

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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22nd Theological Conference

May 2-5, 2013 (Thurs-Sun.)

Simpsonwood Conference Center, Norcross, GA

It is time to make plans for the new year. Once again we urge all of our readers to join us in beautiful Georgia (the weather is spectacular in May) for the 22nd annual Theological Conference. Do not be alarmed at that particular title. This is a gathering of fellow biblical unitarian and Gospel of the Kingdom believers, many of whom will not before have encountered each other face to face. These are Christians of the “radical reformation” belief system. Your presence there, and your personal faith story, have provided the highlights of this event for the past 22 years. You will bless others immensely by your presence at this conference. There will be more formal presentations to instruct and encourage. We plan to have Kermit Zarley with us, author of the significant book on *The Restitution of Jesus Christ*. I am hoping that he will share his very interesting insights on prophecy. We are hoping that Ray Faircloth of the extensive website biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk will be with us. We hope for updates on the growing number of scattered brothers and sisters who are now in contact with each other, thanks to the tireless work of Robin Todd. Details for how to register for this event will be in the *Focus* magazine next month. If there is a demand for this we will offer a post-conference two-day extra Bible instruction.

Join us for Restoration Church of God Bible studies live on Sundays at 10:30 am EST at www.livestream.com/rkitect

Cause for Alarm!

Scholars use a lot of (I think wasted) energy trying to find out what Jesus said, believing that you have to guess at this, since no one knows if Jesus said things reported of him in our Bibles, or whether the later church put words back in his mouth! You can imagine how devastating this technique is to the comfort and instruction which many of us seek in Scripture and the precious words of Jesus, the Master teacher.

The “scholarly” technique has worked its mischief in key passages. Thus in Mark 12:29 where Jesus defined the true God with crystal clarity as “ONE LORD” (not three Lords) the otherwise very valuable *Word Biblical Commentary* says: “A scribe is impressed with Jesus’ ability and so asks him which commandment is the first of all” (so far so good!). Then the commentator makes this extraordinary observation about “Jesus’ affirmation

of the Shema, which is neither remarkable nor specifically Christian...” (p. 261). Did you catch that? Ponder it long and hard! Jesus’ own definition of GOD and his endorsement of the Shema, “the Lord our God is one Lord,” is not Christian?! So then the teachings of Jesus are *not* Christian. This is a shocking indication of what entrenched tradition and some scholars are up to! **They deny to Jesus the right to define the true God.** They deny to Jesus what Jesus said is the most important issue for us all. We seem to be dealing here with the awful prospect of what Jeremiah called “the lying pen of the scribes” (Jer. 8:8).

This dismissal of Jesus puts churches into serious theological jeopardy, since on their books today is a denial of the very definition of God provided by Jesus. A Triune God, about whom Jesus never said anything, has replaced the Jewish-Christian definition of God endorsed by Jesus himself. A revolution will occur when churchgoers vociferously complain that their cherished, traditional view of God is at variance with Jesus’ definition of the true God.

The greatest of all commandments, Jesus said, is “Listen, Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord” (Mk. 12:29). That is a unitarian, non-Trinitarian definition of God. Why then do people claiming to be following Jesus abandon his unitary monotheistic creed? This is a very simple and liberating question. Most seem not to want to venture an answer to this not complex question: Is the creed of Jesus in Mark a unitarian or Trinitarian creed? What do you think? Was Jesus a Trinitarian? If not why are you? Ask your friends and acquaintances this fascinating question, and prepare for a stimulating conversation, or perhaps a stunned silence! ✧

Colossians 1 and 2 from Our Upcoming One God, Kingdom of God Translation of the NT

Paul, an Apostle of Messiah Jesus in harmony with God’s will, and Timothy our brother: to the holy people of God and faithful brothers and sisters in Messiah who live in Colossae, may grace and peace come to you from God, who is our Father.

We are always thankful to God, the Father of our lord Jesus Messiah, when we pray for you, for we have heard of your faith in Messiah Jesus and of the love you express for all the holy people. This love is based on the

hope¹ reserved for you with Christ in heaven.² You already heard about this hope in the message of the truth, that is, the Gospel of the Kingdom, which has come to you. That Gospel of the Kingdom is bearing fruit and growing all over the world, just as it has among you, since the day you heard it and recognized in it God's grace in the truth. You learned all this from Epaphroditus, our much-loved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of the Messiah on your behalf, and he has told us about your love in the spirit.

For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we have not stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may conduct yourselves in a way that is fully pleasing to God and bearing fruit³ in every good work. Our prayer is that you may be strengthened with love, according to His glorious might, leading to a steady endurance and patience, accompanied by joy, giving thanks to the Father who has enabled you to share in the saints' future inheritance of the Kingdom of light.⁴ He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into his Son's Kingdom, the Son whom He loves and in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

The lord Jesus is the visible image of the invisible God, the firstborn of the whole creation because **in** him⁵ everything was originally created⁶ by God in heaven and on earth — the visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, rulers or authorities — all these things are now created⁷ by God through Jesus and for him.

He is superior to all things and in him everything coheres. He is also the head of the body, the church: he is the beginning, because he is the firstborn from the dead, so that [by resurrection] he might be promoted to have first place in everything. For God was pleased to have all

¹ Of the future Kingdom on earth, Matt. 5:5 etc. The fact that hope, the second cardinal virtue of Christians, is based on, i.e. is dependent on, a grasp of the future Kingdom, the promised inheritance, is highly significant. Any confusion over the future hope will result in a diminishing of love.

² It is essential not to misunderstand here. The reward is now stored up in heaven waiting to be conferred on true believers by Christ when he returns to the earth in order that the saints can rule with him on that future renewed earth (Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:1-6; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Dan. 7:18, 22, 27. See Luke 19:11ff)

³ Dependent on the prior acceptance and understanding of the seed, which in the parable of the sower is the seed of the word of the Kingdom of God (Luke 8:11; Matt. 13:19).

⁴ In the Age to Come.

⁵ Not "by him," but "because of, for his sake and with him in view."

⁶ Aorist of "create." The passive is a divine passive, i.e. "were created by God."

⁷ Perfect tense of "create" with continuing results.

His fullness dwell in him,⁸ and through him to reconcile everything to Himself by making peace through the blood of his cross — whether personalities on earth or in heaven. And you were once alienated and hostile in your mind because of your evil activities. But now he has reconciled you through the death of the historical person⁹ of His Son, to present you holy, blameless and beyond reproach, on condition, that is, that you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and without shifting away from the hope of the Gospel which you heard. This Gospel of the Kingdom has been heralded in all creation and I myself became a minister of that Gospel of the Kingdom.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and I am completing in my flesh what is lacking in Messiah's afflictions for his body, that is the church. I became its minister, according to God's administration which was given to me for your sake, to make God's message of the Gospel fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations which is now revealed to all the holy people. God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Messiah in you, the hope of future glory. We proclaim him, warning, counseling and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Messiah. I labor for this, striving with his energy which works powerfully and energetically in me.

Chapter 2

For I want you to know how great my struggle is for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me in person. I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all of the riches of an intelligent understanding, and possess the full knowledge of God's mystery — summed up as Messiah. In him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. I am writing this so that no one will deceive you with persuasive arguments, for although I am absent in person I am nevertheless very much with you in spirit. I am rejoicing to see your good order and the strength of your faith in Messiah. Therefore as you received Messiah Jesus, the lord,¹⁰ conduct yourselves in

⁸ Note that similar language about "the fullness of God" is applicable to believers also in Eph. 3:19.

⁹ Note the use of "flesh" to mean person, as in 2:1.

¹⁰ The lower case "lord" is deliberate to reinforce the vitally important distinction between the Lord God (Yahweh) and the Messianic lord Jesus, the *adoni*, "my lord," of Ps. 110:1. This verse is an umbrella and controlling verse for the NT view of the relationship of God and Jesus. It is cited many more times by far than any other verse from the Hebrew Bible. Jesus used it to stomp all his adversaries and to put an end to all dispute (Mark 12:35ff). Jesus is "the lord Messiah" who was born (Luke 2:11) and thus the Lord's (Yahweh's) Messiah (Luke 2:26). The blind men understood the meaning of "the lord, son of David." Jesus framed his final and

him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith just as you were taught, and overflowing with gratitude. Be very careful that no one takes you captive with philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elemental forces of the world and not in harmony with Messiah. For in Messiah the entire fullness of God's character and mind dwell bodily, and you have been filled by him who is the head over every ruler and authority.

In Christ you were also circumcised with a non-physical, non-literal circumcision, one not made with hands, that is by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of the Messiah. You were buried with Messiah when you were baptized in water and you were also raised with him through belief in the energy of God who raised Jesus from the dead. And when you were formerly dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with Jesus and forgave us for our trespasses. God erased the certificate of debt with all of its obligations, which was against us and opposed to us, and took it out of the way by nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them by Jesus. Therefore **do not let anyone at all try to exercise authority over you in regard to food and drink or in the matter of annual holy days, monthly new moons and the weekly Sabbath. This calendar is a single shadow of what was to come; but the substance of them is the Messiah (who has come).**¹¹ Let no one disqualify you by insisting on ascetic practices and the worship of angels, gaining access to a so-called vision and inflated without cause by his unconverted mind. Such a person does not hold on to the head, while the whole body being nourished and held together by the ligaments and tendons, develops with the growth which comes from the One God.

If you died with Christ to the elemental forces in this world, why are you now wanting to live as if you were still part of that world? Why are you submitting to regulations: do not handle, do not taste? All these regulations refer to what is destroyed by being used up and consist of human commands and doctrines. Although they have a reputation for wisdom by promoting ascetic

decisive question around these descriptions of who he was and is. There are two lords in Ps. 110:1 but only one of them is God!

¹¹Note that Adam is "the type of the one who is to come" (Rom. 5:14), but that does not mean that Christ has not come! The shadow is in itself the shadow of the Christ who has come, and the calendar has no value now that Christ has come and effected a non-literal circumcision. Circumcision includes the whole law which goes with it, i.e. those regulations which separated Jews from Gentiles.

practices, humility, and severe treatment of the body, they are of no value at all against fleshly indulgence.

So then if you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is seated at the right hand of God.¹² Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth. For you have died, and your life is now hidden with the Messiah in God. When the Messiah who is your life is revealed at his Second Coming then you also will be revealed with him in glory.¹³

Therefore, put to death whatever in you is worldly: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these things God's wrath threatens to destroy the disobedient, and you once walked in these things when you were living in that manner. But now you must also put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man and his practices, and you have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator. Here there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, no circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but Christ is all in all.

Therefore God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, must put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, accepting one another and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive each other. Above all, you must put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of the Messiah, to which you were also called in one body,¹⁴ rule in your hearts. Always be thankful. Let the Gospel of the Kingdom, Messiah's Gospel, dwell richly among you, teaching and admonishing one another with all wisdom, and singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the lord Jesus, giving thanks to God, who is the Father, through him.

Wives, be submissive to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and do not become bitter against them. Children, you are to obey your parents in everything for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not aggravate your children so they will not become discouraged. Servants, obey your human masters in everything; do not work only while being watched, in order to please men, but work wholeheartedly with reverence for the Lord.

Whatever you do, do it with enthusiasm as done for the lord Jesus and not for men, knowing that you will

¹²Ps. 110:1, my lord, *adoni*, who is not God.

¹³i.e. the future Kingdom on earth, Rev. 5:9, 10.

¹⁴Not thousands of differing denominations!

receive the reward of the inheritance of the Kingdom from the lord — you are serving the lord Messiah.¹⁵ For the wrongdoer will be paid back for all the wrong he has done, and there is no favoritism. ✧

The Day of the Crucifixion

Dr. Charles Torrey (Yale University), “The Date of the Crucifixion According to the 4th Gospel”: “The author of the 4th Gospel was perfectly familiar with the clear and **repeated assertion of Matthew, Mark and Luke** that Jesus’ Last Supper took place at the time of the paschal meal [the annual killing and eating of the lamb] and that the **crucifixion took place on the 15th Nisan**. He knew that Matthew, Mark and Luke were before the public.”

This crucial fact is echoed on the internet: “Jesus died on Nisan 15. **He clearly ate the Passover seder with his apostles according to the synoptic Gospels.** The ‘Passover’ yet to be eaten, referred to in John 18:28, is the [subsequent] Passover *chaggiga* [celebration] which all Jews had to offer on the morning of Nisan 15. The fact is, Jews would not have been concerned about being defiled in the morning, for the Passover lamb which was to be eaten after sunset, in the evening. When uncleanness is contracted, it only lasts ‘until the evening’ according to the Torah. Let that be read a million times over until it is understood.”

The resurrection was expected to be on the third day, counting inclusively as Luke does. Luke 24:21 settles all difficulties or doubts which might linger.

“We were hoping that he was the one who would free Israel. What’s more, this is now the **third day** since everything happened” (Luke 24:21).

“Jesus said that the Son of Man would have to suffer a lot. He would be rejected by the leaders, the chief priests, and the scribes. He would be killed, but on **the third day** he would come back to life” (Luke 9:22).

“Jesus said to them, ‘Tell that fox that I will force demons out of people and heal people today and tomorrow. I will finish my work on the third day’” (Luke 13:32).

“...whip him, and kill him. But on the third day he will come back to life” (Luke 18:33).

“He said, ‘The Son of Man must be handed over to sinful people, be crucified, and come back to life on the third day’” (Luke 24:7).

“He said to them, ‘Scripture says that the Messiah would suffer and that he would come back to life on the third day’” (Luke 24:46).

Strack, Billerbeck (*Commentary on the NT from Talmud and Midrash*) on Matthew 12:40:

¹⁵The lord Messiah who was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:11). This is the second lord (*adoni*, my lord) of Ps. 110:1, cited and alluded to more than any other verse from the Hebrew Bible.

“As far as counting the three days, we must be aware that in Jewish commentary part of a day is to be reckoned as a whole day. Rabbi Yishmael (around 135 AD) treated a part of an *onah* [a measure of time] as a whole *onah*. In 1st Bar. it is taught that Rabbi Eliazer ben Azarya (around 100 AD) said: ‘One day and night forms 24 hours, and a part of an *onah* counts as a whole *onah*.’ Pes. 4a: ‘Part of a day is reckoned as a whole day, correspondingly part of a month as a whole month and part of a year as a whole year’” (Vol. 1, p. 649).

“The Jews could speak of three days and three nights even when these periods of time were not complete” (Albrecht, *NT*). ✧

The Life of the Age to Come

Nothing could be of greater importance to the disciple of Christ than to understand the nature of the goal for which he is striving. Yet so imprecise and vague is the prospect offered by traditional teaching that large numbers of would-be Christians now no longer even believe in life after death! (Popular “near death” experiences tell us nothing about the true future life of the Bible, and merely deceive readers into not believing the Bible’s teaching about the sleep of the dead, Ps. 13:3). That such unbelief can still be described as Christian only adds to the confusion. The simple facts of the New Testament are that Jesus promised his followers “eternal life.” Without further explanation, the concept as it is presented to us lacks precision, and this is due to an inadequate rendering of the original Greek into English. The truth is that the term “eternal life” in its original Greek, as written by Hebrews, contains a wealth of data which unlocks the entire New Testament prospect for the future. This information is well documented, but never, it seems, reaches the average churchgoer.

The Concept of “Eternal Life”

The idea of life for eternity is founded upon the all-important passage in Daniel 12:2, where the resurrection of both the righteous and unrighteous is clearly described: “Many of those who are asleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.”

It is from this passage that the New Testament derives its fundamental notion of “eternal life,” Daniel’s writings being accepted as an inspired authority by Jesus and the Apostles. Of primary importance is the fact that “eternal life” is the life to be gained through *resurrection*, i.e., from a condition described as “sleeping in the dust of the earth” to that of “awakening” to everlasting life. That great event is destined to occur at the end of a specified era of history, according to Daniel; this leads us immediately to the crucially important description of the divine program for resurrection as given by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15. There are to be stages in the plan for

resurrection; each is to be resurrected in his proper order: “Christ the firstfruits; afterward, those who belong to Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor. 15:23).

The well-known commentary on Mark by Vincent Taylor states that “eternal life” is “no mere immortality, but a gift which a man receives from God in the *resurrection*” (p. 426, emphasis mine). It is important to note that immortality is not an innate possession of man; it must be conferred upon him by a resurrection from death. The resurrection will occur for all the faithful, collectively, at the second coming of Christ. This means, of course, that no one except Jesus has yet been resurrected to immortality!

What is the nature of this eternal life? So far we have established only that it is to be gained through a resurrection from the dead. The Hebrew expression in Daniel 12:2 conveys the notion of life of the remote future, as well as life indefinitely prolonged. It might appear, then, that “eternal life” carries this idea with sufficient clarity. This is not quite true; for during the period preceding the time of Jesus, and after the Old Testament canon was complete, the idea of the remote future was gaining precision, based on the hope expressed by the Old Testament prophets that God would ultimately inaugurate a Golden Age of universal peace and justice on earth. Thus in the time of Jesus the life of the remote age envisaged by Daniel had come to mean “the Life of the Age to Come,” that Great Age of universal harmony which had been the vision of all the prophets. These facts are well established. In *The Gospel According to St. John*, by C.K. Barratt, we find the following: “The meaning of ‘the life of eternity’ (Dan. 12:2) was expressed by the rabbis as ‘the life of the coming age’” (p. 179). Vincent Taylor says, “In origin the conception [eternal life] is eschatological: eternal life is ‘Life in the coming age’” (p. 426). The same point is made by A.H. McNeile in *The Problem of the Future Life*: “*Aonios* (eternal, “ayonios”), for all practical purposes, when applied to things of the New Age means ‘belonging, or proper to the New Age’” (p. 48).

The translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek in pre-Christian times had already rendered the expression in Daniel as “aonian life.” The Greek adjective used here really means “pertaining to the age”; it thus exactly defines the “life of the remote future” as “the life pertaining to the (coming) age.” This development is crucial for our understanding of the New Testament concept of “eternal life.” The matter is clearly outlined by the celebrated *Lexicon of the New Testament* by Thayer: “As the Jews distinguished ‘this age,’ the time before the Messiah, and the ‘coming age,’ the time after the advent of the Messiah, so most of the New Testament writers distinguish ‘this age’ (or simply ‘the age — Matt. 13:22; Mark 4:19; ‘the present age’ — Gal. 1:4; 1 Tim. 6:17; 2

Tim. 4:10; Titus 2:12), the time *before* the appointed return or truly Messianic advent of Christ — and the *future* age (or ‘that age’ — Luke 20:35), ‘the coming age’ (Luke 18:30; Matt. 12:32), i.e., the age *after* the return of Christ in majesty, the period of the establishment of the Divine Kingdom with all its blessings” (*Thayer’s Lexicon*, p. 19).

The New Testament Hope

We see then that Jesus and the New Testament writers build upon the current idea of the Age to Come, putting their stamp of approval upon it since it accurately represents the hope of the prophets that the golden age, in which all the faithful will participate, will one day be established. Christianity is centered therefore on the hope of the Coming Age, and promises as the supreme reward the life of that Coming Age. It will be seen at once that this proper understanding of the term originating in the book of Daniel provides a much more definite idea of the Christian goal. An authoritative confirmation of all this can be found in the writings of one of the most distinguished New Testament theologians of this century: “What appears in the English versions of the Bible as ‘eternal life’ or ‘life everlasting’ really means ‘the life of the age to come’...Throughout the New Testament ‘eternal life’ means the ‘life of the age to come.’ It is synonymous with the Kingdom of God. Thus, in the discussion about the conditions of entry into the reign [Kingdom] of God, the rich man in Mark 10:17 asks: ‘Good master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?’ Or again, if we examine the parallelism of Mark 9:43-47, we shall see that to enter ‘life’ and to enter the Kingdom of God are one and the same thing...The chief implication of ‘aonian life’ (‘eternal life’) is not eternal or everlasting life, but *life pertaining to the age to come.*”¹⁶

A most significant additional piece of information emerges here: namely, that the life of the Coming Age is exactly the same as the life of the Kingdom of God. Thus we find the *Dictionary of Christ and the Apostles* saying that the phrase “‘eternal life’ is used synonymously and interchangeably with the Kingdom of God...The Kingdom of heaven and the life eternal are very closely related in the teaching of Jesus: In the picture of the judgment (Matt. 25:31-46), the righteous who go into eternal life are said to inherit the Kingdom” (pp. 538, 539).

This unquestionable equation of the life of the Coming Age with the Kingdom of God may be further illustrated as follows, based on the passages already referred to:

Mark 9:45: “It is better for you to enter life.”

¹⁶ Alan Richardson, *Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament*, pp. 73, 74, 108.

v. 47: “It is better for you to enter the Kingdom of God.”

Mark 10:17: “Good teacher,” he asked, “what must I do to inherit eternal life?” v. 23: “How hard it is for the rich to enter the Kingdom of God!”

Matthew 7:14: “Narrow is the road that leads to life.”

v. 21: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the Kingdom of heaven.”

Matthew 25:34: “Come, you who are blessed by my Father; inherit the Kingdom.”

v. 46: “The righteous to eternal life.”

In the light of the real meaning of “eternal life,” the Christian goal assumes a new, brilliant clarity as being equivalent to entrance into the Kingdom of God through a resurrection, for participation in the Life of the Age to Come. Participation in the Kingdom implies being appointed as co-ruler with the Messiah. This is clearly stated by Jesus at the Last Supper when he promised that the Apostles would share, by covenant, the dominion which his Father had conferred upon him (Luke 22:28-30).

This appointment to reign was later extended to the church as a whole (1 Cor. 4:8; 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 5:10); it forms the very essence of the new covenant. The church now becomes what ancient Israel had forfeited through disobedience: the New Israel, appointed as kings and priests (1 Pet. 2:9; Gal. 6:16; Phil 3:3), and destined to reign as kings **on the earth** (Rev. 5:10). Under the Old Covenant this honor had been offered to Israel (Ex. 19:5-6). Under the New Covenant Jesus established the church as the new fellowship of the Messianic community. The Last Supper, inaugurating the Eucharist, is a celebration in anticipation of the banquet to be shared by the church in the coming Kingdom of the new age: “I appoint to you by covenant [so the Greek says] dominion, as my Father appointed dominion to me, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom and sit on thrones governing the twelve tribes of Israel” (Luke 22:29-30).

No wonder that in view of these exhilarating promises, the Kingdom of God was the center of interest in the discussions between Jesus and the apostles after he had risen from the dead (Acts 1:3). Their eagerness is betrayed by the all-important, well-instructed question they put to Christ: “Is this the time that you are going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?” (Acts 1:6)

When these simple New Testament facts are grasped, it will be seen how irreconcilable with the teachings of the New Testament is the popular notion that the Christian reward is “eternal life” to be gained at the moment of death. The traditional scheme virtually dispenses with the need for the future resurrection, since the faithful are already enjoying their reward “in heaven”! It completely obscures the fact that “eternity,” according to the New Testament, begins, in its fullest sense, with the advent of

the Age to Come. The return of Christ can have little significance if, indeed, the dead have already “gone to be” with him. Moreover, it replaces the hope of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth with a shadowy realm of disembodied spirits. The belief in such departed spirits of the dead is utterly foreign to the New Testament. The offering of prayers to them is unthinkable.

Conclusion

The proper definition of the Christian goal as the attainment of the Life of the Coming Age through a resurrection from the dead (1 Cor. 15:23) immediately rescues us from the popular misconception about “strumming harps on pink clouds,” and allows us to see that our aim is to attain to the corporate resurrection of all the faithful (in the first resurrection of Rev. 20). The change from a physical to a “spiritual body” will occur “in the twinkling of an eye” (1 Cor. 15:52-54). The new body will equip the resurrected believers for life in the Kingdom, the Life of the Age to Come. This goal is firmly rooted in history; it is tied to “that [well-known] Age” (Luke 20:35), which is to follow the “present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). It will be no surprise to find that the doctrine of the second coming of Christ is central for all the New Testament writers — central to the saving Gospel of the Kingdom. It is that great event which will usher in the New Age, the Coming Age of the Kingdom of God on earth; it is then, and not before, that the righteous shall attain, in fullness to the Life of that Coming Age. Meanwhile we can enjoy the downpayment of the spirit which comes to us when we are baptized based on Acts 8:12 and receive from the risen Messiah, the lord (*adoni*) at the right hand of God, a foretaste of that energetic life of the future age, tasted in advance to sustain us in life’s present trials. ✧

Cause for Rejoicing — a New Translation from Dr. William MacDonald

The Idiomatic Translation of the New Testament (available now with BibleWorks 9 software)

John 1:1-10: In the beginning the word intrinsic to God, identifying God, was active.² This word, expressed in the beginning, belonged to God.³ Through his word all creation originated; not one existing component was created apart from his word.⁴ Life inhered in the word, and life was humanity’s light.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, and darkness did not put it out.⁶ A man commissioned by God came on the scene; his name was John.⁷ His role was to advocate the light by his testimony, that through the light everyone might believe.⁸ Not that light himself, John came to authenticate the light.

⁹ This true light that enlightens all humanity was arriving in the world. ¹⁰ Light was in the world — the world that originated through it, yet the world did not recognize him.

Philippians 2:5-11: Assume among yourselves the attitude characterizing Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, possessing God's image, did not consider equality with God a right to be clutched. ⁷ Instead, he surrendered his rights, taking on a slave's role as his human identity. ⁸ In view of his human status he humbled himself, becoming submissive even to death — death on a cross at that! ⁹ Consequently, God exalted him superlatively, graciously granting him the title that transcends every honorific. ¹⁰ He did this that in deference to the name, Jesus, every knee would flex, from realms heavenly, earthly, subterranean, ¹¹ and every tongue would voice the acclamation: Kurios Yesoûs Christòs ["Lord Jesus Christ!"], to the glory of Father God. ✧

Bluster from Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges on Galatians 3:20

This is typical of the confusing, waffly style which comes over commentators as they try to reassure themselves that Paul was a "good Trinitarian." The words suffer from a severe complication of the original simplicity of Paul's belief in "the MAN Messiah Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). Paul did not divide Jesus up into two components, calling one "Jesus' humanity," allowing for Jesus also to be GOD!

Gal. 3:20: "God is one." "The word 'one' is in the masculine [true, meaning 'one Person']. Paul would have doubtless used the neuter if this had not suggested to his readers too material and impersonal a thought to be connected with God [Paul never imagined God to be a neuter "essence"]. Observe that Paul's purpose in this statement is not to state, much less prove monotheism. [But Paul believed in biblical *unitary* monotheism and certainly not in a Triune God.] He assumes monotheism, and does not even mention it, except insofar as is included in God's nature...The fact is that to Paul, as to us, Christ is not distinct from God, *but is God*. When on the other hand he speaks of Christ as 'the man Christ Jesus as mediator between God and man' (1 Tim. 2:5) he is regarding him in his humanity, putting for the moment his Godhead out of sight." [Implying that Paul for the moment just forgot that Jesus was also 100% God!]

Comments

"I am a student in the university in Ghana. I am not a student of the Bible going to any Bible school but I delight in studying the Bible and making research about biblical things and studying the early church fathers' writings. My encounter with your websites (21stcr.org and restorationfellowship.org) has changed my theology

and has had great impact on my doctrines. Indeed, I have bought some truths from the Bible and other sources of information and I pray that I will 'sell it not.' I keep sharing some truths about the one true God (by exposing the false doctrine called the Trinity), the uniqueness of His Son, the true rapture doctrine (not the secret PRE-tribulation rapture doctrine), what happens when we die, and the fallacy of man going to heaven, purgatory or hell when death occurs. Those who love truth accept it and prove what I teach with the word of God, but those who hate truth call me heretic. In fact many persecutions have come to me but I am still keeping on. I will not give up. Dr. Buzzard, may God richly bless you. I pray that He help you finish this task that He has given to you. Your effort will not be wasted. Therefore I encourage you to still keep on the good work and it is my prayer that God will use me mightily in Ghana to liberate people from false doctrine. Remember me in prayer. God bless." — *Ghana*

From a student at the University of Southern Indiana, after my visit to lecture to students:

"Being agnostic, I didn't really know what to expect. I was raised Catholic, but at an early age I questioned God. By 11 I had made that fact known enough to stop attending church. I liked Anthony's clearing up that Jesus was a real man, though today he is portrayed as being like a coequal God. I now wonder if he was a man, how he performed his miracles. I'm assuming that Sir Anthony would believe that Jesus' faith in God allowed these miracles to occur. This seems logical. I also liked him clearing up the difference between what heaven and hell are really like, compared with the common perception. It makes more sense to me that the afterlife in Christianity would be for one to inherit the earth. I always thought the whole playing a harp in the clouds thing seemed nonsensical. His view of hell, that God wouldn't allow you to be tortured for all eternity, is also refreshing in case I'm wrong in being a non-believer and have to end up there. I enjoyed his lecture and I like hearing from someone who both preaches about the Bible and understands the Bible." — *Indiana*

"First of all I want to thank you for all your insights that you share with us in several ways. I read and I have seen different materials and they were very interesting and sometimes even revealing. Two years ago I changed from a Trinitarian to a Binitarian. But I still had a feeling that something still wasn't quite right. So about three or four months ago I started to search on the internet and now I can say I'm a monotheist like the Messiah was and still is." — *Holland*

"I am one of your greatest fans. *Focus on the Kingdom* coming through my mail is like a birthday each month." — *North Carolina*