

10 Attributes of the Fast-Approaching Jesus Reformation

The past several decades, more believers are embracing a Christ-focused faith (or a Christological theology). I am referring to coming back to the New Testament focus of allowing Jesus Christ to be our center, our life, and our hermeneutic for interpreting the Scriptures.

According to Ephesians 1: 9-11, this Christological focus, experience and paradigm are going to get stronger as we get closer to the consummation of human history. This passage refers to the fact that in the fullness of the times God is going to unite all things (both in heaven and on earth) in Christ. Furthermore, it says God will providentially cause all macro trends to gravitate toward Messiah, because He works all things according to the counsel of His will.

Since the Scripture (John 1: 4,5) teaches that in Him (Jesus) is life and that life is the light of the world (life and light for both Christian and non-Christian) God is merely bringing all cultures back to Himself, as His intent all along was to reconcile all things back to Christ by the blood of His cross (Col. 1:20). I am seeing more and more young believers and leaders embracing this paradigm, which will eventuate in a "Jesus Reformation".

Many are jettisoning alternate focuses in the church such as prosperity, self-fulfillment, and other emphasis since they have come to realize by His grace that only Jesus is the way, the truth and the life (truly believers are lost and hidden with Christ in God and it has pleased the father that in Jesus all fullness should dwell (Col. 1:19).

Scripture also tells us that Jesus holds the universe together with the word of His power (Heb. 1:3) and that in Him all

things consist (Col. 1:16-17). The intent of the triune God in creation was that Jesus would have the preeminence in all things (Col 1:16-20). Furthermore, Jesus said that all things spoken in the Law, the prophets and the Psalms (the three Hebrew components of the Old Testament called the *Tanakh*) pointed to Him (this means that the ultimate goal of all biblical interpretation is Christological and/or has its full meaning explained in Jesus).

I myself have had three distinct conversion experiences since 1978:

- In 1978, I was converted to the gospel of individual salvation
- In 1995, I was converted to the gospel of the kingdom of God (the present rule of Christ in the universe)
- In the past decade, I have been converted gradually to a high Christology that has transformed every aspect of my life, ministry and focus

My experience is not unique as God is doing the same thing globally in the church as He continues to reform His church.

Every prior reformation has prepared the bride of Christ for the marriage supper of the Lamb, which is the ultimate union of the church in Him (Rev. 19).

The Birth of the Protestant Reformation

Although there were always revivals and reformations in both the East and the Western branch of the Catholic church, after the printing press was invented in 1517, a macro Reformation exploded on the scene. This was because the Bible was now in the hands of the common people for the first time (instead of just the religious priestly class and the cultural elite). Hence, a move towards elevating the teachings of the Bible above church canons and ecclesial traditions caused a

restoration of seminal biblical teachings found in the New Testament. Teachings such as justification by faith alone and salvation by grace alone.

As well as further illuminations that led to the formation of Protestant denominations such as the Reformed, Lutheran, Anglican, Ana-Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal and more (there are presently more than 30,000 denominations of Christianity in the world). However, the restoration of any true biblical teaching should eventuate in a high Christology or a Jesus-focused life, faith and church.

The following are 10 attributes of the emerging Jesus Reformation

1. A Christ-focused hermeneutic

That is to say, the science of interpreting Scripture by first uncovering the author's original intent, locating prior mention of the theme to build a proper foundation for understanding (antecedent use of the theme) ultimately leading to discovering how the narrative or doctrine foreshadows the Messiah (of course much more is involved in biblical hermeneutics).

2. Christ-focused preaching

Along with a Christ-focused hermeneutic (interpretation) should be preaching with a goal to exalt the lordship and glory of Christ. This will necessitate a shift away from using Bible study and preaching merely for self-fulfillment, motivational sermonettes and a distorted, myopic prosperity gospel.

3. A greater appreciation for the true church

With a Christ-centered approach to life, we realize that all believers together comprise His body and become His bride—that is to say we cannot separate Christ from His body, since He is

the head and the church is the neck down (Eph. 1:22,23, 1 Cor. 12).

When John wanted to see Jesus, he saw the seven golden lampstands (the church) before he saw the Lord in the midst of His church (Rev. 1:12-13). That is to say—the church is the invisible manifestation of the invisible Christ.

4. A greater understanding of fulfillment in Him

Scripture teaches that believers are complete in Him who is the head of all principalities and powers (Col. 2:8-10). A greater illumination of this truth in the Jesus Reformation will cause a shift away from religious striving for accomplishment and an entering to His rest for inner satisfaction and contentment (Heb. 4:7-11).

5. A loss of religious performance and politics

The more Jesus is the center of the church the more faith becomes a way of life (John 14: 6), instead of a religious performance to ascend the heights of the institutional hierarchy.

6. A desire for living in simplicity

The self-focused prosperity message replete with opulent living and excess will be jettisoned in favor of a life content in Him. Once a person experiences the fullness of Christ they will be more fascinated with Jesus than anything else—hence the need for a lavish lifestyle to appease the flesh will be crucified in Him (Rom. 6:1-8).

7. An explosion of generosity

When Jesus is the center of the church, then the realization comes that He owns everything in the world and believers are merely His treasurers and stewards. This will lead to living a life obedient to the Lord regarding generosity and investing more financially in His kingdom.

8. A desire to live a supernatural life of faith

When the church abides in Him, they will bear much fruit and do great works for Him (John 15:1-7; 14:12). This will lead to living a life dependent upon Jesus as the author of our faith (Heb. 12:1, 2) resulting in seeing His mighty hand operate as part of our daily walk—both in the church and marketplace (almost all the miracles in the Bible took place outside of a religious edifice).

9. A desire to empower others

Jesus invested the bulk of His time and focus pouring into and forming His followers (Mark 3:12-14; Luke 9:1, 2; 10:1, 2). He commanded us to focus on doing the same (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2). Consequently, with the emergence of the Jesus Reformation will come a renaissance in the church of disciple making. This will cause the church to shift away from the shallow church growth, concert-based and performance-based methodologies in favor of a transformational model based on conformity to the image of Christ.

Indeed—conformity to Christ is the primary reason He saved us (Rom. 8:29, 30). Instead of church teaching and membership being a “mile long and an inch deep”—levels of teaching with a goal to mature believers in Christ will be the new normal (Col. 1:21-23). A celebration of inner virtue, humility, brokenness and Christlikeness will eventually transcend shallow gospel preaching and church practice.

10. A celebration of servanthood instead of entitlement

Jesus said He did not come to be served but to serve and give His life a ransom for many (Matt. 20:28).

A Jesus Reformation will shatter the present focus on ecclesial and religious politics that breed entitlement among institutional and church-based leadership. This new reformation will cause the church to understand the privilege

of laying down our life for the good of others. It will replace the prevalent man-pleasing, performance-based Christianity with a Christlike attitude of washing the feet of others for His glory.