

Study of Part Four for benefit of Christian readers

Study meeting by S. Finlan, 12-8-87 -- "Part IV"

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The purpose of the bestowal life is discussed on pg 1308:3-4. Michael's seventh bestowal life began with the normal conception of a baby and its birth in Bethlehem, August 21, 7 B.C.

Part IV follows the life of Jesus year by year as he grew up, noting many significant moments, such as the time when he first realized his parents were not all-knowing: he had asked Joseph the reason for an earthquake which had just occurred, and Joseph said he didn't know. 1359:3

The so-called "lost years" of Jesus are detailed, including his tour of the Roman world, when he taught truth to Roman philosophers, and ministered to people of all the races.

Jesus began his public ministry by choosing six apostles, and had them choose six more. Their training began with the Ordination Sermon, which has come down to us as the Sermon on the Mount. Then they began their ministry and preaching. The gospel of the kingdom of heaven which Jesus taught was:

"God is your Father, and religion--my gospel--is nothing more nor less than the believing recognition of the truth that you are his son." 1590:5

"This is the kingdom of heaven--God is your Father and you are his sons." 1593:0

"The kingdom of heaven consists in these three essentials: first, recognition of the fact of the sovereignty of God; second, belief in the truth of sonship with God; and third, faith in the effectiveness of the supreme human desire to do the will of God--to be like God. And this is the good news of the gospel: that by faith every mortal may have all these essentials of salvation." 1587:L--1588:0

The "sons of God" idea is present in the Bible, but this truth-metaphor is explained by Paul (Romans 8:14-23) as a type of adoption, a rescue from the brink of hell, and not as a natural spiritual relationship. In The Urantia Book, sonship is a true description of man's actual spiritual linkage to God.

There is no other book where one can read about the day by day, even hour by hour, life of Jesus; or gain such an appreciation of the characters of the people who were a part of his life. But rather than go on with a chronological synopsis of Part IV, I will now look deeper into his epoch-making teachings.

First of all, we notice that the emphasis of his gospel is on living faith, on living like an enlightened child of God, rather than on loyalty to religious institutions, practicing a ritual, or adhering to a formula of doctrines.

"Until the human race progresses to the level of a higher and more general recognition of the realities of spiritual experience, large numbers of men and women will continue to show a personal preference for those religions of authority which require only intellectual assent, in contrast to the



religion of the spirit, which entails active participation of mind and soul in the faith adventure of grappling with the rigorous realities of progressive human experience... The religion of the spirit leaves you forever free to follow the truth wherever the leadings of the spirit may take you." 1729:3; 1731:3

Thus, the basis of the kingdom of heaven is the individual; group dynamics grow out of the collaboration of enlightened individuals. But this group dimension of the kingdom is essential, even though derivative, following after the individual dimension. (1862:7; 1863:1)

One might ask, what can bind together all these individuals who are off on their own individual gospel-paths?

"You do not have to see alike or feel alike or even think alike in order spiritually to be alike. Spiritual unity is derived from the consciousness that each of you is indwelt, and increasingly dominated, by the spirit gift of the heavenly Father... In this way you may experience a perfected unity of spirit purpose... you all have a common goal of existence; you all purpose to find the Father in heaven." 1591:6 - 1592:1

Lack of unity in Christianity is due first to the apostles' changing of the basic gospel teaching, and then to the willingness of many subsequent generations to settle into a systematized, second-hand religion. Given these shortcomings it is not surprising that politics has since corrupted Christianity, and that the midwayers write "(The) church is only the larval stage of the thwarted spiritual kingdom." 1866:4

Paul's institutionalized church became a virtual substitute for the kingdom of heaven which Jesus had proclaimed...the spiritual ideal of individual righteousness and the concept of man's divine fellowship with God, became gradually submerged into the mystic conception of the person of Jesus as the Redeemer-Creator and spiritual head of a socialized religious community. In this way a formal and institutional church became the substitute for the individually spirit-led brotherhood of the kingdom. 1864:7,9

Jesus taught the essentials of spiritual living, but did not dictate the forms of association which religious believers may adopt. He proclaimed the fundamentals of nurturing the connection with God, but he did not want to rob the individual of creative discovery in the realms of worship and service. His gospel, when faithfully lived, always results in a genuine morality, but he "did not put ethics in the place of religion. He taught religion as a cause and ethics as a result." 1862:5

The first thing for any new student of The Urantia Book to grasp from Part IV is that "cause," that fundamental message of being a child of a spiritual Father who is interested in nurturing one's spiritual growth.

Believing that one is loved by God is the first step in an endless journey of growth toward God. And on that journey there are many opportunities to serve, and be served by, all the other children of God engaged in that journey.