

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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Can God be the High Priest?

by Terry Anderson

In Genesis 14:18 we are introduced to the concept of High Priest. We learn that the enigmatic Melchizedek is the priest of the Most High God. He blesses Abram *and* the Most High God. His exact functions are unclear, but this we do know: He was king of Salem and he acted as God's agent on earth in those early days of mankind. This was long before the existence of Israel and the Levitical priesthood.

It should be evident from the statement that he "blessed the Most High God" that this Melchizedek was not God. Unless we imagine that God is blessing Himself, we can reasonably understand that the Priest is someone *other than* God! I mention this because there are those who believe that Melchizedek was Christ, and if the Christ of orthodoxy, then God the Son.

In fact Melchizedek was "*like* the Son of God" (Heb. 7:3), which means he could not have *been* the Son of God. Melchizedek had no recorded genealogy ("no father and mother," Heb. 7:3, just as Jews said of Sarah whose lineage is not known). His parenthood, we know, was not traced from Levi (v.6).

Was Melchizedek just a priest or can we deduce that he was the High Priest? The text says that he was the priest of the Most High God. Were other priests involved or was Melchizedek the only priest at the time, thus making him the *de facto* High Priest? The indication is that Melchizedek was alone, acting on behalf of God for that man (Abram) who would become the recipient of a very special "covenant."

It is puzzling that Melchizedek didn't appear, in the Bible, until the meeting with Abram. We can assume he was alive and functional prior to this event, but we just don't know what he was doing. There is no indication that Abram was surprised to see Melchizedek appearing, just in time to receive the tithe of his war spoils. It seemed quite natural, no questions asked; so Abram turned over a tenth of his spoils. Since a normal person wouldn't turn over his possessions to a complete stranger, wouldn't it follow that Abram had knowledge of or possibly a close relationship with Melchizedek?

It is interesting that this Melchizedek is mentioned three times in the Bible — once in Genesis with

Abram (in connection with a covenant), once with David in Psalm 110 (David received the royal covenant of kingship, foreshadowing Messiah) and finally in Hebrews 6 and 7 (the New Covenant). In fact, the whole covenant arrangement is tied together through Melchizedek to Abram, to David and to Jesus the Messiah. So God's promises to make Jesus king and lord (*adoni*, Ps. 110:1) are inextricably woven together with the promise of Jesus also becoming a priest (High Priest) forever according to the order of Melchizedek. This is an everlasting priesthood, as is Christ's kingship over all the nations.

In contrast to this priesthood, the priesthood of Aaron and his descendants would come to an end. The High Priest under the Aaronic, Levitical priesthood served God and ministered to the people as God's agent in religious matters. This has been the function and purpose of all biblical priesthood since Melchizedek. Why? Because God has ordained that He would not deal with man on a direct basis.

I Timothy 2:5 states that there is now "one God and one **mediator** between God and men, the **man** Messiah Jesus." Jesus' mediation is accomplished through his role as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. *God* does not mediate between Himself and man. He chooses men or angels to do this and under the Christian economy it is a *man*, the glorified Jesus Christ. (Jesus also appeared on earth as high priest, Heb. 9:11.) Any inference that Jesus is both God and High Priest makes no sense whatever, for if God has ordained that there be a "go between" then by what logic can anyone claim that this mediator is God? If God is doing the mediating then why not simply say, "I will be mediator between me and man?"

There are many reasons to challenge orthodoxy in regard to Jesus Christ's so-called Deity. God cannot die, God cannot be tempted, God is incorruptible, God is omniscient, and now we see one more: **God cannot be the High Priest**. Jesus is High Priest and therefore cannot be God. This is a basic syllogism in logic.

There is a great deal to be said about the subject of the priesthood in Hebrews chapters 6-9. I'll summarize some of the most salient points. The Levitical priesthood was a temporary priesthood ordained to provide mediators between God and Israel. This function ceased when Christ died and rose to fulfill his role as High Priest for all mankind for all time. He is established in the heavens at the right hand of God and

will remain so until the time of the restoration of the Kingdom on earth when Jesus comes back.

The Torah of the priesthood was changed, the High Priest was changed and the Torah administered by the priesthood was changed (Heb. 7:11-12). It is declared that Jesus arose from the tribe of Judah, of which tribe nothing was spoken concerning the priesthood. Yet Jesus became the High Priest in spite of the requirements delineated in the Torah. How? By God's will, and by Christ's eternal offering on the altar of the Holy of Holies he became a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Think again about the opportunity God the Father had to set the record straight and clarify the relationship between Himself and His Son, the ultimate High Priest. The Scripture says, "It is evident that our Lord arose from **Judah**" — **not from heaven, not from eternity!** And again, Hebrews 7:15 states that "it is yet far more evident if, in the likeness of Melchizedek [a man, v. 4], there arises another priest." In verse 24 Jesus receives the unchangeable priesthood. Why? Not because he is God and always possessed it, but because after being raised, he continues in office forever. He won this position through sacrifice.

In Hebrews 8 we read that Jesus had to offer himself in sacrifice in order to enter into the Most Holy Place, as did the Levitical High Priest under the Old Covenant on the Day of Atonement. In Hebrews 8:3 we see that "this one [Jesus] had to have something to offer" and, of course, that was his life, his own blood on the altar. As a result of this offering "he has *obtained* a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as he is also **mediator** of a better covenant."

The Melchizedek priesthood was temporary and destined to be replaced by a new system of mediation. This would be based on the eternal understanding of man's nature and the need for a new empathetic, perfect and resurrected man to be the compassionate High Priest. This was God's plan for Christ. If it was in the mind of God that the Messiah "was slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8), then it stands to reason that God knew from the beginning that Melchizedek was the model of the everlasting priesthood and the Levitical system was temporary.

Hebrews 6-9 must not be forced into the later mold of orthodox beliefs about Christ's Divinity. There is no indication here of anyone other than man Messiah Jesus fulfilling the most important role of priest and mediator, yet in a New Covenant format. When we allow the Scripture to flow forth from its

Hebrew source we can indeed drink of fresh and living waters.

Jesus cannot be God and High Priest at the same time, and since it is clear that he is High Priest then he cannot be God. ✧

Ignoring the Words of Jesus

by Paul Fiorilla

Ignoring the words of Jesus has led to the introduction of tragic error into orthodox Christian theology, as readers of this newsletter well know. Reducing Jesus' words to window dressing before his all-important death has an equally insidious effect on the behavior of people who call themselves Christians.

This point was hammered home to me recently while sitting in church listening to yet another sermon about how the world has "gone to hell in a hand basket." The pastor asserted that people are by and large more immoral than they were at some unspecified time in the past. He bemoaned the evaporation of societal "shame," which in better times served to modify the behavior of potential sinners. And moving on to politics, he spoke out against the lack of moral fiber in our elected leaders, which — after hearing the sniggering from the audience — I realized was a coded reference to the gay sex scandal that prompted the resignation of New Jersey Governor James McGreevey.

Anyone who attends an evangelical church or listens to mainstream Christian media is bombarded with the notion that the world is a more immoral place than it was in the past. And it is getting worse all the time. I've heard this so much since I began attending evangelical churches some 35 years ago that my brain normally lets it pass by without notice, chalking it up to simpleminded generic pining for the "good old days."

But in truth such grumbling is not a harmless pastime, not among Christians, who have been commanded by God to cast aside their human nature and follow the example of Christ. Not only are the ideas wrong, and therefore promoting untruths, but the attitudes involved contradict the attitude and actions of Jesus, who should be our example.

Biblical support for the idea that the world will grow gradually worse often comes from quoting I Timothy chapter 3, in which Paul declares that there will be "terrible times" in the "last days," and lists a litany of sins that people will commit in such times. But it is far from clear that Paul was referring to any particular year in this current generation, as many would believe.

The idea also is contradicted by any rational review of history. When was this magical time when people were “better” than they are today? Was it earlier this century, when good Christians in the southern U.S. used to pack lunches on their way to lynchings? Was it the last century, when men killed each other by the tens of thousands in the Civil War? Was it in centuries past when Protestants and Catholics warred in Europe, when reading the Bible was illegal and John Calvin burned heretics? Was it during the Crusades? Was it in the Middle Ages when people converted to Christianity at the point of a sword? Was it in antiquity when much of the populace was enslaved and many religions had official prostitutes?

A new and growing trend among evangelical Christians is a sense of outrage at being slighted by secular culture. Christians across the country have sprung into action to fight the use of the greeting “Happy Holidays” at stores and parades rather than “Merry Christmas.” Not only is there rich irony in protesting the commercialization of Christmas by demanding that religious symbols be exhibited at shopping malls, but it is impossible to imagine that Jesus would have had the same lust for power and entitlement. Jesus lived in a society that was truly oppressive — after all, he and 11 of his disciples were executed for their faith. But he did not resent his situation, telling his followers to cooperate with the hated Romans.

The pining for better times goes hand in hand with the frequent call for the return to a societal shame in an effort to prevent immoral behavior. While this may sound good, rarely is it explained how exactly this shame would be resurrected. Do we prosecute doctors that perform abortions? Do we spit at single mothers or label their children as bastards?

The bottom line is, whatever the details, such shame mongering is completely contrary to the actions of Jesus. Confronted with those accused of immoral behavior by the good religious people in his society, Jesus displayed a profound sense of love and mercy. He freed the woman accused of adultery, and spoke respectfully to the woman at the well, as much to her surprise as that of his closest followers. In those cases and others, Jesus clearly felt a closer bond to the sinner than the “pious.” And he repeatedly warned against judging others, saying that God would measure mercy toward individuals as much as they doled it out to others. One could imagine Jesus responding to the call for shaming by reciting the story of the Pharisee at the temple who thanked God that he

did not act like the sinners. The evangelical church of today seems often more interested in recreating the behavior of the Pharisee than reproducing the attitude of Jesus.

The disconnect between church behavior and Jesus’ words is most clear with the issue of war and peace. Evangelical churches in the U.S. today are by and large nationalistic and militaristic, and public polls would indicate that most people who call themselves Christians support the war in Iraq. It is clear that many Christians are more offended by a homosexual act than they are by the senseless slaughter and/or torture of tens of thousands of civilians in Iraq.

But this does not reflect the ideals of Jesus, who spoke frequently about nonviolence. The meek will inherit the earth. The peacemakers will be called the sons of God. Love your enemies. Do not resist those who aim to harm you (a principle which he followed to his death). Now it can be logically argued that a nation is better off not adhering to nonviolent principles. But that can never be the Christian principle, because Jesus calls us to be like him, not the world.

Reviewing two books about Iraq in the *New York Review of Books*, senior war correspondent Chris Hedges describes war in profound terms: “The vanquished know the essence of war — death. They grasp that war is necrophilia. They see that war is almost a state of pure sin with its goal of hatred and destruction. They know how war fosters alienation, leads inevitably to nihilism, and is a turning away from the sanctity and preservation of life.”

The bottom line is that the church takes on the characteristics of its teaching. If people are taught that the most important aspects of Jesus’ life are his birth, death and resurrection — and not *his words* — they will certainly fail to follow his instructions and the example of the life he lived. That leaves an almost incomprehensible situation in which millions of people claim the name of Jesus yet act completely contrary to the lifestyle he both espoused and lived.

“Not everyone who says ‘Lord, Lord’...” ✧

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David Preached the Gospel!

Psalm 40:9, 10: “I have **proclaimed glad tidings of righteousness** in the great assembly; I will not refrain my lips, O Jehovah, You know. I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal **your love and your truth** from the great assembly.”

The Sins of Our Fathers

by Graeme Campbell, New Zealand

Over the last three years I have been reexamining some of my long-held beliefs so that I am better able to defend my faith and also have a clearer understanding of what I really do believe. I have been deeply challenged on several of my long-held doctrines and have had to do a lot of soul searching over what I believe and what the Scriptures really teach. After a colleague spoke recently on “Nehemiah’s Prayer,” I have been feeling that perhaps this is the time to share my thoughts with my fellow elders. I know that since I have changed my thinking on some subjects, my love for God and His Son, the Lord Jesus Messiah, has grown, and my passion for God’s words in Scripture has been ignited to an extent that I have never experienced in 40 years as a “believer.” While I have spent many hours studying, discussing, reading and thinking through these subjects, I acknowledge that I don’t have all the answers. But the ones I do have now seem a much better fit with Scripture than what I understood in the past. Please remember that there is nothing to be feared and everything to be gained by studying Scripture — “the truth shall set you free.”

1. The Jewishness of our Faith

Growing up I never realized that I could be included in the blessings of Israel and that it was a Jewish Messiah that I served and loved. The Church was presented as a gentile body that was unseen in the Hebrew Scriptures and Jews had to forsake their Jewishness to become Christians if they were to become saved. I have come to realize that it is the middle wall of partition that has been broken down by the work of Messiah and we have been made one people, one body, the “ekklesia” (congregation) of the New Israel (Gal. 6:16), or as we know it, the Church. Jesus was the predicted Messiah of the Old Testament but traditional Christianity has reduced the New Testament equivalent, “Christ,” to a kind of surname, which loses the linkage to the Hebrew Scriptures. The Jews were never told to give up belief in their Hebrew Messiah. We were told to become believers in their Messiah too — the fulfillment of the Hebrew Scriptures and the great hope of all true followers of Yahweh. It is useful to read the word “Messiah” wherever the Greek word “Christ” appears. (Christ, of course, is a correct translation, but people have forgotten what it means.) This will link us again to the Hebrew roots of our faith and remind us that we too are children of Abraham as Paul explains in Galatians

3:29. “If you belong to Messiah then you are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise.” We have been indeed “grafted in” and Jewish and Gentile believers are one. It is the Messiah’s return that we eagerly wait for. It is the Messiah whom we will see at the rapture/resurrection and with whom we will spend the millennial reign on the earth. At that time a remnant of the Jewish nation will recognize him and worship him as they should (Mic. 2:12).

2. Life Only in Messiah (The resurrection, heaven and hell, eternal life/eternal death)

This area is much more ingrained in our thinking and teaching and thus more controversial. I have thought long and hard about bringing this subject up, as it is likely to cause heated debate and has real possibilities for entrenchment, leading to division. However, I bring it to my fellow elders first. All I ask is that it be looked at seriously.

By “life only in Messiah” I mean that the human being’s *soul is not immortal* and does not live on forever of its own accord. We are not inherently eternal once we begin. We currently believe and teach that at the point of death only our bodies die, but we actually translocate to another realm and are just as real and alive as before we died! I have come to see that this is not a scriptural idea. Eternal life is available only to those who bow the knee to the Lord Jesus Messiah. Only through the finished work of Messiah on the cross and obedience to his Gospel can we move into eternal life. This means there is “life only in Messiah,” and this life is only received by passing into death and then being raised again at the resurrection, following the path taken by Messiah himself. He was “the first to rise from the dead” and “the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” as we read in 1 Corinthians 15.

Our whole Christian culture and society believes that while the body dies, is buried and awaits resurrection, *the soul* is immortal and lives on forever, both saint and sinner alike. This is almost unquestioned, almost universally taught by both the evangelical and nominal Church as well as many of the cults. It is constantly reinforced at funerals. However I have found that the Hebrew believers of old never believed in an afterlife like this. This is a pagan Greek thing — this idea that souls live on after death in various places in the underworld. The old Hebrew followers of Yahweh simply “rested with their fathers.” No mention is made of disembodied souls waiting anywhere except in the grave for God’s future judgment. One of the most important principles of good Biblical interpretation and exposition is, “What does the bulk of Scripture say on

this subject?" While there are some verses that do seem to support the immortality of the soul, the vast majority do not. To make the Scriptures fit our long-held beliefs we have come up with many convoluted ideas that, frankly, confuse and puzzle most people.

What I have come to realize is that the Greek view of death is not the Hebrew view. When Jesus told the story of Lazarus in the afterlife, he was getting a point across that even if someone were to come back from the dead to speak to them, they still would not believe. We have used this passage virtually on its own to come up with an idea of the afterlife that is unsupported by other Scripture. Almost everywhere else the Bible speaks of resurrection and judgment, and immortality given to the righteous and the destruction and burning up of the wicked (like chaff in a fire) in the lake of fire. It never speaks of the dead being alive, but because we believe they are, we "interpret" many passages to support that view. Jesus was the first to rise from the dead and is the firstfruits of all those who will follow at the rapture/resurrection. The great hope of the resurrection is what we should be looking forward to, when the dead in Messiah will rise first and then we who are alive will go with them to meet the descending Lord in the air. This is the message that Paul preached and we should do the same. Someone asked me recently why we don't talk about the resurrection much and I had to say it is because we have no need of it really, because we teach that we are already in paradise when we die. So the resurrection loses its great excitement and thrill. It was always the resurrection and the fulfillment of the Abrahamic covenant ("The Kingdom will never pass away") that the Jews waited for, and (a few) are still waiting for. We too come under that same blessing, grafted into the same rootstock or vine. We await the return of the Messiah, the trumpet call, the shout of the archangel who announced the birth of the Messiah and will one day announce his return to this earth. The mortal will put on immortality. Corruption will put on incorruption. Death will be swallowed up in victory. Together the raised saints and the living saints will go to meet the Bridegroom as he returns to the earth. (Remember the story Jesus told of the ten wise and foolish virgins who went out to meet the bridegroom as he came to the home of the bride. They met him as he came and went with him to celebrate the marriage with a great feast. This is a picture of what will happen when Messiah returns to set up his kingdom.) This was the hope of the Old Testament Israelites, the constant theme of the preaching of Jesus, the message

that the Apostles taught, and should be the expectation of the Church today. By replacing the hope of the resurrection with the hope of death, we have severely dampened our enthusiasm for the return of the Lord Jesus Messiah.

Another result of our immortality of the soul belief is that there are many strange and unscriptural doctrines, for example the teaching about Purgatory promulgated by the Roman church, by which the "living dead" are struggling to get themselves into God's good books. A true appreciation of the unconscious sleep of the dead and immortality being given only when the Messiah comes back to the earth at the resurrection of the righteous, would completely do away with this and other false teachings which cripple a clear presentation of the Gospel.

The everlasting punishment to be faced by the wicked is just that — a punishment that is final and with no hope of reprieve. The old saying that "where there's life there's hope" will ring very true as those who have "taken their chances" will face no hope. The second death will be the loneliest thing imaginable but will represent true justice from a truly just God.

Recently we learned a new song which brought great joy and excitement to our congregation. It is taken from Rom. 8:19, 20; 1 Cor. 15:51-54; 2 Cor. 4:17-18; 1 Thess. 4:16-17; 1 Jn. 3:2; Rev. 21:4. "There is a day that all creation's waiting for, a day of freedom and liberation for the earth. And on that day the Lord will come to meet his Bride. And when we see him, in an instant we'll be changed. And we will meet him in the air. And then we will be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Then all hurt and pain will cease. And we will be with him forever. And in his Glory we will live. The trumpet sounds and the dead will then be raised by his power, never to perish again. Once only flesh, then clothed with immortality. Death will have now been swallowed up in victory."

Singing that song absolutely electrified our congregation because it rang true with the simple Biblical truth of the great hope of the resurrection and going to meet the coming Lord Jesus Messiah. The dead are now dead, but they will be raised to life and together we will go out to meet the returning Messiah. Many have never rejected all the false teaching of the false church on this subject of the Christian destiny. Yes, we rejected "salvation by works" in favor of the scriptural "salvation by faith" and we came out as protestors or "Protestants" from the established church. Later we rejected the unbiblical hierarchy of the church in favour of "the priesthood of all believers." We dropped infant baptism and special robes for various offices in the

church. We set up autonomous groups governed by local believers. The cost of stepping back from previously held error has always been high, with persecution of the severest kind frequently the result. However this should not stop us from facing up to error if it is there and doing the right thing at whatever the cost. I know that some of these things are a bit radical, and the thought of going against the mainstream belief is for myself very scary, as I don't want to be labeled as divisive. I just want to "live a quiet and peaceable life in all Godliness and honesty."

My experience in raising questions about long-held beliefs is that most will shoot the questioner without examining the question or the answer. I certainly don't have all the answers but the Scripture seems to fit so much better with "immortality only in Messiah" than with "no one ever really dies." "The wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life" is a wonderful verse to be able to take literally. The great message of the Gospel is "life or death" and not "life regardless." I admit that there are a few verses that seem to mention the wicked alive after death, but I would rather wait for understanding on these verses than throw out the mass of Scripture which says that the dead are unconscious.

3. The Trinity

This is perhaps "the big one." This is the issue that many have been burned at the stake for, killed without mercy for, and hounded out of communities into obscurity. I have always held as a basic tenet of my faith that God is three: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I have never understood it or even tried to, as it is completely incomprehensible to the mind of man. This is fine too, if it is true. There are many things about God that our finite minds cannot grasp. Take creation for instance, or how could God always have existed? The threeness of God is something I have argued about with Jehovah's Witnesses and "heretics." I have said hundreds of times that it must be accepted "by faith."

About three years ago a Roman Catholic work colleague and I were talking about the Trinity. I was somewhat surprised at how close our beliefs on this subject were. However he went on to explain to me how this doctrine proved that Mary was the mother of God. His logic ran that if Jesus was God and Mary was his mother, then Mary was obviously the mother of God. I said this was ridiculous but I had no counter-argument because I also believed that Jesus was God. This forced me into a complete examination the doctrine of the Trinity. I knew that Mary was not

God's mother. So then, perhaps Jesus was really the Son of God and not "God the Son." I found that "God the Son" is not a biblical term just as "the Trinity" is not a biblical term. While this might mean nothing in itself, it did set warning bells ringing, and I began to take particular note of the biblical language used to describe the relationship between God and Jesus. About this time a friend of mine gave me a book that he had been reading called *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity's Self-Inflicted Wound* by Anthony Buzzard and Charles Hunting. This book traced the history of the early Church and the political and theological maneuverings of powerful groups down through the centuries. I have since read many other books on Church history and the Trinity. It became evident that the doctrine of the Trinity was not always held universally. I reread the Old Testament and took careful note of how God spoke of Himself to His people and how His people understood Him to be strictly One. I found that in hundreds of places God claims to be One. In fact this became the rallying cry of His people — "God is One" — and this monumental fact is still recited almost daily in Jewish synagogues around the world.

We in the evangelical church daily say, "God is Three." Something didn't seem right. I was introduced to others who were questioning our interpretation of Scripture on this subject, and I found that there are a small but growing number of godly believers who have come to the conclusion that the Father is God alone and that Jesus is His Son and not a member of an eternal Trinity.

I began to examine the passages of Scripture that we use to prove so emphatically that Jesus is God, and found that in many cases they seemed to do the opposite and prove that Jesus was no less than the beloved and perfect, uniquely begotten Son of God. I had always thought of "the Son of God" as a title, but why should it not actually be a description of who he is, the Son of God? This unsettled me somewhat and raised questions. Was it necessary to believe in the Trinity? What difference did it make to the Gospel message? Could the death of the Messiah be enough to cover my sin if the Messiah was the Son of God and not God Himself? Did this radical change of perspective somehow reduce the value of what God had done or the cost to God of my salvation? What I have found has revolutionized my faith in God and His wonderful Son, Jesus our Saviour. It is as though someone has removed a pair of smudged reading glasses from my eyes and replaced them with magnifying glasses. Everything seems so much clearer now. What I have found is that as I have looked at

Scripture in this new light, everything that God has done has been enhanced in my understanding.

Scriptures that once confused me now seem clear. I now understand how Jesus could die when we know that God is immortal and can never be claimed by death. Jesus really was a man. I can now understand about Jesus being the second Adam, how by the disobedience of one man many were made sinners, so by the obedience of *one man* many will be made righteous. I began to realize that the Lord Jesus chose to obey his Father, and that he could have chosen otherwise. It wasn't just a natural progression, because Jesus was "God" and "God can't sin." But on the other hand, "God can't be tempted." The fact is that Jesus could have chosen disobedience just as Adam did, but he didn't. Therefore God has highly exalted him and given him a name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. God's plan of salvation is just amazing. God, being absolutely just, requires that our sin is put away in a way that is true to His own character. Someone must bear our punishment for sin — which is death — or we can't be forgiven.

As God is unable to die, He couldn't take it Himself, so He provided a perfect Son, whom He asked to die in our place. Jesus was absolutely sinless as his father was not Adam, but God Himself, by virginal begetting. God's love for His Son Jesus was truly a real father's love for a real son and not some mysterious transmutation and appearance of God Himself. When Jesus prayed so earnestly to his Father it really was a son talking with his father just as we understand it with our own children. As I have come to see just what God was asking of His Son, so I have come to understand and appreciate in a new way just how much God loves mankind. To be able to grasp literally that Jesus was the *Son* of God has added new depths to my love for both God, and His wonderful Son, my Saviour and the Lord Messiah Jesus (Luke 2:11). ✧

Jesus Calling

The call and Gospel invitation of Jesus to all nations is his plea for us to repent and believe in the Kingdom to come and in Jesus as its king. The essence of the faith is beautifully summarized in the following quotation from a leading commentary on Mark. Each sentence should be pondered carefully. Meanwhile the evangelical world has "gutted" the Gospel by omitting some thirty chapters of Matthew, Mark and Luke, in

which the Gospel is preached with no mention, at that stage, of the death and resurrection of Jesus. The sacrificial and atoning death of Jesus and his subsequent resurrection were of course rightly added to the Gospel. The Kingdom of God is still its rock foundation and intelligent reception of the Kingdom and obedience to Jesus remains the saving Gospel as Jesus preached it.

"Mark 1:14, 15: Mark gives a brief summary of the preaching of Jesus. Preaching and Good News [Gospel] are Mark's favorite expressions. **The call of Jesus** is accurately summed up in 1:15, where the association of repentance and faith reveals the language of the church (Acts 5:31; 11:18; 20:21). Mark's concern is to make clear that in this preaching Jesus continues to go forth into the world and this **call**, therefore, is being directed also to the one who reads this Gospel today. Consequently this section serves as a caption to the whole gospel (cp. the epilogue). **The Kingdom of God.** When Jesus proclaims that the Kingdom of God is near, he is adopting a concept which was coined in the OT. Although it denotes God's sovereignty over creation (Ps. 103:19; 145:11ff) it refers *primarily* to God's unchallenged sovereignty *in the end time* (Isa. 52:7)...Judaism spoke of the reign of God which comes *after the annihilation of every foe and the end of all suffering*...In the NT the Kingdom of God is conceived **first of all** as something in the future (Mark 9:1, 47, 14:25; Matt. 13:41-43; 20:21; Luke 22:16, 18; I Cor. 15:50 et al) which comes from God (Mark 9:1; Matt. 6:10; Luke 17:20; 19:11). Therefore it is something man can only *wait for* (Mark 15:43), *seek* (Matt. 6:33), *receive* (Mark 10:15; cp. Luke 12:32) and *inherit* (I Cor. 6:9ff; Gal. 5:21; James 2:5), but is not able to create it by himself...In the acts and words of Jesus the future Kingdom has come upon him already. It is decided at that very moment whether or not he will ever be in the Kingdom...Repentance is nothing less than a whole-hearted commitment to the Good News [about the Kingdom of God]" (Eduard Schweizer, *The Good News According to Mark*, pp. 45, 46, 47). ✧

Comment

"In spite of the fact that we are blessed to live in an affluent country it is with great anticipation that we yearn for the Kingdom of God. Your efforts are greatly appreciated and critical to getting the message of God's Kingdom to many." — Minnesota