

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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Caution! You are about to enter the theology no-spin zone for basic Bible study. These words, paraphrased, introduce the famous Bill O'Reilly on Fox News. They apply to your Bible reading too!

Tricks of Translation

“Existing in the form of God” (Phil. 2:6). If you are reading the NIV, “being in very nature God” (the marginal note does better), you are being misled. If Jesus is God, that makes two Gods, since we all know that the Father is God. In fact the Father is, as Jesus said, the “only one who is true God” (John 17:3). That is quite clear and easy. So is the Shema (“Hear, O Israel” of Deut. 6:4, Mark 12:29).

In Philippians 2:5 Paul talks about the Messiah Jesus. By Messiah Jesus he means “**the man** Messiah Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). He is not discussing a pre-human “God” person, a “God the Son,” a title which appears nowhere in Scripture. God in the Bible is strictly one Person, the Father (Mal. 2:10 and hundreds of passages).

Paul is urging his congregations to imitate and share the mind of Messiah Jesus, who though he enjoyed the elevated status of being uniquely the Messiah and Son of God, did not use his elevated and unique status and position to advance himself. Being in the form or image of God, he adopted the form or status of a servant/slave and learned obedience right up to the point of death. Because of this marvelous example of a human, sinless life lived in perfect submission to God (an effective ideal model for us all), God super-elevated His Son to the position at the right hand of God where he is now. That position makes Jesus the unique **human** lord (*adoni*, “my lord,” Ps. 110:1) next to God. And all this is to the glory of God who is the Father (Phil. 2:11, as 1300 times in the NT). So understood the words of Paul in Philippians 2:5-11 are a practical and intelligible lesson for us all. The same lesson is repeated in 2 Corinthians 8:9.

An interesting example of the same word “form” (*morphe* in Greek) occurs in Tobit 1:13 (an apocryphal book): “The Most High granted me favor and **status** with Shalmaneser, so that I became purchasing agent for all his needs.” The use of *morphe* in the Septuagint and the Apocrypha reflects meanings such as “a form that can be seen,” or “an appearance or countenance that can be observed.”

In Colossians 1:15-16 Jesus is the “image of the invisible God.” Your translation may tell you that “by

him all things were made.” This is quite misleading since the Father was alone at creation (Isa. 44:24). The Greek says that things were made “in Jesus” or “with him in view.” The “in” (*en*) is said to be causal (because of) by a standard authority on Greek (Moulton, Milligan, Turner). Jesus was not the creator; the Father was. The Son began to exist in the womb of his mother as Luke 1:35 reports along with Matthew 1:18, 20 and 1 John 5:18 (not KJV): “He who was begotten of God [Jesus] preserves him [the Christian].”

“Lord’s anointed” = the Lord God’s Christ, Messiah

In your Bible you have not been allowed to see the connection between the Messiah Jesus (“the man Messiah Jesus” — see 1 Tim. 2:5 for Paul’s brilliant summary) and the other king messiahs of the OT. The title you have been reading in the OT, “the Lord’s anointed,” is not wrong, but it does not tell you that it is the same precisely as “the Lord’s Messiah,” the exact title for Jesus in the NT in Luke 2:26. Jesus is the Lord (God)’s Messiah. Insert the word “Messiah” for “anointed” and you will see that Jesus is the ultimate King. He is not the second member of an imagined Trinity. There is only one God and He is the Father some 1300 times in the NT. ✧

John’s Test for Discerning Genuine Christianity

John, the disciple whom Jesus loved specially, was very much concerned in his three letters to help Christians see the difference between truth and error.

“I have not written to you because you do not know the Truth but because you do know it, and that no lie can come from the Truth. Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist who denies the Father and the Son. These things I have written concerning those who are seducing you” (1 John 2:22, 26).

Here is an alarming comment by the (one-time) head of the evangelical church in England, John Stott, a highly respected writer amongst American fundamentalists. In his commentary on the letters of John, he wrote:

“John’s black and white contrasts are healthily clear-sighted. Opposing views are not to him ‘complementary insights’ but ‘Truth and error.’ The heretics whom John describes do not have a defective theology; it is diabolical. The fundamental doctrinal test of the professing Christian concerns his view of the person of Jesus.”

So far, so good — now this:

“If someone is a unitarian or a member of a sect denying the deity of Jesus, he is not a Christian. Many strange cults which have a popular appeal today can be easily judged and quickly repudiated by this test. The extreme seriousness of the lie is that a second denial is implied: ‘He denies the Father and the Son.’ **No system of teaching which denies either the eternal divine preexistence of Jesus or the historical incarnation of the Christ can be accepted as Christian.**”¹

John the Apostle says this also:

“Every spirit that confesses that **Jesus Christ came in² the flesh** is from God. And every spirit that does not confess **that** Jesus is not of God. And this is that spirit of antichrist, of which you have heard that it should come; and even now it is already in the world...Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:2-4).

“Whoever confesses that **Jesus is the Son of God**, God remains in him and he in God” (1 John 4:15).

“Whoever believes that **Jesus is the Christ** is born of God. Who is it who overcomes the world, but he who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?” (1 John 5:1, 5).

“For many deceivers have gone forth into the world who do not confess that **Jesus came in the flesh**. This is the deceiver and the antichrist” (2 John 7).

“Whoever advances and does not remain in the teaching of Christ does not have [a relationship with] God. He who remains in the teaching of Christ has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house nor tell him ‘God bless you,’ for he who says ‘God bless you’ becomes an associate of his evil works” (i.e. becomes guilty by association).

Not a word here about believing that “Jesus is God.”✧

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¹ Tyndale New Testament Commentary on 1 John, pp. 53, 111, 112.

² Luther mistranslated this as “**into** the flesh,” in order to force on the reader the traditional view of the Incarnation of a pre-human, eternal Son.

Jewish Encyclopedia and Jesus’ Creed

“**Judaism has always been rigorously Unitarian.** Deism, as the denial of original sin and the soteriology built thereon, also harmonizes with Jewish doctrine. But the doctrine of deism which relegates God, after creation, to the passive rule of a disinterested spectator, is antithetical to the teachings of Judaism. [In Judaism] God directs the course of history and man’s fate (Ex. 19:4; 20:2; Deut. 32:11-12; 22:33:29; Ps. 33:13; 145:16; Jer. 32:9). God neither slumbers nor sleeps. He is Israel’s guardian (Ps. 121). Nations may plot and rage, but God’s decrees come to pass (Ps. 2)” (*The Jewish Encyclopedia*).

What is amazing to me is that the *Word Biblical Commentary* says of Mark 12:29, “The shema [‘Hear, O Israel’ from Deut. 6:4] is **neither remarkable nor specifically Christian.**” In other words though the Father says “listen to my Son” (Matt. 17:5), Christians claiming to follow Jesus are free to disregard Jesus on the highest ranking of all the commandments (Mark 12:28ff)! Christianity is not then to be based on Christ?! This is cause for alarm. Christians must listen to and obey Jesus to be saved (Heb. 5:9, etc).

Bishop Wright says correctly that “the Shema is thoroughly non-controversial” (Mark 12:29) — thus conceding that it was and is Jewish and unitarian. “The shema was as central to Judaism as it is now.”³ So said also Professor Hodgson lecturing on the Trinity at Oxford: “The monotheism of Judaism was then, as it is still, unitarian.”⁴

But then Bishop Wright and Drs. Bauckham and Hurtado try to save a sinking ship by saying that later Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 inserts Jesus *into* the shema! They say that Paul *added* Jesus to the Godhead, changing the Shema. They call this radical change a “mutation,” “reinterpretation,” “splitting,” or “expansion” of the Shema! This is an impossible claim, of course, but it helps us who promote the creed of Jesus in Mark 12 like this: These “giants” of Christology **concede that when Jesus affirms the Shema in Mark 12:29, agreeing totally with a Jew, he has not expanded it, or “enriched” it!** Jesus is thoroughly Jewish in his understanding and definition of the only true God.

The teaching of Jesus and the Apostles is binding on Christians. In 1 Corinthians 8:4-6 Paul puts the lord Jesus **Messiah** (not *Lord God!*) *alongside* the one God, exactly as in Psalm 110:1. Paul is following Jesus conscientiously. Jesus had already used Psalm 110:1 to silence all objectors, as we have seen, in the gospels,

³ *Jesus and the Victory of God*, p. 305.

⁴ *Christian Faith and Practice*, p. 72.

when he had taught that he, the son of David, would be super-exalted to sit at the right hand of the One God (Mark 12:35-37). The easy point is that Jesus is the “lord **Messiah**” who was born (Luke 2:11), and he is also the Lord God’s Messiah (Luke 2:26). Jesus is not God. He is the Messiah. God cannot be born and God cannot die (1 Tim. 6:16)!

Thus top scholars lay themselves open to the charge that they don’t much care about the central teaching of Jesus, as he uttered it in Mark 12:29! I would say that the NT is a sustained warning against claiming to accept Jesus while actually rejecting him. The fact that Wright, Bowman, Hurtado and Bauckham say that **only in Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6** is the Shema stretched or mutated to include Jesus, proves that it was *unstretched* when uttered by Jesus! So at stake is this: Do we listen to and obey Jesus or not? (Heb. 5:9; John 3:36; 1 Tim. 6:3). Serious business.

It is a miraculous misunderstanding not to hear and believe the words of Jesus in Mark 12:29. Agreeing with a friendly Jew, Jesus affirmed the Shema, the unitarian creed of Israel, as the highest ranking of all the commandments.

The Jew was a unitarian, of course, since Jews had never been other than unitarians. Jesus was entirely orthodox in his definition of God as a single Divine Person, with no other besides *Him* (a singular Person). Jesus anticipated the later fatal departure from the Shema by immediately going on the offensive and asking *them* a question, citing Psalm 110:1. This verse is the NT’s favorite (by far) verse from the OT. To understand the mind of Jesus, you must grasp Psalm 110:1. YHVH speaks an oracle to “my lord.” The major point is that the word in Hebrew (*adoni* — my lord, not Lord) is never used of Deity! **Adoni** never means God, but always someone, a superior, who is not God. **Adoni** occurs 195 times in the Hebrew Bible (OT). Thus Jesus reaffirms his unitary monotheism, declared in the Shema, the greatest commandment. Expert christologists Drs. Hurtado and Bauckham and Bishop Wright admit that when uttered by Jesus in Mark, the creed is **strictly monotheistic**, not Trinitarian. In desperation they then say that Paul redefined or split or expanded the Shema to include Jesus in it in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6.

But note that they concede that Jesus did no such thing. The Church is left with the embarrassing fact that it takes no notice of Jesus in Mark 12:29. It ignores him, at the most basic of all issues — who is GOD? Note the interesting words of a leading Jewish scholar formerly at Oxford. He observes, with a keen sense of history and fact: “Jesus never imagined he was God. To a pious Palestinian Jew of his time, the very idea would have

been inconceivable, pure blasphemy.”⁵ How far have churches moved from the mind and teaching of Jesus? Salvation is for those who obey Jesus (Heb. 5:9).

Think about this from a very honest German professor who was most honest with his studies. How right Karl-Heinz Ohlig was in his magnificent summary of the history of the Trinity in his *One or Three: From the Father of Jesus to the Mystery of the Trinity*:

“From the point of view of religious studies, the doctrine of the Trinity grew out of the syncretism of Judaism and Christianity with Hellenism...Gregory of Nyssa (*Oratio* 3:2) was of the opinion that the doctrine of the Trinity represented the middle between two opinions between polytheism and Jewish monotheism. ‘If we keep the unity of nature from the Jewish doctrine, the differentiation of the persons from the pagans’ doctrine, thus godlessness is healed on both sides by the appropriate remedy.’ What the scholar of religion is able simply to state, however, signifies at the same time a question for theology about the legitimacy of such a construct. If it is certain — and there is no way of getting around this — that **Jesus himself** knew only of the God of Israel, whom he called Father, and nothing of his own later ‘deification,’ by what right can then a doctrine of the Trinity be normative?...How in other words can one legitimize doctrinal development that actually first began in the second century?...No matter how one interprets the individual steps, it is certain that the doctrine of the Trinity, as it in the end became dogma in the East and the West, possesses no biblical foundation whatever and also has no ‘continuous succession’ [back to the Bible]...Theology must gradually face the facts...The conclusion...is the result of historical circumstances which simply were not otherwise” (pp. 128-130).

Psalm 110:1 needs to be carefully examined, because Jesus used this verse to settle all issues and silence all questions. **Having established the unitarian creed of Israel as the most important of all commands, he went on to define the relationship of the Messiah (himself) to the one God.** The LORD GOD is precisely compared with a non-Deity lord, or superior.

In the following 34 verses we want you to see clearly the obvious difference between God and man. In each verse you will see the precise contrast of the LORD (Yahweh) with a non-Deity superior. You find the same contrast between God and man in Psalm 110:1. The LORD (all caps.) translates Yahweh, the One God of Israel and of God. “My master” or “my lord” translates **adoni**, a superior who is *not* GOD! The last of our list, Psalm 110:1, is the favorite quotation from the Old Testament in the New. It governs the thinking of all the NT writers who did not imagine that the Messiah Jesus

⁵ Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, p. 224.

was GOD, which would make two Gods. (You will not find this information in *Strong's Concordance*, and many commentators actually misstate the facts about the second lord.)

Genesis 24:12 “**LORD**, God of **my master** Abraham,” he prayed, “give me success today, and show kindness to **my master** Abraham.”

Genesis 24:27 “Praise the **LORD**, the God of **my master** Abraham, who has not withheld His kindness and faithfulness from **my master**. As for me, the **LORD** has led me on the journey to the house of **my master's** relatives.”

Genesis 24:35 “The **LORD** has greatly blessed **my master**, and he has become rich. He has given him sheep and cattle, silver and gold, male and female slaves, and camels and donkeys.”

Genesis 24:42 “Today when I came to the spring, I prayed: **LORD**, God of **my master** Abraham, if only You will make my journey successful!”

Genesis 24:44 “If she responds to me, ‘Drink, and I’ll draw water for your camels also’ — let her be the woman the **LORD** has appointed for **my master's** son.”

Genesis 24:48 “Then I bowed down, worshiped the **LORD**, and praised the **LORD**, the God of **my master** Abraham, who guided me on the right way to take the granddaughter of my **master's** brother for his son.”

Genesis 24:56 “But he responded to them, ‘Do not delay me, since the **LORD** has made my journey a success. Send me away so that I may go to **my master**.’”

Numbers 32:27 “your servants are equipped for war before the **LORD** and will go across to the battle as **my lord** orders.”

Numbers 36:2 “The **LORD** ordered **my lord** to give by lot the land to be inherited by the people of Israel, and **my lord** was ordered by the **LORD** to give the inheritance of our kinsman Zelophehad to his daughters.”

Judges 6:13 “Gideon said to him, ‘Please, **my lord**, if the **LORD** is with us, why has all this happened? And where are all His wonders that our fathers told us about?’ They said, ‘Hasn’t the **LORD** brought us out of Egypt?’ But now the **LORD** has abandoned us and handed us over to Midian.”

1 Samuel 1:15 “No, **my lord**,” Hannah replied. “I am a woman with a broken heart. I haven’t had any wine or beer; I’ve been pouring out my heart before the **LORD**.”

1 Samuel 1:26 “Please, **my lord**,” she said, “as sure as you live, **my lord**, I am the woman who stood here beside you praying to the **LORD**.”

1 Samuel 24:6 “I swear before the **LORD**: I would never do such a thing to **my lord**, the **LORD's** anointed. I will never lift my hand against him, since he is the **LORD's** anointed.”

1 Samuel 24:10 “You can see with your own eyes that the **LORD** handed you over to me today in the cave. Someone advised me to kill you, but I took pity on you and said: I won’t lift my hand against **my lord**, since he is the **LORD's** anointed.”

1 Samuel 25:26 “Now **my lord**, as surely as the **LORD** lives and as you yourself live, it is the **LORD** who kept you from participating in bloodshed and avenging yourself by your own hand. May your enemies and those who want trouble for **my lord** be like Nabal.”

1 Samuel 25:28 “Please forgive your servant’s offense, for the **LORD** is certain to make a lasting dynasty for **my lord** because he fights the **LORD's** battles. Throughout your life, may evil not be found in you.”

1 Samuel 25:29 “When someone pursues you and attempts to take your life, **my lord's** life will be tucked safely in the place where the **LORD** your God protects the living. However, He will fling away your enemies’ lives like stones from a sling.”

1 Samuel 25:30 “When the **LORD** does for **my lord** all the good He promised and appoints you ruler over Israel.”

1 Samuel 25:31 “There will not be remorse or a troubled conscience for **my lord** because of needless bloodshed or **my lord's** revenge. And when the **LORD** does good things for **my lord**, may you remember me your servant.”

1 Samuel 26:19 “Now, may **my lord** the king please hear the words of his servant: If it is the **LORD** who has incited you against me, then may He accept an offering. But if it is people, may they be cursed in the presence of the **LORD**, for today they have driven me away from sharing in the inheritance of the **LORD** saying, ‘Go and worship other gods.’”

2 Samuel 4:8 “They brought Ish-bosheth’s head to David at Hebron and said to the king, ‘Here’s the head of Ish-bosheth son of Saul, your enemy who intended to take your life. Today the **LORD** has granted vengeance to **my lord** the king against Saul and his offspring.’”

2 Samuel 14:17 “Your servant thought: May the word of **my lord** the king bring relief, for **my lord** the king is able to discern the good and the bad like the Angel of God. May the **LORD** your God be with you.”

2 Samuel 15:21 “But in response, Ittai vowed to the king, ‘As the **LORD** lives and as **my lord** the king lives, wherever **my lord** the king is, whether it means life or death, your servant will be there!’”

2 Samuel 18:28 “Ahimaaz called out to the king, ‘All is well,’ and then bowed down to the king with his face to the ground. He continued, “May the **LORD** your God be praised! He delivered up the men who rebelled against **my lord** the king.”

2 Samuel 18:31 “May **my lord** the king hear the good news: today the **LORD** has delivered you from all those rising up against you!”

2 Samuel 24:3 “Joab replied to the king, ‘May the **LORD** your God multiply the troops 100 times more than they are — while **my lord** the king looks on! But why does **my lord** the king want to do this?’”

2 Samuel 24:21 “Why has my **lord** the king come to his servant?” David replied, “To buy the threshing floor from you in order to build an altar to the **LORD**, so the plague on the people may be halted.”

1 Kings 1:17 “She replied, ‘**My lord**, you swore to your servant by the **LORD** your God, “Your son Solomon is to become king after me, and he is the one who is to sit on my throne.”’”

1 Kings 1:37 “Just as the **LORD** was with **my lord** the king, so may He be with Solomon and make his throne greater than the throne of **my lord** King David.”

1 Kings 18:10 “As the **LORD** your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where **my lord** has not sent someone to search for you. When they said, ‘He is not here,’ he made that kingdom or nation swear they had not found you.”

1 Kings 18:13 “Wasn’t it reported to **my lord** what I did when Jezebel slaughtered the **LORD’s** prophets? I hid 100 of the prophets of the **LORD**, 50 men to a cave, and I provided them with food and water.”

2 Kings 5:18 “However, in a particular matter may the **LORD** pardon your servant: When **my master**, the king of Aram, goes into the temple of Rimmon to worship and I, as his right-hand man, bow in the temple of Rimmon — when I bow in the temple of Rimmon, may the **LORD** pardon your servant in this matter.”

1 Chronicles 21:3 “Joab replied, ‘May the **LORD** multiply the number of His people a hundred times over! **My lord** the king, aren’t they all **my lord’s** servants? Why does **my lord** want to do this? Why should he bring guilt on Israel?’”

Psalms 110:1 “A Davidic psalm. This is the declaration of the **LORD** to **my lord**: ‘Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.’”

Observe most carefully that in this final verse, Psalm 110:1 which Jesus said defines the Messiah, there should be **no capital letter on “lord.”** The Hebrew word **adoni** means “my lord,” as in all the other verses in which **adoni** occurs, 195 in all. Many translations mislead the reader by placing a false capital letter on the second lord of Psalm 110:1. Only in this one verse do they do this. But this ignores the Hebrew text which has *adoni*, my lord, and not *Adonai*, the Lord (God). **Adoni** is never a reference to God, but refers always to a human superior, particularly the king, or occasionally an angel.

Adonai, by contrast, some 450 times means Deity, the Lord God, the supreme Lord. In the same Psalm 110:5 we have a different picture. In this verse it is the Lord God (**Adonai**) who stands as support for the Messiah. This biblical picture is found also in Psalm 16:8. What a privilege to have God at your right hand to fight your battles.

Show your friends the amazing accuracy and detail of the Hebrew Scriptures which as Jesus said “cannot be broken.” Take your stand on the greatest of all commands in Mark 12:29. Enjoy sounding like Jesus and speaking like him, and have his mind and spirit. The words of Jesus are as he said in John 6:63 “spirit and life,” charged with life-giving energy which leads eventually to immortality in the resurrection and Kingdom of God (1 Cor. 15:22, 23, 53). ✧

Baptism

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

It might be good to recap briefly some previous observations in relation to a long imposed theological inference, as well as touching on some general challenges regarding literal/figurative language factors.

Four prophetic declarations by John the baptist place his (John’s) own literal “washing” activity, a symbolic action to represent repentance for the forgiveness of sins, in juxtaposition with a figurative usage of what the Messiah’s future role as “baptizer” would be:

“I baptize with you with water. But one who is more powerful than I will come, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will baptize you with the holy spirit and fire. His winnowing fork is in his hand to clear his threshing floor and to gather the wheat into his barn, but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire” (Luke 3:15-17; see also Matt. 3:11-12; Mark 1:7-8; John 1:29-34).

All four of these statements refer prophetically to Messiah himself being the one who would baptize with holy spirit. Two of these prophecies also indicate Messiah’s future role as judge, separating good wheat grain from chaff, metaphorically referring to the concept of baptizing with “fire.”

Maybe two full years after John was arrested, the resurrected Jesus alluded to John’s old prophecy of contrast while predicting the outpouring of holy spirit “in a few days” (or on the upcoming Day of Pentecost, Acts 1:5). Years later, Peter quoted Jesus’ declaration about this contrast (Acts 11:16). Thus there are 6 similar statements — the “big six.”

It is clear that the outpouring of holy spirit at Pentecost completely fulfilled the part of these statements about baptizing with holy spirit. It is equally clear that

the idea that Messiah will baptize with fire (in judgment) is a reality yet to be accomplished.

The “long imposed theological inference” to which I refer is what I have labeled “proposition X.” Simply put, it is the assumption that one mode of baptism replaced another; in specific terms, baptizing with holy spirit replaced water baptism. As I’ve pointed out, this inference conveniently ignores “baptizing with fire.” Proposition X, as a theory, is a very strong assertion (which I, personally, embraced for decades), that this is **the way** to understand the “big six” statements (which contrast John and Jesus as baptizers). As we have already seen, this inference is **not** the right way to view what is being contrasted. There are other options to consider — much better, truly biblical options.

A glaring problem with proposition X is that water baptism **did not stop** after the demise of John’s ministry or after the outpouring of holy spirit at Pentecost. I’m well aware of how people “get around” this problem, since I adamantly defended proposition X for so long. I do not accuse any of us of deliberate dishonesty, but we subconsciously “spiritualized” literal “washings” throughout the book of Acts. We made the word “baptize” vague. We unwittingly “allegorized” clear, literal baptism records in order to uphold “proposition X.” This led us into clear disobedience to Scripture.

Notice, we did not really harmonize the baptisms in Acts with the big 6 statements; we artificially forced them to corroborate a theological inference: namely, proposition X itself. It is now clear to me that we quickly gave into a plausible sounding explanation, not really having studied this subject thoroughly without “proposition X” already forcefully imbedded in our psyche. We were deceived.

When, in our reading, we could not avoid the specific mention of *water* in Acts, we resorted to some “fishy,” unbiblical explanations. Such explanations included having the Apostles (and others) making mistakes or blindly following unnecessary, outmoded practices, since they were still “zealous for the law.” (Though we would not have openly admitted it, our view subtly hinted at the suggestion that V. P. Wierwille, who strongly insisted on proposition X, had done a better job of “rightly dividing” the Word on this subject than Peter, Stephen, and Paul!) Consequently, as a result of being hooked on a shaky inference, we became practically incapable of reading “baptize” as literally **dunking in water** in contexts in which it did not suit our theology! Mostly, we did this at subconscious levels. We who have been like this might need to pray for miraculous breakthroughs in order to get back to simple, lucid thinking.

It is insightful to consider that, on top of twisting many records in Acts, we supported our “groove” of proposition X assumptions by misrepresenting “one

baptism” in Ephesians 4:5 as if it means “spiritual baptism” instead of previously outdated “water baptism.” We conveniently neglected to observe that the same list already referred to “one spirit” in verse 4. Is this list in Ephesians chapter four really meant to **redundantly** list the same thing twice? Of course we would not consciously be so blatantly sloppy, but something has been amiss for a long time. Once again, I do not accuse myself or anyone else of intentional deceit, but I remind you that we have a spiritual adversary who delights in pulling the wool over people’s eyes regarding important subjects. I believe the importance of all this will eventually be clear.

If it is not now obvious to you that “proposition X” is highly questionable, and that it is a barrier to biblical understanding, maybe a quick view of “emotional biases” might be the next helpful step. I do not plan to point fingers at any of you for having such biases, though I must confess my own struggles with my own biases. ✧

“The Biblical view of things is resurrection — not a future that is just a *consolation* for the life we never had but a *restoration* of the life you always wanted. This means that every horrible thing that ever happened will not only be undone and repaired but will in some way make the eventual glory and joy even greater...

“In Greek (specifically Stoic) philosophy there was a belief that history was an endless cycle. Every so often the universe would wind down and burn up in a great conflagration called a *palingenesis*, after which history, having been purified, started over. But in Matthew 19:28 Jesus spoke of his return to earth as *the* palingenesis. “I tell you the truth, at the renewal of all things (Greek *palingenesis*), the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne.” This was a radically new concept. Jesus insisted that his return will be with such power that the very material world and universe will be purged of all decay and brokenness. All will be healed and all might-have-beens will *be*.”

— Timothy Keller, *The Reason for God: Belief in an Age of Skepticism*, p. 32-33

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2nd Sunday: Columbian Hall, 6794 Martin Way E., Lacey; 10:00 a.m.

3rd Sunday: Kent Senior Activity Center, 600 E. Smith St., Kent; 10:00 a.m.

4th Sunday: Vancouver YWCA, 3609 Main St., Vancouver; 10:00 a.m.

No Bible studies or worship services on the 1st and 5th Sundays at this time. For more information contact Pastor Robin Todd at robinsings4u@comcast.net, or call him in Olympia at (360) 701-9219. Robin also has information about others around the U.S. looking for contact with other believers. You can see a list of those contact cities/towns by going to www.scatteredbrethren.org and then clicking on the appropriate "region," or by emailing him at the above address.

Comments

"I want to thank you for your excellent studies that contributed to enlighten my wife and myself. After more than 40 years in the Trinitarian evangelical community, our eyes were opened in 2013. Your books and the debate that you had with the Nicene Brown and White helped us a lot, as well as your very British humor and humility in your behavior. I'm 60 and I do not know what to do after being so long in error. We are isolated, without friends, in a Trinitarian country." — *Sweden*

"I'll give you a lot of credit. It must feel like a salmon swimming upstream trying to show the correct teachings of the Bible with all the false teachings out there. Hang in there!" — *Ohio*

"Let me start by saying how thankful I am for the ministry of *Focus on the Kingdom*. I am in what most call 'prison'; I call it my mission field for right now. Out of our Bible study group, which I felt led to start, 5 of the 10 now have seen the truth of the one God. One of these men was an associate pastor. I have been a friend to him and worked with him on these truths for almost a year until he finally said to me, 'I am a Bible unitarian. The Bible makes sense now. I feel like I understand God's plan.' Another said to me, 'I can't fellowship with you, and I can't shake your hand.'" — *North Carolina*

"I would like to thank you for speaking your mind on one of the most difficult and conflicting arguments in the world of religion today: the Trinity. I sincerely appreciate your scholarship and your efforts in articulating the

opinion of the Christian minority (at least from my understanding). I am 23 years old and living in London. I was never the most religious person but I recently realised that a U-turn is in order to truly appreciate this life and prepare for the next. I am now trying to gain a comprehensive understanding of Christianity and how Christian beliefs have evolved from its early days to today." — *England*

"I just finished reading the book *Christianity's Self-inflicted Wound* which you wrote with Charles Hunting and dealing with the doctrine of the Trinity. It has been the most impressive book I have had the opportunity to read in the last thirty years. Through this book I could give my account of how knowledge of the 'One God' and the 'sent' 'Jesus Christ, the Messiah' has been hiding the last two thousand years, mixed with Greek philosophy that has invaded Christianity. For many years I was a follower of Herbert Armstrong and I came to believe that 'the Church of God' was the only true church on the face of the earth and that only they had the truth. However I have to admit I was wrong. Somehow, Herbert Armstrong taught the doctrine of a 'binary God,' very little different from the 'Triune God' taught by traditional Christianity. The return to seeing things from the Jewish point of view, and understanding the Gospel of John in the light of the Hebrew Scriptures is of great satisfaction. It is as if a veil was removed and the light of the Gospel of Jesus Christ shines before our eyes." — *Facebook*

"Thank you for the video chat! I loved your comment and I am convinced that your answer to my question has bridged the gap that has kept me from fully committing to the truth. It's hard to go from Disciples of Christ to Pentecostal to Baptist to 'The Truth.' My journey has taken around 10 years. I met someone who challenged the concept of Hell and convinced me that it was not Biblical. As we talked he also challenged the doctrine of the Trinity. He called it the 'God Blob,' which led me to so many other truths that I wasn't hearing at church. I began a journey that has brought me to this point and I feel that what you are teaching is Truth. Thank you for being obedient to God. Thank you for your scholarship and the loving-kindness you have shown as I have corresponded with you. My guiding verse through this journey has been John 8:32: 'you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.'" — *Oklahoma*

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25th Theological Conference

April 28-May 1, 2016

Calvin Center, Hampton, GA

Your presence with us will bless all who attend.
Christianity is a team effort and there is much work to be done!