

Focus on the Kingdom

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Jesus' Long-Form Birth Certificate Released by Luke and Matthew (and John), 2000 years ago, and Recorded in Scripture

“No responsible New Testament scholar would claim that the doctrine of the Trinity was taught by Jesus or preached by the earliest Christians or consciously held by any writer of the New Testament” (A.T. Hanson, *The Image of the Invisible God*).

“In its encounter with Greek philosophy Christianity became theology. That was the fall of Christianity” (Eberhard Griesebach).

“It is certain that the doctrine of the Trinity as it finally became dogma in the East, and even more so in the West, possesses no biblical foundation whatsoever” (Karl-Heinz Ohlig, *One or Three?*).

From Fuller Seminary, this from the seasoned, expert systematician, Dr. Colin Brown: “To read John 1:1 as though it says ‘In the beginning was *the Son*’ is patently wrong” (“Trinity and Incarnation: In Search of Contemporary Orthodoxy,” *Ex Auditu*, 1991, p. 89).

Matthew 1:18 provides basic information about the ORIGIN of Jesus, *genesis* of Jesus. His birth certificate is certified and guaranteed in Scripture. For Matthew this is not just his birth, but his **origin** (*genesis*, with one “nee,” Greek letter *n*, in the best manuscripts). That same word **genesis** opens the entire New Testament — as giving us the genealogy of the Son of God (Matt. 1:1). We are introduced to the family history of Jesus, descendant of Abraham and David. Is this really so hard? Matthew was quite unaware of the post-biblical idea of a SON who was God or an angel, arriving from *outside* the womb of his mother! Matthew is obviously inviting us, as does John in John 1:1, to build on Genesis 1. In the beginning was the Gospel word. That “word of God” is not WORD=SON at that stage.¹ The *logos* is never a spokesperson in the Old Testament. The *logos* in John 1:1 is *the promise* of the Son, who as Peter said, agreeing

¹ The neuter “light,” *phos*, of John 1:5 becomes a *person*, him (*auton*) only in verse 10.

perfectly with John, was “foreknown” (1 Pet. 1:20) from the beginning. Christians are also foreknown and so was Jeremiah in 1:5.

Who was Jesus *originally*? We can know about the origin and the birth certificate of Jesus by reading Luke and Matthew (and John and Peter, too). Matthew and Luke give a full and detailed account of the **point of origin** of the Son of God. He began as a human being, supernaturally begotten (=brought into existence) by the Father, as Matthew 1:20 reads. Note the word there is “begotten in her,” not just “conceived” in her. The RV of 1881 recognized this in its margin. It is the activity of the Father bringing into existence, begetting His unique SON which is documented by Matthew 1:20. So the official, long-form birth certificate reads. The RV also helped us in the margin with Luke 1:35, showing that the Son of God was *begotten* and on that basis is the Son of God. On no other basis. This aorist of the verb *begotten* for the Son (also 1 John 5:18) is the most hidden word from an “orthodox” point of view. It is a bit embarrassing to the system!

The word “beget,” i.e. the causative of **GENNAO** (*yennao* — we use modern Greek pronunciation, as they do at Harvard!). Related to GINOMAI (*ginome*), “to begin to exist,” this precious word is the key to our whole subject and to Christian unity, and confusion and chaos results from outdoing Matthew and Luke and denying that the “coming into existence” of the Son is the result of a divine historical begetting, **causing the existence** of a SON, which is what **gennao** means! On no account should claimants to belief in holy Scripture avoid the obvious, confuse and divide the church by explaining away the rock foundation of the virginal begetting, which allows God to be the Father of the Son, in time and place, by miracle. He did the miracle once in Adam and then again in Jesus. Not so hard. To divide on this rock foundation is the tendency of some ex-Worldwide Church of God people, who seem bent on remaining islands, unwilling to do theology in community linked to the community of the New Testament. How can Scripture speak to us and our essential collective unity if we deconstruct what we don’t care for? Luke and Matthew are dramatically clear.

The JW’s invited us recently to take part in the celebration of their annual Passover (they actually do not celebrate it, but observe others celebrating it!), and their tract told us that Jesus “came down from heaven” as a transformed angel. What they did not say was that “every

good gift comes down from heaven” (James 1:17; 3:15). What they did not say is that Jesus said his “**flesh, which is bread**, came down from heaven” (John 6:51). Is this not obviously non-literal language? The JW’s have been caught in the “mad about my flat” language fallacy. In the UK and the USA this means totally different things. They assume that “coming down from heaven” means that you were alive in heaven before you came down literally. But “mad about my flat” means “excited about my new apartment,” when read in my British environment and with British language habits in mind. So what does “coming down from heaven” mean in biblical idiom, which is Hebrew (hardly surprising) in style? It means that one’s origin is with God the Father (Matthew and Luke said that too!). It does not mean that one is a pre-human personage. Pre-human of course implies, if you think about it, non-human. And the *whole* point of the Messiah, Son of God, is that he is and must be a man, “the man mediator” of the lucidly clear statement of Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5: “There is one God, and one mediator between God and man, the MAN Messiah Jesus,” the second Adam. Paul is keen to offset any opposing idea when he says “the spiritual man was NOT first” (1 Cor. 15:46-48). The earthly man comes before the second Adam who is the Lord Messiah — not the other way round.

But it was not long before (in II Clement 5:9) the original system was being suppressed by the philosophical notion that Jesus was “first spirit and then flesh.” That shift, documented by II Clement 5:9, meant that the historical Jesus was being swallowed up by a different Jesus. As Martin Werner lamented, “the historical Jesus completely disappeared” behind a Gnostic counterfeit figure (*Formation of Dogma*, p. 298).

A prominent spokesman for the traditional view that God is three Persons in one Essence (“three Whos in one What” as James White and Hank Hanegraaff maintain) writes: “Our Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. God tabernacling in human form. When I say that I believe in the full deity of Christ, that is what I affirm. At his birth our Lord Jesus Christ **did not begin to exist**” (Rev. Ian Paisley). So much for Matthew and Luke and John!

Putting on our Berean hats, what do we find? The origin, coming into existence of the Son of God was as follows (so wrote Matthew in 1:18): Mary was found to be pregnant under the influence of “holy spirit” — the personal operational presence and power of the One God, the Father. The result of the biological miracle worked in Mary is laid out for us: “What is begotten, fathered, brought into existence in her is from the holy spirit” (1:20). Mary would have had no difficulty understanding this very plain, unifying information, and nor should we.

We might even risk being struck dumb for not believing, as was Zacharias.

The history of the Son is equally, in fact even more deliberately and unambiguously (if that is possible), proclaimed by Gabriel in a compact and precise statement in answer to Mary’s reasonable inquiry about pregnancy in the absence of a husband. First in a reinforcing parallel: **holy spirit** will come over you and the **power of the Highest** will overshadow you, and for that reason precisely (*dio kai*) the one to be **brought into existence** will be called (i.e. will be) the Son of God (Luke 1:35). By around 150 AD the philosopher Justin Martyr had so badly misunderstood this that he claimed that the Son engineered his own conception.

Few Bible doctrines are supplied for our understanding and edification in such a comprehensive and comprehensible way, with “Son of God” given its exact definition. But here it is: This verse should have been allowed its monitoring and supervising position and authority as the perfect exposition of what Son of God means, and consequently who Jesus is and was. He is the Son of God, remarkably but hardly surprisingly because God was his Father by miracle. Jesus is thus son of Eve, of Abraham, of David, of Mary and at the same time of God. As Adam was also the Son of God by divine miracle and creation (Luke 3:38), so is Jesus Son of God. “God the Son” is out of the question at once, since the only and mortal Son of God, Messiah, was “brought into existence” some 2000 years ago, at a definite and predicted geographical location. Isaiah 7:14 had predicted this mighty event. It is unthinkable that Matthew and Luke knew of a “God the Son,” uncreated, who left heaven and walked on the earth, while a coequal God the Father remained in heaven. That would be an obvious doubling of God. (Modalist Unitarians, in a desperate attempt to hide a threatening duality in God, said “the Son IS the Father.”)

The Plot Thickens

If one finds intolerable the need to say “He are one and they is three” (Dr. Millard Erickson, *God in Three Persons*, p. 270), what is our alternative? Suppose we agree with top logician Stephen Davis that “no one has yet been able to explain in what way God is one and in what different way He is three” (p. 258). Why not a closer look at the key word “beget” as pointing to the origin of the true Messiah? The aorist of this verb is the great key to understanding. In that famous saying in Psalm 2:7 the Messiah is defined by these words: “You are my Son. Today I begat you = brought you into existence.” That text reappears most reasonably in Matthew 1:20, as explaining the *genesis* of Jesus (v. 18). “What is begotten [by the Father] in her [aorist participle of *gennaō*] is from holy spirit.” Again in Luke: “What is to be begotten will be the holy Son of God” or perhaps

“What will be begotten holy is the Son of God.” The sense is the same.

Then in Acts 13:33, if we consult F.F. Bruce and other commentary we find the Psalm 2:7 text applied where naturally it belongs, to the coming into existence, the putting on the human scene of Jesus, not to his resurrection which has a different proof text, in verse 34: “And as for the fact that he was raised *from the dead*...” Bruce is insightful: “‘Raised up’ – that is by raising him up in the sense in which he raised David (v. 22). For *anistemi* in this sense, see 3:22; 7:37; 3:26 (‘raised him up and sent him’). The promise of v. 23, the fulfillment of which is described in 13:33, has to do with the sending of the Messiah, **not his resurrection** (for which see v. 34). The addition of ‘from the dead’ in v. 34 differentiates this use of ‘raise up’ from its use in v. 33” (*Acts of Apostles, Comm. on Greek text*).

A Trinitarian commentator amongst many was honest enough to admit the obvious here, although it does not help his doctrine: “The Apostle does not quote in Acts 13:33 the passage from Psalm 2:7 in order to prove the *resurrection* of Jesus, but his incarnation [he means here the beginning of his life in Mary]. The ‘raising up’ [the RV corrected the KJV], not ‘raised up AGAIN’ as in KJV, of Jesus spoken of in v. 33, is the bringing of the Messiah into the world for his mediatorial work. Compare Rom. 9:17, ‘For this same purpose I have raised you up.’ This incarnation was promised in the second psalm. Paul then proceeds (Acts 13:34) to prove the fulfillment of the promise that the Messiah would be *raised from the dead*, by quoting Isa. 53:3 and also Ps. 16:10. ‘And as concerning the fact that he raised him *from the dead*...I will give you the sure mercies of David’” (Dr. G.T. Shedd, *Dogmatic Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 327.)

After all “beget” does not mean to resurrect from the dead, but to become the father of, and we know when that happened already.

Beget is a very common biblical word and its primary and obvious meaning is “**to bring into existence** by procreation.” God is not brought into existence. The Son was. Jesus said, “For this purpose [to proclaim the truth of his kingship, cp. Luke 4:43] I have been brought into existence” (John 18:37, *gegeneemai*). He should have said, “I was never without existence”!

Then in Hebrews 1:5ff three corroborating proof texts take us to the origin of the Son. 2 Samuel 7:14 reinforces Psalm 2:7 and speaks of the moment when God becomes the Father of Jesus the Son (“I will be his father and he will my son”). This is equally the moment when Jesus comes into the world, is brought into the world, i.e. is born. Jesus spoke of his own coming into the world (“to this end I was born,” see John 18:37) and we know when that was. He was made holy and sent into the world

(John 10:36), which is an echo of Gabriel in Luke. “The one begotten (brought into existence) holy will be the Son of God.” Exactly.

John is in perfect agreement. In 1 John 5:18 (although the corrupted text of the KJV loses the point, as also in its corrupted 1 Tim. 3:16, trying to avoid the begetting of the Son by God *in time!*), we find Jesus as “the one begotten by God” (aorist participle of GENNAO as in Matt. 1:20; cp. the same word in Ps. 2:7, 110:3 LXX) who “preserves the Christians” who have been begotten by God, using in the case of Christians not the aorist but the perfect tense of GENNAO. So Psalm 2:7, Matthew 1:20 and 1 John 5:18 all refer to the begetting of the Son as marking the beginning of his existence. At Qumran there is also a text about “when God begets the Messiah.” All this is based on the magnificent 2 Samuel 7:14. Paul spoke of Jesus *coming into existence from a woman*, and thus being God’s Son (Rom. 1:1-4). Jesus was *later* God’s Son *in power* by resurrection. But Paul said that Jesus was God’s Son by coming into existence, as well as son of David.

Then remarkably there is the confirmation of the virginal begetting in John 1:13, if we read the Jerusalem Bible and translations like Albrecht’s German rendering of the Greek in 1920. The issue is the *singular aorist* verb here (*egenneethee*). If that text is original, then it is the singular Son of God who “was begotten, not of the will of the flesh or male desire, but of God.” It is surely rather labored and strange to contrast our “rebirth” with the birth by male desire, flesh, etc. Much more natural is an easy reference to the virginal begetting of Jesus. He is then the uniquely begotten Son (*monogenes*) precisely because that is what he really was, uniquely brought into existence as Son. If he is the uniquely begotten “god” in 1:18, although the reading is seriously doubted by many, as being very local in its provenance, then Jesus is still not GOD (making two GODS), but the highest form of created being, as Hort noted in his long dissertation on that verse.

Jesus is thus also God’s “preeminent Son,” “firstborn and brought into the world” by special procreation. Albrecht notes, referring to the copious research of Theodore Zahn: “I am following here in John 1:13 an extremely old reading found in Irenaeus and Tertullian. The singular verb ‘was begotten’ [aorist again of *gennaō*] referring to Jesus, not believers, prevailed in texts from the second to the fourth century in the West, and left important traces in the East also. John confesses expressly here his belief in the virginal begetting and birth of Jesus, which Matthew and Luke describe in much more detail” (Albrecht, note on his translation of John 1:13, my translation of the German). The Jerusalem Bible adopts this reading also. Tertullian actually accuses the Gnostics of trying to rid Scripture of this evidence of the

virginal begetting — by diverting the reference from Jesus to Christian rebirth! This meant changing the verb from an original singular to a plural.

It was Harnack who observed that “preexistence and virginal birth self-evidently exclude each other” (*schliessen sich aus*).

There is more. In the LXX of Psalm 110:3 we read the same “Today I have begotten you,” in the ruling Messianic psalm which controls the thinking of the New Testament. Psalm 110:1 is quoted massively more than any other verse from the Hebrew Bible. The Lord Messiah, my lord (*adoni*) is addressed by YHVH and told to sit at YHVH’s right hand until his enemies are subjected to him. That Son of God is the one begotten by the Father in the LXX of verse 3. Though the Masoretic text has repointed the Hebrew to read “your youth” (*yaldutecha*) many Hebrew manuscripts and the Hebrew version read by Origen read “I have begotten you” (*yeliditicha*), exactly as in Psalm 2:7 “I have begotten you.” (All this is just like substituting “shipping” for “shopping” “skyping” for “scoping.”)

Psalm 2:7 is clearly key as is 2 Samuel 7:14, not to mention Isaiah 7:14: “To us [in Israel] has been born or begotten a Son.” And in Hebrews 7:14 we know that our Lord is “descended from Judah.” In three groups of 14’s Matthew (ch. 1) lays out the complete family history of the Son of God, who later as “ideal Israel” is called out of Egypt (2:15). Jesus then gives us, as the ideal Moses, the *five* blocks of New Covenant teaching, each ending with the “chorus” “when Jesus had finished all these words.” How could anyone imagine “God the Son” being the promised “prophet arising as one like Moses and from the family of Israel” (Deut. 18:15-18)? Israel had asked *not* to hear God speak directly to them, and God conceded. How bizarre if then a “GOD the Son” spoke to them having abandoned a life of eternity in heaven to walk on earth with an “impersonal human nature.”

Remember that that Incarnation of the SON requires us to say that Jesus was “man, not *a* man.” That seems so bizarre. But this is the necessary result of the traditional teaching of the Incarnation of God the Son.

The birth date as well as the begetting of the Son of God ought never to have been transposed out of history and time into the philosophical, misty “times” of eternity. The notion of an “eternal begetting” by which, as one church father said, the Son “had a beginningless beginning” ought to have been silenced, and Scripture allowed to speak to us all. One architect of the Trinity admitted that the Trinity is a compromise between Jewish monotheism and pagan polytheism (Gregory of Nyssa), combining the best of two worlds! This leads people to read Philippians 2 as if Paul was on board with the Trinity of which he had never heard. Jesus was not “in very nature God” (NIV) but “in the form of God,” as

God’s visible image, his glory, as the unique Son. The Son’s glory or appearance, visible, was the reflection of the One God, his Father, the God of Israel and of the creation. As that matchless human Son, Jesus did not exploit his amazing status but worked for our good, resisting the Devil and performing perfectly as a servant-leader. That is why he has been elevated to the position of ADONI, my lord (Ps. 110:1; *adoni* is in all 195 occurrences a non-Deity title), at the right hand of YHVH, the One God. If Jesus were GOD in the first place then his achievement and elevation is really a charade. It is what God has done and can do with a fully dedicated human being that should make us catch our breath.

The Messiah, our only man mediator and Savior, is to be defined first by Matthew and Luke and then by Paul in 1 Timothy 2:5, and then only later by John, and not in a way which pits New Testament book against book and results in confusion and disunity, excommunication, even murder!✧

A Matter of Wise Method in the Search for Truth

One of the most valuable tools a teacher and student of the Bible can have today — in addition to an intelligent Berean attitude which puts seeking Truth at the top of his agenda — is to own, or have access to, and consult the *Word Biblical Commentary*. This commentary is the fruit of diligent study of the background to and language of the Bible, building on a mass of literature in several languages. It is the state of the art in evangelical scholarship.

This is not to say that it should be consulted uncritically. But the authors of these commentaries on the various books of Scripture are experts in their use of clear and informed English. They are masters in technical matters of language, and much else. They will prevent some from imagining that they can stand *alone* as Bible experts, when their own training is not necessarily adequate to the task.

“I do not believe man’s opinions,” I sometimes read from e-mail correspondents. But then the writer will offer *his own* opinion! This often reflects a solo view, judged to be right because the writer has “proved” it, against almost the whole history of biblical commentary.

An example would be the bold assertion that the resurrection was on Saturday and the crucifixion on Wednesday. It does not seem to occur to some that this contradicts what masses, yes, thousands of Bible readers of all types have found. Now to be the only person (almost) to have argued for a Wednesday crucifixion, does not in itself present an error. But it would be an

enormous help to canvass the multitude of counsel now widely available on this, or any other Bible issue.

The disciples, speaking on Sunday, remarked that Sunday was the “third day since these things [the crucifixion] happened” (Luke 24:21). Luke has already demonstrated how to count time: “today, tomorrow and the third day” (Luke 13:32). The third day from Sunday, counting inclusively as Luke does, is of course Friday. Luke, one chapter earlier, speaks of “sabbath” approaching and then refers to “*the sabbath*” (23:54, 56). The article here picks up the “sabbath” just mentioned and shows the same pattern of Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

What then of the exceptional and “one-off” verse in Matthew 12:40 (“three days and three nights”)? Firstly, it is wrong method to start with the exception! Jewish ways of speaking are not necessarily those of 21st-century English. To discover the meaning of the very Hebrew idiom about 3 days and nights, consult the best modern commentaries and better still, refer if possible to Strack-Billerbeck, *Kommentar Zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Midrash, Vol. 1, p. 649). This has not yet been translated into English, but is widely referred to in expert English commentary.

The point here is that we should all hold a realistic assessment of our ability to work out “problems” in the Bible! In any other profession we do pay attention to the expert, at least as a consultant. It is something of a myth to suppose that a “sincere heart,” a King James Bible, and a Strong’s Concordance are necessarily sufficient to arrive at all truth. The principle of a multitude of counsel still stands as a wise precaution against thinking that one is a past master on all Bible issues. Sometimes the translation from the Greek is plainly misleading. Sometimes one needs some technical expertise in language to see what the various options are. Jesus, after all, did promise to send “scribes” to teach Christian truth (Matt. 23:34). Scribes are trained Bible expositors and they have an important role to play in the matter of searching the Bible accurately. ✧

Food for Thought on Sabbath Observance

Paul refers only once in all of his letters to the weekly Sabbath of Exodus 20. On this single occasion in Colossians 2:16-17 he treats the Sabbath as a shadow and contrasts it negatively with the substance which is Christ. Not only this, he links the weekly Sabbath with the observance of the holy days and the new moons. He makes absolutely no distinction and presents them all as having one status: that of a single “shadow.” Paul knows of no difference in value between annual,

monthly and weekly observances. This is because some 10 times in the Old Testament all 3 are similarly linked as a single entity. Paul knows his Old Testament well, much better than many today. If the weekly Sabbath has any importance in the New Covenant, then equally, in the apostolic mind, do the annual holy days *and* the new moons. The fact is that for Paul, in whom Jesus speaks to us authoritatively, none of these observances is of value to believers in the New Covenant. They are a single shadow, now obsolete in Christ who fulfills them. Just as Adam *is* the type of Jesus who has come (Rom. 5:14), so the three-fold shadow *is* the type of Christ who has come. In the same way, the sacrifices *are* a shadow of the good things to come (Heb. 10:1). For further information please see our *The Law, the Sabbath and New Covenant Christianity* at www.restorationfellowship.org ✧

Paul’s Stirring Last Words to Timothy and to Us as Workers for the Great Commission

The final words of Paul to his spiritual “son” Timothy, whom he had begotten with the word of the Kingdom of God Gospel (cp. 1 Cor. 4:15; Phm. 1:10), are precious indeed as exhortation to us all. We all desperately need the sage and timeless words of Paul, whom God and the Lord Jesus used as an amazing tool of truth. Apostleship at the level of Paul is not repeatable. Paul was qualified as an Apostle because he saw Jesus personally (1 Cor. 9:1) and was the last to do so. He was also accredited in his important office by the signs and wonders he performed. On the island of Malta he was able to heal all the sick (2 Cor. 12:12). (The two witnesses may be an exception and are equipped with amazing powers with which to confront the future Antichrist or Beast).

In 2 Timothy 4:1-2 Paul issues a solemn, final charge to Timothy and in principle to us. “I emphatically declare to you, in the presence of God and Messiah Jesus, who is about to judge the living and the dead, both his [future] appearing and Kingdom. Preach *that word*,” that is, the Gospel of the Kingdom just mentioned.

I note the comment of William Mounce in the *Word Biblical Commentary* on the pastoral epistles. Paul uses “two future events as the basis for solemnity. Timothy’s life is on display [so is ours!] before God and Messiah, and Christ will appear again and his Kingdom will come in its fullness” (p. 571). Yes, indeed, but I lament the foggy and vague reference to the Kingdom “in its fullness.” The New Testament is much clearer! The future Kingdom will begin at the seventh trumpet and it will be inaugurated by the returning Jesus. Jesus will raise the currently dead saints of all the ages (1 Thess.

4:13-18). These will have fallen asleep in death (Ps. 13:3; Dan. 12:2: “sleep of death,” not “soul sleep,” which confuses the biblical teaching about the constitution of man!).

The true believers who survive until the great event of the future appearing of Jesus bringing his Kingdom, will be caught up to meet and escort the arriving Messiah. They will escort the royal personage in the direction in which he is proceeding, towards the earth. Jesus will destroy the awful “Antichrist” with the breath of his lips (2 Thess. 2:8, citing the supernatural death of the Assyrian antichrist of Isa. 11:4). This rapture/resurrection event is the single Second Coming of Messiah Jesus (there is no “pre-tribulation rapture” in the Bible: see Matt. 24:29-31 and 2 Thess. 1:6-10). At that time the Devil/Satan, the supernatural evil angel who is presently “deceiving the whole world” (Rev. 12:9), will be arrested, bound and confined in the abyss for a thousand years (the millennium) (Rev. 20:1-6). Jesus will then begin to administer the first ever just and successful government on earth. The saints of all the ages will manage this coming new society (1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Isa. 32:1).

A small number of mortals will survive the depopulation predicted for the Day of the Lord (Isa. 24:1-6) and will form the nucleus of that new society. They will be governed by Jesus and the saints. The time will come when the “saints receive the promised Kingdom” (Dan. 7:18) and “all nations will serve and obey them” (Dan. 7:27, ESV, RSV). The international chosen people of God, the true “Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:3), selected as the true children of Abraham, in Christ (Gal. 3:29), will form the new Messianic government, headed of course by King Jesus. The righteous will thus “inherit the earth and **reside in it forever**” (Ps. 37:29).

This text is particularly impressive and decisive as showing the place of residence of the future immortalized believers. There is an ingrained tendency among Bible readers to be mesmerized by a sort of “fatal attraction,” fixated on the idea that they are going to disappear from the earth and function in some vague way “in heaven.” Since Jesus is coming *back*, he will be here on the renewed earth. Those hoping and expecting to be in heaven, removed from the earth, cannot therefore hope to be with Christ. Would you imagine being in heaven, when Jesus, from the time of his Second Coming, won’t be there?! (Acts 1:11; 3:21).

A degree of infatuation seems to have smitten much of the Bible reading public in regard to their hope for the future. But “heaven” (and especially “heaven as a disembodied soul”) is never the biblical prospect for us believers. Resurrection at the Second Coming is *the only way* we should expect to regain consciousness after death. The sleep of the dead (Ps. 13:3; Ecc. 9:5, 10; John 11:11,

14) will be followed by the return of consciousness. Whether we are asleep in death or alive and awake when Jesus returns, we shall all “begin to live” with him (1 Thess. 5:10), and rule as kings with him on the earth (Rev. 5:9-10). The public’s “spiritual DNA” seems to have been infected with the very pagan, Platonic notion that death is merely a transition to immediate life. But death is really death and it cannot be reversed apart from the future Resurrection of all the saints of all the ages.

Bishop N.T. Wright’s vestige of traditional, mistaken ideas about the nature of the afterlife should be firmly laid aside as contrary to Scripture. The bishop speaks of “life after life after death.” This introduces an unwarranted muddle and confusion over Christian destiny. Daniel 12:2 is the basis of a much cleaner and clearer concept: “Multitudes of those who are now sleeping in the dust of the earth [that tells us what the dead are now doing — sleeping — and where they are doing it] will awake, some to the life of the age [to come].” That is, they will recover consciousness, begin to exist again, this time as immortals equipped with new indestructible bodies. They will enjoy a new life, which will never end, “the Life of the Age to Come” promised by the staggering text in Daniel 12:2. That “life of the age to come” appears some 40 times in the New Testament, rather imprecisely translated as “eternal life.” It will be indeed life without end and it will be enjoyed on the renewed earth. Blessed indeed are the meek, “for they will inherit the earth,” as Jesus promised (Matt. 5:5, quoting Ps. 37:11). ✧

Comments

“I have again finished reading through your monthly newsletter. I often read through it twice. I greatly appreciate your efforts. I am thankful for the doors that God has opened for you to share the gospel with so many.” — *Tennessee*

“The news letter really helps us a lot in sharing to our fellow brothers (both Christian and non-Christian) the Gospel that Jesus our Messiah first preached. Thanks for providing us such info. Yahweh is with us!” — *Philippines*

“I am so grateful for this website and all of the resources Mr. Buzzard has made available to people like me. I was raised in a Southern Baptist church and have been on a ‘truth journey’ the last few years. Mr. Buzzard’s clear biblical insights have been instrumental to that journey in recent months.” — *email*

“I read May 2011’s newsletter. It was a masterful piece and I feel confident in this hopeful message of the resurrection of our dead souls into the coming Kingdom ruled by Jesus Messiah. I also read Psalm 37, a scripture you outlined in your newsletter. Take courage, your work has allowed the Holy Spirit to work in Kansas. God bless

you friend, and keep telling the truth to those who hear.”

— *Kansas*

“I appreciate your fellowship! You seem to handle the challenges of being in the minority with grace and compassion. It makes you and your colleagues stand out from some of the vehement defenders of the orthodox views. I thank you for making yourself (and your wife) available to contact with my questions, etc.” — *Canada*

“I have just recently discovered your theology. I have been on a search for truth for some time now, my whole life really. I was raised a Jehovah’s Witness. I am no longer associated with them. I ran my course of checking out everything in the last 10 years, looking for truth. I have been encouraged to see someone who isn’t a JW, yet holds to some obvious truth, as does Anthony. My question is this: Why, if unitarianism is true, of which I’m convinced, and Anthony seems to hold to most of the JW teachings, is he not a JW? Could the JW society *be* the truth, as they claim, as they have been preaching much the same things as Anthony for a long time? In a nutshell, why are JW’s NOT the trust group going right now? What issues do you hold that would preclude you from being a Jehovah’s Witness? I’m trying to decide where to go, what to do. As you know, the Watchtower Society essentially says that I, and anyone else, are doomed to destruction, and have lost God’s favor, and spirit, if we leave them. That’s why I left them. But that fear of God runs deep in a JW. I’m just looking for some help. Anything you could add would be appreciated.”

Answer: What is not well-known to the public and not openly expressed by JW’s at your door, is that the Witnesses (unless claiming, rarely, to be part of an elect 144,000) do not consider themselves to be “born again,” or “brothers and sisters of Christ,” nor “saints,” nor part of the “body of Christ.” They refuse the obvious command of Jesus to celebrate the Lord’s Supper on a regular basis, certainly not just once a year. They attend an annual “Lord’s supper” but take no active part in it! They have thus excommunicated themselves from the New Testament believers, addressed by Jesus and by Paul.

They also claim that Jesus is the archangel Michael, but Hebrews chapter 1 is a sustained argument against ever believing that Jesus was or is an angel. “To which one of the angels did God ever say at any time, ‘You are my Son; I have brought you into existence [begotten] you today?’” (Heb. 1:5). The implied answer, of course, clear to all, is that Jesus is not in the category of angel or super-angel.

Moreover in Daniel 10:13 Michael is defined as “one of the chief angels” (“prince” in Daniel is an angel). If Jesus is “one of” a class of angels, he certainly cannot be the unique Messiah, Son of God. The witnesses have

thus come to believe in a Jesus who cannot by definition be the Messiah of Scripture. And they have put themselves expressly beyond the pale and limits of New Testament Christianity by claiming *not* to be born again. Is it too much to point out to them that Jesus makes being born again the absolute condition for being his follower? How can a follower of Jesus refuse his command to be born again and to celebrate regularly his death and future coming by “drinking the wine and eating the bread” of his “Lord’s supper”?

Robin Todd, organizer of the Worldwide Scattered Brethren Network, has sent in this announcement and request:

The Worldwide Scattered Brethren Network has a growing list of dozens of cities and towns in the U.S. and Canada where there are scattered believers who are looking for fellowship. If you have ever wondered if there is anyone near you who is of like mind regarding what we’ve come to believe regarding the One true God, His Messiah, and the coming Kingdom, you should come check out our regional listings. And even if you don’t find any town near you right now, sign up to have your city listed for others to see. You might be surprised at how many believers there are who are out there but are looking for someone else to make the first move for contact. That person could be you. The almost 300 people who have requested that we list their towns are just the tip of the iceberg in terms of those who are coming to the faith even as I write this. Don’t delay —get in touch with me right now at robinsings4u@comcast.net, and go to our website at www.scatteredbrethren.org. We know of congregations, fellowships, and individuals who would love to get in touch with you.

Several Restoration-style home fellowships want you to know they are active in the following cities and towns:

Dublin/San Francisco, California
 El Cajon/San Diego, California
 Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
 Bloomfield, Connecticut
 Rathdrum/Coeur d’Alene, Idaho
 Bozeman, Montana
 Vinita, Oklahoma
 Tri City, Oregon
 Olympia, Washington
 Kirkland/Seattle, Washington
 Renton/Auburn, Washington
 Somerset, England

If you live near any of these towns or cities and would like to join in fellowship, just go to www.restorationchurchesofgod.com for contact information. Check back to the website from time to time for additional contact information and locations.