

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 18 No. 8

Anthony Buzzard, editor

May, 2016

By This We Know

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

Much of the New Testament was written against the backdrop of the lure of false religion. For example, in the early years of Christianity, shortly after Paul and Barnabas first travelled to the southern part of the province of Galatia, where churches were established in the cities of Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (Acts 13:14 - 14:23); there was trouble when they returned to Antioch of Syria (Acts 15:1). Shortly after apostles, elders, and brothers dealt with the corrupt influence of Judaizing Christians, first in Jerusalem and then back in Antioch of Syria (Acts 15:2-35), Paul went to Galatia again (Acts 16:1-6) accompanied by Silas. They clearly established the corrective decisions that had been made in Jerusalem (verse 4). Nevertheless, the controversy persisted, and eventually it threatened the young Christian groups of Galatia. In the letter to the Galatians, Paul's rebukes could not have been stronger! The adding of Old Covenant requirements, as if they were necessary for salvation, did not enhance the gospel. Far from it. This legalistic scheme perverted the gospel! It arrogantly distorted the truth of God's grace by which He alone is glorified. Furthermore, such errors divided Christians with the inflated idea that certain ones could boast or glory due to their performance of legal works. This led to an attitude of outrageous superiority (Gal. 2:11-14) with the result that some feared eating with Gentile Christians!

Later in the first century, the perils of counterfeit spirituality emerged in new forms. For example, Paul's stern refutation of errors in the letter to the Colossians showed the existence of a strange mix of Jewish-rooted legalism regarding food, drink, a festival, a new moon, or a Sabbath day (2:16) and other influences: namely, philosophy (2:8), worshipping angels (2:18), elementary principles of the world (2:20), and "self-abasement and severe treatment of the body" (2:23). The letter of First Timothy warned against the upcoming influence of deceitful spirits and doctrines promoted by demons, by which people would hypocritically forbid marriage or insist on abstaining from foods that God intended as a blessing to be thankfully enjoyed (4:1-5). The context referred to the danger of "falsely called 'knowledge' which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith" (6:20-21).

By the time the letter of First John was written, a sprouting network of bogus *gnosis* (knowledge or

wisdom) needed to be combated to distinguish **genuine Christianity** from "falsely called knowledge." What had developed eventually became distinctly identified as **Gnosticism**, exclusive religion masquerading as the true Christian faith. This erroneous system was profoundly rooted in **dualism**, the view that matter itself was inherently evil, and thus not created by God. Only invisible "spirit" was considered to be of value. This overt despising of the material world, and even of the human body, was in extreme contradiction to God's estimation of the creation as "very good" (Gen. 1:31). This counterfeit "knowledge" led to two divergent trends. **Asceticism** was the deliberate neglect of the body through starving it, advocating the strict shunning of many basic needs or physical enjoyments. The opposite Gnostic extreme was **antinomianism**, the total indulgence of bodily appetites, without regard to any moral standards. This approach was based on the logic that since evil bodies could not be reformed, mere "physical" lack of restraint meant nothing. This warped attitude, by hijacking the Christian concept of grace, led to the idea that careless or deliberate sinning was not a big deal. Why not give into sinful urges in order to usher in more grace? Of course, Paul had already refuted such twisted reasoning in Romans 6:1-2.

Whereas early errors had underestimated Christ's redemptive efficacy, the latter Gnostic mindset offered skewed views about the identity of Jesus himself. According to perverse thinking patterns, if bodies were evil by nature, how could the Son of God really have been human? This line of thought produced **Docetism**, the belief that Jesus only **seemed** to be a man. This perception of a nebulous Jesus led to **denying** that Jesus really died as a flesh and blood human being. It further muddled the reality that he was **bodily** raised from the dead by God, since bodies themselves were deemed to be bad. Consequently, many gospel truths were savagely compromised by the rise of Gnostic deceptions.

Also, just as the earlier Judaizing influence **split** Christians by a scenario in which puffed-up elitists, zealous for the Mosaic law, would look down upon others, so Gnostic thinking was extremely divisive. Adherence to the Gnostic ideal of escaping the evil of the body, a very popular concept among Greek philosophers, became a compulsory focus on intellectualism. As matter itself was disdained, so simple people, not equipped to jump through the secret, "spiritual" hoops of an exclusive group, were shamelessly despised. Thus the total

opposite of loving one's brother was fostered by this elaborate, contemptuous worldview!

In contrast to this insidious religion, which was rooted in "falsely called knowledge," the letter of First John weaves a beautiful tapestry of genuine knowledge. Believers did not need to be confused by those who separated themselves from true Christian fellowship (2:18-21). Certain phrases in 1 John abound: "**by this we know**" (repeated in 2:3, 5 / 4:6, 13 and 5:2); "by this you know" (4:2); along with similar expressions like: "from this we know," "that you may know," "we have come to know," "we know love by this," and "we will know by this." In addition there are constant repetitions of "we know" and "you know." These are not meaningless redundancies! This impressive string of "know" phrases highlights the wonderfully interwoven threads of **known** Biblical faith against the dark currents of pretended "knowledge."

Some essential facets of bonafide Christianity, revealed in connection with "by this we know" wording, comprise bold proofs concerning what a real Christian walk looks like. A true believer, who loves God, is committed to keeping God's commandments, His Word, the saving Gospel of the Kingdom, as Jesus preached it. This is the only way to really **know that we know God** (2:3-6 and 5:2). It includes moving away from darkness into light by producing righteous actions. Such practice is coupled with simple honesty to deal with the sins that have been committed. A humble, godly response to the magnanimous effect of Jesus' blood sacrifice requires renouncing sins, confessing them to God, and moving away from them. It does **not mean** frivolously ignoring them, denying them, or deliberately continuing to practice them (1:5-2:2 and 3:4-10). (Those influenced by Gnosticism were prone, on one hand, to take sins lightly or, conversely, to twist the concept of avoiding sins into ritualistic, self-imposed, harsh rules on the body.) Obeying God's Word is further developed with specific exhortations to love one's brother, whereas failing to love people is equated with being a murderer! We can only **know** we are in the truth if our love is proactive, not a hollow theory of mere words (3:10-24 and 4:7-21). The proof of **real** love stands in stark contrast to the prideful stance of an esoteric club, in which someone, obsessed with himself, might boast of "loving God" while carelessly disregarding others!

These vibrant fibers of the tapestry are strongly woven into the bedrock confession that Jesus, the Son of God, came as a real flesh and blood man (4:2 and chapter 5; 2 John 7). Denial of Jesus' humanity, in whatever convoluted form, does **not** come from God's spiritual influence! Such denial absolutely comes from an influence of "antichrist" — a false spirituality that is against Christ (4:3). (Remember, 1 Timothy had warned

people of the advent of "doctrines of demons.") Another closely associated proof of real Christianity is willingness to **listen** (4:6) to all these straightforward gospel declarations, instead of haughtily assuming that one "knows" better! A final factor, specifically connected to the phrase, "by this we know," is the truth that we have been given "of His spirit" (4:13). True Christians have the testimony within, the **real** spiritual guidance regarding Jesus' identity as a man (5:6-10). Confidence in being **anointed**, in order to continue in what God's spirit has clearly revealed, keeps one alert regarding any deceptions coming from those who deny Jesus as the human Messiah. By abiding in the anointing of holy spirit, one perceives that denial of the real, historical Jesus is also a denial of God as the Father (2:18-29).

In conclusion, despite how darkened thinking continues to misrepresent Christian truths, the solid proofs prevail! Being devoted to loving God, by keeping His commandments and loving others, with real compassionate involvement, keeps us walking in the light. Believing in Jesus as the unique Son of God, while being completely convinced that he is a genuine human being, keeps us on track and in fellowship with the Father. Obedient submission to water baptism marks the beginning of the Christian life. Humbly listening to all these Biblical truths, while staying confident in the guidance of holy spirit, yields the fruit of simple, godly living: "by this we know." ✧

Thanks to All

A sincere word of thanks to all of the 75 people who traveled to Georgia for an invigorating, information-packed conference. The presentations were outstandingly useful and can be seen at [youtube.com/AbrahamicMovement](https://www.youtube.com/AbrahamicMovement). As usual the faith stories from different participants provided a stimulating account of the miracle by which real truth-seekers find the truth that they are looking for. A notable phrase sticks in my mind from Robin Todd, who is doing impressive work bringing various folk together in church in a number of states (more to come). He remarked that the characteristic of all good Christians should be "a passion for saving truth (2 Thess. 2:10) and a parallel zero tolerance for error." Only in this way will the aggressive and intentional confusion so obvious everywhere be driven back. Pastor Dennis Baldwin delivered a rousing Gospel of the Kingdom of God sermon on Sunday. As usual, Sharon Gill and Carlos Jimenez did excellent work with their cameras. We are thankful to all who so energetically made our conference a success. We encourage you all to plan to attend next year — the 26th annual conference.

Clarifying a Prophecy of the End-Time (Daniel 9:26-27)

A remarkable prophecy was given to Daniel in Daniel 9:26-27:

“Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing. The city and the sanctuary will be destroyed by the people of the prince who is to come. His end will come with the flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are decreed. ²⁷And he will confirm a covenant with the many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering; and on the wing of abominations he will come desolating, even until a complete destruction, one that is decreed, is poured down on the one who makes desolate.”

The purpose of this prophecy is to throw light on the extraordinary struggle between good and evil destined to convulse the world before the return of Christ to rule in his Kingdom on a renewed earth. Daniel 9:26 speaks of the Messiah being “cut off” — a reference which has been generally taken to mean Jesus’ death for the sins of the world. Isaiah 53:8 likewise speaks of the suffering Messiah being “cut off from the land of life.” The meaning is that Jesus was put to death and thus deprived of life in the land of promise — Israel. By being cut off Jesus did not receive his Kingdom, the inheritance of the Messiah. The prophecy reads that he will “have nothing.” Keil understands this to mean that as a result of Jesus’ death he did not immediately possess what belonged to the Messiah — the Kingdom.¹

There is a change of subject in the second statement made in Daniel 9:26. “A prince who is to come” is introduced in connection with the overthrow (cp. the same Hebrew word used of the destruction of Sodom, Gen. 19:13ff) of the city and the sanctuary. The order of the words in Hebrew is important: “The city and the sanctuary will be destroyed by the people of the prince who is to come.”

Keil points out that the word “coming” is associated in Daniel with a hostile invasion.² In Daniel 1:1 Nebuchadnezzar comes to besiege Jerusalem. In 11:10, 13, 15, forces of the king of the North “keep on coming” (NASV) and “cast up a siege ramp and capture a well-fortified city.” In the case of the “prince who is to come,” however, the idea is that he is a personage whose arrival to destroy the city is well known. Such a hostile invader has already appeared in Daniel, chapters 7 and 8. As Keil says, it is natural that we should think of the Antichrist.

The NASV translates the next phrase in Daniel 9:26: “And its end will come with a flood.” The sense would be

that the city will be overwhelmed. A more natural translation, however, is supplied by the NASV margin and persuasively argued by Keil: “In the following clause, ‘and his end [will come] with the flood,’ the suffix [his] refers simply to the hostile prince, whose end is here emphatically described in contrast to his coming.”³

Why is this an important point of understanding? Those who find here a reference to Titus destroying Jerusalem in AD 70 cannot apply the suffix “his” to the hostile invader. The fact is that Titus did not come to his end in the war on Jerusalem. There are compelling reasons to agree with Keil’s translation. The word order of the preceding sentence (“the city and the sanctuary will be destroyed by the prince who is destined to come”) leaves the prince as the last idea. In the words immediately following, “his” end refers most naturally to the prince just mentioned. The evil prince in this prophecy comes to “his end” (cp. 11:45 where the Antichrist, the king of the North, “comes to his end”).

The prince’s end is in “the flood.” What events are described here? Not the invasion by Titus in AD 70, because Titus did not come to his end at the time of that invasion. Since interpreters have wished to find Titus and the events of AD 70 here, they have avoided the translation “his end.” As Keil says, “preconceived views as to the historical interpretation of the prophecy lie at the foundation of all other [translations than ‘his end’].” A reference to the end of the city or the sanctuary is forced, because the word city is feminine in Hebrew, and a different ending would be needed for “end.” A reference to the sanctuary only is awkward because city and sanctuary are mentioned together. Keil concludes: “There remains nothing else than to apply the suffix [‘his’] to the prince. ‘End’ can accordingly only denote the destruction of the prince.”⁴ Titus, in AD 70, therefore cannot be meant. Jesus, referring to the abomination, was not therefore saying a word about Titus.

The “Flood”

What is “the flood” in which the invader comes to his end? The definite article indicates that a well-known “overflowing” is in mind. “Flood” is elsewhere used as the symbol of an overwhelming divine judgment. For example, in Isaiah 8:8 the invasion of Judah by the king of Assyria will sweep on into Judah; “it will overflow and pass through.” In Nahum 1:8, the Lord “with an overflowing flood” will make a complete end of Nineveh’s site and “pursue His enemies into darkness.” Daniel informs us that Antichrist’s end will come in “the flood” of God’s end-time judgment. We are presented in this prophecy with a “prince who is to come who will find

¹ Keil, *Commentary*, p. 362.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Commentary*, p. 363.

⁴ *Ibid.*

his destruction in the flood.” Daniel 11:45 describes the destruction of the final king of the North who will “come to his end” in Israel just before the resurrection (Dan. 12:2).

Verse 26 of Daniel 9 contains yet another piece of information: “And until the end there will be war.” The end referred to here is simply the end of the “period in progress” (Keil). The meaning is that war will continue to the end of the seventieth “week.” Trouble is to be expected until the completion of the final “week.”

Our verse ends with an additional comment on the nature of the judgment. “Desolation is divinely decreed” as punishment. A comparison with three other passages is illuminating. In Daniel 11:36 the end of the career of the final king of the North is inevitable: “What is decreed will take place.” Further light on the decreed punishment of the invader of Israel at the end of the age is supplied by Isaiah 10:23: “For a **complete destruction, one that is decreed**, the Lord God of hosts will execute in the midst of the whole land.” For this reason Israel should “not fear the Assyrian who strikes you with the rod...In a very little while, My indignation against you [Israel] will be spent, and My anger will be directed to their [Assyria’s] destruction” (Isa. 10:24-25). There is another reference to the decreed punishment of God’s (and Israel’s) enemy of the end-time. In Isaiah 28:17-18 and following, “hail will sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters [cp. flood] will overthrow the secret place, and your [Israel’s] covenant with death will be canceled.” Then in verses 21 and 22, “the Lord will rise up...to perform 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.”

Again the words are reminiscent of Daniel 9:26. There is coming a decisive annihilation of Satan’s final tool to destroy Israel. The city and sanctuary will indeed be overthrown by the coming invader. War will be a feature of the last “week.” Yet the peace of God’s Kingdom will follow when Christ returns to destroy the Antichrist, resurrect the dead, and grant the Kingdom to the faithful (Luke 22:28-30; Matt. 19:28; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:4-6; Luke 12:32; Jer. 27:5). Just before that time, “desolations are irrevocably determined by God.”⁵

We can summarize the announcement provided by Daniel 9:26 with the following translation based on the Hebrew and in conjunction with Keil’s exegesis:⁶

“After the sixty-two ‘weeks’ the Messiah will be cut off, so that he does not have the Kingdom which belongs to him, and the city, together with the sanctuary, will be destroyed by the people of a prince who will come, who

shall come to his end in the flood. War will continue to the end [of the seventieth ‘week’], since destruction is irrevocably decreed.”

Verse 27

We proceed to verse 27, which completes the prophecy, supplying further detail about the events of the seventieth “week.” Verse 27 opens with a statement about the prince just mentioned. He will confirm a covenant. The compelling reason for making the prince of verse 26 the subject of the sentence is given by Keil:

“The connection indicates that the prince is the subject of ‘will confirm,’ since the prince who was to come is named last and is also the subject in the suffix of ‘his end,’ the last clause of verse 26 having only the significance of an explanatory subordinate clause.”⁷

Keil makes three other points: 1) “The taking away of the daily sacrifice combines itself in a natural way with the destruction (verse 26) of the city and the temple brought about by the coming prince.” 2) The one represented as “causing the sacrifice and oblation to cease” is obviously identical with him who changes the times and usages of worship (7:25). 3) “The reference of ‘he shall confirm’ to the ungodly leader of an army is therefore according to the context and the parallel passages of this book which have been mentioned, as well as in harmony with natural grammatical arrangement of the passage. But, by ‘prince’ [v. 26], Titus cannot naturally be understood.”

The prince imposes a covenant on the great mass of the people, in contrast with the few who remain faithful. The contract or covenant forced on the majority by the evil prince reminds us of Matthew 24:12: “The love of the many will grow cold.”

The next clause gives us information about the second half of the final “week.” Keil argues that the proper translation is: “He will cause the sacrifice and grain offering (bloody and unbloody sacrifice) to cease for half the week.” Associated with this interruption of the temple service, the prince “comes desolating on the wings of abomination.” Just as the true God “bowed the heavens and came down with thick darkness under His feet, and He rode on a cherub and flew on the wings of the wind” (Ps. 18:9-10), so here the wicked prince is seen “desolating, borne upon the wings of abominable things.” Keil cites the interpretation of another German commentator: “The powerful heathen enemy of God is here conceived of as carried upon the wings of the idol abomination, just as the God of the Theocracy is borne on the wings of the clouds and on cherubim, who are His servants (cp. Ps. 18:9, 10; 104:3).”

⁵ Keil, *Commentary*, p. 365.

⁶ *Commentary*, p. 373:

⁷ *Commentary*, p. 366.

The picture suggests a counterfeit Parousia (i.e., a fake coming) staged by the power of Satan. Paul reflects the same idea in 2 Thessalonians 2:9, where Antichrist's Parousia is in accordance with the energy of Satan. The final sentence of Daniel's prophecy tells us that this desolating rule of the wicked prince will continue "until the end, and the **decreed judgment** of God will pour down on the desolator." The verb "pour down" once again suggests the flood of verse 26, in which the wicked prince comes to his end. Since no flood of judgment fell on Titus in AD 70, the reference of this whole passage is to the future Antichrist and his temporary reign at the end of this age.

Summary

It will be appropriate to state again the message of Daniel 9:26-27 with reference to Keil's most helpful translation:

"After the sixty-two 'weeks' the Messiah will be cut off, so that he does not have the Kingdom which belongs to him, and the city, together with the sanctuary, will be destroyed by the people of a prince who will come, who shall come to his end in the flood. War will continue to the end [of the seventieth 'week'], since desolation is irrevocably decreed. And he [the prince] will impose a covenant on the many for one 'week,' and during half of the 'week' he will cause the service of sacrifice to stop and, borne on the wings of idol abominations, he will carry on a desolating rule; and this will go on until the end, when the firmly decreed judgment will be poured out on him as one desolated."⁸

Jesus' Intense Interest in This Prophecy

Jesus was most interested in this prophecy of Daniel. As his followers, we should also be experts in it. He referred to the "abomination of desolation" as a key feature of the time just prior to his return. In Matthew 24:15 the appearance of the abomination of desolation in the Temple is the cue for believers in Judea to flee to the mountains. (Jesus did not expect them to be removed from the earth! The pre-Tribulation rapture is a falsehood.)

The expression used by Jesus corresponds most closely to Daniel's other references to the abomination of desolation in 11:31 and 12:11. The first passage tells us that the final king of the North will send forces against the sanctuary fortress, do away with the regular sacrifice and set up the desolating abomination. The connection with Daniel 9:27 is clear. The evil prince comes desolating on the wings of an idol-abomination and in Daniel 11:31 a desolating abomination is placed in the Temple. This could be the Antichrist himself. Mark uses

a masculine participle to describe the abomination in Mark 13:14, describing a human person, or his image, in the Temple.

The abomination of desolation will trigger the time of suffering which Jesus calls the great tribulation (Matt. 24:15, 21). *Immediately* after that tribulation Jesus will appear in glory (Matt. 24:29). It is important to note that these are not events already past. Jesus obviously did not reappear immediately after the tribulation of AD 70.

Daniel 12:11 completes the network of prophetic information about the abomination. From the moment when the abomination of desolation is set up in the Temple, a period of 1290 days will elapse. This appears to be slightly longer than the "time, times and half a time" (3 ½ years) of chapter seven. This period takes us to the end of these "amazing wonders" (12:6). All the prophetic events will be complete 1290 days after the appearance of the abomination and the cessation of sacrifice. The time for the resurrection and the Kingdom of God on earth will have arrived. ✧

The Bible calls The Devil/Satan, "the god of this age" (2 Cor. 4.4). By implication this means that *all* the governments of this world are under his power/influence (Eph 2.2; 6.12). Christians, therefore, are commanded to live as "foreigners," "exiles," resident aliens in this present evil age; eagerly awaiting to enter into the "true citizenship" that will one day come from heaven, the Kingdom of God on earth (1 Peter 2.11; Phil 3:20; Heb 11:13; 1 Pet 1:17). Satan's universal activity as deceiver (Rev. 12:9) will come to a complete end only at the future coming of the Messiah (Rev. 20:3).

Once saved, always saved?
Not according to Luke 8:13-15
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The Trinity: A Mistaken Teaching

"It must be admitted by everyone who has the rudiments of an historical sense that the doctrine of **the Trinity formed no part of the original message**. St. Paul did not know it, and would have been unable to understand the meaning of the terms used in the theological formula on which the Church ultimately agreed" (W.R. Matthews, *God in Christian Experience*, p. 180).

"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 in 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**

⁸ *Commentary*, p. 373.

of God” (Dr. A. T. Hanson, Professor of Theology University of Hull, *The Image of the Invisible God*, SCM Press, 1982).

“It might tend to moderation and in the end agreement, if we were industrious on all occasions to represent our own doctrine (the Trinity) as wholly *unintelligible*” (Dr. Hey, *Lectures in Divinity*, 2, 235).

“The Trinity is a contradiction, indeed, and not merely a verbal contradiction, but an incompatibility in the human ideas conveyed. We can scarcely make a nearer approach to an exact enunciation of it, than of saying that one thing is two things” (A. H. Newman, Sadler’s *Gloria Patri*, p. 39).

“The Church Fathers’ conception of the Trinity was a combination of Jewish monotheism and pagan polytheism, except that to them this combination was a good combination. In fact, it was to them an ideal combination of what is best in Jewish monotheism and of what is best in pagan polytheism, and consequently they gloried in it and pointed to it as evidence of their belief. We have on this the testimony of Gregory of Nyssa, one of the great figures in the history of the philosophic formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity. His words are repeated by John of Damascus — the last of the Church Fathers. The Christian conception of God, argues Gregory of Nyssa, is neither the polytheism of the Greeks nor the monotheism of the Jews, and consequently it must be true. ‘For the Truth passes in the mean between these two conceptions, destroying each **heresy**, and yet, accepting what is useful to it from each. **The Jewish dogma is destroyed by the acceptance of the Word and by belief in the Spirit**, while the polytheistic error of the Greek school is made to vanish by the unity of the nature abrogating this imagination of plurality” (*Oration Catechetica*, 3; Wolfson, *Philosophy of the Church Fathers*, p. 361-363).

Did you catch it? They destroyed the central teaching of Jesus, and admitted it!

Comments

• “I have stumbled upon this website almost haphazardly. I am currently a ‘member’ of the Jehovah’s Witnesses. For some time however the doctrine has bothered my conscience and yet only recently myself and my wife (admittedly more at her insistence) have been seeking the truth, as opposed to the ‘truth’ as we have known it all our lives. Regardless how we came to this point, I wish to wholeheartedly thank you for your research and effort in producing all this material. I just listened to the audio on Revelation at focusonthe kingdom.org. It is fascinating to hear the scriptures that I know so well, expounded in a way that really consolidates and genuinely explains things.

Especially from my own background, I have heard and read these prophecies many times, but have never been able to fully feel I understood them. I am indebted to you for your efforts in this regard.” — *England*

• “Since the age of 13, I’ve been taught that God is a Trinity. So when I began my studies in theology, around 21 years old, I viewed the texts through the lenses of Trinitarian thought. It didn’t help matters that my studies were all based in Trinitarian theology, of course. I have been a student of the Scriptures for two decades now and had been exceptionally successful at explaining and defending Trinity doctrine. Then, in November 2014, it was like the lenses through which I viewed the Scriptures fell out. I suddenly ‘saw’ John 20:17 for the ‘first’ time: Jesus was ascending to *his* God. ‘God has a God?! That can’t be!’ I thought to myself. It was as if — no, it was — the Holy Spirit directly intervening in my Bible study that day in November 2014. The very next — literally the *very next* — verse I opened to was John 17:3: YHVH is the ‘*Only* true God!’ What?! Before my thoughts could fully wrap around that I was then directed to 1 Corinthians 15:27-28: God *excepted* Himself from the authority that He gave His Son. ‘But Jesus is supposed to be absolutely co-equal with God,’ I reasoned. This was a ‘1, 2, 3 — you’re out’ episode for me. I then began to apply the principles I learned from Biblical Apologetics to the Trinity. I dug deep into the claims of Trinitarian theology — not just the doctrine, but the whole philosophy and the historical origin of Trinitarian thought. I devoted a solid 3 weeks — every day — diligently studying the verses/passages purported to support the Trinity and comparing the claims with the express and explicit conveyance of Scripture. What I discovered was that not a single verse/passage in Scripture sets out to present God as a Trinity or that Jesus is ‘God the Son.’ Every verse/passage purported to support Trinity doctrine *had* to be accompanied with commentary laced with eisegesis and other verses ripped from contexts — bad hermeneutics to say the least. I also noticed that an excessive amount of commentary went into ‘explaining away’ express and explicit verses like John 17:3 in an attempt to convince the reader that this verse does *not* mean precisely what it says. At the end of three weeks, in December 2014, I decided to fully renounced Trinity theology, and my friends’ list on Facebook began to slim as I became outspoken (noncombatively) against the Trinity doctrine. I remained subject to guidelines for teaching conveyed in 2 Timothy 2:24-26 as I presented my new-found convictions. About a week after I renounced Trinity theology, I discovered biblicalunitarian.com which reinforced virtually everything that I had discovered in my 3 weeks of study. I also discovered Restoration Fellowship and other groups on Facebook, which has resulted in my friends’ list

growing greater in capacity than previously before I lost some 'friends.' — *North Carolina*

- "I believe this donation will cover some of the costs of postage for myself and hopefully for some other 'technologically challenged' reader. I enjoy the focus on the coming Kingdom. What a prospect when it shall not be necessary to say, 'Do you know the Lord? For all shall know him from the least to the greatest' (Jer. 31:34)." — *Michigan*

- "I just want to thank you and affirm the critical work you are doing for our Lord Jesus in regard to obliterating John 1:1 as the cornerstone of error in Trinitarianism. I am 55 years old, and I have been wrestling with the Trinity for 38 years. Periodically I come across pastors that go so far as to claim and say to me falsely: 'Unitarians do not have the Truth and are not saved and will not be saved.' My associate pastor told me that today: 'Believing the Trinity is essential to salvation,' and the Holy Spirit was burning in me and grieved, as I believe the Lord feels the persecution spiritually. I do not believe that the Lord Jesus is up in heaven just resting. He is working and protecting us with angels and all authority as he is very involved in his Body." — *Oregon*

- "I have been in ministry almost 50 years, all of them as a pastor. I have 6 years Bible college and seminary training. Yet, with all this experience, I was unaware that the things I had been teaching were the philosophies and commandments of Greek pagans. As I found from reading your and others' writings, I was completely dumbfounded about something I should have had at least an inkling about! I did finally find that the Lord Jesus was not a part of the 3-in-1 Godhead, in 1998. That knowledge was shared with my yoke fellows in ministry, thinking they might see the same scriptural things I did. Wow! What a surprise I got! Not only did they, to a man, disagree with my conclusions regarding the nature, position and preexistence of Jesus, but kept me from preaching in *their* churches. As a consequence, the church I pastored decided they wanted a new pastor. I was hurt, but quickly got over it. It was their loss, not mine. They say, 'You can't teach an old dog new tricks'" but this 86 year old learns pretty quickly when the Scriptural facts are presented.

"One does not realize the impact this truth has until it has been personally experienced. To know the Good News about the coming Kingdom of God, that Jesus was a *man* with like passions as we (yet without sin). That when one dies, they do not go to heaven to float on a cloud for eternity but *will* be resurrected to reign with Jesus on *earth* in our spiritual, immortal bodies.

"My humble thanks again for your desire to put into writing the wonderful works of our LORD and His Son, Jesus. Perhaps, in the coming Kingdom age, you may

learn of all the lives you and others who have shared this Good News, have influenced and changed forever. May your ministry continue to be blessed and profitable for our Father and His people.

"P.S. I do have a question. Scripture speaks of the foreknowledge, election (choice) of God. Romans 9 speaks of election; Ephesians 1:4 and 2 Timothy 1:9 speak of His choice. Romans 8:28-39 seems to tie it all together from the calling to the glorification of His people. Since I haven't seen much that you have written about these verses, with the exception of your notes in *The One God, The Father* translation, are you saying we were chosen before we were born?"

Editor: I do not think that Calvin was right at all with his double predestination. We have to choose and God is seeking those who will worship him in spirit and truth. Christian choice and persistence to the end are needed for salvation. God has a people in mind, but I doubt that he controlled every marriage from Adam on. Two sides of the coin: God speaks and we must listen and obey. Sometimes God waits to see how we will act! "Now I know..." He said to Abraham who passed the resurrection test by being willing to kill his son!

To our international readers: If you are able and willing to receive *Focus on the Kingdom* by **email** each month (and save us postage), please send an email to **anthonybuzzard@mindspring.com** or sign up at www.restorationfellowship.org with your name and email address.

For our readers in Washington state who may not be aware, a congregation of the General Conference Church of God was formed a year and a half ago west of the Cascades. The Western Washington Church of God meets at the following locations once each month:

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.