

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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27th Theological Conference

May 3-6, 2018

Calvin Center, Hampton, GA

Do please consider joining a unique group of One God, Messiah and Kingdom believers for those 4 days! You and your story, if you choose, will be an encouraging blessing to others who are emerging from various backgrounds. Our belief is that teaching the truths of the Bible is life-energizing!

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Bunkbed room (6 per room with bath) <i>We can assign roommates</i>	\$185 per person +\$15 for sheets and towels or bring your own	
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Three ways to register:

1. Online at theologicalconference.org
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3. Call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261

Registration deadline: April 12, 2018

Airport Transportation

We will provide transportation between Atlanta airport and Calvin Center for \$25 round-trip or \$15 one-way, at the following times:

Airport to Calvin Center		
Thurs. May 3	2:00 pm	4:00 pm
Calvin Center to Airport		
Sun. May 6	1:00 pm	

Please arrange your arrival time on Thursday early enough to catch one of the two shuttle runs. On Sunday, May 6 we will provide **only 1** shuttle run. In order to allow you enough time to catch your return flight, we suggest you not book your return flight prior to 3:30 pm. The conference begins with registration at 4 pm on Thursday and ends with lunch on Sunday. Driving directions to Calvin Center are at calvincenter.org. The address is 13550 Woolsey Rd., Hampton, GA 30228.

Abba Father

by Barbara Buzzard

Very much emphasis is currently placed on knowing God's proper name (and even the pronunciation of it). But where does God place the emphasis? Would it be appropriate to use God's proper name to address our Father? And would it give us greater access to the throne room? Is it proper for sons and daughters to speak to their natural fathers by using their formal names? Is there any culture in which this is acceptable? Is it not considered *disrespectful*?

As sons and daughters, even adult sons and daughters, the address most often used is "father" or "Dad" or variations of those titles. This too is the example of Jesus who spoke to his Father using the "name" Father, or Abba, dear Father. The beautiful "Our Father" as the beginning to the Lord's Prayer gives the example for all time of how to address our Father. (And the prayer is about God first, and secondly about *us*, not just about *me*.) The three Scriptures which give us this unique word are:

1) Mark 14:36: When facing the greatest trial anyone could ever face, Jesus used the term "Abba Father";

2) We are advised to act as God's own children, calling him Father, dear Father (Rom. 8:15); and

3) Gal. 4:6 points out that a change has taken place. Only since becoming His children are we able to call God our dear Father. This would be akin to the sign which says "Authorized Personnel Only."

Not a Matter of Pronunciation, but of *Position*

It is not a matter of pronunciation but rather of *position* that gives us access to the Eternal Almighty God. As God's children, we have an intimate relationship with our Father. That intimate relationship would *not* dictate that we call Him by His proper name, but by the closer and more natural "Father." It is our *position* as children which is the key to the throne room of God. It is this blessed condition as children that enables us to have access to Him. There is no higher honor or privilege that one could obtain than to be called a child of God. Not to be irreverent, but as His children we have something going with God, and it is not a matter of the pronunciation of His name. It is a matter of how He relates to us. It is that all-important matter of identity. We must know at all times Whose we are. It is at our peril that we forget this.

Jesus' approach helps us. And Jesus never addressed a prayer to the LORD as was done in the Old Testament. All of Jesus' prayers are to his Father. What a wonderful difference that New Covenant has made! Jesus has brought us closer, has destroyed the veil of separation, has led the way to his Father. "Nowhere in the entire wealth of devotional literature produced by ancient Judaism do we find 'Abba' being used as a way of addressing God. The pious Jew knew too much of the great gap between God and man (Eccl. 5:1) to be free to address God with the familiar word used in everyday family life."¹ Praise to Jesus for the incredible advantage he has given us!

Consider this scenario: a child of eight approaches an unknown man in a shop and says, "Mister, will you buy that toy for me?" The man is highly unlikely to comply. He will most likely send her to her parents for the request. The scene would be very much different if the child were his own and he was asked for a toy. The difference is in the matter of *position*. This child was not his. Who will the LORD pay attention to?

The child who is His.

There Is Every Possibility That We Have This Backwards

What *is* incredibly important is that He knows *our* name, that He *recognizes us* as followers of His dear Son. There is every possibility that we have this backwards. As in the very popular phrase "accepting Jesus," the actuality is that it is Jesus who accepts us—not on our terms, but on his, i.e. belief in his Gospel of the Kingdom. (And yet another example of our getting things twisted: one used to hear people say, "Bless my soul." The Bible says: "*Bless the Lord, oh my soul.*") It is not about phonetics. It is about what the name represents. "Calling upon the name of" has nothing to do with pronunciation, but everything to do with all which that name encompasses.

From Professor James Dunn: "It was a characteristic of Jesus' approach to God in prayer that he addressed God as 'abba' and that the earliest Christians retained an awareness of this fact in their own use of 'abba.'"² Dunn further speaks of the Abba prayer as something distinctive, a distinguishing mark of those who shared in Jesus' inheritance.

What Sustained Jesus?

"Abba Father" is one of the most significant names we can use for God. The word is Aramaic and translates as "Father" or "dear Father." It denotes a very close relationship. This relationship is unique in that, while God is the Creator of all children, all children are not

¹New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Vol. 1, p. 614.

²James Dunn, *Christology in the Making*, pp. 26-29.

children of God until they become that through faith and obedience. This relationship should also heighten our sense of brotherhood with Jesus. That we, like he, can call God our Father is the most amazing thing. What sustained Jesus? Was it the pronunciation of his Father's name or was it his Father's words? It appears that as with the prophet Jeremiah, Jesus would say: "Your words are what sustain me" (Jer. 15:16). Jesus put it this way: "It is written." This favorite saying of Jesus actually occurs sixty times in the New Testament!³

Abba Isn't "Daddy"

"The complete novelty and uniqueness of Abba as an address to God in the prayers of Jesus shows that it expresses the heart of Jesus' relationship to God. He spoke to God as a child to its father: confidently and securely, and yet at the same time reverently and obediently."⁴ Marianne Meye Thompson points out that author Jeremias, who helped to make the use of Abba popular as meaning "Daddy," *retracted* his earlier view that Abba was the language of a small child, almost like baby-talk. He later acknowledged that "Abba" is used as the address of an *adult* to one's father. Jeremias wrote, "It would have seemed disrespectful, indeed unthinkable, to the sensibilities of Jesus' contemporaries to address God with this familiar word. Jesus dared to use Abba. Even grown-up sons and daughters addressed their father as abba."⁵

As is often the case, we remember the erroneous version rather better than the correction, and pastors are still teaching that Abba equates to Daddy. (In the article, "Abba Isn't Daddy"⁶ the author acknowledges that Jeremias did not argue that Jesus called God "Daddy.")

The term Abba apparently underwent a considerable extension of meaning, replacing an older form of address. "The effect of this widening of meaning was that the word 'abba' as a form of address to one's father was no longer restricted to children, but also used by adult sons and daughters. The childish character of the word ('daddy') thus receded, and 'abba' acquired the warm, familiar ring which we may feel in such an expression as 'dear father.'"⁷

Follow Jesus' Example

An interesting observation comes from Galatians 4. Paul argues that those under the Spirit have become heirs, and therefore adults — they would have outgrown the speech of young children. Paul's argument here is to

³ See "It is Written," Barbara Buzzard, 21stcr.org.

⁴ Joachim Jeremias, *Prayers of Jesus*, p. 62-63; *New Testament Theology*, p. 67-68.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ James Barr, "Abba Isn't 'Daddy'"

⁷ *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, Vol. 1, p. 614.

emphasize maturity; to use the words appropriate to a young child would have been self-defeating. All of which is to say that since Jesus used Abba as our example, we can be sure that it is the appropriate address.

“Evidently ‘Abba’ was the word which the later church regarded as especially important and sacred, being characteristic of Jesus’ relationship to God...when applied to God it expressed a great and even familiar intimacy and personal closeness which every Jew must have regarded as shocking. On the other hand we must not read into the word a commonplace familiarity with God or even the degrading of God’s divine stature. In Jesus’ usage Abba has for its context the proclamation of the coming reign of God. The Father-God is at the same time the Lord God whose name must be hallowed, whose Kingdom is coming.”⁸

Surely we should emphasize what God emphasizes and focus on what He focuses on. What Scripture reveals is that what He wants most of all is our brokenness. He wants us to humble ourselves before Him. He wants us to give up our self-sufficiency. This is the true emphasis of Scripture. Micah 6:8: “What does God want from you? To love justice, to do mercy, and to walk humbly with God.” He wants to heal us, to bless us, to share His marvelous creation with us. He has willingly bound Himself to us in covenant, through our status as co-heirs of the Kingdom on earth with Jesus. He is bound by His own character to help us. He is not arbitrary, nor, I think, is He as transfixed and spellbound as we are by American or British vowels as if one would obtain closeness or intimacy by the nuances of a vowel.

And Then There Is This to Consider

By definition God is an uncreated Being. Therefore, God could not and does not have a father. And so each time Jesus either called himself the Son of God or addressed God as his Father, he was saying that he himself was not God. We miss much by missing this.

Likewise, the fact that Jesus *has* a God tells us that he is *not* God. No matter how often we hear the words “God, the Son” — they remain unbiblical and illogical. One precludes the other. The utter simplicity of this is so stunning that even a little child could understand it.

What an astonishing privilege to be the sons and daughters of the Most High God, the Sustainer of all that is, the only uncreated Being in the universe — that He would offer us this invitation to become His true children and invite us to call Him Father. This is truly awesome! There is power in a name. There is *very* great power in this one! ✧

Losing the Way

A Book Review by Kenneth LaPrade

To preface a review of Kristen Skedgell’s heartbreaking narrative *Losing the Way*, I believe it is appropriate that I address a few important concerns. Why would I gladly endorse a book which paints an unflattering picture of a man whom I idolized for years? Also, even though I was an enthusiastic, thankful participant within the atmosphere of The Way Ministry (The Way International) during the 1970s and 1980s, an era very aptly described by Kristen, why would I be quite supportive now of a revealing voice of warning regarding major past defects? After all, I have never even met the author, who wrote this autobiographical piece based on over forty meticulously kept journals.

In the Bible one can see that despite God’s merciful call to repentance and lavish forgiveness of sins, there are quite a few stark reminders regarding serious, perpetual errors attached to particular names. For example, Christians should **not** imitate the harsh, egotistical leadership model of Diotrefes, but, rather they should imitate what is good! (See 3rd John, v. 9-11.) Furthermore, in relevant historical studies, being aware of John Calvin’s outrageous murder of Michael Servetus (in the sixteenth century) might help Bible students be wary of certain highly erroneous tenets of Calvinism (like double predestination). According to what Jesus clearly warned about false prophets (who within are ravenous wolves, though appearing in sheep’s clothing), “You shall know them by their fruit.” Similarly, in Way Ministry terminology one might say, “The value of a counterfeit is in its closeness to the genuine.” “Let no one in any way deceive you!” Paul said emphatically (2 Thess. 2:3).

Though I never even suspected certain activities regarding Victor Paul Wierwille himself during my years in The Way, I am a witness now (in hindsight) to a multitude of badly misleading attitudes, doctrines, and practices which were detrimental to many of us. (I state this without being at all ungrateful for any good things learned or experienced at that time.) One thing, among many, to which I can attest, is the highly-charged sexual mindset produced by certain statements or teachings during those times. Even though (in the Bible), the prophet Nathan boldly reproved David for both adultery and murder, V.P. Wierwille repeatedly and emphatically taught that God was not upset about the adultery itself, since “every woman in the kingdom belonged to the king!” God was *only* concerned about David’s murder of Uriah (according to V.P. Wierwille).

On top of this presumptuous fallacy, major Way leaders would quote part of Romans 14:22 (KJV) out of context and apply it to sexual activity: “Happy is he that

⁸ William Kasper, *The God of Jesus*

condemneth not himself in that thing which he alloweth.” How did such twisted thinking originate? Was there a real fire under the billows of smoke? Within a very dominant “once saved always saved” culture, in which sexual behavior had *nothing* to do with one’s salvation (according to warped ultra-dispensational teaching), the consequences of such suggestions were catastrophic among so many! Talk about corrupt fruit! Were such weird ideas about grace and freedom a self-justifying cover for certain insidious actions? Maybe Kristen’s book will help answer that question.

By the way, I do not advocate this book for those who seek entertaining sensationalism; I *do* recommend it for those who would pray for (and counsel) the victims of manipulative relationships and sexual exploitation, often underneath the veneer of “Christian” ministry. In addition to this, this book could also inspire people to take a cold, hard look at many influential ideas and practices attached to a religious context of rotten fruit. Personally, Kristen’s testimony alerted me to a need to **stop** being insensitive and indifferent to such devastating realities! It would be easy to stay in denial about the hurtful plight of others from my religious background — and wrongly chalk off their voices to the category of scandalous rumors. Nevertheless, not all exposes are slanderous. Kristen’s particular witness definitely rings true, even to some of us who were very naïve about certain concealed activities.

The full title is: *Losing the Way: A Memoir of Spiritual Longing, Manipulation, Abuse, and Escape*. Kristen Skedgell begins each chapter with an insightful snippet of dialogue from after-the-fact counseling sessions. Her book’s initial quote, “Little children, keep yourself from idols. Amen” (1st John 5:21) makes a deeply reflective backdrop for her experiences, going from her giddy ecstasy of initial involvement in the Way to her growing awareness of destructive influences. By the way, Kristen is an excellent author of autobiographical prose.

Early on, Kristen recounts certain bizarre episodes of childhood and adolescent sexual abuse, largely due to parental neglect. In spite of her honest assessment of the failures of her parents and others, her attitude is very loving and forgiving toward all those who ever neglected or abused her. She graciously changes the names of almost everyone with whom she interacted from approximately 1970 until 1987, during blissful times and during her increasing awareness of questionable influences. Though she does not spare us certain painful details about corrupt thinking, speech, and actions, she also directs a critical view toward her own faulty decisions. She does not use a “blame game” approach to “play the victim card” while honestly revealing the dark details of an imminent catastrophe.

By the way, a picture of Kristen (when 15 years old) is featured prominently (the girl with long wavy hair) in the *Life* magazine article of May, 1971: “The Groovy Christians of Rye, N.Y.” (by Jane Howard), which is partially reproduced in *Losing the Way*. There is quite a bit of detailed description in the early part of Kristen’s book about the personal, exuberant joy of initial belief in Jesus’ offer of salvation (according to the formulaic quoting of Romans 10:9 – out of context.) Then there is the ensuing excitement involved in taking the PFAL class (Power for Abundant Living) and meeting Dr. Wierwille, “the man Of God,” in Rye and later at the farm (“headquarters”) in Ohio. As she is very successful in getting others involved in “taking the class,” her enthusiasm seemingly has no bounds.

There are a few faint hints at that early stage in her narrative of quirky attitudes, like the “us against them” mindset of Way believers. Eventually, it comes into even clearer focus that essentially, people on board with a PFAL mentality are “spiritual” and are to be implicitly trusted. Everyone else is an “unbeliever,” ruled by his or her “five senses.” Furthermore, in a gradual way, one gets the emerging picture that “the Word” is a subtle code in the Way for Dr. Wierwille’s *interpretations* of the Bible and Christian living.

Among other things, Kristen is exposed as a teenager to Dr. Wierwille’s graphic, explicit presentation of the “Christian Family and Sex” class (which actually never addresses Biblical teaching regarding adultery). Some aspects of that class strike her as weird, but she doubts herself rather than question the “source.” (Later in her life, when she keeps trusting the mystique of “the man of God”, the consequences are overwhelmingly tragic.) Nevertheless, as a young Christian (age 16) emerging from a background of sexual abuse, she is now still determined to keep herself pure until marriage.

While very young, she also battles deeply with doubt and despair, including suicidal thoughts. On top of that she gets introduced to The Way’s severely paranoid conspiracy theories: perceived threats from the “Illuminati,” Communists, or “Zionist” plots from Jews. Greater involvement in The Way exacerbates her self-doubt and shaky confusion, even though she is among a group that glosses over such problems as being a case of “negative believing” — something to snap out of with easy, automatic “positive believing.”

Her tumultuous college experience, balancing her student responsibilities with her bouts of self-doubt and her zealous evangelistic efforts, reveals to her (in hindsight) her inability to distinguish her commitment to God from her wholehearted dedication to “The Way” (as supposedly God’s uniquely relevant ministry.) At one point, responding to Dr. Wierwille’s suggestion, she decides to switch colleges to begin an apprentice year of

Way Corps training in Indiana. It is in Indiana where she first becomes the recipient of sexual advances from a Way leader. (Previously, she had successfully averted inappropriate advances from men in high school and college.) Now, though, she gets talked into engaging in sexual activity with a married man, based on his Way-styled ideas using terms like “grace,” “freedom,” “meeting one another’s needs,” etc.

Even though this really mirrors the parallel twisted reality of being abused as a thirteen-year-old girl, she starts little by little getting pulled into such activities, while being coaxed through “grace”/“meeting of needs” arguments by others. All this happens despite her natural reluctance to allow herself to be used, and her deep feelings that adultery must be wrong.

Without summarizing the details of the rest of the book, one sees increasingly in later chapters how high-pressure “leadership” demands, wildly confused signals, demeaning “guilt trips,” odd defenses of human weaknesses (but without any repentance), and many self-serving doctrines and attitudes sabotage a young lady’s heart and life. The narrative of her years of Way Corps training (including a bizarre exercise of mock military imprisonment) and her courtship and disappointing marriage to a “leader” who would repeatedly beat her up are sad enough. Nevertheless, on top of many other confusing, hypocritical influences, being coercively talked into a persistent affair (for years) with V.P. Wierwille himself makes for a cruel travesty. The secret agenda unveiled here was hidden under the professed label of a ministry parading itself as offering “the rightly-divided Word of God as it hasn’t been known since the first century!”

As heartbreaking as her memoir is, it is not merely an exercise in negativity about the past. Its perceptive warnings are still timely in a world in which misguided religious zeal can be readily confused with devotion to the true God. Kristen’s keen insight, in developing how seemingly insignificant flawed assumptions can later balloon into major disasters, is very well expressed!

Her ultimate *escape* involves “cold turkey” withdrawal from “Way” dependence. She eventually gets reliable counseling from outside the dubious associations which had been causing her so much pain. Once again, her attitude of forgiveness, *not* bitterness, shines through. She expresses extreme gratitude for her mom’s loving help. (She had been mostly estranged from her mom during her Way years.) Kristen came to realize that “love” as a superficial guise for religious affiliation does not compare to true, loving care for (and from) others.

By the way, Kristen’s witness is not a fancifully devised work of “fiction” decades after the fact; her honest, ardent plea for help from damaging, threatening abuse became known to people at the time when she

escaped from the Way over thirty years ago. This can be corroborated in the book *Undertow* by Charlene L. Edge on page 416.

I know that those of us who were involved, along with Kristen Skedgell, with Way “group-think” conformity, might still have fond memories of real Christian friendships, joyful experiences, and genuine past convictions about God, Jesus, and the Bible. Personally, I believe we can still be thankful about God’s goodness in our lives in years past (despite our zealous errors), while simultaneously refusing to stay *in denial* about a corrupt “dark side,” of which many of us were naïve. By doggedly deciding *not* to be defensive, (perhaps due to happy-go-lucky memories of perceived “good things”), we can view certain rotten roots with greater clarity. What Way doctrines and practices do not really measure up to a full “Kingdom of God” perspective? As one moves away from an ultra-dispensational disregard for Jesus’ teachings in the gospels, what other paradigm shifts are needed? Which Way ideas are rooted in blatant plagiarism or sloppy dogmas from questionable “sources” of theology? Nowadays, we might sometimes be involved in shedding erroneous ideas bit by bit, like peeling the layers of an onion. At other times it might be wise to “cut to the chase” and bravely acknowledge a corrupt root system embedded in our past. Kristen’s narrative truly reveals poisonous issues at the very root! The Scriptures address such rampant, misleading, disguised evil, and they warn us to be wary of such deceiving influences.

“Having eyes full of adultery, and who cannot cease from sin; enticing unsettled persons; having a heart trained in greed; children to be cursed...Uttering great swelling, empty words, they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by licentiousness, those who are indeed escaping from those who live in error. They promise them liberty, while they themselves are slaves of corruption, for a man is brought into bondage by whatever overcomes him” (2 Peter 2:14, 18, 19).

In conclusion, I simply commend Kristen Skedgell for her boldness and courage to present a thoroughly honest narrative of true events in their real context. ✧

Christian Nonviolence

by Brett Musser, Kentucky

When the subject of Christian nonviolence comes up, most people want to bring up the scenario of a parent having to stand by and watch as their child is harmed by some evil person. They feel that God understands, and even demands, that a parent must defend a child. Fear of being powerless in such a situation seems to scare people into searching for a solution that allows them to harm others. I’d suggest that those who bring up these wild scenarios may have

overlooked a few important teachings of the Bible. I'd like to ask them the following questions:

Why do you believe God would tell us to love an enemy and then put us in a position where our only option is to kill? What does trusting God mean to you? Is it possible that God could deal with the situation better than we could if we would just step back and let Him?

Perhaps the most important teaching of Jesus on this issue is the command that his followers love their enemies. We know that Jesus was delivering God's message to us, so we know that God has commanded us to love our enemies. Don't take this lightly. The supreme being, creator of the universe has sent His Son to tell us to love our enemies. God wouldn't give us such a difficult command and then try His best to put us in situations where we can't possibly obey. Abraham was willing to obey God, even if it meant that he had to give up his son. In Hebrews 11 we learn that his willingness came from the fact that he had faith that God could raise Isaac from the dead. Do we have that kind of faith?

Faith is a big word and the key, I suppose, to being willing to obey. Having faith means that we have complete trust that God will do what He says. If we can let the words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:13 become real to us, it should help us to better understand how a person can stand through tough situations. Paul says, "No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it."

I contend that God will not allow one of His own to have to stand by and watch as something terrible happens to their child. So as believers, let us not live in a state of fear. Understand that God may allow situations to arise and that we may be tested, but God knows how much a person can endure. He may allow us to reach the edge of that point, but it is up to us how we handle these situations. It isn't God's will that we fall, so we have to stay strong and put our trust in Him and not in ourselves. Jesus states in Matthew 28:20, "I am with you always." Can we wrap our minds around that and believe it?

With all of that being said, let's also be mindful of the fact that some of us may have to die for our beliefs. Several of the first followers of Jesus were killed when God could have easily made a way for their escape. We must submit and be willing to accept God's will, no matter what the outcome may be. ✧

We suggest you consider the article at our site "Towards the Cessation of Church Suicide: A Theology of Peace from an Anabaptist Point of View," and do remember Jesus' sweeping condemnation of even the *defensive* sword in Matthew 26:52.

The Bible's Kingdom Narrative

God has a **Kingdom of God** or **Restoration** movement under way as His Project for man, Plan for Man. This is God's response to the failure and disobedience of the first Adam. This Gospel (Good News) of the Kingdom project (God's *logos*, John 1:1) is an invitation to **all who choose** to participate. The narrative goes like this. Each participant must embrace the challenge by first believing in the project; then he must be forgiven for his past. He must then embark on the journey that ends in immortalization and co-rulership of the new world order which will be the world inaugurated at the last trumpet to be blown as in Revelation 11:15-18 (1 Cor. 15:23; Dan. 12:2). This is the future return of the Messiah to the earth.

For the narrative to be understood, the characters in the narrative must be identified correctly. The man Messiah Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5; Acts 2:22; Luke 2:11) is the pioneer participant in the Kingdom project. He is also the announcer of the Project, the Gospel preacher, preaching the Gospel about the Kingdom (Luke 4:43). The God who plans and directs the entire project is the one God of Israel, the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, the God of Jesus (Mark 12:29; Deut. 6:4). Candidates to participate in the Kingdom Project are men and women of all nations, not just Jews.

False narratives are those which do not match the only true narrative, the Biblical one. False narratives fail because they miss the biblical climax by diverting the narrative, taking a wrong turn, by offering the participants a false hope of disembodied existence in "heaven" at death. "When we all get to heaven..." Why go to heaven when Jesus won't be there? He is coming *back*.

This destroys the actual objective of the Kingdom project, which is to govern and administer the world with the Messiah Jesus, when he comes back (1 Cor. 6:2; Dan. 7:22, 27). Jesus and his associate administrators will be empowered to subdue the world, that is, the Messiah's enemies, led by a final antichrist (Rev. 5:10).

The book of Revelation is a concentrated account of that future encounter of Messiah with hostile, resistant man. This is the climax of the whole Kingdom movement, the object and conclusion of the True Narrative and Project. Psalm 2, in 12 verses, reveals in advance the end-point of the Kingdom project. The hostile world is called to submit to the Messiah whom God will have then placed (at the second coming, *Parousia*, of Jesus) on Mount Zion. Verse 10 bids the hostile world submit to the authority of the arriving Messiah, and not to resist him, lest they be destroyed by the overwhelming authority of God's agent the Messiah.

Appropriately then verse 9, “the Messiah will break them with a rod of iron and shatter them like earthenware,” is recalled 3 times in the book of Revelation (2:26-27; 12:5; 19:15). These passages declare the goal and reward of the Kingdom project, and they remind the reader of the need for human subjection to the great Kingdom project of the one God of Israel (Mal. 2:10; Dan. 3:17, LXX). They also describe the authority conferred on Jesus and the saints, recalling Daniel 7:14, 18, 22, 27 (“obey them”) and 2:44-45, the Kingdom or world empire which replaces all rivals. All former nation-states will then accept the Kingdom of the Messiah and his saints. The penalty for refusal is stated by Jesus in Luke 19:27: “slaughter my enemies.”

The biblical true narrative is falsified when it is never allowed its climax. The project is falsified when it is reduced, shrunk, to a “dying and rising” Messiah project, which allows for no denouement of the grand project — which is the subjection of rebellious man and governments to the risen, exalted, and returning Messiah and his saints. Thus Psalm 2 finds its fulfillment as the vision of the returning Messiah who takes control of chaotic human societies and turns them (at the future 7th trumpet, Rev. 11:15-18) into the Kingdom of God, which is the end-game of the entire Kingdom project. This is the Gospel as announced by Jesus (Heb. 2:3; Luke 4:43; Mark 1:14-15) and all the NT Christians.

Briefly, any attempt to describe the Biblical narrative without its climax at the future return of Jesus and the resurrection of all the saints (1 Cor. 15:23) is a failed and inadequate narrative — not fully true to the Bible. Hope (Col. 1:4-5) has been left out and replaced by “heaven when you die.” But as Dr. J.A.T. Robinson at Cambridge said, “Heaven in the Bible is never in fact used for the destination of the dying.”⁹

John Wesley of Methodism: Sermon on the Parable of Lazarus: “It is, indeed, very generally supposed that the souls of good men, as soon as they are discharged from the body, go directly to heaven; but this opinion has not the least foundation in the oracles of God. On the contrary our Lord says to Mary, after the resurrection, ‘Touch me not; for I have not yet ascended to my Father.’” Do Methodists today know this or even care?

Beware false narratives and fake news, depleted Gospels and counterfeit Christs! They will poison you. GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms) will do your physical health no good. Teachings contrary to Scripture will likewise undermine your spiritual health. ✧

Comments

• “I felt at home when I finally learned about the Kingdom. It was in many respects like learning about God for the first time. By that I mean for the first time I felt God was someone I could actually relate to, and that He understood me as a man because He created the world for man, and the world, i.e. earth, is where we are going to stay. That made everything different and just made sense. I am one of those who came out of the Way. I am glad to say I did not go through any of the experiences in the recent review in *Focus*.” — *California*

• “I was a former Oneness delusional myself for 6 years until I started really listening to Jesus 2 years ago. What started my investigation was Revelation 2 and 3:12 when Jesus says he has a God three times! This set me on a journey to investigate my own doctrine. It was daunting because I was a youth minister at the church. If I were to investigate this and find out that we were wrong, then it would be detrimental to my family and church. I stumbled across ministries like yours, especially your insight on Psalm 110:1. And that really sealed the deal. I was basically forced out of church and now I am attending your online church on Sunday mornings. It really is life to know these things and it’s so exhilarating to study these topics because I get so excited! I have hope to start a church around here in the future.” — *North Carolina*

• “I was beginning to feel completely isolated in my biblical beliefs until I discovered your ministry. You see, I have been a Jehovah’s Witness for about 30 years, but over the last decade I have had some serious doubts as to a number of the teachings of this group — in particular the 1914 teaching, the teaching of the identity of the faithful and discreet slave, Jesus as only the mediator of the 144,000, and the belief that Jesus is the archangel Michael. Your straight and simple explanation of these matters has helped me a great deal. The above teachings as well as the authoritarian nature of the organization troubled me greatly. My goal from this point forward is to use what I have learnt and have come to accept in my public ministry to help free people from the Trinitarian delusion and to focus on the Kingdom that was taught by Jesus.” — *England*

• “What a joy the *Focus* has been to me once again. ‘The Land Promise’ I found to be helpful in that it helped me not to know something new, but to protect my belief of over 60 years. My main reason for writing is to thank Barbara for the ‘I’ve Got Your Back’ article. It not only helped me greatly but also brought tears to my eyes. Thank you both greatly for the pillar you have been to me for many years now.” — *England*

⁹ *In the End God*, p. 104.

Focus on the Kingdom
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