

Focus on the Kingdom

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Whatever Happened to Biblical Christianity?

“The first task of exegesis [explaining the Bible] is to penetrate as far as possible inside the historical context(s) of the author and of those for whom he wrote. So much of this involves the taken-for-granted of both author and addresses. Where a modern reader is unaware of (or unsympathetic to) these shared assumptions and concerns it will be impossible to hear the text as the author intended it to be heard (and assumed it would be heard). In this case, a major part of that context is the self-understanding of Jews and Judaism in the first century and of Gentiles sympathetic to Judaism. **Since most of Christian history and scholarship, regrettably, has been unsympathetic to that self-understanding, if not downright hostile to it, a proper appreciation of Paul in his interaction with that self-understanding has been virtually impossible.**”¹

“The hope of the early church centered on the resurrection of the Last Day. It is this which *first* calls the dead into eternal life (1 Cor. 15; Phil. 3:21). This resurrection happens to the man and not only to the body. Paul speaks of the resurrection not ‘of the body’ but ‘of the dead.’ This understanding of the resurrection implicitly understands death as also affecting the whole man...**Thus the original Biblical concepts have been replaced by ideas from Hellenistic Gnostic dualism.** The New Testament idea of the resurrection which affects the whole man has had to give way to the immortality of the soul. The Last Day also loses its significance, for souls have received all that is decisively important long before this. Eschatological [forward-looking] tension is no longer strongly directed to the day of Jesus’ Coming. **The difference between this and the Hope of the New Testament is very great.**”²

“Like all concepts the meaning of religious terms is changed with a changing experience and a changing world-view. Transplanted into the Greek world view, inevitably **the Christian teaching was modified — indeed transformed.** Questions which had never been asked came into the foreground and the Jewish pre-suppositions tended to disappear. Especially were **the**

¹ James Dunn, *Romans 1-8, Word Biblical Commentary*, pp. xiv, xv.

² Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, p. 413-14.

Messianic hopes forgotten or transferred to a transcendent sphere beyond death. When the empire became Christian in the fourth century, **the notion of a Kingdom of Christ on earth** to be introduced by a great struggle all but **disappeared**, remaining only as the faith of obscure groups. Immortality — the philosophical conception — took the place of the resurrection of the body. Nevertheless, the latter continues because of its presence in the primary sources, but it is no longer a determining factor, since its presupposition — **the Messianic Kingdom on earth — has been obscured.** As thus the background is changed from Jewish to Greek, so are the fundamental religious conceptions...We have thus a peculiar combination — the religious doctrines of the Bible run through the forms of an alien philosophy.”³

“The primary kinship of the New Testament is not with the Gentile environment, but rather with the Jewish heritage and environment...**We are often led by our traditional creeds and theology to think in terms of Gentile and especially Greek concepts.** We know that **not later than the second century** there began the systematic effort of the Apologists to show that the Christian faith perfected the best in Greek philosophy...A careful study of the New Testament must block any trend to regard the New Testament as a group of documents expressive of the Gentile mind. This book’s kinship is primarily and overwhelmingly with Judaism and the Old Testament...**The New Testament speaks always of disapproval and usually with blunt denunciation of Gentile cults and philosophies.** It agrees essentially with the Jewish indictment of the pagan world.”⁴

“Although the acute form of the secularization of Christianity in gnosticism was rejected, yet **the Church...continued to lose more and more its primitive character and to be conformed to its environment in the Graeco-Roman culture.** The process was advanced by the Apologists [spokesmen for the faith in the second century], seemed to suffer a check in the influence of Irenaeus, but was stimulated in the Alexandrian school of theology...This development brought about the definite transformation of the rule of faith into the compendium of a Greek philosophical system...We cannot assume that the faith as delivered to

³ G.W. Knox, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed. Vol. 6, p. 284.

⁴ F.V. Filson, *The New Testament Against its Environment*, pp. 26, 27, 43.

the saints was adequately and finally expressed in these Greco-Roman intellectual forms...That the faith was expressed in ecclesiastical dogma always without obscuration or distortion cannot be maintained...That the Christian organism could not escape being affected by, in adapting itself to, its Graeco-Roman environment must be conceded; that this action and reaction were not only necessary but a condition of progress may be conjectured...This does not however exclude the frank recognition of the fact that there were characteristics of the Greek speculative genius and the practical Roman ethos not altogether harmonious with the distinctive character of the Gospel, so that **there was perversion amidst the progress in the subsequent development** — the salt in seasoning did lose some of its savour. Greek metaphysic and Law **misrepresented** as well as expressed the Gospel.”⁵

“Christians have largely lost the sense of Jesus’ Messiahship. **And they have largely lost the Messianic vision.** The Greek word ‘Christos’ means ‘the anointed one’ and is the literal translation of the Hebrew ‘Mashiach’ — Messiah...Christians who think or speak of Christ almost forget the Semitic word and the ideas which the name translates; in fact they forget that Jesus is primarily the Messiah. The very idea of Jesus’ Messiahship has passed from their minds. Having lost the original sense of the word ‘Christ,’ many Christians have also lost the Messianic vision, i.e., the expectation of the divine future, the orientation towards **what is coming on earth** as the denouement of the present era of history.”⁶

William Strawson, a tutor in Systematic Theology and the Philosophy of Religion, made a detailed study of *Jesus and the Future Life* and dedicated 23 pages to an examination of the word “heaven” in Matthew, Mark and Luke. He concluded:

“In few, if any, instances of the use of the word ‘heaven’ is there any parallel with modern usage. The gospel records of our Lord’s life and teaching **do not speak of going to heaven**, as a modern believer so naturally does. Rather the emphasis is on that which is ‘heavenly’ coming down to man...Our modern way of speaking of life with God as being life ‘in heaven’ is not the way the gospels speak of the matter. **Especially is there no suggestion that Jesus is offering to his disciples the certainty of ‘heaven’ after this life.**”⁷

What can you do to warn your friends and family about this devastating departure of “Church” from the saving teachings of Jesus?✧

⁵ A.E. Garvie, “Christianity,” *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, 1910, Vol. 3, p. 588.

⁶ Lev Gillet, cited by Hugh Schonfield in *The Politics of God*, p. 50-51.

⁷ Strawson, *Jesus and the Future Life*, 1959, p. 38.

A Kingdom-less Gospel

Are you suitably jolted into action, to do what you can to alert people to this loss of Jesus and the central saving Gospel of the Kingdom which he always preached (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43)?

Note what distinguished commentators admit the Church has *not* been doing:

“Every generation finds something in the Gospel which seems to have been overlooked in the previous age and in all previous ages of the church. The great discovery of the age in which we live [1900s] is the immense prominence given in the gospel to the **Kingdom of God**. To us it is quite extraordinary that it figures so little in the theology and religious writings of almost the entire period of Christian history. Certainly in the synoptic Gospels it has a prominence that could hardly be increased...A professed Christianity which omits anything which is essential to the conception of the **Kingdom of God** is a defective Christianity” (William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury).⁸

In his book, *Church Growth and the Whole Gospel*, Peter Wagner cites George Eldon Ladd as saying that “modern scholarship is quite unanimous in the opinion that the **Kingdom of God** was the central message of Jesus.” Wagner then comments:

“If this is true, and I know of no reason to dispute it, I cannot help wondering out loud why **I haven’t heard more about it in the thirty years I have been a Christian**. I certainly have read about it enough in the Bible. Matthew mentions the Kingdom 52 times, Mark 19 times, Luke 44 times and John 4. But I honestly cannot remember any pastor whose ministry I have been under actually preaching a sermon on the Kingdom of God. As I rummage through my own sermon barrel, I now realize that I myself have never preached a sermon on it. Where has **the Kingdom** been?”⁹

Arthur Glasser, expert on Christian missions, asked:

“When is the last time you heard a sermon on the **Kingdom of God**? Frankly, I’d be hard put to recall ever having heard a solid exposition of this theme. How do we square this silence with the widely accepted fact that the **Kingdom of God** dominated our Lord’s thought and ministry? My experience is not uncommon. I’ve checked this out with my colleagues. Of course, they readily agree

⁸ *Personal Religion and the Life of Fellowship*, 1926; *The Kingdom of God, A Course of Four Lectures*, 1914.

⁹ The centrality of the Kingdom of God in Jesus’ teaching is emphasized in many contemporary sources, for example in *Christian Religious Education* by the Roman Catholic writer, Thomas Groome (Harper & Row, 1980), pp. 35-55. In footnote 16 to chapter 5, he cites a number of leading contemporary scholars who agree that the **Kingdom of God** dominates everything that Jesus taught.

they've often heard sermons on bits and pieces of Jesus' parables. But as for a solid sermon on the nature of the **Kingdom of God as Jesus taught it** — upon reflection, they too began to express surprise that it is the rare pastor who tackles the subject."¹⁰

These scholars have put their fingers on a fundamental problem of Christianity as we know it. Contemporary evangelism and indeed preaching in general, though supposedly based on the Bible, *do not sound like the teaching of Jesus*. While they continue to use his name, they do not reflect his central theme — the **Kingdom of God**. This remarkable discrepancy was recognized also by the 19th-century German theologian Richard Rothe, who expressed his uneasiness about received methods of expounding the Bible:

"Our key does not open — the right key is lost and until we are put in possession of it again our exposition will never succeed. The system of biblical ideas **is not that of our schools** and so long as we attempt exegesis without it, the Bible will remain a half-closed book. We must enter upon it with other conceptions than those we have been accustomed to think the only possible ones."¹¹

Our purpose is to show that the missing key which unlocks the message of Jesus, and indeed the whole Bible, is the **Kingdom of God**. The key, however, will be ineffective if it is bent out of shape. To make sense of what Jesus taught, we must understand the term "Kingdom of God" as he understood it. If we detach the Kingdom of God from its Jewish, biblical context and attach a new meaning to it, we create a version of Christianity distorted at its very heart.

Without a grasp of **the Kingdom**, which is the axis around which all of Jesus' preaching and teaching revolves, we cannot hope to understand his Gospel message. The candid admissions of the scholars we have quoted suggest that Jesus' principal theme does not hold the central place in the teachings of the churches we call Christian. Indeed it is often omitted entirely! This can only mean that their systems of theology are in need of radical reformation.¹²

¹⁰ *Missiology*, April 1980, p. 13.

¹¹ Quoted by G.N.H. Peters, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, rep. Kregel, 1952, p. 21, emphasis added.

¹² In an article entitled "Preaching the Kingdom of God," the British expositor Dr. I. Howard Marshall of the University of Aberdeen says: "During the past sixteen years I can recollect only two occasions on which I have heard sermons specifically devoted to the theme of the Kingdom of God... I find this silence rather **surprising** because it is universally agreed by New Testament scholars that the central theme of the teaching of Jesus was the Kingdom of God... Clearly, then, one would expect the modern preacher who is trying to bring the message of Jesus to his congregation would have much to say about this subject. In fact my experience has been

Such reformation will happen only when the **Kingdom of God** is: 1) Placed at the center of the salvation message where Jesus always placed it. 2) Defined in its biblical context as firstly the goal of God's salvation program, as the restoration of sound government on earth under the supervision of the Messiah and the saints. This will depend on Jesus' return and the resurrection, at that time, of the faithful of all the ages.

The Kingdom of God must of course be tasted now in advance in the spirit. But the phrase "Kingdom of God" is predominantly the new revolutionary government worldwide, to be introduced by the Second Coming. No verse says we have "inherited the Kingdom of God." Start with Mark 1:14-15 and refer to Daniel 7:14, 18, 22, 27 and then note that entering the Kingdom in Mark is parallel to the time when the wicked are destroyed in the fire of Gehenna. Tell the story of the Kingdom from Luke 19:11-27 where the Kingdom belongs to the future return of Jesus. This parable emphasizes the absolute necessity for believers, if they hope to be in the Kingdom (be saved) to use their talents in the service of the Kingdom now, with urgency. Jesus will say to these, "Well done, you good and faithful servants! I now promote you to governorship over 10 cities" — a very far cry from the popular prospect of playing harps on clouds when you die! Why would you want to "go to heaven" when Jesus is not going to be there? He is going to return to the earth! Faith and love are built on hope (Col. 1:4). What if hope is not clearly defined in our minds? It is obvious that faith and love will be correspondingly weakened and undermined.

This urgently-needed **reformation of the Gospel** might well take its cue from the excellent observation of Professor Burton Scott Easton in his article on "Salvation" in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* (1939):

"Jesus' statement 'the Kingdom of God is at hand' had the inseparable connotation 'Judgment is at hand,' and in this context, 'Repent' (Mark 1:14-15) must mean 'lest you be judged.' Hence our Lord's teaching about salvation had **primarily a future content**: positively, admission into the Kingdom of God, and negatively, deliverance from the preceding judgment [Gehenna fire]."

At present Jesus' saving Gospel message remains unclear in the minds of churchgoers. Those who heard the historical Jesus' call to salvation would have been exposed to a clear, vital message about the coming **Kingdom of God** on earth. Today invitations to salvation contain little or none of this information. A message confined to Jesus' death for sins has replaced Jesus' comprehensive Kingdom Gospel. It appears that the

the opposite, and I have rarely heard about it" (*The Expository Times*, Oct. 1977, p. 13).

original Christian proclamation has suffered an alarming eclipse. Such a situation threatens the life of Christianity itself, since Jesus always made faith or belief in his Gospel Message the condition of salvation (cp. Heb. 2:3; John 3:36; John 12:44ff., etc.).

The amazing absence of the **Kingdom of God** from current presentations of the Gospel was noted by the Roman Catholic scholar B.T. Viviano:

“As a teacher of New Testament literature...it early became obvious to me that the central theme of the preaching of the historical Jesus of Nazareth was the near approach of the **Kingdom of God**. Yet, to my amazement, this theme played hardly any role in the systematic theology I had been taught in the seminary. Upon further investigation I realized that this theme had in many ways been largely **ignored in the theology and spirituality and liturgy of the church in the past two thousand years, and when not ignored, often distorted beyond recognition**. How could this be?”¹³✧

How Strong's Concordance Misleads on God and Trinity

Here is the first part of the entry for *theos* (God) (Strong's #G2316):

- 1) a god or goddess, a general name of deities or divinities
- 2) the Godhead, trinity
 - a) God the Father, the first person in the trinity
 - b) Christ, the second person of the trinity
 - c) Holy Spirit, the third person in the trinity

No text is cited for 2). There are 11,000 occurrences of the words for God (*Elohim, Adonai, YHVH, theos*) and never once do they designate a Triune God. No Bible writer ever meant the Trinity when they said “God.” Note that Strong's will also not show you the crucial difference between *Adonai* (*Lord*) and *adoni* (*my lord*) in Psalm 110:1. Jesus is *adoni*, my lord (lower-case “l”).

Serious confusion arises when Trinitarians try to explain that “Jesus is God,” that God cannot die, but that the Son of God *did* die!

“So when we say that Jesus is God, we are saying that within the one person who is Christ is the human nature and the divine nature. Therefore, we see that Jesus is God because he has both the nature of man and of God. **But when Jesus died on the cross, it was not his divine nature as God that died. It was the human nature that died. Dying is a biological function that was reserved only for the human nature of Christ** when he died on the cross...

“So, Jesus is both divine and human; that is, he is both God and man. When we say that Jesus is God and that Jesus died on the cross, we are not saying that the God-nature died. Rather, we are saying the person of Christ died, and that the person of Christ had divine attributes” (Matt Slick, carm.org).

All this is so much “fog language” based on post-biblical creeds.✧

Has Jesus Been Excluded from the Church at the Most Fundamental Level of Defining the True God?

From *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, edited by Colin Brown:

“The New Testament rests firmly on the foundation of the Old Testament, when it speaks about God. But its emphases are new. He is the God who is near, the Father of Jesus Christ who justifies freely by his grace. His action in election bursts all claims to exclusiveness. But it is the **same God** who reveals Himself here as in the Old Testament, and whose plan of salvation, there promised, comes to fulfillment here. The one God, *o theos*, is the most frequent designation of God in the New Testament. Belief in the one, only and unique God (Matt. 23:9; Rom. 3:30; 1 Cor. 8:4, 6; Gal. 3:20; 1 Tim. 2:5; James 2:19) is an **established part of primitive Christian tradition. Jesus himself made the fundamental confession of Judaism his own and expressly quoted the Shema (Deut. 6:4ff; Mark 12:29ff; cf. Matt. 22:37; Luke 10:27). This guaranteed continuity between the Old and the New Covenant.** For the God whom Christians worship [do they?] is the God of the fathers (Acts 3:13; 5:30; 22:14), the God of Abraham, of Isaac and Jacob (Acts 3:13; 7:32; cf. Matt. 22:32; Mark 12:26; Luke 20:37), the **God of Israel** (Matt. 15:31; Luke 1:68; Acts 13:17; cf. 2 Cor. 6:16; Heb. 11:16), and the **God of Jesus Christ** (2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3; 1 Pet. 1:3)” (Vol. 2).

Dr. L. W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*: “Early Christian Mutation [i.e. the shift from a unitarian to a Trinitarian view of God]. The Shema [Jesus' own creed as the basis of true faith and worship] was of course a **pre-Christian Jewish confession** [so Jesus is pre-Christian!] constructed from Deut. 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Num. 15:37-41. The Greek wording of Deut. 6:4 is especially relevant — ‘The Lord our God is one Lord’” (pp. 93, 162).

Bowman and Komoszewski, *Putting Jesus in his Place*: “If **Judaism** has a creed it is the words of Deuteronomy 6:4-5 — known as the *Shema*, meaning ‘hear,’ the first word of the verse: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’ The Septuagint translated

¹³ *The Kingdom of God in History*, 1988, p. 9.

this [as does the New Testament] ‘The Lord our God is one Lord’ (*kurios eis*). In first-century Judaism the affirmations One God and One Lord were synonymous and referred to the same divine Being, YHVH, the God of the patriarchs, of Moses and of the prophets. **Jesus affirmed the Shema as the first and greatest commandment (Matt. 22:36-38; Mark 12:28-30; Luke 10:25-28), and in that regard Jesus’ view was in the mainstream of Judaism”** (p. 166).

Will no one stand up for Jesus?

Dr. Hugh Anderson, *New Century Bible Commentary on Mark*:

“The opening words of Jesus’ reply to the scribe’s question about the first commandment, ‘Hear, O Israel the Lord is one,’ are the beginning of the *Shema* (Deut. 6:4-9), the prayer which all pious Jews were expected to recite three times daily and which occupied a similar special position in late Judaism to the Lord’s prayer in Christianity [but was this not the confession of the pious Jew Jesus, the founder and model of the original Christian faith?]. Only in Mark among the Synoptics are these words included...Though they are not strictly part of the commandment [but ‘Hear’ is a command!] they are of vital significance and must be presupposed, since it is only because God **is one** that He is worthy of all man’s devotion. That they were retained out of a need to defend monotheism in a Gentile milieu like Mark’s is doubtful...The Markan form goes back to oral tradition passed on by a church **that did not any longer recite the Shema**. But here at least in his statement of the first commandment, **Jesus stands foursquare within the orbit of Jewish piety”** (p. 280).

And yet his followers do not! Who said that the NT Church no longer needed to believe in its founder’s stated creed?

Dr. Harold O. J. Brown, *Heresies*: “...the transition within biblical monotheism, from the unitary monotheism of Israel [and Jesus!] to the Trinitarianism of the Council of Chalcedon. The difference is symbolized by the transition from the prayer *Shema Israel* of Deut. 6:4, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is One Lord...’ to the confession of the Athanasian Creed, ‘We worship one God in Trinity and Trinity in Unity’ [which symbolizes the exclusion of Jesus from the Church, a permanent lapse into paganism].

“Was the transition from the personal monotheism of Israel to the tri-personal theism of Nicea a legitimate development of OT revelation? Christians affirm that it is, holding that Nicea represents a fuller unfolding, not a distortion of the self-disclosure of the God of Israel [and the God of Jesus]. Indeed the Trinitarianism of Nicea and the Christological definition of Chalcedon are seen as the valid and necessary interpretation of the claims of Jesus [the Jesus whose major claim was that his own creed and

the creed of Israel was the *most important* consideration of all!] in the context of the OT witness to the God who is One. [This in an amazing obfuscation, since it is precisely the witness to the unitary monotheism of the OT which Jesus makes the true basis of true faith! (Mark 12:29; John 17:3).]

“Without Nicea and Chalcedon, it would not have been possible to maintain that Christianity is a biblical religion, the legitimate daughter of OT Judaism. Today the clarity and necessity of Chalcedon, if not refuted and disproved, has been widely forgotten and ignored [or has the unitary monotheism of Jesus been widely forgotten and ignored?]

“Christianity took four centuries to formulate its witness to the deity and humanity of Christ in the context of the One God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in such a way that it preserved a coherent approach to the unity of truth. It has taken fifteen centuries more to forget Chalcedon again; as it loses touch with Chalcedon [as once it lost touch with its founder, the unitarian monotheist Jesus], the Christian world is in the process of losing its coherence. It is in fact losing the conviction that that there is any final truth about the one who said, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life’ (John 14:6)” (p. 431).

Yes, the very same Jesus who, as the ultimate teacher of truth, said that the unitary, non-Trinitarian monotheism of his Hebrew heritage was the indispensable foundation of true belief and worship!

Christianity thus turns out to be the only world religion which begins by discarding its own founder’s creed! This is the real incoherence. ✧

A Message to All Children

Think hard about your main task in life. You are all commanded by God and Jesus to “honor your mother and father.” This will guarantee you a long life in the land, and immortality in the Kingdom. What a wonderful world we would have if all children everywhere took to heart this piece of advice!

Think of it this way: In Proverbs 23:19, 22-25, hear these beautiful words and commit them to memory for daily practice:

“Listen, my son [or daughter] and become wise, set your mind on doing things right...Listen to your father who gave you life, and do not despise your mother when she is old. Buy Truth and never sell it. Buy wisdom, instruction and understanding. A good man’s father will rejoice, and he who has a wise son will delight in him. **Give your mother and father cause for delight. Let her who bore you rejoice.”**

The Greatest Career Opportunity of All Time — for You!

Stop and listen! We have some spectacularly good news for you and your family. Some time in the future, Jesus of Nazareth is going to become the world's first successful super-ruler. He will totally reorganize human society, and produce the peace on earth which we all long for. Under Jesus' government, the Kingdom of God, who is the Father of Jesus (Luke 1:35), there will be no more wars, no more famine; no more murder, rape or theft; no more alcoholism and depression; no more divorce; no more poverty; no more child abuse, and no more dishonoring of parents. Does this sound too good to be true? God, the Creator of all things, has personally promised that a Golden Age for all mankind *will* come. He has been promising it since He first placed man on our earth. The arrival of that era of glorious peace and prosperity is guaranteed.

What you have just been told is the heart of the Christian Gospel. Very probably you have not heard it before. You have heard a "reduced" Gospel about "going to heaven when you die."

Nearly 2,000 years ago, Jesus came to announce the dramatically important good news concerning the future divine government on earth. He is coming back to take up his office as world super-ruler — and he is now recruiting men and women to assist him in the administration of his coming Kingdom. He wants you to be a ruler in that Kingdom. He wants us to train now under his supervision for royal office in that coming Kingdom (Matt. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:2; Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; Ps. 37:11, 29: "inherit the earth and live in it forever," and many passages).

There was a time when we did not know that Jesus wants to train men and women now for positions in the world government of the coming New Age on earth. When we found out, our lives were radically changed. We want to share with you what we have discovered about the Christian Gospel — the Good News about God's coming world government.

What a tragedy if you were to allow this greatest of all career opportunities to pass you by. You can so easily neglect the information you have just been given. But don't do it. Do yourself and your family a favor. Check up on the facts. We might just have given you the greatest piece of Truth you have ever heard!

Act now! Find out more about the Christian Gospel/Good News. Peace is coming. And you can help to bring it about. ✧

In the New Testament demons exist! They are real and active. The demons knew that Jesus was the Messiah (Luke 4:41). In general the public did not know this. The attempts of some to get rid of the demons from the text assaults the validity of the narrative of Scripture. This is a form of unbelief.

Jesus spoke to demons and they to him. On one occasion, Mark 9:20, the demon saw Jesus coming and threw the child into convulsions. The demon is an intelligent, evil spirit personality. Mark, in a careful use of grammar, ensures that we understand the demon to be a personality, an evil personality who saw Jesus coming!

Comments

"I am writing to express my appreciation of you and your ministry and to offer encouragement through my testimony. I am delighted to say that my faith has enjoyed a most-welcome transformation. Having been a dedicated churchgoer and Bible teacher in various Trinitarian settings, I have finally recognized how steeped in tradition my theology once was. Though casually entertaining small concerns with my Christology over the years, I had always managed to avoid direct confrontation with them, following in the footsteps of Melancthon and others who decided it was 'better to adore the mysteries of Deity than to investigate them.' It was only at the recent birth of my own son that it was laid upon my heart to truly investigate the Son of God. I awoke a few mornings before my son was born with a single thought on my mind: 'Who do you say that I am?' It is this intensely personal question from Jesus which has not ceased to captivate my mind. I can happily say that my answer now truly aligns with Peter's confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God.

"Believing formerly in a tri-personal Godhead, I humbly admit that I was cut to the heart when I first read Mark 12 with clarity and discovered the Lord Jesus' unabashed statement of faith in the One God of Israel. The idea of God's unity as a single Lord is incredibly exciting to me. The radical simplicity and pervasiveness of God's singularity throughout the Scriptures is a truth which I can now comprehensibly enjoy and meditate on without jumping through the mental hoops of traditional dogma. During my studies, it was refreshing and rightly disturbing to realize how thoroughly I had been immersed in a para-biblical worldview which tragically divorced Jesus from his own identity. Indeed, the traditions of men have returned the revealed Messiah back into the shadows of mystery, but by the grace of God my rejuvenated faith stands as an example that the truth of God and his Son is not out of reach. I now count myself blessed to join the early Christians in 'attaining to all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a

true knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ himself' (Col. 2:2b).

"Your work has proven an indispensable resource to me on this wonderful journey. I want to add my personal appreciation to the many voices who write you each month for your tireless efforts in bringing the good news about the Kingdom and the name of Jesus to Christians all over the world. I have enjoyed your books *Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven* and *The Doctrine of the Trinity*, and look forward to receiving *Focus on the Kingdom* each month. Your courageous work has also greatly encouraged my own writing. I am looking forward to using my gift for the expansion of the Gospel of the Kingdom. I have high hopes for Christianity in this area and I am ready to be put to use in the service of God's Kingdom program. I have come to understand that it is only through a mass-exodus of Christians out of the realm of church tradition and into the land of Scriptural truth that the indefensibly fragmented Body of Christ can ever be mended. If we are to call ourselves followers of Messiah, we must lay hold of and vigorously defend the Jesus that Jesus preached. Thank you for your service to the Church." — *Texas*

"Thank you for everything you do to move the word forward." — *Illinois*

"May God bless you and your work for the Kingdom! I have been receiving your publication for a while and learned quite a bit about the Gospel of the Kingdom, and now I am a true follower of the one sent by God to save us, the lord Jesus." — *Brazil*

"I have been a student of yours through *Focus on the Kingdom* for many years. I don't know how it started coming but I'm thankful it did. It took me some time to relearn but after I learned 'what I didn't know' I had an easier time of it." — *Youtube*

"Wow! That's how I feel today, after reading extensive material from you and your colleagues. I am currently reading *The Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus*. I have previously written to you, about a year or 2 ago, but could not let go of the idea that Jesus is God as I had been taught since I was little. In my journey, the thing that bothered me the most was when I knelt down to pray and then the question in my mind would be, 'Who do I pray to?' Jesus clearly taught the disciples that when they pray, they should say, 'Our Father in heaven.' My mind would cram every time I heard someone in church pray to Jesus as God, or if I found myself doing it, it felt awkward, contradictory. Your material has shed much light on the subject. I find reading the Book of Revelation easier to understand." — *South Africa*

"I consume the newsletters so eagerly; this time my heart cried and I shed tears when I read the comments of others out there wanting to walk in the truth as well, turning away from the 'orthodox' concepts when they see

clearly that they are not scriptural but rather pagan/Greek in origin, isolated but alive and kicking. I could relate so well to the woman who wrote from Australia. I really get a strong sense that these are my brothers and sisters, and I wish I could meet each one. If not in this age, then in the age to come; there is hope! Until then I feel united in spirit/in purpose with them. Keep up the good work, Anthony, and all there in Georgia, and all the brethren to the ends of the earth. May God grant us the perseverance to spread the Gospel (the Good News) with boldness and in love and wisdom, until Christ's (Messiah's) return; and may we be found faithful, pure and blameless, walking in love, at his Great Coming. If we are in that love, we need not fear the Day of the Lord, but rather we eagerly look for it. I pray this for all of us as we work out our salvation with fear and trembling. Keep encouraging each other and keep your eyes on the prize; it will be so worth anything you may suffer/lose in this age." — *Washington*

"I am absolutely blown away by the weight of apostolic revelation in your book, *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah*. I am blown away, at a loss of breath, overwhelmed, excited, overjoyed, amazed at the sheer weight of revelation in this book. I feel like hopping on the next plane and come and sit at your feet and ask you to teach me. I am totally at a loss of words. I feel like buying 10 million copies of this book and give it to every person I see, together with a copy of a good translation of the Bible. I am eternally grateful for having the privilege to be alive and come to know the things concerning God, His Christ and His Kingdom. If I had all the money in the world, I would found an international TV station and international radio station and just ask you to speak. I am overwhelmed! I am currently at work reading a copy of the book from a download on your site, Restoration Fellowship. O may the God of heaven, the glorious Father and His blessed Son, the Lord Jesus Christ continue to bless you with the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. May He bless your family, your house and all who are with you." — *South Africa*

For a most encouraging account of the biblical unitarian faith of Jesus, do read Eric Chang's book *The Only True God*, available to read for free online at theonlytruegod.org

Correction from May issue, page 1, footnote 5

"Grace in the NT means a weakening of the importance of the truth" **should be** "Grace in the NT **does not** mean a weakening of the importance of the truth!"