

Focus on the Kingdom

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Believing Jesus' Gospel

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To believe the gospel is to be *saved*; not to believe the gospel is to be *condemned* (Mark 16:15, 16; Rom. 1:16; Mark 8:38; Luke 9:26). To believe the Son is to have *everlasting life*; not to believe the Son is not to have *life* but come under the *wrath of God* (John 3:36; cf. vv. 5-8 and 1 John 5:10-13). Clearly, then, what one believes or does not believe is an extremely important matter having consequences beyond this life.

But what must one believe? What is Jesus' gospel? What is it to "believe in the Son"?

First, consider Hebrews 11:6: "Without faith it is impossible to please Him: for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." Jesus, addressing his Father, says, "This is life eternal, that they might know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom You sent" (John 17:3; cf. 1 John 5:20). Note that one must believe in Jesus who was sent as well as his Father who sent him. To believe in the Son is to believe who he is — the Christ, the Son of the living God (John 20:31; 8:24; Matt. 16:16).

Then note also that according to John 3:36 to "believe in the Son" is to "believe the Son," i.e., to believe what he said. The words he spoke were the words that God gave him to deliver; therefore, not to believe his words is to reject the words of God (John 3:34; 8:26, 46, 47; 12:44-49; 14:10, 23, 24; 17:8; Mark 8:38). The God who spoke by the prophets has spoken also by His Son (Heb. 1:1, 2). Moses prophetically and Peter by application stated that the one who does not hear the words of Jesus — the prophet like Moses — "will be destroyed" (Deut. 18:18, 19; Acts 3:22, 23). On the other hand, to believe his words is to have the assured prospect of "everlasting life" (life in the age to come) or salvation, for his words are dynamic and vital (John 5:24; 6:47, 63, 68; 1 Tim. 6:3, 4; 2 Tim. 1:10; Heb. 2:3; Rom. 1:16). Not only must one hear the words of Jesus, he must "keep" or continue in them obediently (John 8:30-32, 51; 14:23; Luke 6:46-49; Mark 16:15, 16).

What then was the message that Jesus taught? Let the record testify: "Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand;

repent and believe the Gospel'" (Mark 1:14, 15). "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom" (Matt. 4:23). "He went throughout every city and village, proclaiming and preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). Luke later refers to his first record as being "all that Jesus began both to do and teach" prior to his ascension (Acts 1:1). He then says that Jesus appeared to the Apostles. He "showed himself alive after his passion by many infallible proofs, being seen by them forty days, and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God" (Acts 1:3). Jesus, throughout his ministry, taught the "gospel of the kingdom of God."

When Jesus speaks by parable of these things, as he often did, he describes a sower going out to sow seed. The seed fell on various types of soil and produced accordingly: some was destroyed by birds; some flourished only a short time in stony soil; some was choked out by thorns; some bore fruit in different amounts. By comparing the accounts in Matthew 13:3-23 and Luke 8:1-15 we see the following: The seed represents the "word of God" or "word of the Kingdom." The soil represents the hearts of men. The birds represent the Devil who is determined to destroy "the word sown in their hearts, to prevent them from believing and being saved." In stony soil the plant could not put down roots sufficient to sustain it. A shallow faith does not have strength to bear up under tribulation or persecution and so falls away. The thorns that choked out the young plants represent the cares and pleasures of this life and the deceitfulness of riches which destroy faith. The various levels of productivity in the good ground represent what takes place "in an honest and good heart" — hearing the word of the Kingdom, understanding it, keeping it and producing enduring fruit according to the measure of faith. This "word of the Kingdom" is none other than the "Gospel of the Kingdom." Believing that Gospel leads to both Christian living (Rom. 14:17) and salvation. Luke equates hearing and believing the word of God/word of the Kingdom with being saved. Salvation is to be fully realized in the age to come, in the Kingdom of God (Mark 10:30; Acts 3:19-21). This point is confirmed by analyzing the terms used in Matthew 19:13-30. In this text the expressions having "eternal life" (v. 16), entering into "life" (v. 17), entering into "the Kingdom of heaven/Kingdom of God" (vv. 23, 24), being "saved"

(v. 25), and inheriting “everlasting life” (v. 29) are equivalent in meaning.

The Gospel which Jesus taught was the same Gospel which he commissioned his disciples to teach throughout the world (Mark 16:15, 16; Matt. 28:19, 20). He even states that there would be a time when “this Gospel of the Kingdom will be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations” (Matt. 24:14). And so the Gospel was indeed to be disseminated everywhere (Rom. 10:8-18; Col. 1:5, 6, 23). And this must continue “to the end of the age” (Matt. 28:20).

At the time of Jesus’ birth, note what Joseph and Mary were told by the angel. Joseph was informed that the child Mary was carrying in her womb was conceived by the holy spirit. She was to “bring forth a Son, and call his name JESUS [margin: *that is, Savior*]; for he will save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:18-21). Mary was informed that the child she was to bear originated in the working of the power of the Highest and would therefore be called the Son of God. “You will conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and will call his name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there will be no end” (Luke 1:31-35).

In this way they learned the object of both his first coming and his second coming. These things constitute the Gospel as we see in the angelic announcement to the shepherds outside Bethlehem: “Fear not; I bring you good tidings of great joy for all people. To you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is the Lord Messiah” (Luke 2:10, 11). Or as Peter declared, when God raised up His Son and exalted him to His right hand, the Messiah was “to be a Prince and a Savior” (Acts 5:30, 31).

The New Testament record relates the content of the apostolic message as “the things concerning the Kingdom of God and Jesus Christ.”

When Philip went into Samaria and “preached Christ to them,” what they heard and believed is stated in this way: “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the Kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:5, 12).

Paul said, “We declare to you the good news that the promise which was made to the fathers, God has fulfilled for us their children, by raising up Jesus” (Acts 13:32, 33). This coincides with what Peter relates in Acts 3:25, 26 concerning the blessing of Abraham, including the resurrection of Jesus (Acts

13:34) and forgiveness in him (cf. Gal. 8:6-9, 13, 14, 26-29; Rom. 4:3-8, 13-16). In context, the discourse at Antioch (Acts 13) included a Savior for Israel of the lineage of David (vv. 22, 23; 2 Tim. 2:8; Luke 1:68-75). Not only do the Davidic covenant promises include the Messiah’s birth and resurrection, they specify his ruling in the restored Davidic Kingdom on David’s throne as well (cf. Isa. 55:3; 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Ps. 89:19-37; 16:8-11; Acts 2:22-36; 5:30, 31; 13:34-37; Luke 1:30-33; 2:10, 11). Paul links his message with the patriarchal promises and the hope of Israel (Acts 26:6, 7; Gal. 3:6-9, 13, 14, 26-29; Rom. 15:8). Isaiah’s revelation of the “good tidings,” which were the basis for the “hope of Israel,” includes both the reign of God through the Messiah (52:7; 40:9, 10) and the salvation of God through the suffering one (53:1-12). The hope of Israel is the hope of all by faith in Christ Jesus (Eph. 2:11-3:6).

In writing to the Ephesians Paul testifies about “repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.” This is a testimony of “the Gospel of the grace of God” and “preaching the Kingdom of God.” These things amount to “all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:20-27). The grace of God which brings salvation has appeared in the gift of His Son (Eph. 1:7; 2:4-8, 13-16; Titus 2:11; John 3:15, 16) and will yet be seen in its “exceeding richness” in the ages to come (Eph. 2:7; 1:10; 1 Pet. 1:13).

Writing to the Corinthians, he says, “Moreover, brethren, I declare to you the Gospel which I preached to you, which you received, and in which you stand; by which also you are being saved, if you keep in memory what I preached to you, unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all [i.e., among things of first importance] what I also received, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the Scriptures” (1 Cor. 15:1-4). He then continues by describing the proof and necessity of the resurrection both of Christ and of those who are his at his return (vv. 5-23). Without any break in his thinking, he then speaks of the reign of Christ and the final turning of the Kingdom of God over to his Father, “that God may be all in all” (vv. 24-28). So his Gospel to them included both what Jesus accomplished at his first coming and the cross *and* what he will accomplish at his second coming and the Kingdom. This is that “salvation” about which the prophets wrote when they “testified beforehand about the sufferings of Christ and the glory to follow” (1 Pet. 1:9-11).

At the close of his ministry, Paul was under house arrest in Rome. He shared the Gospel with many in his

lodging. He “expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both from the law of Moses, and from the prophets, from morning till evening. And some believed what he said, but some did not believe” (Acts 28:23, 24). In verse 28, after referring to the general Jewish rejection of his words, he says, “Be it known therefore to you, that this salvation of God is sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it.” He thus equated the things of Jesus and the Kingdom with the message of salvation (Acts 20:46; Matt. 21:43). Then we are told, “Paul stayed two whole years in his own hired house, and received all who came to him, preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, unhindered” (vv. 30, 31).

Hebrews 9:24-28 says that Jesus *has appeared* to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself (v. 26); he *now appears* in the presence of God for us (v. 24); and *will appear* on earth the second time completing salvation (v. 28). Thus we have the first coming and the second coming; the suffering and the glory; the name and the Kingdom; the cross and the crown in the Gospel message.

The angels and Jesus and the Apostles delivered the same Gospel message which would bring faith for salvation to all who believed and continued in it. There is only one Gospel (Gal. 1:6-9) and only one faith and hope leading to salvation (Eph. 4:4, 5; Jude 3). The Church today must deliver the same complete Gospel message. The believer today must believe the same Gospel of the Kingdom.

We conclude with this quotation: “Hope is an *effect* produced by faith in the unfulfilled promises of the Gospel. Hence, to have but one hope there must be but one faith as its unit cause: and to have but one faith, there must be only one Gospel, as its unit cause...The Bible teaches that there is only one hope; consequently there can be but one faith and one Gospel to produce this one hope” — J.M. Stephenson in *The Herald of Messiah’s Reign*. ✧

Lost in Translation

The reader of the Bible who assumes that all the translations give him the sense of the original Greek texts should realize that some of our modern versions, in *some* verses, are positively misleading. Let me give you very obvious examples. I think we all know that reading the King James Version of I John 5:7 is reading a forgery. The text cannot have been part of the original and does not appear in the text of Greek manuscripts until the 13th century. It was introduced from Latin versions. “That these

words are spurious and have no right to stand in the New Testament is certain” (Bruce Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the New Testament*, p. 715). This Trinitarian-sounding verse is not quoted by any of the Greek church fathers. They would certainly have cited it somewhere, if they had known of it, in the endless arguments over the Trinity.

Less well known to readers of Scripture is the corruption in I Timothy 3:16, where the King James reads “God was manifested in the flesh.” Modern translations rightly view this as an imposition on the original. What appeared originally was probably “*He who* was manifested in the flesh...” In some of the Greek manuscripts the word for God, which in Greek is *theos* (θεος) and begins with the letter “theta” (θ), has been cleverly inserted. This happened when copyists “cooked” or manipulated the text to make it say what they (as Trinitarians) thought it *ought* to say. In this case, in I Timothy 3:16, this was not very difficult. Here is how it happened. The Greek for “he who” is *os*. It is very easy to create the letter θ from the letter O. You just draw a little line horizontally inside the circle, and the word becomes θς (Ths) instead of Oς (Os). Now note this: θς (Ths) is the abbreviation for God (*theos*). Thus with one deft stroke of the pen “he who” became “God.” And another Trinitarian proof text came into existence.

I certainly do not want to give the impression that our Bibles are substantially unreliable. Not at all. The fact is that the framework teachings of Jesus about the Kingdom of God, the One God, and the Messiahship of Jesus are clear in all versions (though *some* verses are corrupted in translation, and sometimes, as we have seen, in the Greek manuscripts).

The King James Version was beautiful English in its time, and its legacy lives on, but it is unfortunately obscure in many places to the modern reader. It tends to remove the Bible from real life and experience and make it “churchy.” We just do not speak English today as they did in 1611. Any filter erected between the text and ourselves should be avoided.

The King James and many translations are positively misleading in John 1:1. It is an editorial move on the part of translators to put a capital “W” on “word”: “In the beginning was the Word.”

The reader is immediately invited to lose track of the central doctrine of Scripture that God is one and not three. If there was a Person, a Word (capital W), “with God,” the Father, that makes *two* who are God. To the reader’s mind this means that there are *two Gods*! If the Word is a Person and is God, and if the Father is a Person and is God, that amounts to two Gods. This is a

catastrophic departure from the creed of Israel (Deut. 6:4) and of Jesus (Mark 12:28-34; John 17:3).

It is interesting to see David Stern, in his *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, struggle with his own Jewish thinking in opposition to what he thinks a Christian ought to believe, i.e. the Trinity.

On page 597, he begins by stating correctly that the Greek word *kurios* (lord) can mean the Lord God or any other superior person. He then tells us that Jesus is ADONAI (the Lord God). “I believe that Philippians 2 teaches that Jesus is YHVH.” He asks: “But in what sense is Jesus ADONAI? It is not that the Father *is* Jesus, nor does Yeshua [Jesus] exhaust the meaning of YHVH [so then there is more to YHVH than Jesus].”

Stern now has to do battle with the notion he has just presented that Jesus is YHVH and the Father is YHVH. He first expresses his unease: “No matter what is said about this, it can be easily misconstrued so as to seem incompatible with the Old Testament and therefore incompatible with Judaism [I can hear thousands of Jews saying ‘Amen’!].” “Obviously,” Stern goes on, “anyone who (1) speaks of the Father and the Son separately, (2) says that both ‘are’ YHVH and (3) cleaves to the Shema — ‘YHVH is one,’ Deut. 6:4, is stretching language beyond its usual limits...Since God Himself transcends human limits, it is not surprising that His nature cannot be expressed fully by the *normal use of language* even though the Torah uses everyday language” (italics mine).

Ponder what Stern has to do here. He has to soften the offense of speaking of the Father as YHVH and Jesus as YHVH to mean only One God. It is “stretching language beyond its usual limits.”

May I suggest with respect that it is abusing language terribly. Stern admits that the Bible speaks to us in everyday language. Is God not intelligent enough to express in plain language the fact that He is strictly one Person? Would not thousands of singular pronouns do the job? Do not the countless references to the God of Israel as a single Person, without any equal, “beside whom there is no other,” who “is God alone, and no others with Him” — do not these straightforward, everyday language expressions do the job?

Biblical studies are blighted by the unfortunate idea that believers must say “Jesus *is* God.” They are thus committed to *more than one* who is God. It is a tragedy to try to escape into nebulous remarks about God being beyond language and unable to tell us how many He is!

Back to John 1:1. The unfortunate capitalization of the Word seduces the reader into thinking that two Persons are God. This is a departure from the well stated creed of Jesus in Mark 12:28-34 where he agreed with the unitarian scribe (professional Bible scholar) that God is one. That text will not go away. It is plain and simple. But the added, editorial capitalization of Word in John 1:1 wrecks its simplicity. It creates an uneasy tension in the minds of all those who try to convince themselves that the propositions “Jesus is God” and “the Father is God” do not add up to two Gods. They *do* according to all the rules of language we share in common!

Jesus in John 17:3 defined his Father as “the only one who is truly God.” Is that clear? Is that in any way difficult? We think not. Augustine was so troubled by this verse that he actually altered the order of the words of John. He altered the text of the Bible to fit his own theology. Augustine in his *Homilies on John* stated that John, i.e. the Bible, ought to have said, “You, Father *and* Jesus Christ, the only true God.”

How much evidence has to be presented to the public before they call for an explanation from their leaders in this matter of defining the God of the universe? How much evidence, how many smoking guns have to be produced before the public begins to understand that the way churches treat the Bible ought to be classified as a crime scene?

Take one last example. The NIV, the New International Version, corrupts the original Greek in the matter of the identity of Jesus. I know that our readers understand the significant difference in English between “go” and “go back.” The Greek New Testament distinguishes those two ideas clearly.

Now look at the NIV in John 16:28 and 20:17. In those two passages Jesus spoke of “going to the Father” (16:28) or “ascending to the Father” (20:17). But look what the NIV has done. In 16:28, words are put into the mouth of Jesus which alter what he said: “I am leaving the world and going *back* to the Father.” Going *back* to the Father? You mean, he remembers having been with the Father before he was born? The NIV wants us to believe that, but the words of Jesus are lost in translation. Jesus said nothing here about going *back* to the Father. He said he was “*going* to the Father.”

In John 20:17 the same false idea is communicated by the NIV: “I have not yet *returned* to the Father...I am *returning* to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.” But Jesus did not say that. He said, “I have not yet *ascended* to the Father...I am *ascending* to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God.”

Even writers of commentaries have been conditioned to hearing Jesus say things he did not say. R.V.G. Tasker, writing in the *Tyndale Commentary on John*, reports that Jesus “returned” or “went back” to God (pp. 167, 211, 222). (Tasker by the way says that the Son of God was not the same as when he had come. He goes back with an assumed human nature which he did not have originally. So the Trinity is now radically changed!)

A final example of the loss of meaning by mistranslation or inconsistent translation. According to the NIV Jesus really does not preach the Gospel! He preaches the Good News. The NIV inconsistently translates the Greek word Gospel (*evangelion*). When Jesus preaches “the Gospel of the Kingdom,” as our Greek texts say, the NIV does not let you hear that. Although they allow you to know that Paul preached the *Gospel*, they are not keen for you to know that Jesus preached the *Gospel*. So they substitute “Good News” for Gospel. Now of course the reader should know that Gospel and Good News mean the same thing. But the variation in translation, not justified by the Greek, tends to prevent the reader from hearing that there is only one Gospel preached by the New Testament from start to finish — the *Gospel* about the Kingdom.

Study this out. It is very instructive. Only once in the NIV do we hear “preach the Gospel of the Kingdom.” That marvelous and essential phrase is found in the NIV only in Matthew 24:14. Here Jesus is not the preacher, but evangelists preaching for him — a sign that the end is near: “then the end will come.”

If you are reading the more accurate translation in the NASU, you will hear five times about the *Gospel* of the Kingdom as preached by Jesus (Matt. 4:23; 9:35; 24:14; Mark 1:14, 15; Luke 16:16). In four of those five passages in the NIV, the word has been inconsistently rendered as Good News. When it comes to Paul, however, the NIV allows you to hear that it is “the Gospel” which he preaches.

The impression you gain is that Jesus did not preach the Gospel, but the Good News. This is a slight but significant difference. The NASU does not translate inconsistently, but allows the word Gospel to describe equally the Gospel preaching of Jesus and of Paul.

There is a matter of fundamental importance in any clouding of the term “Gospel.” Nothing must be lost in translation when it comes to the word which determines our salvation, the word “Gospel.”

May I invite readers to consider this point carefully: What must one do to repent and be forgiven? The answer will be unanimous from churchgoers everywhere. We have to believe that we are forgiven by the blood of Jesus shed on the cross. “Remission of sins” is found in the death of Jesus.

I want to ask you, Is that the whole truth? What did Jesus say about repenting and being forgiven, about “remission of sins”? You may answer, “Jesus did not use the words ‘remission of sins.’” That is true. But of course it is one of the most disastrous mistakes of Bible study to imagine that if two writers or speakers do not use exactly the same words, they must not be dealing with the same subject matter. The facts are that Paul and Jesus and other writers use *different* words to express the very same ideas. I might speak of USA and you of America, but would anyone say we are not covering the same subject?

Now observe very carefully how Jesus speaks of repentance and being forgiven. Our lives depend on this. Did he speak *only* of belief in his sacrificial death as the condition of forgiveness?

Long before Jesus uttered a word about his death and resurrection he laid down conditions for repentance and forgiveness. In the parable of the sower Jesus described how the seed message about the Kingdom (the Gospel of the Kingdom) must take root in our hearts. Matthew 13:19 tells us that the believers in Jesus are those who have accepted the “word/message/Gospel of the Kingdom.”

Not only that. Jesus makes the intelligent reception of his own Gospel of the Kingdom a *condition for repentance and forgiveness*. Remember that he has said nothing about his death at this point.

Mark 4:11, 12 is critically important. It builds on the most fundamental of all Jesus’ calls for repentance and belief. Mark 1:14, 15 had provided the public with a comprehensive statement about the Christian faith. We are to respond to Jesus’ first command: “Repent and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom” (Mark 1:14, 15 — nothing here about his atoning death or resurrection).

How do we repent? By turning to Jesus and *believing his Gospel of the Kingdom*. Look how he then develops this idea in Mark 4:11, 12:

“And he was saying to them, ‘To you has been given the mystery of the Kingdom of God, but those who are outside get everything in parables.’” The believers are the “in-group” who have been given God’s unfolding Plan about the Kingdom of God. How important is this? And how does this bear on “remission of sins,” on God’s forgiveness extended to us?

Now verse 12: “So that although they look they may look but not see, and although they hear they may hear but not understand, **so they may not repent and be forgiven.**” Listen to this vital teaching of Jesus from another version which states the same truth even more vividly:

“So they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; *otherwise* they might turn [repent] and be forgiven!”

May we commend these precious words of the Savior to your prolonged meditation. I have quoted here from the core of Jesus’ teaching on salvation. The subject is the seed Gospel of the Kingdom of God which Jesus sowed everywhere. It is the reception or non-reception of the Kingdom Gospel which for Jesus is *the* issue. Matthew calls the Gospel “the word of the Kingdom” (Matt. 13:19). Luke refers to the same Gospel message as “the word of God.” Mark calls it simply “the word.” Jesus conveyed this simple truth. All depends on our understanding, intelligent reception of the Kingdom-word/Gospel. Some do not see it, though they may hear it. They hear but do not understand.

Then the devastatingly interesting line from Jesus: “Otherwise — that is to say, if they did understand the Kingdom Gospel — they could repent and be forgiven.” Their sins would be remitted. They would receive forgiveness. They would be converted. They would be able to repent, IF they understood the Kingdom of God Gospel. And Jesus at this stage had said not a word about remission of sins by believing in his shed blood.

An unsuspecting public is deluged with tracts and sermons announcing the death of Jesus for our forgiveness. Nothing, apparently, is said about believing the Gospel of the Kingdom as a condition for repentance and receiving God’s forgiveness.

The New Testament Gospel has in various ways been “lost in translation,” either by corrupted Greek manuscripts, manipulated translations or a thick filter of post-biblical theology erected between the reader and the Bible.

The central teaching of Jesus is this. F.F. Bruce put it well commenting on John:

“The disciples who keep Jesus’ word (cp. John 14:23), in whom his word had found a lodging place (cp. v. 7) are clean on that account (John 15:3); it may be implied that his word is the means used by the Father to perform his work of pruning...There is no practical difference between Jesus’ personal indwelling in his disciples and his words remaining in them...The logos [word] is his teaching in its entirety;

the words are the individual utterances which make it up. The promise of answered prayer is made to the one who remains in him and in whose heart his words have a permanent residence. Faith in Jesus, *acceptance of his words*, inaugurates a union with him through which his power and eternal life become forever available to the believer...So also 8:31: ‘If you remain in my word [Kingdom Gospel, logos] you will truly be my disciples and you will come to know the truth and the truth will make you free’” (*Gospel of John*). ✧

Correcting a Correction

It appears that I may have acted prematurely by saying (in the last *Focus*) that all the Apostles did not witness the crucifixion. According to Luke 23:49, “All those who knew him, including the women who had followed him from Galilee, stood at a distance,” watching the crucifixion.

15th Theological Conference

We want to extend a warm invitation to you to be with us April 21-23, 2006. I think this is going to be a wonderful conference. Greg Deuble from Australia will be with us and “armed” with his brand new book which is really a blockbuster event for the Abrahamic faith. We plan to allow a little more time for fellowship this year.

This is a unique gathering of Abrahamic believers, bringing people together from various countries. A number of speakers will present papers on subjects of interest to us all, with time for questions following. The conference is a rich time of fellowship and an opportunity to meet and encourage others of Abrahamic persuasion. There will be opportunities, as usual, for shorter faith story presentations. This is not an academic occasion, for specialists only! It is a meeting for Christian education and fellowship to further the great truths of Scripture. Many of the participants have newly discovered the Abrahamic faith and are excited to meet others of similar persuasion.

The cost of the conference is \$105 if you register by April 7, and \$130 after April 7. Please register by phoning Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261 or 404-362-0052 (credit cards accepted), or use the form on the back page. Rooms are \$75 per night at the Hampton Inn in McDonough, Georgia and you can make reservations by phoning them at 770-914-0077. Please plan on arriving on Thursday and the conference will begin at 9:00 am on Friday, April 21st. The hotel rate includes a continental breakfast. Transportation from Atlanta Airport to the hotel and to the meeting place at

Cornerstone Bible Church in McDonough will be provided.

The weather is normally gorgeous in Georgia in April. Please do consider joining us. It is so important for us all to gather from time to time to celebrate our common faith.

“The True Messiah” Intensive Course

Following the conference on Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday (April 24-26), I will conduct a class sponsored by Atlanta Bible College. The course can be taken for credit if you are working on a degree with Atlanta Bible College (which is accredited). But we invite anyone to audit the course for \$129 (including textbook). Last year about 12 gathered to explore the Kingdom of God as Gospel. This year we want to tackle the issue of Christology. Amazing things are happening in the world of theology worldwide and this is going to have an impact on us and our circle of friends. We want to strengthen and preserve the precious truth about the One God and His uniquely begotten Son. Further questions can be addressed to the college at 800-347-4261. If you do plan to stay on for these extra days, please make arrangements with the Hampton Inn, unless you choose another place to stay.

Course Concept, Description and Objective

A flood of literature continues to pour from the presses on the subject of the identity of Jesus. The so-called quest for the historical Jesus is probably the topic which most engages the minds of professional scholars and many laymen, especially those who are uneasy with the uncritical acceptance of church tradition about Jesus and his claims.

In view of the central question asked by Jesus about “Who do you say that I am?” and the Savior’s promise to found his own Church on the right answer to that question, this course examines the identity of Jesus as the promised Messiah of Israel and the world. We will cover the basic materials on “Christology” beginning with the Hebrew Bible’s anticipation of the “one to come” and his arrival in Bethlehem. From Genesis onwards and through the prophets of Israel, and the Psalms, there is a rich and varied body of texts dedicated to defining the Messiah and his mission, his aims and claims. Stress will be laid on the fact that Jesus affirmed the creed of Israel (1 Cor. 8:4-6). In the New Testament we will examine the development of the Messiah’s career and identity, concentrating first on Matthew and Luke’s account of the Savior’s origin by virginal begetting. We will then peruse the Gospel of John for the portrait of Jesus as

Messiah presented by John, the beloved disciple. So-called difficult texts in John will receive special attention. Since Paul has been the subject of so much controversy we will analyze the principal Christological sections of his epistles and show their complete consistency with the Old Testament and the other New Testament writings. A main objective will be to underline the Christology of the radical reformers, and current “Abrahamic” believers, who challenge the notion that Jesus claimed to be the second member of an eternal Triune Godhead. We will refer to significant current literature from Protestant and Roman Catholic sources, which is very much in agreement with the Abrahamic Christology held by that denomination since the 1850s. This is a new and exciting development and points to the possibility of a revolution in thinking about Jesus, with enormous implications for the major religions, Christianity, Judaism and Islam. A major aim is to equip participants with the tools and skills to share the information with others. This is not a purely “academic” exercise, but rather designed to promote evangelism and a return to the biblical Jesus and his Message as Messiah. ✧

Comments

“Thanks so much for *Focus on the Kingdom*. It’s such a blessing and encouragement.” — *Colorado*

“After being a member of different church denominations over the years (the last one being the Worldwide Church of God) I am so grateful to God that He has led me to your ministry as what you teach, I think, is truly the most important message to mankind in the world today. I am grateful to you, also, and all the scholars who are willing and dedicated to teach this knowledge to those of us who are searching for scriptural truths and the Gospel about the Kingdom as Jesus preached it.” — *Wisconsin*

“This is just a quick note of thanks for the encouragement I have received from the MP3 files of your Kingdom broadcasts at focusonthe kingdom.org. I now carry your programs with me on a cell phone device and frequently meditate on them while driving, exercising, brushing my teeth, studying the Bible with my wife, etc.” — *Connecticut*

“Today I set about reading the booklet *The Law, the Sabbath, and the New Testament Christianity* which put me into an area of the Bible that sheds tons of light on the Law. The Worldwide Church of God’s statements did not give me the *whole* story. We found the answer in some of your references in that little book.” — *Minnesota*