

Focus on the Kingdom

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The Kingdom of God: What You Can Expect

Recent world events, despite the unspeakable horror of such senseless murder and mayhem, may stimulate the rest of us to tighten our grip on faith and what it means to believe in Jesus. This magazine is committed to the conviction that it makes no sense at all to claim allegiance to Jesus if we shirk the responsibility of finding out *what he taught*. No one claims to be a Platonist if he does not know what Plato advocated and taught. But multitudes of churchgoers, it is reliably reported, have little or no idea about what Jesus expects us to believe, understand and promote. There can be no real Christianity in the absence of the teaching of Jesus. Such was John's final warning: "If anyone should approach you and not bring *the teaching of Christ...*" — beware! (II John 9). The great trap laid by the Devil is "Jesus" without his teachings, Jesus (may we suggest) as invented by popular preaching.

The Devil really only has one trick: To separate Jesus from his words and teaching. That is why the Gospel of John on page after page insists that we come to know and believe **the word and words of Jesus** (John 5:24, etc.). By this he means the Gospel which Jesus preached, the Gospel which he mandated that his followers preach until the Kingdom — which is the main subject of the Gospel — comes.

All this makes perfect sense when we realize that a person *is* his word. We *are* what we think and speak. No one gets to know another by unbroken silence — at least such knowledge would be abnormal in the extreme. But God has **spoken, and spoken finally** (Heb. 1:1-2) in the one He accredits as His ultimate agent and messenger. Thus the writer to the Hebrews warns: "We ought to pay greater attention to the things we have heard" (Heb. 2:1). And what was this? He goes on: "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation which *was first announced by the Lord [Jesus]* and was confirmed to us by those who heard him" (Heb 2:3). "Accepting Jesus in your heart" is devoid of real meaning unless this includes accepting his Gospel preaching. "He who hears my Gospel/Word and believes Him [God] who sent me

has the life of the age to come" (John 5:24). There it is in a wonderful encapsulation. Paraphrased, Jesus said, "He who hears and understands and responds to **my word** is the successful convert." Such a person embarks on the journey of faith. But what if the convert is invited to "accept Jesus" in the absence of any clear presentation of the Kingdom word/Gospel offered by Jesus? Would this not promote a false sense of security? Such a convert might well believe that he had "accepted Jesus." But the words of Jesus are demanding. He makes real repentance and forgiveness *conditional upon* an intelligent reception of the **Gospel about the Kingdom** as he preached it (Mark 4:11, 12; Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:12; Mark 1:14, 15). That Gospel of the Kingdom is the object of faith, according to Jesus, in addition to faith in his atoning blood and his resurrection. The Gospel of the New Testament is a two-pronged Gospel. In a widely popular form today the Gospel seems to lack the vital Kingdom component. It is somehow a one-legged Gospel. Our objections are echoed by scholars of various camps. Seeing the ineffectiveness of much preaching they suggest a remedy:

Tom Wright (*Jesus and the Restoration of Israel*, p. 251), the world's most famous current writer on Christianity and on Jesus, writes, "The church's use of the gospels has given scant attention to what the Gospels themselves are saying about the actual events of **Jesus' life and his Kingdom proclamation [Gospel of salvation]**... Therefore the church is in effect sitting on *but paying no attention to a central part of its own tradition that might, perhaps, revitalize or reform the church significantly were it to be investigated...*This must involve understanding what the Gospels are saying about Jesus within the world of first-century Judaism, not within the imagination of subsequent piety (or impiety)...To content oneself with a non-historical Christ of faith seems to me demonstrably false to NT Christianity."

Charles Taber, Professor Emeritus of World Mission, Emmanuel School of Evangelism, Johnson

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City, Tenn. wrote to *Christianity Today*:

“I read with the greatest interest the nine statements attempting to answer the question, ‘What is the Good News?’ I am amazed and dismayed to find not even a passing mention of the theme which was the core of Jesus’ Gospel in three of the four accounts: The Kingdom of God. Every one of these statements reflects the individualistic reduction of the gospel that plagues American evangelicalism. In addition to being biblical, founding one’s understanding of the gospel on the Kingdom of God bypasses two false dilemmas that have needlessly troubled theologians for several centuries: the either-or between individual and systematic salvation, and the either-or between grace and works. On the one hand God intends to rescue the entire cosmos from the bondage to decay; on the other hand how can one claim to be saved who does not make every effort to do God’s will?”

Gary Burge in the NIV Application Commentary quotes from *Revisioning Evangelical Theology*: “Stanley Grenz has reviewed the failed attempts of evangelical theology to fire the imagination of the modern world. He argues for **the Kingdom of God as the new organizing center** of what we say and do.”

Churchill said: “If you have an important point to make, don’t try to be subtle or clever. Use a pile driver. Hit the point once. Then come back and hit it again. Then hit it a third time — a tremendous whack.”

Such will be our continued emphasis. Our readers are encouraged to promote the Kingdom Message with all means at their disposal.

What then is the Good News about the Kingdom? The Kingdom of God is firstly in Scripture the new political/spiritual order to be introduced by Jesus at his second coming. We hardly need to add that this event did not come to pass during the ministry of Jesus in Israel, nor did it materialize in AD 70! Joseph of Arimathea was still *waiting for* the Kingdom of God even after the resurrection of Jesus (Mark 15:43). Had he missed the great event?! Of course not. With all the faithful (Joseph of Arimathea was a Christian disciple, Matt. 27:57) he was looking forward to the end of all present world governments and the inauguration of a brand new world system in which Jesus will preside from his throne in a rescued and renewed Jerusalem. Jesus is the Messiah and the greatest of all falsehoods is the denial of his Messiahship (I John 2:22). That is why we emphasize that the contradictory proposition that “Jesus is God” is to be avoided. The biblical Messiah is a representative of the human race. He is neither an

angel nor is he God. There is only one God, and if the Father in heaven is God and Jesus on earth was God, that makes two Gods, which is polytheism and paganism.

Jesus came recruiting for his Kingdom. He urged repentance — a complete reorientation in thinking and lifestyle. Converts to his Kingdom agenda, his manifesto as the King of that coming Kingdom, were to grasp the Kingdom Plan and busy themselves with its promotion. This would be an act of self-sacrifice so that all who heard and responded to the Gospel of the Kingdom could one day participate as fellow executives in that Kingdom and acquire immortality.

Jesus warned constantly of the danger of a faith not shared. The light of Gospel truth was not to be hidden. The use of talent in the service of the Kingdom was not optional. Those who had done little with the talents allotted to them would find themselves excluded from the joy of the coming Kingdom. The one who buried the divinely bestowed talent was judged as lazy and ineffective, and unfit for a place in the Kingdom (Matt. 25:24-30).

What can the world expect prior to the coming of the Kingdom? The Middle East is the center of biblical prophecy (not the Common Market). The current war between Arabs and Israel will continue. Eventually a coalition of ten Middle Eastern nations will succeed in the purpose of disrupting the nation of Israel. A harsh judgment will come first to Israel, as God uses the natural hostility of Israel’s enemies to bring judgment on Israel. Both the land and the capital Jerusalem will fall into the hands of their captors and many will be deported. Through the pressure of this coming time of tribulation — the time of Jacob’s trouble — a remnant of the nation at least will come to its senses and turn to God and His Messiah Jesus. An important reason for the return of the Messiah will be to rescue suffering Israel and reestablish her in peace in the land. But a greater purpose even than this will be to gather the Israel of God, the faithful church (Gal. 6:16), from every part of the world and grant them the inheritance of the land which he promised to the meek (Matt. 5:5). It is fundamentally false to say that the land of Israel belongs to unconverted Jews! The seed of Abraham, as of New Testament times, are the believers in Messiah Jesus (Gal. 3:29). Much popular literature proceeds on the premise that the land was given to the flesh and blood Jew with no conditions attached. But if that is so, why did God cast His people out of the land? Occupation of the land in peace is conditioned on faith. Israel currently does not demonstrate faith in her Messiah who has

come and is coming. Until she does, she can make no claim to the inheritance of the land. Meanwhile those (Jews and Gentiles) who have espoused the cause of the true Messiah and accepted his atoning death replace the ethnic Jew as heirs of the land (Matt. 5:5; Rev. 5:10). Is this then a doctrine of permanent “replacement”? No. The replacement taught by the Bible is temporary only. There remains also an inheritance of the land for that body of Jewish people who collectively turn to the Messiah during the tribulation. But such inheritance is not granted to any, Jew or Gentile, in disobedience to the Messiah.

Beyond the troubled times ahead there lies an era of peace and prosperity for restored Israel and for the whole world. When the Devil is put out of commission (Rev. 20:1-6), there will be an unprecedented increase of true understanding and true faith in God and the Messiah. The Messiah will be back on earth. He will preside from Jerusalem and “execute justice and righteousness in the land” (Jer. 23:5). The faithful believers of all the ages will assist the Messiah in the supervision of that coming era of peace, prosperity and the absence of the insane violence which has so terribly marred the history of mankind thus far (1 Cor. 6:2; Luke 22:28-30; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 20:1-6).

Page after page in the Hebrew Bible outlines the main events of the end time leading to the establishment of the Messianic Kingdom of God. For example: Isaiah 26 looks forward to unprecedented celebration in Israel. This will happen beyond the times of trouble and exile of Israel. “In that day [the time of the arrival of the Kingdom when Jesus begins to subdue his enemies] this song will be sung in the land of Judah. ‘We have a strong city. God makes salvation its walls and ramparts.’” Restored Jerusalem will invite righteous nations to enter the city gates (v. 2). There follows this reflection: “When your [God’s] judgments come upon the earth the people of the world will learn righteousness.” What a contrast with present conditions! But even then some will rebel: “Though grace is shown to the wicked they do not learn righteousness. Even in the land of righteousness they do not learn righteousness and they do not regard the majesty of the LORD.” Those who stubbornly resist God “will be put to shame. Let the fire reserved for your enemies consume them” (v. 11). Restored Israel will look back on her past experience (including the present time): “LORD, You establish peace for us; all that we have accomplished You have done for us. O LORD, other lords beside You have ruled over us, but Your name alone we honor. They [those other political tyrants who will have oppressed Israel] are

now dead, they live no more. Those departed spirits do not rise. You punished them and brought them to ruin; You wiped out all memory of them” (vv. 12-14). Now the prophet turns to the future Kingdom in Israel: “You have enlarged the nation, O LORD. You have gained glory for Yourself [by sending the Messiah back to conquer the enemies of God and restore Israel to a position of leadership]. You have extended the borders of the land” (v. 15). Israel will reflect at that time on the awful tribulation she will have suffered: “As a woman with child and about to give birth writhes and cries out in her pain, we [Israel] were in your presence, O LORD” (v. 17). Next comes a description of the triumphant resurrection of the faithful of all the ages. “But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust wake up [from their present sleep in death] and shout for joy. Your dew [the symbol of fresh vitality and energy] is like the dew of the morning. The earth will give birth to her dead” (v. 19). Then follows a word of advice to believers: “Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you. Hide yourselves for a little while until the wrath has passed by. See, the LORD is coming out of His dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the blood shed upon her [the end times will be marked by warfare]. She will conceal her slain no longer” (v. 21). The following chapter (Isa. 27) reflects further on the tribulation of Israel, and her vindication with the arrival of the Messiah. This geographical information about the place in which Israel will have been exiled follows: “In that day the LORD [Yahweh, the personal name of God] will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt and you, Israelites, will be gathered one by one. And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt [indicating the places of Israel’s future exile] will come and worship the LORD in the holy mountain in Jerusalem” (Isa. 27:12).

In this way the advance news of the Kingdom is laid out by the prophet Isaiah. Believers are to cultivate this vision and build their hopes on it.

Isaiah 26:19 speaks of the fresh vigor with which the resurrected and immortalized saints will be equipped, at the outset of their new indestructible life. For further glimpses of the triumph of the coming Kingdom, readers should refer to Psalm 110. The saints are there described as the troops of the Messiah (v. 3). They will volunteer for a genuine “holy war” under the direct supervision of the Messiah. Arrayed in their new “clothing of immortality,” they emerge

from the womb of the dawn. As persons incapable of death from that moment on, they will acquire perpetual youth: “You will receive the dew [vitality] of your youth” (Ps. 110:3). This is what followers of Jesus according to the biblical model can expect for the future. ☩

Who is the God of “the Kingdom of God”?

“There is one God, the Father, who is **the only one who is truly God**, the one **who alone is God**, and one Mediator between that One God and man, and this is **the MAN/lord Messiah Jesus**” (I Cor. 8:4-6; John 17:3; 5:44; I Tim. 2:5). Such is the Bible’s invitation to a clear-headed view of the God we are to worship in spirit and truth (John 4:26). To maintain, in the face of the above statements, that Jesus IS God places an unbearable strain on the propositions listed above.

The biblical creed, combining John 17:3 with I Timothy 2:5 and I Corinthians 8:4-6, appears to us to put all possible doubt to rest. These passages are of course directly credal statements, but Trinitarians stay away from these and go for the ambiguous verses which do not bear directly on the creed. Jesus did say formally that “eternal life/salvation consists in knowing the Father as the **only one who is truly God**, who is alone the true God” (John 17:3; 5:44). When these statements are understood and confessed we are on the way to unity.

The Bible says that Jesus was **begotten** by the Father. To state that Jesus is the begotten Son is simply to say that he was brought into existence, that he had a beginning. The idea that Jesus, the Son of God, is a Person *without beginning*, as the Trinitarian doctrine maintains, is to contradict plain texts of the Bible. The New Testament leaves no doubt at all about this fact. In Matthew 1:18 we read about *the genesis* of Jesus Christ. We learn that “what is begotten/generated in Mary” (Matt. 1:20) is the product of the action of the holy spirit of God. Translations have apparently tried to conceal this simple truth by rendering the word “beget” as “conceived.” This diverts our attention from the significant information that the beginning/begetting/generation/coming into existence of the Son of God is being described. Take a long and careful look at Matthew 1:20. What you are seeing there is a stupendous event — the coming into being of the Son of God by a divine creative miracle. This is one of the truly awe-inspiring landmarks of the whole of human history. The Creator of Heaven and Earth, the God of

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and of Jesus stoops down to “engineer” a staggering miracle in the womb of a young Jewess, Mariam. What happens in that precious moment of time is the coming into existence of the Messiah, Son of God. “That which is begotten — that which is being given existence — in Mary is from God, through His operational presence, His spirit” (see Matt. 1:20).

It is a considerable scandal that the public has so long put up with a system of “interpretation” which negates the actual meaning of simple words. To beget, in English, Hebrew and Greek means “to give existence to, to bring into existence, to bring into life.” Orthodox traditional church teachings invented a new non-dictionary meaning for the vitally important word “generate” or “beget.” That tradition announced dogmatically that the Son of God was “eternally generated.” This is language without meaning — church-speak, a jargon which innocent church members were, and often still are, compelled to believe. But the vast majority have not seriously thought through the implications of what they have been taught. The Bible says that the Messiah, the Son of God was to be “begotten *today*” (Ps. 2:7). “Today” cannot mean outside of time, in eternity. To speak of an “eternal generation” is to speak of square circles or of 2 and 2 equaling 5. It is — not to put too fine a point on it — nonsense. It is an abuse of the precious gift of language to speak of a beginningless beginning. It was no less subversive of the laws of language when Charles Wesley, in a celebrated hymn, taught churchgoers to sing of Jesus as “the immortal who died”: “Tis mystery all, the immortal dies.”¹ Such misuse of language encourages a mystical confusion, the very opposite of sound, biblical Truth.

When Gabriel announced the staggering event of the coming into existence of the promised Son of God, he avoided all ambiguity. In a concise statement he informed the world that “the thing being begotten” is from the holy spirit. No one could possibly imagine that the “the thing to be begotten” was *already in existence as the eternal Son of God*, as traditional creeds propose. Far from proposing any sort of mystification, Gabriel places the begetting of the Son of God squarely in history (it was the Gnostic heretics, remember, who constantly tried to obscure the historical facts of God’s salvation program). Around 2 or 3 BC the Son of God was created in the womb of Mary by a supernatural intervention from God. “For

¹ See the famous hymn, “And Can it Be That I Should Gain?”

that reason, the holy thing to be begotten will be called holy, the Son of God” (Luke 1:35). For what reason? The answer is simple. Because of the mighty intervention from God and the activity of His spirit in generating — bringing into existence — the Son of God.

Such teaching of course tells us in no uncertain terms that Jesus is the Son of God, but he is not the eternal Son of God. There is no hint of an eternal generation of the Son in Scripture. John in his first epistle speaks of Jesus as the one who was begotten. The aorist tense points to a single event in history. The event was the miracle of creation effected in Jesus’ mother. Jesus really was a man. “He [the Son] who was begotten keeps him [the believer]” (I John 5:18). Notice that this proposition was an embarrassment to some. The King James Version shows signs of a corrupted Greek manuscript. This turned the word “him” into “himself.” In this way the begetting of the Son of God (Jesus) was removed from the text. Modern versions of the Bible have happily given us the real words of John in this verse.

However, some modern versions (like the NIV) have elsewhere misleadingly given the impression that Jesus was God Himself! Thus in Philippians 2:5ff we read in the NIV of the Son “being in very nature God.” But no Greek manuscript says this. What the Greek text does say is that the Son was “in the form of God.” “Form” occurs (apart from this passage) only in one other verse of the New Testament (Mark 16:12) and it describes the outward — what is visible. To say that Jesus was in the form of God is equivalent to saying that the character and mind of the One God, the Father of Jesus, were reflected in the historical Jesus, the Son of God. To be in the image of God, as Adam also was, is to be a *visible* representative of God. Jesus was just that, but he was a human being originating at his (supernatural) conception. Though he was the reflection of the one God, his Father and endowed with divine characteristics and authority he nevertheless resolved to fulfill the role or “form” of a servant. In so doing he provided a realistic model for his followers.

As many scholars have pointed out, the idea that “Jesus was God who became man” lures us into belief in two Gods. The theory adopted by the church in the 4th and 5th centuries implied that while God the Father remained in heaven, “God the Son,” who was equally God, became a man, or rather “man.” (The classical creed says that Jesus is “man,” but not “a man”). If God the Father remained in heaven and God the Son was walking the earth, we are presented with two

Gods. We are asked to believe in the one who was God who did *not* become man and the one who was God who *did* become man. That is plainly ditheism, belief in two Gods.

Once the church set out on this path, the most fundamental of all unities was undermined. Unity amongst believers may be recovered when we all begin to agree with Paul that “there is one God, the Father, one God and Father over all,” and that Jesus is His Son who came into existence around 3 BC. Jesus is the Lord Messiah (the *adoni* of Ps. 110:1) and his Father is the Lord God.

Bible teachers who have taken on the teaching of the classic creed struggle with its difficulties. Ryrie writes:

“Trinity is, of course, not a biblical word. Neither are triunity, triune, triunal, subsistence, nor essence. Yet we employ them, and often helpfully, in trying to express this doctrine which **is so fraught with difficulties**. Furthermore, this is a doctrine which in the New Testament *is not explicit* even though it is often said that it is.” “A definition of the Trinity is not easy to construct. Some are done by stating several propositions. Others err on the side either of oneness or threeness. One of the best is Warfield’s: ‘There is one only and true God, but in the unity of the Godhead there are three coeternal and coequal Persons, the same in substance but distinct in subsistence.’”

Other scholars candidly admit that the Trinity is a mistaken doctrine. *Encyclopedia Britannica*:

“The propositions constitutive of the dogma of the Trinity were not drawn from the New Testament and could not be expressed in New Testament terms. They were the products of reason speculating on a revelation to faith...they were only formed through centuries of effort, only elaborated by the aid of the conceptions and formulated in the terms of Greek and Roman metaphysics.”

Dr. W.R. Matthews, Dean of St. Paul’s, *God in Christian Thought and Experience*, p. 180:

“It must be admitted by everyone who has the rudiments of an historical sense that the doctrine of the Trinity, as a doctrine, formed no part of the original message. St. Paul knew it not, and would have been unable to understand the meaning of the terms used in the theological formula on which the Church ultimately agreed.”

We comment: There is much that is in fact inscrutable about God and His purpose. But the fact that He is a single Person and not three Persons jumps out at the open-minded reader on every page. “I am God alone; there is no one besides Me; there is no

other God beside One. Do we not all have one Father? Has not One God created us? You, Father, are the only one who is truly God, the one who alone is God.” ✠

The “If’s” of Christianity

A popular form of evangelism invites you “just to trust in Jesus and be saved.” This form of preaching can be dangerously misleading unless the matter of trusting Jesus is more carefully defined.

We can all agree that salvation is by grace, but to receive it we must believe in the Jesus of the Bible, the Messiah, the King of Israel and the world; we must also persist in our faith until the end of our life (Matt. 24:13). To believe in the Jesus of Scripture, we must first know something about who he was, what he does now and what he is going to do in the future. We must grasp the Gospel **as Jesus preached it!** (see Mark 1:14, 15; Luke 4:43). We must understand that Jesus is the promised Messiah whom God planned to send by birth from the virgin Mary — a birth having its origin in Holy Spirit, that is, divine power (Matt. 1:20, “*begotten*,” in the original Greek). The Messiah is not only the one whom God sent, that is, commissioned, to die for the sins of the world; he is also the High Priest of all the Christians and the future King of the world. We must welcome this information about the Savior, before we can believe in him in the way the Bible asks. That is why the Gospel is a call to believe in the Kingdom, **the coming Reign or Empire of God** as well as in the death and resurrection of Jesus (Mark 1:15; Acts 8:12; 28:23, 31; Dan. 2:44; 7:27).

When we first understand and believe in Jesus, the Messiah, and his teachings, we begin to be rescued from all the false beliefs we have previously held. We should then be baptized as a sign that we want to become a member of God’s family and receive His Spirit. Can we then relax, knowing that there is nothing further for us to do? Here is where the “if’s” of Christianity come in.

After baptism there is a sense in which we have been saved. Yet that is only part of the story. It is not always realized (due to obscure translation in the King James Version) that the Christian is one who **is being saved** and looks forward to complete salvation in the future. This shows that there can be no room for complacency: “Let him who thinks he stands, take heed lest he falls” (1 Cor. 10:12). The popular notion that there are no conditions to salvation once you have

made an initial commitment is not borne out by the New Testament facts.

The word “if” is a sign of condition. If Paul had taught that salvation could never be rejected after it had been initially granted, he could not have used the word “if” as he did. In Colossians 1:23 he makes a most interesting statement: “You who were once alienated, enemies in your mind by wicked works, Christ has now reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and blameless and unimpeachable **IF indeed you continue in the faith** founded and firm and not being moved away from the Hope of the Good News which you heard.” Paul makes it very clear that the Hope offered by the Gospel — the Hope of Resurrection and rulership with the Messiah **in his Kingdom** when he comes back — must be grasped and held on to. This is a condition of receiving salvation. Salvation is indeed offered by grace, but our cooperation is required. Paul says the same thing in 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2: “I made known to you the Good News which I preached to you as the Gospel, which you also received and in which you now stand, by which you are *being* saved, **IF you hold fast to the Message** which I announced as the Good News.” This makes it quite clear that persistence in the Gospel is a condition of obtaining final salvation. The facts embodied in the Good News, including faith in the person of the Messiah Jesus, must be held firm. This includes the Hope of rulership with Christ in the Kingdom. **Paul always preached the Gospel about the Kingdom (Acts 20:25; 28:23, 31; cp. Acts 8:12).**

In three other passages Paul uses similar language. In 1 Thessalonians 3:8 he says: “Now we live **IF** you stand fast in the Lord.” The implication is that he will be most unhappy if they do not! And again, in 2 Timothy 2:12, there is a most important passage written by Paul at the very end of his career as an Apostle: “**IF** we endure we shall reign as kings with him” — that is, if we successfully come through the trials of this life, we shall reign with him in the Messianic Kingdom of the Coming Age. Paul had said the same thing in slightly different words in Romans 8:17: “**IF** we suffer with him we shall be glorified with him.” You will find by comparing Mark 10:37 with Matthew 20:21 that the word Glory is another term for Kingdom.

In all the passages we have quoted **the IF’s show the condition which must be fulfilled by Christians before they can finally enter the Kingdom of God to be revealed at the Second Coming of Christ.** Salvation is therefore in one sense past: we have been

rescued from the world, the Satanic system which at present dominates all forms of civilization. In a very important sense salvation is a **continuing process** — we are being saved. 1 Corinthians 1:18 speaks of those who are “being saved” (NASV) as contrasted with the rest who are perishing. Thirdly, salvation is a future event to which we are to look forward. That is why Paul can say “Salvation is now nearer to us than when we first believed” (Rom. 13:11). That salvation comes to us only **IF** we hold fast to the Good News of the coming Kingdom of God and the things pertaining to the name of Jesus until the end (Heb. 6:11).

The Christian life is thus properly likened to a race. At the starting line you have not won the race. You must persist and persevere until you reach the finish line. A prize awaits each winner. We must all finish the race! We shall achieve this only by the grace of God working in our lives. Again, “Salvation is now **nearer to us** than when we first believed” (Rom. 13:11). We must persevere until salvation finally comes to us at the resurrection when Jesus returns to rule in Jerusalem.

Mark 4:11 and 12 tell us that intelligent reception of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God (Matt. 13:19) is the first step for the believer. Repentance means repenting of our blindness in regard to Jesus’ Gospel of the Kingdom. The Devil tries to keep us from believing in that “word” about the Kingdom, “so that we **cannot believe it and be saved**” (see Luke 8:12).✠

Theological Conference

The 11th annual Theological Conference of Atlanta Bible College will be held from Feb. 8-10th, 2002. All of our readers are cordially invited to this unique opportunity for meeting fellow truth-seekers. We anticipate many new attendees as a result of radio and literature contact. The conference will begin on Friday afternoon and the first sessions will be dedicated to a presentation by two professional scientists espousing a so-called “young age” creationist viewpoint.

The remainder of the weekend will feature lectures devoted to central themes of Abrahamic Christology and eschatology.

A special block rate room (\$49, 1-4 people) may be booked at the Fairfield Inn (cut-off date Jan. 31). Please phone Fairfield Inn at 770-961-6044 and refer to the group name “Anthony Buzzard.”

Cost of the Conference	Regular Rate	Full-time Student
Early Bird (by Jan 20 th)	\$29	\$19
After Jan. 20th	\$39	\$29

Comments

“I just finished *Our Fathers Who Aren’t in Heaven* for the first time and I was overwhelmed. The information is similar to what we have been looking at and studying for the last 3 or 4 years, but your ability to put it in a readily understandable and accessible form is wonderful. I have felt for some time that I knew what I believed about the Kingdom and its place as the key to understanding God’s will for us, but there were many areas where I was not confident in my ability or knowledge to share this with others. Your book has given me great insight in how to share the Kingdom message with others. Thank you.” — *New York*

“Your work and study on the coming Kingdom of God on earth is outstanding because it is the simple truth of the Bible. Thanks and keep up the great work.” — *New York*

“Your books and magazine have brought new light into our lives (especially mine). I confess that the picture I had of the Kingdom of God in relation to the GOSPEL of Messiah Jesus is very different from the one I now have after reading through the book you sent me... You asked the question, Are they telling you the truth about the Gospel? Now I can answer NO (though all along I thought they were). What you have revealed in the book is very true. Previously I believed with many others that the Gospel was ONLY about Jesus’ death and resurrection. Yes, somehow from childhood I believed that after the resurrection the righteous would live eternally in heaven, not on earth. Though I read that there would be a new heaven and earth and a new Jerusalem I also brushed this aside; for me it was heaven. The message of the coming Kingdom of the Messiah has helped me see the truth of the Gospel as it really is. I have given the books to my fellow prisoners who are also reading and I am discussing the message with those who cannot read.”

— *Maximum Security Prison, Zambia*

Your writings are completely enlightening. Many confusing thoughts on the Kingdom of God, and souls going to heaven, etc. have become so clear after reading your articles on them. I’m interested in learning more and more through your subscription.

— *Washington*

I am writing to confirm my subscription to *Focus on the Kingdom*. I look forward to it as each publication arrives. I use this magazine to preach the Biblical gospel of the Kingdom of God and the true nature of Jesus Christ. It is a great magazine. Keep up the good work. — *Missouri*