

Focus on the Kingdom

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Reflections after the National Conference in Australia

Travel is a stimulating if tiring experience. We set off from sunny Atlanta and after some 30 hours sitting in Air Tahiti Nui planes, or waiting for the next plane, my wife Barbara and daughter Sarah and I arrived in Sydney, Australia. We lost a day somewhere along the journey and in Sydney it was winter!

When you are traveling you are more than ever aware of the need for God's help moment by moment. (How did AirTran manage to deliver our three pieces of baggage to three different carousels?!). The security of home is given up for the potential troubles and trials to which travel exposes us. It is exciting to hear announcements in three languages, Tahitian, French and English, to say nothing of the striking, if to our form of English, more strident and colorful tones of the Aussies!

We are reminded of the infinite variety of God's marvelous creation as well as the chaos of religion. The Pope arrived in Sydney on the same day and his well orchestrated public appearances were accompanied by bright young people of many nations begging Mary, the mother of God, as they say, to provide the Holy Spirit to his gatherings. 400,000 people assembled from all over to welcome the Pope, regaled in his white robe and red suede shoes. The Pope of course claims to be the direct successor to Peter the Apostle. One cannot help notice that Peter of the Bible was a married man (Matt. 8:14), and the Pope cannot be. While Peter would think of Mary as dead, unconscious (Ecc. 9:5; John 11:11, 14), the Pope encouraged prayer to Mary as the mother of God.

Flying north to Brisbane, in Queensland, we were thrilled to meet many of Greg Deuble's friends and fellow biblical unitarians. Greg's astonishing book *They Never Told Me THIS in Church* (available at 800-347-4261 or www.focusonthekingdom.org/books.html) documents his radical change of theological perspective, and is a standing testimony to the plain fact that basic Bible teachings have been lost to the public and need to be restored. Such was the purpose of the "Creed of Jesus" conference held from Friday to Sunday. Greg gave us an astounding confirmation of the need for restoration. He quoted James Dunn and Bishop N.T. Wright, leading lights in today's New Testament scholarship, as saying that their task was "to give the New Testament back to the Church." This of course implies that the Church has lost the New Testament!

Presenters kept the audience intensely interested as various aspects of Bible teaching were covered, challenges to fresh thinking were issued and lots of good fellowship was enjoyed. There were visitors from New Zealand and participants originally from Nicaragua. A similar conference has been held for the past 17 years in Atlanta in April (details to be announced later this year). All are welcome.

The impression one is left with is that doctrinal strangleholds and strongholds need attention. If you have been taught from early childhood, backed by generations of tradition, a certain exclusive view of what the Bible says on a given topic, adjusting that view in favor of truth is no easy matter. Theology taught to youngsters is accepted uncritically. It is not tested against other views, merely proclaimed as dogma and a party distinctive. How such a "truth" is arrived at, and by what biblical method, has often never been examined. It is "right" because "that is what my denomination has always believed." The unfortunate aspect of theology done in this fashion is division.

An example: It has been clear to millions of ordinary Bible readers that Jesus was tempted by an *external* personality, the Devil or the Satan in the wilderness (Matt. 4, etc.). Who is this Satan, or rather "the [well-known] Satan"? He is described in the Bible as "god," "prince," "ruler," "deceiver," "angel," and everyone knows that these words describe not attributes of character, much less internal thoughts from the heart of man, but *persons*, i.e. personalities. That Satan, *the* Satan (not "a satan"), is said to *meet* Jesus in the wilderness. Language has no other way of expressing the fact that a person *came up to Jesus* in the wilderness than by the way the text reads. The Tempter "came up to Jesus, approached him" (Matt. 4:3). In the same passage, using the same word, "angels *approached* Jesus, came up to him" (v. 11) and no one thinks that the "angels" mean good thoughts emanating from inside Jesus! Nor then can "the Satan" coming up to Jesus mean evil twisted thoughts proceeding from the mind of Jesus.

But of course the serpent in Genesis was also *external* to Adam and Eve and every occurrence of satan or Satan in the Old and New Testaments refers not to internal human nature, but to an *external*, personal enemy. Paul is perfectly clear: we are not ultimately fighting "flesh and blood"—human beings. We are in battle with the "cosmocratic spiritual powers" (Greek *kosmocrates*, Eph. 6:12). Is this so difficult?

Documents from New Testament times show that *kosmocrats* are demonic, non-human powers (*Testament of Solomon* 8:2: “world rulers of the darkness,” cp. Paul in Eph. 6:12: “world rulers [*kosmocrates*] of this darkness”).

Everyone reading Paul knew what he meant and it is our wisdom to accept the inspired teaching of Jesus through Paul. When a denomination is experiencing bouts of infighting, this points to a loss of holy spirit and holy spirit is obstructed when biblical truth is obstructed. Denominational “distinctives” can be just wrong, and happy the truth-seeker who is able to extricate himself from error, however cherished and hallowed by a denomination. Only then can unity be increased and effectiveness in evangelism blossom. But stepping away from a denominational stronghold can be costly. Jesus seems to have warned us that loving him and his words demands our “all” (Luke 14:26-27).

Our sincere thanks to all those enthusiastic lovers of God and Jesus who arranged the first national “Creed of Jesus” conference in Australia. The point of the conference was to urge our adherence to *Jesus’* view of who God is and how many He is. This is a vital element of our allegiance to Jesus as Messiah. We were led daily by Frank Selch in a beautiful singing of the Shema, the creed of Jesus and of the Bible: “Listen, Israel: Yahweh our God is one Yahweh” (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29).

The much needed restoration of original truth is advanced by these conferences and participants are stimulated afresh to bring what they have learned to others in search of the “faith once and for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3). What we learn of truth we are duty-bound to share with others. There are billions of human beings treading our earth who have little or no idea about any of these simple life-imparting truths. Where will you start in reeducating them?

The struggle is indeed intense. Amazing word tricks abound — for example that the word “one” (Hebrew *echad*) really means “compound one,” allowing for God to be mysteriously “three in one.” Or that the word *presbuterai* (1 Tim. 5:2; Titus 2:3), meaning “older women,” really means “women elders”! Through Paul Jesus gave instructions for the way churches are to function and for the different roles to be played by men and women. “Older or elderly women” are *not* “female elders,” and every lexicon knows this, but deceptive powers are hard at work to disturb and confuse. This issue is causing consternation and division in huge denominations.

May lots of conferences unite on the truth of God as the one-Person God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and belief in Jesus as the human Messiah, supernaturally **coming into existence** (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35; *gennaō* means “to cause to begin to exist”) and therefore

not “preexisting” himself! You cannot come into existence if you are *already* in existence! But very little thought has been given to this contradiction by Bible readers and even teachers.

One final reflection: May the freedom of the New Covenant be maintained against any tendency to draw Christians back under the Old Covenant, or rather that part of the Hebrew Bible which Paul calls a temporary “custodian” superseded by the Torah of Messiah (1 Cor. 9:21; Gal. 3:23-25). We have been graciously given New Testament Scripture in the Greek language and this is God’s last word to us. Nothing is gained by trying to *improve on* the Apostles by insisting on imposing Hebrew words on the New Testament. The Hebrew Bible is of course the foundation of God’s purpose for mankind, and the thinking of the whole Bible is Hebrew and not pagan Greek. *But* the Apostles make no issue at all about maintaining Hebrew forms of personal names, and Christians sound “odd” to the world in need of plain teaching if they retranslate the Greek Scripture into Hebrew. It is good to remember that the writers of the New Testament freely **quote from the Greek version of the Old Testament** (the Greek Septuagint). They also of course freely use the Hebrew Bible. To disparage the Septuagint (Greek, LXX) version as inferior, when the Apostles use it when they so choose, is to imply criticism of the Apostles and thus of Jesus!

The restoration movement is a fragile thing and must be done in community and in the light of the best possible scholarship. The Restoration Fellowship conference in Australia leaves us all excited and eager to maintain a unity in the simplicity of faith. ✧

Dr. Marian Hillar has produced a magnificent translation of the extraordinary work of the Spaniard Michael Servetus, *The Restoration of Christianity*. Servetus was brutally murdered, burned at the stake in 1553 at the hands of John Calvin. The issue was the doctrine of the Trinity which Servetus exposed as non-biblical. Dr. Hillar’s fine work is now available from Edwin Mellen Press.

Defining the Gospel and Thus Defining Christianity

The Gospel as Jesus preached it is about the Kingdom of God. In churches, however, the phrase “Gospel of the Kingdom” is almost never heard. This points to an absence of the central teaching of Jesus and since Jesus may never be divorced from his words and Gospel, it indicates an absence of Jesus himself from much popular preaching. Defining the Kingdom and thus defining the saving Gospel of Jesus ought not to be so hard. Jesus and the New Testament taught with a view to

being understood. There is much in scholarly writings which makes quite clear what Jesus would have meant, in his first-century context, by the Kingdom of God and the Gospel about the Kingdom, Christianity's saving message. From a large collection of quotations gathered over the years I offer our readers the following, hoping that they will strengthen their own hand as they share the Good News of the Kingdom with others at every opportunity.

Leading Scholars on the Kingdom of God

The objective analysis of the Kingdom of God in Matthew, provided by the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, ought to serve as a much-needed guide to all our thinking about the Kingdom:

"The Kingdom.—The central subject of Christ's doctrine...With this He began His ministry (4:17), and wherever He went He taught this as good news [Gospel] (4:23). The Kingdom, He taught, was coming, **but not in His lifetime**. After His ascension He would come as Son of Man upon the clouds of heaven (16:27-28; 19:28; 24:30)...and would sit on the throne of His glory...Then the twelve Apostles should sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28). In the meantime He Himself must suffer and die, and be raised from the dead. How else could He come upon the clouds of heaven? And His disciples were to **preach the good news of the coming Kingdom** (10:7; 24:14) among all nations, making disciples by [adult] baptism (28:19). The body of disciples thus gained would naturally form a society bound by common aims...Hence the disciples of the Kingdom would form a new spiritual Israel (21:43)" (W.C. Allen, professor at Oxford University).¹

The same authority goes on to say:

"In view of the needs of this **new Israel of Christ's disciples**...who were to await His coming on the clouds of heaven, it is natural that a large part of the teaching recorded in the Gospel should concern **the qualifications required in those who hoped to enter the Kingdom when it came**...The parables...convey some lesson about the nature of the Kingdom and the period of **preparation for it**...It should be sufficiently obvious that if we ask what meaning [the parables] had for the editor of the First Gospel...the answer must be that he chose them because...they taught lessons about the Kingdom of the heavens *in the sense in which that phrase is used everywhere else in his Gospel, of the Kingdom which was to come when the Son of Man came upon the clouds of heaven*.

"Thus the parable of the Sower illustrates the varying **reception met with by the good news [Gospel] of the**

¹ *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, 1917, Vol. 2, p. 144.

Kingdom as it is preached amongst men. That of the Tares also deals not with the Kingdom itself, but with **the period of preparation for it**. At the end of the age the Son of Man will come **to inaugurate His Kingdom**...There is nothing here nor elsewhere in this Gospel to suggest that **the scene of the Kingdom is other than the present world renewed**, restored and purified."²

My comment: The last sentence of our quotation makes the excellent point that Matthew nowhere expects believers to "go to heaven." He reports that Jesus will come back to rule with them **in a renewed earth**. The perceptive reader of the New Testament will note the striking difference between the biblical view of the Kingdom and what in post-biblical times was substituted for it: a departure of the faithful at death to a realm removed from the earth. "The Kingdom, He taught, was coming, but not in His lifetime." "In Matthew [and in the NT] the Kingdom of God is conceived, **first of all**, as something **in the future**" (cited below). So say leading analysts of the Gospel records.

The *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* gets the emphasis on the future Kingdom right:

"'The Kingdom of God is at hand' had the inseparable connotation 'judgment is at hand' and in this context, 'Repent' in Mark 1:14, 15 must mean 'lest you be judged' [to avoid being judged]. Hence our Lord's teaching about salvation **had primarily a future content: positively admission into the Kingdom of God and negatively, deliverance from the preceding judgment**. So the Kingdom of God is the highest good of Christ's teaching...Man's nature is to be perfectly adapted to his spiritual environment and man is to be 'with Christ' (Luke 22:30) and with the patriarchs (Matt. 8:11). Whatever [?!] the Kingdom is, it is most certainly not exhausted by a mere reformation of the present order of material things."³

My comment: The Kingdom of God is the *future* revolutionary government to be initiated by the spectacular, visible reappearance on earth of the Lord Messiah, Jesus. In the present we are all urged to repent and believe in that Good News (Gospel) of the future Messianic Kingdom on earth and to conduct ourselves in accordance with the words of Jesus and of his agents, the Apostles who spoke and wrote under the inspiration of the risen Lord Jesus.

Eduard Schweizer, *Good News According to Mark*:

² *Ibid.*, p. 145, emphasis added. The same view of the Kingdom is expressed by the author of this article in his commentary on Matthew (W.C. Allen, *The International Critical Commentary, St. Matthew*, T & T Clark, 1907, pp. lxxvii-lxxxi).

³ 1929, Vol. 4, p. 2667.

“Mark 1:14, 15: Mark gives a brief summary of the preaching of Jesus. Preaching and Good News are Mark’s favorite expressions. The call of Jesus is accurately summed up in Mark 1:15, where the association of repentance and faith [belief] reveals the language of the church (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 20:21). Mark’s concern is to make clear that in this preaching [about the coming Kingdom] Jesus continues to go forth into the world and this call, therefore, is being directed also to the one who reads this Gospel *today*. Consequently this section, Mark 1:14, 15, serves **as a caption to the whole gospel**.

“The Kingdom of God defined by Mark. When Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom of God is near, he is adopting a concept which was coined in the OT. Although it denotes God’s sovereignty over creation (Ps. 103:19; 145:11ff) it refers *primarily to God’s unchallenged sovereignty in the end time (Isa. 52:7)*...Judaism spoke of the reign of God which comes *after the annihilation of every foe and the end of all suffering*...In the NT the Kingdom of God is conceived *first of all* as something **in the future** (Mark 9:1, 47, 14:25; Matt. 13:41-43; 20:21; Luke 22:16, 18; I Cor. 15:50 et al) which comes from God (Mark 9:1; Matt. 6:10; Luke 17:20; 19:11). Therefore it is something man can only *wait for* (Mark 15:43), seek (Matt. 6:33), receive (Mark 10:15; cp Luke 12:32) and inherit (I Cor 6:9ff; Gal. 5:21; James 2:5), but is not able to create it by himself...In the acts and words of Jesus the future Kingdom has come upon us already. It is decided at that very moment whether or not he will ever be in the [future] Kingdom...**Repentance is nothing less than a whole-hearted commitment to the Good News**” (pp. 45, 46, 47).

Ernest Scott, D.D., Professor of New Testament, Union Theological Seminary, NY, makes good points but seems uncertain about the Gospel.

“It seems almost impossible to define the Christian Gospel. [Then Christianity is a total failure, since no one can know what it is!] Sometimes it is identified with our religion as a whole, sometimes with some element in it which is regarded as central. To accept the Gospel is to believe in the atonement or the love of God, or the revelation in Christ or the fact of human brotherhood. Yet it is well to remember that the word which is now used so loosely [Kingdom] had, **at the outset a meaning which was clearly understood**. ‘Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and saying, The time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand.’ The Gospel underwent a marvelous development...but the Good News has always been essentially what it was at the first — **the announcement of the Kingdom. It is evident from the manner in which Jesus made the announcement that he took up an idea which was already familiar**.

“He did not explain what he meant by the Kingdom, for **he could assume that all his hearers were looking forward to it. Their hope** for it had been newly stimulated by John the Baptist...They had long been thinking of the Kingdom and wondering when it would come and a prophet had now arisen who declared that it was close at hand...**In the religion of Israel we must seek for the immediate origin of the Kingdom idea of Jesus**...The idea persisted long after the royal house was firmly established that the reigning king was only the vice-regent of the invisible King [cp. Col. 1:15: Jesus is the *visible* image of the invisible God, his Father]...Israel had been chosen by a unique God who was known as yet only by His own people, but was nonetheless King of the whole earth. The day was coming when all nations would own His sovereignty...

“On the higher levels of prophecy the purified Israel of the future is conceived as attracting all nations by its high example, to the service of the One God. More often it is assumed that Israel when fully disciplined will be **restored to God’s favor** [Rom. 9-11] and advanced by Him to the sovereign place. As King of this preeminent people God will reign at last over the world...On the one hand God is already King. On the other hand it is recognized that **the Kingship lies in the future**...They look for a coming day when He will overcome all usurping powers and assert Himself as King. So the prophets keep before them the vision of a **new age** when the Kingdom of God will be fully manifested [at the Second Coming of Jesus].

“In that happy time Israel will be exalted, the cause of justice will be established, the earth full of the glory of the Lord. Nature in that day will be restored to its pristine glory and the wolf will lie down with the lamb and cattle will feed in large pastures; the light of the moon will be as the light of the sun. He [and His Messiah] will reign from Mount Zion and all nations will serve Him. King over a righteous nation, he will extend his dominion over the whole earth.”⁴

My comment: The New Testament is based on the Old. **Daniel 7:18, 22, 27** are ideal verses for grasping the Old Testament background to Jesus’ Gospel preaching. Jesus came to:

1) Proclaim the Kingdom of God (Luke 4:43). This is the whole reason for Christianity and therefore the whole reason for a Christian’s mission today.

2) Confirm the promises made to the fathers (Rom. 15:8). The promise was that the land and the world (Rom. 4:13) would be cleansed by the presence of the returned Messiah and that peace would fill the earth and the nations live in harmony.

⁴ 1931, pp. 11-21.

3) Give us an understanding that we might know God (1 John 5:20). That understanding is conferred by our understanding the unfolding Plan of God (the mystery) that the Kingdom of God is at hand and that we are to believe in that Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19) and live accordingly as we await the arrival of the Kingdom in the future.

4) Make people righteous not only by his death but “by his knowledge” (Isa. 53:11). “By his knowledge My righteous servant, the Messiah Jesus, will make the many righteous,” i.e. right with God and no longer in rebellion against Him.

5) Invite whoever will believe in God’s Plan for themselves and the world to prepare now to rule the world with Jesus when he returns. “Don’t you know the saints are going to manage the world?” (1 Cor. 6:2, Moffat; cp. 2 Tim. 2:12; Matt. 19:28; Rev. 5:10; 2:26; 3:21; 20:1-6).

In post-biblical times the original **faith in the Gospel of the Kingdom** suffered massive alteration, turning the Gospel into something quite different. Greeks rather than Jews became leaders in the Church and they imported alien Greek philosophy into the church’s teachings. They lost the vision of the Gospel of the Kingdom and substituted for it a vague “after-life” in heaven for disembodied souls. This made the future resurrection of believers (1 Cor. 15:23) and the return of Jesus quite unnecessary! Churchgoers today labor under the very great burden of this large scale paganizing of the faith, which obscures the Gospel of the Kingdom, the saving Message of both Jesus and his apostles (Luke 9:11; Acts 28:30-31, etc.).

This alteration of the original faith led to a continuing decline into a false Gospel and finally in the 1500s to the Reformation which was a plea to go back to the Bible. But these reformers did not fully recapture the Gospel of the Kingdom, Jesus’ saving Message. The process of restoration is furthered when people earnestly seek **the original meaning of the Kingdom of God as preached by the original Jesus**. The Gospel itself is all about the Kingdom of God and “Gospel” should never be divorced from the Kingdom. The pagan notion of “heaven” at death has replaced the hope of the Kingdom coming on earth. That paganism must be banished from the Christian vocabulary if the Bible is to be understood.

Harper Collins Bible Dictionary: “The Gospel is the proclamation of the Kingdom announced by Jesus (Mark 1:14, 15) and now proclaimed by the church” (or rather it should be!).

Gary Burge, *NIV Application Commentary*: “The Gospel as most of my church friends and I have known it in the past is so small a part of the whole deal, that it is hard to call it an accurate Gospel at all. Perhaps this limited Gospel message as proclaimed by modern

Christians explains the limited impact it is having on America today.”

In *Revisioning Evangelical Theology* “Stanley Grenz has reviewed the failed attempts of evangelical theology to fire the imagination of the modern world. He argues for the Kingdom of God as the new organizing center of what we say and do.”

Theology, News and Notes, Fuller Theological Seminary:

“Over the course of the past year, faculty from each of Fuller’s three schools have met together to discuss the question: What is the Gospel? A dozen years ago, the late Robert Guelich made the question the topic of his inaugural address, noting that years of professional work has returned him again and again to this fundamental subject. Guelich told the story of an encounter with the founder Charles Fuller after a seminary forum, with the ‘inspiration of Scripture’ as its topic. Fuller commented that he longed for the day when the seminary would host a forum on the question: ‘What is the Gospel?’ (spring, 2004).

My comment: This is an amazing admission. The fact is that they really are not sure what the Gospel is, and yet they say they are saving people by preaching “it.” The plain fact is that the Gospel of the Kingdom, including of course the ratifying blood of Jesus and his resurrection, is the Gospel. Until the heaven at death teaching, which is Plato’s and not Jesus’, is dropped, how can progress be made? And how can we be sure that anyone is saved by believing the teaching of Plato and calling it the teaching of Jesus? Is God as sloppy as we are with our thinking?! Is He so indulgent that He really does not care as long as we are sincere, although ignorant — of the nature of man, his destiny, the identity of God and Jesus?

Shailer Matthews, D.D., Professor of Theology, Chicago Seminary, *The Messianic Hope in the New Testament*:

“It is a serious error to hold that the Kingdom of God plays no important role in apostolic Christianity. Such a view both lacks historical perspective and is at variance with the entire thought of the literature of apostolic Christianity. The very name of the new movement, *Christianity*, would suggest the contrary opinion. So far from the eschatological Kingdom of God being a secondary element in the early church, *it is its great conditioning belief*. The preaching of the first evangelists was not a call to ethical ideals or an argument as to certain truths. Rather it was the proclamation of a Message...As regards the person of the Messiah, there is of course no question that the early Church believed that Jesus was the Christ who had gone to heaven, whence he would come to introduce the new age and the new Kingdom. This was the very core of the entire Christian movement...**To think of Jesus as deliberately using a**

term with a meaning different from what it would have been for others is not only to raise a question as to his morals, but as to his capacity as a teacher.”⁵

Sir Winston Churchill said, “If you have an important point to make, don’t try to be subtle or clever. Use the pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time; a tremendous whack.”

We do not apologize for following his advice. ✧

As has been nicely said, “We are to hitch our little human wagons to the star of God’s purpose by the words of Jesus and in no other way.”

The Gospel Which Hides

The Gospel is the vital message of salvation. We are to believe it to be saved. But what is that Gospel which saves? This is the million dollar question to which we must all give close attention.

Treat yourself to a session on the Internet and type in “What is the Gospel?” You will discover literally thousands of sites offering you the Christian Gospel and how to be saved. But will you find **the Gospel as Jesus preached it there?** I believe that it is a rare site which actually spells out the Gospel as Jesus announced it.

This is a serious issue indeed. Is it possible to present “the Gospel” and yet bypass Jesus? It is. This is how this feat is achieved: We all know that the death and resurrection of Jesus are essential elements of the saving Gospel. We all know that if Jesus did not die for the sins of the world and was not raised from death on the third day (Sunday) we are all doomed.

What most do not seem to understand is that the death and resurrection of Jesus do not comprise the *whole* of the Gospel. It is easy to demonstrate this remarkable fact. Just pick up a New Testament and read from Luke 4:15 and onwards till you come to Luke 9:22. You will read there in unmistakable terms that Jesus was going everywhere preaching the Gospel, and yet until Luke 9:22 he said not a word about his death and resurrection! The same is true of Matthew 4:17 where Jesus began to preach the Gospel, onwards to Matthew 16:21 where for the first time he *began* to tell them about his death and resurrection. The same pattern is found in Mark also. From 1:14-15 Jesus is preaching the Gospel, the saving Gospel, and yet he says nothing about his death and resurrection till we get to Mark 8:31 where he *began* to tell them about his death and resurrection.

Do you see the significance of these startling facts? The Gospel is firstly about the Kingdom of God and believing that Gospel of the Kingdom as it came from the

lips of Jesus who is the model preacher of salvation, as Hebrews 2:3 says: “How shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was **declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard...**” Obviously we must cling to the Gospel preaching of the historical Messiah.

In fact there is no greater peril than ignoring or bypassing the words/Gospel/teaching of Jesus: “Watch yourselves, that you do not lose what we have accomplished, but that you may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in **the teaching of Christ**, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring **this** teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting” (2 John 8-10).

As we have seen there are some 26 chapters reporting the Gospel preaching activity of Jesus in which, at that stage, he said not a word about his death and resurrection. This proves that the Gospel is not complete in just the death and resurrection of Jesus, which Paul said were “matters of first importance” (1 Cor. 15:1-3) but not the totality of the Gospel.

The NIV hides this astonishingly interesting fact about the Christian Gospel by telling you that Jesus preached “the Good News” while Paul preached “the Gospel”! This is deceptive. The Greek words are exactly the same for the Gospel preaching of Jesus and of Paul. The summary of Jesus’ cry to us all is: The Kingdom of God is coming: Repent and believe that Gospel (Mark 1:14-15). Jesus went on to unpack how the saving Kingdom message works in our lives. In the critically significant **parable of the sower** Jesus showed that it is an intelligent reception of the Kingdom of God Gospel which initiates our Christian life (Mark 4:11-12; Matt. 13:19). Only when a person sees, hears and understands the saving Gospel of the Kingdom (including now of course the later information about Jesus’ death and resurrection) can he repent and be forgiven (Mark 4:11-12). The Devil, knowing this, is keen to keep the Kingdom Gospel away from us, or snatch it from us if it is presented to us “so that we cannot believe it and **be saved**” (see Luke 8:12).

No wonder then that in Acts 8:12 we have a beautiful summary of how the people “came to Christ.” It was by **believing** the saving Gospel of the Kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ. (They then got baptized in water as every disciple of Jesus must.)

Just as Abraham **believed** the land/Kingdom/seed promise as presented to him by God (Gen. 15:6), quoted by Paul in Romans 4:3, so Jesus calls on us to believe his Kingdom Gospel to be saved (Mark 1:14-15; Matt. 13:19). **The Gospel**, says Paul, “was preached ahead of time to Abraham” (Gal. 3:8). The same Abrahamic

⁵ University of Chicago Press, 1905, pp. 144, 155.

promises constitute the Christian Gospel: the promise of seed, progeny, prosperity and property (the land/earth, Matt. 5:5; and the world, Rom. 4:13).

Jesus and Paul are on the same page, preaching the same Gospel of the Kingdom (see Luke 9:11 compared with Acts 28:30-31). The salvation steps are clearly laid out by Paul in Ephesians 1:13, agreeing exactly with Jesus' parable of the sower. We are to **hear** the Message of salvation, the truth, and having **believed** in it, we are sealed with "the holy spirit of the promise" (NJB). That promise is the promise made to Abraham and Jesus that they would be "heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13). The Gospel invites us to prepare to receive the Kingdom and to rule with Jesus in it on the earth when he comes (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; Rev. 20:1-6; 3:21; 2:26; 5:10).

At the first opportunity try communicating this wonderful Kingdom Gospel to your friends. ✧

Mistranslations in the NIV

Phil. 2:6 "...being in very nature God."

John 1:18: "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only..."

John 13:3, 16:28 and 20:17: Jesus is made to say, "I am going back, returning to the Father" instead of "I am going, ascending to the Father."

And in the KJV

Forgeries imposed on Scripture in the King James Version of the Bible and the Spanish *Reina Valera* version: 1 John 5:7, a verse suggesting the Trinity, is found in none of the original Greek manuscripts and was not part of Scripture as is widely recognized by study Bible notes and modern translations. It is not part of inspired Scripture and should be rejected as untrue. The Reina Valera version removed the intruding verse in 1989 but apparently put it back in 1995.

Note too that in all versions of the Reina Valera Daniel 12:11 is mistranslated, altering the sense of the prophecy. La Biblia de las Americas (1986) corrects the mistake.

Comments

"As I was first encountering the truths you have taught me I had found your *Doctrine of the Trinity* book in a thrift store. After praying for a few years for God to help me find the Truth on who the True God really is, I wanted to put this issue to rest. My spirit never could accept the idea of the Triune God. You sent me as a gift several books and then later again a few more. I was in a tight spot for months with money. Those books have born fruit over and over again, and I can't thank you enough for them.

"I did encounter a feeling of being all alone in my beliefs. The more I studied the more I had to rein in my upset and anger at how we had all been duped over simple questions about who God and the Son are. It was just so very clear. I forgive everyone in my church family. I understand now. I tried to teach or challenge the teaching that is common in the general churches and asked questions that were not appreciated in my church. I even taught openly in my own house group. Many were challenged. Some even agreed with us. But I was eventually asked to stand down. I spoke to my closest friends and some family. Some were hungry and some were so angry at the idea that I would question their beliefs that it reminds me of Servetus and a few others in history. Folks respond in a nearly demonic way when you touch the Trinity as a doctrine.

"Since my cousin is a bit of a home-grown theologian he read each and every book and has been secretly holding to the faith as best as he can understand. His wife is from South America and was deeply involved with the RCC, then for a little time the Mormon Church. Only in the past couple years has she actually wanted to invest time and prayer in finding out if the religion of Jesus was more than just a way to control masses in the old days, or if it's really true and valid. She is hungry now. She went rummaging through my cousin's books, looking for things that would help her understand the Gospel. She found these books: *The Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus*, *The Law, the Sabbath and New Covenant Christianity: Christian Freedom Under the Teaching of Jesus*, and *Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven*. She has recently begun *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound*.

"There were also some tracts on death, heaven and the Scriptures related to our true goal — one tract on how to count up to "one" in the Bible and one on the two lords of Psalm 110:1. She is seriously wondering what it is I am getting myself into, but at the same time is being pulled along by the fact that the Bible has been altered to fit an eisegetic point of view. She wants the truth about it all. She is doing a bit of work to find out if we are wrong and painting herself into the corner of truth. It just can't be denied!

"I have one of Greg Deuble's books and that one copy is nearly in pieces. We may have slow growth, but there is a growth in the grass roots. The Trinity vs. monotheistic point of view is coming up in so many places." — *California*

"The last issue of *Focus* arrived within a few hours of a gathering where I had been challenged by a Trinitarian brother quoting Isaiah 6:1-10 and John 12:41. Back home in bed I opened *Focus* and there was Clifford Dourousseau's article. Thank you, Lord!" — *New Zealand*