

Focus on the Kingdom

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Thinking about “The word was with GOD” in John 1:1

When John in his gospel wants to say that one *person* is next to or with another *person*, he does **not** use the Greek preposition *pros* (translated “with” in John 1:1). But in John 1:1 John **does use** the preposition *pros*. John writes that the word was “with God.” Thus John did *not* write, “In the beginning was the SON of God [a person] and the SON of God was with GOD [person with person].”

If John had written “In the beginning *the Son* was with God (the Father),” that of course would make two GODS and break the fundamental rule of Scripture that GOD is a single Person.

It would also contradict flat, the wonderful accounts of the *origin* of the Son of God by miracle in Mary some 2000 years ago. Luke 1:35 and Matt. 1:18, 20 (“begotten in her”) inform us with simple clarity that the Son of God *began to exist* in the womb of Mary. This is true of all human beings. Jesus was a human being, not an “average” human being, but still a human being. He is “the man Messiah Jesus.” Paul said this beautifully and simply in 1 Timothy 2:5 where he repeats the true Christian creed: “There is one God [the Father], and one mediator between that God and man, the man Messiah Jesus.”

We need to repeat our point: John did not contradict Matthew and Luke by teaching that the Son of God was literally with God from eternity. John did not write “the Son was with the Father.” He wrote “the word was in God’s mind” — fully expressive of God’s plan and purpose.

Jesus defined God as “one single Lord” in Mark 12:29: “The Lord our God is one Lord” — agreeing with a fellow Jew about the most important of all commands! And we all know that Jews were never Trinitarians. They believed God was a single divine Self/Person. Jesus taught and rehearsed this in prayer (as we should) that the Father is “the only one who is true God” (John 17:3). That excludes Jesus from being the One God! “The Father is the only ONE who is true GOD.” Jesus is not God but *the Son* of God (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18, 20). John 17:3 proclaims that Jesus Christ is the fully accredited agent of the One God, the Father. Jesus was sent by God as agent of the One God.

Look again at John 1:1. “In the beginning was the word [not Word!] and the word was *with* God.” The word

was *pros* God. If John had wanted us to believe that this means one person was with another person he would have used the preposition *para* (with) or *meta* (with). Why? Because those are the pronouns he used elsewhere in his gospel to describe one person with another person. Thus (show your friends this) John 1:39: “They stayed *with* (*para*) him for the day.” 4:40: “They asked him to stay *with* (*para*) them.” 14:17: “He remains *with* (*para*) you.” 14:23: “We will come and make our residence *with* (*para*) him.” 14:25: “These things I have spoken to you while remaining *with* (*para*) you.” John also uses the preposition *meta* (with) in 3:22: “they remained *with* (*meta*) them.” 3:25: “a discussion *with* (*meta*) a Jew.”

So then this shows us that if John wanted to say “In the beginning was the Son and the Son was with the Father,” he would have used *meta* or *para*, *for person with person*. But John meant in fact that the word/plan/intention of God was with (*pros*) GOD, in the mind of God. In the same way Paul wrote in Galatians 2:5: “so that the truth of the Gospel [not a person!] might remain *with* (*pros*) you.” The meaning is “in your mind, in your consciousness.”

Thus in John 1:1 the word or Gospel-plan was in God’s mind, fully expressive of God, the Father. The word was in relation to [*pros*] God, was God’s concern.

The capitalization of “Word” in many translations for *logos* (word) misleads the reader into believing that GOD was with GOD. How many Gods is that? More than one. The universe is shaken by polytheism.

(For a striking account of how a former Trinitarian scholar came to see the truth of our point here, please read free on the internet Eric Chang, *The Only True God* at theonlytruegod.org)

Most of the English translations from the original Greek *before* the KJV in 1611 spoke of “word” (lower-case w) and not “Word.” And they translated correctly, “All things were made by *it*,” the word, not by *him*, the Son — contradicting the rest of the Bible (see July, 2004 *Focus* at our website for complete list).

It is interesting that in John 1:5 he speaks of the light. The light is a thing, not a person. The pronoun is neuter (*auto*). But once Jesus comes on the scene, the light becomes a person (*auton*, him) in verse 10. The Son appears fully in verse 14 and is the uniquely begotten SON — certainly not a second GOD! The Bible is based on the unitary monotheism of Jesus and his Jewish heritage (Deut. 6:4 = Mark 12:29).

John 1:18 reports, “No one has ever seen GOD [the Father], but the uniquely begotten SON has revealed the Father.” It would be nonsense to say that “no one has ever seen GOD, but we all saw Jesus who *is* GOD!”

John, remember always, defines that Father as “the only one (*monos*) who is true GOD” (17:3). The word “only,” as we all know from an early age, restricts and limits and excludes all others! Jesus is the Son of God who was sent (John 17:3) but he cannot be “the only one who is true GOD” — the Father.

It is instructive to see how muddled and contradictory Trinitarian Dr. James White becomes when he tries to avoid the obvious in John 17:3. He writes in his book *The Forgotten Trinity*: “What of the phrase ‘the only true God’ (John 17:3)?” He forgets to tell you that this phrase from Jesus is addressed to the Father: “**You, Father**, are the only true God.” White then asks, “Doesn’t this mean that Jesus isn’t God? Of course not.”

But of course it obviously *does* mean that Jesus isn’t God! If the Father is the *only one* who is true God, everyone else is excluded. Dr. White has been using language like this (involving “only”) all his life without the slightest confusion. But here he is driven by the Trinity! He is forced into an obvious misuse of easy language. He goes on to repeat his tradition that Father and Son both share the one Being of God. But Jesus does not say anything like this.

Jesus knows nothing of the language of “Being.” Jesus knows nothing of the language of “Essence.” Dr White thinks that his Triune God is “one *what*” (*The Forgotten Trinity*, p. 27). But Jesus has a different concept entirely in John 17:3: “The Father [one single Person] is the only one [a single Person, excluding all other p/Persons] who is [a single Person] true God [a single Person].” All quite straightforward until a contradictory tradition (post-Bible) was introduced to complicate and confuse the monotheism of Jesus.

Well did scholar and teacher Franz-Josef Ohlig write in his very informative book *One or Three: from the Father of Jesus to the Mystery of the Trinity*: “Jesus himself stood in the tradition of Jewish monotheism...His thinking and acting were geared toward this one God...It is certain that the doctrine of the Trinity as it became dogma...has no biblical foundation whatsoever” (p. 121, 130).✧

“To love a god that would send another to a place of endless anguish is akin to pretend to love the school-yard bully to prevent personal abuse. Protestations that those going to hell do so as a matter of choice are nothing more than additional faulty logic. No human in sane control of their thought processes would send others to eternal punishment for any kind of crime. Nor would they stand idly by allowing it to happen without protest of some kind” (Atheist Foundation of Australia).

Studies in the Future and God’s Final Intervention

Intelligent Bible study is a “connect the dots” exercise. You read certain words or phrases in one part of the Bible and you connect them with similar language somewhere else. Key words link to the same key words.

An easy example would be comparing the three versions of the all-important parable of the sower. The different details offered by the three writers (Matthew 13, Mark 4 and Luke 8) should be put together to form a composite whole, a complete and illuminating picture. Matthew defines the Gospel as the “word **about the Kingdom**” (Matt. 13:19). Mark and Luke refer to the same Gospel of the Kingdom as “the word” (Mark 4:14) and “the word of God” (Luke 8:11).

This material is immensely instructive for our Christian lives and understanding the mind of Jesus. The Gospel words and word of Jesus are life-imparting truth and energy (1 Thess. 2:13: the Gospel *energizes*). They plug us in to the very life of God Himself and His creative energy. They link us to the very life of the ascended Jesus who is now “a life-imparting spirit-personality” (1 Cor. 15:45) at the right hand of the Father (Ps. 110:1). This leads eventually to the Life of the Age to Come — badly translated in most versions as “eternal life,” which is much too vague! Bishop Tom Wright in his recent *Kingdom New Testament* gives us “the life of the age to come” as does Ray Faircloth in his fine rendering of the NT in his *Kingdom of God Version*.

Let us now apply the connect-the-dots procedure to a very fascinating phrase which occurs only 4 times in the Bible, three times in the OT and once in Paul in Romans 9:28. The phrase is about the final execution of God’s great work on the earth at the time of the future arrival of God’s Son Jesus to inaugurate the Kingdom worldwide (see Luke 19:11ff, etc).

Paul is talking about how God is going to save a repentant remnant of now blinded Israelites, those whom today we call Jews. “Isaiah cries out concerning Israel [the Israelites, the present Israel of the flesh, I Cor. 10:18]: ‘Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the **remnant** that will be saved. For the Lord will **execute His work on the earth thoroughly and quickly**’” (margin of NASU: “**finishing it and cutting it short,**” Romans 9:27-28).

This sounds indeed like the final intervention of God through Jesus at the future coming of the Messiah. Paul in this passage in Romans 9 is quoting the Old Testament passage in Isaiah 10:23. Paul quotes from the Greek version, the LXX. If we start in Isaiah 10:20 and read a few verses you will easily hear the connection to Romans 9:

“Now in that [future] day the remnant of Israel and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped will **never again rely on the one who struck them [a final Assyrian anti-Christ oppressor of Israel], but will truly rely on the LORD, the Holy One of Israel [this is certainly not true of Israelites today!]. A remnant will return [and repent], a remnant of Jacob, to the mighty god [the Messiah, the great hero of Isa. 9:6].** For though your people, O Israel, may be like the sand of the sea, *only a remnant* will return; a destruction is determined, overflowing with [resulting in] righteousness [peace on earth in the Kingdom!]. For **a complete destruction, one that is decreed**, the Lord God of Hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land. Therefore thus says the LORD GOD of Hosts, ‘O my people, do not be afraid of the Assyrian who strikes you’” (Isa. 10:20-24).

Now search out the parallel (connect the dots) passage in Isaiah 28:21-22: “The LORD GOD will rise up...to do His task, His unusual task, and to work His work, His extraordinary work...For I have heard from the LORD GOD of Hosts of **a decisive destruction** on all the earth.”

Please note that the language in Romans 9:28, Isaiah 10:23 and Isaiah 28:22 contains a unique Hebrew phrase found only here and, as we shall show, in one other place — in Daniel 9:27, the final “week of years” of the famous 70 “weeks” (490 years) prophecy.

The time setting indicates God’s *future*, final, decisive intervention in the affairs of man, and particularly of Israel in the Middle East. This is going to involve a **final, complete destruction** of the unrepentant and the salvation of a remnant of repentant true believers.

Now look at the amazing connection to Daniel 9:27. Daniel, in fact writing later than Isaiah, quotes Isaiah in reference to the **final, decisive completion and destruction**. Daniel 9:27 reads: “And he [the wicked prince who in v. 26 will destroy the city and sanctuary and *whose end* will come with the flood of judgment] will make a strong covenant with the many for one [final] week [seven years]. But in the middle of the week [seven years] he will put an end to sacrifice and grain offering, and on the wing of abominations he comes desolating, until a **complete destruction, one that is decreed**, is poured out on the desolator.”

If we compare these four passages, two from Isaiah, one from Daniel and one from Paul, we see the same language about **final, decisive destruction and end**. After this “Israel will never again rely on the one [the Assyrian] who struck them” (Isa. 10:20), but will rely on Messiah and his Father who is God. This will be the time when the Kingdom of God will be inaugurated worldwide by the returning Jesus (see always, as a key passage to begin your Kingdom studies, Luke 19:11-27).

Paul sees this final, end-time intervention and completion of God’s work as the time when a remnant of now blinded Israelites will come to repentance. *The return of Israel to the land in 1948 has been largely misunderstood to be the fulfillment of the passages in Isaiah 10:23 and 28:22.* The Bible looks forward massively to the future return and repentance of a remnant of Israelites *in faith* in their Messiah! This has not happened yet. Israel has returned in unbelief, not yet accepting the Messiah Jesus. A return in unbelief is interesting as making possible the fulfillment of much prophecy in the future. But a return in *unbelief* is not the return detailed in the Bible in passage after passage.

The present true spiritual “seed of Abraham” (Gal. 3:29; Phil. 3:3; Gal. 6:16) are for Paul the international body of true believers. “If you belong to Christ *then* you are Abraham’s seed and heirs [of the Kingdom] according to the promise” (Gal. 3:29). God had promised that those who bless the seed of Abraham, who are in NT times the international believers (Gal. 3:29) would be blessed, and those who curse that spiritual seed of Abraham would be cursed.

For the moment the physical Israelites, Jews today as normally called, have forfeited the right to be seed of Abraham. *But* God has not forgotten His promise, for the sake of Abraham, that a remnant of them will finally come to faith, under the refining pressure of the future Great Tribulation (for grim details read Zech. chapters 13 and 14). The awful story ends with the happy survival of a remnant who will enjoy the full blessings of the future Kingdom of God on earth. At that time everyone will learn to believe that YHVH, the God of Israel and of Jesus, is the *only true God* and that the Messiah is his uniquely begotten Son (see John 17:3 and Zech. 14:9).

Paul’s quotation of the “**final and complete end and destruction**” passage in Romans 9:28, quoted from those key eschatological (i.e. future, end time) passages in Isaiah 10 and Isaiah 22 and Daniel 9:27, show that Paul understood that “**final and decisive**” intervention of God, found in the last future week of the 490 years prophecy of Daniel, as still future. He knew that God’s **final and complete and decisive** end-time activity, described as part of the final “week” of Daniel 9:24-27, was future, just before the Second Coming of Jesus. Paul and Daniel did not imagine this final and decisive end event to be either 33 AD or 70 AD, when a great disaster happened to Israel which did not produce the Kingdom of God on earth!

Let me leave you with the actual Hebrew words describing this final end-time decisive event. The Hebrew for the **final, decreed and decisive end-time destruction**

sounds like this: *kalah ve necheratzah*.¹ You will find this most instructive phrase only in Isaiah 10:23, Isaiah 28:22, Daniel 9:27 and the equivalent in Greek in Romans 9:28.

Connect these dots and increase your vision of what is coming on earth at the return of Jesus. The true coming of the Kingdom is a solution to all the world's terrible problems.

There is no *pre*-tribulation rapture/resurrection event in Scripture. Jesus will return after the cosmic signs which follow the end of the future Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:29-31). Paul warned strongly against any false belief that Christ would return *before* the appearance of the Man of Sin, who will sit in *the* (not *a*) temple of God claiming that he is God or a god.

The definite article on "temple" in 2 Thessalonians 2:4, "the temple," strongly suggests a real building. When Paul introduces the *figurative* use of "temple" for individual Christians or the church as a body, he speaks of *a* temple, not *the* Temple.

Only a "passion for the truth in order to be saved" (2Thess. 2:10) will be able to protect anyone from deception. The time to prepare is now, for you and your children. Constant meditation on and constant conversation about the great truths of the Bible are the best safeguard against being scammed (Ps. 1; Josh. 1:8). Children, and anyone else, can memorize Psalm 1! The words of Deuteronomy 6:6-7 admonish us all to be ever conscious of the words of God and His unique agent the Messiah. Jesus gave fair warning in John 12:44-48 that we are to be judged by the standard of his words. ✧

Luke 4:36: "What is this word (*logos outos*) which with authority and power he commands the unclean spirits, and they come out?"

Note that "word," as also in John 1:1, is not a person distinct from the Father. The word is the spoken utterance of the Father and Jesus expresses that word most perfectly in his Gospel of the Kingdom word.

"Is it possible, then, that we have manufactured our own difficulty by leaving Logos [John 1:1] untranslated, as though it were a proper noun, and that bold translation would resolve the problem. 'In the beginning was a purpose, a purpose in the mind of God, a purpose which was God's own being.' It is surely a conceivable thought that God is wholly identified with his purpose of love, and that this purpose took human form in Jesus of Nazareth." (G.B. Caird, *The Language and Imagery of the Bible*, Westminster Press, 1980, p. 102)

¹ If you want an introduction to Hebrew in about 6 hours (an hour each week) via Skype, let us know.

Easy, Basic Bible Vocabulary

This statement from the state-of-the-art in good scholarship (*Word Biblical Commentary*) reflects our own teaching perfectly:

"Luke continues to underline the public impact of Jesus. 'The word of God' is a comprehensive designation of the Christian Message applied both to Jesus' preaching and to Christian evangelism in Acts. It is God's message [God's Gospel in Mk. 1:14] which is spoken by Jesus, as in Christian evangelism" (*Word Biblical Commentary* on Luke, Vol. 1, p 221). That Gospel is **the Gospel of the Kingdom**, and its shorthand equivalent is "the word," or "word of God."

The public does not know this and so misses the meaning of the Gospel in the NT. "Word of God" has been diluted to mean vaguely the Bible! Rather, the Bible calls itself Scripture. "Word of God" is the all-powerful "word about the Kingdom" (Matt 13:19). It is the essential seed of immortality, a package of dynamic information which brings us into harmony with God's great plan and intention to bestow immortality on those who choose to obey Him and His Son Jesus (John 3:36; 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 John 7-9).

Obedience is the great key to success. Jesus made this clear time after time. In John 3:36 Jesus said that refusal to obey him is unbelief. Believing in Jesus or believing Jesus is exactly equivalent to obeying him. Otherwise the wrath of God rests on us — ready to strike the disobedient.

Note the constant framework of obedience in NT teaching. "The obedience of faith" frames the book of Romans (1:5 and 16:26). "To him who continues in well doing... I am coming and my reward is with me" (Rom. 2:7; Rev. 22:12).

One of the most striking examples of disobedience currently comes from a camp which denies the importance of water baptism, a simple response to a simple command of Jesus and the apostles (Matt. 28:19-20).

Jesus was baptized in water. Jesus baptized others in water and he commanded water baptism until the end of the age. Any discouragement of water baptism brings a person into a position, regrettably, of disobedience. ✧

No Need to Think There Are Two Advocates/Comforters/Mediators

In John's Gospel Jesus spends time explaining that he was going to leave them and go to the Father (not "go *back*" to the Father as wrongly inserted into some translations like the NIV in John 13:3, 16:28; 20:17). Jesus said that though he was leaving, "I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:18). You see clearly the promise that he, Jesus, will come to

them *in spirit*, not as until then he had been *physically* with them in tangible presence. In the same context in which he says that he is going to leave but will not abandon them as orphans, note that he promises, “I will come to you.” Jesus came to them in the spirit, and so Paul can even say “the Lord is the spirit” (2 Cor. 3:18).

In that same context in John it is the famous Consoler, Comforter, Advocate (*parakletos*, one called alongside to assist and plead for a person) about which Jesus speaks. The word “Comforter” appears 4 times in the gospel of John. It is a spiritual presence which will be with the disciples. Compare the great statement in Matthew: “I will be with you to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:19-20).

In 1 John 2:1, a text much neglected, we read that the Comforter, Consoler, Advocate (*parakletos*) is Jesus Christ! So in the writings of John the holy spirit, comforter is Jesus himself, returned not physically or visibly, but in invisible presence. Thus the disciples are not abandoned as orphans. (An orphan lacks a parent, and Jesus was for the disciples, and for us, a father, teacher figure as well as brother. He is not of course *the* Father, but he had spiritual children whom he taught.)

There is no evidence of a *third Person* in a Trinity in the writing of John or any NT writer. The holy spirit is never worshiped or prayed to and never sends any greetings!

Paul has the same notion that the spirit of God working in his life is in effect the very spirit of Jesus. This does not mean that Jesus *is* God, which would make two who are God. It does mean that the operational presence of Jesus, “the spirit of Jesus” operates in the lives of the true believers to guide, instruct and comfort (Phil. 1:9; Acts 16:7).

It is unnecessary to think of *two* advocates. Jesus is identified as the Advocate, Comforter, Vindicator, Consoler, in 1 John 2:1. **John thus interprets his own references to Comforter/Advocate in John chapters 14-16.**

Paul actually says that “the Lord is the spirit” in 2 Corinthians 3:18. The Lord here is the Lord Jesus. The effects of the spirit of Jesus and the spirit of God are not distinguished. They are one in effect.

Paul says that the risen and exalted Jesus has now become **a life-imparting spirit (1 Cor. 15:45)**. Jesus is no longer a flesh and blood human being but he is an immortalized human being, still a man but a man who has been given immortality and a spiritual body. Christians will likewise at the resurrection receive a spiritual body. We will still be identifiable as who we are, but our bodies will be given new spiritual capacities which we do not have now. We will still be able to eat and drink and experience our surroundings, but we will have a body that is spiritual (1 Cor. 15:42, 44).

Jesus is centrally important for us all. Yes, the Father has given him all this authority. Jesus can be prayed to also. John 14:14: “If you ask me [Jesus] anything in my name, I will do it.” Christians call on the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 1:2). The Father is of course also and very often to be addressed in prayer.

Revelation chapters 4 and 5 can be consulted often to see who the two *great* personages are in heaven. There is the one and only God, who is the Father, and next to Him at His right hand is the Son of God, the *adoni* of Psalm 110:1, who is lord Messiah, not the Lord GOD! That Lord Messiah was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:11), and all Bible students should know that GOD cannot be born! Nor can GOD die. He is immortal. Jesus, the Son of God, died (Rom. 5:10).

All this makes perfect and easy sense of the creed which Jesus taught us is the most important of all truths. “The Lord our God is one Lord” (Mark 12:29). Certainly not two or three Lords in one. This is a much later confusing development under the influence of Greek philosophy. Jesus and Paul knew nothing about the Trinity. “The evolution of the Trinity: No responsible NT 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 NT. It was in fact slowly worked out in the course of the first few centuries in an attempt to give an intelligible doctrine of God” (Dr. A.T. Hanson, Professor of Theology, University of Hull, *The Image of the Invisible God*, SCM Press, 1982). ✧

It Matters What We Believe and Teach by Robin Todd, Washington

There are an alarming number of pastors, teachers, and believers who seem to ask if it really matters what we believe when it comes to attaining immortality or salvation. Some wonder if perhaps we can even believe one thing as Biblical truth, but at the same time accept other ideas as having equal authority with the Bible when it comes to salvation. This can be a dangerous delusion.

One predominant concern that fuels this question is that God surely would not condemn billions of people to utter annihilation just because they didn't have the right information in order to make that right decision for salvation. Of course, for those of us who have a “wider hope” for a deceived and ignorant human population, this is not a fear that we have to begin with (and I don't mean “universalism” — the idea that everyone is bound to be saved). But setting aside the issue of “wider hope” for the moment, let's look closer at the conclusion reached by some that there is no salvation-determining difference in what people believe. We need to find out where that notion ultimately comes from. Many may have laid hold of this concept out of a concern for the welfare of fellow

human beings. But there may be a more sinister origin for it. It may be deeply rooted in unwarranted fear.

A little-consulted verse in Hebrews 2:14-15 says that Jesus partook of flesh and blood, “that through death he might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the Devil, and might free those who through *fear of death* were subject to slavery all their lives.” Notice it is through the *fear* of ultimate rejection (final death) that human beings were brought into a condition of sin and corruption, and continue therein. This surely takes us back to the Genesis 3 affair between Eve and Satan in the Garden of Eden.

There Satan, the supernatural wicked personality who devised the fatal lie told to Eve, wanted to re-hash and bring into question an initial article of faith between God and His children, concerning which trees they could eat from and which they couldn't.

To his question, “Did God say you shall not eat of any tree of the garden?” Eve answers, “Yes, we may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden, but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die’” (Gen. 3:2-3).

First this arch-deceiver subtly called Eve's attention to the one thing she and her husband could not have, and focused her on a distorted, fear-based relationship with God, rather than a faith/love-based one (there is no fear in love, 1 John 4:18). Note the fear indicated in Eve's response. At the very least, her somewhat exaggerated response was an indication of her focus.

Next, from that fearful position Satan simply assured them that whether they ate or not, they would not die. In other words, don't worry about it, it doesn't make any difference what you believe, the outcome will be the same either way — immortality. He was not asking them to doubt God's intention that they live forever by following His plan. He wasn't suggesting that the truth was wrong, but he *was* suggesting that a person would also have that same immortality through knowledge they could obtain outside God's approved format and plan. This deceiver's subtlety knows no bounds! According to him, this was a win/win proposition! To eat or not to eat was no longer the question. Either choice could lead to life. It really didn't matter...so they were tempted to believe.

Driven then by fear, a decision was made that would supposedly alleviate that fear. They ate of the forbidden tree. Doing so caused the children immediately to possess a sense of shame for their imperfect and incomplete condition, and to hide from God out of a fear that was anything but alleviated. This is what happens when we step out of that predetermined grace and faith-filled relationship with our Father. A child doesn't need to have this kind of shame and compounded fear when he/she is inside the parentally-based relationship God intends for

us. However, the system we have all lived in for millennia is not a parentally-based one. Finding ways to self-justify has become the lifelong pursuit of humanity, resulting in a plethora of religions pouring forth from the hearts of men.

So the whole idea that there can be an acknowledged truth, but that it really doesn't matter for salvation if anyone believes it or believes something else, is a concept born out of fear and doubt. And that fear is Satanic in type and origin, being unwarranted and evil. The situation is summarized well in 1 John 4:18: “There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.” But for those who are of God it is said, “For you have not received the spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of sonship by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’” (Rom. 8:15).

The fear of death sometimes can cause us to become slaves of sin and corruption. This is not where a son or daughter should be dwelling, indeed cannot dwell, and still be a real son or daughter of God in the way He has determined as healthy. One ends up with false law-based systems of one kind or another. But now, stepping out of this fear, we have come back into a parentally-based relationship with God. And this we've done through the hope given to us in Christ Jesus.

Note that “law” in itself is not wrong. We are to be as Paul said “within Messiah's Torah” (1 Cor. 9:21). But many substitute their own Moses-based legal system. The NT law for Christians is in the spirit and not in the letter (Rom. 7:6).

We cannot believe something as Biblical truth, and then say that it doesn't matter for salvation whether someone else believes it or not (and therefore, whether we teach it or not). This is not only a dishonest violation of conscience, but it is an argument driven by fear and doubt. It is precisely the same thinking which presented itself in the very beginning of our history when the enemy of God confronted our first parents. The Gospel of the Kingdom as preached by Jesus and presented to us in the Bible is the very power of salvation (Rom. 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:13), leading us away from that fear, and out of the sin and death that follows it. That Gospel of the **coming Kingdom** and Jesus Christ has not been the subject of this particular paper, but the Church of God is expected to understand what that is. And we, like Paul, should not be ashamed of it, diminish it, or make excuses for it. If we acknowledge there is indeed a truth that has this power to save, then we must also be brave enough to proclaim it without reservations (as in Rom. 1:16).

Perhaps we should be warned by the words of Paul as he draws a connection between what happened in the Garden and more recent subtleties: “I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds

will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ. For if one comes and preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear this beautifully...for such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. No wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness” (2 Cor. 11:3-15).

Let’s not be careless servants of a “different spirit” or a “different gospel.” Let’s not unwittingly promote, disavow, or diminish doctrines and ideas based on fear, but trusting in the One God who has a purpose, and a *specific* plan to carry out that purpose. By believing in and promoting *that* Gospel we are keeping faith with God and are one with His mind and spirit. This *is* the spirit and this *is* the Gospel through which salvation comes, and there is no other. We need not let fear convince us of any “different spirit or gospel.” It *does* make a difference what is believed and what is taught! In fact, the immortality of each human being is determined by it. ✧

**2014 Theological Conference · May 1-4, 2014
Simpsonwood Conference Center, Norcross, GA**

Comments

“We will start meetings in Vienna in September with at least seven people. Your book was very important for all of them! One lady was a member of the Baptist church for 21 years and excommunicated a member, because he became a unitarian after reading your book. Now she is convinced too (and her daughter). She is joined by a Hungarian. They want to start a church in Hungary as well. Exciting times, sometimes overwhelming.”—*Austria*

“The suggestion that ECHAD (one) means THREE is not only poppycock, it is insulting to me as a Jew and it insults my intelligence as a person with a brain. I do not pretend to fathom the depths of the mystery of God, but I know what it says in the Bible and it says God is One. It’s as if I need to prove that the sky is blue or that the word *yamin* [Hebrew for right] really means ‘right’ because there is a movement of nearly two billion people claiming it means ‘left’!” — *Texas*

“I’m reading your book *The Doctrine of the Trinity*. I really enjoy it. I have been a unitarian for a few years now, and recently came out as a unitarian. Many people try and debate with me even though I am not that good at it. The nice ones tell me I am wrong. The not so nice tell me I am going to hell for ever.” — *Colorado*

Practice in any field of endeavor makes perfect. You will gain skill in persuading others of the truth by doing

it daily. There are hundreds of sites and blogs inviting comment. Just plunge in. If we all did this, we can make a difference. There are many out there seeking, and they need to know of other truthseekers and finders.

“Thanks for writing your book *Our Fathers Who Aren’t in Heaven*. I’m enjoying it and thrilled with many of the points you’re making about our traditional views and what the Bible really says about the Kingdom of God. Also, your comments beginning on page 216 regarding the nature of man.” — *Texas*

Our books including this one are currently being recorded by the author for audio listening.

Robin Todd and the Worldwide Scattered Brethren Network is in the business of connecting scattered biblical unitarian believers. One of the ways he is now expanding that effort in his own area of Western Washington is by organizing a fellowship ministry called the Western Washington Church of God (Abrahamic Faith). Starting in August this “moving” ministry will hold Bible Study and worship services once a month in the following locations:

Tacoma, Washington—2nd Sunday of every month from 10:30-12:30. Address is the University Place Senior Citizens Center, 2534 Grandview Dr. W., Tacoma, Washington

Tenino, Washington—3rd Sunday of every month from 10:30-12:30. Address is the Tenino High School at 500 W. 2nd St., Tenino, Washington

Once these start rolling, Robin’s hope is to go north of Tacoma for the 1st and 4th Sundays in two separate locations. Stand by for that information.

Teaching and preaching will be similar to the statement of beliefs held by the Church of God, General Conference. In addition to the faith statement on the Conference website, official teaching from the pulpit could include these majority Conference-church views: 1) Speaking in “tongues” is to speak in human foreign languages (previously unknown to the speaker) and is not a gift common to all members of the body of Christ; 2) there is only one gospel for both the Jews and Gentiles; 3) a post-tribulation rapture/resurrection; 4) the existence of a real, personal Devil and demons; and 5) that questions about days and foods are no longer concerns for the New Testament believer. Although there are, of course, other views on some of these topics, lengthy discussion of these can be pursued in other venues so that all things are done decently and in order as we reach out to individuals and communities who have little or no knowledge of basic Biblical truths. All are welcome, regardless of the views each one holds personally!

If you plan to attend one of these locations, please send Robin an email at robinsings4u@comcast.net or you can call him in Olympia at (360) 701-9219.