

Focus on the Kingdom

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Our Destiny and the World's Destiny

This magazine, *Focus on the Kingdom*, now produced for 21 years (back issues at focusonthekingdom.org), is dedicated to the not very complicated idea that God has a wonderful Kingdom of God plan for our very distressed world. Isaiah chapter 2:1-4 is a great place to start a conversation with your neighbors who show some interest in what life is all about, and where our world is heading. Can anyone not afford to be interested in such topics? Nothing counts ultimately except your future and immortality and the future of the world. Isaiah describes that wonderful time coming, when nations will be forbidden to build tanks or weapons of mass destruction. They will be eager to go up to Jerusalem, where Jesus will then be king, and to learn a lifestyle and way of thinking very different from what is currently called “wisdom” (Isa. 2:1-4).

Most people know that Adam was created to be God's king (Gen. 1:28). Adam was to be God's vice-regent and to rule over the world which God had created for man. The tragic story is that he and his wife Eve failed dismally, when they broke the covenant God had made with them, by listening to the treacherous and tricky words of the serpent (the Satan or the Devil of Scripture). Satan is a master propagandist of “fake news.”

The Story

The story of mankind is sadly the story about not following the covenants, or contracts, made with us, the human race. The contract which God involved Adam and Eve in was simply that they *obey* the word and words of God. “Salvation is by obeying Jesus,” God's unique Son (Heb. 5:9). All God's covenants with us involve God's commands, His will for us. The Old Covenant books, the Hebrew Bible (Genesis to Malachi), describe in a multitude of fascinating stories how generations following Adam frequently failed to meet God's requirements. Most people know of the first murder, when Cain shed the blood of his brother Abel. Some will remember Lamech (Gen. 4:18-24), descendant of Cain, the first polygamist.

Man, when he failed, was expelled from Eden, and Jesus came bringing the Gospel (Mark 1:14-15) that with him and by obeying him, we can return to Eden. “I tell you today, that you will be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43: note where the comma goes!). That event

will be the grand restoration of all things as predicted by all the prophets (Acts 1:6; 3:21).

Many Bible readers understand that God later (in Gen. 12, 15, 17) made a brand new start, so to speak, by calling Abraham out of his hometown in Ur of the Chaldees. God invited him to go in faith — which means believing what God told him to do, the true meaning of faith — to a land that he had never seen. A land needs a king. Around 1000 BC, God made a contract/covenant with King David, promising David that He would give to his descendant the ultimate kingship of the world (2 Sam. 7; Ps. 72, 89). That promised descendant of David was, as you know, the Messiah Jesus who came some 2000 years ago, and will come again to inaugurate his and his Father's Kingdom worldwide. Jesus was “the Messiah lord,” born from Mary (Luke 2:11). Jesus is the “my lord” (*adoni*) of Psalm 110:1, the NT's favorite psalm.

Jesus was supernaturally fathered in the womb of his mother Mary (“begotten, fathered in her,” as the Greek says, Matt. 1:20, Luke 1:35). This was the beginning of a new creation of human beings based on the original promise made in Genesis 3:15, referring to the offspring, descendant, of the woman.

The beginning of the Gospel or Good News preached by Jesus, who was an evangelist as well as the one who died for our sins and rose, is found in Mark 1:1 and 1:14-15 (Acts 10:34-43). This passage, being the **beginning** of the gospel (Mark 1:1) as preached by Jesus, is an excellent place for you to start, as you learn about God's marvelous Kingdom Plan. The Gospel of the Kingdom is the one Gospel for all of us, Jews and Gentiles alike (Acts 8:12; 20:24-25; 28:23, 31). The very first command given by Jesus in the New Covenant arrangements was a command to repent, that is, to change our minds and lives radically, and to “believe the Gospel of the Kingdom of God” (Mark 1:14-15). Such true repentance causes utmost joy to God, Jesus and the angels! (Luke 15:10). That is where true Christianity as preached by Jesus begins (Mark 1:1).

Why did Jesus choose “Kingdom of God” as the label to describe his core message of salvation? Simply because he knew that he was the new Adam, and that his task was to succeed where Adam had failed. Adam should have ruled successfully and he failed. Jesus will succeed. Jesus uses the phrase “Gospel about the Kingdom of God” as the title over his whole ministry. God had commissioned him to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom: “that is the reason why I was commissioned”

(Luke 4:43). That verse gives you a perfect definition of the “purpose-driven” Jesus. Paul’s purpose and career was the same (Acts 20:24-25).

The Land

Many do not realize that Jesus was in fact recruiting the members of a future kingdom or world empire, all based on the extraordinary visions given to Daniel, described in chapters 2 and 7. Daniel chapter 7 describes firstly, in v. 14, the Messiah coming up to God his Father, to receive the authority to rule; and then, in verses 18, 22, and the all-important 27, we learn that Jesus and the saints are going to be royal authorities over the future world. All nations will serve and obey *them*, the people of God, as Daniel 7:27 reads.

This story is not remotely connected with the popular but very false idea about “going to heaven when you die,” as a disembodied soul, a destiny about which Jesus and the Bible say nothing. People with even a minimum acquaintance with the Bible know that Jesus promised that “the meek will inherit the earth [or land]” (Matt. 5:5; see also Psalm 37:9, 11, 18, 22, 29). That promise of the land recalls and repeats the covenant made with Abraham, the father of the faithful, to whom as Paul says, the Gospel was preached ahead of time (Gal. 3:8). Abraham and Jesus and you are promised the land as your inheritance. All references to the “**promise**” recall this verse: “The **promise** to Abraham that he would be heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13).

The Gospel, indeed, is all about the land and the earth. We recall the astonishing statement in Jeremiah 27:5, where we read that God has made everything, men and women and animals, and by an act of huge generosity, plans to give that world to those human beings who please him. How very much more engaging and exciting is that prospect than playing a harp (presumably solo!) on a cloud in the sky forever. Once you grasp the basics of Jesus’ spectacular agenda and plan, you will see not only how the world is going to be blessed when Jesus requires people of all nations to put away their weapons of destruction, but you will see also how *you personally* fit into that plan. Paul summed it all up, in a moment of frustration at quarreling members of the church, when he said: “Have you forgotten that the saints [the true believers], are going to manage the world?” (1 Cor. 6:2; cp. Rev. 5:10; 2:26; 20:1-6; Dan. 7:18, 22, 27).

Jesus had promised this very same destiny at his final lord’s supper. In Luke 22:29-30 we read Jesus’ words: “Just as my Father has **covenanted** with me to give me a Kingdom, so I **covenant** with you to give you the Kingdom, and you will sit on twelve thrones, to administer the [re-gathered] tribes of Israel.” The same amazing Christian reward is promised in Revelation 2:26-27. Most know about the covenant made with

Abraham, to grant him *property* (land), *progeny* (offspring even when Sarah was of advanced age), and *prosperity*, success of all kinds. Few know of this ultimate *Jesuanic* covenant to grant the Kingdom to his followers (Luke 22:28-30).

Pastors who currently operate local churches heard little or nothing of this in the colleges where they were trained. They were told that the Gospel is exclusively “spiritual,” and not to be confused with real politics, real nations, and real government. But if one claims to be the Messiah, which Jesus of course did, then his destiny as the second Adam is to head up the first successful world government. Your part in this is to prepare now, using your God-given talents to the full, going through various trials and tribulations as tests for that amazing future (Acts 14:22).

As you know, Jesus’ teaching method employs lots of parables to illustrate how the Kingdom plan works. The “message” or “word” is, as we expect, the Message about the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19). That Gospel is the “seed” which must be planted in the mind of the convert. That seed Gospel of the Kingdom must bear fruit. Salvation is a process and some “believe for a while” (Luke 8:13; cp. Rom. 11:22). Jesus warned that the salvation process requires persistence to the end.

1 Peter 1:23 speaks of the same “seed” (Greek *spora*), the seed of immortality of the Gospel which causes Christian rebirth. Jesus had spoken of this not only in the parable of the sower but also to Nicodemus in John 3 (“You must be born again”). Repentance, belief in the Gospel of the Kingdom, and baptism are non-negotiable requirements for salvation, as Jesus said also in Mark 4:11-12. No one can repent in the biblical sense unless he repents and believes the Kingdom message (exactly as in Mark 1:14-15). Jesus taught us in Luke 8:11 that the Devil’s master plan is to take away from our minds the Gospel word of the Kingdom, “so that we cannot believe it and be saved.” Jesus customarily used to raise his voice, shout, when he uttered these warning words (Luke 8:8). He knew how the Gospel of the Kingdom was the essential, saving message.

Mediator, Messenger, Prophet, Evangelist

It is important to understand the New Covenant. Jesus is said to be the “mediator of the New Covenant” (Heb. 9:15; 12:24). Paul describes himself and Christians as “servants of that New Covenant” (2 Cor. 3:6). The New Covenant is not the same as the Old! The old was based on the words of the covenant made through Moses. That covenant “in the letter” must never be mixed with or confused with the New Covenant taught by Jesus and Paul and all 27 books of the New Covenant Scripture.

Jesus came to introduce the terms of the new covenant. He was the messenger of the new covenant (Mal. 3:1). Jesus is the new and greater Moses, as promised by the foundational prediction in Deuteronomy 18:18: “I will raise up a prophet like you, Moses, from among your Israelite brothers.” That prophet was to be the mouthpiece of God’s own words. Peter was so intrigued with this prophecy that he repeats it in Acts (3:22; cp. 7:37), warning in no uncertain terms that we must carefully pay attention to the words of that prophet Jesus, who was also, as it turned out, the evangelist of the Gospel about God’s Kingdom plan (Mark 1:14-15, etc.). God and Jesus are in the king-making “business” (nothing to do with finance!).

So the Gospel is not something for you to gaze at from the outside. It is an invitation to you personally to spend your life, using your talents fully, to promote the Kingdom plan and eventually to receive the promise of the future inheritance of the Kingdom and to rule the world with Jesus. No wonder then that Joseph of Arimathea was still waiting for the Kingdom, even after the death of Jesus (Mark 15:43). No wonder then that Jesus requests us to pray as the first petition: “May Your Kingdom come, may Your will be done on earth.” As Hebrews 12:28 says, “We are destined to receive a kingdom.” That is almost exactly what the Jewish contemporaries of Jesus were praying for in the synagogues: “May He establish His kingdom in your lifetime and during your days, and within the life of the entire House of Israel, speedily and soon; and say, Amen” (The Jewish Kaddish prayer).

Bonus

So that is where you and your family fit into the overall narrative and story of Scripture. The Gospel is a Gospel of hope for all nations. Note too that as a bonus(!) true believers will receive, at the return of Jesus to rule the world with you assisting him (Dan. 7:27), the gift of immortality, of living endlessly forever. No wonder then that Paul ending his ministry, which was to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom (Acts 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31), could say that “life and immortality had been brought to light in the Gospel” (that is, about the Kingdom of God, 2 Tim. 1:10).

Be very careful that no one detracts you from seeing that the Gospel of the Kingdom of God is exactly the same as the Gospel of the grace of God (Acts 20:24 and 25). The death of Jesus for our sins and his resurrection are of course nonnegotiable elements in the Gospel, but they do not constitute the *whole* Gospel. That is why Jesus preached the Gospel for some years, without at that stage mentioning his sacrificial death. The basic foundation of the Gospel is the Kingdom of God. Jesus later included his death and resurrection, when he began for the first time to speak of them (Matt 16:21). Paul

spoke of the death and resurrection of Jesus as “among the issues of first importance” (1 Cor. 15:3).

The destiny of the world, and your destiny, is described massively in the Bible. The “good time” is coming. “My heart longs for you at night. My spirit longs for you in the morning. You will come and judge the earth. Then the people of the world will learn to do what is right” (Isa. 26:9). “‘The days are coming,’ says the LORD, ‘when I will raise up a righteous Branch from David’s line. He will reign as king and succeed; he will do what is just and right in the land’” (Jer. 23:5).

In the USA, especially, it is very easy to engage people in conversation on these huge issues of destiny — yours and the world’s. For further reading you might enjoy my articles “The World’s Destiny” and “Have You Heard the Gospel?” at our site, focusonthe kingdom.org See also my book *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah: A Solution to the Riddle of the New Testament*. ✧

Eden: The Link Between Faith and Stewardship

by Barbara Buzzard

It is an often heard accusation that Christians do not care for this earth. “Let me just say it: care for the environment is not something that can be comfortably applauded in many Bible-believing church contexts. It is not a popular subject.”¹ Care and concern for the environment is generally thought to be a part of the liberal agenda. The specific charge often leveled against Christians is this: “They just don’t care.” And since most Christians believe that they escape this earth and spend eternity in heaven, it would make sense that their view of gladly leaving it behind would shape their attitude toward it. It is almost a “to hell with the earth” approach.

But we who firmly believe that God has promised us this earth — the land (and with Scriptural validation) could not be guilty of the same dismissive attitude. Or could we? Let’s see.

This is not an article about gardening, even though I am an unapologetic lover of God’s incredible Creation. However, it is a look at how faith either does or does not influence our environmental stewardship. Michael Abbate’s wonderful book *Gardening Eden* brings together the physical and the spiritual and questions the great divide that we *think* is there. “People of faith are rarely recognized for leading the way in promoting environmental moderation, protection, or restoration. Many nonbelieving friends and colleagues have rightly

¹ Randy Alcorn, Foreword to *Gardening Eden*

pointed this out to me as they ask, ‘Why aren’t Christians more involved in environmental issues?’”²

I am not a “tree hugger.” I am a radical in pursuit of Truth but I have no political agenda. Since all truth is God’s truth and since our ancestors came from Eden and we are destined for Eden, let us have a look at it. Do we not have a calling to care for the earth? Is it not a sacred task? We know that God rejoiced in all that He made (Ps. 24:1). And we could therefore deduce that He would want to preserve it.

The preservation of this earth (and not the trashing of it) is basic in our job description (Gen. 1 and 2). Is it only the chorus which speaks of “standing on holy ground” or is it an attitude — bound up with our identity? Our identity is surely connected to the purpose of our Creator which is to find a people obedient to His Gospel and bless them unbelievably.

“Heaven the way Scripture describes it — a bright, vibrant, and physical New Earth.”³

“The truth is, in our seminaries, churches, and families, we have given amazingly little attention to the place where we will live forever with Christ and his people — the New Earth.”⁴

“Oh, I see,” said a friend. “It’s heaven on earth.”

Something Is Wrong Here

“It’s a great irony...Secular humanism doesn’t offer a higher rationale for its convictions, and people of faith recognize no moral imperative to protect the planet. It appears something is rather wrong here.”⁵

“The Christian worldview holds that humans have special, unparalleled significance in the universe. From this perspective, it matters if humans disappear from the earth and it would be a great tragedy for us to destroy ourselves by destroying our world.”⁶

Dare we ignore God’s everlasting “covenant between Me and the earth”? (Gen. 9:13). Dare we ignore creation care?

“People of faith claim to know the Artist but lack any compunction for protecting the artwork. Why have God followers not been defending this masterpiece from degradation?”⁷

Root of the Problem?

What hinders us from taking care of our world in the way that its Creator would expect and be pleased with? First would be the idea that we will leave the earth by going to heaven and therefore the earth is of little

consequence. Second, I believe, would be the false but somewhat popular idea that “everything is going to burn.” Or to put it in the vernacular, “everything is going to burn, baby.” Or “the planet is going to be destroyed anyway.” Where did this idea come from? Let’s examine the source — 2 Peter 3:10b (NLT) in describing the Day of the Lord: “...and the earth and everything in it will be *exposed* to judgment.” *Note: exposed, not destroyed.* Likewise, Psalm 18:15b: “...and the foundations of the earth were *laid bare.*”

God established the earth and its myriad complexities. He is not about to destroy it. God is about restoration, transformation, rehabilitation, renewal. As was pointed out by a diligent Bible student, the verse we most often turn to for the promise of restoration is Acts 3-2-1 — countdown. That is, Acts 3:21: “For he must remain in heaven until the time for the final restoration of all things, as God promised long ago through His prophets.” God’s plan from the beginning will not fail. He does not have to move it to heaven. He does not have to work with plan B. Paradise lost will be followed by paradise regained.⁸ In store for us is The Great Reversal!

And think of this: when Abraham comes to life in the resurrection, there will be no need for him to ask God why He burned up his (Abraham’s) inheritance!

“The heavens belong to the LORD, but he has given the earth to all humanity” (Ps. 115:16). Why is this verse not known, taught and used as basic? The earth is on loan to us, rather like the breath of life (which returns to God Who gave it). To miss this is to be at sea, to be at a loss as to where to put your stake in and thereby be grounded by Truth.

How Do We Live Out the Things That We Believe?

The two following paradigms are representative of most Christian views: 1) This world is a gift from God and therefore we must do our best to preserve it and protect it from harm. 2) This planet is a tool, only useful for meeting temporary needs, and destined to be done away with in favor of a cosmic, heavenly home.⁹ Our viewpoint necessitates a theological decision as to God’s Plan and Purpose; it necessitates a *theology of the earth.*

“There is a danger of sometimes losing our faith and being left with only its application. The New Testament gospels reveal how the Jewish Pharisees were guilty of this. They had emphasized personal works and the obedience to their society’s rules so much that their rules eventually became what they believed. After a century or so of teaching people to do things, or not to

² Michael Abbate, *Gardening Eden*, p. 19.

³ Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Gardening Eden*, p. 20

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

⁸ Although this is the title of a Jehovah’s Witness publication, the Paradise described there does not bear true witness to the Scriptures, in my opinion.

⁹ How to Live Like a Conditionalist, *From Death to Life*.

do things, the reasons for the commands were lost, and there was nothing left but the commands.”¹⁰

Oh, How I Love This One!

“After he created the world, all the living things, and man, God invented *landscape architecture*. He planted a special, protected garden and added all sorts of beautiful trees and a river to water it. It was probably a purely delightful place, lacking nothing but a gardener.”¹¹

In teaching junior master gardeners I find that having them plant a garden answers the question as to what a miracle is far better than any definition I could give. And it teaches them something that we simply cannot. When, as the teacher, one feels their joy at harvesting something, or even just working in the earth, one senses what it feels like for God to watch our success — He derives pleasure from our successes.¹²

“While the world was still pure and sinless, there was meaningful work to be done in this special garden to ensure its health. Gardening Eden was not Adam’s punishment; it was his *purpose*.”¹³ And we follow the model of our Father and our brother: “I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener” (John 15:1). The entire planet is our garden. It’s just a matter of keeping up your piece of the planet. A disinterested Christian? I don’t think so.

It’s about Restoration!

We are all familiar with the parables about stewardship and so to just leave them there on the page and not to employ them is dangerous for us. And so we must face our positions as corporate stewards of this planet and ask ourselves how we are doing. God is so unbelievably generous to us. “God gives us this universe freely, wanting us to discover the joys of responsible stewardship, of moderation, and the freedom that comes with self-discipline and caring for a flock, of not squandering resources. And by doing these things, God tells us, we’ll better understand and appreciate Him. He alone knows the deep joy and satisfaction that will be ours when He catches us fulfilling our calling and says to us, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant!’”¹⁴

“We’re told that a time is coming when God will restore *everything*. This is an inclusive promise. It encompasses far more than God merely restoring disembodied people to fellowship in a spirit realm...It is God restoring mankind to what we once were, what He designed us to be — fully embodied, righteous beings.

And restoring the entire physical universe to what it once was.

“God will restore everything *on Earth*. The prophets are never concerned about some far-off realm of disembodied spirits. They are concerned about the land, the inheritance, the city of Jerusalem, and the earth they walk on. Messiah will come from Heaven to Earth, not take us away from Earth to Heaven, but to restore Earth to what he intended so he can live with us here forever.

“Will the earth we know come to an end? Yes. To a *final* end? No.”¹⁵

Loving Your Neighbor?!

“How can you love your neighbor if you don’t know...how to keep your filth out of his water supply and your poison out of his air?...How can you be a [good] neighbor without applying principle — without bringing virtue to a practical issue? How will you practice virtue without skill?”¹⁶ And so, as with most things in life, it’s a matter of knowledge combined with application and performance.

What does God say about environmental stewardship? He is all too clear: He will destroy those who destroy the earth (Rev. 11:18b) and it is His, on loan to us, and requiring looking after. And since what He made was good and since He loves the world He created — so must we (Ps. 145:17).

“The more I study the vast wonders of this natural interlocking system, the more I’m amazed by God. He didn’t simply call for casting individual species and create separate environments for them all. He scripted an incredible living drama of interaction, dependence, and interdependence upon interdependence. **It is the performance of this creation in motion that is so ridiculously awesome.**”¹⁷

Moved by Beauty

Why are we moved by beauty? Knowing that we are unique in this among all God’s creation ought to make us stop and think. What is the *point* of beauty, either of the eye or of the ear? It is not necessary, to be sure, but the benefits are monumental. Our reaction to beauty is a quality given from the One in Whose image we are made and we share this with Him. Our appreciation of beauty is a gift from a Father Who also appreciates it.

Science and psychology together make a connection between health and nature. The restorative power of God’s creation is undeniable. The sheer power of the outdoors to refresh and inspire, to instill peace and calm are well attested facts. The therapeutic power of the outdoors is witnessed to by both medicine and theology.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ *Gardening Eden*, p. 38.

¹² Instead of saying I am a Master Gardener, I prefer to say that I work in my Master’s Garden.

¹³ *Gardening Eden*, p. 39.

¹⁴ *Gardening Eden*, p. 41.

¹⁵ Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, p. 90.

¹⁶ Wendell Berry, *The Gift of Good Land*.

¹⁷ *Gardening Eden*, p. 31.

Many would agree that they go outdoors to have their senses put in order. Is it just an accident that as you nourish the soil, the soil nourishes you?

And I would add that research has shown that there is a bacteria (a good one) in the soil which stimulates our feel-good hormones. That bacteria is also said to increase learning ability.

And so the pay-off for gardeners is out of proportion to anything they might put into it. And the creation of beauty is the crowning glory, that delight which we share with our Father in harmony.

“So if we did nothing else in our Christian view of nature than to save and enjoy beauty, it would be of value, and worthwhile...When we have learned this — the Christian view of nature — then there can be a real ecology; beauty will flow, psychological freedom will come, and the world will cease to be turned into a desert.”¹⁸ “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy” (Isa. 35:1-2). It has been suggested that people from a planet without flowers would think we must be mad with joy the whole time to have such things around us. As Einstein said, “There are only two ways to live your life. One is as though nothing is a miracle. The other is as if everything is.”

Case in Point

Hundreds of millions of butterflies migrate each year to the mountains of central Mexico, some traveling over 2,000 miles. How, Abbate asks, does a creature barely an inch and a half long, weighing virtually nothing, travel 25 to 100 miles a day? Their arrival in Mexico creates a staggeringly beautiful sight as they cover the pine trees there so densely that the trunks, branches and needles of the trees cannot be seen. Their movements make the trees appear like twinkling gold, a sight so majestic that it is breath-taking.¹⁹ And if it is God’s Plan that this scenario takes place — shouldn’t we do our part to ensure that this fragile beauty continues?

Moved by Understanding and Appreciation

The Bible speaks about trees more than any other living thing other than humans.²⁰ It seems that God has a very great fondness for trees since they are woven into the Scriptures from one end to the other.²¹ Every significant event in the Bible is marked by a tree or its parts — branches, fruit and seed. There is a tree featured on the first page of Genesis, the first Psalm, the first

page of the New Testament and the last page of Revelation.²² In fact, the tree of life begins and ends the Bible. Our Rabbi Jesus is the true vine, the shoot and descendant of David, and we are that wild olive tree grafted in. And we are to be like trees, firmly planted, firmly rooted, bearing fruit, and never withering.

Understanding the mechanics of trees offers us a glimpse of the world that many miss. Missing the wonder means missing much about the nature of God and His love for us. In fact, you might wonder how it is that you have read the Bible your entire life and missed so many insights and treasures. The more one knows the more one finds he doesn’t know. Appreciation and understanding help bridge the gap between faith and environmentalism. Nature is not a self-acting instrument. We must be aware of the connection between heaven and earth so that we might participate in God’s Plan.

In one class on trees the professor informed us that there is such a vast amount of knowledge that can be ascertained from “reading” a tree’s rings that we could even discern what spring was like in the year Jesus was born in Bethlehem!²³

No stone was left unturned in the planning of the universe.

“By my great power I have made the earth and all its people and every animal. I can give these things of mine to anyone I choose” (Jer. 27:5).

We must *tread carefully upon the earth* out of respect for its Designer, Creator and Sustainer. ✧

Comments

• “I have been reading your book *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*. Thank you for writing it. Since reading it, I have started going through every book of the New Testament and I am writing down every description that the Bible gives Jesus. I am amazed that I never saw the distinction between Jesus and the Father so strongly before this time. Thank you for all you do!” — *Texas*

• “Thank you once again for the *Focus on the Kingdom* magazine. I appreciate it very much and look forward to reading it every month.” — *England*

• “I am still witnessing the truth here [in prison], and sometimes I get some who listen and see the truth. There are a couple of men who are listening and want to know the truth about the Trinity.” — *Ohio*

• “Since we met you guys a huge world (Kingdom of God) has opened up for us, and what an experience this has been. We were discovering things sporadically at first, but with the help of Restoration Fellowship and like ministries our knowledge base began to develop into something that was logical and actually matched

¹⁸ Francis Schaeffer, *Pollution and the Death of Man*.

¹⁹ *Gardening Eden*.

²⁰ And, of course, with the exception of God Himself.

²¹ The word *tree* or *trees* is found 311 times in Scripture.

²² Matthew Sleeth, *Reforesting Faith*.

²³ Known as the hidden language of trees.

what was written! The two most powerful things taught were re: Psalm 110:1-5 and also the ‘principle of agency.’ Just these 2 things alone have explained/clarified so much, and continue to answer questions about scriptures which once appeared to be contradictory. What amazes me though is that when these 2 things are mentioned during the debates (by both Carlos and Dale Tuggy), your opponents do not respond with any comment, challenge, or anything for that matter; as if they did not hear it at all. My prayer is that they have ears to hear, and an open mind. Look, I get why there is such resistance to this; to be honest my world was turned upside down by it. I was taught that way, and taught it the same way. I was afraid to look further and was told by sincere people of God that this was demonic influence and not of God; and the fear of this being true closed my mind. I call it spiritual PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder). That’s why the work that you do is so important. You didn’t convince me, but the scriptures you presented showed me there is a lot more to this than what I had been told! My prayers were answered; our eyes were opened. I can now say with all humility ‘I was wrong,’ but now I am free!” — *Virginia*

• “Thank you for uploading your *Focus on the Kingdom* magazine to your website. This enables me to download it and read it comfortably. Your magazine is really informative.” — *Australia*

• “I’m glad you’re still active in your ministry. I love reading all your material. Things are starting to fall in place, making more sense than ever. I just couldn’t swallow the Trinity teaching. If there are any like-minded believers in the Ensenada/Rosarito, Mexico area that you are aware of, I’d appreciate communicating with them.” — *Mexico*

• “I just wanted to say that I’ve been reading your book (*Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*) and I’ve found it to be enlightening. I’m extremely new to the belief that Jesus is not God, although I have not been a Trinitarian for the past 15 years or so, probably more modalist. My beliefs started to change over the past 8 weeks when I started to write a Bible study in regard to John’s statement that he wrote his Gospel so that we may ‘believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God’ — but from a Oneness perspective. I couldn’t get my head around why John didn’t say, ‘Jesus is the Father or God.’ I was in a bit of a haze for a few weeks, not really knowing what to believe. Now I have faith that Jesus truly is the Christ, the anointed one, the Messiah, the king and very importantly that he is the Son of God due to his begetting in the womb of the virgin. At the moment I’ve written near enough of a 20,000 word essay to confirm that Jesus is the Son Of God. Although I’m not finished yet it’s my hope to share with everyone what I know to be true from the scriptures.” — *Northern Ireland*

• “Really I don’t know how to say thank you! All I can say is may the Eternal God Father Almighty reward you in the work you do about His word. I was ignorant! Now I have come to the understanding that after the Gospel of the Kingdom is preached to the entire world, then the end will come, and the Kingdom of God (the Gospel preached) will be established here on earth. What a wonderful key to open the future life!” — *South Africa*

• “To translate the most accurate approach to Scripture into my native language is not only a great advantage and honor, but also a very joyful experience, yes passion. I wish you and your co-workers a lot of health and especially energy, so that you can continue your excellent work in the Lord’s vineyard. We are far from each other linguistically and geographically, but our hearts do not perceive this distance.” — *Czech Republic*

• “I always appreciate the *Focus on the Kingdom*, but I must comment on Barbara’s article on abortion! (July). She is a wonderful writer, well reasoned, motivating, inspiring. Thank you so much for your article, and others on the same topic. I wholeheartedly agree and say Amen! Once again thank you so much to the both of you for the truths for which you stand, and for speaking up for the unborn babies who have no chance.” — *Indiana*

The Light of Hope

by Jan Dominic Bolus, Philippines

On listless nights, the winds blow
Hidden sorrows that nobody knows
Where is the light that I’m seeking?
The hope that will fill my being

O Lord, you know what I long for
Those things that I cherish and adore
Keep them safe and clutched in your breast
Until the time You grant my request

I rely on You; there is no other
No one can match You or Your power
Let me stray not from Your glorious will
When troubles come, help me be still

Fill my life with purpose and meaning
So I may dance and rejoice in singing
Let the earth be filled with gladness
When You cure the world of its sadness

After You rid the world of suffering
And Your Son is enthroned as King
Let me gain entrance into Your Kingdom
Let the New Age dawn whose time has come!