

Focus on the Kingdom

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The Truth About Who the Son of God Is

If students of the Bible would conduct their studies in order, they would much more easily arrive at the truth. But they often do not do this. They start in John instead of starting with the full accounts of the beginning of the Son of God in Matthew and Luke.

If you begin in Matthew it will not be hard to understand that the Son of God is a lineal descendant of David and Abraham. It really ought not to be difficult to grasp that the Son of God is not older than his ancestors David and Abraham. He is not older than his mother! We are supposed to know from long experience that sons are not older than their forefathers. So people get off to a fatally wrong start when they interfere with the lucidly clear teaching of Matthew and Luke about the origin of the Son of God.

Indeed “origin” is the very word Matthew begins his account with. “This is the family history of Jesus Christ” (Matt. 1:1). Matthew has used the beautiful Greek word *genesis* (pronounced *yenesi* in modern Greek), and of course we are immediately invited to connect this with an earlier Genesis when God created the world and Adam.

Matthew repeats this easy word *genesis* in Matthew 1:18. Some less reliable Greek manuscripts actually altered the word to “gennesis” with two “n”s. This word means birth rather than strictly “genesis” or origin. The point is that some copyists were unhappy with that word **genesis**, origin, creation.

That was because the post-biblical Church had lost track of the origin of the real Son of God and pushed it back into a so-called “pre-human” existence. It would be more honest to call this what it really is, a “non-human” existence of the Son. But is an originally non-human Jesus really the promised Messiah, Son of God?

Matthew knew nothing of such a preexisting, non-human Son of God. For Matthew and the whole New Testament the Son’s **origin** is in time, some 2000 years ago. It was an origin (**genesis**) in the womb of a virgin. Just as God created the first Adam from the earth, so He created, originated, fathered the last Adam, His unique Son, by miracle, within the human biological chain (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35).

How beautiful and how simple, compared with the brain-breaking theories about a “God the Son” who became “man,” but not (as Trinitarian theory says) “a man.”

Matthew is quite explicit. After listing some forty begettings, fatherings, from Abraham downwards, Matthew arrives at the incomparable story of the *genesis*, the fathering, of the Son of God. “It was like this,” Matthew states precisely and simply (1:18). His mother Mary was found to be pregnant under the influence of the operational, creative presence and power of God. We are to prepare for a stupendous miracle!

Joseph, engaged to Mary, is naturally troubled by the pregnancy he knows he is not responsible for. For him this is a serious crisis! So in a dream God reassures him. The true facts are these: “What is begotten **in** her is from the holy spirit” (1:20). Note the slight vagueness of the translations which say “conceived in her.” Yes, of course it was a conception by Mary, but more important it was a **begetting**, fathering by the One God, by miracle. The Revised Version in 1881 told us about the actual Greek word “begotten” in the margin. The Father became the Father of His uniquely begotten Son by a miracle performed in the womb of Mary. This was a historical event in time, and it marks the beginning, origin, begetting, coming into existence of the Son of God — certainly not a transmutation or transformation of an existing angel or eternal “God the Son.” Matthew and Luke knew nothing at all about the Incarnation of a previously existing, non-human “God the Son.” To maintain that that they did would be as odd as asking what sort of software Matthew had on his computer!

All this we can gather, too, from the Hebrew Scriptures which Matthew quotes in support of his amazing account. Isaiah had foreseen some 700 years earlier that “**The** virgin will be pregnant and bear a child” (Isa. 7:14). In Isaiah 9:6 there had been a prophecy that “a child will be *begotten* for us, a Son given to us” (the people of Israel and now for the whole Church). Psalm 2:7 had alerted us to this same astonishing event. “Today I have fathered him, begotten him,” God had announced. And the one in question was the Lord Messiah whom eventually God would place on Mount Zion and instruct the nations (this has not yet happened) to pay careful attention to his orders, lest the Son be provoked by their stubborn refusal of obedience (Ps. 2). The lesson is for us also!

The decree in Psalm 2 related to the Son of God, the Messiah. “The Lord said ‘of him’: ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten you’” (=fathered, brought you into existence). In Genesis we had similar language where Abraham said *of Sarah*, not *to* her, that she is my sister

(Gen. 20:2). The decree in Psalm 2 was an announcement, in advance, of God's great immortality program to be implemented by His beloved, uniquely begotten Son.

David of course had been privy to this grand prophecy that a descendant of his would be the Son of God. In 2 Samuel 7, repeated for emphasis in 1 Chronicles 17, Nathan the prophet had informed David of God's grand intention. "I [GOD] will be his [the Messiah's] Father and he will be My Son." This was to be a descendant of King David, as is well known. Hebrews 1:5 applies the amazing prophecy of 2 Samuel 7 and 1 Chronicles 17 to Jesus.

By no possible stretch of the imagination could David have heard, "He *is already* my eternal Son." The whole point of the prophecy was that the fathering of the Son of God, David's descendant, was to be an event, *the* event of future history. And some 1000 years later, 2000 years before our time, that promised Son was fathered, begotten, brought into existence in the womb of Mary (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35; 1 John 5:18, not KJV).

None of this requires any special "theological" or complex understanding. It requires belief. (Remember that Zechariah was severely punished for not believing the simple words of the angel! Luke 1:20.) God planned that the Messiah should be the descendant of Eve from the beginning (Gen. 3:15) and announced that same distinguished son of Abraham, as Abraham's promised seed (Gal. 3:8, 16-19). The promise was then repeated to David (2 Sam. 7), and some 2000 years ago the divine promise became historical reality when, as Joseph learned, "that which is begotten, fathered, brought into existence *in her*" (see Matt. 1:20) is from the holy spirit — a creative miracle of God.

If only this matchlessly beautiful story had been allowed to stand! But it was not long after Bible times that the meddling fingers of Greek philosophical so-called "church fathers" interfered with the story and wrecked it. The simple history of Jesus, Son of God, Savior, was turned into a nightmare of complexity, obfuscated by amazing "theological" jargon! A foreign language was imposed on the Bible, and complicated, confusing words turned simple things into giant problems.

In Scripture it is sufficient, indeed essential, to believe that Jesus is "the Son of God" (John 1:49), the prophet (John 4:19; 7:40), the Holy One of God (John 6:69), the Christ, the Son of God (John 1:41; 20:31), God's chosen one (John 1:34), Savior of the world (John 4:42). There is not a word in Scripture about believing that "Jesus is GOD" or "Jesus IS Yahweh."

Most churchgoers hold contradictory notions about who they think Jesus is. They imagine four propositions and do not know how to harmonize their obvious inconsistency. 1) Jesus is God. 2) God is the heavenly

Father. 3) Jesus is not the heavenly Father. 4) There are not two Gods. Ponder this carefully and tell your friends.

The contradiction is clear. Two have been named as GOD. That makes two Gods. It is a desperate evasion of the obvious when it is claimed that the two are really one, that God is a single Essence, a "WHAT," and not a WHO, to use the language of Dr. James White in his *The Forgotten Trinity* (p. 24-28).

Luke's Teaching About the Son of God

Lest we miss the point, the same story of divine fathering, begetting, bringing into existence was repeated in Luke 1. So that both Joseph and Mary would be independently informed of God's plan, the angel Gabriel, in the sixth month of Elizabeth's unexpected pregnancy (she was advanced in years), was sent to the young virgin Mary. Gabriel in a few concise sentences answered Mary's very reasonable question about how she was to become pregnant when as yet she had had no sexual relations with her husband. Gabriel was given a message so lucid and clear that it is hard to avoid its truth (unless church tradition blocks one's understanding).

"Holy spirit will come over you, Mary, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you, and for that reason precisely (*dio kai*) the one to be begotten [fathered, brought into existence] will be holy, the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35). Some have desperately tried to avoid these words by claiming that being *called* Son of God does not mean that he will *be* Son of God from the moment of begetting. That argument will not work, because "to be called" and "to be" are the same thing. Luke 6:35 reports that Christians will *be* sons of God and the same proposition appears in Matthew 5:9: "they will *be called* sons of God."

Few verses in the Bible are so transparently explicit as Luke 1:35. Few verses come with their own built-in explanation of a key term, in this case Son of God. Gabriel provides the explicit basis for Jesus being the Son of God. It is precisely because the One God intervened to procreate, father, beget, bring into existence His unique Son, by biological miracle in Mary. And all this was in fulfillment of ancient prophecy in the Psalms, Genesis, 2 Samuel 7 (1 Chronicles 17), Isaiah and Micah.

The begetting, origin, fathering, bringing into existence of the Son is the key issue for defining who Jesus is! The fulfillment of Psalm 2:7 some 2000 years ago restores a long-obscured truth about the Son of God's true origin and thus his identity.

John on Jesus the Son of God

John of course was in perfect agreement. In 1 John 5:18 we have a wonderful reference to the begetting, fathering of the Son. That Son Jesus "keeps the Christian believer" so that the Devil cannot touch him. The KJV text was early corrupted to avoid this fact. Read a modern version and you will find in 1 John 5:18, "He

who was begotten, fathered by God [i.e. the Son of God, Jesus] guards and keeps the Christian who has been born of God.” John had given us the same truth in John 17:12: “I protected [guarded] them with your name.” By “name” Jesus meant the whole immortality, salvation program which he preached and died for, on behalf of the One God, his Father, the “only one who is true God” (John 17:3). It is the Christian Gospel as preached first by Jesus (Heb. 2:3; 1 Tim. 6:3) which protects us from poisonous error and keeps us within the will of God.

1 John 5:18 is testimony, then, to the begetting of Jesus as a single event in the past. “He who was begotten, brought into existence, from God” protects the Christian and keeps him safe from the Devil’s attacks and deceptions.

Thus we have harmony in all the gospels about the *origin* of the Son of God, the fullest and clearest accounts being provided by Matthew and Luke. The rest of the New Testament takes for granted what was well known in the community: that Jesus’ Sonship dated from his begetting in his mother, by miracle.

It did not take many decades for the Church to obscure this easy Truth about the identity of the Son of God. Gradually the Son’s origin was pushed back to a time before Genesis and then into eternity! A new set of words had to be invented to cope with this anti-biblical twist — a fearfully complex language of “Being,” “eternal begetting,” “dual nature,” “hypostasis” and later “perichoresis” (how the three supposed members of a Triune God interacted with each other, “danced around” in eternity).

The word “beget, father, bring into existence,” especially as connected with “today” (Ps. 2:7 referred to the coming of Jesus on to the scene of history in Acts 13:33 — v. 34 refers by contrast to the resurrection from the dead) became obscure. “Today” is a strong “time expression.” It had to be replaced, or rather emptied of its actual meaning. It was embarrassing to emerging “orthodoxy.” The foggy notion of “eternal begetting” was substituted for the Bible’s vocabulary! No longer was the begetting, fathering, coming into existence of the Son of God the supreme moment of history. It was lost in the fog of eternity past! And so it has remained to this day. The “new” understanding of “beget” was enforced by threatening church councils laced with ever more complicated language — not to mention “anathemas” hurled at anyone who disagreed!

These revised versions of Jesus meant that the true Messianic Son of God was “discontinued,” and a strange hybrid God-man or angel-man took his place. But these substitute figures will not fit the portrait given us in 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 2:7, Isaiah 7 and 9, Luke, Matthew, Mark and John. They also present a Jewish person with the greatest difficulty. He has learned from the Hebrew

Bible that the Messiah *must be* a human descendant of David. Muslims too are disturbed by two who are both God.

More on the Messiah in John

The whole point of John’s gospel is that “you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31). 1 John declares that the essence of good faith is that you believe that Jesus is the Christ and that Jesus is the Son of God (1 John 2:22; 5:1, 5).

The intelligent reader of Scripture will think immediately of the explicit statement of Gabriel to Mary that the basis for Jesus being Son of God was the miracle of begetting, fathering, bringing into existence of the Son. There are hundreds of texts in all the gospels showing Jesus to be the Son of God. Indeed every time he refers to God as his Father, naturally enough this means that Jesus was His Son! (John 10:36). Adam is also called Son of God (Luke 3:38).

The miracle of the fathering, begetting of Jesus in Mary in Luke 1:35 is referred to also in John 10:36, 8:42, 16:27-28 and 17:8. In John 10:36 Jesus said to hostile Jewish leaders: “Do you say of him whom the Father made holy [sanctified] and sent into the world, ‘You are blaspheming,’ because I said ‘I am the Son of God’?” Had not Gabriel spoken to Mary about the Son of God as “the holy [sanctified] one to be begotten” (Luke 1:35; cp. Matt. 1:20)?

In John 8:42, again in dispute with the religious leaders, Jesus said, “If God were your Father you would love me, for I came forth from God and have come; for I did not come on my own initiative, but He sent me.” To come forth is to be born, and God was directly responsible for Jesus’ begetting. God also commissioned Jesus. He sent His Son. In John 16:27-28 Jesus was pleased with his disciples because they had believed that “I came forth from the Father. I came forth from the Father and came into the world.” Again his origin is directly related to the work of the Father. Some manuscripts read “from (*ek*) the Father” pointing even more definitely to his origin from the Father. Again in John 17:8 Jesus recognized the faith of the disciples who had known for certain that Jesus had “come forth from You [the Father] and that You sent me.”

The struggle over who Jesus is has centered on this critical issue of **the begetting** of the Son. Creeds, armed later with the strong-arm of the secular authorities, finally ruled out of court the belief that the Son of God had a beginning, a begetting in time. It was anathema to say that “there was a time when the Son did not exist.” He was eternally and timelessly begotten. But Psalm 2:7 had said otherwise. It spoke of a decree in time: “Today I have begotten you.” Today I have become your Father. “Today I have given you being” (BBE).

It is highly likely that Psalm 110:3 repeats the same statement as Psalm 2:7, with the words found in the LXX (Greek Old Testament, as well as in many Hebrew manuscripts also). Psalm 110:3 says “From the womb I have begotten you.” That verse was embarrassing to later “orthodoxy.” And it was manipulated to read “your youth” instead of “I have begotten you.” This was achieved by changing the vowel points, not the consonants of the Hebrew text. (See my book *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*, pp. 352, 353).

The loss of the true origin of the Son changed the whole shape of theology. It led to endless disputes and confusion, denominationalism (contrary to 1 Cor. 1:10; John 17:23), excommunication and even murder, often with impossibly difficult language making the whole discussion unintelligible to the majority. ✧

A Translation of John’s Gospel

Chapter 1

In the beginning there was God’s Grand Design, the declaration of His Intention and Purpose, and that declaration was with God as His project, and it was fully expressive of God Himself. This was with God in the beginning. Everything came into being through it, and without it nothing of what came into being existed. In it there was life and that life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overwhelm it. There came on the scene of history a man commissioned by [sent from] God. His name was John. This man came as a witness [a preacher of the Gospel of the Kingdom, Matt. 3:2] so that he might bear witness to the light and that everyone might believe through him. He was not the Light himself, but he witnessed concerning the Light. This was the genuine Light which enlightens every man coming into the world.

He was in the world and the world came into existence through him, and the world did not recognize him. He came to his own land and his own people did not accept him. As many, however, as did accept him, to these he gave the right to become children of God — namely the ones believing in his Gospel revelation about Immortality [his name]. These were born not from blood, nor from the desire of the flesh nor from the desire of a male, but from God. And the word became a human being and tabernacled among us, and we beheld his glory, the glory as of a uniquely begotten Son from a Father, full of grace and truth.

John witnessed concerning him and cried out with these words, “This was the one of whom I said, ‘The one coming after me has now moved ahead of me, because he always was my superior.’” Because from his fullness all of us have received grace followed by grace. Because the law was given by God through Moses, but grace and

truth came through Jesus Christ. No one has seen God at any time. A uniquely begotten Son, one who is in the bosom of the Father — he has explained God. And this is the witness of John, when the Jews sent a commission of priests and Levites to him from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” And he confessed and did not deny, “I am not the Christ.” And they asked him, “Who are you? Are you Elijah?” And he said, “I am not.” “Are you the prophet?” And he answered, “No.” And they said to him, “Who are you? So that we can give an answer to those who sent us. What do you say about yourself?” He said, “I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord God,’ as Isaiah the prophet spoke.” And the ones sent were from the Pharisees. And they asked him a further question, “Why do you baptize if you are not the Messiah, or Elijah or the prophet who was to come?” John answered them, “I am baptizing in water. Among you there stands one whom you do not recognize — the one coming after me, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie.” These things happened in Bethany beyond the Jordan where John was baptizing.

The next day he saw Jesus coming towards him and he said, “This is the lamb of God, the one who removes the sin of the world. This is the one of whom I said, ‘After me there comes a man who has now moved ahead of me, because he was always my superior.’ And I did not recognize him, but so that he might be recognized by Israel for that reason I came baptizing with water.” And John witnessed with these words: “I saw the spirit descending as a dove out of heaven and remaining on him, and I did not recognize him. But the one who sent me to baptize in water spoke to me and said, ‘The one on whom you see the spirit descending and remaining on him, he is the one who is baptizing with holy spirit.’ And I saw this, and I have witnessed to the fact that this is the Son of the One God.”

On the next day again John stood with two of his disciples, and seeing Jesus walking by, he said, “This is the Lamb of the One God.” And the two disciples heard him speaking and followed Jesus. Jesus, turning round and seeing them following him, said, “What are you looking for?” They said, “Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are you staying?” And he said to them, “Come and see.” And so they went and saw where he was staying and remained with him that whole day. And it was about the tenth hour. This was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, one of the two who had heard from John and followed him. He first found his brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which translated means the Christ). He brought him to Jesus, and Jesus looked at him and said, “You are Simon the son of John. You will be called Cephas, which translated means Peter.” The next day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee,

and he found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip then found Nathaniel and said to him, "The one about whom Moses wrote in the law and whom the prophets mentioned, we have found, Jesus, the son of Joseph from Nazareth." Nathaniel said to him, "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" Philip said, "Come and see." Jesus saw Nathaniel coming towards him and he said of him, "Behold a genuine Israelite in whom there is no guile." Nathaniel said to him, "How is it that you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, I saw you under the fig tree." Nathaniel answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel." Jesus answered him with these words: "Because I told you that I saw you under the fig tree, you are a believer? You will see greater things than this." And he said to him, "I tell you on the authority of my Father, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

Chapter 2

Now on the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus also was invited to the wedding with his disciples. When they ran out of wine, Jesus' mother said to him, "They have no more wine." Jesus said to her, "What do you and I have in common, lady? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Whatever he tells you to do, do." There were six water jars standing there for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding about 20 or 30 gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the water pots with water." And they filled them to the brim, and he said to them, "Now pour them out and bring them to the head steward of the wedding," and they did this. When the head steward had tasted the water which had become wine and he did not know how this had happened, (but the servants who had poured out the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said, "Everybody serves the good wine at the beginning and when everyone has drunk sufficiently, poorer wine. But you have kept the best wine until now." Jesus performed this, the first of his signs, at Cana in Galilee, and he displayed his glory and his disciples believed in him. After this he, his mother, his brothers and his disciples went down to Capernaum and they stayed there for a few days. And the Jewish festival of Passover was approaching and Jesus went up to Jerusalem and he found in the temple those selling cattle, sheep and doves. He made a little whip and drove them out of the temple and overturned the tables and said to those selling the doves, "Take these things out of here. Do not make my Father's house into a market place." And the disciples remembered what Scripture had said: "A passion for your House consumes me." So the Jews answered Jesus with these words: "What sign are you going to show us, that you are able to do these

things?" Jesus replied, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up." The Jews answered, "This temple was under construction for 46 years and you say that you are going to raise it again in three days?" But he was speaking of the temple of his body. When Jesus was later raised from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said these words and they believed the Scripture and the word that Jesus had spoken.

Now when he was in Jerusalem at the Passover festival many believed in his name [his claims and his Gospel teaching] when they saw the signs which he was doing. But Jesus did not commit himself to them because he knew the nature of every man. And he did not need anyone to testify about man, because he knew what was in man.

Chapter 3

There was a man from the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a Jewish ruler. He came to see Jesus by night and said to him, "Rabbi, we recognize that you are a teacher commissioned by [sent from] God. No one can possibly do these signs which you are performing, unless God is with him." Jesus replied to him, "I tell you on the authority of God, unless a person is born again, he is unable to see the Kingdom of God." Nicodemus replied, "How is it possible for a person to be born when he is old? Surely he cannot enter his mother's womb a second time and be born again, can he?"

Jesus answered, "On the authority of God I tell you that unless a person is born from water and spirit, he will be unable to enter the Kingdom of God. What has been born of flesh is fleshly and what has been born of spirit is spiritual. Do not be amazed that I told you you must be born again. The wind blows where it wishes and you hear its sound, but you do not know where it comes from and where it goes. So it is with anyone who has been born from the spirit." Nicodemus responded, "How can these things happen?" Jesus replied, "Are you a teacher in Israel, and you do not understand these things? On God's authority I assure you, we speak the things which we know about and witness to the things we have seen, but you do not accept our witness [Gospel]. If I have told you about things on earth and you do not believe them, how will you believe heavenly things if I tell you about them?"

"And no one has ascended to heaven [i.e. gained access to the secrets of God] except the one who has his origin in God, the one who is the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness, in the same way the Son of Man must be lifted up, so that all who believe in him may gain the life of the Age to Come [the life of the Kingdom]."

"God loved the world in this way, that He gave His uniquely begotten Son, so that every person who believes in him should not perish but have the life of the Age to Come. For God did not send His Son into the world

[cause him to be born] for the purpose of condemning the world, but so that the world might be rescued through him. The person who believes in him is not condemned. But the one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the revelation [lit., the name] of God's uniquely begotten Son. This is the reason for condemnation: the light has come into the world and human beings loved darkness rather than light, because their activities were wicked. Every person who does wicked things hates the light and will not come to the light, so that his works will not be exposed. But the one who performs truth comes to the light, so that his works may be demonstrated as performed in the light of God's will."

After these things Jesus and his disciples came into Judea and he stayed there with them and was baptizing people. And John the Baptist was baptizing in Aenon near Salim, because there were many springs there, and people were coming to get baptized. John the Baptist had not yet been thrown into prison. (To be continued.)✧

The Spirits in Prison

by Terry Robinson

The following is an excerpt from *The Theogony of Hesiod*:¹

"(Il. 713-735) And amongst the foremost, Cottus and Briareos and Gyes, hungry for war raised fierce fighting: three hundred rocks, one upon another, they launched from their strong hands and overshadowed the Titans with their missiles, and buried them beneath the wide-pathed earth, and bound them in bitter chains when they had conquered them by their strength for all their great spirit, as far beneath the earth to **Tartarus**. For a brazen anvil falling down from heaven nine nights and days would reach the earth upon the tenth. Round Tartarus runs a fence of bronze, and night spreads in triple line all about it like a neck-cirlet, while above grow the roots of the earth and unfruitful sea. There by the counsel of Zeus who drives the clouds the Titan gods are hidden under misty gloom, in a dank place where are the ends of the huge earth. And they may not go out; for Poseidon fixed gates of bronze upon it, and a wall runs all round it on every side. There Gyes and Cottus and great-souled Obriareus live, trusty warders of Zeus who protect Tartarus."

The above passage, from about 800 B.C., supports the understanding that the spirits in prison and the angels that sinned and were kept in Tartarus, of 1 and 2 Peter, are the sources of mythology — recording the time of the Nephilim in the days of Noah (Gen. 6). Believers need to understand this. Some are still struggling to explain the following:

¹ Translated by Hugh G. Evelyn-White (1914) <http://www.sacred-texts.com/cla/hesiod/theogony.htm>

"If God did not spare heavenly messengers who transgressed, but threw them into Tartarus to be kept in chains of gloomy darkness — reserved until the judgment" (2 Peter 2:4).

"Heavenly messengers who failed to remain within their own dominions, but instead abandoned their appropriate dwelling, he [God] has held in eternal chains within murky darkness until the sentencing of the great day" (Jude 6). The angels indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh (see v. 7).

These passages indeed are mentioned in the account of the Lord Jesus' activity after he was made alive, that is resurrected, by Yahweh. The NIV is less than clear about when Jesus preached to the spirits who were held in jail. Peter described this as something done *after* his resurrection. To be "made alive" means to be resurrected. An uninstructed reader might think that Jesus did the preaching while he was dead!

"For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, to bring you to God. He was put to death in the body [as a human mortal person] but made alive [resurrected] in the spirit. After being made alive, he went and made proclamation to the imprisoned spirits — to those who were disobedient long ago when God waited patiently in the days of Noah while the ark was being built. In it only a few people, eight in all, were saved through water" (1 Peter 3:18-20, NIV).

These "spirits in prison" were "once disobedient in the days of Noah." But Christ did not preach to them at the time of their disobedience.

A word about the use of the word "spirits" for the student: "Spirit" is translated from the same word from which we may translate "breath" or "wind" (*pneuma*) and does not carry the inherent meaning, "disembodied."

"Spirits" are not human beings. They are in the category of created angels. So the angels (heavenly messengers) are called in many translations "ministering spirits" (*pneuma*) in Hebrews 1:14. See the NASB: "Are they [the angels] not all ministering spirits, sent out to render service for the sake of those who will inherit salvation?"

When attention is paid to the fact that angels are called "spirits" by inspired writers, and that some of these spirits (angels) transgressed in the days of Noah, and were held in chains in dungeons of gloomy darkness, while awaiting that great day of sentencing, it is easier to understand the following: That finally Jesus, after being resurrected to the life of immortality, went and proclaimed his glorious victory over sin and death to these wicked beings held for judgment.

We can comprehend that much of ancient mythology was derived from the actual events of this great rebellion and the resultant incarceration of some very powerful beings! This truth should warn righteous persons to

remain faithful to truth, since we have been informed, through inspired writings, preserved also by ancient historians. We must move onward living godly lives and proclaim these important truths. Mythology is sometimes an embroidered account of real history. In this case, it aptly describes a rebellion of old, and the circumstances of Tartarus, corresponding to wicked angels in 2 Peter 2:4 and Jude 6. But we must guard against corruption by Greek mythology, and a resultant blurring of the true identities of the beings involved, and the polytheistic state to which they degraded theology. ✧

Comments

“With regard to the Trinity, it is only lately I do not hold to that concept. The idea of God in 3 persons, preexistence of God the Son and Incarnation are 2nd-century concepts. Jesus is called the Son of God because he was begotten of the Father in the womb of Mary and thus Jesus called God his father (Lk. 1:35). Jesus never claimed to be God. He did however claim to be God’s Messiah who would fulfill the promises made to Abraham and set up the Messianic kingdom that will have no end. Psalm 110:1: “The Lord God (YHVH) said to my [human] lord (*adoni*)...”² The Christ was preexistent in the mind of God as were all things, and in time were brought forth by God through His creative wisdom (*logos*). Jesus our Lord, fully man, begotten in the womb of Mary, whose God is his Father and now ours by becoming sons of God (born again), announced the Kingdom of God to come and made it a surety by his death, burial and resurrection. The faith of Jesus as well as faith in Jesus results in immortality in that coming Kingdom. Take away Trinity, preexistence and Incarnation and the house of cards with regard to paganism utterly falls. No immortality or migration of souls. No nebulous life somewhere after death, experientialism and intruding in things we think we see, no new age, cosmic Christ, mysticism, reincarnation, traditions and Platonic philosophy. The Messiah must be seen through Hebrew glasses, not Greek, or we miss the obvious. God, whose first son Adam failed, spoke of a Messiah, last Adam, born of the seed of woman, a human Jew brought into existence supernaturally, who was fathered by God. Not ‘God the Son’ who already was, and then birthed, not half man half God, not a non-personal personality which God the Son assumed and then called it man. A man is a man precisely because he is a man. The other is a form of spiritual bestiality. The only true God is ‘the God and *Father* of Jesus the Messiah,’ who is our God appointed by his Father on our behalf. God predetermined a Kingdom of God which the

² *Adoni*, my lord, is in all 195 occurrences never a title for Deity. It is almost always used for a human superior, occasionally an angel.

Father would bestow on him our Messiah as well as promote him as the preeminent one of all creation, for his obedience. God our Father and his Messiah now invite his followers to be joint heirs with him in his coming administration on earth. Not in heaven. Those who refuse will perish.” — *North Carolina*

“Thank you again for the September issue of your unique magazine *Focus on the Kingdom*. It is very effective to me and it made me very happy every month.” — *Philippines*

“I hope you don’t mind me bouncing something off you. I can’t seem to escape from the word ‘deception’; I’m bombarded with it, or the words ‘a gross darkness is over the people.’ And when I think of the doctrine concerning the immortality of the soul, and the teaching of an everlasting burning in hell, this term ‘deception’ echoes even louder. I have heard countless stories concerning people who claim to have seen into heaven, seen the souls of the departed. One guy even claimed to have been taken to hell to see what people suffer at the hands of demons. That CD was a popular evangelism tool in various countries, and I’m sad to say I was part of it. The more I read and learn, the more I am horrified at how deep this deception is, and how I was part of it. But what is the greatest shock for me is how confident back then I was that God was revealing those teachings to me, when in fact, it was nothing but lies, which had their origin in Satan the father of lies. I mean, I would have fought with lions over the belief that those doctrines had been given to me by God Himself, but now I see that it was not God (this has really left a deep impression on me). When I speak to people now concerning the Trinity, etc, and they resist what I am saying, there is an emptiness within their eyes. I believe the eyes give a lot away concerning people, and I regularly see an emptiness, fear, etc looking right back out at me. I can relate to the fear aspect, because I went through that myself when my pet doctrines were being shredded before my very eyes. All those years I thought God was speaking to me and He was not. Shocking! But a smile comes upon my face when I remember how He made me feel uncomfortable with certain beliefs. This later made me check them out and finally reject them. But these last few years have been liberating to say the least!

“P.S. Many people recently have been reached with the message of the kingdom, the oneness of God etc, so again I say, your teachings are not being wasted over here. We have been giving it out wholesale to everyone we meet, either by Facebook chats, one on ones, everyday meetings, etc. Lots of things are happening over here, slowly, but they are still moving.” — *Northern Ireland*

“What would I do without the *Focus* magazine?!” — *Colorado*