

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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Dear conference participants,

May we extend our sincerest thanks to every one of you who made the recent conference in Atlanta the success it was. I thought the faith stories were exceptionally moving and passionate this year. We should be reminded that Christianity is to be done in community and not solo on an island. It is important to come together with fellow believers and benefit from mutual encouragement. There is strength in numbers! The stories of how God and Jesus have led you to truth are rich indeed and they should not be kept to ourselves. Thanks to all of you for making the effort necessary to travel to Georgia. Do plan on coming again next year and bring with you a busload of friends (or at least a vanload!).

We hope you have much opportunity of sharing the great basic truths of the faith with all who are ready to listen. None of us would have been at that conference had someone not had the kindness to alert us to the need for serious study of the Bible. We can and must do for others what has already been done for us. There is no such thing as a silent Christianity. The Commission laid on us by Jesus mandates communication of the saving faith. The resources for this exercise are now unprecedented with the astonishing advent of the internet.

DVDs of all the speakers including the faith stories will be available at 800-347-4261 (see order form on page 7). Greater mileage is extracted from those talks when they are propagated far beyond the confines of Simpsonwood. They are one means of evangelism and the preaching of the Gospel about the Kingdom obviously needs to use all possible modern technological miracles. Dan and Sharon Gill are setting us a fine example with their wonderful site at www.21ster.org

They are linked, as we are at www.restorationfellowship.org, to other sites which will provide a banquet of solid teachings. As a Roman Catholic professor of theology kindly wrote to me, "The theological exercise is only adolescent and in need of further guidance. I think you're doing a good work that will eventually have an impact on my own Roman Catholic tradition. There is much work to be done before we can, collectively, think clearly, and I'm glad that your magazine's honesty about these things is so unflinching."

So please do plan now to come to the **20th** annual Theological Conference (exact date to be announced). And bring with you a report of progress made. There are 6.8 billion persons walking the earth, and each one of them needs to benefit from your understanding of the one

God, the Messiah and the Gospel of the Kingdom. We can all in some way fish in that vast pool and increase the numbers of those in training to rule with Messiah in his Kingdom (Rev. 5:9-10). Do contact us if we can be of assistance in the matter of our mutual concerns for preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom as per Jesus' mandate in Matthew 28:19-20. ✧

Talking about Unity

The present Christian world is terribly, alarmingly divided. Jesus did not envisage his body as fragmented into scores of denominational factions. Jesus did not found thousands of denominations. He prayed, referring to believers in him and his Gospel, "that they all may be one, just as I and the Father are one." Paul echoed that sentiment when he declared his desire "that you all be perfectly united in one judgment." Jesus founded his Church on the rock foundational confession that he is the promised Messiah, the Son of God (Matt. 16:16-18). That surely is not so hard to understand. Jesus is called the Messiah (Christ) 516 times in the New Testament. Is that clear? The Father is called God 1300 times at least. He is called "the only one who is truly God" (John 17:3). He is called "the God and Father" of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are some 11,000 occurrences of the various words for God in the Bible (*Adonai, Elohim, YHVH, Theos*) and *not one of them* can be shown to mean "the triune God who is three in one."

Is that not astonishing? When the Bible says "God," "the Lord God," "YHVH," or *Theos* in the Greek, **it never designates a triune God**. I hope the reader is not missing the point here: If God is a triune Essence, one might reasonably ask Trinitarians to supply a single sample of a word for "God" to mean that triune God. Can they do this? If not, would it not be wise for them to desist from condemning to hell believers in God as a single Person? When Jesus recited, in complete agreement with a Jew, the famous creed of Israel, "Listen, Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord" (Mark 12:29), is anyone listening? (Jesus did say "Listen" and noted also that this is the most important command of all.) How then do churches assemble under the umbrella of a triune God, God existing in three Persons? Did Jesus recognize that creed? Does he approve it? Does anyone care to investigate this matter carefully? Is anyone appalled that John Calvin subjected a brilliant objector to the Trinity to a brutal and senseless murder by burning at the stake? Where are the whistle blowers, pointing out that all is not well with contemporary churches?

I am struck by the comment from a letter to *World* magazine about the state of churches: “We have turned North American Christianity into little more than a self-help theory based on an emotional appeal. We should instead teach faith based on immutable truths.”

Would Jesus approve of the Trinity when he confessed a creed which will not fit with the Trinitarian formula? Does anyone care about these monumental issues, now dividing billions of believers in God and creating unbearable tensions among the great world religions?

Is no one able to detect the blatant falsehood in the theory of God which requires us to say “He are three” and “They is one”? This is what the top evangelical defendant of the Trinity concedes in his full-length study. Do read this book: Millard J. Erickson, *God in Three Persons* (Baker Books, 1996). Is no one outraged when the scholars of the Seventh-Day Adventist denomination conclude that the word “one” in Hebrew “is inherently a plural word”?¹ Is no one shocked by the title of a recent Seventh-Day Adventist article: “1+1+1=One: The Keystone of Biblical Theology”? (*Adventist World*, Feb. 2010).

Could the unitarian Jesus possibly commend these amazing propositions, offered to us as the basis of sound theology? It appears that “theology” has sunk to an all-time low. We may be able to travel to the moon, but we cannot add up to three or discern the meaning of the word “one.” What an insult to the custodian of the precious Hebrew Scriptures, the Jews, to indict them with age-long stupidity for not understanding how many God is!

The God of the Bible declares Himself to be a single divine Person countless thousands of times. God is defined as He, Him, Himself, His, I, Me, Myself, My, Mine, Thou, Thee, Thyself, Thy, Thine, over and over again. Yet readers, under the centuries-long indoctrination of an alien system, cannot “hear” these singular personal pronouns. They do not know that a singular personal pronoun communicates information about a single person — in the case of God, a Divine Person. God has deigned to describe Himself in terms which we understand. If God has not spoken to us in intelligible language, He has revealed nothing! The word “I” describes a single person. God so describes Himself repeatedly, warning against any deviation.

Contemporary evangelicalism not only departs from the biblical definition of the Son of God and of God, it has turned the spirit of God or of Jesus into a *third* Person. The spirit is indeed very *personal*, as being God or Jesus’ searching operational presence and power. But

the spirit is not a *third* Person. The Paraclete or Comforter is defined as Jesus himself in 1 John 2:1. Jesus has departed but he is present in his spirit. No need for a *third* Person who is never worshiped as such and never sends greetings.

The Gospel has been devastated by contemporary evangelicalism, which reduces it to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Billy Graham’s celebrated definition of the Gospel as Jesus’ “three days work” may sound catchy, and it does catch the unwary, but what has happened to the Gospel as Jesus preached it? Did Jesus just contribute three days work (death, burial and resurrection) to the Gospel? Obviously not. If one begins at the beginning (there is no better place to start) then Jesus came preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, announcing that it was coming soon and that we are to repent and believe in that fact with all urgency (see Mark 1:14-15 for Jesus’ first commandment to us all). Paul has been wrongly pitted against Jesus in the matter of defining the Gospel. Jesus said nothing about his death and resurrection for most of his ministry, yet he preached the saving Gospel. The facts about Jesus’ death and resurrection are of course added later as they occurred. But Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:1-3 expressly said that the death and resurrection are “among things of first importance.” He did not say that they were the whole Gospel. If he had said this he would have done what evangelicalism does: *omit* the foundational facts of the Gospel about the Kingdom of God to come, which is the heart of the historical and human Jesus’ preaching. Luke 4:43 states the Christian purpose in unmistakably easy language. The purpose of Jesus and thus of his body now is “to preach the Gospel about the Kingdom.” This is abbreviated as the “word of the Kingdom” or equally “the word of God” or “word” (Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:11-12, Mark 4:14).

“Dispensationalism” managed to eradicate the Kingdom of God as Gospel by advancing the astonishing proposition that it was only Gospel for Jews and not for us! This despite the patent fact that Paul equates the Gospel of the Kingdom with the Gospel of grace (see Acts 20:24, 25). “Dispensationalism” then added insult to injury by inventing a PRE-Tribulation rapture, by which the believers were to expect a “removal from the earth” **before** the time of Great Tribulation! Jesus was drowned out by this amazing theory. Jesus said that the elect, the believers of all nations, would be gathered to meet him “immediately after” (=POST) the great tribulation which will immediately precede the second coming in glory (Matt. 24:29-31). Paul evidently knew nothing about a PRE-tribulation rapture. He knew that believers of all nations would have to endure affliction *until* the Lord Jesus “will be revealed in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who disobey the Gospel” (see 2 Thess. 1:7-8).

¹ *The Trinity: Understanding God’s Love, His Plan of Salvation and Christian Relationships*, Whiddon, Moon and Reeve, 2002, p. 76.

There is no pre-trib. rapture here, nor elsewhere. It is a pleasant myth promoted by millions of books, tracts and sermons.

The Great Tribulation of course is, mercifully, not a continuous period of agony beginning in AD 70. This would make the Great Tribulation twice as long as the millennium! No, Jesus was replying to the question about trouble in the Temple **just prior to his Parousia**, his yet future coming in great glory (certainly not an invisible event in 1914!). Jesus said that the days of the great tribulation would be specially difficult for pregnant and nursing women. Anyone who imagines this to be a truth relevant to the past 2000 years, beginning in AD 70, is very much mistaken.

Unity based on the plain words of the Bible (with the more complicated ones taking second place to the clear ones) cannot be achieved if individuals take it upon themselves to redefine basic words. “One” does not mean and never can mean “more than one” — certainly not three!

“Elderly women” in the church does not mean “women elders.” A contemporary attempt is now being advanced to justify what Paul did not say. He did not burden the women — while highly valuing their part in the churches’ activity as essential and vital — with official leadership. He did not ordain “women elders.” He worked within a framework of male headship and since the congregation are to “obey their leaders” (Heb. 13:17), it would have been impossible for Paul to say other than that “I do not permit a women to teach and have authority over a man” (1 Tim. 2:12). Attempts to avoid the obvious here are hardly satisfactory. Most of the failure stems from not paying attention to standard lexicons (the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, 10 volumes, or Bauer’s would be the place to start). An “older woman” is an older woman. She is not a “woman elder”! These would hardly qualify as “husbands of one wife” (1 Tim. 3:2). Marriage would be the *normal* state of the adult male, but of course Paul would be the first to admit that a properly qualified unmarried man could be ordained (he did not exclude himself!). The elderly woman are contrasted with the younger women. Neither of these categories is an ordained office. They are not pastors, presbyters, bishops or elders (a single office in the NT). The younger men are obviously not “youngers”! What would that imagined category be — a youth pastor?!

These are important issues since the “males” (not just husbands, but the word for male in the context) who meet the qualifications are charged with bearing the heavy burden of leadership. They are even to be obeyed (Heb. 13:17). This is nothing at all to do with the fact that our spiritual status before God is entirely equal. There is no male or female, slave or master, employee or employer as

regards our relationship with God (Gal. 3:28). But Paul knew well the difference between men and women, as well as the difference between employer and employee. I am concerned that these easy truths be set aside in favor of the appeal of “modernity.” This can be a snare. One can rightly advance the idea of equality in Galatians and then pit this idea against the *difference of function* as between men and women in 1 Timothy, a difference which has nothing at all to do with some local conditions in Ephesus, but is rooted in the events of the Garden of Eden.

Unity over the great events of the Kingdom means unity over the Gospel of the Kingdom, the Christian Gospel. This is Christian (in the biblical sense) because it is found in the Gospel words of Jesus who is the model Gospel preacher of salvation (Heb. 2:3). We should start with Matthew and Mark and Luke (a good place to start, once the Hebrew Bible has been thoroughly examined for its wonderful Kingdom information). And don’t forget that “the Gospel was preached ahead of time to Abraham” (Gal. 3:8). The Hebrew Bible provides additional indispensable background and core for the Gospel in Isaiah, and more particularly in Daniel 2:44 and then 7:14, 18, 22, 27. That last verse is superbly good. It shows that the Kingdom is a future revolutionary government to be inaugurated at the second coming. This will be on the renewed earth and Jesus will be here, back on earth to take up his rightful position on the throne of David (for much more detail see my *Our Fathers Who Aren’t in Heaven* from restorationfellowship.org or 800-347-4261). The saints are privileged then, not now, to rule the world on earth with the Messiah (Rev. 5:10).

Today’s popular concept of “Preterism” or “pastism” is a serious threat to the integrity of the Gospel since it muddles events of AD 70 with the future spectacular, visible, revolutionary event of the actual return of Jesus to rule with the believers of all the ages in the promised Kingdom. AD 70, far from involving peace on earth, the resurrection of the dead, and a new world order with Jesus present on earth, was a ghastly event by which Jerusalem was battered into destruction. No resurrection occurred then! Nor did it in 1914 or at any other of the failed dates proposed by whole denominations. If the resurrection is not a visible event by which dead people return from their present sleep of the dead in *hades*, *sheol*) and walk again on the earth, then the resurrection has been dissolved into a myth and the whole faith is threatened. The Gospel of the Kingdom is undermined at its core by Preterism, which is really a failure to grasp what the Bible says about the future, of Jesus and of us as believers.

Unity is damaged when arguments over “replacement” begin to undermine some basic New Testament truths. There is for Paul one united,

international “Israel of God,” the people of God drawn without distinction from all the nations. This is the base principle of the whole New Testament. Paul applauded those who walk by the ground principle of love. He called them the Israel of God in Galatians 6:16 as is widely known in commentary and really a matter of common sense. Paul had spoken of the “Israel of the flesh” (1 Cor. 10:18) and by that term he referred to unconverted Israel. Paul termed unconverted Israel “enemies of the Gospel,” who were for the moment blinded as a group, due to their failure to believe in Jesus as the Messiah. Paul was confident of a future collective conversion of the ethnic Jew or Israel. For the moment Paul was trying to save his national Israelite countrymen, whose zeal was commendable but not informed by truth. Knowledge is what they needed and God Himself had lamented the destruction of Israel “through lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6), the knowledge provided by the Messiah (Isa. 53:11) who came “to give us an understanding in order to know God” (1 John 5:20). This verse makes the case clear that without the right knowledge we cannot know God. “Replacement” and “supersessionism” tend to be “fighting words.” They need definition. Yes, Jesus has rejected unbelieving Jews and the Church has taken their place as the true people of God (Gal. 6:16, etc.). But yes, also, the unbelieving people of Israel, now hardened, will one day turn to God and accept the returning Messiah (Mic. 2:12; Rom. 9-11). At that time they will thoroughly lament their past failure to welcome the Messiah whom God sent to them (Zech. 12).

These teachings are not complicated when proper recourse is had to not only the material in the Bible but the excellent commentary now available. It is unwise for any of us to “sit on an island” and come up with infallible answers on all questions. “I don’t believe in man’s opinions,” I hear in email. The writer then advances his own opinion as the last word! But he or she too is human! The better method is to take stock of one’s own ability and equipment to examine the Bible, and the need for peer review, so that the different options may be known and examined. The cut and thrust of good dialogue is invaluable here. “Iron sharpens iron” (Prov. 27:17). Learning takes time, and it is unwise to be an “authority” too young! First learn the trade in the hard-knocks world of dialogue, reading and discussion.

Take a simple matter like the difference between the LORD God (all capitals LORD which translates YHVH in many Bibles) and the Lord Messiah, who is *not* God. If Jesus were God, this would make two Gods and thus violate the first commandment and the Shema (Mark 12:29). This is X, this is X and this is also X makes 3 X’s. We all really know this. But in church-speak we seem to have been induced into believing that three who are each individually YHVH makes one YHVH. But as

long as the universe stands, this cannot be. It is not sufficient to retreat into “mystery” when really we are pleading mystification and verbal trickery. We know that God does not treat us like that and expect us to squelch the logic of language which He created for us and which He also uses logically to speak to us.

The theological and church world is a kind of minefield. It is to be navigated with much care and prayer. Being a Berean does not mean just looking up a word and ignoring the seasoned opinions of others — at least to be aware of them. This takes time. It may take some long-term study to learn the art of good understanding. It certainly takes caution and humility, and if one is less than 30 years old, asking whole communities to abandon an idea must be approached with gentleness. “Have you ever read John1:1?” comes the cry on email. Yes, I have, and have tried to ponder it, analyze it from every angle and listen to all the views. There is no need to type it out for me on email in the KJV, though the intention is no doubt noble. Some of our most persistent (if unhappy) correspondents are sure that they alone have had a life-changing encounter with Jesus and are thus poised to answer all Bible questions. They are suffering often from a lack of good education, and should and can remedy this by learning from others.

Unity begins, I think, by defining the Gospel (as the Gospel **about the Kingdom**) and God and Jesus properly. For a very good place to start go to the accounts of Christianity provided by Matthew, Mark and Luke. John is too difficult for the beginner, but only if he has not paid *careful attention* to the Hebrew Bible and then Matthew, Mark and Luke. Just one example to close: “The dead know nothing at all and there is no activity in Gravedom (sheol, hades) where you are going.” One half of one verse in Paul (“absent from the body and present with the Lord”) ought not to wipe out the testimony of the heritage of Jesus in relation to what happens at death. May the quest for truth continue. ✧

Who Is God?

A Simple Cause

and an Easy Remedy for the Confusion

by Oren Johnson, Kentucky

When I first started *seriously* searching for the truth about how I should be worshiping God, I was lucky enough to come across an excellent teacher, who stated that I should not take his word, or anyone else’s, for anything, but that I should check every fact for myself. When I started doing that, my entire life changed.

While this may sound like it will slow down your research, it is absolutely necessary, if in fact one is interested in getting at the truth. (*Most are not; most are more interested in just backing up what they already believe. You may want to ask yourself which you are*

more interested in.) Part of good research, using the Bible for your information, is actually looking up the definitions of the words you're reading. Many people *absolutely will not do this.*

They may think that the translators of the particular translation they're reading did a good job. Or they may think they *already know* the meaning of what they're reading at that moment (probably because they've been *told* the meaning by someone else), or they may think that they know the meaning of the words they're reading in their own language (with no thought of the original text it was translated from). The fact is, most would find that they can't even give a good definition of the words in their own language without looking them up.

Just in case you think that is a ridiculous statement, I ask that you humor me by checking just two words as examples. Can you, personally, humble yourself to check yourself on two words, here and now? Let's see.

1. What is the meaning of the word "soul" as defined in an English dictionary?

2. What is the meaning of the Hebrew word "nephesh," which is translated into English as "soul" 475 times (in KJV)? Please write down your definitions for these two words before you look them up, if you will, and then use the dictionary and a concordance to find out what they actually mean.

In all likelihood, you will be one of the 99% who call themselves Christians but cannot define these two words correctly. You may also be surprised to find that the English dictionary definition for "soul" has nothing whatsoever in common with the Bible concordance definition for "nephesh," which is translated "soul" in almost every Old Testament verse you're familiar with containing that word "soul." But, in fact, most Christians visualize the English dictionary meaning of "soul" when they read it in the Bible, and very definitely *not* the definition of the Hebrew word it was translated from.

Although this word is not the focus of what I am writing here, it is a telling example of how we can so easily be confused by what we are reading, simply because we don't take the time to be *sure* of what we're reading. I do want to "re-translate" a few words in this article, to say what I feel they *actually* say, and I will do this by using my concordance to check the *original* text, as well as an English dictionary. And I ask that you please, please look these up yourself as you read this article, to be sure that what I write here is correct, whether you agree as you read this or not. If you will do that, you are of course still free to draw your own conclusions as to whether or not you agree with me! However, you have *no right* to disagree (or even to agree, for that matter), if you're not willing to actually look up these definitions yourself, and prove whether this is correct or not. You see, I believe that God *inspired* the

writers of the Bible, but I don't believe He inspired all the translators, or they would all agree. Christians are supposed to *study* the Bible, not just superficially read a few verses.

The reason I have taken the time to say all this is that I believe that many people essentially waste their time when "reading the Bible," because they just read it (in whatever translation they choose) and then try to fit their perceived and preconceived meaning of what they read into the context of their *current* beliefs. However, I truly feel that if we do that, we are probably no better off than the illiterate millions throughout the ages who have trusted in their clergy to tell them what the Bible says, since they couldn't read it themselves. I want to present a very few verses for your consideration, and I ask that you please take the time to examine them carefully, and the reasons will become obvious. I can find *dozens* of similar examples, but it is my hope that, after checking these few verses, you'll look for others yourself. They're not hard to find.

The God of the Old Testament has a name. (Don't get excited yet — I'm *not* going to try and get you to address God only by His "sacred name.") Most of the time God's name is translated in the Old Testament as "the LORD." Now, although I don't believe that it is necessary for you to address God by His name, I do think that there are times when calling Him "the LORD" has contributed to the apparent mass confusion for centuries, and even now, about who exactly God is. Together, let's see if we can work through some of this confusion. I fully understand that the Apostles did not see fit to use the Hebrew name in the Greek New Testament Scripture.

I heard a sermon recently about God's name. The speaker said, "Does God have a name? Yes. What is His name? He said it was 'the LORD.'" But is that, in fact, what God said? Well, no, it is not. In the following verses, God says His name is "YHWH." If you'll please look them up in your concordance you'll find this to be true. We're not sure how this should be pronounced, because, even though God honored the Israelite people with the knowledge of His name, they were so afraid of using it incorrectly that they actually forgot how to pronounce it. Truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. Anyway, in these verses and dozens of others all through the Old Testament, God says His name is YHWH (I'll pronounce that "Yahweh" in the rest of this article for simplicity's sake). You see, if we continue to say that God's name was "the LORD," and then we start referring to others as "Lord," it may be much easier to get confused about whom we're speaking, than if we use the *names* of the persons about whom we're speaking. That *exact situation* has happened. To this day, when people read "Lord" in their Bibles, many times they are confused about whom they're reading, and sometimes they

conclude that different individuals are actually the *same*, because they're both called "Lord," when there would be no confusion at all if they would check a simple concordance to see what words were translated as "Lord" in the first place, and what the Hebrew or Greek meanings of *those* words were.

In Exodus 3:15 God says, "You are to say to the children of Israel, 'YHWH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me unto you: this is my name forever, and this is my memorial unto all generations.'"

Exodus 20:2-3: "I am YHWH, your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. **You shall have no other gods before Me.**"

Isaiah 42:8 says, "I am YHWH; that is my name: and my glory I will not give to another."

And Isaiah 44:24 reads, "Thus says YHWH, your redeemer, and he who formed you from the womb: 'I am YHWH who makes all things; who stretches forth the heavens alone: who spreads abroad the earth by myself.'"

Isaiah 45:5: "I am YHWH, and there is no other; there is no other God besides Me."

So in the Old Testament God says His name is Yahweh, and in these verses and many others (please do some checking for yourself), He says that He created everything, and that He did it alone. He also said that He will not share *His glory* with anyone, and that we are not to place *anyone before Him as God*.

Since the Council of Nicea "deemed it so" in the fourth century, many have said that Jesus is also God. Some even believe that Jesus is the God of the Old Testament, and he came to earth to *reveal* the Father. Some believe that there is one God, who is always Jesus, but he reveals himself at different times by different names. But who did Jesus say God was? Let's see. And remember, we're only going to look at a few verses so we can take the time to examine them well.

Jesus said in John 8:54, "If I honor myself, my honor is nothing. It is my Father who honors me, *of whom you say that He is your God.*" So Jesus says that the one God of the Jews is his Father. His Father is the God of the Old Testament. The God who said there is *no other God* is the one Jesus says is his Father. Can you read that any other way? Jesus has also acknowledged here that *his Father* is the God who said "You shall have no other Gods before me." If you make someone else the creator, other than Yahweh (who Jesus says is his Father), have you violated that commandment? I'm not asking you here to quote other verses you may have been taught to use which you've been told say something else, I'm simply asking you to examine *these* verses and see if that is actually what they say. Did Jesus say here that his Father is the one the Jews said is their God? Did the Jews recognize as "God" the one who said His name is

Yahweh and then said there is *no other God*? The answer here is inescapably "yes."

In John 17:3, Jesus said to his Father, "This is life eternal: that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You have sent." If we look at the original, we may make the point even clearer by reading that the Father is "the only one who is truly God." Is that clear? Or are we going to argue the verse away by saying that there are two others who are equally the one God?

Wow! There's a lot to examine here, but this will be our last verse for now, so it will be worth it. First, "life eternal" is not a great translation, but it is fairly accurate. What does it say will bring about this "life in the age to come"? This is most likely very important, or Jesus would not have worded it this way, but that particular point is not what I wish to examine here. Jesus said that "the Father" is "the only true God," or "the only one who is truly God." Please check some other translations and your other sources to be sure, but it is inescapable that this is what he said. Also ask yourself another question: If Jesus was also God, as most have been taught, what sort of "god" did he think himself to be, if he thought that the Father was *the only true God*?

We can see here that Jesus knew exactly who he was and what he was, and he also stated that *this knowledge leads to eternal life*. Please read the verse carefully. It's all one sentence. Life eternal is knowing who "the Father" is (the one true God), and also knowing who Jesus is. And who did Jesus say he was? Well, this will require us to look at a word used here which I think confuses people. That word is "Christ."

There is nothing wrong with the word "Christ" in this verse. It isn't really translated though. It is merely "transliterated" from the original Greek word *Christos*. The word *christos* had appeared in the Greek Old Testament (the LXX) as a title for specially anointed agents of God. However, I think that the way it is used today has caused many to think of it as Jesus' last name, his surname. Some actually believe that it is, simply because they have never thought about it. And even those who don't *mean* to think of it that way often do, simply because they never read or think about the true meaning of the Greek word *christos*. It is not part of Jesus' name; it is his title. It means "the anointed one," "the anointed of God," or "messiah." Even if you know that, if you would look it up right now, you would probably learn something else that you hadn't thought of before. Please look it up in a concordance, and read the entire definition, because this is so important. You may even want to look up the meaning of the Hebrew word for "messiah," and the word "messiah" in your English dictionary, so you'll have a really clear picture of what this title actually means. (If you will try reading verses which say "Jesus Christ" as instead "Jesus, the anointed one" or "Jesus, the promised

Messiah,” I think you will be surprised at how differently you feel about what you read.) Jesus said here: “This is everlasting life in the coming age of the Kingdom, that they may know You, Father, the only true God, and Jesus, the promised King and deliverer, whom you commissioned.” Can you find any way that this is an incorrect meaning of what Jesus said? Have you looked up the words in your concordance and your dictionary to be sure?

YHWH said that He alone is God. YHWH was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Jesus said that his Father was YHWH, the God of the Jews. Jesus said that his Father is the only one who is the true God, and that he, Jesus, is the Messiah, sent by God the Father. In the same sentence, Jesus said that this knowledge is essential for life in the age to come. Am I reading this wrong? I don't think so. But this is an important matter that everyone must figure out for themselves. I think, from the way Jesus worded this, that it would be *safer* to examine this matter carefully than to dismiss it out of hand, if one has already been taught something else and merely wishes to defend a previously held view.

There will probably be some who read this and think of other verses they have been taught which *seem* to contradict these. My question here is, do these verses actually say what I have claimed that they say? I sincerely hope that they will be closely examined so that there is no doubt. Once you are sure what *these* verses say, it would be a good idea to use this same “definition technique” on the other verses. The Bible does not contradict itself.

I lived over 50 years before ever hearing these views. Studying this was very uncomfortable for me, for it seemed blasphemous to even read such things. (That's because I was taught that any views which disagreed with the views of my denomination were blasphemous.) I am so grateful that God gave me the strength to study this out, because now the Bible and God's plan are clear to me, where before I was unsure about so much. The best advice I ever received, and which I now want to pass on, is this: Stop just *reading* the Bible, and start looking up the definitions of the words you're reading. Don't trust *any* translation for *any word*, until you're sure the meaning of what you're reading is what was originally written. It *does* make a difference. And after all, when studying for eternity, the *quality* of your study is much more important than the quantity. Unless you study for yourself and investigate the various options, you might just be following blindly and fall into the ditch. ✧

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