

Focus on the Kingdom

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A Mistake Which Outdoes All Mistakes!

There is a piece of simple misinformation copied without examination by Bible commentator after commentator. It occurs in commentaries on Psalm 110:1, a verse which wins the prize for being the most often cited passage from the Old Testament in the New. Psalm 110:1 is likely (I hope soon) to have its day of fame. It is going to expose a colossal, long-held misunderstanding about the relationship of the one God to His unique Son Jesus.

Psalm 110:1 is an inspired oracle about the Messiah, who since the ascension is sitting at the chief position next to God in the universe. Jesus loved this verse and so did the New Testament writers. They allude to it some 23 times. It is of massive significance in describing who Jesus is. Because its testimony is in direct contradiction to the traditional belief that Jesus is “God the Son,” it has suffered miserably at the hands of commentators, who by some extraordinary means actually misinform the public about the crucial Hebrew word for the second “lord” of Psalm 110:1.

Reformer Martin Luther was right to point out that Psalm 110 is “the chief psalm of our dear Lord Jesus Christ, in which his person, his resurrection, ascension and whole Kingdom are clearly and powerfully set forth.” The Psalm begins by announcing a solemn divine oracle. Jesus quoted this Psalm as vital spiritual information. He referred to David as here “speaking in the spirit” (Matt. 22:43; Mark 12:36): “The Lord said to my lord, ‘Sit at My right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’”

Of such fundamental importance was this proposition that it provided a New Testament proof text for defining the divine Plan and Jesus’ relationship to his Father. It appears in the New Testament over and over again. What does this oracle reveal to us?

This verse has been an embarrassment to “received” traditional views of Jesus as “God the Son.” Psalm 110:1 in fact completely eliminates any such idea. Peter provides one of the many examples of the quotation of our verse. In his epoch-making sermon in Acts 2 Peter explained that the Hebrew Bible had predicted the elevation of Jesus to the supreme position in the universe next to God his Father. This happened at the ascension, and the words of Peter inform us of the status achieved by Jesus at the ascension. “For it was not David who ascended to heaven, but David himself said, ‘The LORD said to my lord, “Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.”’ Therefore let the

whole house of Israel know for certain **that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified**” (Acts 2:34-36). The reaction of Peter’s audience was suitably dramatic. They took the Apostle’s words with utmost seriousness: “Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and they asked Peter and the other apostles, ‘What are we to do, brothers?’” (2:37).

It would be desirable for contemporary audiences to be as touched, if not outraged, by the constant *misuse* of this verse by tradition-bound commentary. Walk into a Christian bookstore and treat yourself to a perusal of one of the many commentaries available, both new and old. Here is one example among many I found recently: “Ps. 110:1, ‘The Lord said to my Lord’ describes a conversation between God the Father and God the Son.”

This is a complete falsehood, as we shall show. The Jews as custodians of the Hebrew Bible are rightly insulted by the suggestion that there are **two** who are God, the one talking to the other! There is only one who is God. God never speaks to God. That would not be monotheism. And monotheism, belief that God is one and not more, is the absolute criterion of truth for us all.

The proof of the rudimentary fact that **God is not speaking to God** is found in the language of Psalm 110:1. But first another example of misinformation, this time from the 1000-page *Commentary on Matthew* by William Hendrikson: “In this Psalm David is making a distinction between YHVH (Jehovah) and Adonai...YHVH, then, is addressing David’s Adonai; or, if one prefers, God is speaking to the Mediator. He is promising the Mediator such preeminence, power, authority and majesty as would be proper only for One who, as to his person, from all eternity, was, is now, *and forever will be God*” (p. 812, emphasis added).

This statement contains a major error of fact. The text does *not* say that YHVH is addressing David’s ADONAI! The word in the Hebrew text is not Adonai at all. Adonai is indeed the word (all 449 times) for the Lord *God*, that is, the supreme God of Israel. But the inspired word in this Psalm, found in all the originals, is not Adonai; it is **adoni**. There is a vast difference between these two words. Adonai is indeed God, the Lord. Adoni, by contrast, never refers (in all 195 occurrences) to the Lord *God*. It refers always to a human, that is, non-Deity superior (or occasionally to an angel). Adoni is never a title of Deity. It tells us always that the “lord” in question is someone who is *not* God, but a human superior.

Here then in this marvelous Psalm we have a brilliant definition of the status of the Son of God, Jesus the Messiah. He is not Adonai (Lord God) but “my lord,” the Messiah. The word provided by the Scripture which Jesus described as inspired and which he used to silence all counter arguments (Matt. 22:46) is the Hebrew word for “lord” which never designates God! This verse was alluded to massively in the New Testament, and Peter used it to define and demonstrate the status of Jesus at the right hand of the Father: he is the uniquely elevated *human* lord (Acts 2:36), but not a second GOD! The text should put an end to the centuries of dispute about who Jesus the Messiah really is. He is not God (which would make two Gods) but the one and only Lord *Messiah*, the *man* Christ Jesus, as Paul said in 1 Timothy 2:5, reflecting the information provided by Psalm 110:1.

Jesus is referred to as the lord Messiah over 100 times in the New Testament. He is called Christ or the Christ (Messiah) 516 times. That should be enough to convince us about who he really is. He is the “our lord” of the ancient prayer “maranatha” (1 Cor. 16:22).

I would ask the reader to ponder the extraordinary fact, without parallel in the history of Bible commentary, that the actual word for the second “lord” in our verse has been constantly misreported by those expounding the Bible. The error is very, very common. It actually appeared in the margin of Acts 2:34 in editions of the NASU Bible, where the note read: “The Hebrew word in Ps. 110:1 is Adonai.” But it is not. And the fact can be checked by anyone consulting the original. (Strong’s does not show this distinction.)

Standard authorities are in no doubt at all about the immense significance of the difference between the forms of the Hebrew word for “lord.” The Hebrew text makes a clear-cut and consistent distinction between the one supreme **Lord God** and human (occasionally angelic) “lords.” The Hebrew text wants us to know exactly who is the Lord God (Adonai) and who is a human superior (adoni, my lord).

Every student of the Bible should know that when the *personal* name of the One God appears in English translations, the word is printed in English (in many versions) as LORD (all capitals). This tells us that behind the LORD (nearly 7000 times) lies the Hebrew word YHVH or Yahweh (sometimes pronounced Jehovah, though this is almost certainly not accurate). Another significant editorial policy is to write Lord (capital “L” but lower-case “ord”) when the Hebrew word is Adonai (= the Lord God, the supreme Lord). But when in the Hebrew text we have the word *adoni* (pronounced in Hebrew “adonee”) then many English translations have the word “lord” (lower-case “l”). For example, Sarah (Gen. 18:12) referred to Abraham her

husband as “adoni,” my lord, not Adonai (the Lord God)!

That distinction between the Lord God and a human lord or superior is faithfully reflected by the English Lord (capital L), as distinct from lord (lower-case l).

However, when translators arrived at Psalm 110:1, they broke their own rules and wrote the second “lord” (adoni) as Lord (with capital). You will find this misleading inconsistency in the King James, NIV and many other versions. The Roman Catholic Bible most accurately kept a lower-case “l” on the second “lord” telling us that the word was “adoni” (= my human, not Deity lord) and not Adonai, the Lord God. The Revised Version of 1881 (the first correction of the KJV of 1611) wrote “lord” and thus emended the KJV mistake. The RSV and NRSV followed suit and correctly wrote “lord.” BBE (Basic Bible in English) and the Jewish Publication Society also rightly provided us with the truth about that second “lord” by writing it with lower case “l.”

The difference between God and man is the most significant of all distinctions, and it is carefully and precisely given us in Psalm 110:1, which the New Testament uses universally to define the status of Jesus in relation to God. Jesus is the human being, the “man Messiah” (1 Tim. 2:5) at God’s right hand. This fact, which Satan does not like and wants to suppress, tells us of the amazing position God has granted to a sinless, virginally begotten man, Son of God (Luke 1:35), installed at the right hand of God’s own throne in heaven. Jesus of course will leave that position and come back to the earth at his future coming to take up his position on the throne of David in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32, etc.).

There is only one who is God, the Creator of all things, in the Bible. He is the Father, indeed the “*God* and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3). Paul put it this way: “There is to us [Christians] one God, the Father” (1 Cor. 8:6). Paul went on to add that we also recognize “one Lord Jesus Christ.” But that Lord Jesus Christ is not the Lord God! He is the Lord Christ and was announced with this title when the angels told the shepherds, “Today in the city of David there has been born for you a savior who is the Lord Christ” (Luke 2:11, literally the “Messiah/Christ Lord”; cp. Col 3:24; Rom. 16:18).

Luke adds a few verses later that Jesus can also rightly be called “the Lord’s Messiah” (2:26). He is the Christ who belongs to the Lord God. When the two blind men appealed to Jesus to have their sight restored, they touchingly addressed him as “Lord, son of David” (Matt. 20:31) and even the pagan, Canaanite woman pleaded with Jesus to help her with her demonized daughter. She expressed her faith in the true Messiah as “Lord, son of David” (Matt. 15:22).

Elizabeth, the mother of John the Baptist, was thrilled to greet Mary when she was pregnant with Jesus. She rejoiced that she was in the company of “the mother of **my lord**” (Luke 1:43). She meant of course not “the mother of God,” but the mother of my lord, the Messiah. This was the “my lord” of Psalm 110:1 (adoni). A ghastly twist was given to the Christian faith when later Bible readers began to speak of “the mother of God.” (I heard a Catholic priest say that God had asked Mary to be His mother!) This is standard language in the Roman Catholic system, but Protestants equally speak of Jesus as being God! For some illogical reason they balk at the idea that Mary is the “mother of God.” But why should they? Constantly one hears that “Jesus is God.” Mary ought really then to be called the “mother of God” in the Protestant system. Readers ought to ponder this interesting fact.

But most importantly they should ponder deeply the distressing and amazing fact that Bibles and Bible commentaries have in many cases not permitted you to know that Jesus in Psalm 110:1 is not Adonai, the Lord God, but adoni, my lord, the human Messiah. All the centuries of strife and confused argumentation which eventually led to the “creeds” could have been avoided if the adoni (“my lord” of Ps. 110:1) had been recognized as the perfect definition of the Messiah not as Lord God, but as Lord Messiah.

Currently the battle over the identity of Jesus continues and Psalm 110:1 is not being recognized as the appropriate corrective to centuries of misunderstanding. It is not uncommon for the following kind of comment to appear on Paul’s classic monotheistic statement in 1 Corinthians 8:6. Paul tells us that “there is one God, the Father...and one Lord Jesus Christ/Messiah.”

Astonishingly the *Oxford Bible Commentary* has this to say: “The Jewish Shema (‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord,’ Deut. 6:4 and affirmed by Jesus in Mark 12:29) is here split apart into a statement about *God* the Lord, the Creator of the world and the goal of salvation, and a matching statement about *the Lord*, now taken to be Jesus Christ, the medium of creation and redemption...The way in which Paul reads them both out of the Jewish declaration of monotheism is suggestive of the ways in which Christian theology will struggle to define Christ’s exalted status without falling into ditheism [belief in two Gods]” (p. 1121).

The Shema is “split apart”?! The Shema of Deuteronomy 6:4 and of Jesus in Mark 12:29 has now been supplemented and expanded to include two who are God? This is precisely what Paul does not mean. He carefully distinguishes the One God, who is the Father, from the one Lord Jesus Messiah. The Messiah is not the One God, and the difference between them is exactly the difference declared 1000 years earlier by Psalm

110:1 in which as we have seen YHVH speaks to the Messiah in a prophetic oracle, and defines the Messiah not as the Lord God but as the *human* lord Messiah, adoni.

Tampering with the biblical creed (splitting it apart) which defines God as the Father of Jesus is unwise. If Psalm 110:1 had been fully recognized instead of being widely misrepresented in regard to the actual Hebrew words of the text, centuries of argumentation could have been avoided and today the great “monotheistic” religions would have common ground, rather than being hopelessly at odds over who and how many God is (Jews, Christians and Muslims).

There is a simple message here: Instead of the brain-breaking difficulties and infinitely complex vocabulary of Trinitarianism, Jesus offers us an easier burden. He affirmed the great unitarian creed of Israel (Mark 12:29) as did Paul (1 Cor. 8:4-6). The astonishing new fact since the ascension is that there is a glorified, immortalized Son of God, a *human being* by origin (Matt. 1:18, 20; Lk. 1:35), whom God has honored by taking him to be with Him at His throne of the universe. Jesus, the Lord Messiah, Son of God is now waiting to return to this planet. He remains at the right hand of God until he is given the signal to come back to the earth. He will then inaugurate the long prayed-for Kingdom. With the saints of all the ages he will supervise the first ever successful world government. We need that day! ✧

Edward Wightman: A Tragic Death

by Carlos Jimenez, Australia

“If, then, dead books may be committed to flames, how much more live books, that is to say, men?”¹

This is the story of Edward Wightman, a name unknown to modern Bible students, yet known to history as the last person in England to be burned at the stake for heresy.² Like most cases of this kind, it is a story dominated by the religious and political climate of its time, an environment firmly controlled by men who held sway over all matters pertaining to the Christian faith. Most sources are biased in their portrait of the “heretic” as some kind of demon-possessed, deranged mind. Yet Wightman was a well-respected business man and community leader, whose zeal for his faith and freedom of expression ultimately brought him to the attention of the King of England, James I. James’ religious zeal as the “Defender of the Faith” led him to sign the last known execution for burning via the stake in 1612.

¹ ‘Matthieu Ory, Inquisitor of Heretical Pravity for the Realm of France, Paris, 1544’. Lawrence Goldstone, Nancy Goldstone, *Out of the Flames*, Broadway, 2003.

² Narrowly edging out another accused anti-Trinitarian and heretic, Bartholomew Legate, burned in London three weeks earlier.

Wightman's parents hailed from Burton-upon-Trent, in Staffordshire. He was born there in 1566 and like most residents was baptized in traditional orthodox fashion. He attended Burton grammar school and entered the clothiers business of his maternal family. In 1593 he married Frances Darbye.

He became involved with the Puritans and in 1596 was chosen as one of the leaders assigned to the investigation of the demonic possession of 13-year-old Thomas Darling. This suggests that by the mid-1590s Wightman was an important and well-respected public figure, taking part in the newly formed movement that began to hold sway over Burton's society and politics. His involvement in the Darling case proved a turning point in his life, making him entirely amenable to the possibility of unmediated spiritual intervention. Darling claimed not just to be possessed by the devil, but engaged in a series of "spiritual wars" in which both demonic and angelic voices were said to emanate from him. This was something that, as we shall see, affected the way Wightman later perceived traditional orthodoxy.

His initial descent into "heresy" involved his understanding of the mortality of the soul, a view that progressively became more radicalized and unorthodox.³ Between 1603/4 and 1610/11, his behavior grew increasingly bolder and louder. According to court records, he was a prolific writer, although his writings have not yet been found. He came to the attention of the local church authorities and a warrant for his arrest was issued. The order instructed the constables of Burton to bring him immediately before Bishop Richard Neil for interrogation.

He set about to put together a compendium of his theology for his upcoming hearing and defense. Perhaps thinking that he would at least be allowed time to plead his case, he delivered copies of it to members of the clergy in an effort to shore up support. But then, perhaps as a last resort, he delivered a copy to King James I, a move that would ultimately seal his fate.

James I came to the English throne in 1603, "thinking himself a competent judge of religious questions and disposed to take seriously his title of 'Defender of the Faith.'"⁴ Since 1607 he had been engaged in a battle of books with Roman Catholic apologists over the *Oath of Allegiance*, both personally and by encouraging others to write in his defense. "One

³ In one of his early public messages he claimed that "the soul of man dies with the body and participates not either of the joys of Heaven or the pains of Hell, until the general Day of Judgment, but rested with the body until then" M. W. Greenslade, 'The 1607 Return of Staffordshire Catholics,' *Staffordshire Catholic History*, 4, 1963-4, p 6-32; Clarke, *Lives of Two and Twenty English Divines*, p. 147.

⁴ Earl Morse Wilbur, *A History of Unitarianism*, Harvard, 1945, p. 177.

of the central planks of the king's case was the preservation of his catholic orthodoxy through his adherence to the three great creeds of the church, the Apostles', the Nicene and the Athanasian."⁵

Wightman was fully aware of the king's firm stance, yet he set about willfully to combat both his State and Church. Of the handful of fragments of his defense treatise that have survived, he refers to the doctrine "most of all hated and abhorred of God himself...the common received faith contained in those three inventions of man, commonly called the Three Creeds...the [Apostles'], Nicene and Athanasius Creed, which faith within these 1600 years past hath prevailed in the world."⁶

Wightman had by now totally isolated himself from all other groups, calling into question all aspects of Christian truth, arguing "that the baptizing of infants is an abominable custom...[and affirming that] the sacrament of baptism [is] to be administered in water to converts of sufficient age of understanding converted from infidelity to the faith."⁷

But what finally spelled his end was his grievous departure from the Trinity and the nature of God. It was presumably on these points that he so vehemently rejected the formulae of the Nicene Creed of 325 and the subsequent Creed of Constantinople of 381. He claimed that the doctrine was a fabrication and he maintained that Christ was "a mere Creature and not both God and man in one person...[Although this did not mean that Christ was a man like all others but] only a perfect man without sin."⁸ King James was by now more set than ever on securing the execution of Wightman, since in the intervening years he had launched a dual campaign against heresy at home and abroad.

After months of being subjected to a series of conferences with "learned divines," Wightman was finally brought before Bishop Neil for the last time. According to Wightman, the Bishop told him "that unless I did recant my opinions he would burn me at a stake in Burton before Allholland day next."⁹ The final verdict and list of charges included "the wicked heresies of Ebion, Cerinthus, Valentinian, Arius, Macedonius, Simon Magus, Manichees, Photinus, and of the

⁵ F. Shriver, 'Orthodoxy and Diplomacy: James I and the Vorstius Affair,' *ante*, lxxxv, 1970, p 453-4; James VI and I, *The Workes of the Most High and Mightie Prince, James by the Grace of God, King of Great Britaine*, London, 1616, p 302.

⁶ Bodleian Library, ms Ashmole, *A True Relation of the Commissions and Warrants for the Condemnation and Burning of Bartholomew Legate and Thomas Withman*, 1521 B, 7, 1a-1b, London, 1651, p 8.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p 8-9, 23.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p 5.

⁹ Lincolnshire Archives Office, D&C, Cijj/13/1/2/2, fo. 1r.

Anabaptists and other arch heretics, and moreover, of other cursed opinions belched by the instinct of Satan.”

He was ordered to be placed “in some public and open place below the city aforesaid [and] before the people burned in the detestation of the said crime and for manifest example of other Christians that they may not fall into the same crime.”¹⁰

When he was finally brought to the stake his courage had all but left him. As the fires were lit he is said to have quickly cried out to recant, although by then he had been “well scorched.” But this would not last, since two or three weeks later he was again brought before the courts and, no longer fearing the searing flames, refused and “blasphemed more audaciously than before.” The king quickly ordered his final execution, and on April 11, 1612, he was once more led to the stake.

“[Wightman] was carried again to the stake where feeling the heat of the fire again would have recanted, but for all his crying the sheriff told him he should cost him no more and commanded fagots to be set to him whence roaring, he was burned to ashes.”¹¹

In the months that followed his execution, a number of religious radicals nearly met the same fate, even though the downfall of the bishops and abolition of the High Commission in 1640-2 did not bring about any changes to the constitution. On May 2, 1648, a new “Ordinance for the Punishment of Blasphemies and Heresies” was created.¹² Opposition from independents and sectaries, however, meant that the ordinance was never enforced. And only with the passage of another act in 1677 (“forbidding the burning of heretics”¹³) was Wightman’s position in history as the last person in England to be burned at the stake for heresy, secured. Mention of his case came almost 100 years later by a handful of writers in the wake of the 1689 Toleration Act. The only immediate result was that of a minority opposition to his execution, a shift in public opinion which may have led to a relative decline in the practice.

Meanwhile, King James I seemed to have lost faith in this method of discouraging heresy and seeing that heresy still survived, “publicly preferred that heretics

¹⁰ Robert Wallace, *Antitrinitarian Biography*, E. T. Whitfield, 1850, pp. 567-568.

¹¹ George Birkhead, Michael C. Questier, *Newsletters from the Archpresbyterate of George Birkhead*, Cambridge University Press, 1998, p. 153.

¹² “Principally those of the triune God, the resurrection, the last judgment, and that the Bible is the Word of God...relapse is to be punished as felony with death without benefit of clergy” (Felix Makower, *The Constitutional History and Constitution of the Church of England*, Ayer, 1972, p. 193).

¹³ Burning at the stake remained on the statute book in England until 1790, as the punishment for a woman who murdered her husband.

hereafter, though condemned, should silently and privately waste themselves away in the prison rather than to grace them, and amuse others, with the solemnity of a public execution.”¹⁴ ✧

The Myth that Prevents a Human Messiah: Being Human is Not Good Enough

by Robin Todd, Washington

I want to speak to those who understand the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as it is consistently recorded in the Bible. It is the theme of both the Old and New Testaments and says basically this: that the one Person who is God, that is, the Father, is going to restore His Kingdom on this renewed planet, where people who accept this Kingdom will live the lives they were meant to live and be the people they were meant to be. That Kingdom is going to be restored at the end of this present age by one Jesus of Nazareth, who is the Son of God by miraculous conception/begetting of the holy spirit (Luke 1:35), and who is therefore the prophesied human Messiah now glorified at God’s right hand (Ps. 110:1; 1 Tim. 2:5).

When he returns he will set up that Kingdom which will be headquartered in Jerusalem and will reign for a thousand years with the saints until everyone has been brought under his loving rule. At that time he will turn everything over to his Father who has given to him the authority and power to execute this plan, and a new heavens and new earth will then be established (1 Cor. 15:28).

So again, it’s to you who understand the nature of this Kingdom Gospel that I want to speak today. I intend to clear up for many why it is that mainstream, orthodox Christianity mostly does not accept the overwhelmingly consistent biblical teaching that the prophesied Messiah is the *human being, Jesus*, and instead teaches that he is a pre-existent “God”-being in a Trinity of three God-persons. I want you to understand why the teaching that God is only one person, the Father, is such a vital component of the Kingdom Gospel. Not only does the Trinity doctrine upset the entire biblical scheme of the Kingdom of God message, it makes Jesus essentially non-human.

It is a fact that few on earth accept Jesus as a legitimate human being with a core human center and personality. The New Testament church did, but as we know, within 100 years Greek philosophy and human speculation began perverting and replacing biblical monotheism and turned Jesus into a second “God-person.” Why did this happen? I don’t mean how did it happen in history. That information has been well documented. What I mean is, what is the ultimate, underlying spiritual cause of this departure from the

¹⁴ A. J. Loomie, *Spain and the Early Stuarts 1585-1655*, Aldershot, 1996, ch. 10.

truth? Amazingly, the answer is found at the beginning of this present world order when its foundation was first being laid.

It was at this time that a deception was perpetrated by Satan, the arch-enemy of both God and those made in His image. The nature of this lie has been hidden from men and women since the beginning of their existence on this earth, but nonetheless provides the foundation upon which all of this civilization has been built. This lie actually sets the stage for a disbelief in a human savior. So I think it is time to more fully expose that lie and show how it is so diametrically opposed to the whole Kingdom message as revealed to us by God through the prophets, Jesus, and the apostles.

The false foundation of this present world is simply this: *being human is not good enough. A human being does not have what it takes to be a son or daughter of God.* I repeat: Satan has deceived the inhabitants of this earth to believe that *being human is not good enough.* The entire structure we call civilization from the dawn of human history has been built on this false premise. The world absolutely cannot tolerate a doctrine that says Jesus is a fully *human* Messiah, originating in his mother, as the Bible teaches. It goes against the very premise that supports the established systems of this age. There is no room for a human Messiah because this would cause us to look at human potential, and that is the very last thing Satan wants us to see. He is the arch enemy of both God and those created in the image of God, and pursues nothing short of the complete annihilation of the human race and a discrediting of God amongst those in the spiritual realm. The very world system that is based on the premise that humans aren't good enough is the same system that puts forward various religious schemes designed to keep people in the dark about why they were created and their ultimate potential to become glorified human beings who will inherit the universe and judge affairs even in the angelic realm. In order to protect itself and Satan who is the "god of this age" (2 Cor. 4:4), this world order must either reject or ignore Jesus entirely, or make him an eternally existing God-Person who only had a "human nature," but was not a personal, 100% human being. To agree with the biblical truth of who Jesus really was and is, would mean the beginning of the end and ultimately the complete collapse of civilization as we know it. Neither Satan nor the powers of this age can willingly allow that to happen. It would be suicide. So the lie that human beings don't have what it takes and just aren't good enough, continues and will continue until Jesus returns in all the glory God has given him to set up the new world order where human beings are given the value and worth that God gives them.

So, let's go back to the dawn of human history and take a look at how all this was laid down. Let's go back

to the Garden of Eden incident which of course we find recorded in the first chapters of Genesis. I'm going to hit the highlights briefly because I think everyone is familiar with the story.

In the last verse of chapter 1 we find that God completed creating Adam and Eve and pronounced them, along with everything else, "very good." As far as God was concerned, these two newly created human beings were definitely good enough and had what it takes to inherit the Kingdom He had prepared for them because He handed them the earth and confidently urged them to subdue it. And even Adam and Eve had no problem with their incomplete and imperfect youth, because as 2:25 states, "they were both naked and were not ashamed." They were not perfect like their Father, but that was not a problem for them. Nor was it a problem for Dad. His children were young, incomplete, and therefore in a growth mode of becoming more like Dad, but certainly not expected to be morally and ethically complete. No one is inherently good and without the need to learn right from wrong, but God alone, as Jesus said in Luke 18:19.

At this point, the confident situation and environment we find in the Garden of Eden is all about to change. God had told His kids that they could eat of any of the trees of the garden except the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Enter the deceiver, Satan. In 3:4-5 he cunningly suggests to Eve that disobedience would not lead to death. If she would eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, she would be like God who has complete knowledge of right and wrong, and would know how to avoid death through that knowledge. She could be better than human, and she should definitely pursue that course. The underlying message here is that God will accept, value, and love you more if you become something other than what you are, a fledgling human being. Now, it is true that Adam and Eve were fledgling humans, but it is not true that there is something wrong with this. All children must grow, and will do so in a successfully healthy way if the relationship with Dad is based on a trust that they are lovable in his sight. To any child, it's the opinion of mom or dad about them that matters most and lays the groundwork for either a functional life or a dysfunctional one. And here we have Satan suggesting that their Father isn't as pleased with them as He would be if they were something other than the growing humans they were.

And what was the result of all this? As we might expect: "The eyes of both of them were opened and they knew that they were naked" (3:7). By this it means that they were now ashamed of who they were as created, ashamed of their nakedness, ashamed of their incompleteness, ashamed of being humans who had little ability to properly use their newly acquired

information about right and wrong. All they could see, as they now attempted to justify themselves by works of the law, was their own imperfection and inability therefore to live up to God's standards. They were never expected to be immediately perfect like God, but someone told them they needed to be. When they agreed with that lie they plummeted instantly into self-condemnation. And what did God have to say about this? "Who told you that you were naked?" In other words, who told you that being naked was a shameful thing?

As a result of their shame, they hid from others and from God (3:7-8). And you know that we have all been running and hiding ever since. Many people are ashamed of who they are. And insecure parents, demeaning society norms, and condemning religion have all done their part, too, to keep us from being people who realize their God-appointed destiny.

But thank God, He has never given up insisting on His truth, that being human is absolutely the pinnacle of His creative project. He has encouraged us to achieve our human potential through the central theme of the Bible, that is, the good news of the coming Kingdom of God. As part of that message, He first tells us over and over again that there is only one God, and it is Him, not us. We don't have to bear that burden. He is okay with us being human — He does not expect anything more or anything less. Second, He planned to create a second Adam who would be as fully human as the first Adam was, but this time would not fall for the subtleties of the enemy and would prevail as the first glorified, immortalized human being. This Messiah would be the firstborn of many brothers and usher in a new age of healing and peace for all human beings. People at last will be able to live the life they were meant to live, and be the people they were meant to be. The human potential will be realized right here on the planet God created to provide all the challenges and opportunities for that to happen.

As we listen to the entire Kingdom message from both the Old and New Testaments, we hear the message within the message. We, the human children of our Father God, are not the apple of His eye because of obedience to Mosaic law. Righteousness does not come by works of the law. We do not get our value or lovability this way. Rather, we are justified by our active belief in the promises which have come through the Gospel message preached by Jesus who is the unique agent of our loving Father. This Kingdom Gospel is the message Abraham believed in, and as the Bible says, that belief accounted him righteous. It is the righteousness of faith in the promise of God's kingdom message that pleases God, and provides the groundwork for all right thinking and living for us humans. We are lovable and acceptable to God as human beings, not

because of anything we could ever come to know or do, but because He says we are. He is our Father, after all. In return we yield to the "obedience of faith" as taught by God's Son Jesus.

The biblical version of the coming kingdom message is the only one that provides the way out of our unhealthy thinking and living. We must do what we can to take this message to the world. People will experience the healing salvation it provides right now. The truth of God can never be said to have been without witness in this age. The kingdom message including the vital component that God is one Person and that Jesus is the human Messiah is the groundwork information all must have in order to move forward in the development of our human potential. Without it, the opposing concepts of the righteousness of works and the righteousness of faith cannot be rightly understood, and we remain trapped in our sins, even by religious "systems."

The world's religious system overall cannot accept a human Messiah because this entire age is based on the false premise that being human is not good enough in the eyes of God. And that is why orthodox Christianity must teach the doctrine of the Trinity. Otherwise it would mean a complete undoing of the current evil structure, and I'm afraid the system will not permit its own destruction. Other doctrines such as the immortality of the soul also serve to buttress the lie that being human in itself is not good enough. Fundamental to the immortal soul doctrine is the idea that God's creation, the human, material body with its breath of life from God, is in itself evil and to be discarded at death.

Let us continue to do the God's work, to announce this gospel to the world until the end (Matt. 24:14). The message within the message is simple yet profound: being truly human is good enough for God. A genuine human being has already gained the immortality which will be ours too when we inherit the Kingdom God has prepared for us. ✧

2009 Theological Conference

April 26-29, 2009

Simpsonwood Conference Center, Norcross, GA

We invite you all to our 18th annual conference. This is for every lover of the Bible whose heart is set on understanding the faith as set forth by Jesus and the early Christians. It offers a unique opportunity for fellowship with truth seekers of all nations. It is certainly not designed to be "theological" in the negative sense in which that word is sometimes (wrongly) used. Our purpose is to rejoice in truths held in common "in Christ." We have invited Joel Hemphill and his wife LaBreeska to be with us. Joel will present an account of his personal discovery of the One God and the Messiah and the radical effect this is having in many quarters. In addition other presenters will build us up in the biblical faith. There will be opportunity, as at all our conferences, for faith stories from participants.