They want no king but Caesar!

The men held as example by sacred writers are not the ones whose lives abounded in perpetual joys and pleasures, but the ones who knew suffering, such as Job, Moses, Elijah, Jesus and Paul. How is it then, that we honor the prophets who suffered for Christ, but insist that a Christian in 1968 [and today] is one who is lived by the world, who find joy in the world's changing pace and who, if he trusts Christ, will enjoy the goodies of life right here and now!

Certainly the Christian is abundantly blessed. Just to be relieved of sin and its guilt is abundant pardon. To have the fellowship of God, and to live in His strength is abundance of daily grace. To know that all things work together for good to those called according to God's purpose is abundance of peace and joy. To know that Christ is coming to bring an end to sin and sinners and give us immortality is abundant hope. There is joy in spreading this message, in seeing a sinner repent, and there are seasons of refreshing in fellowship with other brethren. The saint who suffers the most is the one who may have the deepest peace and faith.

But this is not the ultimate purpose of Christ. This life is not the abundant life He died to give. He did not die so that we could have more food on our tables and more clothes on our backs. He did not die to give all men an education or to assure us that we would all have a guaranteed annual wage. He did not die so that we could all vote or have quality in this world. In fact, if He made anything clear, it was that there is not going to be equality in His Kingdom. All will have the same amount of life — eternity is the same for all — but all will have different rewards. No, Jesus did not die to bring about brotherhood and equality in this present world which He said is ruled by Satan.

3) What Christ promised is abundant life in the new creation. "I give unto them eternal life." Not merely tell you how to live. Not merely to make life in the sinful world more enjoyable. But to **impart life**. Only Christ can do this. It will be done only at the time of resurrection when He comes again. True, the quality of our lives are changed by

Him; we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. But He died for more, much more than this. Abundant life if life that is forever! It is the abundance to be supplied in the new earth “wherein dwells righteousness,” when all things are restored (Acts 3:21) at the return of Jesus: the tree of life, the water of life, and the presence of God and the Lamb (Rev. 22:1–5). It will be life without the curse of disease, aging and dying; for each shall be immortal as Jesus is, in a glorious body like His. There will be no pain, no tears and no death, for there will be no sin nor sinners.

This is the message of the Gospel. This is the message of the true church and the faithful witness. The wage of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life, through the resurrection of the dead.

The social gospel of abundant living is nothing less than the counterfeit of the devil, the work of the beast to which all are giving their minds (Rev. 17:13). The warning is for our time, for the people of God, not to follow the hireling shepherds, but to listen for the voice of Jesus, the true Shepherd and King.

We have a King (Acts 2:36, I Timothy 6:15). Let us obey Him. “For our citizenship is in heaven; whence also we wait for a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ: who shall fashion anew the body of our humiliation, that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working whereby he is able even to subject all things unto himself...so stand fast in the Lord, my beloved” (Phil. 3:20–4:1).

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