

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 13 No. 7

Anthony Buzzard, editor

April, 2011

2011 Theological Conference

20th Anniversary Conference

Thurs-Sun, May 12-15, 2011

Registration deadline: April 18

This 20th annual conference at Simpsonwood Retreat Center promises to be an outstanding gathering of lovers of the Abrahamic faith and the Kingdom Gospel of Jesus, the Messiah. We are delighted to report that we will have a number of visitors and speakers from overseas — Australia, Germany, South Africa and England. The word of the Kingdom and the creed of Jesus are making an impact on a daily and ever-growing scale, thanks to books going out, in several languages, weekly at Amazon, and the astonishing power of the many websites now making the faith known to a potential of some 2 billion people. The increase in getting the message out is a constant source of joy. What a marvel is this amazing Internet.

Do take the time to spend these few days and encourage especially those who are new to the Abrahamic circle. Robin Todd will be with us to keep us posted of the fruit borne by his fine efforts to unite scattered believers. Small home fellowships are beginning to emerge, with a Restorationist flavor, as they recapture the vision of the Kingdom of God Gospel of Jesus and the ancient unitarian heritage which Jesus proclaimed as the “greatest of all the commandments.”

There is a worldwide dearth of hearing the Gospel as Jesus defined it and preached it. It is about the coming Kingdom, and its impact when fully embraced and made the center of our efforts (cp. Luke 4:43) still transforms lives and energizes. Paul described the Gospel as “the word which is energetic and active in you” (1 Thess. 2:13).

You will enjoy meeting familiar conference participants, and you will meet new family in the faith. How important it is not to “forsake gathering together.” We are responsible to each other not to sit on “islands” and operate as soloists. We must not forget that Christianity is to be done corporately. We will all learn much from what we hear and experience at the Conference. Please do not underestimate the joy you bring to others by attending. We will also celebrate the 20th anniversary with a special communion service.

To register please call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261 or 678-833-1839 or mail the form on the back page by **April 18**. The non-refundable deposit is \$50 per individual or couple.

Registration deadline: April 18

Conference Cost

Includes 3 nights, all meals, snacks, conf. fee, and tax

Single	NEW Couple Rate	Double (per person)	Triple (per person)	Quad (per person)
\$340	\$505 per couple	\$260	\$245	\$230

Transportation (Judy: 678-485-8492)

We will provide transportation between Atlanta airport and Simpsonwood for \$25 round-trip or \$15 one-way, at the following times:

Airport to Simpsonwood		
Thurs, May 12	1:00 pm	3:30 pm
Simpsonwood to Airport		
Sun., May 15	1:00 pm	

Please arrange your arrival time on Thursday early enough to catch one of the two shuttle runs. On Sunday, May 15, we will provide 1 shuttle run. In order to allow you enough time to catch your return flight, we suggest you **not book your return flight prior to 3:30 p.m.**

The conference begins with registration at 4 pm on Thursday and ends with lunch on Sunday. Driving directions to Simpsonwood Conference Center are at www.simpsonwood.org The address is 4511 Jones Bridge Circle NW, Norcross, GA 30092.

Post-conference Class

Anthony Buzzard will teach “The Titanic Struggle over Defining God, His Son and the Kingdom” from Sunday afternoon, May 15 to Tuesday, May 17. The cost for the class is \$179 for credit or \$75 for continuing education. The total cost for room/meals at Simpsonwood for Sunday and Monday nights is \$214 single, \$160 double (per person). Please call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261 or 678-833-1839 before **April 18** to register.

I am back from a trip to Malaysia and Indonesia where some intense Bible students — Chinese, Korean, Australian and American — spent many wonderful hours in Bible study, as we went verse by verse through some of the “difficult” passages related to the important issue of the identity of Jesus.

Paul speaks in Philippians 2:5 of the “Messiah Jesus.” Paul wrote “Christ (Messiah) Jesus” but we know from 1 Timothy 2:5 that he intends “*the man* Messiah Jesus” with this title. That human Jesus was not a previously existing non-human being, God or angel. The whole point of the promise of the Messiah is that he must be a descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:14), of Abraham, and of Eve. Since his father was not a human, i.e. not Joseph, Jesus is uniquely Son of God, the “uniquely begotten [brought into existence] Son of God” (John 1:18).

Paul thus identifies the subject of his discussion. There is no “preexisting” Jesus (how can you preexist yourself? Have you ever pondered that?) in Philippians 2, or anywhere else in Paul. The important consideration in determining who Jesus is, is this: Who was Jesus *originally*? What was his *origin*? The answer is provided exactly and expressly in Matthew 1:18 where Matthew speaks not merely of the birth, but of the *origin* of Jesus, the Son of God. The Greek word is “genesis.”

Some turn a blind eye to this perfect description of how Jesus began. They seem bound by the idea that Jesus must be a non-human person, either God or angel.

But Paul agreed with Matthew and Luke that the real Messiah Jesus was fully human, beginning as all humans do in the womb of his mother. That Messiah Jesus was, Paul says, “in the form of God.” Being in the “form of God” he did not use his likeness to God as something to be taken advantage of or exploited for his own gain. Rather Jesus adopted the status of servant and served selflessly, carrying out the will of God sinlessly.

“Being in the form or image of God” (not “although he was in the form of God” but just “being, as he was, in the visible form of God,” reflecting the glory of God as a uniquely begotten Son, John 1:14), Jesus took no advantage of his unique position as God’s Messiah (Luke 2:26). Instead, he humbled himself in a series of repeated acts of humility and servanthood. He emptied himself, taking the role of slave, by being in the likeness of men and by being found as any man (he had to be identified by a kiss when Judas came to assist in his arrest). He poured himself out in death. Resisting the temptation to take advantage of his supreme status as God’s Son, Jesus constantly carried out the will of his Father. His temptation in the wilderness illustrates this beautifully, when Satan tempted him to use his supernatural powers, wrongly.

In view of his heroic dedication to the Father’s will God elevated him to the supreme status designated for the

Messiah as the *adoni* (my lord, not my Lord) seen in the famous oracle in Psalm 110:1. “In the name of Jesus” all knees must eventually bow in subjection to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:10-11). We note that the Father is still here the One God, as some 1300 times in the New Testament.

The first chapter of Colossians speaks also of the visible Messiah, i.e. the historical Son of God who is the visible image of the invisible God. This should put an end to any speculation about a non-human Son of God. Adam was in the image of God (1 Cor. 11:7) and thus also the visible image of the invisible God. Colossians 1:13 sets the tone for the whole passage. It speaks of Christians having been transferred into the Kingdom of God’s beloved Son. The subject Paul has in mind is nothing to do with the Genesis creation but the new creation in Christ. The topic is redemption and how Jesus has achieved this for us. “In Christ all things were created” (Col. 1:16). The translation “by him” is seriously misleading. “In him” means that Jesus is the sphere in which the whole creation exists. The creation in mind has to do not with “birds and bees and trees” but “authorities and powers.” Within the plan designed with Christ in mind God created them all (“were created” —the divine passive, i.e. God created them).

Paul speaks of all things having been created (*ektisthe*, aorist) and having been and now being (the perfect tense, *ektistai*) created *through* Jesus. Probably Paul changed the tense in the same verb (“were created,” “have been created”) to indicate the original creation with Jesus in mind followed by the new creation through Christ (Col. 1:16). Jesus is the mediator of the *new* creation. He is, so to speak, co-creator with the Father. All authority has been given to Jesus (Matt. 28:18) and he is now upholding all things by the word of his power (Heb. 1:3). This is an appropriate position for the sinless Son of God. Jesus’ supreme elevation tells of the amazing thing God has done through a perfectly obedient Son. He has been resurrected to immortality in advance of his spiritual brothers and sisters, who are destined to be resurrected when Jesus comes back to the earth to inaugurate the Kingdom of God (Luke 21:31; 1Cor. 15:23; Dan. 12:2).

Colossians 1:16 sounds like this: “All things were created **in** [not “by”] Jesus and all things are now created [since the ascension] through Jesus and for him.” The topic is “thrones, rulers, powers and authorities.” Saints were also “**in** Jesus” before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4). Jesus is now superior to them all and *attained* this position by being placed there by God (Col. 1:18). Jesus could not gain first place if he already had it!

Ephesians is an important help in understanding Colossians. The two letters were written at the same time. Ephesians unpacks the wonderful plan of redemption and

is not concerned with the Genesis creation. Note that the KJV is based on a corrupt text in Ephesians 3:9. It does not say “by Jesus Christ.” The creation in Genesis was the work of the Father, unaccompanied (Isa. 44:24). The Son is not found in Old Testament times, since his **genesis**, beginning, origin dates from some 2000 years ago (Matt. 1:18, 20). ✧

Matthew 24:14, Our Christian Task

Matthew 24:14 remains a vital key to our Christian service of Jesus and our contemplation and understanding of the future as planned by God. It is only when “this [i.e. well-known to us all] Gospel *about the Kingdom of God* [not just that Jesus died and rose, but firstly about the Kingdom] is heralded in the whole world” that the end can come (Matt. 24:14).

It will be only a few weeks before the tragically mistaken false date for the second coming of Jesus (Harold Camping has claimed May 21st) will be exposed as yet another fraud. No wonder the atheists and agnostics mock the ridiculous attempts of some so-called Bible experts to fix a date for Jesus’ return.

The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20) mandates that the Christian church announce the coming of the Kingdom of God, the essence of the Gospel as taught by Jesus and commanded as the saving message “until the end of the age” (the future Second Coming of Jesus). The command to announce the great event of the Kingdom, in addition of course to the death and resurrection of Jesus, cannot be separated from the command to “baptize them into the name of Father, Son and holy spirit” (Matt. 28:19). Baptism in water was the constant and necessary public act of obedience to Jesus, commanded until the “end of the age.” Jesus promised to be with us all as the Great Commission is faithfully undertaken. On no account should baptism in water be subtracted from Jesus’ marching orders for his Church. Hebrews 5:9 remains a golden text: Salvation is for those who obey Jesus. “He who believes in the Son has life, but those who refuse to obey the Son” do not (John 3:36). These are easy principles and allow for no ambiguity.

Baptizing “in the name of Jesus” means baptizing on the basis commanded by him. To baptize “in his name” means to follow his orders and his orders are clearly given in Matthew 28:19-20. Tragically, some tried to force these verses into *exact verbal formulas*. They thus created a contradiction between the formula “in his name” (in Acts) and “into the name of the Father, Son and holy spirit” (in Matthew). Baptizing in the name of Jesus means performing baptism in the way Jesus commanded it.

In Matthew 24 the disciples had asked *the* question: “What will be the sign of your coming and the end of the

age?” (Matt. 24:3). In all three gospel accounts of this final extended discourse of Jesus the question is directed to the future coming of Jesus. It is not (so it turns out now) a question about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The second coming certainly did not occur then.

Jesus did not come back in AD 70. If AD 70 was the return of Jesus it was a non-event and a ghastly failure. No resurrection occurred then, and Jerusalem, far from being restored as it must be when Jesus comes back, was ruined, and the Jews scattered far and wide!

Having announced that the Gospel of the Kingdom must have a worldwide exposure to all nations (Matt. 24:14), Jesus said “*then* the end will come.” This of course is the only “end” in the discussion, the end of the present age and the arrival of Jesus in glory. The end will be marked by the appearance of “the Abomination of Desolation standing in a holy place” (Matt. 24:15). It is not an Abomination to be imagined by us, but the very Abomination formerly predicted by Daniel (9:24-27; 8:13; 11:31 and 12:11). This “awful horror” invading a sacred place is destined to be seen just shortly before the Second Coming, certainly not 2000 years earlier.

Note carefully the important logical connection between the “end” and the appearing of the Abomination. “When you *therefore* see...” (Matt. 24:15). “Consequently when you see...” The “end” is the only end in the chapter. It is “the end of the age” which was the subject of the disciples’ question. It is connected with the appearance of the Abomination. The response of Jesus corresponds beautifully therefore to the question of the disciples about trouble in the temple and the end of the age connected with it. The end — the end of the age — and the Abomination are inextricably bound up with the Second Coming. This fact is reflected in the disciples’ question and equally in the detailed reply of Jesus. Good teachers answer their students’ questions! The students knew about the scheme found for **the time of the end** (not the end of time!) as given by Daniel. Today many read the Olivet Discourse with little or no preparation in the material supplied by Daniel. The Abomination of Desolation is the key to Daniel’s and Jesus’ view of the end of the age.

At the sight of the Abomination in “a holy place” the disciples are to flee with all urgency. Not a moment is to be wasted, for the Abomination will be the trigger for a “great tribulation” unprecedented and worse than anything in history (Matt. 24:21=Dan. 12:1). “If that terrible time of trouble were not cut short no human being (flesh) would remain alive” (Matt. 24:22).

The Great Tribulation is to be carefully distinguished from the general tribulation which characterizes the Christian life (Acts 14:22). According to Mark, the great tribulation is defined as “days in which it is hard for pregnant women” (Mark 13:17). That makes no sense at

all if applied to a tribulation lasting now almost 2000 years since AD 70.

In Matthew 24:29 we have these critically important words: “**Immediately after** the tribulation of those days,” the Great Tribulation in the context, there will be cosmic signs and the Second Coming of the Son will follow the spectacular heavenly disturbances (Matt. 24:29-31).

There is nothing very complex about the sequence of end-time events, provided we follow the straightforward words of Jesus and avoid forcing on the text a preconceived system. The presuppositions of Jesus in Matthew (and Mark 13, Luke 21) are found in the book of Daniel to which he refers (Matt. 24:15), adding a special caution that we grasp what had been revealed to Daniel: “Let the reader understand.”

Key to the words of Jesus in his long and important discourse is the scheme already revealed to Daniel, especially the end-time Great Tribulation found in Daniel 12:1 (Matt. 24:21). The resurrection of the dead is the great final event, and it was predicted as “life of the age to come” (Dan. 12:2) and expected throughout the New Testament as the event to coincide with the coming of Jesus (1 Cor. 15:23). The rabbis read with understanding: “The life of the age” predicted in Daniel 12:2 means life to be experienced by resurrection from the sleep of death. It is evidently therefore the “life of the future age to come.” This expression we find some 40 times in the New Testament as “eternal life” — more accurately “the life of the future age of the Kingdom of God.”

The Final Decisive, Decreed Intervention of God

A further key to understanding Jesus’ view of the future is the link between Daniel 9:27, the final “week,” and Paul’s expectation of a future and final salvation of a remnant of Jews (i.e. national Israel, as distinct from the international “Israel of God,” the church, Gal. 6:16). The connection is as follows: Isaiah 28:22 contains the very rare expression “**a complete and decisive destruction on all the earth,**” to mark the end of the present age and the arrival of Jesus in power. The warning is addressed to scoffers and skeptics! “Do not carry on as critics, or your fetters will be made stronger” (Isa. 28:22).

This same final, decisive completion of God’s work is referenced again in Isaiah 10:20-25. We learn here that a remnant of Israel, the nation, will emerge from the time of trouble: “Now in that day, the remnant of Israel and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped will *never again* rely on the one who struck them [the final enemy of Israel], but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel. A remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the mighty divine hero [*el gibbor*]. For though your people Israel may be like the sand of the sea, only a remnant within them will return. **A destruction is determined, overflowing with righteousness. A complete destruction, one that is decreed** the LORD God of

Hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Hosts, ‘O my people who dwell in Zion, do not fear the Assyrian, who strikes you with the rod and lifts up his staff against you, the way Egypt did. For in a very little while my indignation against you [the time of great tribulation] will be spent and my anger will be directed to their destruction’” — the destruction of the final enemy Assyria (Isa. 10:20-25).

In Daniel 9:24-27 the seventieth “week” or period of seven years climaxes in the identical “a complete and decisive end” found in Isaiah 28 and 10 (above) and repeated in Romans 9:27-28. Paul is reading the “**final and complete destruction, one that is decreed**” of Daniel’s 70th week (Dan. 9:27) as the event which marks the return of Jesus. This makes 70 AD impossible for the end of the 70th “week.” 70 AD was absolutely not a triumphant end of the age and the escape of the remnant of Israel. It was the opposite — a terrible ruin of Israel which lasted for centuries. The scattering of Israel in AD 70 was positively not the restoration of the remnant of Israel promised in Isaiah and Daniel.

Linking the seventieth “week” of Daniel to Romans 9:27-28, where Paul refers to it, shows that it is a mistake to end the Daniel prophecy in AD 70. It ends as do all the predictions of Daniel with the great arrival of Messiah Jesus to inaugurate the Kingdom on earth. This will be the time when the saints are given the Kingdom with Jesus and they will reign on earth with the Messiah (Rev. 5:9-10; Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; Matt. 19:28).

We are reminded of the ancient words of the early premillennial commentators like Irenaeus: “When this antichrist shall have devastated all things in the world, he will reign for three years and six months and sit in the temple in Jerusalem. Then the Lord [Jesus] will come from heaven, in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire, but bringing in for the righteous the times of the Kingdom, that is the rest, the hallowed seventh day. And restoring to Abraham the promised inheritance [Rom. 4:13], in which Kingdom the Lord declared that ‘many coming from the east and from the west would sit down with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob,’ at the banquet to mark the beginning of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 8:11).” ✧

Pre, Post and A-mill

I have noticed as I travel to various Bible studies in different parts of the world that some teachers seem overwhelmed by the subject of the “end-time.” This need not be. What Jesus and Paul teach about the future events leading to the second coming is very much an essential part of the “every word of God” out of which we are to live (Matt. 4:4). Leaders are to instruct their people in “the whole counsel of God” (Acts 20:27).

An unnecessarily daunting set of words, technical terms, makes the study sound difficult and complex when it really is not. It is not unusual to hear someone say jokingly that they belong to the “pan-millennial” or “pan-tribulational” school. They just know that things will all somehow “pan out.” This may in fact be a copout, when serious pondering and studying of the important words of Jesus and Paul about the future have not really been undertaken.

The words of Jesus are “spirit and life” (John 6:63) and any failure to deal with them all tends to dull the vitality of Christian life. We need the energy and the spirit transmitted by the spirit-words of Jesus. If we pick and choose, we are liable to miss out on the life and power of the saving words of Jesus (cp. Prov. 1:23).

In 2 Thessalonians 2:5 Paul reminded the Thessalonians that when he had founded the church there, he had been accustomed to give them a detailed explanation of what to expect in the future, prior to the Second Coming. “Don’t you remember that while I was with you I *used* to tell you these things?” — not just once, but often.

Paul (as did John in 1 John 2:18) went on to tell them of a single and final Antichrist who would sit in the Temple of God and announce himself to be God or a god. The appearance of this ultimately evil figure would be evidence of the impending future arrival of Jesus, whose task would be to “destroy that person with the breath of his mouth and by the outshining of his arrival” (2 Thess. 2:8, citing the Assyrian material of Isa. 11:4). The evil, final Antichrist (1 John 2:18), as distinct from the many antichrists present even in the days of John, will have his own fake, pseudo second coming (*parousia*) (2 Thess. 2:9), and this supreme act of trickery will inevitably scam those who do not know the true scheme of end-time events.

We need to be informed, and ignorance of what the Bible predicts for the future risks our falling prey to deception. We are to live by “every word which proceeds from the mouth of God” (Matt 4:4), not just the parts we prefer!

Paul’s careful and detailed instruction to the Thessalonians was to prevent the believers from imagining that the Second Coming could occur *at any moment*. No, Paul said, certain events — a falling away and the ultimate appearance of a single Man of Sin — must occur first. Only then can the Second Coming of Jesus occur. The Hal Lindsey school (a PRE-Tribulation, secret arrival of Jesus) which convinced millions of the opposite point of view may show how little the public really pays attention to the Bible.

It is evident from 2 Thessalonians 2 that Paul did not believe in the doctrine which is common fare in many circles these days — that Jesus could arrive *at any*

moment and rapture the saints to heaven for the final period of 7 years.

Such a pre-tribulation rapture is ruled out by 2 Thessalonians 2, which warns against it. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10 is equally clear against an “any moment” return of the Messiah. Here’s how: Paul comforts his people in this passage with the prospect of final relief from their present suffering at the hands of the evil. But exactly *when* should the believers expect to gain that final relief? Paul is in no doubt and expresses himself with complete clarity. The end of suffering for believers is to be “at the revelation of Jesus in flaming fire taking vengeance on those who do not obey the Gospel” (2 Thess. 1:7-8). This is utterly clear. The pre-trib rapture should be discarded on the strength of the clear words of Paul here. Paul could not possibly have entertained the idea of a relief and release seven years earlier! Paul’s statement is a falsehood, if in fact the saints are to be removed to heaven seven or three and a half years before the public and spectacular arrival of the Messiah in power and glory, to defeat his enemies.

Premillennialism (don’t be put off by the long word!) describes the biblical truth that Jesus will return just before (“pre”) the beginning of the 1000 years reign described in Revelation 20:1-6. Amillennialism teaches that the 1000-year rule of Messiah began at the cross and is ongoing for an indefinite period. This notion is mistaken because in the millennium the saints are destined to rule with Jesus on earth. That is obviously not true today. Therefore the millennium has not yet begun. Post-millennialism is the equally misleading theory that we as humans will improve things on earth to the extent of producing an idyllic period of 1000 years of peace. Jesus will come back after (“post”) that time of peace.

Since around 1830 a completely novel idea was introduced into some evangelical circles that the saints would not be on earth during the future Great Tribulation of Matthew 24:21 = Daniel 12:1. (On no account should these texts be pulled apart.) This theory contradicts the teaching of Jesus. It destroys the clear outline of events laid out by Jesus.

Jesus spoke of the “Abomination of Desolation standing where HE ought not to” (there is an important masculine participle in the Greek here: Mark 13:14). The appearance of this personal Antichrist in a holy place would be the sign for believers to flee to the hills, if in Judea. It would mark the onset of the worst time of trouble ever. Immediately following that time of extreme trouble (Matt. 24:29), there will be cosmic upheavals and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and they will see the Son of Man coming in power and glory. At that time Jesus will gather together all the living saints and appoint them to positions in the Kingdom. The Kingdom of God will then begin in full force as Jesus

defeats the Anti-Christ (Isa. 11:4=2 Thess. 2:8) and Satan is bound for a thousand years.

Paul spoke of an evil figure who would take up his seat in the Temple of God. Paul did not speak of a temple of God, meaning the Church, but of **the** Temple or sanctuary of God, and this strongly suggests a building.

Paul was eager to explain the essential precaution against falling for the deceiving activity of the Man of Sin. That Antichrist figure, based on the portrait given in Daniel 11:21ff and Isaiah 11:4, would be empowered by Satan to perform signs and lying miracles. Many today conclude that a healing or other miracle *must* be evidence of God at work. But is this true? If Satan can perform signs and wonders, then other criterion will be necessary for evaluating them. Jesus complained that “unless you see signs and wonders, you refuse to believe” (John 4:48). A popular desire for the spectacular is evidently not the best and safest basis for faith.

Yet often today it is the spectacular which is so readily hailed as amazing evidence for God at work. What if this is not so, based on the prediction that the spectacular might have to be traced not to the energy of God but to Satan’s power to lay on signs and wonders? The question is at least worthy of very serious consideration.

Paul provides the necessary key to proper evaluation of the miraculous. He says that “because they did not welcome the love [a passion!] for truth” God “gave them over to a spirit of deception, so that they end up falling for believing what is false” (2 Thess. 2:10-11).

Truth is of course the truth of the true Gospel as preached by Jesus and the rest of the New Testament. It is the opposite of error and untruth. Truth is something to be sought out and examined with all the tools available to us. Paul actually puts the word “love” in the emphatic position when he urges us to remember that “because *the love* of the truth they would not accept, in order to be saved” (2 Thess. 2:10), God allowed a widespread spirit of deception to prevail. Truth is not an optional extra! Truth is the basis for being saved. Jesus’ words are “spirit and truth.” Jesus himself embodied and taught saving truth. We are reminded of Luke 8:12, where Jesus spoke of his saving word/Gospel of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19) as the key to being saved. The Devil, knowing this, perhaps better than some church members, is always eager to snatch away the vital Gospel of the Kingdom (word of the Kingdom), “so that they will not believe it and be saved.” Once again, salvation is at stake in these marvelous words and warnings of Jesus and Paul.

Matthew 24 and the whole book of Revelation are not less the truth than John 3:16! The Protestant tradition may turn out to be a poor guide to the complete Truth of Scripture. Luther did not think that the book of James had much value as Scripture. Early in his ministry he

dismissed the book of Revelation as a book in which “Christ is not taught.”

John Calvin was responsible for the brutal murder of unitarian believer Michael Servetus (in 1553). The public seems little aware of these horrifying facts of church history. Surveys in the USA regularly discover the fact that the churchgoing public, when questioned on basic facts of the Bible, know very little of the content of the Bible. Is this situation satisfactory in the light of the shattering warnings of Jesus that “in vain they worship, teaching for teachings the commands of men”? Is not Jesus’ reflection on the question as to whether he would find the faith alive and well at his return a wake-up call for us all? What of his words to us “to strive to enter by the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able” (Luke 13:24)?

There are a billion and a half human beings, not more or less intelligent than you the reader, who believe that God cannot have a Son. There are millions who are convinced that when Jesus comes back the earth will be void of human beings and that Satan will be alone on the earth. There are a billion sincere believers who think that Mary, the mother of Jesus, was sinless, and that she never had normal sexual relations with Joseph and that Jesus thus had no half-brothers, but merely cousins. There are believers at your door who exclude themselves from the Lord’s supper (to be kept not once a year) and do not think that they are born again or part of the body of Christ. Can all this really represent the truth of Scripture or are we in need of radical reformation? By some God is defined as three Persons in a single Essence. By others Jesus is identified with an archangel. Others know him to be the man Messiah, the one mediator between the One God the Father and mankind (1 Tim 2:5).

The search for truth and clinging to truth based on the best possible research and with due attention to a multitude of counsel, must go on. There are too many “theological islands” and solo workers who teach as though God has allowed them to bypass the work necessary for good examination of the Bible. Some are hampered by inadequate tools, by way of training. They are sometimes victims of mistranslation in some passages in some translations. God has not left Himself without witness and the world of professional word studies and lexicons ought not to be neglected. Otherwise some will dispense with the hard work needed for good investigation and tend to rely on a personal “apostolic” inspiration which is subject to no one. ✧

Our Core Beliefs

Focus on the Kingdom, now in its 13th year, distributed to some 80 countries freely every month, attempts to remind believers everywhere that the faith, as widely accepted without much question in various denominations, suffers from a dangerous and debilitating Greek philosophical influence. The Messiah Jesus was not a Greek philosopher and did not believe in “immortal souls going to heaven at death,” and did not think of himself as God Himself, but rather the Son and agent of the One God of Israel, his Father. Jesus announced the Kingdom of God as the saving Gospel and urged all of us to prepare for places of responsibility in that coming Kingdom.

Remarkably the core truth of the identity of Jesus as son of David, of Mary and of God was announced in 2Samuel 7:14-16, applied to Jesus by Hebrews 1:5: “I [God] will be his father and he will be my son.” The tense of the verb is future, ruling out the “eternal generation of the Son” imported into later Christianity by the philosophically minded church “father” Origen.

Isaiah 7:14 (cp. 2 Sam. 7:14 above) announces that “the virgin will conceive and bear a son.” And Hebrews 7:14 gives us a further brilliant definition of Jesus as “descended from the tribe of Judah.” Matthew lists the genealogy of the Davidic family in a patter of 3 times 14.

The Protestant Reformation did not go back to the original core truths of Scripture but continued to promote the strange philosophical definition of God as a triune Essence (“One what in three who’s,” as some claim). It also played down the most important accounts of the Gospel preaching of Jesus in Matthew, Mark and Luke (and John, with different terminology). Luther tended to phase out the teaching of Jesus and concentrated so much on Romans that he presented Paul as the real founder of Christianity and neglected its actual founder, Jesus the Messiah. Calvin misunderstood the Kingdom and thus the Gospel of Jesus, and accused the disciples of Jesus of blindness in Acts 1:6. As authorizing the murder by burning of an outstanding Bible scholar, Servetus, Calvin displayed an obvious failure to express the spirit and love of Jesus.

The root of the problem is Greek philosophy. This needs to be eradicated from theological systems. At present it lies hidden, and the public is largely unaware of its sinister presence in what they often uncritically accept as biblical understanding. Tradition and not truth continues to rule unchallenged. We hope to make a dent in that all-pervasive problem. ✧

Lies I Told Myself

by Lois Eaton, Australia

I used to believe in the Trinity. I wasn’t trying to say $1+1+1=1$. Instead I was saying $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$.

Problem: when multiplying, dimensions are automatically introduced. If I calculate the volume of a box, I can say 1 meter x 1 meter x 1 meter = 1 meter squared. 1 meter does NOT equal 1 meter squared. In other words, when numbers are multiplied, something greater — something different — is created. I cannot say 1 meter x 1 meter x 1 meter = 1 meter. As Gods cannot be squared — that would imply that they are not complete or all-encompassing in themselves — the mathematical analogy $1 \times 1 \times 1 = 1$ does NOT apply. (As soon as a number is applied to *anything*, including God, the dimension factor is introduced. We cannot exclude it.)

Also, we are visually oriented beings. Most of us have a mental picture of God, even if we don’t like to admit it. My mental picture (which I was never able to admit to anyone till I left the Trinity doctrine behind) was Father God: a white light shining out from a throne. Son God: a man-shape made of pure white light. Holy Spirit God: a ghostly white shape somewhere in between the other two in appearance. They were not equal at all! Only one sat on the throne.

What brought it all together for me was the question of Jesus: “Why do you call me good? There is none good but God.” If he was truly equal to the Father, then he was insulting the Father by saying this. Jesus was aware of the capacity for evil within him. I do not believe we are denigrating him to our level by saying he was human. What an incredible victory, that one born capable of sin lived a truly pure life! If Jesus was God, then he was incapable of sin, and the cross was meaningless! The cross is not meaningless to me! ✧

Correction

Last month we inadvertently cited E.W. Bullinger’s comment on “absent from the body, present with the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:8) as coming from his *Companion Bible*. The quotation is found in fact in Bullinger’s *How to Enjoy the Bible*.

Comments

“For over five years now I have been a very interested reader and hearer of your many articles and presentations in The Restoration Fellowship, Focus on the Kingdom etc. This has thrown new light on my previously held nebulous or confusing thoughts for which I wish to sincerely thank you, as well as all your hard working colleagues.” — *England*

“I read and enjoy every issue of *Focus on the Kingdom* and have often referred the on-line version to friends.” — *New Zealand*

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