

WHY JESUS? – OF JESUS – NOT MY JESUS OR ABOUT JESUS!

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If any serious reader were to reflect on the various narratives relating to Jesus (commonly, though erroneously called 'Gospels'), both in the New Testament and outside it, it is indisputable that various sects and individuals had their own conceptions 'About Jesus'. Their opinions fall within a wide spectrum. They range from those who saw him as a healer or miracle maker, John the Baptist's uncertain views, the pharisaic and sadducean static categorisation of him as a 'heretic' and a threat, Herod's phobic speculations, Pontius Pilate's decision that he was guilty of 'high treason', and many more coming from those labelled 'mad' and destitute to those who were vested with affluence and power. However, those whom Jesus chose and called to follow him as disciples had no such choice – 'About Jesus' or a 'My Jesus', if they chose to follow his call to live out an exclusively alternate culture, quite different to the conventional, counter/oppositional, or any other of the times. There was no compromise. One either follows fully, or departs (see John 6.60-71). There are three recorded instances in the narratives where Jesus enquires of his disciples (who were already living out his call to alternate culture), whom others say he is, and what they think he is. (See Mark.8.27-30; Matthew.16.13-20; Thomas.13). In all these instances it is clear that the disciples follow his call without seeing Jesus as an object. They are 'Of Jesus'!

Perhaps the most potent thrust of looking at Jesus as an object and deducing an 'About Jesus' or 'My Jesus' comes from Paul. For him, it was an analytical theological exercise of Jesus based on an alleged post-ascension appearance, rather than a following of him – 'Of Jesus'! For instance, see 1 Corinthians 15.

When I dwell on anything, I tend to focus on that thing as it is, without a personal or social agenda. Then, I see if that thing is something I can rightly understand employing my five senses and mind (which includes emotion). Looking back on my life as a 63 year old, I will be economical with the truth if I were to say that I was not a follower, as opposed to being a seeker of such things as 'absolute truth' to satisfy frustration or curiosity (incidentally it is supposed to kill the cat!). 'Following', means living out a particular way of life, without adding or subtracting to its precepts and practices, towards the perfection of the end product (goal),

stipulated in that path (see 'Gospel' of Mary 9.9) . It is certainly not a 'My' or an 'About' but an 'Of'.

From childhood I was encouraged to rightly understand Jesus and follow him as he asked, as recorded in the narratives about him. I was discouraged to have agendas of my own, or agendas connected to me in one form or another. That, I have tried to do, to lesser or greater extent throughout my life. Often, what was initially distasteful to me, became a primary feature of following, most benign to being absent of contradictions, frequently quite contrary to my own views and fancies about that followed which entailed contradictions with pathological effects.

What did Jesus say regarding 'following'? The phrase "follow me" is regular on Jesus' lips relating to selected individuals. Just read Mark chapter 1. He was spiritually driven away from the baptism of John the Baptist to isolation (Mark 1.12, supported by Matthew 4.1 and Luke 4.1). Then he rejects any type of involvement with state or religion/temple (Matthew 4.5-10 and Luke 4.5-12). Thereafter, he pronounces his one and only 'gospel' (proclamation) – "... Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God (also referred to as the kingdom of heaven/universe in Matthew and most importantly as the kingdom of righteousness (see Matthew 5.6, 5.10 & 20, 6.33; and John 16.10), and saying, "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is here: look away (from everything), and trust this gospel" (see Mark 1.14-15 and Matthew 4.12&17). But, how was that trust in an alternative kingdom implemented? By calling selected individuals to look away from all and follow Jesus by trusting in the alternate kingdom, which in effect was a new culture. (see Mark 1.16-20, 2.13-14, 2.21-22, 8.34, 10.21; Matthew 4. 19, 8.22, 9.9, 9.16-17, 16.24, 19.21; Luke 5.27, 5.36-38, 9.23, 9.57, 18.22; and John 1.43, 10.27, 12.26, 13.36, 21.19) .

This is the primary emphasis of most of the narratives relating to Jesus, either explicit or implicit – living out the alternative culture of the kingdom proclaimed and implemented by Jesus, which has no nation, race, religion, territory or sovereign, without loyalty or even any allegiance to any other, apart from the kingdom culture!

Should any one intend to discuss and follow this without fear and compromise, committedly and consistently, please contact the writer Nirmal Fernando via email – nsmfdo@hotmail.com