

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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Leaping to Conclusions

Popular works on Christian apologetics abound in the Christian bookstores. They contribute heavily to the spiritual diet of many inquiring believers and churchgoers. One of the most frequently treated topics is the question, Is Christ God?

The affirmative answer to the question goes like this: 1) Jesus had a unique relationship with his Father. Therefore he must have been God. 2) Jesus said he was the Son of God, so he must be God. 3) The Jews accused him on two occasions of "making himself equal with God." The Jews' accusation must have been fair, and they must have thought that Jesus was claiming to be a "coequal, coeternal, uncreated Person in the Godhead," who had become man. 4) Jesus claimed to be the Son of Man and this proves he was God.

These four arguments are presented in Paul Little's *Know Why You Believe*, which Billy Graham reviews as "scholarly, articulate and simple."

Proverbs wisely advises us that one man's arguments may *sound* convincing until someone comes and puts an opposite point of view. So what about these "proofs" of the so-called Deity of Jesus?

1) Jesus' unique relationship with his Father proves only that Jesus was unique. It is a huge leap of logic to say that a unique relationship with God means that one *is* God. Jesus was virginally conceived, he was without sin, and he was resurrected from death to endless life, immortality. He was uniquely *authorized* by God his Father to act on behalf of the Father (he says this over and over again in John's gospel). But none of these factors makes him God! Paul, in a dramatically clear statement about who Jesus was,

said: "There is one God and one mediator between God and man, the *man* Messiah Jesus." Jesus died. He was mortal. But God is immortal (I Tim. 6:16). Jesus was tempted, but God cannot be tempted. By definition, then, Jesus could not have been God. Indeed, as Paul said, "there is One God, the Father..." (1 Cor. 8:4-6). Jesus is the "*man* Messiah Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5). Jesus is indeed the Lord *Messiah* (Luke 2:11), based on the title "my lord" (RV, RSV, NRSV, Jerusalem Bible) given him in the massively important prophetic Psalm 110:1. "My lord" (*adoni*) is a title given exclusively, in all 195 occurrences in the Old Testament, to superiors who are *not* God.

Jesus never claimed to be the Lord God. There is only one Person, the Father, in that unique class (John 17:3). Jesus is never once called "the Almighty." He is never addressed as "the one who alone is God." He is never called "the only who is truly God," but his Father is so addressed (see John 17:3; 5:44). If, as Jesus said, the Father is "the only one who is God," no one else can be. Language could not be clearer (unless of course one has been induced to believe otherwise).

What about argument 2)? Jesus claimed to be God because he said he was the Son of God. It is surprising that a reflective Bible student would be convinced by this! The title Son of God is found in the Bible on which Jesus was reared on several occasions. It refers to the whole nation of Israel, collectively (Ex. 4:22). Angels are called "sons of God." The Messiah is to be God's Son (Ps. 2:2, 6, 7; 89:27). The Messiah as the future blood descendant of David is specifically called the Son of the Father (2 Sam. 7:14; Heb. 1:5). The title applied also to Solomon, who certainly was not God.

The New Testament tells us also that Adam was the Son of God (Luke 3:38). But, as you see clearly, none of these examples demonstrates that Son of God=God! Rather obviously "Son of God" means a created human being in the case of Adam and otherwise a member of the human race who comes

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into the world by conception and birth, and who enjoys a special relationship to God.

The assertion that “Son of God”=“God” is really an amazing piece of misinformation. Indeed, biblical facts lead us to the opposite conclusion. As a leading world Bible scholar of our time, Dr. Colin Brown, general editor of the prestigious *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, says: “To be called Son of God in the Bible means that *you are not God*” (*Ex Auditu* 7, 1991, emphasis added).

Paul Little claims that Son of God means God, but he offers us no analysis of the other places where “Son of God” appears in the Bible. We are supposed to believe on the strength of “say-so” and dogma.

Paul Little maintains that 3) Jesus must have been God, since Jews (whose conversations with Jesus were often biased and unfair — Jesus accused some of them of having the Devil as their Father, John 8:44!) accused him of “making himself equal with God.”

Honest assessment of evidence in any situation requires that the accused be allowed to answer. Jesus did that. He immediately replied that far from being absolutely equal with God, he was dependent on God for everything (see John 5:18-23). On the second occasion Jesus presented as argument the fact that *human* judges had been called “gods” by God himself (Ps. 82:6). On that basis, Jesus said, it was not wrong for him, as the supreme and final human representative, accredited agent and prophet of God (see Deut. 18:15-18; Acts 3:22; 7:37), to claim to be Son of God (see John 10:31-38). We have seen that this title is not the title of Deity at all, but the name for a divinely authorized *human being*. Jesus was indeed “one with the Father” (John 10:30). The Bible shows us that to be “one” indicates a “hand in glove” association. The disciples were to be “one just as we [the Father and Jesus] are” (John 17:11). To be “one with God” certainly does not mean one *is* God.

Weakest of all is Paul Little’s claim that Jesus’ self-title Son of Man makes him God. That is extraordinary, since Ezekiel in the Old Testament is addressed frequently as Son of Man. Moreover, Son of Man means “*the human person/being*.” It is a Messianic title drawn from Daniel 7. (“Sons of men” are human beings.) The Jews, rightly on this point, never imagined that God Himself would be the Messiah. God could not be the son of David. No early Christian supposed that God would come and say to Mary (as recently a Roman Catholic teacher claimed): “Mary, will you please be my mother?”

Jesus’ authority to forgive sins is not any proof at all that he *was* God. The right to remit sins was given

by Jesus to other human beings (John 20:23) and the Bible itself provides the appropriate comment from onlookers: they marveled “that such power had been given to *men*”! (Matt. 9:8)

It is common for popular books on Christianity to present the reader with three choices: Jesus was either bad, mad or God. So, say these books, you choose! Was Jesus evil, insane or God Himself? This is a clever way of forcing an unbiblical conclusion on the reader. There is a fourth option which reflects the teaching of Jesus himself and the Scriptures: Jesus was the unique, virginally conceived, final spokesman and ambassador of God, who as the visible image of his Father, perfectly reflected the will of his Father who commissioned him. Jesus was the promised Jewish Messiah, and no Old Testament text ever hinted that he was Almighty God. He was to be born as a son to Israel (Isa. 9:6) and be “mighty god” (*el gibbor*=“divine hero, reflecting the divine majesty,” *BDB Lexicon of OT Hebrew*). The Messiah: that is the Savior presented by the New Testament and anticipated by the whole of the Old Testament. Jesus fits that model beautifully. He was indeed the very expression of God, the walking embodiment of God’s own word and wisdom (John 1:1-2). Note carefully that “word” in John 1:1 has no capital letter on it in the original Greek, and does not mean *another person* until *it* is embodied in the human being Jesus, the Son of God, who was begotten in the womb of his mother by supernatural generation (Matt. 1:20 — “that which is *begotten* in her”). The original Greek should be consulted here, since translations conceal the fact that Jesus was supernaturally created/begotten *by the Father*, not just conceived (the action of the mother). It is a begetting, not in eternity — the Bible has not one word about an eternal begetting of the Son — but in history, some 2000 years ago. Luke 1:35 explains the *reason* and basis for Jesus’ being the Son of God — certainly not because he *is* God, but because he was miraculously and supernaturally created in Mary. This makes him a unique human being, the second (last) Adam.

The earliest post-biblical Christians were not Trinitarian believers. That is to say they did not believe what popular “orthodoxy” now demands so insistently, that the Son of God was an *eternal*, uncreated Person.

Tertullian, c. 155-230: “The Father is the entire substance but the Son is a *derivation* and part of the whole” (*Against Praxeas*, 9). Though he believed that the Son was preexistent, “**there was a time when the Son was not**” (*Against Hermogenes*, 3). The Son

came into real existence (according to Tertullian) before the Creation but had no separate existence until he thus proceeded from the Father. “Tertullian thus still moved in part in the thought world of the apologists (Justin Martyr and others) and had not yet reached the conception of the eternal Son, the correlate of the eternal Father.” Tertullian does not speak of “the Trinity immanent in the eternal life of God” (Sydney Cave, D.D., Professor of Theology, University of London, *Doctrine of the Person of Christ*, p. 86).

From these well-established facts we see that the Trinity cannot be traced back continuously to the New Testament. ✧

More Scholarly Opposition to the “Immortal Soul”

(our thanks to Richie Temple for the following)

James D.G. Dunn is the Lightfoot Professor of Divinity at the University of Durham, England. He sets forth his understanding of the biblical view of the soul in his recent book *The Theology of Paul the Apostle*, Eerdmans, p. 76:

“Paul uses *psyche* just 13 times, 4 of them in Romans. This itself is in striking contrast to the regular use of the term in classical Greek and of *nephesh* in the OT (756 times). **The difference between Hebrew and Greek anthropology becomes as clear here as anywhere.** For in classical Greek usage the *psyche* is ‘the essential core of man which can be separated from his body and which does not share in the body’s dissolution.’ Here is the origin of the concept of ‘the immortality of the soul,’ as the continuing existence of an inner, hidden part of the human person after death. **In contrast, in Hebrew thought, *nephesh* denotes the whole person, the ‘living *nephesh*’ of Gen. 2:7.** Paul’s usage clearly echoes the typical Hebrew mind-set.”

Stanley B. Marrow is a Jesuit Roman Catholic scholar who obtained his Licentiate in Scripture from the Pontifical Institute in Rome and his Doctorate in Theology from the Gregorian University. He has been a Professor of New Testament at the Biblical Institute in Rome and universities in the USA. We present this quotation from his book *Paul: His Letters and His Theology*, p. 229-30:

“The first thing that should be said about the answer Paul himself gives about the question ‘What is Man?’ is that it is not ours – certainly not that of our habitual way of thinking and speaking. We understand ‘man’ to be made up of body and soul – one material and perishable, which is destined to return to the dust

whence it came, and the other spiritual and immortal, which is what survives of us after death. Death for us is the separation of the soul from the body. The spiritual soul, we believe, receives its just recompense immediately after death and awaits the resurrection of its body at the resurrection of the dead on the last day.

“Anything farther from Paul’s response to ‘What is Man?’ is hard to imagine. For Paul, as for the biblical authors, when the *pneuma* leaves my body, then I, all of me, die. This by the way, is how Jesus himself died: ‘he yielded up his spirit (*pneuma*)’ (Matt. 27:50); ‘he breathed his last’ (Lk. 23:46).

“When this mortal creature comes to the end of his days, then he dies – all of him, not just his body, nor only his flesh and blood, nor only his mind and his heart, but all of him; body and soul, flesh and spirit, heart and mind, what of him is visible and what is invisible – all die. The rich multiplicity of biblical terms, both technical and traditional, employed by Paul to describe this mortal creature, describes only aspects and facets of the individual. Thus, ‘body’ describes him in his relation to other individuals and to other things; ‘mind’ refers to his innermost thoughts; ‘flesh,’ to his mortality and fragility; ‘heart,’ to the seat of his intentions, thoughts, and affections; ‘soul’ (*psyche*), to the individual life that ends in death; ‘spirit’ (*pneuma*), to the breath of life that the Creator breathed ‘into his nostrils’ (Gen. 2:7).

“This is the reason why the resurrection occupies such a central position both in Paul’s theology and his anthropology. **The Christian’s only hope of life after death is resurrection from the dead to eternal life.** To forget this basic truth, to get caught up in the endless philosophical debates on ‘the immortality of the soul,’ to wander aimlessly in the labyrinth of vain speculation about the dead, is, ultimately, to render Paul’s anthropology incomprehensible, and his insistence on the resurrection of our ‘mortal bodies’ (Rom. 8:11, 23) superfluous.”

Now, if this is not what one hears growing up in the Roman Catholic or Protestant churches, it only shows the huge gap between biblical truth and the mistaken traditions that are upheld in so many churches – Protestant and Roman Catholic alike.

As Hans Schwarz, Professor of Theology and Director of the Institute of Protestant Theology at the University of Regensburg, Germany, points out in his recently published book *Eschatology*, pp. 272-280:

“The Roman Catholic Church is not alone in its emphasis on the immortality of the soul. Most Protestant hymns express the hope that after our life

on earth our immortal soul will be united with God...But can this be maintained on biblical grounds?

“When we consult a concordance of the Bible, we find many instances of the term ‘soul.’ But the creation accounts at the beginning of the Bible, where we would expect mention of the human soul, are remarkably quiet about a creation or infusion of the human soul through divine intervention. Genesis 1 simply states that ‘God created humankind in his image’ (1:27), and in Genesis 2 we hear in more picturesque language that ‘the LORD God formed the man from the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and the man became a living being’ (2:7).

“This distinction made is not between body and soul but between a lifeless and a living human being. In other words, God created the whole person according to the body (from dust) and then gave this body life through His life-giving breath. This can hardly substantiate the teaching that our ‘soul’ is created immediately by God, while our body came into existence in a mediated way through evolution [the current official Roman Catholic position]. It also runs contrary to the Platonic idea that the body is a prison of the soul.

“How incompatible the Greek idea of the immortality of the soul and the Christian belief in the resurrection are, is demonstrated by Paul’s own missionary activity [Acts 17 in Athens]. We should also note that, according to Paul, death is not a passage to new life or redemption from our earthly existence, but an enemy that has been overcome by Christ.

“Paul, and with him the whole New Testament, is not longing for the liberation of the self from the bodily prison, but for the resurrection of the body. He does not hope that from our mortal nature something worthwhile and immortal will survive, but he hopes and is sure that through the resurrection of the body our mortal nature will be transformed into immortality (I Cor. 15:35-57).”

R.K. Bauckham, a world-renowned scholar of biblical eschatology, has taught at several leading universities. He writes in the *New Bible Dictionary*, IVP, 3rd edition, “Eschatology,” p. 336-7, as follows:

“In NT thought, immortality belongs intrinsically to God alone (I Tim. 6:16), while men by their descent from Adam are naturally mortal (Rom. 5:12)...**The Christian hope for life beyond death is not based on the belief that part of man survives death.** All men, through their descent from Adam, are naturally

mortal. Immortality is the gift of God, which will be attained through the resurrection of the whole person.”

F.F. Bruce, the late Rylands Professor of Biblical Criticism and Exegesis at the University of Manchester, was often called the dean of 20th-century New Testament scholars. In his book *Paul: Apostle of the Heart Set Free*, Eerdmans, p. 311, he writes:

“Paul evidently could not contemplate immortality apart from resurrection; for him a body of some kind was essential to personality. Our traditional thinking about the ‘never-dying soul,’ which owes so much to our Greco-Roman heritage, makes it difficult for us to appreciate Paul’s point of view. **Except when immortality is ascribed to God Himself in the New Testament, it is always of the resurrection body that it is predicated, never of the soul.**”

We close with a quotation from the renowned New Testament scholar Howard Clark Kee, Professor Emeritus of Biblical Studies at Boston University. He gives us these important words in *The Cambridge Companion to the Bible*, p. 544:

“At times resurrection seems to refer to the restoration of the whole faithful community, as in Ezek. 37. But in Isa. 26:19 and Dan. 12:2, it is the faithful individual members of God’s people who are given assurance that their fidelity to God will be rewarded when they are raised up from among the dead.

“This hope was given concrete expression in the early Christian assurance that God raised Jesus from the dead and that his people will share in the resurrection of the faithful and in the age to come (I Cor. 15). In passages like John 11:25-6, however, the benefits of the resurrection life are seen already being enjoyed by God’s people in the present evil age. In Hellenistic tradition there was a belief that the human soul would be released from the body at death and might ascend to the realm of the eternal and divine. That notion was taken up by some Jewish thinkers in the Hellenistic period, as Wisdom of Solomon 3:1-4 [from the Apocrypha] attests. But when Paul describes the state of the faithful in the new age, it is not in terms of a disembodied soul but as a transformed body – the spiritual body (I Cor. 15:35-49). Similarly, in Rev. 20:11-22:5, the righteous find their ultimate joy and fulfillment – not as souls ascending to heaven – but in the new order, the new city, and the new temple, which come down out of heaven to a renewed earth (Rev. 21:10).”✧

How to Confuse the Bible

There are two good ways to confuse the Bible (and lots of variants on these two methods).

1) You make a difference between two or more items when the Bible makes no such difference.

2) You fail to distinguish what the Bible distinguishes as different.

Let us take an example of 1). A tract says: “The gift of tongues is not to be confused with the use of tongues as the sign of Baptism in the Holy Spirit **or** with tongues used in a private prayer **or** intercession **or** with some foreign language as a means of communicating.”

Notice what has happened here. There are no less than five distinguishable forms of “tongues.”

The Bible does not provide these distinctions. The gift in Acts was the gift of speaking a foreign language by someone who had not learned it. No interpreter was needed. The audience understood their own language. In I Corinthians 12-14 the gift of tongues is also the ability to speak a language (not just repeated syllables) unlearned. The only difference in Corinthians is that there was need for an interpreter, so that all could know what was being communicated. So there is only one gift of languages: an interpretation was provided supernaturally in Corinth and no interpretation was needed in Acts.

The gift of tongues is listed as of less importance than preaching and *it should always be interpreted*, either by the speaker who should pray to interpret (1 Cor. 14:13), or by another person present who has the companion gift of interpretation (1 Cor. 14:27, 28). Paul never suggested that the gift would remain forever in the prayer closet, nor that it should be unintelligible. All the gifts are to be public, to benefit all and be verifiable. Only three utterances are permissible at a given meeting and one person is to interpret. Without interpretation, no use of tongues is permitted.

Paul makes no distinction between five different “tongues” gifts.

An example of confusing Scripture in the other way, 2) above, is to propose that the Kingdom of Heaven is not the same as the Kingdom of God. This difference is denied, rightly, by thousands of good Bible commentators. It is easy to show that in Matthew only, Jesus is reported as preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of *Heaven*. The same Gospel preaching of Jesus is called the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God in Mark and Luke. Imagine the potential confusion introduced by the

false assertion that Kingdom of God and Kingdom of Heaven mean different things. “Allow the little children to come to me. Of such is the Kingdom of Heaven” (Matt.). “Allow the little children to come to me. Of such is the Kingdom of God” (Mark, Luke). It would be impossible to see a difference here. Examples could be multiplied, but the point is clear. ✧

Taking Tasker to Task

“It does not take a systematic theologian of any extraordinary degree of perspicacity, to notice how Bible commentators are often victims of quite dogmatic, uncritical, assumptions, in the course of their professional work.” So wrote wisely a fine scholar of the Bible and theology.¹ In plain language, he observed that his colleagues often swallowed huge assumptions without examination.

Here is a significant example of an unproven assumption at work. R.V.G. Tasker wrote the commentary on Matthew in the *Tyndale New Testament Commentary* series. This set of commentaries contains much of the greatest value. But the section on Matthew 22:41-46 reads:

Jesus reminds the Pharisees “that if David himself, in an inspired utterance in Ps. 110:1 [‘the LORD said to my lord’], speaks of the Messiah as *Lord*, then the Messiah must be more than David’s physical descendant, who would be a national leader, greater perhaps but similar to David himself. In other words the Messiah, though of Davidic descent, is also of *divine origin*. David’s Son is *David’s God*. Such a logical exposition of one of the key psalms reduced the Pharisees to silence” (emphasis added).

But wait a moment. Did David refer to the Messiah as his *GOD*? Absolutely not. Professor Tasker assumes that David believed in the Trinity or at least a Binity. But the facts are against him. David referred to the Messiah as “my lord” (note the correct lower case “l” of the RV, RSV, NRSV, etc.). But “my lord” is definitely not “my God.” The inspired text has the word *adoni* (my lord) here, and that form of the word “lord” occurs 195 times in the Old Testament. On no occasion does it refer to the Lord *God*. It is always the title of a *human* (or rarely an angelic) superior.

The Messiah is not God, but the supreme human lord of David and of all believers. Mary was, according to Elizabeth, “the mother of my lord [the Messiah]” (Luke 1:43), not the mother of God!

¹ James Mackay, “The Problem of the Preexistence of the Son,” p. 51.

Do Christians Follow Christ?

The question may seem odd. My object is to call attention to the glaring difference between the terminology of believers and the language of Jesus in the matter of defining the Christian hope. We would think that those who claim Jesus as Lord would carefully follow his example as a teacher and speak of their destiny in exactly the way Jesus did.

But churchgoers do not do this. They refer to the goal of the Christian life in completely different terms from the Bible which they claim as the source of true faith. This will alert intelligent Christians to a simple fact: a radical new language and thinking have somehow intervened between us and Jesus. We are not talking as Jesus always talked about the very object of being a believer. A return to the Bible is called for.

On every hand we hear church members speak of “going to heaven,” having the “hope of heaven,” desiring to meet relatives “in heaven.” Evangelists commonly approach unbelievers with the question: “If you died today would you be certain of ‘heaven’?” This sort of vocabulary is without support in the Bible — a fact recognized by New Testament scholars. Why then is nothing done to bring our thinking and speaking into line with Jesus?

William Strawson, a tutor in Systematic Theology and the Philosophy of Religion, made a detailed study of *Jesus and the Future Life* (Epworth Press, 1959), and dedicated 23 pages to an examination of the word “heaven” in Matthew, Mark and Luke. He concluded:

“In few, if any, instances of the use of the word ‘heaven’ is *there any parallel with modern usage*. The gospel records of our Lord’s life and teaching do not speak of ‘going to heaven,’ as a modern believer so naturally does. Rather the emphasis is on that which is ‘heavenly’ coming down to man...Our modern way of speaking of life with God as being life ‘in heaven’ is not the way the gospels speak of the matter. *Especially is there no suggestion that Jesus is offering to his disciples the certainty of ‘heaven’ after this life*” (p. 38, emphasis added).

Thousands upon thousands of sermons must have been preached in which non-biblical language about heaven perpetuates a fundamental misunderstanding about the afterlife — a fundamental misunderstanding about the whole revealed purpose of God. A glance at the teaching of Jesus as recorded in the New Testament reveals that what we call “heaven” he called the **Kingdom of God or Kingdom of Heaven**

on earth: “Blessed are the meek, for they will have *the earth/land* as their inheritance” (Matt. 5:5, quoting Ps. 37:11; cp. Rev. 5:10). It would be hard to imagine a more effective way of contradicting the teaching of Jesus than to be constantly promoting “heaven” as the Christian reward. Jesus’ audience asked him, “What shall I do *to inherit the Kingdom of Heaven?*” (defined as we have seen as “inheriting the earth”). Jesus replied: “If you want to *enter life* [not ‘go to heaven’] keep the commandments...” It is hard for a rich man to “enter the Kingdom of God” (Matt. 19:16, 17, 24). Jesus then described the Christian objective specifically: “When the world is reborn, when the Son of Man comes [back] to sit on the throne of his Glory, you also will sit on twelve thrones to rule the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28; Luke 22:28-30).

The promise of royal office, *on earth* when Christ returns, was offered to the Apostles and later extended to the whole church: “He who overcomes, and keeps my works to the end, to him I will give *authority over the nations*, and he shall rule them with a rod of iron...as I also have received authority from my Father...[God] has made [the believers of all nations] into a kingdom of priests...and they will *reign as kings upon the earth*” (Rev. 2:26; 5:10; cp. Rev. 3:21; 20:1-6; II Tim. 2:12; I Cor. 6:2).

The chorus of voices presenting “heaven” as the object of being a Christian do not represent the authentic voice of Jesus. An (unconscious) conspiracy seems to hide the reality of the Christian hope from believers who, under the pressure of such persistent indoctrination, vaguely imagine that “heaven” is the reward of the faithful, according to Scripture. A careful investigation of the New Testament will show that it is not. Christians in the Bible always spoke of “inheriting the Kingdom,” and the earth, never of “going to heaven.”

A revolution is needed in our speaking, thinking and Bible study. Perhaps the remark of a leading New Testament scholar of this century will be able to startle believers into following Jesus more accurately:

Professor J.A.T. Robinson of Cambridge observed that “‘Heaven’ is never, in fact, used in the Bible for the destination of the dying” (*In The End God*, p. 104).

It is an easy matter to verify the correctness of his statement. It has been said often enough by experts in standard works describing the Bible. ✧

Great Commentaries Speak the Truth That the Church Needs to Hear

The International Critical Commentary on Matthew, by W.C. Allen, MA (Lecturer in Theology and Hebrew, Exeter College Oxford, 1907) gives us this wonderful account of the basics of Christian belief. He is commenting on the great confession of Peter in Matthew 16:15-19:

“It would not be unexpected if we found the Messiah or Son of Man described as having the keys of the Kingdom of the heavens. This would imply that he was supreme within it. But it is surprising to find the power delegated to Peter. We must however be careful **not to identify the Church with the Kingdom**. There is nothing here to suggest such identification. The Church was to be built on the rock of the revealed Truth that **Jesus was the Messiah**, the divine Son.² To Peter were to be given the keys of the Kingdom. The Kingdom is here, as elsewhere in this Gospel, **the Kingdom to be inaugurated when the Son of Man came on the clouds of heaven**. If Peter was to hold supreme authority within it, the other apostles were also to have places of rank: ‘You will sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel’ (18:28). The church on the other hand was to be the society of Christ’s disciples, **who were to announce the coming of the Kingdom** [the task of every believer], who were to wait for it, and who would enter it when it came. The Church was built upon the divine Sonship. It was to proclaim the coming Kingdom. In that Kingdom Peter should hold the keys which conferred authority...He who has the keys has authority of an administrative nature. He who binds and looses exercises authority of a legislative character. In this coming Kingdom Peter was to exercise this two-sided authority...Nothing in this Gospel suggests any other locality for the kingdom **than the renewed earth** (cp 19:28). [Belief in the Messiahship of Jesus] will be the foundation truth of the belief of my disciples, i.e. those who **await the Kingdom of the Heavens**. In that Kingdom you shall hold an exalted position, having the keys of administrative power and the right to legislate for the needs of its citizens...It is possible that originally the keys describe the effect of Peter’s insight into divine

² Editor’s note: “divine Son” should be taken to mean not “God the Son” but the supernaturally conceived Messiah.

Truth. His perception that Jesus was the divine Son was a key which admitted him into the Kingdom. By bringing others to the same faith he would open for them too the Kingdom, in contrast to the scribes and Pharisees who locked it in the face of those who wished to enter it (Matt. 23:13). **The truth of the divine Sonship will be the keynote of the doctrine of my disciples in their work of preaching the coming Kingdom**. All to whom this truth is revealed will have in it a key to the Kingdom and will be able to admit others to it, i.e., make them members of the society which **waits for the Kingdom**. In this case Peter would be mentioned on the ground that it was he who had given utterance to the divinely revealed truth, with the implication that all to whom it should be revealed would have the same privileges” (pp. 177-179).

Preterism

Preterism is the technical term for the belief that the Second Coming of Jesus happened in AD 70 at the fall of Jerusalem. From our point of view this is the ultimate collapse of intelligent Bible study. The Second Coming of Jesus, according to Holy Scripture, is to be marked by the resurrection of the faithful dead (I Cor. 15:23; Rev. 11:15-18, etc.). He who is willing to believe that dead persons emerged from their graves in multitudes and took up residence on a renewed earth — the Kingdom of God, and that Jesus was installed as King in Jerusalem, *in AD 70*, has swallowed an impossible piece of information. We recommend a complete re-examination.

Comments

“It is a rare find these days to read the refreshing truth that Jesus Christ is not God. Instantly catching my full attention, I read further, and found your website to be very illuminating, to say the least.” — *New York*

“A spiritual brother gave me one of your books, *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound*. I have really enjoyed the book; actually I am reading it for the second time. I really enjoy your insight into the truth.” — *Missouri*

“I am thrilled to bits about this book (*Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound*). It is exactly what I have believed for the past 65 years (I’m now 87). The doctrine of the Trinity is the greatest obstacle for Jewish feeling about Christianity.” — *England*

The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound is available from 800-347-4261 or on the Internet at www.amazon.com or www.barnesandnoble.com