

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 10 No. 4

Anthony Buzzard, editor

January, 2008

2008 Theological Conference

Sunday-Wednesday, April 27-30, 2008

Simpsonwood Conference Center, Norcross, Georgia

April 27, 2008 marks the beginning of the 17th “Theological Conference.” It is important for us to point out right away that this is not some abstruse meeting for professional scholars only! On the contrary it provides a rare opportunity for believers in the God of Israel and in Jesus as Messiah and in the saving Gospel of the Kingdom to come together for mutual support, comfort and exhortation. Our speakers will once again be drawn from various parts of the world. They are in many cases full-time workers for the faith and they will bring us the best of their own research and meditation in matters directly related to the faith of Jesus. Most importantly they will help us to improve our own individual service of the Message of the Kingdom. The Church, Paul said, is to be equipped for ministry. Ministry is not the sole responsibility of a single “pastor”; it is the task assigned to each one of us as members of the body of Messiah.

We were very thrilled to hear of two of our lady participants of last year who, when they arrived home after the conference and the following three-day intensive class on the Kingdom of God, began to introduce the ladies of their Bible study to what they had been learning and confirming at the 16th annual conference. The ladies were thrilled with the refreshing new clarity brought to them and a united group of truth seekers and finders emerged. Above all the Bible students were taught to read the Bible in its proper first-century Jewish environment, uncluttered by the deadening and confusing traditions which have been added to it by mainstream theology.

Please do seriously consider making the trip to Atlanta and the excellent Simpsonwood Retreat Center. I feel you will be richly rewarded for your participation. We hope this year to allow extra time for fellowship and enjoyment of the beautiful setting in which the conference is held. But there will also be intense learning, as well as every opportunity for questions. A special feature of the conference is of course the celebrated “faith stories” of any who choose to give them. Many who come are finding fellowship for the first time, since it is difficult to meet with others of similar beliefs in many parts of the US and the world. The conference is only as good as its participants. Plan on being a blessing to others and on gaining a

corresponding inspiration. Jesus did say that we are all expected to share the gifts of truth we have received and at no time in history, I suppose, is the world more desperately in need of a sound, simple presentation of the Gospel of the Kingdom and the identity of the human Messiah and his One God.

Registration

To register please call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261 or 404-362-0052 or mail the form on the back page. The minimum deposit is \$50 per room. **The registration deadline is March 31, 2008.**

Cost

	Single	Double (per person)	Quad (per person)
3 nights w/meals	\$223	\$175	\$159
Conf. fee	\$20	\$20	\$20
Total	\$243	\$195	\$179

Transportation

We will provide transportation between Atlanta airport and Simpsonwood for \$25 round-trip or \$15 one-way, at the following times:

Airport to Simpsonwood		
Sunday, April 27	1:00 pm	3:30 pm
Simpsonwood to Airport		
Wed., April 30	1:00 pm	

Please arrange your arrival time on Sunday early enough to catch one of the two shuttle runs. On Wednesday, April 30, we will provide one (1) shuttle run. In order to allow you enough time to catch your return flight, we suggest you not book your return flight prior to 3:30 p.m.

The conference begins with registration at 4 pm on Sunday and ends with lunch on Wednesday. Driving directions to Simpsonwood Conference Center are at www.simpsonwood.org

Post-conference Class

Anthony Buzzard will teach “The Crisis over God: Helping Others Understand Who God and Jesus Are” from Wednesday afternoon, April 30 to Friday, May 2. The cost for the class is \$298 for credit and \$149 for continuing education. It will be held at Simpsonwood, with the same room/meal rates for Wed. and Thurs. nights — \$74 per night for single, \$58 per person per night for double. Please call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261 or 404-362-0052 **before March 31** to register.

The Bible Is Not the Word of God

by Sean Finnegan

Let me start by saying that I do believe that the Bible is true, divinely inspired, and authoritative. However, I would like to examine the critically important phrase “word of God” in order to understand its biblical definition. To my knowledge, the Bible never calls itself “the word of God.” Instead, the terms, “it is written,” “Scripture,” and “the Law and the Prophets” refer to the whole Bible. Nevertheless, the Scriptures certainly do contain what God and His agents have said (i.e. God’s words). More specifically “word of God” is used many times (especially in the Old Testament) to mean a message from God (i.e. prophetic word for a king or nation). The Psalmist sees “the word” as a synonym for a law, statute, command, or precept of God. This usage of “word of God” as “God’s command” is present in the New Testament as well (Mark 7:13; John 10:35). Even so, as I have looked at the various places that “**the word**” is used in the New Testament I have become increasingly aware of its meaning as **the Gospel of the Kingdom, the Christian Gospel**.

Nothing is more important than that we listen carefully to what Jesus means by “the word of God.” “Hear then the parable of the sower. When anyone hears **the word of the kingdom** and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. The one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears **the word** and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises because of **the word**, immediately he falls away. And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears **the word**, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of wealth choke **the word**, and it becomes unfruitful. And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears **the word** and understands it; who indeed bears fruit and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty” (Matt. 13:18-23; see also Mark 4 and Luke 8).

This parable of the seed and the sower is the foundational parable for understanding everything Jesus taught (Mark 4:13). According to Mark 4:14 the sower’s seed is “**the word**.” In Matthew 13:19 the term is defined as “**the word of the kingdom**.” Throughout the parable “**the word**” is the primary saving Gospel message that must be understood, accepted, held fast to, and it is the same **word** which alone produces fruit in the believer. It is important to note that Jesus delivered this parable to Jews in Palestine who already believed and read (or at least heard) the Scriptures each Sabbath. Jesus is not asking them to accept the Bible (they had

already done that). Instead he is asking them to accept Jesus’ “**word of the kingdom**,” his Gospel of salvation which in other places is summarized by the catch-phrase “Repent, the kingdom of God is at hand” (Matt. 4:17; Mark 1:15).

That opening command of Jesus summarizes the basis of the entire Christian faith. We must begin by responding obediently to Jesus’ *first* command (Mark 1:14-15). The Apostles faithfully continued to preach the Gospel they had heard and learned from Jesus: “And they laid hands on them and put them in jail until the next day, for it was already evening. But many of those who had heard **the message/word** believed; and the number of the men came to be about five thousand” (Acts 4:3-4).

Peter had preached the Gospel to the crowd that gathered after the healing of the lame man. Many of these people who heard “**the word**” (translated “message” in the NASB) believed. We see then that the **word/message** contains a strong call to repentance in light of Jesus being the Messiah, the coming restoration of all things in the future Kingdom of God, and the forgiveness available through Christ (all of this comprises the Gospel). The Gospel as Jesus preached it is strongly orientated towards *the future* and the Kingdom to be introduced at Jesus’ future coming.

“Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching **the word**. Philip went down to the city of Samaria and began proclaiming **Christ** to them...But when they believed Philip preaching **the good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ**, they were being baptized, men and women alike...Now when the apostles in Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received **the word of God**, they sent them Peter and John...So, when they had solemnly testified and spoken **the word of the Lord**, they started back to Jerusalem, and were preaching **the gospel** to many villages of the Samaritans” (Acts 8:4-5, 12, 14, 25).

I believe that all of the above words in bold print are synonymous. “The word” = “Christ” = “gospel about the kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ” = “the word of God” = “the word of the Lord” = “the gospel.” To come up with a different definition for each of these phrases would cut the record of Philip preaching in Samaria into a myriad of confusing pieces. Luke will naturally not use the same word for the Gospel each time. He varies his terminology. This is just the same today. One time I may say “America” and another “the U.S.” or “the United States” but everyone knows that these are interchangeable.

“The brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea, and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. Now these were more noble-minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received **the word** with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures

daily to see whether these things were so. Therefore many of them believed, along with a number of prominent Greek women and men. But when the Jews of Thessalonica found out that **the word of God** had been proclaimed by Paul in Berea also, they came there as well, agitating and stirring up the crowds” (Acts 17:10-13).

Paul’s mission was to preach **the gospel of the kingdom** from city to city (Acts 19:8; 20:24-25; 28:23, 30-31). When he arrived in Berea, they received his gospel message (i.e. “**the word**”) and checked it against the Scriptures to see if the message was correct. Thus, “the word” is not one-to-one equivalent with “the Scriptures” (although the Bible certainly does contain the word/message).

“For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring **word of God**. For, ‘ALL FLESH IS LIKE GRASS, AND ALL ITS GLORY LIKE THE FLOWER OF GRASS. THE GRASS WITHERS, AND THE FLOWER FALLS OFF, BUT **THE WORD OF THE LORD ENDURES FOREVER.**’ And **this is the word which was preached** to you as Gospel” (1 Peter 1:23-25).

The **word (Gospel)** is the message which must be believed in order for us to be born again (remember the seed from the parable of the sower?). This is the word that was preached. The word for preach in this verse is *evangelizomai* and it is the verb form of the noun *evangelion* (the gospel). Although this fact is lost in English the point is that “to preach” is really to **preach the Gospel**. It is like saying that I am going out to “gospel” to my friend (i.e. preach = verb form of “gospel”). Here in this verse it says “this is the word which was ‘gospelled’ [or preached] to you.” Thus the word (at least in this verse and in many others) definitely implies announcing the Gospel about the Kingdom.

I know that it is common to refer to the Bible as “the Word” but if the Bible never does this then we are unwittingly changing the definition of “the word.” Certainly this is something we need to consider. After all, we are the people of the Book, the ones who seek to base our theology on the Scriptures rather than on received tradition. ✧

Defining the Real Jesus

Some commentary on the Bible is unconsciously the victim of tradition uncritically assumed to be true. One can demonstrate this fact easily. Many Bible readers start with a given definition of Jesus in mind, and they then assume that the gospels agree with them. Unknown to themselves these readers impose on the text their preconceptions about what they think it *ought* to say. In other words they assume that the Church has

instructed them properly. But is this true? What sort of Jesus do the gospels actually present as the hero and founder of the Christian faith?

Read the opening chapters of Matthew and Luke, who tell us extensively (appropriately enough in the case of Matthew as the introduction to the whole NT) about **the origin of the Son of God**. We want to establish who Jesus, the Son of God, is and thus we need to know his *origin*. Matthew takes 1/20 and Luke 1/10 of their whole books to lay the foundation properly. This is what good teachers do.

So what does Matthew have to say about the origin and beginning of the Son of God? You will need to pay close attention to Matthew’s careful use of words. He begins by introducing the key player in God’s drama by giving us the *genesis* or genealogy or family history of Jesus Christ, who is the son of David and the son of Abraham (Matt. 1:1). That is Matthew’s great opening statement. Stop right there! The son of David. That is the first and essential definition of Jesus, and remarkably in Revelation 22:16 at the close of the New Testament Jesus himself gives us a wonderful confirmation of his identity: “I am the root [i.e. shoot]¹ and offspring of David.” (Compare “root of Jesse” in Isa. 11:10, quoted in Rom. 15:12, where the sense of “root” is one springing from the family of Jesse.)

Now it is a matter of plain common sense to know that the son of David is not older than his ancestor David! That would throw the whole account into utmost confusion. No, Jesus, the Son of God, is the lineal and biological *descendant* of King David. The son, Jesus, is the successor to David, and cannot therefore be older than David, his “father.”

Matthew is working out the data provided by Old Testament prophecy. The *promise* of the son of David who was to come was given to David in that memorable passage in 2 Samuel 7:14 (1 Chron. 17:13) in which the prophet Nathan announced on behalf of the one God of Israel that David would have a distinguished descendant, a *seed*, who would inherit the Messianic Kingdom and rule on David’s and God’s throne forever.

Now some of you reading have been for a very long time victims of a direct contradiction of 2 Samuel 7:14. The prophecy is that “I [God] *will be* his father and he [the Messiah, Heb. 1:5] *will be* My son.” Please do not make the mistake of rejecting that sublime promise and definition of who Jesus the Son is. He is not *older* than David! The descendant of David cannot pre-exist David! It is utterly impossible to venture the idea that Jesus was

¹*Bauer’s Lexicon*: “That which grows from a root, *shoot*, *scion*, in the NT, in imagery, descendant...of the Messiah, *the Scion*, [root] from Jesse Ro 15:12 (Is 11:10); Rev 5:5; cp. 22:16 (Isa. 53:2).”

the creator of the heavens and the earth. He has to be the biological and blood relative of David. No other figure can qualify as the Messiah. And confessing the true Messiah is the heart and core of New Testament faith. It is very important to get this issue straight. Other Jesuses are threatening as well as divisive.

Some readers have been “trotting out” a phrase about the “pre-human Jesus.” There is no such person in Scripture. The only Jesus who meets the requirements for Messiahship is the Jesus introduced in the first verse of the New Testament. Jesus Christ is the lineal descendant of David, David’s great, great...grandson. Only *that* Jesus fits the categories supplied by Scripture.

Notice how Matthew goes on emphasizing who the true Messiah Jesus is. After 3 x 14 generations (David in Hebrew has the numerical value of 14: Dalet=4, Vav=6, Dalet=4), we come to the precise information about the *genesis*, the beginning, *the coming into existence* of Jesus Christ. Again, please do not make the mistake of contradicting Matthew and saying “this was not really his beginning because I know he was pre-human!”

Matthew uses the same word in 1:18 as he had used in 1:1. The word is *genesis* and it means the beginning, the beginning of existence. Here, says Matthew, is how that beginning of the Son happened. When Mary was engaged to Joseph of the royal house of David, she was found to be pregnant through the power of the spirit. Joseph was not aware of the miracle which had occurred and naturally planned to divorce his wife to be, for fornication. The angel then intervened to explain the true facts. Joseph could confidently proceed with his marriage to Mary because “what is *begotten in her* is from the holy spirit” (Matt. 1:20).

Note how confusingly translations have avoided the plain meaning of the Greek here. They write (with some few exceptions) “what is conceived in her is from the holy spirit.” That is also of course true; Mary did conceive a son. But the Greek text speaks *directly of the activity of the Father in begetting*, bringing into existence the Son: “What is begotten, caused to exist in her, is from the holy spirit.” That procreated person is the true Jesus, the Son of God.

The story is equally clear in Luke’s account. Gabriel informs Mary that she is to bear the promised Son of God. He will inherit, just as Nathan had said to David, the throne of David his ancestor (2 Sam. 7:13-14; 1 Chron. 17:12-13). When Mary asked how she could become pregnant while still not living with Joseph as married, Gabriel states the same facts as the angel who appeared to Joseph. Gabriel announces the biological miracle which is to produce the Son of God. As if to ward off all alternative and contradictory accounts, Gabriel says that Mary’s baby will be the Son of God **precisely because** (*dio kai*, Luke 1:35) God is his Father by supernatural intervention in the human biological

chain. The baby to be begotten (Luke 1:35), brought into existence, will be the Son of God and the son of David and of Mary.

This establishes right from the start of the New Testament the fact that Jesus is the *human* head of the new creation. He is the beginning of a new race of human beings. He is the second Adam. Precisely because of the creative biological miracle wrought by God, the Father, Jesus is indeed the Son of God. God is his Father and he is thus a unique human being, the last Adam. The first Adam in Genesis was also son of God (Luke 3:38), by direct creation.

Creeds from the second century on muddled and contradicted these lucidly simple accounts of who Jesus is at his origin. They began to promote an essentially non-human Jesus, a so-called “pre-human Jesus” who then “dressed up” to look like a human being. In his core being, however, that imagined Jesus was not really a human being, beginning, as all humans do, in the womb of his mother.

John in his epistles penned late in the first century reinforced the beginning and origin of Jesus when he wrote in 1 John 5:18: “We know that he who has been born of God does not [continue in] sin. But **he who was born/begotten** from God keeps him safe and the evil one cannot harm him.” To beget means to bring into existence. This implies of course that the Son did not exist until the moment he was brought into existence!

The statement of 1 John 5:18 proved embarrassing to later copyists of the New Testament because it provided solid historical evidence for **the origin** of Jesus (agreeing perfectly with Matthew and Luke). John used the aorist tense in Greek to describe the clear historical event which was the beginning, the begetting, the coming into existence, “the beginning to be” of Jesus. Later *post-biblical* theology had departed into a new version of Jesus. It said that Jesus as Son of God had no beginning in time! He was eternally begotten (though no one could really explain what that actually meant!).

So what was a scribe, copyist of the New Testament documents to do? Fortunately the evidence of a twisting of the text is available to us. Some manuscripts have “he who is born of God [the Christian] keeps **himself**.” John had written “he who was born of God [i.e. Jesus] keeps **him** [the Christian].” Jesus, in other words, as the one begotten by God preserves the believer. Those fudged texts changed the word “him” to “himself,” thus destroying the evidence from John that Jesus was “born/begotten from God” in historical time, just as Matthew and Luke report.

Thus the KJV and NKJV are incorrect in 1 John 5:18 and they cover up the important evidence for the beginning of the Son of God *in time, in history*. He who was begotten from God is indeed the Son of God and

that Son of God preserves the believers so that the Devil cannot harm them. The *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* has it right: “Christ, the one who was begotten from God, preserves him” (Vol. 6, p. 559). Jesus, the Son of God cannot *be* God; he originated from God some 2000 years ago. “The one who was begotten by God...is Christ as the Son of God” (Vol. 8, p. 142).

God Fathered a Son in Nazareth, Not in Eternity

The new creation happened some 2000 years ago when God intervened to produce by miracle His own Son in a Jewish maiden. Jesus is thus “the beginning of the [new] creation of God” (Rev. 3:14). The clearcut creative activity of God producing the new creation has become as confused and chaotic as the Genesis creation. The theory of evolution has removed the sharp edge from the concept of God’s initial creation of the heavens and earth and of the man Adam. The biblical creation has been lost in an endless dim past when life was supposed to have started in the mud.

Likewise the traditional doctrine of the Incarnation of a “second member of the Trinity” has destroyed the clearcut teaching of the New Testament that the Son of God, Jesus, is the **beginning** of the new creation. The Son did not arrive from a previous existence and pass through the womb of his mother. That is what the Gnostics taught. He was procreated in the womb of Mary (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35; 1 John 5:18, not KJV, corrected in the text of the RV, 1881). Jesus was begotten by God and Jesus preserves the Christian. There is a vast difference between a being who has no beginning and one who begins as all humans do in the womb of his mother.

A recent prayer heard in an evangelical setting speaks of the confusion which has overcome our understanding of the constitution of the universe. The prayer went like this: “O Lord Jesus, thank you for being the architect of the whole universe and coming to earth to be born as a baby. You, Jesus, are the Almighty and you humbled yourself to be born and to die...In Jesus’ name we pray.”

What happened to the Father here? He is pushed aside and Jesus replaces Him as the Creator of everything, unaccompanied (Isa. 44:24). The promotion of Jesus to the status of God multiplies God, makes Him two and not one, and destroys the human Son of God, depriving him of his human origin. The whole point of Jesus is lost when he is no longer the perfect model of man in relation to the One God. 2 Samuel 7:14 (Heb. 1:5) is incomprehensible if God already had a Son before he promised to have a Son in the future! Mary did not bear “human nature.” She conceived and bore the lineal descendant of David as promised by God in 2 Samuel 7:14 and Isaiah 7:14. **If Jesus is not biologically originated in Mary, the descendant of**

David, he cannot qualify to be the Messiah, who said so emphatically, “I am the descendant and offspring of David, the bright morning star” (Rev. 22:16). “We know,” said the writer to the Hebrews, “that our Lord is descended from the tribe of Judah” (Heb. 7:14. Note Isa. 7:14; 2 Sam. 7:14 and Heb. 7:14! And of course David is numerically 14. Is this mere coincidence?). A person who is the ancestor of Judah, i.e. older than Judah, cannot by definition be *descended* from Judah.

The popular Son or “God the Son” who gives up his station as eternal God and becomes a baby and dies is reflected in the apocryphal literature which breathes an atmosphere quite different from the New Testament. There is a Gnostic hymn describing a conversation between God, the Father and the Son, before the birth of Jesus: “For the world’s sake, send me, Father! Possessing the seals I will descend, all the aeons I will pass through, all secrets I will reveal, the forms of the gods I will disclose and the hidden things of the holy way, which I have called ‘knowledge,’ I will impart.”

Gnostic literature presented a pre-human Jesus asking to be sent to earth from heaven. Amazingly a hymn of the Protestant Martin Luther echoes the same mythology: “He said to His beloved Son, ‘The time has come to show mercy. Go down, precious crown of my heart, and be salvation to the poor.’”²

The public now misreads John 1:1. They impose their preconceived notion of that preexisting Son on the matchless text of John and read “in the beginning was the *Son*.” But John spoke of the word, not the Son. There was no Son until God begat him in Mary (Luke 1:35). The human Jesus whose origin is expressly traced by Matthew and Luke to the miracle wrought by God in Mary has been replaced in this paganized version of the faith by a pre-human and thus non-human Jesus, who cannot qualify as the genuine lineal descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:14). That non-Davidic Jesus is the property of both “orthodoxy” and Gnosticism.

The public should be warned against some false translations of the Greek in the NIV version. Jesus nowhere said he was “returning” or “going back” to God. This would be impossible since he had not been there as a conscious Son of God before his conception in Mary. In John 13:3, 16:28 and 20:17 in the NIV Jesus is made to say something he did not say, that he was going back or returning to God. The Greek text does not say this. Jesus said he was “going to the Father,” or “departing to go to the Father,” not going *back*.

Unfortunately the public all too uncritically accepts what seems right on the basis of tradition accepted without careful examination. A regular correspondent of ours wrote recently with great confidence that Jesus

² Cited from Kuschel, *Born Before All Time? The Dispute over Christ’s Origin*, 1992, p. 380).

must have been God because in John 16:28 he spoke of *returning* to the Father. His translation has misled him. The text in the original says no such thing. No questions would have arisen if Matthew and Luke and 2 Samuel 7:14 had been taken to heart as the basis of who Jesus, the uniquely begotten Son of God, is. ✧

Kalah ve Necheratzah

Please read on and everything will become clear! I have titled this article with a very important phrase from the Hebrew text of the Old Testament found in Daniel 9:27, Isaiah 10:23 and 28:22. It is an unusual phrase. **It contains vital information about future events** which must happen before the arrival of Jesus in power and glory to resurrect the faithful of all the ages (1 Cor. 15:22-23) and to set up his Kingdom on a new earth. The Christian Gospel is about the Kingdom of God and its future coming and present preparation. Jesus is coming back to solve the world's intractable problems.

The Hebrew phrase above and the contexts in which it is found are a veritable key to understanding end-time events — about which there is a very great deal of confusion amongst Bible readers. You will see too that Paul was very interested in this phrase and quoted it in Romans in a setting which proves he understood it to refer to times *yet future*, namely the time when, as part of Jesus' important activity at his future coming, he will regather a remnant of national Israel and reestablish their sovereignty in the Middle East (as promised too in Acts 1:6-7; Matt. 19:28). Since Paul is citing the Old Testament and particularly since he is citing our phrase from Isaiah 10:23 and 28:22, we are given a marvelous indication of how Paul understood the famous 70 "sevens" prophecy found in Daniel 9:24-27, where the same phrase is found in the Hebrew.

Let us start with *kalah ve necheratzah* in Isaiah 28:22. Isaiah begins with a strong warning to skeptics: "And now do not carry on as scoffers, or your fetters will be made stronger, because I have heard from the Lord God of Hosts of **a destruction decreed** [*kalah ve necheratzah*] against the whole land [or earth]." Isaiah had used the same rare phrase in 10:22-23: "For though your people, O Israel, are as the sand of the sea, only a small number will come back, for the destruction is fixed, overflowing in righteousness. For **a complete destruction, one that is decreed** [*kalah ve necheratzah*], the Lord God of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land [or earth]."

Now the third appearance of this amazing decreed destruction promised by the prophets. Daniel 9:27: "For one week he shall make a firm compact with the many; half the week he shall abolish sacrifice and oblation; on the temple wing shall be the horrible abomination until

the ruin that is decreed [*kalah ve necheratzah*] is poured out upon the horror" (NAB).

Now Paul's all-important reference to Daniel and Isaiah: "For the Lord will execute his sentence on the earth quickly and decisively" (**Rom. 9:28**). Paul was reading from the Greek version of the Hebrew Old Testament (called the LXX, the "seventy"). Our phrase *kalah ve necheratzah* (Dan. 9:27, Hebrew) was rendered into Greek in Daniel 9:27 as "at the end time an end shall be put to the desolation." The concept is the same: a decisive end and destruction will come to the one causing abomination, that is the "abomination of desolation" mentioned as the critical sign of the end by Jesus (see Matt. 24:14-15). The NIV of Romans 9:28 reads: "For the Lord will carry out his sentence on earth with speed and finality" (citing Isa. 10:22-23).

In his important work *Man and His Hope in the Old Testament*, well-known commentator Walther Zimmerli observes that "Dan. 9:27 corresponds to the second half of the seventieth 'seven' of years...Dan. 9:27 looks towards that point in time in which 'on the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate [the Abomination of Desolation referred to by Jesus], until the decreed end [**kalah ve necheratzah**] is poured out on the desolator.' The formula [*kalah ve necheratzah*, Dan. 9:27] is taken over from Isaiah 10:23 and 28:22. Daniel 11:45 puts it directly: 'the oppressor will come to his end with none to help him.' 'By no human hand he will be broken' (Dan. 8:25)" (p. 146).

We are invited here into the vision of the prophets for the future of present evil world systems which will come to an end by God's decisive and final decree, when the "Abomination of Desolation," defined by Mark 13:14 as a "'**he**' [note the masculine pronoun in the original] standing where he ought not to," is finally brought to his ruin. The seventieth "seven" of Daniel's celebrated prophecy is linked to that final and decisive destruction of the evil person, the final enemy of God. This did not happen in AD 70. It will happen when the final "Assyrian" of Isaiah 10, God's instrument for chastising the people of Israel, is brought to "his end" (Dan. 11:45; 9:26b). This important antichristian figure is called the King of the North by Daniel, and in 11:45 an end is put to his disastrous military exploits. The same end is described for the wicked "prince who is to come" in Daniel 9:26b. He will be destroyed by the returning Messiah and this will put an end to his activity which will be "causing desolation on the wing of abominations" (Dan. 9:27).

The point I am making here is that the real end-times begin with the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation. Jesus stated this clearly. In response to the question "What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the age?" (Matt. 24:3), Jesus replied with these precious words: "This Gospel of the Kingdom must be

preached to all the nations, to the whole world, and *then* [and only then] will the end come — **When you therefore see the Abomination of Desolation spoken of by Daniel standing in a holy place...**” (Matt. 24:14-15). The connecting word “therefore” links the concept of **the end** to the appearance of the Abomination of Desolation. His appearance will trigger that greatest time of trouble (Matt. 24:21). Here Jesus quotes again from Daniel. This time it is Daniel’s parallel statement about the Great Tribulation. This is found in Daniel 12:1 in connection with the death of the wicked final King of the North (Dan. 11:45).

There have been too many abortive attempts to tell us when Jesus is coming back. A disaster occurred when some in 1844 thought they had calculated the date. This failed, and the false prediction disillusioned many. Then came the Jehovah’s Witnesses who set dates over and over again, and were invariably wrong, not following Jesus’ or Daniel’s prophecies properly. 1914 came and went. 1948 saw the rebirth of the nation of Israel, but in unbelief. There was no acceptance of the Messiah by the nation. Still further dates have been produced. But Jesus said enough when he predicted that not until the Gospel of the Kingdom has been made known far and wide, will the end of the age come (Matt. 24:14). It is then a matter of recognizing the Abomination as the visible sign that the final end-times are beginning. Paul warned also that it is premature to expect the Second Coming before certain other events have happened (2 Thess. 2:1-5). Until then the task of the Church is not to turn inwards on itself but to announce the Truth of the Gospel of the Kingdom across the world. We invite our readers to take part in this activity. ✧

The Crucifixion Was on Friday

In all investigation of Bible topics it is wise to start with the really plain information and adjust the more complex passages to the easy and elementary ones. For example “the dead know nothing at all” (Ecc. 9:5) should settle quite easily the fact that the dead are not conscious at present. Jesus said the same of the dead Lazarus: he “is asleep, and I am going to wake him up” (John 11:11). Likewise Luke 1:35 tells you why and how Jesus is the Son of God and Mark 12:29 convinces the open-minded that Jesus was a unitarian believing in the creed of Israel. Matthew 5:5 and Revelation 5:10 will persuade the seeker for truth that “heaven” is not the objective of the Christian. The day of the crucifixion has given rise to some differences of opinion, but if one starts with Luke 24:21, Sunday was “the third day since these things happened [the crucifixion of Jesus].” Luke tells us elsewhere how he reckons time: He reports Jesus as saying “today, tomorrow and the third day” (Luke 13:32). Sunday was the third day since Friday, counting with Luke and Jesus, *inclusively* (one Sunday is eight

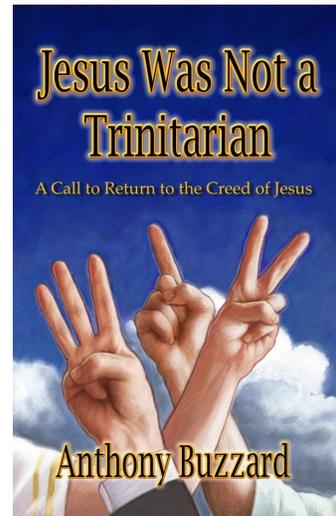
days later than the previous Sunday, John 20:19, 26). The “three days and three nights” of Matthew 12:40 does not overturn that clear evidence, confirmed also in Luke 23:53-24:1, a clear sequence of Friday (preparation day), Sabbath and first day. Matthew 12:40 is idiomatic for a part of 72 hours, as is shown by Jewish commentary. ✧

Comments

“I wanted to let you know that your new book *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian* is absolutely what is needful for people to hear. I pray it will be distributed far and wide, and cause people to rethink their positions on who God is and who His Son Jesus really is! I have just completed my second reading since I received it about a week ago, and have found it an inspiration and a tool I can use to help others see what biblical unitarianism is.”— *Canada*

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Review by Dr. Richard T. Nolan of our new book *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian* at www.amazon.com:



“Anthony Buzzard has provided a thorough presentation that escapes the paralyzing bondage of the 4th and following centuries’ faux-orthodox interpretations of Jesus the Christ. This book exposes the intellectual distortions and rut that has entombed Christology for centuries, because such scholarly honesty would probably have cost ‘traditional’ theologians their jobs, even their lives. Readers are provided with a Jesus truly grounded in the New Testament. In the current post-Christian period, Buzzard’s candor may well assist with a resurrection of a genuinely orthodox Christianity, if there is ever to be one. In my roles as a former philosophy professor and retired Episcopal cathedral canon, I heartily recommend *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*.”

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