



THE GOSPEL FOR THE POSTMODERN WORLD VIII:

Returning the Gifts

IN HIS MANIFESTATION at Calvary as Jesus Christ, God terminated his “other side,” his old covenant, and the old Creation of command, possession and power — necessarily introduced by God in the process of creating a relational (covenantal) universe out of nothing (*creatio ex nihilo*).¹ In his resurrection Jesus Christ inaugurated the new God of self-emptying love, the new covenant, and the new Creation of unfettered and unlimited relationality. By this event God irrevocably, noncontingently and eternally re-ligated (re-ligioned) himself to humanity.

Although God thus gave himself and all his attributes in this monumental act, his gifts have neither been perceived nor received. For 2,000 years his “followers” have defiled his name by persistently manifesting command, possession and power. Beneath the surface religious fundamentalists are today determined to lead humanity, this world and Creation to the brink of extinction.

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In the name of “religion,” both God and humanity have suffered unutterably for nearly two millennia. At the same time, God has always been present: “. . . [L]o, I am with you always . . .” (Matthew 28:20). He is present with us as the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 15:45; 2 Corinthians 3:17), and he remains with us through the word of Scripture, which bears witness to him (John 5:39, RSV). He calls upon humanity to accept the gifts of all his attributes — such as faith, hope, love, joy, peace, rest, truth and life. He invites humans to recognize his presence and his

self-emptying love, to joyfully receive his gifts, and to responsively share his gifts with others (Philippians 2:5-8). Wise men, shepherds, and Simeon and Anna in the Temple, were representative humans who recognized Christ's First Coming (Matthew 2:1, 2; Luke 2:8-21, 25-38). Let us now be representative human witnesses who abandon the old covenant of command, possession and power and receive, accept and reciprocally return God's gifts in anticipation of his promised Second Coming (*parousia*) (Acts 1:8; cf. Deuteronomy 19:15; Matthew 18:16; 2 Corinthians 13:1).

The One who has always been present will shortly —

1. Parousaically (Second Coming) manifest himself before this world:

Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh.
— James 5:8; cf. Matthew 24:27.

2. Resurrect all who have died:

For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. — 1 Corinthians 15:22.

3. Gather all humanity together before himself:

And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. — John 12:32; cf. Matthew 25:31, 32.

4. Reveal that he long ago fulfilled the judgment of this world and of all Creation:

Now [at Calvary] is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. — John 12:31.

5. Invite all humanity to receive and join him in a blissful eternity of mutual giving:

. . . [H]enceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. — 2 Timothy 4:8.

6. Allow any who decline his gifts to return to nonexistence:

To finally and irrevocably reject human relationality is to reject existence and thus return to nonexistence. Having granted free will to all humanity, in the judgment God will surely allow all humans to make their own free decisions. To do otherwise would be wholly inconsistent with a truly human God, who has renounced the old Creation of command, possession and power.²

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7. Transform humanity and all Creation into his own likeness:

... [W]e shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. — 1 John 3:2; cf. Revelation 21:1.

Are we ready to now relinquish what God himself so long ago abandoned? Are we willing to now accept his resurrectional gifts? Are we prepared to now joyfully share his gifts with others? Oh, that the “goodness of God” will now lead us to repentance (“changing our minds”) (Romans 2:4)!

Endnotes

1. See “The Gospel for the Postmodern World III: The ‘Other Side’ of God,” *Outlook* (January 2008).
2. See *ibid.*

Last Revised September 2011
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