

Who do you say that I am?

Stories of the Kingdom (2): Invitation, Welcome, Challenge
and Summons

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1. Introduction: The Open-Ended Story



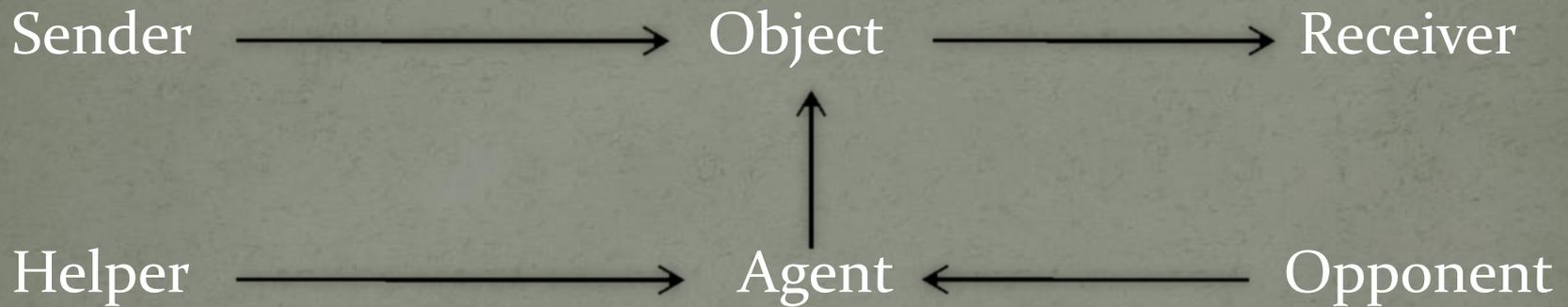
Mark 1:14, 15

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. “The time has come,” he said. “The kingdom of God has come near. *Repent and believe the good news!*”

Algirdas Julien Griemas: The Grammar of Story

- Agent → Object
- Giver → Receiver
- Helper <-> Opponent
- Ex. The Holy Grail. Here the agent appears as knights of the Round Table; the object as the Grail, the sender as God, the receiver as Humanity, the helper as Saints and Angels, and finally the Devil and his acolytes constitute the opponent.
- Sender and receiver may appear - and they usually do - as abstract notions, and they most often express the motivation of the subject to perform a certain action.

Narrative Story Line



Sender = YHWH

Receiver = Israel

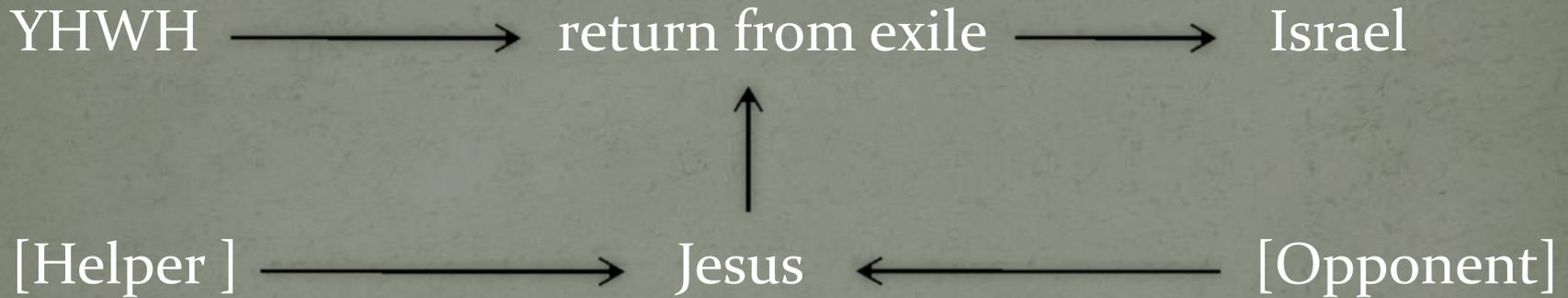
Object = return from exile

Agent = Jesus

Helper = ?

Opponent = ?

Narrative Story Line



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Key questions and terms:

- Who is the “Israel” that will benefit from this “return from exile”?
- Who are Jesus’ “helpers”?
- Who are Jesus “opponents”?
- The story of the kingdom generates a “praxis” among those who heard it and accepted it.
- Praxis – Actions and Behaviors
- Controlling Story: Seeks to realign in its hearers, worldview and praxis.

Four Stages of Jesus Character Call

- Invitation
- Welcome
- Challenge
- Summons

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2. Invitation: The Call to Repent and Believe



Mark 1:14, 15

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Repentance

- Contemporary Christianity's view of repentance
 - The negative side of conversion
 - Acceptance of undeserved divine grace as opposed to achievement of salvation by human legalism.
- John the Baptist view:
 - Israel was apostate and had become 'like the pagans'
 - Necessity to repent to be re-included in the people of YHWH—speaking against a presumption of inclusion in the restoration on the basis of ethnicity.

Repentance: The Jewish Definition

- Repentance is what Israel must do in order to end the Exile and thus bring about Eschatological Restoration
- Repentance => Return to YHWH
- The Hebrew word *shub* means “to turn”.
- Deut. 30:1-2 “¹ When all these blessings and curses I have set before you come on you and you take them to heart wherever the LORD your God disperses you among the nations, ² and when you and your children return to the LORD your God and obey him with all your heart and with all your soul according to everything I command you today, ³ then the LORD your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you and gather you again from all the nations where he scattered you.”
- For examples of repentance in Post-Exilic Old Covenant Prophets see Daniel 9, Ezra 9, Nehemiah 9

Daniel 9 (New International Version, ©2011)

¹ In the first year of Darius son of Xerxes (a Mede by descent), who was made ruler over the Babylonian kingdom— ² in the first year of his reign, I, Daniel, understood from the Scriptures, according to the word of the LORD given to Jeremiah the prophet, that the desolation of Jerusalem would last seventy years. ³ So I turned to the Lord God and pleaded with him in prayer and petition, in fasting, and in sackcloth and ashes. ⁴ I prayed to the LORD my God and confessed:

“Lord, the great and awesome God, who keeps his covenant of love with those who love him and keep his commandments, ⁵ we have sinned and done wrong. We have been wicked and have rebelled; we have turned away from your commands and laws. ⁶ We have not listened to your servants the prophets, who spoke in your name to our kings, our princes and our ancestors, and to all the people of the land.

Daniel 9 (New International Version, ©2011)

¹⁵ “Now, Lord our God, who brought your people out of Egypt with a mighty hand and who made for yourself a name that endures to this day, we have sinned, we have done wrong. ¹⁶ Lord, in keeping with all your righteous acts, turn away your anger and your wrath from Jerusalem, your city, your holy hill. Our sins and the iniquities of our ancestors have made Jerusalem and your people an object of scorn to all those around us.

¹⁷ “Now, our God, hear the prayers and petitions of your servant. For your sake, Lord, look with favor on your desolate sanctuary. ¹⁸ Give ear, our God, and hear; open your eyes and see the desolation of the city that bears your Name. We do not make requests of you because we are righteous, but because of your great mercy. ¹⁹ Lord, listen! Lord, forgive! Lord, hear and act! For your sake, my God, do not delay, because your city and your people bear your Name.”

Daniel 9 (New International Version, ©2011)

⁷ “Lord, you are righteous, but this day we are covered with shame—the people of Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem and all Israel, both near and far, in all the countries where you have scattered us because of our unfaithfulness to you. ⁸ We and our kings, our princes and our ancestors are covered with shame, LORD, because we have sinned against you. ⁹ The Lord our God is merciful and forgiving, even though we have rebelled against him; ¹⁰ we have not obeyed the LORD our God or kept the laws he gave us through his servants the prophets. ¹¹ All Israel has transgressed your law and turned away, refusing to obey you.

“Therefore the curses and sworn judgments written in the Law of Moses, the servant of God, have been poured out on us, because we have sinned against you. ¹² You have fulfilled the words spoken against us and against our rulers by bringing on us great disaster. Under the whole heaven nothing has ever been done like what has been done to Jerusalem. ¹³ Just as it is written in the Law of Moses, all this disaster has come on us, yet we have not sought the favor of the LORD our God by turning from our sins and giving attention to your truth. ¹⁴ The LORD did not hesitate to bring the disaster on us, for the LORD our God is righteous in everything he does; yet we have not obeyed him.

Meanings of repentance in Jesus time

- “What Israel must do is YHWH is to restore he fortunes at last”
- It could also more specifically refer to a call ‘to abandon violent revolutionary zeal’.
 - See the example from Josephus.

Josephus (66AD) from the autobiography *The Life of Josephus*

- ...that I was ignorant of the plot which he [Jesus the brigand] had contrived against me...; I would, nevertheless, condone his actions if he would show repentance and prove his loyalty to me. All this he promised.... (pg. 100; tr. Thackeray)
- Could be translated “repentance and believe in me.” – NT Wright.
- In this case, it would be repentance from brigandage and trust in Josephus better way forward.

Repentance for Jesus

- Jesus proclamation of the “the Kingdom of God has come” would necessarily have included a call to “turn”:
 - An Eschatological Call: Certainly meant a summons to Israel to turn to YHWH for Restoration from Exile in order to escape eschatological judgment.
 - A Political Call within the historic setting: Summoning the people of Israel as a nation to abandon one set of agendas (violent nationalism) and embrace another.
- Not simply a moralistic reformer preaching timeless moral truths.
- Call has little to do with the existing Jewish Structures
- Repentance seems to consist of adherence and allegiance to Jesus himself.

Relevant Gospel texts:

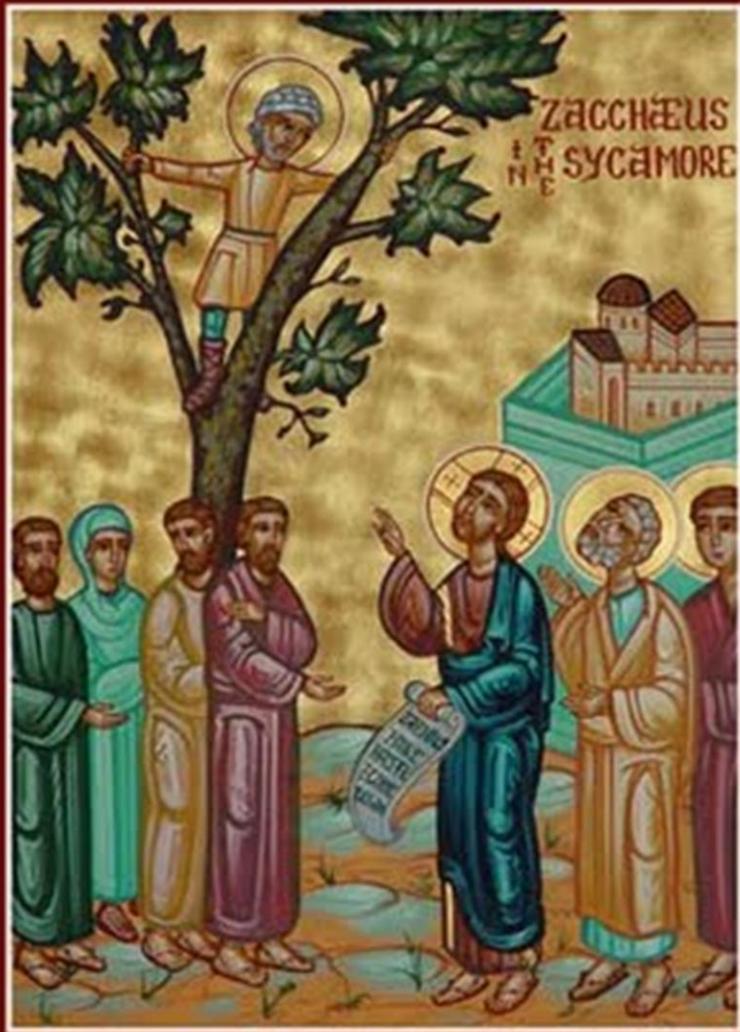
- Already noted the general summaries in Mark 1:5/Matt. 4:17)
 - “Repent and believe the Gospel”
 - Mark 6:12 The disciples commission is to call people to repentance.
- Examples of Repentance as Eschatological Summons:
 - Matthew 11:20-24
 - Matthew 12:38-41
 - Luke 13:1-5
 - Luke 5:29-32

Relevant Gospel texts:

- Examples of Repentance as a Political Summons within a historic context:
 - Again Luke 13:1-5 As an example of the Eschatological and Political 'mingled' together.
 - Call to follow Jesus in the 'way of the Cross' as a renunciation of violent aspirations
 - The call to 'love your enemies' Matt. 5:43-48
 - Parable of the Prodigal Son, Luke 15
 - Lack of Repentance of the Angry Brother
 - Rich man and Lazarus (Luke 16:19-31)
 - Welcome of the repentant 'outcast'.
 - Repentance is happening but the Pharisees can't see it!

Repentance did not involve...

- Going to the temple and offering sacrifice...
- He offered restoration and renewal to YHWH
 - On his own authority
 - By his own process
 - THIS was the true scandal of Jesus call
- Jesus story:
 - Return of exile was happening
 - It consisted of himself and his mission
 - *Jesus had the right to pronounce who belonged to the restored Israel.*



Zacchaeus the repentant Tax Collector

Luke 19:1-10

⁸ But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, “Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount.”

⁹ Jesus said to him, “Today salvation has come to this house, because this man, too, is a son of Abraham. ¹⁰ For the Son of Man came to seek and to save the lost.”

Belief: In Contemporary Christianity

- Faith, Trust, Belief
 - Christian Debates of Faith vs. Works
 - Roman Catholic vs. Protestant
- To speak of Faithfulness and Loyalty raises concerns of 'work's righteousness'
- Key question: What did Jesus mean by faith/belief?

Faith/Belief in the Old Testament

- Call to faith in YHWH during Israel's time of need
 - Isa. 7:9 "If you will not believe, indeed you will not be established"
 - Isa. 28:16 "See I am laying in Zion a foundation stone, a tested stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation; One who trusts will not panic."
 - Isa. 30:15 "In returning and rest you shall be saved; in quietness and trust shall be your strength. But you refused..."
- True people of YHWH will be marked out by "faith":
 - Hab. 2:4 "Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right with in them; but the righteous will live by faith."
- It will characterize and be a sign of the return from exile:
 - Jer. 40:6 "Behold, I shall restore to her soundness and health, and I shall cause them to hearken; and I shall heal her, and create for them peace and faith."
- Conversion of proselytes: Trust in YHWH and turn away from idols.

Jesus on Faith/Belief

- Jesus was not offering a “new” religious dimension or option.
- What was new is Jesus urging faith in Him.
- For Jesus the call to faith and believing was “Israel’s God is acting climactically in the career of Jesus himself” JVG p. 262.
 - *Religious Connotation: Faith in YHWH to be The Father of his People (As the Father who acted in the Exodus to redeem and save Israel cf.)*
 - *Secular Connotation: Meaning (like Josephus’ call, faith to give up a violent agenda and follow Jesus and Jesus way. “Pick up your cross and follow me.”*

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3. Welcome: Sinners and Forgiveness

Luke 7:41-42

³⁶ When one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. ³⁷ A woman in that town who lived a sinful life learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, so she came there with an alabaster jar of perfume. ³⁸ As she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

³⁹ When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were a prophet, he would know who is touching him and what kind of woman she is—that she is a sinner."

Who are the 'sinners'?

- *amme ha'aretz* “people of the land” – people who were in the land at the time of the return from Babylon-- ‘not quite real’ Jews. (‘the sinners’ in Luke 15:2)
- Non-Pharisaic Jews (didn’t keep Torah their way Jn. 7:49)
- Those who deliberately flouted Torah...(for example: prostitutes)
- Tax Collectors—The Moral equivalent of Lepers
- What did Jesus offer to ‘sinners’?

The Forgiveness of Sins

- Forgiveness in common Christian usage
- For Jesus' day, "Forgiveness of sins is another way of saying 'return from exile.'" JVG p. 268
- Remember the exile is a punishment for Israel's sins.
 - See the Prophets Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah 40-55
 - "[If] Israel were to be brought back from exile, it would mean that her sins were being punished no more; in other words forgiven." JVG p.268

Jeremiah 31:31-34

³¹"Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³ But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. *For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.*"

Jeremiah 33:6-11

- ⁶ Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them and reveal to them abundance of prosperity and security. ⁷ I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and rebuild them as they were at first. ⁸ *I will cleanse them from all the guilt of their sin against me, and I will forgive all the guilt of their sin and rebellion against me.* ⁹ And this city shall be to me a name of joy, a praise and a glory before all the nations of the earth who shall hear of all the good that I do for them.... For I will restore the fortunes of the land as at first, says the LORD.

Ezekiel 36:24-6, 33

²⁴ I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your own land. ²⁵ I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. ²⁶And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh....

³³"Thus says the Lord GOD: *On the day that I cleanse you from all your iniquities*, I will cause the cities to be inhabited, and the waste places shall be rebuilt.

Isaiah 40-55

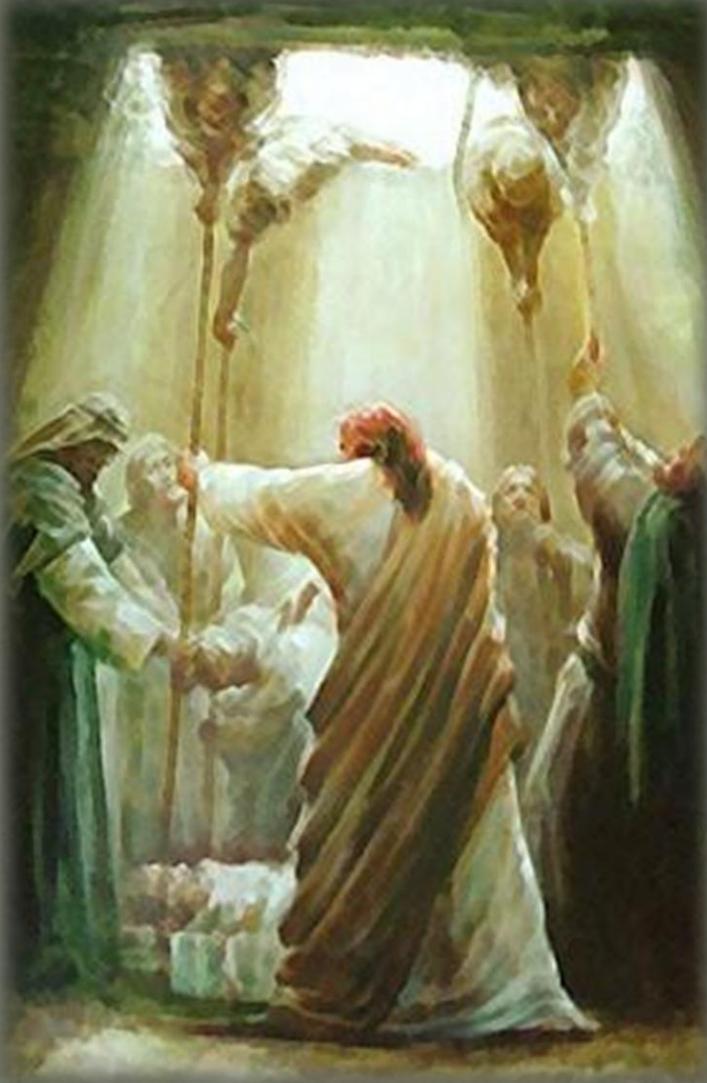
- See also 43:25-44:3; 52:1, 3, 9, 53:5-6, 11-12; 54:1, 3, 8; 55:7, 12
- The point is that Israel's sin is the cause of the exile and forgiveness is need for restoration to occur.
- John's Baptism was "for the forgiveness of sins"—to bring about the restoration for which Israel was longing. Mark 1:4/Luke 1:77

Isaiah 40:1-2

¹Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. ² Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and cry to her that her warfare is ended, *that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received from the LORD's hand double for all her sins.*

Jesus was offering...

- Return from exile
- The renewed covenant
- The eschatological 'forgiveness of sins'
- His invitation and offer of forgiveness to 'sinners' was an offer to become part of the *restored people of YHWH*.
- They then became a sign that YHWH was restoring his people.



Matthew 9:1-8

And behold, some people brought to him a paralytic, lying on a bed. And when Jesus saw their faith, he said to the paralytic, "Take heart, my son; your sins are forgiven." ³And behold, some of the scribes said to themselves, "This man is blaspheming." ⁴But Jesus, knowing their thoughts, said, "Why do you think evil in your hearts? ⁵For which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or to say, 'Rise and walk'? ⁶But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins"—he then said to the paralytic—"Rise, pick up your bed and go home." ⁷And he rose and went home. ⁸When the crowds saw it, they were afraid, and they glorified God, who had given such authority to men.

Why did people object?

- Not simply that Jesus was eating with Sinners, but that he was announcing the restoration and...
- The Restoration Jesus was announcing was replacing allegiance to Temple and adherence to Torah with allegiance to Jesus himself!
- “The point about Jesus’ welcome of sinners was that he was declaring, on his own authority, that anyone who trusted in him and his kingdom announcement was within the kingdom.” JVG p. 274.