

According to Marxsen, what is distinctive about Jesus is that the *reign* of God that is coming in the future is already breaking in in the present as the *rule* of God. But whereas, on the usual Jewish understanding, it was God's work alone to bring in the new age, one could take the rule of God upon oneself through following the law, so that its coming was one's own affair. For Jesus, by contrast, the rule of God, no less than the reign of God, is solely God's work, and one can take it upon oneself only by allowing it to happen to one. Moreover, the rule of God does not come through doing the law, but only insofar as one allows the eschatological communion with God (originally expected only in the new age) to happen to one even now.

Thus in Jesus' message gospel takes the place of law; and it is in this context that Mk 1:15 is to be exegeted. The faith in the gospel for which Jesus calls is opening oneself to the rule of God now breaking in, risking the offered communion with God. But wherever such opening of oneself and risking occurs, the consequence can only be immediate repentance. The order here, however, is decisive. Repentance is not a precondition for the coming of God's rule, but rather its result. In one's repentance, the inbreaking rule of God attains its goal (*SJ*: 21 f.).

I have two comments on Marxsen's interpretation.

The first is that Sanders's interpretation of Jesus—especially his argument that Jesus, unlike John the Baptist, is not a preacher of repentance (230-237)—fully converges with Marxsen's. In fact, Sanders explicitly speaks of Jesus' message as "good news about God," in contrast with "a standard exhortation to give up wickedness and turn over a new leaf," thereby implying that, in his view also, the distinctive thing about Jesus' message is that gospel takes the place of law (234).

My second comment is that Marxsen's notion that the gift is never to be had except in one's own doing (*SJ*: 23) and that, therefore, the inbreaking rule of God attains its goal only in one's repentance, converges very closely indeed with Wesley's insistence that God (gives and) demands nothing other or less than outward as well as inward holiness. Indeed, Marxsen is at least as emphatic as Wesley that the Christian life happens in the body and that what

is (ever again) given (and demanded) by God is nothing other or less than "entire sanctification," which is to say, the perfection of God's own perfect love (cf., e. g., *C-p*: 78, 57, 104 f.).

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