

Focus on the Kingdom

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Which Translation of John 1:1-3 Are You Reading?

A very persistent correspondent of ours writes the following challenge: “The Bible very clearly says that Jesus was with God in the beginning (John 1:2). How can you deny this?” I applaud his determination and zeal, but, as a Berean (Acts 17:11), have some question about whether he has access to the best information.

There is a considerable fallacy at work here in my correspondent’s assertion. I do not blame our writer for his misinformation, but I suggest that he might do some further study. It is not sufficient to dismiss others as unintelligent or misguided. And it is quite wrong to assume that because one has “invited Jesus into one’s heart,” that others have not made the same commitment to Jesus and truth. Those of us with degrees in language and who teach the biblical languages on an ongoing basis may have valuable information to share with others. It is our prayer that truth, and thus “the spirit of the truth,” the holy spirit, is furthered when proper attention is paid to the Scriptures as inspired in Greek and Hebrew (not an infallible King James English!).

The Bible actually does *not* say that Jesus was with God from the beginning. It says that “the word [notice no capital letter — not Word] was with God.” I would ask our correspondent to consider that those of us who deal in the original languages of the Bible (which was not written in English, much less King James English!) do not find in the Bible 1) In the beginning was Jesus nor 2) In the beginning was the Word (with capital letter), nor 3) In the beginning was *the Son*.

There are no capitals in the Greek text to distinguish personal names, as there are in English. The capital letter on word in John 1:1 you find in some translations is an *editorial addition to the Bible* and the Bible warns against adding to the text.

If you start with the Old Testament, the Hebrew Bible, you will find some 1500 occurrences of the terms for “word” and in no case is that “word” a “he” or a “him.” The “word” is without exception *an “it.”* It is therefore a very great mistake to launch into John’s gospel disregarding what we have learned about “word” in John’s Jewish background.

What we do find in inspired Scripture is “In the beginning was the word.” Again, John did not say “In the beginning was the Son”! (I hope my correspondent is listening carefully). And if we are reading the first

translations from the Greek into English, *we do not always find a capital W on word*. And we also read “All things were made **by it** [the word]” (v. 3). Now I think that our readers know that Jesus is not an “it.” But the Greek is perfectly correctly translated by Tyndale and some 50 translations in English since his day (1534) which likewise read in a way which supports the idea that “all things were made **by it**.” The “it” refers to the word, which is not a person until Jesus, the Son of God, is begotten, brought into existence. There are hundreds of examples of the word “word” in the Hebrew Bible, which is the background to John’s writings, and not one of them means a person! It is therefore a misleading translation to write “in the beginning was the Word” (capital W).

So may I offer a caution: Before one says “The Bible says” — with confidence and sometimes a strong implication that anyone who disagrees with you is ignorant or stupid — one should first recognize that the New Testament was *inspired in Greek* and that various translations are available. Only when you have given thought to the possible renderings of the Greek original as shown by the variety of translations of John 1:1-3 are you in any position to make critical judgments about “what the Bible says.” The Bible does in fact *not* say “In the beginning was the Word... All things were made by *Him*.” It is time for some of our readers to rethink this whole matter.

The justification for our point here is that we are to love God and Jesus with all our minds and this involves using our intelligence to understand what the Bible actually does say! Critical (analytical) thinking on the great issues of life and who God is is a necessary part of our devotion to God, Jesus and the Bible. The good Berean, when he is confronted with new information, goes to work to make an intelligent judgment based on all the facts, not superficially on the basis of his favorite English translation of the Bible. Again, the Bible was not inspired in English.

At present churchgoers (though they may not realize this) are committed to this proposition: He who says that “Before he [the Son] began to exist, he did not exist” are anathematized! (Nicene Creed of 325 AD). This is the sort of “churchspeak” imposed on intelligent churchgoers, to which we object.

There is a noble tradition and example set by Sir Isaac Newton, John Milton, John Locke, and the hymn writer Isaac Watts, all of whom challenged the bizarre notion, held officially by churches, that God is **Three-in**

One. Is it not time for us to support the creed of Jesus, who knew nothing of the Trinity? Inspiration for an honest searching on this issue is provided also by the appearance of Michael Servetus' *Restoration of Christianity* recently, for the first time in English,¹ although it was written in 1553! Servetus was cruelly burned to death by John Calvin precisely because Servetus was unable to accept Jesus as "the eternal Son of God." He died protesting that Jesus was the "Son of the Eternal God."

A fine example of a trained pastor who willingly undertook the reexamination of his "received" doctrines is Greg Deuble, author of *They Never Told Me This in Church*, available from 800-347-4261. You will find here his wonderful Berean approach to the study of the Bible and what joy this has brought him and many others. ✧

Cornelius

By Stan Paher

There is wonderful joy in coming into the company of those who love God, as did Cornelius. Man cannot reverence God (Acts 10:35) without having a sincere sense of his own sinfulness. The story of Cornelius is a delight to dwell upon. He was a Roman (a thoroughly heathen race) and a soldier which is not an innocent profession. Yet he was a devout man, a generous, praying God-fearer. His influence was felt all around. His household also feared God, and his friends and kinsmen were prepared to listen to God's instruction with respect and readiness of mind (Acts 17:11).

Also, we rejoice to see, in this account, Peter's acceptance of God's way, and surely it rejoiced Peter's heart to find such ready respect and reverence when he met this Gentile and his family. Note the contrast with the rage of the Jewish rulers in Jerusalem with their evil designs. Until Acts 10, no Apostle had conveyed the truth of the gospel of Christ to those outside the covenant of promise. It went only to the Jews. The listeners in Cornelius' house gladly heard the news of forgiveness through a Savior crucified and raised from the dead. Their hearts accepted these truths, and they received directly from God miraculous manifestation of divine approval. No doubt thoughts and words of praise to the living God had often been theirs, but the holy spirit enabled Cornelius and the others to speak with eloquence the thanks and praise which had filled their hearts.

This provided proof to Peter that the same Gospel provisions were given to Gentiles as to Jews. The manifestation of divine favor upon Cornelius, wonderful though it was, did not alter the requirements of God that he and his household should be baptized in water. This necessary Christian obedience fulfilled the will of God.

¹Translated by our good friend Professor Marian Hillar, Edwin Mellen Press, 2007.

He received the forgiveness of sins, a process which started with believing the Gospel (Acts 10:43).

Had Cornelius refused water, no signs of grace or goodness in his life would excuse him. But in his proper response, Cornelius was granted the assurance of "walking in newness of life" (Rom. 6:4) and possessing the spirit of Christ. ✧

From the popular book *Velvet Elvis: Repainting the Christian Faith* by Rob Bell (Zondervan, 2005):

"One of the most tragic things ever to happen to the gospel was the emergence of the message that Jesus *takes us somewhere else* if we believe in him. The Bible ends with God coming here. God, in the midst of all the people who can imagine nothing better, celebrating the life that we all share. The images Jesus used were of banquets and feasts and celebrations" (p. 80).

The Church: The New "Israel of God"

A major theme of Paul's and Peter's theology is the recognition of the New Testament Church as the *spiritual Israel of God*. The following texts make this quite plain. This truth does not of course exclude the fact that *physical, ethnic* Israel will be regathered in the future (Rom. 9-11, etc.). The Church is *now* clearly distinct from the physical nation of Israel (flesh and blood Israelites), but it is equated with the new spiritual Israel of God. Both these truths must be kept in mind for a proper understanding of the Apostles.

To the Gentile Christians Paul wrote: "Remember that formerly you who are Gentiles by birth, and called 'uncircumcision' [non-Israelites] by those who call themselves 'circumcision'...were separate from Messiah, *excluded from citizenship in Israel* and foreigners to the covenants of promise...But now you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household" (Eph. 2:11-19).

The contrast is between our former *exclusion* from citizenship in Israel to present inclusion in the commonwealth of Israel, God's people. So in Galatians 6:15-16, Paul says of the Jew/Gentile church: "It does not matter if a person is circumcised or not; what matters is for him to become an altogether new creature. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, *who form the Israel of God*" (Jerusalem Bible).

From Romans 9:6-24, we see that there are two Israels in Paul's thinking: "Not all those who descend from Israel are Israel; not all the descendants of Abraham are his children [children of Abraham are here equated with the new spiritual Israel]...It is not physical descent that decided who are the children of God; it is only the children of the promise who will count as the true

descendants...Well, we are those people, whether we were Jews or Gentiles, we are the ones he has called.”

Paul here makes a clear distinction between ethnic Israelites, Paul’s flesh and blood relatives (Rom. 9:4), and the new spiritual Israel in Christ, which is the international Biblically-based Christian Church.

Paul goes on to quote from Hosea 2:23, applying phrases which originally referred to the *nation* of Israel (and will refer to them again in the future) to the Church: “even us, whom He also called, not only from the Jews but also from the Gentiles. As He says in Hosea, ‘I will call them *My people*, who are not *My people*’” (Rom. 9:24-25).

This most important practice of quoting texts which originally referred to the nation of Israel and applying them to the Church is found very clearly in 1 Peter 2:9-10: “You [the Church] are a chosen people [quoting Isa. 43:20], a royal priesthood, a holy *nation* [quoting Exod. 19:6], a people belonging to God [Deut. 7:6], that you may declare the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light [quoting Isa. 43:21]. Once you were not a people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy [Hos. 2:23].”

In 1 Peter 2:5, we read: “You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.” This was exactly the function of Israel. The Church has today taken the place of Israel, though national Israel has not been finally rejected (Rom. 11). Individual Jews can by repentance and belief in Jesus as Messiah become part of the present Israel of the spirit *now*. And the Jews will repent nationally and collectively in the future, consequent upon the events of the Tribulation (Rom. 11, etc.)

The Church, as God’s new Israel, is *now* to perform all the functions of Old Testament Israel. None of this, we emphasize, means that physical Israelites (a remnant) will not in the future as a nation turn to God, and thus also become part of the New Israel of God.

The importance of the identity of God’s Church as the New Israel is that we are a body with a real constitution based on the laws of the Sermon on the Mount and the covenant of the Kingdom of God made by God with Jesus (Luke 22:28-30). Carrying a passport in the Commonwealth of Israel, we reside as aliens (1 Pet. 2:11) in the various countries where we are domiciled. We are ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20) representing the Kingdom of God, and have become spiritually speaking “Jews,” circumcised not in the flesh but in the heart: “A true *Jew* is not the man who is merely a Jew outwardly, and real circumcision is not just a matter of the body. The true Jew is the one who is circumcised inwardly, and the true circumcision is of the heart” (Rom. 2:28-29). Thus

Paul asserts in Philippians 3:3: “We [the Church] are the circumcision, we whose worship is spiritual.”

The crucial importance of Exodus 19:5-6, the constitution of Israel as kings and priests, is seen by its frequent application to *the New Testament Church*, by Peter (1 Pet. 2:9-10, quoted above), and also by John in Revelation 1:6: Jesus “has made us a kingdom and priests to our God and his Father.”

Again, in Revelation 5:9-10: Jesus “purchased men from every tribe, tongue, people and nation and **made them to our God a kingdom and priests, and they will reign on the earth**” (not go to heaven when they die!). This finds fulfillment in Revelation 20:6: “Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign as kings with him for a thousand years.” Once again the original application to Israel (Ex. 19:6) has been transferred to the Church.

No wonder then that Paul addresses the Church as “the Israel of God” (Gal. 6:16). Salvation, after all, is “from the Jews” (John 4:22). The tragedy is that the Jews did not, and have not, as a nation accepted their Messiah. Those who did became the founding members of the New Israel of God which we as Gentiles can now join as brothers and sisters to the Apostles and Jesus, the Great Apostle.

In Philippians 3:3 Paul states expressly that the Church is the spiritual Jew: “We are the true circumcision who worship in the spirit.” That Paul recognized the Israel of the Spirit is shown by 1 Corinthians 10:18 where he speaks of physical Israel as “Israel *according to the flesh*” (see KJV or an interlinear). Why would Paul use this expression unless he recognized two kinds of Israel: the natural, national Israel and the true Israel of the Spirit?

Remember this: “Salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). We must all be incorporated into the Jewish Messiah and his mind and spirit to be saved. Thus the Gentiles, too, can become the children of Abraham “who is the father of us all” (Rom. 4:16). And when they do, they become heirs of the same promise as was made to Abraham, “the promise that he would be heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13).

After all if we desire an exact definition of the Christian Gospel we can do no better than refer to Paul’s remark in Galatians 3:8 that “**the Gospel was preached in advance to Abraham** to the effect that in Abraham all the nations will be blessed.”

Anyone interested in understanding the Christian Gospel should be riveted by those amazing words of Paul: The Gospel was preached ahead of time to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). ✧

John 1 and “the word” (see for details the July, 2004 issue at focusonthe kingdom.org)

From the first translation of the Bible from Greek into English by William Tyndale in 1534 until modern versions, the latest in 2002, translators have warned us that the King James and other versions are mistaken when they read “all things were made by *Him*” (John 1:3), i.e. Jesus the Son. The Greek does not say this, and the standard translations simply support ecclesiastical tradition. The following 50 translations, including 9 before the King James Version in 1611, do not force the reader to understand that the “word” was the Son before the Son’s birth.

It was the Roman Catholic Douay/Rheims version, translated from the Latin by Gregory Martin² in 1582, which first rendered John 1:3, “all things were made by *him*,” rather than “by *it*” (the “word”). This was followed by the King James in 1611. This translational move made the public think that the Son of God created the universe and was also God. This made two Gods, distorted the creed of Jesus (Mark 12:28-34) and usurped the position of the Father as the *unaccompanied* Creator (Isa. 44:24) who “made them male and female” (Mark 10:6; Gen. 1:27) as Jesus and the Hebrew Bible (the OT) said.

In modern times the celebrated commentary on John by Leon Morris says: “More important for our understanding of this Gospel in general and of its use of the term ‘word’ in particular is *its Jewish background*...The ‘word’ irresistibly turns our attention to the repeated ‘and God said’ of the opening chapter of the Bible. The word is God’s creative word...Thus throughout the Old Testament the word of the Lord is thought of as His effective agent for the accomplishing of His divine will, ‘by the word of Yahweh were the heavens made,’ (Ps. 33:6). When God speaks He does something. His word is a divine action...‘So shall my word be which goes forth from my mouth. It will not return to me void, but it will accomplish what I please and it will prosper in the thing for which I sent it’ (Isa. 55:11). In Ps. 29 the

²Martin was one of the original scholars of St John’s College, Oxford, and he became a tutor in the household of Thomas Howard, Duke of Norfolk. When the duke was imprisoned for his Roman Catholicism, Martin escaped to Douai, where he joined W. Allen. In 1573 he was ordained a RC priest. After some time in Rome he returned to Douai in 1578 where he spent most of the rest of his life translating the Vulgate (Bible in Latin) into English. He wrote about the religious life and organized charities of Rome in a work called *Roma Sancta* which remained unpublished until 1969. He died on Oct. 28th, 1582, the year in which the NT appeared in Rheims, known as the Douay-Rheims Bible. This version is the first to read “All things were made by *him*” (John 1:3), promoting the Trinitarian idea of the eternal Son, Jesus.

voice of the Lord is regarded in much the same way” (but no one would call the voice “he”). Archbishop Temple wrote: “The word (*logos*) alike for Jew and Gentile represents the ruling fact of the universe and represents that fact as *the self-expression of God*. The Jew will remember that ‘by the word of the Lord the heavens were made’; the Greek will think of the rational principle of which all natural laws are particular expressions. Both will agree that this *logos* is the starting point of all things.”

Morris says: “It is probably impossible for us to read the Prologue without thoughts of Jesus of Nazareth. But it is worth bearing in mind [!] that there is nothing to link the two until we come to v. 14. Up to that point the first readers of this Gospel would have thought of the Word in terms of a supremely great Being or *principle*. If we are to evaluate the intended impact of these words we must bear this in mind...John 1:14: Notice that this is the first time in the Gospel that John indicates that the word and Jesus are to be taken as the same. Up till this point [i.e. John 1:1-13] it would have been quite possible for the reader to have taken the ‘word’ to refer to *some supreme cosmic principle or the like*.”³

I add this: In verse 5 the light which is in the world is an *it* (*auto*); only in verse 10 is this light turned into a masculine person “him.” That is because the light is Jesus when Jesus is born, and before this Jesus, the Son of God, is not yet in existence. Thus the word *is Jesus* only after Jesus begins to exist, is born. Before that the word is the word of God, the one God’s plan and wisdom, not yet the Son of God. There is no preexisting Son in the New Testament. God did *not* speak in a Son in the Old Testament times (Heb. 1:2). There was as yet no Son of God because the Son of God was to be the descendant of David (2 Sam. 7:14-16). And thus there is no basis at all for the Trinity.

Now listen to these translations:

1. “All things were made by it” (Tyndale, 1534)
2. “The worde...All things were made by the same” (Coverdale, 1535)
3. “All things were made by it and without it nothing was made” (Matthews’ Bible, 1537)
4. “All things were made by it and without it was made nothing that was made” (The Great Bible, 1539)
5. “All things were made by it” (Taverner NT, 1540)
6. “All things were made by it” (Whittingham, 1557)
7. “All things were made by it” (The Geneva Bible, 1560)
8. “All things were made by it” (Bishops’ Bible, 1568)
9. “All things were made by it” (Tomson NT, 1607)

³ *New International Commentary on the New Testament, John*, pp. 75, 102, emphasis added.

10. "Nor can anything be produced that has been made without it [Reason]" (John LeClerc, **1701**)

11. "The word...through the same all things were made" (Mortimer, 1761)

12. "In the beginning was Wisdom...All things were made by it" (Wakefield NT, 1791)

13. "The Word...All things were made by it" (Alexander Campbell, founder of the Church of Christ, **1826**)

14. "The Word...All things were formed by it" (Dickinson, *A New and Corrected Version of the NT*, 1833)

15. "All things were made by it" (Barnard, 1847)

16. "Through it [the logos] everything was done" (Wilson, *Emphatic Diaglott*, 1864)

17. "All things through it arose into being" (Folsom, 1869)

18. "All things were made through it" (Sharpe, *Revision of the Authorized English Version*, 1898)

19. "All things were made by the Love thought" (Goddard, **1916**)

20. "All things came into being in this God-conception and apart from it came not anything into being that came into being" (Overbury, 1925)

21. "All came into being through it" (Knoch, 1926)

22. "The word...the living expression of the Father's thought" (Blount, *Half Hours with John's Gospel*, 1930)

23. "The word was god" (C.C. Torrey, *The Four Gospels*, 1933)

24. "Through the divine reason all things came into being" (Wade, *The Documents of the NT Translated*, 1934)

25. "Without it nothing created sprang into existence" (Johannes Greber, 1937)

26. "It was in the beginning with God, by its activity all things came into being" (Martin Dibelius, *The Message of Jesus Christ*, translated by F.C. Grant, 1939)

27. "Through its agency all things came into being and apart from it has not one thing come to be" (William Temple, Archbishop of Canterbury, *Readings from St. John's Gospel*, 1939)

28. "The energizing mind was in existence from the very beginning" (Crofts, *The Four Gospels*, 1949)

29. "First there was the Thought and the Thought was in God...He, him" (Hoare, Translation from the Greek, 1949)

30. "In the beginning God expressed Himself...That personal expression, that word...He" (J.B. Philips, *NT in Modern English*, 1958)

31. "All was done through it" (Tomanek, 1958)

32. "The Word was the life principle [in creation]" (William Barclay, NT, 1969)

33. "This same idea was at home with God when life began...He" (Jordan, Cottonpatch Version, 1970)

34. "All things became what they are through the Word" (Dale, NT, 1973)

35. "Within the Word was life" (Edington, 1976)

36. "It was his last werd. Ony it come first" (*Gospels in Scouse*, 1977)

37. "By it everything had being, and without it nothing had being" (Schonfield, *The Original NT*, 1985)

38. "All things were made through the Word" (Inclusive Language Lectionary, 1986)

39. "In the beginning was the Plan of Yahweh. All things were done according to it" (Hawkins, *Book of Yahweh*, 1987)

40. "All things happened through it" (Gaus, *Unvarnished NT*, 1991)

41. "In the beginning was the divine word and wisdom...everything came to be by means of it" (Robert Miller, *The Complete Gospels*, Annotated Scholars' Version, 1992)

42. "All things were made through the Word" (Throckmorton, 1992)

43. "In the beginning there was the divine word and wisdom, everything came into being by means of it" (Robert Funk, *The Five Gospels*, 1993)

44. "All things were made by the Word" (*NT in the Inclusive Language Bible*, 1994)

45. "Through the Word all things came into being" (Inclusive NT, 1994)

46. "All things came into being through the Word" (Gold, *NT and Psalms*, 1995)

47. "In the beginning was the message, through it all things were done" (Daniels, *The Four Gospels: A Non-Ecclesiastical NT*, 1996)

48. "All things through God were made" (VanCleeef, 1999)

49. "That word of God was God...God's way of speaking and acting" (Beck, NT, **2001**)

50. "In the beginning was the Word or the expression of divine Logic" (Zeolla, *Analytical-Literal Translation of the NT*, 2001)

51. "Nothing but God, and all that He means existed in the beginning of absolutely everything. There was no possible way to separate God from His meaning, for only by His meaning can He be identified as God. God's intentions and purposes existed with Him from the very beginning of everything. God, through His intentions and purposes created everything that has, or has had, existence in all of time" (Junkins, *A Fresh Parenthetical Version of the NT*, 2002)

The evidence of fifty translations and paraphrases will show that it is an imposition on Scripture to insist that John wrote, "In the beginning was **the Son of God**. All things were made by him, the Son, Jesus." John was thinking of the Son as *promised* but not yet in existence.

John spoke of *the word*, God's purpose for the world. If the *Son* existed from eternity, that turns God into two and undermines the "Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God is *one Lord*," Jesus' first commandment (Mark 12:29). If the Son was in existence before he came into existence, this makes no logical sense and contradicts the accounts of Matthew and Luke.

It destroys the Old Testament promise that the Son was in the future to come into existence (2 Sam. 7:14-16). It destroys Matthew's "book of the generation/origin of Jesus" (Matt. 1:1, 18, 20). It contradicts Luke's message from Gabriel that the virginal begetting was the origination point of the Son of God and the exact and only reason for Jesus being uniquely the Son of God (Luke 1:35). If the Son of God is pre-human he cannot be human. If the Son of God existed *before his begetting*, it is impossible for him to have been begotten, brought into existence. If the Son is God, he cannot die, since God cannot die. If Jesus is God, there is no sacrifice or death for sin, since the immortal God is incapable of dying. If the Son of God was originally a holy angel, he also cannot have died, since holy angels are immortal (Luke 20:36). Jesus really was a human being originating in the womb of his mother. (See our video free at Jesusishuman.com)✧

Do You Understand Shorthand?

What I mean here is the "shorthand" of the Bible. For example Paul speaks of the holy spirit as "the spirit of the promise" (Eph. 1:13). The shorter form is simply "the spirit" or "holy spirit," the mind, heart and presence of God and Jesus extended to us. Ephesians 1:13 is correctly rendered by the New Jerusalem Bible and by Young's literal translation as the "*spirit of the promise.*" The Bible in Basic English vividly defines the spirit as the "holy spirit of hope"! More fully it is the spirit of "the promise made to Abraham that he would be heir of the world" (Rom. 4:13) or inherit the earth, as Jesus said (Matt. 5:5). But that hope needs defining. It is the hope contained in the Gospel of the Kingdom and the promise made to Abraham that he would inherit the land or earth (which has never yet happened: see Acts 7:3-5).

"The Gospel" is the shorthand for "the Gospel about **the Kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ**" (Acts 8:12), and another shorthand for that Kingdom Gospel is "the word," which in the New Testament is not just a synonym (as misleadingly in popular church language) for the whole Bible. Why is this so important? Because every time you come (say in the book of Acts) to the expression "the word," you need to know that this is shorthand for the saving **Gospel of the Kingdom** as Jesus preached it. The apostles preached "the word," (Acts 8:4) and so did Jesus (Mark 2:2), but not much is

conveyed to you by that "shorthand" until you learn that it is **the Gospel of the Kingdom of God**. The full definition of Acts 8:4 ("preaching the word") and 5 ("preaching Christ) is provided by Luke in Acts 8:12. But some Bible readers have never really defined the Gospel as the Gospel of the Kingdom and they miss all those shorthand references such as "the word," "the message," "the truth."

None of this would be difficult if we first grasped Paul's definition of the Gospel in Galatians 3:8. He says there that **the Gospel was preached in advance to Abraham**. It would be essential then to know what was promised to Abraham. It was not "heaven" but **the land** (Gen. 13:15), and that land is the Kingdom of God on earth which Jesus will establish when he comes back and gives the earth/land to his followers (Matt. 5:5), where they will rule with him as kings and priests on the earth/in the land (Rev. 5:10).

Paul in Galatians 3 (one of the most power-packed chapters of the whole Bible) speaks of "the blessing of Abraham" (Gal. 3:14). That in itself is a shorthand expression for the fuller definition found in Genesis 28:4 where "the blessing of Abraham" is defined more fully as inheriting "**the land** of your sojournings, which God gave to Abraham." That too is the promised inheritance of Christians who are meant to share the faith of "faithful Abraham," "Abraham the believer" (Gal. 3:9). Abraham believed the promise of property, progeny and blessing and Christianity in its New Testament form is modeled on the same promises, now offered to all from whatever nation who choose to believe what Abraham and Jesus believed: that we will inherit the **land/earth/Kingdom of God** and supervise a new world order with Jesus when he comes back. He must one day return to this planet to relieve the world of its present terrible problems and tragedies caused by our disregard for God and what He has revealed to us in Christ. The **Christian Gospel of the Kingdom** is the announcement of that new world and society coming and how, in Christ, we can prepare now to enter it when it comes. Hence we pray, "Your **Kingdom** come."

In Galatians 3 there are eight technical terms which form the backbone of biblical Christianity. When they are not understood the whole faith is thrown into confusion. "Works of the Law" = the legal system prescribed by Moses for ancient Israel. "Sons of Abraham" = the spiritual children of Abraham who believe the same Gospel as was preached to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). Jesus called them disciples or sons of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:38). "God" = (some 12,000 times in the Bible: *Elohim, YHVH, Adonai* and *o theos*) the unipersonal [One Person] God of Israel, of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob **and of Jesus**, not the triune God of later theology. "Blessing of Abraham" = the promise of the land made

by God to the patriarchs and now to Christians (see Gen. 28:4). “Justified” = counted and made right before God. “Seed” = Christ, as the recipient of the promises made to Abraham (3:16). “Seed” is also the saving Message of the **Gospel of the Kingdom** (Luke 8:11; 1 Pet. 1:23-25). “Covenant/promises” = God’s promise to Abraham and later to David and Christ of the **land/earth** (Gen. 12; 15; 17; Matt. 5:5; Rev. 5:10), to be given also to the spiritual descendants of Abraham (Gal. 3:29), the spiritual brothers and sisters of Jesus, Christians. “Inheritance” = the future inheritance of the whole earth and the world as the reward (Col. 3:24) for believers of all the ages. ✧

Comments

“Thank you for sending me *Focus on the Kingdom*. A friend subscribed for me. I have a background mainly in the churches of God. I thank you very much for your fervent scholarship and pursuit of truth, especially in trying to understand and bridge the gulf between Jewish and Muslim faiths. I desire to be able to answer those hard questions about the real Jesus and come to a good understanding of the Scriptures. Thank you also to those who work and study with you. I am out here and I do appreciate your generosity and pursuit of the eventual Restoration.” — *South Carolina*

“I thank you for your Kingdom book. It is so excellent, a tremendous book. I never read anything like this book ever in my life. It is my fortune to write this email to you. I did not hear ever about the Messiah’s Kingdom and the ‘elixir of life.’ It is so thrilling. You clarified about small ‘l’ and capital ‘L’ in Psalm 110:1. I teach this book from hence, I have decided to do it. I thank God I know human secrets from your book. I will also participate in distribution of the books.” — *India*

“I agree with all my heart with you. Being ‘eternally begotten’ is an oxymoron. These two words just can’t go together to actually mean anything — much like someone being 200% or capable of being tempted and incapable all at once. Or the same being knowing and not knowing the time of Christ’s return. When someone doesn’t have the truth and you give them enough space and rope they will hang on their own words. At a quick glance and using maybe a couple verses, their argument sounds coherent enough but any further examination proves it paper thin. It is like we were talking about at church a few weeks back: the whole of Scripture should come together like a puzzle. Sometimes people talk of perspective or ask, How do you know you are right? I really feel like it is the difference between two jigsaw puzzles which are both supposed to be finished. One is a smooth rectangle which forms a picture just like the one on the front of the box. The other has a bunch of raised edges and gaps, and the picture it forms doesn’t look

much like anything. Incongruent pieces are forced together. My question isn’t how can you see the difference but how can you *not*. To answer my own question: some have the spirit of truth while others have only delusion.” — *Ohio*

“Just a note to say that I watched the **Jesusishuman.com** video and I thought it was excellent! No doubt you had a lot of positive feedback, because the quality of the production and the approach was done in a superb and professional fashion. I was impressed and have already begun to make a list of people to share it with. I can’t wait for it to become available in DVD format. The interviews with people in churches and malls were a smart and entertaining touch! This video is definitely something people should not have any problem sharing with their friends and family. I thought the subject was handled logically, non-offensively, and with dignity and love. I can’t say enough! Super job! We (the church body) need more material just like it. Are you working on the next one yet?” — *Indiana*

“Our God bless you always in the love of our savior Jesus Christ. This email is to tell you that I saw the first half of the documentary *The Human Jesus*, where you participate. The documentary is very, very clear and useful to preach the truth about our Savior, the *real* Jesus. I tell people there is only one mediator between God and men: *a man Jesus Christ*. Not a god, nor an angel, but a *man*. I believe if people don’t understand this very important point they are losing their valid mediator. The most beautiful truth I found in the Church is that Jesus is *human*. All the power Jesus has today, all the grace, all the majesty, was not simply automatic. He worked and won all he has because he is the greatest man of all ages, the greatest teacher and of course he is the Son of Yahweh. Only Yahweh can have such a very special Son like Jesus.” — *Uruguay*

“I am thankful to have a real source for study of the Bible. It is coming alive and I am learning so much, and passing it on to my family. May God continue to bless His work and the opening of minds.” — *Texas*

“I have read and reread the May issue and found it helpful in my search to understand SPIRIT. I have been studying the spirit and the kingdom for several years. We still enjoy your little paper and read it always.” — *Arizona*

“The Human Jesus” two-hour documentary is now available on DVD (\$12). Please call 800-347-4261 or 404-362-0052 to order.

The 17th Theological Conference will be Sunday-Wednesday, April 27-30, 2008 at Simpsonwood Conference Center, which one participant called “the most beautiful conference center I’ve ever stayed in”!