

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 10 No. 9

Anthony Buzzard, editor

June, 2008

Back from Another One God Conference

Those of us who write often know that we are very likely to pour out of our minds what is currently occupying them. In my case, I am trying to simmer down after a stimulating weekend in Seattle where Ken Westby, a long-term friend of mine, had organized the seventh “One God Conference.” Some 70 folk gathered from different religious backgrounds and faith stories, to be instructed further in the “unitarian” understanding that God is the God of Israel, and the God and Father of Jesus.

We were treated to a vigorous debate on the last day between an expert exponent of the Trinitarian position and Sean Finnegan whose magnificent work for the One God, Jesus and the Gospel of the Kingdom, including the recent debate, may be seen at www.kingdomready.org

The impression I take away from this intense interchange and clash of minds is this: Trinitarianism is fearfully complex. One has somehow to believe that as God Jesus knew the time of his return, but as man he did not. As God he could not die, but as man he could. (Paul knew nothing about such hairsplitting; he said that God’s Son died.) Yet it is maintained by Trinitarians that Jesus is one single undivided personality. It is obvious that the ordinary churchgoer who assembles under the banner of the Trinity could not possibly defend the doctrine which, he is nevertheless told, determines whether he is a true or false believer.

I take another very strong impression from this debate, and it is this: The whole issue over Trinitarianism or unitarianism¹ (is God three Persons or one Person?) could, I suggest, be resolved in a simple manner, based on two major considerations.

Firstly the unitarian points out with confidence the astonishing fact that *none* of the some 11,000 occurrences of the different words for the Deity in the Bible (*YHVH, Adonai, Elohim, Theos*) can be shown to mean “the triune God.” That data ought to be startling to any lover of the Bible. Is it credible that the Bible’s God is a triune Being when the words for God in Scripture never designate that triune God — not once?

You would think that every reader would conclude that since “God” in the Bible never means the triune God, then the God of the Bible is not triune.

¹Not to be confused with contemporary Unitarian Universalism which is a very different theology.

Secondly, what seems to get lost in the shuffle of argument and counter-argument, delivered often at lightning speed and laced with technical language, is this profoundly important question: What is the definition of God provided by Jesus himself? How does Jesus instruct us to believe when it comes to knowing who God is?

Is Jesus to be permitted to teach us who God is? The question is almost never given a clear hearing. But we do, don’t we, believe that Christianity is to be based on Jesus **and his teachings**? Can we speak of believing in the lordship of Jesus and then disregard what he says? Have we not entered some sort of never-never land if we propose that Christianity can get along nicely without reference to the words of Jesus? Is Jesus dispensable as far as his words/teachings are concerned? Could not Jesus decide the Trinitarian/unitarian debate?

Paul uttered some of his most strident and impressive words when he warned us against any who might present themselves as Christians yet discount and deny the health-giving WORDS of Jesus (this magazine almost never resorts to shouting capital letters, but here we allow ourselves a single exception!). Please listen to Paul:

“Anyone who teaches anything different and does not **keep to the sound teaching which is that of our Lord Jesus Christ**, the doctrine which is in accordance with true religion, is conceited and understands nothing. He has an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions” (1 Tim. 6:3-4).

With those words firmly planted in our hearts, let us approach the question of who God is. Trinitarians maintain that we are to worship a God who is **three eternal Persons who exist as one essence**.

The obvious question to be asked is whether Jesus believed in such a tri-personal God. Let us appeal to the Lord Messiah for guidance in identifying the true God. Happily we have a clear record of Jesus’ belief about who God is. Not only that — his creed is doubly confirmed by the fact that the Jew Jesus is in perfect agreement with a Jewish scribe, as together they discuss the greatest of all questions we humans must face. Who is God? So prepare now to hear what Jesus commands us in terms of our definition of God.

“One of the scribes [professional Bible teachers]... seeing that Jesus had answered them well, asked him, ‘Which commandment is first of all?’ Jesus answered, ‘The first is this: “Listen, Israel, the Lord our God is one

Lord, and you are to love the Lord your God with all your heart..." And the scribe said to him, 'Well said, teacher; in truth you have said that He is one and there is no other besides Him' (Mark 12:28-32).

Here then is the plainest credal statement about who the true God is. Without any doubt He is one, and there is no other besides Him. Without a shadow of doubt He is the God of the Israelite people, the God of the scribe and equally the God of Jesus. Is anyone going to avoid the obvious fact that He is, or ought to be, also the God of those claiming to follow Jesus?

Jesus stated that God is a single Lord. He uttered the Jewish unitarian creed and made it the pinnacle of good Christian understanding and practice.

What else can we say about this One God of Jesus' creed? He could not possibly be the triune God of traditional Christianity. Jesus is on record as recognizing no God but the God of his Jewish heritage based on the Scriptures preserved as God's oracles. That God was never the Trinity. Jesus was not a Trinitarian, on the plainest evidence of his testimony in Mark 12:28-34.

Why is not the creed of Jesus recited Sunday by Sunday in church? The answer is that a prodigious ecclesiastical propaganda has been mounted against Jesus' definition of God. It has been deemed too Jewish and it has been replaced by a Trinitarian view of God. At the most basic level, this "improved" creed assaults the bedrock theology of Jesus and renders his words of no effect. Is this not cause for a public outcry and protest?

Visit your local Christian bookstore and consult the commentaries. They are strangely quiet when it comes to the discussion in Mark 12:28-34. And on Psalm 110:1 they are simply inaccurate in the presentation of the facts. Desperate to find a second God in the Godhead, they appeal to Psalm 110:1 as did Jesus immediately after his historic words affirming the unitarian creed of Israel. I was horrified to find again a blatant piece of misinformation. "The LORD [YHVH] said to my Lord, 'Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.'"

Translations wrongly capitalize that second lord to give the false impression that God is speaking to another who is equally God. One commentary I consulted tells us that in Psalm 110:1 "David owns the Messiah, his son, as his Lord — a title of Deity...Only God can sit on God's throne."

These are remarkable falsehoods. Firstly the second lord is *adoni* (pronounced *adonee*) in Hebrew and it never refers to Deity. The word for the Lord God is *Adonai* (pronounced *Adonigh*). Secondly the entire Plan of God is thwarted if He is not permitted to place His beloved and obedient Son on the throne beside Him. Jesus achieved his remarkable triumph by being exalted by the Father to the supreme position in the universe

under the One God. To disallow God to place His human Son at His right hand is to tell God what He may not do! Such is the result of the greatly mistaken idea that God is three. Jesus' words and creed in Mark 12:28-34 are our only safe guide, and Jesus pronounced the command to "listen" to that creed to be the most important consideration of all. Are we listening to Jesus' creed? ✧

Pre-existence in the Gospel of John by Sean Finnegan

Recently someone dropped by the www.KingdomReady.org blog and left this comment:

"Having found restoration theology in the past year and having the Trinity drummed into me all my life, it is a joy to find the 'truth' being taught and verified by this website. Yet, how do I come to believe the teaching that Jesus wasn't with God before he came to earth born of the Virgin Mary? John 17:21-24 reads, 'That all of them may be one, Father, just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us that the world may believe that you have **sent** me. I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one. I in them and you in me. May they be brought to complete unity to let the world know that you **sent** me and have loved them even as you have loved me...the glory you have given me because you loved me **before the creation of the world.**' If someone can comment on those verses and how they seem to run contrary to the teaching that Jesus' beginning was only at his birth, I would really love to hear those thoughts."

Did Jesus exist before he was born? Can one in fact exist before one exists? Is Jesus a spirit made flesh or even God Himself? This question about pre-existence is repeatedly asked, especially by those who have come out of a Trinitarian background. Usually the question is raised by pointing to specific verses in the gospel of John. However, we need to build our understanding of Jesus by asking the following questions in order: (1) What does the Old Testament say with regard to prophecies about who/what the Messiah would be? (2) What do Matthew, Mark, and Luke say with regard to when the Messiah began? (3) Now that we have those underpinnings of some 42 books of the Bible, we can approach the gospel of John and ask how to work this all together. We will look at each of these three questions in turn in an effort to answer this question about Jesus' pre-existence.

The Old Testament clearly states that the son, the Messiah, was not already in existence. Below are some prophecies that speak of him.

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and **her seed**; he shall bruise you

on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel” (Gen. 3:15).

The Messiah is to be a descendant of the woman. A descendant is by definition one who comes into existence *after* the ancestor. Apparently, from the very beginning of this mess (the fall), God had plans to fix the problem through the seed of the woman (i.e., a solution from within the human biological chain).

“For a child **will be** born to us, a son **will be** given to us; and the government **will** rest on his shoulders; and his name **will be** called wonderful counselor, mighty god, eternal father, prince of peace” (Isa. 9:6).

The child will be born/given. At the time of Isaiah 9, the language used to describe the Davidic Messiah is future tense. This is a prophecy of a child who would be born in the future (just as chapters 7 and 8 had prophesied about other children who would be born). If Jesus already existed, we would expect different language here.

“Then a shoot **will** spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots **will** bear fruit. The spirit of the LORD **will** rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. And he will delight in the fear of the LORD, and he will not judge by what his eyes see, nor make a decision by what his ears hear” (Isa. 11:1-3).

“A shoot will spring” means that a descendant of David (Jesse’s son) would be born some day. The whole idea of lineal descent is emphasized by the terms “shoot” and “branch” which are tree metaphors. In other words, this person would come from the line of Jesse. If he already existed independent of the line of Jesse, then he would come through but not from the stump of Jesse.

“I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD: He said to me, ‘You are My Son; **today I have begotten you**. Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as your possession” (Psalm 2:7-8).

This oracle does not include when this was to happen. The only information given is that on a certain day (i.e. “today”) God begets a son who is to rule the world (not just Israel). This means that the day before this “day” the Son did not exist. “Begotten” means a father brings someone into existence. (Typically this occurs via the sexual union of a man and a woman, but obviously with Jesus a miracle occurred in which Mary remained a virgin, though she had conceived.)

“When your days are fulfilled that you must go to be with your fathers, **I will set up** one of your descendants after you, **who will be of your sons** [i.e. a human being]; and **I will establish** his kingdom. **He shall build** for Me a house, and **I will establish** his throne forever. **I will be his father** and **he shall be My son**; and **I will not take** My lovingkindness away from him, as I took it

from him who was before you. But **I will settle him** in My house and in My kingdom forever, and **his throne shall be established** forever” (1 Chron. 17:11-14).

Again, notice the future tense here. One day a descendant of David will be born, and he will be chosen by God to rule on the throne of David forever. Was David thinking that an angel, a spirit, or God Himself would metamorphose into a human, pose as a descendant, and fulfill this prophecy? Of course not! David was most likely thinking of Solomon (who we know didn’t end up being “the one”) or perhaps a distant descendant. What is clear is that one of David’s progeny will rule forever.

Matthew, Mark, and Luke need to be investigated with respect to the question of Jesus’ origin before we look at the gospel of John. Mark does not have any information about the birth of Jesus, so we will focus on the first couple of chapters of Matthew and Luke.

“Eliud was the father of Eleazar, Eleazar the father of Matthan, and Matthan the father of Jacob. Jacob was the father of Joseph the husband of Mary, by whom Jesus was born, who is called the Messiah” (Matt. 1:15-16).

It is essential that we take into consideration the context that immediately precedes this verse. Matthew has just enumerated dozens of generations in genealogical fashion (just as in Genesis chapters 5 and 11). Then at the end of this impressive list of descendants, he gets to Jesus (Matt. 1:16). The point is that Jesus is a *bona fide*, lineal descendant of Abraham and David (cf. Matt. 1:1) — a real human being.

“Now **the birth [lit. origin] of Jesus Christ** was as follows: when his mother Mary had been betrothed to Joseph, before they came together she was found to be with child by the Holy Spirit” (Matt. 1:18).

The NASB says “birth,” but the word used here is a bit stronger than that. It is the word “genesis” which means beginning or origin (like the first book of the Bible). So the origin of this Messiah (Christ = Messiah) is in the womb of the virgin, Mary. The inescapable consequence of his origin being in Mary is that he did not literally exist prior to this (though, of course, Jesus existed “notionally” from the beginning — in the mind of God).

“But when he had considered this, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, ‘Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for **the child who has been conceived [lit. begotten] in her is of the Holy Spirit**. She **will bear** a son; and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ Now all this took place to fulfill what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: **‘BEHOLD, THE VIRGIN SHALL BE WITH CHILD AND SHALL BEAR A SON, AND THEY SHALL**

CALL HIS NAME IMMANUEL,' which translated means, 'GOD [IS] WITH US'" (Matt. 1:20-23).

The first thing to note is that the word translated "conceived" in verse 20 is really the word "begotten," which is important because it is the part the father has in making the child. In other words, we find here in Matthew 1:20 the fulfillment of the oracle in Psalm 2:7 (one day the Father will beget a child who will rule the world). Remember that "to beget" is what the father does to bring someone into existence.

The next thing to note is that the angel of the Lord tells Joseph that the birth of Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy that one day a virgin shall bear a son. In other words, we are being told that the future tense language used in the Old Testament is in fact fulfilled in Joseph's time through the miraculous begetting and subsequent birth of this son. All of this causes one to think of a monarchical story of a promised heir of royal blood who will rule the world. Jesus is that heir. The twist that the New Testament adds is not that he always existed and "transmuted" into a human, but that this child was actually miraculously begotten without a human father, making God his literal (i.e. biological?) father.

"And behold, **you will conceive in your womb** and bear a son, and you shall name him Jesus. **He will be great and will be called the Son** of the Most High; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David; and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and his kingdom will have no end.' Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I am a virgin?' The angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and **for that reason the holy child shall be called the Son of God**'" (Luke 1:31-35).

Two points here:

(1) Gabriel tells Mary that she will conceive, she will bear a son, and he will be great. The clear implication of this language is that Jesus did not already exist, but that he was about to be born. Furthermore, if he were to have existed prior to his birth, then he was not great. Gabriel says that "he will be great," which means if he already existed he was not great, or else the angel should have said, "he is great" or "he will remain great" or something to that effect.

(2) The precise reason given for why the child is the "son of God" is *not* because he always existed, *not* because he is the second member of the Trinity, and *not* because he shares the same divine substance or being with the Father. No! He is the "son of God" because of the miracle in the womb of Mary. This is the precise reason why he is God's Son. This is so simple, yet so overlooked — Jesus is the Son of God because God begot him! How did God do it? The holy spirit, God's creative power and presence (cf. Gen. 1:2 where spirit

hovers over the chaotic waters) overshadowed Mary, and the result was an impregnated womb, the beginning of a human being. Jesus did not pass *through* the womb, but rather he began at his birth. The womb is not an incubator for an alien being! So from all of this evidence (and there's more at www.kingdomready.org/topics/god.php), it is absolutely clear that Jesus began at birth (after all that is what it means to be a human).

The gospel of John is so often misunderstood because we forget to look at the dozens of books that precede it, and we then isolate verses and interpret them in light of our culture rather than harmonizing them with the Hebrew thought-world of first-century Judaism. In the gospel of John, we are suddenly confronted with a lot of language which seems to say the opposite of what has preceded in the Bible. How do we make sense of this? There are two options: (1) harmonize John with the rest of the Bible, or (2) overturn the previous books in favor of a hypothesis that to John was revealed "secret" information about the "true" origin of Jesus. It is our belief that the former is preferable. So what does it mean when we find sayings about Jesus coming from heaven, being sent by the Father, or having things (glory, love, etc.) with God before the foundation of the world? I will take each of these in turn.

Jesus came down from heaven. All good things come down from heaven (James 1:17). Saying something came down from heaven could mean it fell from the sky, or it could mean that this person, idea, or event was in God's plan (in heaven), and then it came to pass on earth. Johannes Weiss explains this well:

"We have to bear in mind that for the Israelites, and likewise for Jesus, there existed a twofold world, and thus also a twofold occurrence of events. The world of men and history is only the lower floor of the world's structure. The world of the angels and spirits is erected above that. Both parts make up the world (1 Cor. 4:9). Moreover, what happens on earth has its exact parallel in heaven. All history is only the consequence, effect, or parallel copy of heavenly events. Thus an event which on earth is only just beginning to take place may not merely be already determined, but even already enacted in heaven."²

Although I certainly don't believe that *every* single event on earth occurs because it has been determined in heaven first, I do most certainly believe that *certain* events (the coming of the Messiah, etc.) are already determined by God in heaven, and they will come down to earth in the fullness of time.

The second category is when John's gospel says Jesus was sent (around 40 times). But does "sent" mean that Jesus was in heaven with God, and then one day God sent him to earth to save us? I would suggest that

² *Jesus' Proclamation of the Kingdom*, p. 74.

there is another sense for the word “sent” that is more harmonious with what we have already seen. Isaiah was sent (Isa. 6). What does this mean? He was commissioned by God; he was given a mission by God to do something. Furthermore, John the Baptist was sent: “There came a man sent from God, whose name was John” (John 1:6). This is the same sort of language used of Jesus. “The Father sent me,” etc. Was John in heaven? He was **sent from God!** We conclude that being sent from God need not imply pre-existence. It may just mean that someone was commissioned by God.

The third idea found in John is that Jesus “has” things with God before he was born (or even before the foundation of the world). There is one question we need to answer before we come to understand this: did Jesus literally exist before the foundation of the world? If the answer is “yes,” then it would be quite natural to say that Jesus literally had glory with (John 17:5) or experienced love from (John 17:24) the Father before his birth. However, if it is our understanding from the 42 books that precede John that Jesus is in fact a genuine human who had a literal origin in his mother, though his father was miraculously God, then we will see these expressions in terms of predestination, not pre-existence.

In other words, when Jesus says, “Now, Father, glorify me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was” (John 17:5), he means that he had glory stored up with the Father (i.e. in God’s plan), and he is now asking for it. And when Jesus says, “You loved me before the foundation of the world” (17:24) he means that God has always loved His son, even before he existed. This does not mean that Jesus *experienced* the love before he existed, but that God still expressed His love, perhaps by ordering history in such a way that all things would culminate in His Son, in much the same way as expectant parents make preparations before their child is born.

Another example of this type of thinking may be helpful. “All who dwell on the earth will worship him, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world” (Rev. 13:8). Was the Lamb literally killed before the beginning of the world? No! But in the counsels of God he was, so this event is projected into the past, as having already been done — from the beginning — though everyone understands that the slaying of the Lamb did not *actually* take place until AD 30 or so.

In conclusion, Jesus is a human being. Though he was always planned for in the counsels of God, he did not literally pre-exist his own beginning (birth). The Bible tells a beautiful, Jewish story about a godly woman who had a baby destined to rule the world. God’s triumph over Satan was to be a victory from within creation rather than from without. Because Jesus

is one of us, he can completely relate to the human plight. Yet, because God begat him, Jesus finds himself in full solidarity with God as well. He is the perfect mediator, the second Adam. What a glorious story — a story that is cheapened when we move his origin prior to his birth and make Jesus into some sort of superhuman spirit turned man! ✧

Insecurity, Fear and Delusion: How do we face it and fight it?

by Paul Herring

God calls us to be lovers of truth and seekers of truth. The Apostle Paul tells us in 2 Thessalonians 2 that people perish because they refuse to love the truth. Not only that, but when they refuse to love the truth, God sends a deluding influence so that they believe a lie: “They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie” (2 Thess. 2:10-11).

Is Paul here speaking only of our salvation or is there a wider context, so that if we refuse to seek after all truth, God may well send a deluding influence on any of us, so that we may easily be deceived in a number of different areas of life and faith?

I believe that this statement by Paul does in fact have a more universal and broader implication. Consider first the many examples in the Old Testament. For example, God hardened the heart of the Pharaoh of Egypt so that he refused to believe God’s agents, Moses and Aaron; and God allowed the ears of the sons of the prophet Eli to be deaf to Eli’s words of warning so that they did not repent of their sin and turn back to God (1 Sam. 2:22-25).

In the New Testament, we see in Romans 1 that God gave men over to deception because they did not want to continue in God’s truth: “And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind” (Rom. 1:28).

We see also in 2 Timothy that when men are not willing to seek truth and endure sound doctrine, God allows them to find teachers who will encourage them in their deception. These “teachers” are in effect the deluding influence that God sends: “For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables” (2 Tim. 4:3-4).

So it seems to me that anyone, including believers, pastors, church leaders and Bible scholars, can be deluded in some area of their understanding, if they are not always “lovers of the truth,” if they are not always open to criticism, to other perspectives and scholarship which may give new insights and even improve our

Bible translations, which in turn may lead to the need to discard some of our pet doctrines or practices.

In fact, I believe this God-sent delusion has infected much of the Christian Church for many of the last 1900 years in a number of very significant areas of faith and practice! It seems to me that the traditional Christian Church may be blind to significant portions of God's clear truth.

Why is it that sincere and earnest pastors seem happy to rest in their beliefs that were perhaps ingrained from Bible college or from their time in the pews? Why do so many pastors seem unwilling to read widely, to read honest critiques from Bible scholars, to read the criticisms of their opponents, to be challenged by and confront the beliefs of such ideologies as Catholicism, replacement theology, prosperity religion, materialism, paganism, and Islam, etc?

It seems that many are insecure or fearful. Scripture tells us in Revelation 21:8 that cowardice is a sin. Cowards will not enter the Kingdom of God, the New Earth and New Jerusalem. Perhaps it is fear or insecurity that prevents many from being earnest and zealous seekers after truth? Yet are we not all cowards by nature? Are we not all fearful of standing against the tide of this world — standing against the crowd when they practice evil?

When Paul was in prison he was encouraged that many of his fellow believers gained confidence in their stand for the truth of the Gospel. "Most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear" (Phil. 1:14). Each of us has different opportunities to play our part in the teaching of truth. The Church exists mainly to teach the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and we take to heart Jesus' warning that we must never be ashamed of him and his Gospel (Mark 8:38).

It is each of us individually and not our pastor or church leader who will stand before the Messiah, the righteous Judge, and have our heart searched on these matters. It is therefore you and I who need to be sure regarding where we stand before God for our own peace of mind and salvation.

Proverbs 24:10-12 is striking: "If you falter in times of trouble, how small is your strength! Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, 'But we knew nothing about this,' does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done?" ✧

The following is a reply to an inquirer who tries to find the Trinity in the gospel of John:

I got your letter on John and much of what you said was really good. I think perhaps in this issue of God we

have to be careful to pay close attention to the **unitarian statements** of Jesus. "You, Father, are the **only one** who is truly God" (17:3). Is that statement unacceptable? Does it not obviously tell us that no one else is the true God? Jesus is the *Son* of God and Luke 1:35 explains very nicely how and why and when.

The NIV has tricked you in John 16:28. Jesus never said he was going *back* to God. You will find this a very interesting matter to investigate in John 13:3, 16:28 and 20:17. The NIV, please note, is treacherously misleading in these passages.

Once we have accepted John 17:3 (above), then John 17:5 cannot contradict 17:3, obviously. Note that the glory which he "had" is glory in the plan since Jesus gave it to you also before you were even born (John 17:22, 24). (See the May *Focus on the Kingdom* at www.focusonthekingdom.org/108.pdf)

This is very Jewish since Jews think of all the great things of the Plan as existing from the beginning. But you were not in Christ literally before you were born, and yet you were in that Jewish sense (Eph. 1:4). I think it is dangerous to say that Jesus was the creator of the old creation, since God was totally alone in this as Isaiah 44:24 says so clearly. So Jesus was and is the Son of God and 2 Samuel 7:14 applied to Jesus in Hebrews 1:6 tells us *when* the Son would begin to exist. He cannot have been helping to create before he existed! There is no God the Son, since that would make *two Gods*! Once we say that Jesus *is* God we are counting two Gods — and that contradicts the Shema which Jesus says is the most important commandment (Mark 12:29).

Jesus learned everything from God as he grew up in wisdom and stature. If he were God he would have nothing to learn! And God obviously cannot die. Jesus did die. The Son of God died.

I wonder why one would accept a capital "W" on "word" in John 1, especially since all the translations before the King James said "All things were made through **it** [the word]." The "word" is the word of God's mouth and it became a human being when Jesus was begotten by the Father in Mary (Matt. 1:20).

You may find this a great subject to pursue and it is the view as you know of the Abrahamics and many modern scholars now also. I would strongly advise some more reflection on this wonderful subject. As you know, I was not born into the Abrahamic understanding, but reckon it to be very good on this subject. God bless you always. ✧

Comments

"I had a tremendous talk last Saturday night with someone at the congregation. He asked me what my thoughts were about the Trinity. I explained in detail. He later mentioned he came across a booklet in the congregation library that said the Trinity was an error (a

booklet like that would not normally be allowed there). It turned out to be an old copy of your booklet *Who Is Jesus?!* He said it really shook him (his background was Baptist although he has been learning Hebraic thought). I told him to read it again and suggested getting your other books on the subject.” — *Texas*

“I am a firm believer in the biblical unitarian view of God. I went to speak with one of the elders at my parents’ church. I had hoped to have a discussion and hear whether or not he had any arguments against my interpretation of key Trinitarian texts. Unfortunately, I was simply shown the texts which I had already looked at extensively. I was told that the reason I could not see that Jesus is God, is that Satan has blinded me. I was strictly warned that unless God chose to open my eyes and make me a real Christian, I could choose from his book of cults (he took it out and placed it on the table), because I was going to be told ‘Depart from me, I never knew you’ and be consigned to an eternally burning hell. This was the most discouraging of all my conversations, especially because despite my interest and passion for God, His Son and His Gospel, I cannot truly fellowship with many believers in my life. Some have been open and believe I am genuinely saved, but still ban me from serving in their ministries...I would like to thank you for the work you have done in defense of Scripture’s presentation of one single God. Although I did not come across any of your materials online until after I had come to that conclusion myself, it was a blessing to delve deeper into the Scripture and see it fit more and more beautifully and seamlessly with strict monotheism.” — *Ohio*

“At a recent Bible study on John’s gospel we were discussing the question of who Jesus was. I have been a churchgoer virtually all my life (I turned 50 in February) and have always believed in God, Jesus and the Holy Spirit but never really gave much consideration to the idea of the Trinity; however when it was stated at this Bible study that Jesus **was** God something in me wanted to shout out ‘Don’t be so ridiculous!!’ The fellow members of the group and everyone I have spoken to at church since have all said the same thing to me, in effect that God would reveal the truth to me in His time. The idea of water being able to change to steam and ice was proffered and also the use of ‘us’ in Genesis 1:26, ‘the Word’ in John 1:1, and ‘the Father and I are one’ in John 10:30. My reply was that if Jesus is God then my whole understanding of and relationship with God would be irrevocably changed and not for the better. I came to the internet looking for guidance and read with great interest and relief your article ‘Does Everyone Believe in the Trinity?’ The article made perfect sense to me in light of the understanding of scripture I believe God has revealed to me. If Jesus is God then God must have sacrificed himself on the cross. As a parent this

would diminish the power of the sacrifice in my mind. The fact that God sacrificed his own Son and had to watch him suffer on the cross is for me the most amazing act of love. To change the truth of this sacrifice is to diminish God’s love for the world.” — *Scotland*

2008 Theological Conference DVDs

\$10 each; \$70 for set of 9, plus postage; set of papers \$10

To order call 800-347-4261 (404-362-0052)

DVD 1	Alex Hall: “The Sacrifice of the Son of God”
	Ray Faircloth: “The Misapplication of Romans 9 to Predestinarian Views”
DVD 2	Kent Ross: “Anabaptists: Misunderstood and Mis-Identified”
	Lennox Abrigo: “No Resolution – No Peace”
DVD 3	John Obelenus: “Jesus and Atonement”
	Chuck Jones: “Modern Idolatry or the Other Gospel”
DVD 4	Faith stories (Monday)
DVD 5	Dan Gill: “Yet Another Music City Miracle”
	Joel Hemphill: “My Story: To God Be the Glory”
DVD 6	Jesse Acuff: “The Holy Spirit in the Old Testament”
	Dustin Smith: “Religion and Politics: A Fresh Look at the Imperial Overtones in the New Testament”
DVD 7	Faith stories (Tuesday)
DVD 8	Sean Finnegan: “Looking for the Historical Jesus: In Between Evangelical and Liberal Scholarship”
DVD 9	Faith stories (Wednesday) See DVD 5 for Joel Hemphill
	Anthony Buzzard: “Discerning the Difference Between Two Opposed Theologies”

2008 Restoration Fellowship National Conference Australia

18th-20th July

Virginia Palms Conference Centre

Sandgate Rd., Virginia

Brisbane, Queensland

Theme: The Creed of Jesus

Keynote Speakers: Anthony Buzzard, Frank Selch, Greg Deuble (the Christian author whose book was banned by Koorong!)

Also Peter Barfoot, Steve Cook, Paul Herring

RSVP 9th July

Ph: 0422 099 549 • Email: admin@restorationfellowship.info

www.restorationfellowship.info