

Focus on the Kingdom

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Some Ground Rules for Reading the Bible and Understanding It

Many people who take up the Bible have not realized that it is *one* book. The individual (66) books should be considered as various chapters in the One Sacred Book. If the Book is not accepted for what it claims to be, the sacred Scripture, breathed out by God Himself, a single divine Mind acting through His spirit, it is being misread from the start.

Jesus remarked that “the Scripture cannot be broken.” It has an inviolable status as the authoritative word of a Holy God. It is not to be tampered with. And one section of it must not be pitted against another. This would be to accuse the book of confusion and contradiction. God does not contradict Himself.

If we read the Book as one book, we find that it presents a coherent and logical story. It is a story which unfolds. It is the story of the real meaning of human history as distinct from the various flawed accounts which human historians and philosophers have offered. The Bible is *God’s* story. Each book in the Book contributes essential information to the entire narrative.

If you start reading from the New Testament, you are reading the story with no understanding of the 75% which had already been written. It is therefore nothing less than a calamity to imagine that you can follow the story if you leave out the first three-quarters of it! And, indeed, the first three-quarters of the Book provides the indispensable foundation of the rest of it. When did you ever just read a favorite novel of twenty chapters, beginning invariably at chapter 15?

If you grasp the Story as it appears in the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) you are ready for the New (the last quarter of the Story), which is the climax of the whole. **The art of successful reading is not to use the last quarter of the book to contradict the first 75%.** For example, in Genesis 1 you will have been impressed with the fact that the One God was the Creator of everything. In Isaiah 44:24 you will have learned that He was *alone* and unassisted at that

creation. Jesus knew this well when he said “God created them male and female at the beginning” (Mark 10:6).

When you come to John 1:1, be careful! You have learned, remember, that the One God was alone, solo, unaccompanied when at the beginning He created all things. So, then, with that in mind, do not make the mistake of reading John 1:1 in a way which would destroy the truth of Isaiah 44:24 and Genesis 1. Do not read, “In the beginning was the *Son* of God and the Son was with the Father.” Do not insert into the story a character who is not found within the pages of Scripture, a so-called in churches (but *never* so called in the Bible) “eternal Son.” John did *not* say “In the beginning was the Son of God.” If he had said this he would have contradicted the Holy Scripture which had established that there was no Son of God assisting the One God in the Genesis creation (Isa. 44:24). Rather the Hebrew Bible had constantly said that one day God was going to *bring into existence* His only Son, His special Son and heir to the Kingdom of God, the seed (descendant) of Abraham, of David and of Eve. To invent a Son who was alive before he was alive is to throw the story into confusion. It led in church history to centuries of confused argumentation, excommunication, division and even killing. Such ecclesiastical chaos could have been prevented, had the Story been read “straight,” beginning in the Hebrew Bible.

The Hebrew Bible had constantly spoken of the Son of God who was *not yet in existence* but would one day be born of a virgin and be, like Moses, a member of the nation of Israel (Deut. 18:15-18). When this marvelous thing happened it was the begetting (coming into existence) of the promised Son (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35; I John 5:18, NAS etc., not KJV). So John must have been talking about the *Word* or *Promise* of that Son from the beginning and not the Son as already existing (remember Isa. 44:24).

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If each book of the Bible is taken as a new chapter in the Story it will be seen that John cannot contradict either the Old Testament or other “chapters” (i.e. on our analogy, books) of the New Testament. Matthew tells us exactly when the Son of God came into being — was begotten — and how this happened. The One God, in harmony with His own ancient promises about the coming Son, created that Son by miracle using the womb of a woman. This was the beginning — the begetting — of the Son of God (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35). It happened in history, in Israel and the creation of that final Son was some six months after the conception of John the Baptist. When God begets a Son that Son is not God! Israel was not God, but Israel is called “Son of God” (Exod. 4:22). Christians are “sons of God” but they are not God!✧

On June 3rd, 2001 Pope John II entrusted “the whole church” to the intercession of Mary and “placed in her hands the expectation of peace and justice in the world.” He called Mary “the queen of heaven.” He commended the Mariolatry of the late Pope John XXIII, observing that Mary took that pope “by the hand and accompanied him” on his earthly journey. This is the same Pope who has been praised by Billy Graham, Jack Van Impe, Bill Bright and Chuck Colson (*Christian News* 7/16/01).

This report points to the vast extent of the power of deception allowed in “the present evil age.” Holy Scripture declares that Mary the mother of Jesus is now dead and in her grave until the resurrection. She is incapable of any intercession or mediation. Paul stated that “there is only one Mediator between God and humans, and that is the human person, Messiah Jesus” (I Tim. 2:5). One might wonder what power, then, camouflaged under the pleasing name Mary, is really at work.

A Declaration

The following statement (next paragraph) was recently advanced by Jewish believers in Yeshua. It rather obviously contradicts itself by proposing that God is one (“He”) but at the same time He is three. Note the subtle shift of “One” from a description of the One God to a *quality* of God, His “unity.” This creedal statement is a denial of the age-old Hebrew belief in God as a single Person. It is thus also a denial of Jesus’ own Hebrew creed (Mark 12:29ff). The Yeshua of the Bible is “my lord [Messiah]” (Ps. 110:1, where the capital on the second lord in some translations is misleading). Adonai is the One God and since God is in a class of His own, no

one else can be God, not even Jesus, who expressly said he was not God (John 17:3; John 10:34-36).

“G-d: ‘The Lord our G-d, the Lord is One.’ The G-d of Avraham, Yitzchak and Ya'acov is the only G-d and Creator. There is no other besides Him and all privileged attributes are His alone. His unique unity consists of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit: Each of them eternal and divine in fullness of Deity. The Son, our Messiah, who was born without sin by the Holy Spirit to the virgin Miriam, is also human in the full sense of the term.”✧

The Problem with Christianity as the Majority Have Accepted It

“Judaism survives in two forms. Changed, and in some ways purified, but still essentially the same in the synagogue. Judaism, radically altered, yet vigorously alive, survives in the literature, ethics and hopes of Christianity. Hellenism [Greek philosophy], unlike its rival Christianity, has now no separate existence, but it too lives on. For it was the genius of Christianity to weld together into a new organic unity elements drawn primarily from Stoic ethics, from the later Platonic metaphysics, from Oriental mysticism and from Roman administration, as well as from the faith and hope of Israel” (Kirsopp and Lake, *The Beginnings of Christianity*, p. 262).

“The Greek mystery religions had spread the belief that through the emotional experience of initiation and ritual a revelation of God and a union with the Divine was secured which brought the assurance of a happy immortality...These beliefs were emphasized and reinforced by mystic philosophies and religions during the first four centuries of our era” (p. 261).

Biblical theologians have long pointed out (but has anyone really listened?) that the Greek approach to understanding God is not found in the Bible. “The whole Bible, the NT as well as the OT, is based on the Hebrew attitude and approach. We are of the firm opinion that this ought to be recognized on all hands to a greater extent” (Dr. Norman Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, p. 185).

This statement sums up beautifully our aims in producing *Focus on the Kingdom* (now completing its fourth year). We want the Bible-reading, churchgoing public and any others who are interested to understand that they need to exercise their critical faculty in regard to what their church is teaching them. We believe that the vast majority have been lulled into a comfortable acceptance of the status quo — otherwise known as “what my church believes and teaches.” The

Bible is full of warnings, on page after page, that we are not to accept without personal investigation what we hear from religious organizations, however hallowed, however massive their tradition. Majorities can be and have been entirely mistaken. Jesus himself, in some of the most awe-inspiring words he ever uttered, said: "Many will say to me in that day [when he returns]: 'Did we not represent you, Jesus, when we preached, did miracles and cast out demons?'" Jesus' answer will express his complete lack of approval of what this majority has claimed to be doing (Matt. 7:23).

We believe that the signs of danger have been understood by many good analysts of the history of Christianity. There has been a corruption of the faith, but very few seem to know or care. Dr. Snaith goes on:

"It is clear to us...that there is often a great difference between Christian theology and Biblical theology. [Is this really the Christ of the Bible who is presented to you in tract and sermon?] Throughout the centuries the Bible has been interpreted in a Greek context, and even the NT has been interpreted on the basis of Plato and Aristotle." He goes on to urge that those who do this should stop maintaining that they are basing their theology on the Bible. But is anyone concerned?

"There have always been Jews who have sought to make terms with the Gentile world and it has in time meant the death of Judaism for all such. There have been Christians who from the beginning have sought to do this. Often it has been done unconsciously, but whether consciously or unconsciously, the question needs to be faced as to whether it is right." Our position is that the reinterpretation of Biblical theology in terms of the ideas of Greek philosophy has been both widespread throughout the centuries and everywhere destructive to the essence of Christian faith. Dr. Snaith quotes a Roman Catholic writer who complains that the Roman Catholic system presents a concept of salvation conceived in Aristotelian terms, and an "idea of the Beatific Vision closely related to the NeoPlatonic idea of the Vision of the One, which bears little relationship to the beatitudes of the Gospel." The same writer sees in Protestantism an emphasis on the development of personality and a human movement towards the realization of ethical ideals (good behavior). The Kingdom of God is regarded as something which is achieved by human effort.

The Kingdom of God which is the heart of the Gospel is a Kingdom to be introduced by cataclysm at

the return of Jesus. It is a Kingdom for which Christians are to prepare now while there is still time.

Dr. Snaith concludes: "If these judgments are sound, and we believe they are, then neither Catholic nor Protestant theology is based on the Biblical theology. In each case we have a domination of Christian theology by Greek thought" (cp. our quotation from Kirsopp and Lake above).

We concur heartily with Dr. Snaith when he asks this challenging question: "What then is to be done with the Bible? Is it to be regarded as the norm and its distinctive ideas as the determining factor of Christian theology? Or are we to continue to regard Plato and Aristotle with their pagan successors as contributing the norm, and the main ideas of Greek philosophy as the determining ideas of Christian theology, with the Bible illustrating and confirming those Greek ideas when and where it is suitable?... We hold that there can be no right answer until we have come to a clear view of the distinctive ideas of both Old and New Testaments and their difference from the pagan ideas *which have so largely dominated 'Christian' thought*" (from pp. 184-188). ✧

Idolatry Leads to Blindness

Daniel 5:23, NRS: "You have exalted yourself against the Lord of heaven! The vessels of his temple have been brought in before you, and you and your lords, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them. You have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood, and stone, which do not see or hear or know; but the God in whose power is your very breath, and to whom belong all your ways, you have not honored."

Daniel 5:23, NAB: "You have rebelled against the Lord of heaven. You had the vessels of his temple brought before you, so that you and your nobles, your wives and your entertainers, might drink wine from them; and you praised the gods of silver and gold, bronze and iron, wood and stone, **that neither see nor hear nor have intelligence** [cp. Isa. 6!]. But the God in whose hand is your life breath and the whole course of your life, you did not glorify."

When Jesus repeatedly emphasized the need for the reception of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God Gospel as the essence of repentance and faith (Matt. 13:19; Mark 4:11, 12), he noted that those who do not preach the Kingdom of God are without spiritual sight or hearing. They become in fact like the idols they are inadvertently worshipping as described above in Daniel 5:23. ✧

“Worshipping” Jesus

“If anyone examines the evangelical narratives carefully he would hardly affirm that the persons who worshipped Christ while on earth acknowledged him to be God. They believed, indeed, that he was a distinguished prophet, sent by the Almighty, by whose assistance he cured the blind, the deaf and the lame, but they did not recognize him as the true Son of God [i.e. God]. This is proved by the opinion of Nicodemus (John 3:2), the confession of Peter and the other disciples (Matt. 16:13, 14) and the exclamation of the people of Nain (Luke 7:16). In the same way the magi, the leper, the centurion and others...felt persuaded that the power of the Most High was exhibited in him.

“I do not in proof of Jesus being the object of divine worship urge the instances of those who fell down at Christ’s feet and worshipped him while he was on earth. For it may well be answered that a prophet was worshipped with the civil respect of falling down before him among the Jews as appears in the history of Elijah and Elisha. Nor does it appear that those who worshipped Christ had any apprehension of his being God. They only considered him as the Messiah or some eminent prophet” (Bishop Burnet, Church of England).

“Doing reverence by prostration is not only an act of worship paid to God, but often to kings and great men in the OT according to the custom of Eastern countries (see II Sam. 9:6; 14:33). It was likewise an expression of reverence paid to prophets on account of the sanctity of their office and not refused by them (I Kings 18:7). Of this kind probably was the worship paid to Christ by the leper (Matt. 8:2)” (William Lowth).

“To do him homage.’ *Proskuneo auto*. The homage of prostration which is signified by this Greek word in sacred authors as well as in profane was throughout all Asia commonly paid to kings and other superiors by Jews and pagans. It was paid by Moses to his father-in-law (Exod. 18:7), called in the English translation ‘obeisance.’ The instances of this application are so numerous both in the OT and in the NT as to render more quotations unnecessary. When God is the object the word denotes adoration in the highest sense. In old English the term ‘worship’ was used either of God or man. It is not commonly so used now” (Dr. George Campbell).

“*Proskunein* [worship] in the NT particularly denotes ‘with head and body bent to show reverence and offer civil worship to anyone, to salute anyone so

as to prostrate the body to the ground and touch it even with the chin.’ This is a mode of salutation almost universally adopted by Eastern nations. *Proskunein* also signifies ‘to bend the knee in reverence and honor or in supplication.’ This corresponds to the Hebrew word *hishtachavah*, ‘he bent,’ or ‘he prostrated himself at the feet of anyone for the sake of honor and reverence.’ We find this in the Septuagint [Greek version of the OT] in Gen. 18:2; 23:7, 12; 19:1; Esther 3:2, etc. See also Matt. 2:2, 8, 11; 8:2; 9:18; and compare Mark 5:22; and Luke 5:12; Matt. 15:25; 18:26; 20:20; 28:9, 17; Mark 5:6; 15:19; John 9:38; Acts 10:25” (J.F.D. Schleusner, *NT Lexicon*, under *proskunein*).

“Worship” Defined

“The Hebrew word means to bow down, prostrate. The Greek word means to prostrate, do obeisance to. The honor, reverence and homage paid to superior beings or powers, *whether men, angels or God*. The English word meant ‘worthship’ and denotes the worthiness of the individual receiving the special honor due to his worth. While the word is used of men, it is especially used of divine honors paid to deity, whether of the heathen religions or the true and living God” (*New International Dictionary of the Bible*).✧

“The worship of Christ on completely equivalent terms to that of God does not occur within the pages of the New Testament” (Kenneth Schenk, “A Celebration of the Enthroned Son: The Catena of Hebrews 1,” *JBL* 120/3, 2001, pp. 469-485).

“This generation will not pass before all these things take place” (Matt. 24:34)

The text above is currently attracting attention. It is supposed to support the amazing idea that the Second Coming (Parousia), as described by Jesus in the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24), took place in AD 70!

Such a view abandons the Gospel of the Kingdom, which promises the world a universal era of prosperity and peace when the Messiah comes back. The destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 and the scattering of Jews outside their homeland did not signal the arrival of the Kingdom of God (Luke 21:31). The Kingdom, when it comes, will produce peace in Israel and the restoration of Israel as the headquarters of the Messianic Kingdom (Luke 1:32-35; Acts 1:6; 3:21, etc.). To imagine that the coming of Jesus happened in AD 70 is to misunderstand the Kingdom of God and

thus **the Christian Gospel of the Kingdom** (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14).

The fact is that the New Testament, while maintaining an urgency in regard to the Kingdom, states that “the Son of God” himself “does not know the day or the hour” (Mark 13:32), and the disciples are not to know, according to Jesus’ parting words, even “times and seasons” (Acts 1:5-7) for the great event. This makes it impossible that Jesus had given them any kind of time limit for the coming of the Kingdom. The argument that he had declared that the end would come **within at the most 40 years, a generation**, must be mistaken, unless we charge him with a considerable confusion. If in fact “generation” is to mean 40 years in the famous text “this generation will not pass until all these things have happened” (Matt. 24:34; Mark 13:30; Luke 21:32), then why only a couple of months later is Jesus saying that the disciples can have *no idea* about “spans of time or seasons” (Acts 1:7) relative to his return? Why is Peter later in the New Testament period telling us that days are as a thousand years with God? He seems undisturbed by any so-called delay of the Second Coming. Peter had indeed glimpsed the Parousia and Kingdom in his own lifetime when privileged to see it *in vision* (Matt. 17:9) on the Mount of Transfiguration (2 Pet. 1:16-19). Had Peter really been led to understand in AD 30 that Jesus would come within 40 years?

The term *genea* (generation) is the equivalent in the LXX of the Hebrew word *dor* which means generation or age. Many exegetes have noticed that in the New Testament *genea* can have the sense of “age” or “indefinite period of time.” The following is from the *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, Vol. 1, p. 444 (“generation”):

“**Genea** — expresses the idea of kinship, those of the same lineage who are born about the same time...or more generally an ‘age’ or lengthened period of time...Finally (d) the word is used, as often in the OT (Deut. 32:5, 20; Ps. 12:7, 24:6, etc.), with a **moral connection** as in Phil. 2:15 and Acts 2:40. In the latter passage the word has an eschatological coloring. ‘This crooked generation’ is the present, swiftly transient period of the world’s history, which is leading up to the day of judgment and the New Age.”

So also the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, Vol. 1, p. 639: “That *genea* (rendered generation) does express ‘the current age’ of ‘the world period’ is obvious in the Gospels (Luke 16:8, Matt. 24:34 and less clearly Matt. 23:36).”

One can add: In Matthew 23:35 Jesus says that “you” killed the prophets of the Old Testament. He speaks in the next verse of “this generation,” and the generation he has in mind apparently reaches back 400 years to the murderers of Zechariah. They are all the same wicked “brood.” They are all included in the corporate “you.” Jesus then looks forward to the Parousia when “you” will say, “Blessed is he who comes...” Thus *genea* takes in a wide sweep of people, belonging to the present evil age, belonging to the same genre, society as organized in opposition to God.

Note also the sensible comment of Cranfield (*Gospel of Mark*): He points out that *genea* renders the Hebrew *dor* = seed, family and people. “Probably here — ‘whoever is ashamed of me in this adulterous and sinful generation’ (Mark 8:38) — generation means ‘age,’ ‘period of time,’ which is **the primary meaning of the Hebrew dor**, the word it most often represents in the LXX, and a possible meaning of *genea*. The whole phrase, ‘this generation,’ is contrasted with ‘when he shall come with his holy angels’ and so is roughly equivalent to ‘in this time’ (10:30) which is contrasted with ‘in the coming age.’ The time meant is *the time before the Parousia*. But it is not thought of simply as a period of time; the thought of the men living in it and of their character is also present and prominent — hence the adjectives adulterous and sinful” (p. 284).

Note also Psalm 102:18: “This will be written for the *genea* to come that a people which will be created may praise the Lord.” This contrasts the present time with the “generation to come,” millennial in this passage. Note also Psalms of Solomon 18:6: “Blessed are those born in those [future Messianic] days, to see the good things of the Lord which He will do for the coming generation...a good generation living in the fear of the Lord.” This shows that generation can mean a “group of people with common characteristics.”

When Proverbs 30:11-14 says that “there is a generation (*genea*) of those who curse their fathers...There is a generation who are pure in their own eyes...There is a generation whose teeth are as swords,” the meaning is “a class of people identified by a common characteristic.” So also in Psalm 24:6, “the generation of those who seek God.”

In Luke 16:8 Jesus remarked that “the children of this *age* are wiser in regard to their *generation* [people belonging to the same class and age as they] than the children of light.” The contrast is between two groups of people, those touched by the Kingdom

Gospel and those not. It is clear that “generation,” used generally in a pejorative sense in the New Testament as “**wicked society this side of the second coming**,” does not have to be restricted to a period of 40 years.¹ In an eschatological setting such as Matthew 24 Jesus contrasts the two ages.

It defies common sense to believe that Jesus set an almost exact date of 40 years in Matthew 24:34, when soon after he denied that any knowledge of times and seasons is available to us (Acts 1:7) in regard to the coming of the future Kingdom (Acts 1:6). ✧

Driver on Genesis 1:26

What Scholars Know and You Need to Hear:

“Gen. 1:26 ‘Let us make man in our image’ has been regarded by the Church Fathers and others as expressing a plurality of persons in the Godhead, and so suggesting, at least by implication, the doctrine of the Trinity. But this is to anticipate a much later stage in the history of revelation.”

Professor Driver of Oxford, coauthor of the celebrated standard Lexicon of Biblical Hebrew, knows full well that Genesis 1:26 says not a word about the Trinity. Rather vaguely he speaks of a later time of revelation. The Trinity is found nowhere within the pages of Scripture but is a development under pagan influence and Greek philosophy through post-biblical Church Fathers. These men, many of them monks, failed to understand the Unity of God found in Deuteronomy 6:4 and echoed by Jesus in Mark 12:29ff; John 17:3 and Paul in 1 Corinthians 8:4-6; 1 Timothy 2:5.

The Incorruptible God?

by Terry Anderson

Proponents of a multi-person God almost never attempt to explain how the preexistent Son of God was separated from his “godpower” or “essence” to become a man. Frequently they dismiss the problem as beyond all comprehension. They begin with the assumption that since the Trinity exists this transition from God to man must have happened. There is no need to question its logic.

Maybe the Son had a robe and the robe had all the power. Then he removed the robe and “poof,” he shed his power. Then the Father and the Holy Spirit put their heads together and said let’s make the Son into a sperm, and you, Holy Spirit, take the sperm and place it inside the woman Mary. So we assume that the “Son member” of the Triune Godhead must have temporarily ceased to exist at the God level. For some 30 years then we had a Binitarian Godhead. Is this getting a little complex and clinical? Sorry, but to unravel the Trinitarian thinking there is no way

¹Cp. *T.D.N.T.* (single volume) which defines *genea* as “manner” in Luke 16:8.

around complexity for it is inconceivable and confusing to begin with.

All the attributes which make God special and unique have to be temporarily put on the shelf if one is to believe in Jesus Christ as a real human being. The immutability, omniscience, omnipresence and immortality of God have to be suspended for a time. The claim by some Trinitarians is that when the God-Son became the Man-Son then all these God traits were left behind. The eternal Son became mortal man in a transitory form awaiting his return to the Godhead.

Perplexed by this inscrutable Trinitarian idea the ordinary pew-sitter is committed to this puzzle: Even though God can’t die and God knows all and God is all-powerful these characteristics don’t matter because God became a man and left all that behind. So it is said that the immortal became mortal and died.

But what about incorruptibility?

In Romans the first chapter, God indicts the human race for rejecting His knowledge and creative powers. God complains that man, in his rush to reject God and rely on his own wisdom, refashioned God to be like the creation, like animals and corruptible man. Now isn’t that exactly what the proponents of Trinitarian orthodoxy do in stating that Jesus was the preexistent God? They made God corruptible. This corresponds also to the Trinitarian claims of dualism — the concept of two natures in Jesus which harmonizes with the pagan philosophies of the time. We still have the problem of incorruptibility, though. This is a very challenging difficulty because we can’t get from point A (God) to point B (man) without the meaning of both words — God and man — being destroyed. This is the same problem we have with immortality (“’tis mystery all — the immortal dies,” as the famous hymn tells us).

How, if Jesus was God, could he have become corruptible and not done horrific damage to Paul’s statement about God’s incorruptibility? We know that God did not allow Jesus to see corruption, meaning that if Christ’s body had not been resurrected it would have decayed and experienced corruption. The mere act of transitioning from God to human was an act of becoming corruptible or capable of corruption or decay. There is only one way around this and that is to assert that Jesus was not really a man and did not really “come in the flesh,” the corruptible flesh.

Our human existence is a progressive state of corruption. From the moment we are born we are in a constant state of decay, our cells dying and being

replaced and some, in the case of the brain, dying and not being replaced.

God made the creation subject to this condition of corruption (Rom. 8:20-21) expressly to force us to look forward to becoming incorruptible through Christ and the coming resurrection which will grant us entrance into his glorious Kingdom (1 Cor. 15:23, etc.)

Romans 1:18-22 says that the “wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world **His** invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even **His** eternal power and Godhead (divine nature), so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify **Him** as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the **incorruptible God** into an image made like **corruptible man** and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.”

This is a focused indictment by Paul against Greek and Roman philosophical teachings and it summarily destroys, in a few verses, all the pagan/Gnostic notions of the day. First of all, God establishes *Himself* (singular, One Person, not three!) as the only eternal power and divine Being. It is *His* glory alone which is supreme, as *He* states repeatedly in numerous verses in Isaiah 44 and 45. The convoluted and complex reasoning of the Greeks, adopted by the church councils, was a product of their own perverted “wisdom” necessary to fill the vacuum of knowledge created by them in rejection of the Hebrew God’s simple plan of salvation for all. Creating their own problem, they attempted to solve it with a maze of mystical theories of One and Three.

The pagans believed that God was impersonal and unapproachable and, therefore, had to be brought down to earth so that mortal (corruptible) man could associate and feel close to God. So they made God like mortal (corruptible) man — exactly what God said could not be done! In their wisdom they became fools, and why? Because they just could not accept the simplicity of God’s revealed word. They possessed also a deep-seated opposition to the Hebrew faith of Jesus and his belief that God was one Person only.

The irony of the whole story is that God did reveal Himself *in* corruptible man and “the word became flesh and dwelt amongst us.” But this is a far cry from the immortal God actually becoming mortal man.

Jesus the Messiah became exactly what God intended for Adam. Adam failed. The second Adam, though corruptible, led the way to eternal life and incorruptibility. This second Adam was the perfect reflection and image of the Eternal God. Because of Christ’s perfect life in serving God and mankind he became the firstborn among many other brethren.

I Corinthians 15 is another marvelous revelation from God outlining His plan for Adam and the human race. In 34 verses God destroys not one but two unscriptural doctrines — the immortality of the soul and the Trinity. Christ, the second Adam, was corruptible but he overcame sin and corruption to sit at the exalted right hand of God. “For this corruption must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality.” Thus, what started out as a disaster, man in the garden, will turn into a glorious victory in the Kingdom of the Messiah and the only true God, the Father (John 17:3; 1 John 5:20).

The Greeks were not far off. Their problem was one of arrogance and pride. They thought they knew better than God and had to complicate matters when the simplicity of God’s Plan would have sufficed. In complexity there is confusion and profit. From the beginning of time powerful men knew that esotericism (secret knowledge) was a way to control the masses. If a political or ecclesiastical body can dictate truth which the average man or woman cannot understand but must believe, on pain of death or excommunication, then power and control are secured.

Knowingly or unknowingly, this is the path the early post-biblical church chose, a path which has led multitudes into confusion. Millions who believe in this “impossible” Christ who is neither God nor man are unable to explain the mystery of the Trinity. They accept it as tradition and often out of fear. How much suffering and pain could have been averted if belief in the simplicity of Christ and his word about himself, God and the Kingdom had prevailed? ✧

Comment

“I wish to tell you, I truly do enjoy receiving and reading *Focus on the Kingdom*! It is without question a very enlightening truth to me, since I only started learning the truth about God’s word less than two years ago. I am 61 years old. When my wife died, 4 years ago, I was content that my wife had gone to heaven, because that’s what I was taught from my birth. What really amazes me is the fact that the truth is actually written in God’s word for all to read, but few adhere to it. It seems that they would rather take the word of anyone that speaks about the word of God, truth or not!” — *Alabama*