

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 13 No. 2

Anthony Buzzard, editor

November, 2010

We are back from a fascinating three-week trip to Spain and Germany. In the little village of Villanueva de Sijena in Spain we were privileged to visit the birth place of Michael Servetus. This distinguished biblical theologian and medical doctor was brutally put to death on Oct 27th, 1553 for the “crime” of not believing in the Trinity. Urge your friends to look up the story of this remarkable hero of biblical faith. Servetus’ tragic death is perhaps the most remarkably hidden and suppressed event of church history.

The person responsible for this shameful event was none other than the reformer John Calvin. Servetus was a forerunner of a return to the belief that the Son of God, Jesus, was a procreated person — that he began, by divine miracle, in the womb of his mother (Luke 1:35). Officials who led Servetus out to his torturous death by fire in 1553 in Geneva pleaded with the “accused” to affirm his belief in the Trinitarian “eternal Son of God.” Servetus was a vigorous non-Trinitarian. He wrote full treatises on the biblical view of God and His Son. He was willing to confess his unbending conviction that “Jesus is the Son of the eternal God.” He was a biblical unitarian. For this he gave his life. The shocking fact is that he suffered at the hands of a fellow student of the Bible.

In recent years there has been a significant interest in making Servetus’ works available in English. His birth house in Spain is now a fine museum where one receives a detailed account of his many talents, his description of the Son of God who began in the womb of Mary, and of course of his awful death at the hands of Calvin, who died 14 years later believing that he had done right to have Servetus removed by burning at the stake. Ironically Calvin, it is said, wanted the authorities to lighten Servetus’ agony by urging a death by beheading! The whole episode is a dreadful reminder of how sickeningly misguided religion can be — and how the name of Jesus and the Bible can be implemented in the interest of personal vendetta and even murder. The whole theological system of Calvin should come under careful scrutiny. He believed that God has assigned the wicked to endless eternal torture, even before they were born.

But how much is the public aware of the terrible event of the death of Servetus by Calvin? There are important lessons to be learned from history. Is your church associated in name with Calvin? Has it clearly and publicly renounced the brutality of its founder?

The guides at the home of Servetus were more than kind to us, as modern exponents of the belief that the Son

of God began to exist when God fathered him in the womb of Mary (Luke 1:35 documents this tremendous truth beautifully). Show your friends, and rejoice in the real human Messiah, the second Adam, not a pre-human and thus non-fully human visitor from outside the human family. 1 John 4:2 issued a warning even in the second century: “Test the spirits: Every spirit which confesses Jesus Christ as the one who came in the flesh is from God.” John went on to say that “every spirit which does not confess **that** Jesus” is to be rejected as dangerous. Notice “*that* Jesus,” the one just described as coming as a human being, not a second member of an eternal Godhead.

In Germany we were honored to conduct a three-day seminar on the One God, the first of its type in Europe. A group of Bible searchers assembled in Warmsroth not far from Frankfurt, and represented 16 different nations, including the Czech Republic, Russia, Iceland, Croatia and Morocco. We are most grateful to Werner Bartl of Austria for his fine organizing skills. I was able to present the Gospel of the Kingdom and strengthen the hands of those battling for belief in the God of Israel, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and of course of Jesus himself.

Many were duly shocked by the misleading dictum of C.S. Lewis that “the Gospel is not in the gospels,” and by Luke 8:12 which speaks of the Gospel of the Kingdom, the word (Matt. 13:19), as the object of Satan’s constant attack, so that men and women “may not believe that Gospel and be saved”! A power-packed saying from the lips of Jesus, the model Gospel of the Kingdom preacher (Luke 4:43).

A pressing danger confronts the modern seeker after biblical truth. There is a tendency to slip back into Moses and thus reject Jesus as represented by Paul. The revelation of the Christian faith is not complete until the “things which you cannot yet bear” (John 16:12) are fully expounded by Paul. In this regard the book of Galatians is key. So too is 2 Corinthians 3. It is amazing to hear dedicated folk say that the Ten Commandments are God’s final word. They are not. This “covenant of the ten words” “was not given to our forefathers but to us Israelites,” Moses declared in Deuteronomy 5:3. The ten commandments of course underlie the later and more searching, summarizing and “fulfilling” commandment of love which Jesus introduced as a “new commandment.” But, in the letter, the Ten Commandments are not God’s final word.

The Sabbath appears there as a summary of the calendar of festivals given to Israel. John calls that system “the feasts of the Jews,” and refers to the **Jewish day** of preparation, Friday. Jesus died on that day and was raised “on the third day” which was Sunday (Luke 24:21). Jesus had predicted “today, tomorrow and the third day” (see Luke 13:32) and this fits perfectly with the inclusive reckoning of Luke 24:21. Sunday is indeed the third day since the Friday crucifixion. That third day, Sunday, was designated by Jesus as the day of his resurrection (Luke 24:7). “Two of them were going that very day [Sunday] to a village named Emmaus, about seven miles from Jerusalem” (Luke 24:13).

As if by instinctive reflex, people read the Sabbath commandment of Exodus 20 *as detached from* the other “feasts and new moons.” They assign some special status to the *weekly* Sabbath and forget that in the mind of the spirit as demonstrated by Paul in Colossians 2:16-17 the Sabbath is part of “**a single shadow**” now replaced by Christ who is the reality of that single shadow. Some meditation on Colossians 2:16-17 will bring this point home. Paul urges the church not to be legislated in matters of eating and drinking, nor in the issue of “feasts [annual], new moons [monthly] or Sabbath day [weekly].”

The status of these observances is for Paul relegated to a single shadow. The substance, or body, i.e. the reality to which this calendar pointed, is now present, since the arrival of Jesus Christ who “is our Passover” (1 Cor. 5:7-8). The trio of shadows pointed forward to Jesus who is now at the right hand of the Father. Jesus is the one of whom Adam is a type (Rom. 5:14). “Adam *is* a type” of the one who was to come. The calendar, taken as a single trio in which the Sabbath is no different in status from the new moons and feasts, is a shadow of Jesus who was to come and has come.

There is a very great difference between taking the leaven out of your house for some 8 days at the feast of Passover (Ex. 12:15) and taking the “leaven” out of our lives permanently. “Let us *be keeping* the feast,” Paul says (that is, all the time, 1 Cor. 5:8: the verb in the Greek shows this continuous feasting). This is not, “Be sure you observe all the feasts of Israel,” as misread by some. Unfortunately people do not seem to know about Galatians 4 where the Sinai event is categorized as Hagar and bondage! 2 Corinthians 3 describes the ministry of Moses at Sinai as a ministry of death. Paul uttered some of his most impassioned warnings when he pleaded with his people not to be “bewitched” by the Jewish party which tried to pull them back from Christ into the Old Covenant arrangement. Paul was a minister of the New Covenant (2 Cor. 3:6), and Jesus had inaugurated that New Covenant at the Last Supper (Luke 22:20, 30). He also urged the church to celebrate that replacement

ceremony, the Lord’s supper, with a breaking of bread and a drinking of memorial wine “when you come together as a church” (1 Cor. 11:18, 20). He was not talking about an *annual* Passover, but a community meal “as often as you do it.”

There is a danger for unitarians who recover the creed of Jesus and of the Bible to fall back into the shadow of Moses who has been superseded by one greater. Jesus is even greater than the Temple (Matt. 12:6), and he reminded his followers that even in OT times there are those who **break the Sabbath** and are innocent when working in the Temple (see Matt. 12:5).

Christians are the New Covenant priests and kings, and they ought to be doing service for the Gospel of the Kingdom and the Messiah. Mark observed in an editorial note that Jesus had implied a “cleansing of all food” (Mark 7:19, not KJV). Jesus was not talking here just about washing one’s hands. The participle “cleansing” is masculine and refers to Jesus who cleanses food, not the digestive system.

Paul amazingly, shockingly and radically announced that he (a Jew!) was convinced as a Christian (in Christ) that “nothing is unclean of itself, unless you think it is unclean” (Rom. 14:14). “All things [talking of food] are clean” (v. 20). Paul has obviously reversed the laws of Leviticus 11. Mark 7:19 should be read in the light of Paul’s remarks. A disaster occurs when some unitarians declare Paul to be mistaken! Of course everyone has at present the right to speak openly, but it ought to be clearly realized that the view that Paul was a false teacher destroys the Christianity of the Bible. It is another religion.

As a holy apostle speaking for the Messiah who commissioned him on the Damascus Road, Paul is authorized to explain the Torah of the Messiah, which is not just a repeat of Moses. The Law which was added 430 years later (Gal. 3:17) through Moses was a temporary guide and thus it may be truly said that “Jesus *abolished* the law of commandments in decrees” (Eph. 2:13). This part of the Torah in the letter was the dividing wall which kept Jews at arm’s length from “unclean” Gentiles. But in the new body of the Church, which is not just a copy of the congregation of Israel and of Judaism, issues of calendar and foods are not to be issues of concern. The “weak” were urged by Paul to move forward to maturity, to follow Paul who was *not* weak (see Rom. 14:1-5). And the strong were to wait patiently till we all come to a point of unity. This will happen when Galatians, Ephesians, Colossians and especially 2 Corinthians 3 are taken in fully and not tailored to fit a preconception.

At present a historical falsehood prevails in some quarters by which a new celebration on the 8th day, the resurrection day (not a transferred Sabbath), is said to

have originated with Constantine! On the contrary, it is well known that meeting on the 8th day was current among Christians long before the days of Constantine. Just read the earlier “church fathers” for this information. Constantine merely legislated in favor of what had long been the Christian custom — to celebrate the New Covenant event of the Sunday resurrection of Jesus. 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 speaks of “every Sunday,” and Luke clearly did not think that the church met on the Sabbath when he expressly says that the Christians met “on the first day of the week” (Acts 20:7). He has in mind the resurrection on that day (Luke 24:21).

The Sabbath of the fourth commandment must not be taken in isolation but in connection with the single **shadow** trio of observances, so listed not less than 12 times in the Hebrew Bible. In Paul’s mind too the “feasts, new moons and Sabbath day” are a unit not to be split up. The history of the faith is littered with attempts to forget Colossians 2:16-17 and to make of the weekly Sabbath something much greater than the new moons. This is to suppress those 12 “trio texts” in the OT and the mind of Jesus-in-Paul in Colossians 2:16-17. In effect: “Let no one tell you to abandon the reality of Christ for the **shadow** which is now superseded.” The **shadow** in question is the **trio** of “annual feasts, new moons and weekly Sabbath” (the plural in the Greek is found often in the Bible and for technical language reasons refers to the single Saturday Sabbath, as for example in Ex. 20:8 in the LXX).

In Colossians 2:16-17 Paul is certainly not talking about physical sacrifices offered on those days! One could not anyway offer a sacrifice in Colosse. It had to be done in Jerusalem. The shadow for Paul is the Jewish calendar.

Being a Christian does not mean adopting a totally Jewish lifestyle. It does however require believing in the One God of Israel and in His Messiah Jesus, and in Jesus’ Gospel about the Kingdom of God. ✧

Program for the End of the Age

2 Thessalonians 2:1-13

Free translation by AB, April 1986

“There is one entreaty we would make of you, brethren, in connection with the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him. Do not be suddenly terrified out of your senses and thrown into confusion by any ‘spiritual’ utterance, any message or letter pretending to come from us, which suggests that the Day of the Lord is close at hand. Do not let anyone find a way of leading you astray. The great Apostasy (rebellion against God) must come *first*; the champion of wickedness (the Antichrist) must appear *first* — the one destined for destruction. This is that godless tyrant (Dan. 7, 8, 9, 11, 12) who is to elevate himself above every

divine name, above all that men hold in reverence, till at last he takes his seat in the Temple of God, and proclaims himself as God. Don’t you remember how I often used to tell you about this while I was with you?

“At present there is, as you know, a power which holds him back, so that he may not be revealed before his appointed time; meanwhile the conspiracy of revolt against God is already at work; only he who restrains it now will go on doing so until he is removed from the enemy’s path. Then that rebel will make his dramatic appearance; but the Lord Jesus Christ will destroy him with the breath of his mouth and eliminate him by the brightness of his coming.¹ The Antichrist will stage his own ‘second coming’ with Satan’s power to aid him. It will be accompanied by all sorts of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders; and his deceptions will completely fool those who are on the way to destruction, as a punishment for their refusal to love the Truth which would have saved them. That is why God will let loose on them a deceiving influence so that they will believe what is false. In this way judgment will fall on all those who did not believe the Truth, but took pleasure in lawlessness.

“But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning to be saved by becoming holy through the spirit and by faith in the Truth.” ✧

“For Such a Time as This”

The Challenge to Involvement

by Mark DeYoung, Michigan

“If at this time you say nothing, then help and salvation will come to the Jews from some other place, but you and your father’s family will come to destruction: and who is to say that you have not come to the kingdom even for such a time as this?” (Esther 4:14).

Over the last year I have heard this passage applied to several situations within Christianity in general, and within the Church of God Abrahamic Faith at least twice. The first time it was used in a setting with a group of pastors back in May at the Pastors’ Summit when Dr. Joe Martin became the CAO of the General Conference and President of Atlanta Bible College in the face of a financial crisis within the General Conference. This was not an emotionally engineered event. Looking back I now see it as a very solemn moment in Abrahamic history.

The second time this last year was in July. Many of us were at FUEL, the youth gathering in Indiana. I believe each of us can remember where we were when we received the news that Pastors Rashid Emmanuel and

¹ Paul quotes Isa. 11:4, which describes the destruction of the Assyrian. Assyria corresponds to modern Syria and Iraq. Cp. Dan. 11, the King of the North.

Sajid Masih Emmanuel had been martyred in Pakistan. I was sitting in the Youth Workers class at FUEL. Sandy, my wife, received word from Wally Winner and she sent a text to my phone, which I shared with those in the class as it was coming to an end.

It is this second event that spurred the conversation and resulted in this article. We have had contact with these believers in Pakistan for just about 2 years, and what excitement it has brought to many of us, to think we have a voice for the One God and the human Messiah and his Kingdom Gospel in a Muslim country. Then to have the lead pastor and his brother, who was also a pastor, martyred/murdered so early in our ministry partnership — it was simply an eye-opening reality check for the Church of God Abrahamic Faith. It has been over a hundred years since the Church of God Abrahamic Faith experienced a pastor being martyred. This was D.M. Hudler in Tennessee. So what should we learn from this tragic experience? Or is there anything to learn? We tend to isolate the last phrase of the following verse from the rest of the message. How does that portion of Scripture apply to our conference of churches? “If at this time you say nothing...you and your father’s family will come to destruction.”

In situations where the last phrase of this verse is applied, often the first portion of the verse is left out, and perhaps conveniently so, but I believe that both portions of the message are vitally important and applicable to the General Conference, the Bible college, and most pointedly, to all of us as individuals.

The story of Esther we all know well from Sunday school. It was one of my favorites. This verse contains the admonition of Mordecai to Esther to appear before the king on behalf of the Hebrew people. The warning is this: “If at this time you say nothing...you and your family will come to destruction.” It would seem to me that if we are willing to apply the last phrase of this admonition, the warning is similarly applicable to the General Conference, Atlanta Bible College and to individual members that make up the Church of God Abrahamic Faith.

The early members of the Abrahamic Faith had their imaginations and consciences ignited by the message preached by Jesus the Christ. What was the message of Jesus Christ, you may ask? In Mark 1:15 Jesus states, “The time is fulfilled, and **the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel**” (ASV). The gospel message Jesus was preaching far and wide is that the “time is fulfilled and the Kingdom of God is at hand.” This is the saving gospel message, and because of this good news (synonym for Gospel) all mankind should repent! After Jesus’ death, burial and resurrection, did he change that gospel message? No, in fact in Acts 1:1-3 Luke records clearly: “Truly, O Theophilus, I made the

first report as to all things that Jesus began both to do and teach, until the day he was taken up...and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom of God.” Jesus’ salvation message did not change — no, not one iota. *It was still about the Kingdom of God.*

Jesus did give us a warning during his lifetime. We should heed it: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. On that day many will say to me, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?’ And then will I declare to them, **‘I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness’**” (Matt. 7:21-23). Paul makes the same point even more clearly in Galatians 1:6-8: “I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting him who called you in the grace of Christ and are **turning to a different gospel**, not that there is another one, but there are some who trouble you and want to **distort the gospel of Christ**. But even if we or an angel from heaven should preach to you a gospel contrary to the one we preached to you, let **him be accursed**.” Do you see the similarity in the messages of Mordecai, Jesus and Paul? They all end in the warning, “if the message is not delivered, your destruction is assured.”

One of the most fundamental, clear and simple messages of the Bible has been distorted by Christianity over the centuries. No longer is their gospel message about the Kingdom of God, but rather it is only about Jesus’ death. Nowhere in the New Testament was Jesus’ gospel message *only* about himself; it was always pointing men to the Father and the message of God’s Kingdom. That was the good news (gospel) people needed to hear then and that people need to hear now.

It was for salvation. If we turn on the television to a religious program or station, we will hear a message sterilized, depleted, i.e. emptied of the gospel as Jesus Christ preached it. The message has been distorted and reduced to a message strictly centered on faith in Christ only as one who died and rose. But Jesus and Paul insisted on the Kingdom as the primary factor in the Gospel (Luke 4:43; Acts 19:8; 20:24, **25**; 28:23, 31).

Because Jesus Christ was obedient to his Father’s will and gospel, he has been given a promise which we read in Philippians 2:9-11: “Therefore God also highly exalted him, and gave him a name which is above every name: So that in the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The amazing thing is that not only do we understand the message of the gospel of the Kingdom of God, we know who Jesus is! We understand that God is one, that Jesus Christ is God’s unique human Son and agent. A

miracle of God's power was wrought in the conception/begetting/beginning of the Son, as we read in Luke 1:32-35. We understand that the Holy Spirit is God's personal power and presence, and not a third Person. We understand why Jesus is presently at the right hand of the Father (Ps. 110:1) as Lord Messiah. We understand that death is a sleep, retaining the believer until the resurrection of the saints, just before the millennial reign of Jesus Christ, God's Son, on a renewed earth. I could go on and on listing the distinctive doctrines that set us apart from almost every other denomination on this planet, but we as the Church of God Abrahamic Faith know these doctrines well (if you are new to this publication and are unfamiliar with these Bible truths, please go to "Jesus Is Still a Jew" at Youtube and the various linked websites posted there).

"...then help and salvation will come to the Jews from some other place." The message to the world today is different from the message Mordecai gave Esther, which was a message to preserve the Jews but more importantly to preserve the ancestral line of the Messiah.

The application we can draw from this for the Church of God Abrahamic Faith, our General Conference and as individual believers, is that we should realize that God has given us the truth which is contained in the distinctive doctrines that set us apart from the majority of Christianity.

In this passage Mordecai tells Esther: if you refuse this challenge, God will provide salvation from some other source or someone else. I believe that is the warning we should take very seriously. If the Church of God Abrahamic Faith is not proclaiming the message of the gospel that Jesus preached, which was "repent for the kingdom of God is at hand" and be "baptized for the remission of your sins," and not the watered down, distorted message of mainstream Christianity, then it may very well be that the Church of God Abrahamic Faith may cease to exist as a conference of churches and even local fellowships, if are willing to trade the truth for a lie.

There are many outlets that we should use to put our distinctive message into the hands of the American public and the whole world. This would allow us to shake American Christianity at its very roots, whether it be broadcast through television and radio or advertised in secular newspapers and magazines. This would be in addition to the many resources and ministries being implemented through the internet by the churches and individuals of the Church of God Abrahamic Faith, such as the *truthrevolution.wordpress.com* and *focusonthekingdom.org* and the magazines published by several state conferences and churches, such as *The Sound of the Trumpet* and the *Dot to Dot Newsletter*.

The fact remains, if you engage a person in a conversation about religion and ask that person what they

understand about Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormons, Baptists or Pentecostals, etc, the average person can give you their understanding about those groups, but if asked about the Church of God Abrahamic Faith, relatively few have ever heard of this Church of God; even fewer can give you even the slightest answer as to what we believe, and some will respond only with a blank stare.

While the previous paragraphs outline a larger campaign, which should be seriously planned and carried out, the importance of personal outreach, evangelism and discipleship should be preached, taught, and practiced by each member of the Abrahamic Faith, regardless of age. The need for personal evangelism needs to be taught dogmatically. While we read of Jesus preaching to the multitudes, equally meaningful are the recorded personal contacts that Jesus had with people regardless of their position in society.

D.M. Hudler a little over a hundred years ago lost his life in defense of this message; this last July Rashid and Sajid Emmanuel gave their lives as well, for the Gospel of the Kingdom. Looking back at the history of the Abrahamic Faith, there have been thousands of people who gave their greatest effort studying, writing and defending these Bible truths which are so clearly written in God's Holy Scripture to mankind.

If the Bible truths contained in the distinctive doctrines of the Church of God Abrahamic Faith are not vital, and if they are not essential to understanding God's plan of salvation for all mankind regardless of their religious affiliations, then we should close up shop, join one of the more well-heeled denominations and quit the struggle against all of the rival Christian denominations that have distorted the gospel.

If you agree with me that the salvation which God desires for all mankind is found in the biblical truths of the Abrahamic Faith's distinctive doctrines, that they are vital and essential, my challenge is this: begin today to spend time in meditation, fasting and prayer. The next challenge is to follow the orders Jesus gave the Apostles and the early church. Go outside your house and church and begin to be a friend with the mission to bring those around you to an understanding of the true Gospel of God's Kingdom, repentance and baptism. It is as simple as being a good friend. The third challenge is this: that as you are meditating, fasting and praying, ask God what avenue of mass evangelism you should help take part in, supporting an established evangelistic ministry such as *cogcast.org*, the *E-Herald* or *The Sound of the Trumpet*, *Focus on the Kingdom* or other avenue of truth. Perhaps God will direct you to help in funding a television or radio ad or program, an ad in a secular magazine or national newspaper?

It boils down to this: Are we, you and I, willing to drop the proverbial ball, and let salvation come to

mankind from another avenue, person or group, that as of yet is unformed and chosen by God to replace the Church of God Abrahamic Faith? Or will you join with me and together arm in arm, bring God's plan of salvation to all mankind?✧

From the Email-bag Typical of the Voluminous Discussions about Who God and Jesus Are

I wrote: Thanks for the vigorous interaction. I don't think many of those who write to us are familiar with the very large literature, past and present, from a **Socinian** point of view. You are treating me in isolation, as though I am inventing some "new doctrine." I am not. I am only processing a lot of others' writings, both past and present. (I have written two full books on the subject.)

We might first discuss why giant commentators on Matthew and Luke (notably the Roman Catholic Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*) emphasize that there is no hint of a preexisting *Son* in Matthew, Mark and Luke.

Jesus is the Son of God ("to be called" = "to be") **because of** the virginal birth (Luke 1:35). That is easy. Yes, of course I believe that all the promises (including the one about the lamb crucified from the beginning) come to fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is *foreknown* from the start (1 Pet. 1:20). I certainly believe with Paul that Jesus is the now immortalized and supremely exalted Lord Messiah at the right hand of God (Ps. 110:1). Paul called this present mediator, the man Messiah Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). Is anyone unhappy with that? He is sung to and praised in Revelation. He is worshipped as Messiah. This is what God has ordained for his uniquely begotten Son.

I suggest that greater attention be paid to the status of Jesus which governs the whole New Testament — that defined by his title as **adoni**, *kurios mou*, as described by Psalm 110:1. If, as evangelicals say, "Jesus IS Yahweh," i.e. they identify Jesus as YAHWEH, then they go beyond the limits of Jesus' own Jewish creed and beyond the bounds of Psalm 110:1. Yes, we all know that YAHWEH-things prophesied in the Old Testament are performed by the Messiah in the New. But functioning for YAHWEH does not mean you *are* YAHWEH. I am unimpressed by the obvious popular error that "one" in Hebrew or English means more than one! It does not. And arguments about evening and morning dangled before us as though they show that *echad* ("one" in Hebrew) is complex, are simply incorrect.

Do we believe Jesus has (uniquely) the characteristics of Yahweh? Of course, as the word made flesh (John 1:14) he is the very expression of God, his Father. But he is not a second YAHWEH. That breaks the first commandment. Perhaps correspondents would like to

make clear what they mean when they say "Jesus IS Yahweh." We might find surprising agreement! If you say that the Father is Yahweh and that Jesus is also Yahweh you are declaring belief in two who are God, thus two Gods.

Thanks for the question about Yahweh. As you know YHVH is a Hebrew word and the New Testament is in Greek. But you also know that the LORD (YHVH) GOD is reproduced in Greek as *kurios o theos*. Jesus said that "the **Lord our God** [*kurios o theos*] is one Lord" (Mark 12:29). One is the numeral which counts one! Jesus then went on immediately in Mark 12 to define himself as **adoni**, the non-Deity lord at the right hand of the one YAHWEH. Jesus also defined that second lord (himself, the Messiah) as the Son of Man at the right hand (Mark 14:61-62).

Can you imagine what confusion would be produced if Jesus says "God is ONE LORD" (Mark 12:29) and then immediately (Mark 12:35-36) calls himself LORD, claiming that the LORD speaks to the LORD, GOD to GOD! But this is the way many are reading Psalm 110:1.

The category of "compound one" does not exist. "One" can describe a collective noun (family, bunch, married couple etc.) but who can provide a lexical mention of "compound one"? Where does a lexicon define "one" as "compound one"? These terms have been invented by apologists and they simply confuse the discussion.

The LXX (Greek version of the OT) in BC times shows that **adoni** (my lord) is not the Lord God! The text makes a careful distinction between God and man. "To my lord" in Psalm 110:1 is rendered as *to kurio mou*. But the 11 occurrences of "to *the* Lord (God)" are not rendered as *to kurio mou*. The "my lord" is the royal title and fits exactly for the King Messiah — hence "our Lord Jesus Christ" in the New Testament. Jesus is the Messiah, not the One God. No one ever says "my Yahweh" or "our Yahweh" but the Christians of the Bible constantly speak of Jesus as "my Lord" and "our Lord." This is an important proof that Jesus is not identical with Yahweh.

Jews and Muslims will be much encouraged by this. Jesus is never called "the Lord God" nor "the Almighty" (Rev. 1:8 is not a reference to Jesus!) nor the "LORD of hosts." Jesus of course *acts as* YHVH's agent supremely and uniquely and does the things that YHVH does. Jesus is not just another agent, but the sinless, virginally begotten, final agent of God.

To sound like Jesus and the Bible we must never speak of two who are YHVH. Jesus is not identified as YHVH. He acts for and on behalf of YHVH. James McGrath (*The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in its Jewish Context*) explains all this nicely in his book which I encourage all to read. James

Dunn says rightly: “Jesus is not the God of Israel, not YHVH.” Gradually order will return to a now chaotic subject!

The word *logos* (word) is the standard New Testament word for the Gospel of salvation, the Christian message of the Kingdom, which was preached first by Jesus. In New Testament times *logos* would be heard as Gospel message. And truly the Gospel message is the whole point of the universe God gave us. That Gospel message was from the beginning and, in the fullness of time, the Messiah, Son of God, came into existence, was begotten. All this is easy. But once the Son is said to have no beginning, all is confused, complicated and chaotic! Or if he is said (with church fathers) to have “a beginningless beginning” we are in worse trouble.

Luke 1:35 was designed to prevent and block any idea that the Son did not begin in Mary. If the angel were believed, things today would be very different, and John would not be used to contradict Luke! To be called the Son of God means exactly the same as to **be** the Son of God. Luke 1:35 simply explains why, how and when Jesus is the Son of God. God became his Father by miracle. If this verse is believed light will come to the darkness of the present conflict and argumentation about God and Jesus. ✧

Comments

“Your writings were instrumental in converting me to the Socinian viewpoint [i.e. Jesus, the Son began to exist in Mary], so I put a lot of stock in what you have to say. I’m having difficulty also with the whole concept of a Trinitarian God living within us. I have a Trinitarian friend who points out that according to the New Testament the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus all dwell within the believer. If Jesus is not God, though, then we are inhabited by a mere ‘creature,’ someone that is not God. He reasons that this destroys the unity of the NT concept of God, and God alone, living within us. Also, if the Holy Spirit is not a separate ‘person,’ but is synonymous with the Father, why would there be the redundancy of Father *and* Holy Spirit living within us?”

“I agree with you: the truth is simple and it is wonderful and beautiful. There is one God, the Father, and one Master, the Messiah Jesus. These questions of mine have more to do with tying up all the loose ends of my new found faith. I earnestly believe that Scripture teaches that Jesus came into existence in the womb of Mary (Luke 1:35), but at the same time I have to fight back a lifetime of tradition which I inherited that says that Jesus has existed for all eternity! Part of me is afraid of being deceived. I have my views, which I feel are backed up by Scripture, but at the same time I know that we are warned about being deceived. I have the fear that maybe I’m misreading the text! After all, each and every

denomination thinks that it’s got the truth, and thinks that it’s reading the Bible in the correct way. I am just being very cautious in my faith journey because I want to know and believe the truth, whatever it is, and not a lie. Thank you for your help as I continue along my path.”— *Texas*

This is a most encouraging letter. Thanks so much. Many of us feel for you. We have been there too! Take heart — the Shema recited by Jesus is not misleading you, and thousands of single pronouns for the One God are unassailable. Try getting your mind around “three who’s in one what” (James White’s book on The Forgotten Trinity) and how can we call God an IT?

God’s personal, operational presence and power are with us by His Spirit. The spirit of Jesus is also with us and in us. All this is easy, and since the time of Jesus the Son, we do indeed experience God through His Spirit and the Spirit of His Son. The Son of God embodies the word/mind/Gospel/plan/logos of the One God. But there is no second “God the Son,” which would undermine the creed which says that God is one Yahweh. Yes, of course, Jesus is appointed to carry out Yahweh’s plan; the Father and Son work as one. Jesus now does “God-things,” like searching our hearts and minds.

“I graduated from Emmaus Bible College (Bible degree), Philadelphia Biblical University (BA in Biblical studies), and Dallas Theological Seminary (Masters in Christian Ed.), but I never heard of Jesus’ Gospel of the kingdom! Imagine that. Once my ‘sacred cow’ (dispensationalism — pre-trib. rapture) was blown apart, I soon discovered the truth of God’s Kingdom. I’ve enjoyed your thoughts on the Gospel of the Kingdom. I was raised to think that Paul’s gospel of grace was a ‘new Gospel’ and was for the church, but Jesus’ Gospel of the Kingdom was for the Jew. What a colossal mistake!” — *Texas*

As for Dispensationalism, it is hard to imagine a more savage way of dividing Jesus from his own saving Gospel of the Kingdom! Does not the NT throughout say that Jesus is the first Gospel preacher (Heb. 2:3) and that his Gospel words as well as his death and resurrection are to be accepted as saving Gospel? It was Luther and the whole tradition of the Reformation which tended to down play Matthew, Mark and Luke. C.S. Lewis I think is mistaken greatly when he says that “the Gospel is not in the Gospels.” Now you see it. Do try these ideas out on all your friends and contacts. Ask them why we should not start by obeying Jesus’ first command in Mark 1:14-15.

The debate between Anthony Buzzard, Joseph Good and Michael Brown, James White aired on Jewish Voice TV from Nov. 1-14. You can watch the two shows on their website www.jewishvoice.org under the “Television” tab.