

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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John 5:33-47

Here is the next section of our continuing translation of John from the Greek. This should be compared with other translations of course, and we hope merely to clarify some points of interest. We hope you find the style reader-friendly as well as close to the Greek. [Jesus said]: You sent messengers to John and he witnessed to the truth, but I do not accept witness from men. But these things I am telling you so that you can be saved. He was a bright shining light and you were willing to rejoice in his light for a time. But I have a much greater witness than John because the works which the Father has given me to do, these works witness to the fact that the Father has commissioned me. And my Father who commissioned me has borne witness to me. You have never heard His voice or seen His form at any time.¹ And you do not have His word dwelling in your heart. Because the one whom the Father commissioned — him you do not believe.

You search the Scriptures because you imagine that you have the life of the age² to come in them. These are the very Scriptures which bear witness to me. But you are not willing to come to me to have that life. I do not receive praise from men, but I know that you do not have God's love in you. I have come in the name of my Father and you do not accept me. Yet if another comes in his own name, you will receive him. How can you possibly believe when you accept praise from one another and you fail to seek the praise which comes from the only One who is God? Don't imagine that I will accuse you before the Father. There is one who will accuse you and that is Moses, in whom you have placed your hope. If indeed you believed Moses you would believe me, because he wrote about me. But if you will not believe his writings, how can you possibly believe my words?³ ✧

¹The implication is probably that they *could* have had such a divine visitation, as did Moses.

²“Eternal life” (*zoe aionios*, pronounced in Greek today as “zoe ai-ownios”) means “the life of the age to come,” and is based on the “life of the age” (Dan. 12:2), the promise of life in the future resurrection, tasted now by the spirit given to those who believe the Gospel and thus obey Jesus (Heb. 5:9). The spirit is a downpayment of that future immortality.

³Showing that believing the words of Jesus (and Paul, of course) is the essence of New Covenant faith.

Mathematics Gone Mad

“Anthony, you're still blinded to the truth. ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord’ (Deut. 6:4). There are two Hebrew words for the English word ‘one.’ The first means a single or only one; the second, a compound unity; it is the second that is used in this verse. So the verse implies the Trinity.”

So wrote a well-intentioned, but ill-informed correspondent. His zeal is appreciated but the blatant misinformation he provided, and on which he builds his whole understanding of God, needs to be set straight. Unfortunately a lot of internet searchers are taken in by a widely propagated but complete falsehood about the Hebrew (and English) word meaning “one.”

Our correspondent is referring to two different Hebrew words: *yachid* and *echad* (the *ch* in biblical and modern Hebrew is a guttural sound as in the word *Bach*). He claims, because he has read this somewhere or been taught it, that if God were a single personality He would not be described as *echad* — one. Rather (so the false argument goes), if God was a single Person, He would have to be described as *yachid*, unique. The argument is entirely false and cleverly misleading.

Let us look at the facts. Hebrew lexicons of the Bible are quite clear, and the “problem” is no greater than understanding the meaning of the English word “one.” Our correspondent has accepted, without examination, that the Hebrew word *echad* means a “compound one.” Compound “one” means that an object is more than one! If that were true, the world and its communication would soon descend into a chaos of confusion and misunderstanding! Supposing that in a dollar store you present your one dollar for payment of the item you have purchased. The cashier informs you that the “one” is a “compound one” and the value is not one dollar at all! It is three dollars!

To say that “one” in Hebrew or English means “compound one” is to use words with no intelligible meaning. It is to contradict all sound learning provided by the lexicons which define language. We have entered a humpty-dumpty nonsense world, which in other situations but theology would make us liable to confinement in a mental institution!

The Hebrew word *echad* means “one, one single.” Sometimes it is properly translated as the indefinite article “a.” *Echad* in the Bible is the numeral one. When we count in Hebrew we say *echad* — one — and follow with two, three, etc. When we want to say eleven, we say in Hebrew “ten plus one” (*echad*).

Jesus is the sinless Son of God, but he is a human being. His value in God's sight was entirely adequate to his being a sacrifice on our behalf to wipe out our sins, when we agree to obey him (Heb. 5:9). Obedience to Jesus means hearing, understanding and obeying his words to us. His first command to us is to "Repent and believe the Gospel about the Kingdom of God" (Mark 1:14-15). Tragically many who seek God skip over the commands of Jesus that we believe and obey the Gospel of the Kingdom of God announced always by Jesus and by Paul and all the writers of the New Testament.

Misleadingly, many offers of salvation invite a vague "accept Jesus in your heart," but do not pay attention to Jesus' first command to "Repent and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom" (Mark 1:14-15). Many just skip over these words of Jesus. But Jesus, in the parable of the sower, which is a brilliant "unpacking" of his central command to us to believe the Gospel of the Kingdom, repeated that unless we believe his Gospel of the Kingdom we cannot truly repent and be forgiven. You can read this staggeringly interesting proposition in Mark 4:11-12. Here Jesus opens our eyes to extremely important truth. He complains that people "have closed their eyes" to truth. Then he says "Otherwise they would believe and be forgiven." Jesus makes a spiritually intelligent response to his Kingdom Gospel Message the condition for true repentance. We suggest an extended meditation on Mark 4:11-12 and its parallels in Luke and Matthew. Luke reports Jesus as saying, "When anyone hears the word [defined as the word **about the Kingdom** in Matt. 13:19 — look it up and let the full force of that phrase impact you], the Devil comes and snatches away that word [of the Kingdom] from their hearts so that they cannot believe it and be saved" (Luke 8:12).

We will not tire of putting these extraordinarily interesting statements to our readers (now in 75 countries). Do you grasp the words of rabbi Jesus here? He states that the Devil is strenuously in the business of trying to prevent you from believing and thus obeying Jesus. We obey and believe Jesus when we obey and believe his words. His word here is that we believe the Kingdom of God Gospel. If we do not grasp it and obey it and pass it others, we risk being out of the will of God and Jesus. The Devil, knowing this, is bent on snatching Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom from our understanding (our "hearts," since the heart in Hebrew psychology is the center of our operating personality). The Devil knows (better it seems than many churchgoers) that if the seed/word/Gospel of the Kingdom gets firmly lodged in our hearts, by constant mediation and internalizing and practice, then we are headed for our destiny which is to gain immortality when Jesus comes back. The seed/word/Gospel of the Kingdom is the divine "DNA" of God Himself, mediated through the

Lord Messiah, Jesus. God transmits to us via that Gospel preaching of Jesus (and Paul) about the Kingdom, as well of course as about his death and resurrection, the very character and nature of God (2 Pet 1:4). The "circle chart" on page 7 shows how all the New Testament salvation teaching is traced back to that seed/Gospel/preaching of Jesus. Hebrews 2:3 describes Jesus as the original and finest exponent of salvation — the Gospel/saving Message.

It is a matter of amazement to us that some who write in constant criticism of our Bible studies, now for the past 50 years (and we all have lots to learn yet!), do not carefully evaluate what they read. They trot out a very small number of verses, but completely overlook the fact that Jesus is the one who defines the Gospel for us. We have some correspondents who have not in the course of thousands of words to us ever spoken about the Gospel of the Kingdom! They do not sound like Jesus, because they do not reflect Jesus' Kingdom-Gospel language. They select a few verses from Paul and then twist the Gospel to avoid any reference to the preaching of Jesus himself. Paul of course was a stellar example of Kingdom preaching (Acts 19:8; 20:24-25; 28:23, 30, 31). But these verses are almost always not cited. There is a way to read the Bible blind and it can be achieved by leaving out the words of Jesus in Mark 1:14-15.

One way of humorously and perhaps effectively alerting our friends to the risk of *avoiding* Jesus in the name of Jesus (a very conflicted way of thinking!) is to say this: "Where do you expect to be in the future?" "In heaven of course" comes the ready response. Then you might ask, "Why do you want to be in heaven when Jesus is not going to be there?"

Jesus of course is coming back to reside on this planet and to renew it. The purpose of his Christian mission is expressed by Luke 4:43 (a brilliant summary statement by Luke). The mission of Jesus was and is and will continue to be the announcing of the Gospel of salvation about the Kingdom. Some of our correspondents across the world see this and are thrilled. Others are intent on avoiding Jesus' Kingdom language. They do not sound like Jesus, if Kingdom language is not theirs. They have been taken in by a Jesus who is not centered in the Kingdom Gospel. This requires some serious reflection.

Don't forget too that the Jehovah's Witnesses, dedicated and at your door, make the same mistake exactly. They think that only 144,000 "super-believers" will be with Jesus in the future. They think that the rest of believers (those not of the 144,000 class) will not be with Jesus. They say that Jesus will not be on the earth when he comes, but will be with the special class of 144,000 in heaven, while the rest of the Christians(?)

will be on the renewed earth. All this makes the New Testament a very difficult book to understand.

The truth is simpler. In Paul's words, there is "one hope...one faith" (Eph. 4:4-5). It is for the international group of believers in Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom plus his death and resurrection (Acts 8:12 says it so well!). This international group is the new "Israel of God" of Galatians 6:16, those who walk by the canon of love so strenuously contended for by Paul in the whole book of Galatians.

We are all invited to accept Jesus' opening command to "believe the Gospel about the Kingdom of God," which is nothing less than "God's Gospel" (Mark 1:14), as coming from the Father of Jesus. Responding with a spiritual intelligence to Mark 1:14-15 we are launched into the Christian program (water baptism is an important signal of our repentance and belief: Acts 8:12, etc.), which is designed to result in us gaining immortality in the resurrection. This resurrection will occur when Jesus comes back (1 Cor. 15:23, another key text for you as you present these truths to friends).

Jesus is going to rule in the Kingdom, when he comes back. The Kingdom will be "under the whole heaven" (Dan. 7:27), that is of course on a renewed earth. The Messiah will be "in the land" (Jer. 23:5). The camp of the saints will be on that renewed earth (Rev. 20:9). Jesus is actually returning to the earth at the Second Coming (Acts 1:11). There is no **pre-tribulation** rapture in the New Testament. Jesus is coming back once to give immortality to the faithful of all the ages and to punish the wicked (2 Thess. 1:7-8). When that event happens, the presently afflicted Christians will gain relief as well as life forever. They will then rule as kings and queens with Jesus as Revelation 5:10 says so eloquently, precisely and succinctly. Christianity as Jesus taught it is an invitation to prepare now, under trial and testing, to be the world leaders of tomorrow's new society. That society will come into being worldwide when the Messiah comes to sit on the throne of David which belongs to him by right. Jesus is the distinguished offspring of David (2 Sam. 7:14-16) as well as Son of God as defined in Luke 1:35 and Matthew 1:18 ("begotten in her," v. 20).

A well-instructed professor of Hebrew at Oxford summarized beautifully Matthew's view of the Kingdom of God as preached as the Gospel by Jesus. His words deserve to live on and can be shared with everyone at every possible occasion. What he says of Matthew's understanding of the Kingdom applies with equal accuracy to the whole New Testament. We are dealing here with the core of the Gospel which is not just about Jesus dying and rising (though those facts are central to the Gospel also).

W.C. Allen, MA, on the Kingdom of God

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

"The Kingdom — **the central subject** of Christ's doctrine. With this He began His ministry (4:17) and wherever He went He taught it as Good News [Gospel] (4:23). The Kingdom He taught was coming, but not in His lifetime. After His ascension He would come as Son of Man on the clouds of heaven (16:27; 19:28; 24:30; 25:31) and would sit on the throne of His glory...Then the twelve Apostles should sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28). In the meantime He Himself must suffer and die and be raised from the dead. How else could He come on the clouds of heaven? And the disciples were to **preach the Good News of the coming Kingdom** (10:7; 24:14) among all nations making disciples by baptism (28:18). The body of disciples thus gained would naturally form a society bound by common aims. Hence the disciples of the Kingdom would form a new spiritual Israel (21:43)."

The same authority goes on to say:

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

"Thus the Parable of the Sower illustrates the varying **reception met with by the Good News [Gospel] of the Kingdom as it is preached amongst men**. That of the tares also deals not with the Kingdom itself, but with **the period of preparation for it**. At the end of the age, the Son of Man will come **to inaugurate His Kingdom...** There is nothing here nor elsewhere in this Gospel to suggest that **the scene of the Kingdom is other than the present world renewed, restored and purified.**"⁴

⁴ Vol. II, p. 145, emphasis added. The same view of the Kingdom is expressed by the author of this article on Matthew in his commentary on Matthew (W.C. Allen, *The International Critical Commentary, St. Matthew*, T & T Clark, 1907, pp. lxxvii-lxxxi).

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

On the Recent 18th Theological Conference at Simpsonwood

In some ways I think it may be a mistake to call this a “*theological* conference,” as it might sound like an event which is not practical and relevant! We hope it is *highly* relevant, as being expert comment on the Bible, supportive of the heart of the Abrahamic faith, and thus exhortation and instruction to be better believers. Our conversations seemed to return often to the matter of how well we as “Abrahamics” are getting the message to 6 billion folk who desperately need to know that God is One, the Father, and Jesus is the Lord Messiah, and that the Gospel is based on the Kingdom of God as the promise to Abraham, David and Jesus — and of course to us, of all nations. The internet has changed the face of communication forever, and seems to play right into our hands as the tool above all tools to bring the Message to everyone. All were encouraged to make plans to engage the wider public via internet discussion. The opportunities are legion and one learns by experience.

Anyway, I think this, the 18th gathering, was the richest we have had in terms of variety and content, and especially the faith stories were fascinating. People who otherwise have little or no contact with the Church of God gathered to inspire and be inspired. I was personally touched by so many, but especially by one who 11 years ago heard my shortwave radio program “Focus on the Kingdom” when he lived in Yap, near Guam in the vicinity of the Philippines. Despite a crackly reception he managed to hear the email address we provided, and he was convinced that the Kingdom of God is the key to the Bible. Eleven years later we met face to face. I was later removed from that Sumerall radio station, because I was not judged fit as a non-Trinitarian. But for this conference participant the radio was life-changing.

The setting at Simpsonwood Retreat Center was breathtaking — so quiet and beautiful. It was a fine time of fellowship and learning. We had many musical offerings. Joel Hemphill and Robin Todd sang and so

did Dennis Baldwin and “OJ.” Karl Ahrens showed us how the mountain ocarina sounds and how it is gaining ground as a popular, portable “flute.” I played “Gabriel’s Oboe.” Our topics ranged widely, including the all-important “anabaptist” concern over non-violence and our resident alien status as Christians awaiting the Kingdom. We discussed prophecy and futurism and reflected on the simplicity of the Truth. Dustin Smith and Sean Finnegan were there to present papers and their success in terms of advanced theological education is a blessing to us all.

There were three moving baptisms, held this year in a new setting ideal for these always memorable occasions. We are most grateful to all the speakers whose work on their various papers is available on DVD from 800-347-4261.

Fellowship with fellow believers is an important factor in the Christian way, and we encourage all to be with us next year for those few days. There was a subsequent three-day intensive class at the same location. Thanks to all who contributed to the arrangements, which worked out well, and leave us feeling that every moment was very much worthwhile. ✧

Watch that King James Version!

The King James Version of the Bible, beloved by many because they were brought up on it, is seriously defective in some verses. Everyone now knows (or can find out from any study Bible notes) that the so-called Trinitarian proof text of 1 John 5:7 is a forgery. It belongs to none of the Greek manuscripts which make up the genuine text of the Bible. It is properly omitted by modern versions. The Revised Version of 1881 corrected the error by leaving out the KJV’s fraudulent 1 John 5:7.

The KJV is mistranslated also in Acts 7:59 where Stephen is made to say what he did not say. The KJV reads that while being stoned Stephen was “calling upon *God* [in italics], and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit...Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.” Two major points need to be made. The word “God” is not in any Greek manuscript of verse 59. The context tells us that Stephen was calling out to the Lord *Jesus* and asking him not to hold his enemies guilty. The RV correctly supplied the word “Lord,” putting it in italics. The context then identifies this Lord with Jesus. Jesus is often called “the Lord” in Acts and the rest of the New Testament. Stephen invokes in prayer the Lord Jesus. Jesus, on earth, had never told people not to make requests to him.

The same language is used for calling on God in both Testaments. And the same language (*epikaleomai*) is used of Christians who “call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ” in 1 Corinthians 1:2. Christians addressed the Savior Jesus, while they prayed of course also and

often to God the Father. Paul thanked Jesus (a form of prayer as we use the word) and Paul thanked God also. The Greek expressions are identical and mean “to give thanks” (1 Tim. 1:12; 2 Tim. 1:3). In Revelation 5 a marvelous revelation shows that both God and the lamb are worthy of songs of praise, and “doxologies” are offered to both. This teaches us the amazing truth about what God has graciously bestowed on his unique *human* Son, the lord Messiah (not Lord, or LORD) at the right hand of the One God (Ps. 110:1). ✧

Comments

“The *Focus* magazines have hit home so often and so well! Thank you for addressing the issue of tongues and how it has become a ‘token’ of salvation, if you will. We all need to understand that our faith, and not a learned behavior, is key to salvation. Your comments on death and resurrection in the last issue were very timely, too, in my continued discussion with the friend I mentioned in previous letters. Without the resurrection of Jesus, we are without hope!” — *Alaska*

“Thanks so much for your informative and inspiring *Focus on the Kingdom*. It has been a year now that I have believed in the Oneness of God. The evidence that Jesus did not believe himself to be God jumps off almost every page of the gospels. How could I have been so blind? I have also come to trust in God remembering me and resurrecting me from the dead instead of trusting in Greek philosophy and its teaching of immortality.” — *California*

“This is my latest update from ‘The New Reformation in Western Australia.’ After this morning’s service my husband and I were invited to go to a back room to discuss our beliefs with the senior pastor and his deputy. Singing and praying fervently to our Lord, we entered the back room and the door was firmly closed. It turned out it was to ask us not to share our views with members of the congregation, or they would have ‘to deal with *that*.’ I calmly pointed out that I had followed Scripture and only spoken to firstly the senior pastor and then his deputy face to face. We give God the glory that He enabled us to wield the sword of the Spirit and reason out of the Scriptures so effectively that the pastor asked not to turn it into a teaching session! We pointed out that they in their zealotry to stop us could be doing a Saul/Paul mistake before the Lord Jesus spoke to him. We brought up Luther, Plato, and Gnosticism. We kept on getting firmly assured that they ‘only go by the Word of God, the Bible’! I am considered a complete heretic because I keep telling them that evil men have altered manuscripts to comply with their doctrines or the twist from Gnosticism. I was told God has preserved His word and it is correct. An example was 1 Timothy 3:16 changed to ‘GOD’ from ‘He.’ They rolled out the old chestnut of John 1:1 being

God made flesh, and especially Revelation 1:8, 17, stating it means Jesus is God. I kept asking the pastor if he had read Anthony’s book *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, to which he replied he had only ‘glanced at it.’ My reply was it was hardly a book that could be dealt with like that, and he turned and recommended it to the deputy. All this took a good hour or so. On departing I was asked once again not to talk to others. My reason for contacting you is for prayer, firstly for these pastors that God would open their eyes, secondly for ourselves. As we drove away feeling despondent, more about the state of the church in general, I felt the Lord Jesus Christ remind me that he too was not only rejected, but crucified. I thought of all the martyrs who died. I even reminded these two about Michael Servetus and how Calvin so cruelly had him burned to death.” — *Australia*

“I just finished listening to 1 and 2 Thessalonians taught by Anthony Buzzard. I must say I’ve been refreshed beyond measure to hear such explanation of the Word of the Kingdom of God so plain, so simple, but yet so profound, so deep. It reminds me of a passage in the Hebrew Scriptures where it says that Nehemiah prepared his heart to seek the Law of the Lord and to practice it and to teach it. I enjoyed very much listening to the teachings of 1 and 2 Thessalonians, most especially because they deal with our hope, the anchor of our soul, the second coming of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I am a grateful listener.” — *New York*

“I just want to thank you so much for the articles relating to the ‘One True God.’ I now have answers to things I have wondered about for 40 years. I have known for decades that the Trinity doctrine was utterly false, and now I know for certain that the ‘Who and what is God’ teaching of H.W. Armstrong and others is also false. After reading your articles, the life of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice appear all the more amazing. I used to wonder if Christ really did understand what it was like to be a weak human being trying to overcome sin in an evil world when he was God before he was a man. Now I know the true power of God’s Holy Spirit which Christ had ‘without measure.’ Now I know that Jesus Christ really was tempted in all points like we are yet never sinned. He truly is a High Priest who understands our weaknesses and is able to help us. And how wonderful is our Father in heaven (the One True God) in all that he has done for us.”

National Conference Australia

Friday – Sunday, July 24-26

Kawana Community Hall · Sunshine Coast

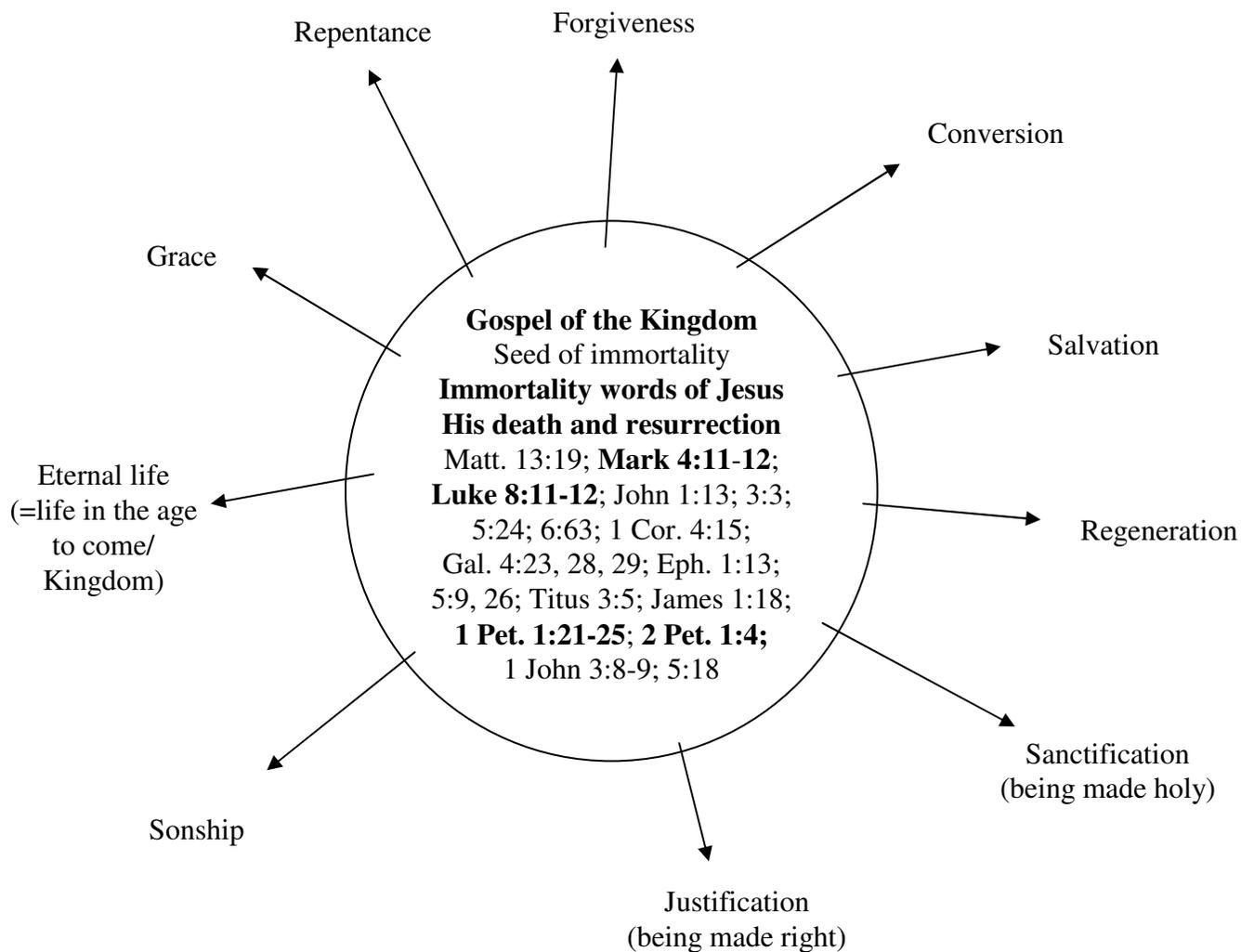
“The Forgotten Gospel”

Seminar in Sydney, Australia

Whitlam Leisure Centre, Liverpool, NSW

July 30-31

The Immortality Plan
How to Gain Indestructible Life
 from the seed (Luke 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23; 1 John 3:9)



2 Pet. 1:4: promises/words which confer the divine nature
 Gal. 3:8: the Gospel preached to Abraham