

# Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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## The One God = the Father of Jesus: The Concept Is Easy

(John 17:3)

The ground fallacy of the Trinitarian argument is that Jesus is to be *identified* as Yahweh. Since the Father is Yahweh, saying that Jesus *is* Yahweh makes two Yahwehs! Trinitarians are fond of saying “Jesus is Yahweh,” but they seem to forget that they believe the Father is *also* Yahweh. Two who are Yahweh makes two Yahwehs.

Jesus however, in his classic statement of monotheism, said “you [Father] are the only one who is truly God” (John 17:3). In that phrase we have both the words *monos* (alone, only) and *theos* (God). Jesus excluded himself from the Godhead by saying that his Father is “the only one who is truly God.” According to the laws of language which we all understand, this means that Jesus is not the only true God. Only the Father belongs to the category of “the only true God.” Jesus is another person. He is the Son and he was sent by the Father who alone is the true God.

Jesus appears to think that this understanding is vital to the quest for eternal life: “This is eternal life: that they come to know YOU [Father], the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you commissioned.”

This really is not difficult, and it was not meant to be! J.A.T. Robinson at Cambridge stated the obvious when he wrote, “In the first place it should be noted that John is as undeviating a witness as any in the New Testament to the fundamental tenet of Judaism, of *unitary* monotheism (cp. Rom. 3:30; James 2:19). There is the one, true and only God (John 5:44; 17:3). Everything else is idols (1 John 5:21).”

The same scholar is right to point out that the NT sometimes uses the same language of God and of Jesus. That is true. Jesus is functioning for the Father and is His deputy. But Jesus is not the One God. Only His Father is actually the One God (John 17:3). With this truth in place, Jews and Muslims can join the Christian quest, based on the assurance that only one Person is the true God. Jesus is His unique prophet, servant and Messiah. Paul summed up this non-complicated idea with this: “There is one God and one mediator between the one God and man, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). With these statements all arguments can be safely laid to rest.

Jesus, quoting the most important of all commands, said, “The Lord our God is *one Lord*” (Mark 12:29).

This is the Greek NT version of “Yahweh our God is one Yahweh” (Deut. 6:4-5). Yes, Jesus does things which Yahweh does, because his Father, Yahweh, has authorized this. Jesus and God work together in perfect harmony. But there is only one Lord God: “The Lord our God is one Lord” (not two or more Lords!)

The fundamental distinction between the One God, the Father, and the Son is that the Son of God is **begotten**. This word “begotten” means he has a beginning. But God (Yahweh) has no beginning. He is self-existing: “I am who I am” (Exod. 3:14). The Son of God not only had a beginning of existence, began to exist in time (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35; 2 Sam. 7:14-16), but he also *died* and was tempted and fell asleep. But God does not do these things. God is not only *unbegotten*, i.e. He has no beginning, but He also cannot die. That should convince anyone that Jesus who died cannot *be* God! A person who is incapable of death cannot die! Is that so hard? The Son of God was limited in his knowledge, and said so (Mark 13:32).

If we *identify* Jesus as Yahweh we are committing ourselves to belief in *two* who are Yahweh and this is two Yahwehs — one too many. This would contradict Jesus who said “the Lord our God is one Lord.” The Lord God of the Bible, who is always a WHO and never a WHAT, “is one Yahweh [LORD].” That is easy to understand. It also sounds like Jesus, who said exactly that: “You, Father, are the only one who is truly God” (John 17:3).

God has revealed Himself using human language in Scripture (thank God He has!). It is a cop-out to say that the Bible’s human, yet inspired language is *inadequate*. It is all we have. God speaks in Scripture, and not once did He say that He is an “essence” or a “What.”

There are thousands of examples of the various words for God in the Bible (*Adonai*, Lord, YHVH, *Elohim*, God, and *Theos*). Not once is God called an essence (*ousia* in Greek). The word “God” never means a triune Being. James White, struggling to defend the Trinity, says that the word God “can refer to all three persons at once,” but he offers no example.<sup>1</sup> There are none.

In desperation some have resorted to a very easily detected language muddle. They have alleged that the Hebrew word for “one” is really “compound one.” The fact that *no standard lexicon of the biblical Hebrew language ever heard of this idea* does not deter them one

<sup>1</sup> *The Forgotten Trinity*, p. 71.

moment! It may be difficult for them to look this up in a Hebrew lexicon. But they can ask anyone who knows Hebrew or look up all the occurrences of *echad* (“one” in Hebrew) and see for themselves. (The word for “one” in Hebrew appears in masculine and feminine forms.)

Some rely on someone else. A zealous reader of this magazine who is determined to believe in the triune God writes to inform us that Jimmy Swaggart Ministries told him that “one” may mean “more than one,” i.e. “compound one.” It is hard to respond respectfully (as we should) to this sort of claim. Would Jimmy Swaggart claim to be any sort of expert in this field? I doubt it. He does not claim to define English words. He knows that Webster’s does much better at that. The equivalent for biblical Hebrew is the Brown, Driver and Briggs *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, or other equally good ones available on good Bible software.

The facts of the language can be examined easily in English by looking up all the 970 appearances of the word “one” (*echad*) and seeing what they mean. It is a complete falsehood to state that *echad* means “more than one.” “Abraham was one single person [*echad*],” Ezekiel wrote in 33:24. Moses said that God is “one single Lord.” (Deut. 6:4 quoted by Jesus in Mark 12:29). That is not so hard.

“One” in English and in Hebrew means one and not two. Ponder that statement from Jesus: “The Lord our God is **one Lord**” (Mark 12:29). What are you hearing there? Three Lords? Or one Essence in three Persons? The language of Jesus is refreshingly straightforward and comforting. He often spoke of a child-like approach being the one he treasured most in his people.

“God is one Essence in three Persons” is completely foreign to the words of Jesus. The absence of the word “Trinity” in the Bible might not be a difficulty for Trinitarians, but the total absence of the concept of the Trinity should be cause for concern. “God” in Scripture never signifies God, the triune Essence. Does that not strike churchgoers as astonishing?

Here are some more helpful examples of that word “one” (*echad*):

One place (Gen. 1:9), one man (Gen. 42:13), one law (Ex. 12:49), one side (Ex. 25:12), one ewe lamb (Lev. 14:10), one of his brethren (Lev. 25:48), one rod (Num. 17:3), one soul (Num. 31:28), one of those cities (Deut. 4:42), one way (Deut. 28:7), one ephah (1 Sam 1:24), one went out into the field (1 Kings 4:39). One shepherd (Ezek 37:24), one basket (Jer. 24:2), one thing (Ps. 27:4), two are better than one (Ecc. 4:9), for one day or for two (Ezra 10:13). Abraham was only one person (Ezek. 33:24), a unique day Zech 14:7.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>I am indebted for this list to Lindsey Killian and Dr. Emily Palik in their *The God of the Hebrew Bible and His*

So we invite any reader to show from a standard lexicon of Hebrew that “one” means **more than one**. Now of course “**one**” **can describe a compound noun**. You can have “one family.” But think carefully. What does the word “one” mean here? Your 12-year-old will be insulted by the question! “One family” means just that. Not two families or three families!

I am sure readers are finding their way into the subject by now. “The Lord our God is **one Lord**,” says Mark 12:29, reporting Jesus’ own precious words. Is that clear? “One Lord” does not mean three Lords or two Lords. Well did a very learned scholar bewail the fact that the Trinity is really a contradiction in terms: “It is a contradiction, indeed, and not merely a verbal contradiction, but an incompatibility in the human ideas conveyed. We can scarcely make a nearer approach to an exact enunciation of it [defining God], than of saying that one thing is two things.”<sup>3</sup>

Tragically noble believers have had to die at the hands of cruel and misunderstanding church authorities determined to impose their confusing concept of God, based on Greek philosophical terminology, on them. The death penalty was issued for non-Trinitarians. At other times, believers in God as a single Person are just told that they are heretics who will burn forever! As a race how far have we progressed?

That God is a single (*echad*) Divine Person is said over and over again in the Bible. The repetition is massive and impressive. We all know that a pronoun stands for a noun, and **single personal pronouns tell us that we are dealing with a single p/Person. God has chosen to reveal Himself not only as “one Lord,” “one Father,” but as “I” and “Me,” and “He” and “Him.”** Those words do not confuse us. We use them all the time with no possibility of being misunderstood. So with God. He reveals Himself (note *Himself*, as a singular personal pronoun) thousands and thousands of times as one single Divine Person. **There is no other way known to language by which one can define himself as a single Person.**

But with our fatal tendency as humans to spoil a marvelous, unifying and health-giving truth, we appear to prefer torturing our brains with the impossible idea that God is *both three and one at the same time*. No Bible verse (out of 31,000!) has the word “three” next to God. The Bible writers and Jesus whose teaching is recorded for us had never heard of a triune God, except perhaps as a pagan concept to be rejected. Yes, of course the Father, Son and holy spirit are quite often *mentioned together*, but in such verses, we never read that the three make up the One God. (1 John 5:7 in the KJV is a forgery, as is now publicly known to all.)

*Relationship to Jesus.*

<sup>3</sup> A.H. Newman, Sadler’s *Gloria Patri*, p. 39.

We invite readers to examine all points of view. By all means read what others have to say. But don't necessarily accept a "favorite" ministry as the last word on Hebrew words. They may just be passing on what they have heard, but have not verified. My dad, who was director of British Naval Intelligence, warned me (and there may be some value in what he said), "Son, you will find out that most people do not do their homework"!

I wrote to an author who relied on someone he viewed as an expert. He had claimed that "one" in Hebrew means more than one. I gently suggested that his concept about "one" was mistaken. After a few weeks he replied: "Following our recent correspondence I have taken theological and academic advice, and it seems clear that my comments on the Hebrew word *echad* are inaccurate. I am grateful to you for pointing this out and assure you that in future printing of the book the paragraph will be replaced with other arguments."

The God of Jesus is the God of Israel and of the Bible. Ask any Jew about his God and he will shrink from the notion that God is **more than one supreme Lord**. Are Jews and their rabbis and rabbi Jesus to be rejected as not understanding the word "one"? It is a fascinating issue to search out. And while you are at it, why not write to the *MacArthur Study Bible* editors and ask them why they (inadvertently) misreported what the Bible actually says in Psalm 110:1. Will anyone accept the challenge to ask them a question? On Mark 12:36, "The Lord said to my Lord," they say "The first word for Lord is Yahweh, which is God's covenant name. *The second word for Lord is a different word which the Jews used as a title for God...Jesus was proclaiming [by quoting this verse] the Messiah's deity.*"

That second word is positively and definitely *not* the word Jews used for God! Ask any Jew. He will tell you the second "lord" in Psalm 110:1 is the Hebrew word *adoni* ("adonee") and in every one (not two!) of its 195 occurrences means a lord who is *not* God, but a human or occasionally angelic superior.

Note the contradiction. The Study Bible asserts what is not true. The second "lord" they say is the word for God. It is not. It is the word which never means the supreme One God. The lesson is that believers are supposed to be alert and on the watch, not just believing everything they read from "favorite" teachers.

Will anyone report back on what the Study Bible might say? But don't let them fob you off with a non-answer about Hebrew vowel points. The vowel points are part of our received text and we have fortunately complete certainty that there is no corruption of the text quoted by Jesus (Ps. 110:1, cited in the gospels). The Hebrew word "adoni" means "my lord," not Lord God. It is never the title of Deity. The Greek version of the

Old Testament and the New Testament inspired in Greek render the word "adoni" perfectly as "my lord."

I trust our readers will now see that as they bow in prayer, the universe is constituted like this: There is one God, the Father, and no one else but Him, and there is one Lord *Messiah* (Christ) Jesus. He is not God but the Son of God. And within five minutes you can find out what "Son of God" means for Jesus, and how he acquired that title. Luke 1:35 is the key: "For this reason he will be the Son of God." The reason: God became His father by biological miracle in Mary. That explains what Son of God means. The angel was clear and concise. But the church's traditions have overwhelmed and suppressed the precious words of Gabriel. Point this out to your friends.

So hated (by some) is that simple truth about the Son of God, that they dared to say that Mary had sex with a Roman soldier. Such is the contempt of the unconverted mind when confronted with truth. May we all remain believers. Jesus is the Son of God, the second Adam. Jesus was created, begotten in the womb of the Jew Mary. Luke 1:35 gives us the perfect explanation of what it means for Jesus to be the Son of God.

If you get involved in an instructive discussion about Yahweh and who He is, here is a possible way to approach the question. How many Yahwehs are there? Is there just one Yahweh, or if Jesus is Yahweh, does that make two, and if you add the Holy Spirit does that make three? So is the one Yahweh (Mark 12:29) really three Yahwehs? That sounds like 3Xs make 1X. Logicians call that logical nonsense. The word YHVH needs to be given a clear definition so that we worship God "in spirit and truth." Truth is life-giving and health-giving (1 Tim. 6:3). Confusion and conflict in the mind does no one any good. It fosters an insidious dishonesty. The important thing for Christians is to follow Jesus' teaching, to sound like him, to recite and believe his creed and his definition of God. Is that asking too much? ✧

"The Holy Land forms the central point of this Kingdom. **Hence 'to inherit the land' is equivalent to having part in the Messianic Kingdom.** But it is not confined to the limits of Palestine; on the contrary, it is a rule conceived of as in some way or other comprising the whole world" (Schurer, *History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, Second Div., Vol. II, p. 172).

Jesus promised his followers that they would rule the world with him in his future Kingdom (see Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 5:10).

Separating Jesus from his Hebraic heritage effectively results in the Gospel of the Kingdom being thrown away. How is it that people are so easily persuaded not to listen to Jesus the Jew? It must rank as the greatest crime of the present evil age!

## “Absent from the body and present with the Lord”

by David Burge, President of the Conditional Immortality Association of New Zealand

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8, KJV). This phrase is commonly used to teach that *at death* a Christian transcends this world to be with Jesus in a bodiless state. But a bodiless state is definitely not what Paul desires. Paul points instead to the new body, an immortal body, a pneumatic body which we “will be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven” (v. 2). An immortal *disembodied* soul or spirit that survives the body as the living, functioning, essential person reflects the poisonous Greek influence that entered the church centuries ago and has had devastated the gospel message.

Paul uses the same expression of being “clothed” in 1 Corinthians 15:54 (NIV) and he explains the sequence of future events for believers. Christians will obtain their new pneumatic immortal body **not at the time of death, but at the resurrection when Jesus returns**. The context both in this popular passage (2 Cor. 5:1-9) and in 1 Corinthians 15 along with many Bible texts gives us “the rest of the story.” As they say, a text without a context is often a pretext. Our reward (2 Tim. 4:8; Rev. 22:12) is to be raised from death **at Christ’s return** (1 Cor. 15:23). Our entrance into the eternal kingdom of God and His Christ (2 Tim. 4:1; 2 Pet. 1:11) must also await his return.

However this single phrase in 2 Corinthians 5:8 is often quoted to prove that **at death** Christians immediately go to their reward in heaven in a disembodied state without benefit of Jesus’ return or the resurrection. Paul begins simply by explaining his desire to be absent from this present body, this frail, mortal, dying body in which we “groan” (v. 4). (“What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?” Rom.7:24). Paul longs to be “clothed with our heavenly dwelling...because we do not wish to be unclothed [disembodied] but clothed” with our resurrected body (v. 2-4; 1 Cor. 15:21-23).

To represent this temporal body, he uses figures such as “earthly tent” and “tent.” To represent our resurrected, undying body he uses more substantial figures such as “building,” “eternal house in heaven” and “heavenly dwelling” (twice). Indeed, when we die this present earthly (mortal) body is “destroyed” (v. 1). That in itself is not what Paul desires. That condition is likened to being “unclothed” and “naked” (having nothing). To the contrary, Paul desires the opposite of “unclothed” and “naked” (dead, literally). He desires to be “clothed,” “dressed up,” so to speak, in our “heavenly dwelling.” “Meanwhile we groan, longing to be clothed

with our heavenly dwelling, because when we are clothed, we will not be found naked” (v. 2-3).

The great resurrection chapter (1 Cor. 15) explains this further. “For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, *then* the saying that is written will come true: ‘Death has been swallowed up in victory’” (1 Cor. 15:53-54). Compare this with our text: “what is mortal may be swallowed up by life” (2 Cor. 5:4). Our hope is precisely *not* to become a disembodied spirit. Our hope is to have a new body, a substantial body, a “glorious body.”

For that we must wait for Jesus to come from heaven: “But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body” (Phil. 3:20-21).

Considering the total picture, it is reasonable to conclude that Paul was expressing his desire to be absent only from this present “body of death.” He looked forward to the time when he will be present with the Lord at the resurrection (and not before), because to be present with the Lord is to be in possession of a body like his. “We know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2). “Behold my hands and feet, that it I myself: handle me and see; for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have” (Lk. 24:39).

If the desired state is simply to be bodiless in order to be with Jesus, then the resurrection of the body is retrogressive and an anticlimax. No, the desired state is to be raised from death when the Lord returns. Then the grave must give up its prey. “Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out” (John 5:28-29).✧

## Light Relief and Other Reflections from My Bible College Graduation Address

**M**aintain your sense of humor and marvel at innocent misuse of language (How good is our Japanese?): The brochure of a car rental firm in Tokyo advised its clients as follows: “When a passenger of foot heaves in sight, tootle the horn. Trumpet him melodiously at first, but if he still obstacles your passage tootle him with vigor.”

Experience is a wonderful thing but by the time you have gained enough of it, it is too late (Mark Twain).

Aphorisms tend to lock themselves into the mind and reside there forever. “Leave it all quietly to God, my soul.” Let that saying lodge in your heart and use it when the situation calls for it.

A leading educator has observed that “within a decade of graduating many adults will be out of touch with the world of intelligence. A typical adult can all too easily hold the bag of education — the game of learning having long since slipped by him. Too many clergy’s bookshelves are lined with books whose publishing dates are very close to their date of graduation.”

One of our Theological Conferences brought some 150 people together to celebrate truth, in some cases at great cost to their personal comfort, due to rejection by friends and family. These are people who are discovering that the Bible makes the most sense when read **within the framework of the Abrahamic land promise brought to a climax in the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as preached by Jesus**. And of course those promises tell us that Jesus is coming back to the earth to raise the dead and take over the government of the world. The Bible is indeed all about who gets the land. Jesus said that the meek will inherit it.

Dr. Joe (one of my fellow teachers at Atlanta Bible College) once preached a sermon — and this shows how one remembers Joe’s sermons — you know, one of those spectaculars where he stands on a ladder, or swings across the chapel on a rope, or whatever — anyway, Dr. Joe preached on how modern technology can spot the location of any human being within a space of a yard or so. If someone gets lost those gadgets can find him. They can identify your *orientation* precisely.

My question to you is, do you know *where you are and who you are in the Christian, spiritual scheme of things*? As you go out from the college for the summer or permanently, it is essential to *know who you are as a Kingdom believer in Jesus* and your relationship to the world. I want to remind you that the world is hostile to Jesus, and it is hostile to you as part of the body of Christ on earth. I saw this week that the Southern Baptist Convention is so alarmed at the anti-God attitudes of the current education system that they took resolutions to advise their members actually to withdraw their children from the government schools.

Of course those are very personal choices, but certainly the pure form of Christianity is being eroded in subtle ways by atheistic educators, by TV producers who can waste hours of our time with material which does not really move us forward towards the Kingdom. And of course the foundations of Christianity are now being shaken with even *church* sanction of lifestyles which former believers *knew* were unapproved and fiercely condemned by the Bible.

Sometimes it is going to be very hard-going. As one highschooler said, “How do I know God loves me when I can’t even get my locker open?” That’s the time to press on regardless. Keep praying. Keep studying and reading and thinking.

There is so much that can be done for the cause of Christ. There are hundreds of internet discussions on the Bible. You can get involved in evangelism by simply inviting others to hear what you have learned and what you treasure about the Son of God and his Kingdom Gospel message.

You will appreciate what you have learned at Atlanta Bible College a thousand times more if you use it to help others. The measure you give out, Jesus said, is the measure you will receive.

With modern technology you can indeed be part of those greater works that Jesus promised would be possible for disciples. Above all, you can identify *your own position and orientation*, by interaction with others. You can also ask questions of others as you test your own belief system. The Abrahamic faith as demonstrated by Jesus has given you some major challenges, sometimes going against the grain of traditional teaching. It is surely important not just to be locked in within the confines of your own comfort zone, even your own denomination. It is also good to be a global Christian which means standing strong for the narrow path which leads to life, but being available to lots of different sorts of believers and unbelievers.

You can have the greatest fun exploring those major areas of theology which have been the subject of so much discussion and sometimes controversy over the centuries. You can inform yourself by private reading about church history. You can take a local seminary course in biblical language. You can find a theological library and browse in it. Be a lifelong reader and student. Never stop learning. There is simply a mass of work to be done to reeducate the public and there is room for you all (all y’all, as we say in Georgia) in this process. There are never enough workers to go round, to work for the precious fruit of the harvest as Jesus said. So ask not what you can do for yourself, but ask what you can do for the cause of Christ — and for others to achieve their destiny in the coming Kingdom.

As a committee of one you can do amazing things, if you first decide who you are and where you are in relation to the world around you, and then find a way of making a great difference in the lives of others. You will be amazed at what talents and skills God has already given you. Just get busy using them. Not to have used your opportunities and talents could be a disaster, if Jesus should judge us adversely for having hidden our talents.

See what you can do for the Messiah and the work of his Kingdom Gospel. The possibilities are vast. Try it and see. But try it on a permanent basis, not just a flash in the dark approach, but keep on keeping on. And take Jesus’ own slogan to heart, until you have mastered it: **Seek first the Kingdom of God and God’s right way of doing things**, and remember that no one who puts his

hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God. He who endures to the end will be saved. These are the verses to post on the fridge door and these are the verses which will help to define for you who you are in the world and what you really in the deepest core of your being stand for.

I suppose I can speak with at least a measure of fatherly experience now, having for the past 50 years been revolutionized by what I find in the teaching of Jesus. I sat in my room at Oxford back there in 1957 pondering the words of Isaiah about the nations finally deciding to hammer their weapons into farm instruments. (At that future time, after Jesus comes back, the West Points and the Sandhursts will become curio museums.) Tanks will be turned into tractors. The word "Truth" was pounding in my head. My parents thought I had become a Bible freak, and I probably had.

But I notice that Jesus' family thought he had gone mad. God works slowly with us — he has with me and my wife Barbara. His results may not be immediately visible, but just as a plant grows slowly, so the seed of the Gospel of the Kingdom germinates and develops slowly but irresistibly. The fruit will come only if we persist day after day with our conviction about Truth and our commitment to standing for Truth in the long term. I love 2 Thessalonians 2:10 where Paul pulls out all the stops to make his point about the value of Truth. When the antichrist comes only those who "have loved the Truth" will be able to resist his subtle, pernicious and ruinous lies. People are perishing, Paul said, "because the love of the truth they refused to receive in order to be saved." That verse is so indelibly impressed on my mind that I recite it often to myself in its original Greek. 2 Thessalonians 2:10 makes it clear that Truth and salvation are linked. What a huge blessing you can be to mankind as you take the saving Truth of Jesus' Kingdom Gospel to them.

Paul gave a sort of final graduation sermon to us in 2 Timothy 4. I want to pass it on to you. He had warned that the church was going to be invaded by false ideas soon after his departure, and that people would no longer put up with health-giving doctrine but would heap up for themselves a mass of popular preachers who would tickle their ears with entertaining sermons — things they wanted to hear and which would just keep them coming. Paul then left these famous last words to Timothy:

"Before God and the Lord Jesus Christ who is going to judge the living and the dead, I solemnly testify to you both His Kingdom and his Coming. Preach that word." You notice what word it was — the word of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19), Jesus' own saving Gospel message. Jesus had preached the saving Gospel of the Kingdom for 30 chapters in the gospels, so the popular idea that all you need to know is that Jesus came to do

three days work is very much mistaken, indeed a dangerous half-truth.

I urge you to add those wonderful verses to your scriptural treasury and to get busy doing them. The Church of God is not alone in feeling that there are serious gaps and weaknesses in much current preaching.

A leading evangelism expert, Dr. Mortimer Arias, observed: "We seem to be faced with what can be called an eclipse of the Kingdom of God lasting from the apostolic age to the present, particularly in our theology of evangelization." He adds: "The Kingdom of God is God's own dream, His project for the world and for humanity! He makes us dreamers and He wants us to be seduced by His dream and to dream with Him...It is not we who dream but God who dreams in us."

Arias admitted: "When I left the seminary I had no clear idea of the Kingdom of God and I had no place in my theology for the second coming, the Parousia...I had no concerns about the future. Thousands of books are printed and circulated every year on evangelization; most of these fall into the category of 'how to' manuals for churches (devising plans, strategies, methodologies and goals)...Our traditional mini-theologies (the 'plan of salvation' or 'four spiritual laws') *do not do justice to the whole Gospel*. Not all this activity or activism is a sign of health or creativity...The Good News of the Kingdom is *not the usual way we describe the gospel and evangelization...The Kingdom of God has practically disappeared from evangelistic preaching and has been ignored by traditional 'evangelism.'* The evangelistic message has been centered in personal salvation, individual conversion, and incorporation into the church. The Kingdom of God as a parameter or perspective or as content of the proclamation has been *virtually absent*...Those interested in evangelization have not yet been interested in the Kingdom theme...Why not try Jesus' own definition of his Mission — and ours? For Jesus evangelization was no more and no less than announcing the Kingdom of God."<sup>4</sup>

This movement, now centered at Atlanta Bible College, formerly Oregon Bible College, got going largely because keen Bible students saw the danger of what David Krogh one year called a popular "guttled gospel." Look back for just a moment to the 1850s. Thanks to the combined effort of dedicated Bible students, some from England and many from the US, there was a veritable evangelism explosion. Groups of avid Bible readers rediscovered certain long-lost dynamic truths which had been hidden behind the fog of Greek philosophy and ecclesiastical tradition. It takes energy to found a denomination. A great deal of zeal for God's revelation in Scripture and for Jesus the Messiah

<sup>4</sup> *Announcing the Reign of God*, Fortress Press, 1984.

went into getting the Church of God (Faith of Abraham) going. I believe *that* energy was the energy of God's spirit, the power, as Paul said to the Thessalonians, of "the God who is at work energizing you." The popular ad for batteries strapped on the back may, in a humorous way, help us to get the idea.

So as you take your place in the world "out there," imagine yourself crossing the Red Sea and marching into the promised land, the Kingdom of God.

I have just a couple of pieces of advice for you which I trust you will keep in mind beyond bedtime tonight. On the one hand keep the Sermon on the Mount clearly in view, as you seek the narrow way that leads to the Kingdom. Many will say, Jesus warned, that they will have thought they were doing good for Jesus only to be shatteringly disappointed. More important than the question "Do you know Jesus?" is this question: Does he know you?

But you are not going to be in that "flaky" majority who really do not buckle down and work at their salvation with God working in them. Sharpen your vision of the marvelous biblical truth that Jesus was a real human being, a miracle man, a man who, if you asked him about his dad and what his dad did in town, would have replied uniquely, "God is my Father." On your *other* hand as you journey forward keep the vision of yourself "shining like the sun in your Father's Kingdom" (Matt. 13:43). You know, the end of the great parable of the sower and the seed, how God is producing immortals beginning with that precious seed of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

"To teach is to touch a life forever." We all know this. We are permanently touched by each of those mentors who affect our development. We love you as having been entrusted with the privilege of shaping in some small way your destiny. I thank you for your persistence in Christ and your various faces are etched in my memory after those long hours in the classroom, slogging together. **Remember that religion is the best armor and the worst cloak.**

May God bring you all safely to his wonderful Kingdom when the Messiah returns. ✧

## How to Explain the Bible Away (Don't do it!)

**I**nstead of believing the scriptural text some have been taught to dissolve its language in favor of denominational hang-ups. It goes like this:

To say that demons were cast out of someone is to say that they were cured of a mental illness, or an illness which was not understood at the time. People living in the first century tended to blame everything which they couldn't understand on imaginary beings called "demons." Mental illness being hard to understand with their level of medical knowledge, the people spoke of

those afflicted as "demon possessed." In Old Testament times, an evil or unclean spirit referred to a troubled mental state (Jud. 9:23; 1 Sam. 16:14; 18:10). In New Testament times, the language of evil spirit/demon possession came to refer to those suffering mental illness. The association between demons and sickness is shown by the following: "They brought to him [Jesus] many who were possessed with demons: and he cast out the spirits with his word...so that what was spoken by Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: 'He himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses'" (Matt. 8:16-17). So human infirmities and sicknesses are the same as being possessed by "demons" and "evil spirits."

This is an unfortunate example of the unbelieving mind mounted against the revelation provided by the New Testament Scripture. Luke 4:41 reports that the demons came out of many and the demons cried out recognizing Jesus as Messiah. Jesus then rebuked them (the demons, as the Greek agreement shows) and forbade them to speak. We recommend against the unbelief involved in dismantling the historical narrative about demons. Demons are not diseases. Demons are not human beings. Scripture in the gospels is to be taken as historical narrative, not dissolved because we think it might be "unscientific." ✧

## Comments

"Anthony, I just want to say thanks for your labors in bringing to light the true humanity of Christ and the vital importance of Kingdom consciousness...I've been a believer in Jesus as the special sent one for many decades but only now do I feel like I'm finally coming to know him and God's eternal and ultimate plan for HIM! I've read much of your stuff and listened to audio as well and I've detected not merely the ring of truth in what you say but the humility that should accompany all who claim to serve the ONE God." — *Kentucky*

"In your May article titled 'Mathematics Gone Mad,' you quoted a man who wrote, 'Anthony, you're still blinded to the truth.' To say I was astounded is an understatement. After all your work (not to mention the work of Charles Hunting and the many scholars you so frequently quote) I felt compelled to try to write some words of appreciation and encouragement. It seems to me that there is no single, more important or fundamental knowledge than that of the One God. How you manage to consistently bring fresh and new aspects of this topic to our attention is nothing short of amazing." — *Mississippi*

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