

# Focus on the Kingdom

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## What Biblical Unitarians Need to Understand

A prominent spokesman for the traditional view that God is three Persons writes: “Our Lord Jesus Christ is God manifest in the flesh. God tabernacling in human form. When I say I believe in the full deity of Christ, that is what I affirm. *At His birth our Lord Jesus Christ did not begin to exist...*In many quarters, ecclesiastical as well as secular, belief in the Virgin Birth of our Lord Jesus Christ is scouted as unworthy of twentieth-century intelligence. Biologically, it is vehemently asserted, such a birth is impossible. Science with pontifical authority has pronounced against it. Who dares to challenge the ‘all knowing’ of such an eminent authority?”<sup>1</sup>

Our readers should make every effort to deal with the confusion represented by the above paragraph. These are not issues of academic, non-practical Christianity. They affect the very heart and core of your belief system, your grasp of the God’s revelation in biblical Christianity. The word “doctrine” has been drastically abused in our time. It is held that “doctrine” is some pointless abstract theory which is to be negatively evaluated in comparison with the far more worthy subject of “Christian living.”

Such a misleading dichotomy between “doctrine” and “Christian living” needs to be banned from Christian discourse once and for all. The Bible is full of “doctrine,” and it commands us to love God and Jesus with all our *minds* as well as every other aspect of personality we can bring to bear on the matter of pleasing God and gaining salvation in the future Kingdom (never in the Bible “going to heaven when we die!”). We are to live not by certain favorite passages selected from the letters of Paul or words of Jesus, but by “every word that proceeds from the word of God” (Matt. 4:4). That is the “doctrine” with which Jesus was armed when he faced the external supernatural Satan in the wilderness (the Adversary “came up to him” and spoke to him). This is the “doctrine” with which we today must be armed as we battle “not ultimately against human beings [flesh and blood] but against ‘cosmocratic powers’ [Paul’s word], evil spirits in high places” (see Eph 6:12).

All teaching is “doctrine” and one cannot teach anything about the Bible without uttering “doctrine” and

so the popular denouncing of “divisive doctrine” or any “doctrine” in favor of practical “Christian living” creates a very significant confusion in the public mind. Above all believers are to be “critical thinkers” in the best sense (Acts 17:11: “they examined the Scriptures daily” to ensure a grasp of saving truth), and education of young Christians must involve that essential factor always. As things are, many churches seem to “put a lid on” any free discussion of cherished teachings. These, it is argued, easily result in division and hostility. But Jesus and Paul nevertheless insisted on truth, and confession of truth rather than falsehood, as necessary equipment for successful Christianity. 2 Thessalonians 2:10: “Because the *love of the truth* they would not accept in order to gain salvation...” The warning is clear.

Now back to our opening quotation from a Trinitarian writer who rightly insists on belief in the virginal begetting/conception of the Son of God. He is compelling in his analysis of the mindless hostility of “science” and rationalism to the miraculous.

Here is how the opponents of the miraculous biological miracle in Mary operate: “The fact of the Virgin Birth having been denied, the evidence and proof which established the fact must now be discredited. Let it be carefully noted that this finding against the Virgin Birth was not the result of a fresh examination of the evidence but rather the arbitrary act of science falsely so called...All sorts of ingenious methods have been brought into play to destroy the records — from the mistranslation of words to the pen-knifing of whole passages of the Bible. Historical evidence is flouted without respect for any known rule of evidence. Unfounded assertions are put forward as sound conclusions and the whole basis of traditional Christian belief is subjected to the methods of a reckless infidelity.” Human beings hostile to God will stop at little to discredit Holy Scripture.

“This assault on the doctrine of the Virgin Birth is, however, but one phase of a great battle to evacuate the supernatural from Christianity and to reduce it to the plane of natural religion. These naturalists in religion are out to destroy supernatural Christianity. They go through the Bible and tell us there is no supernatural revelation there; they go through the Birth of Christ and tell us there is no supernatural incarnation there; they go through the Person of Christ and tell us there is no supernatural deity there...they go through the Works of Christ and tell us there are no supernatural miracles there; they go through the Words of Christ and tell us

<sup>1</sup> Ian Paisley, *Christian Foundations*, 1971.

there is no supernatural wisdom there; they go through the Death of Christ and tell us there is no supernatural atonement there; they go through the Blood of Christ and tell us there is no supernatural cleansing there; and they go through the Tomb of Christ and tell us there is no supernatural resurrection there. Having jettisoned the supernatural from the Gospel Ship they have reduced her to an old hulk of man's manufacturing, a mere plaything for the storms of unbelief and the reefs of infidelity."

Our writer sums up his point: "As a fundamentalist I believe in a supernatural Christianity which presents a supernatural Christ who had a supernatural birth, who lived a supernatural life, who died a supernatural death, who rose in a supernatural resurrection, and who is coming again in a supernatural manner. Rejection, then, of the Virgin Birth is an attack on the supernaturalness of Christ. Of Christ's wondrous birth, human incredulity questions, 'How shall this be?' Divine inspiration answers, 'With God all things are possible.' When human impotence bows to that answer of divine omnipotence the miracle of the Virgin Birth can be whole-heartedly accepted. He who questions the virgin birth challenges the almightiness of God. To discredit the virgin birth is not only to strike at the nature of Christ but at the very power of God."

Amen to his impassioned cry for belief in the supernatural. But did you notice his passing reference to the origin of Jesus: "*At His birth our Lord Jesus Christ did not begin to exist.*" And how he slipped in the word "incarnation"?

We encourage our readers to become thoughtful investigators of the statement above: "At His birth our Lord Jesus Christ did not begin to exist." Behind this claim of course lies the conviction that the Son of God *had no beginning*, that he was "eternally begotten." Believers in a Jesus who has *always* existed commit themselves to a serious contradiction. On the one hand they claim that the Son was miraculously begotten. On the other they say that he had no beginning, but has existed as the Son of God from eternity. That the Son is as old as his Father. That the Son is an integral part of the Godhead, and is without beginning.

So deeply written into our collective "church" DNA is this conviction, and buttressed as it is by centuries of creed-reciting, hymns and indoctrination that when an opposite point of view is presented it is liable to immediate rejection without careful investigation. Rare is the person who like Greg Deuble, author of the outstanding book *They Never Told Me THIS in Church* (available from [www.restorationfellowship.org](http://www.restorationfellowship.org) or 800-347-4261), prayed "O God, if I am deceived, please undeceive me, and give me the courage to follow through on what I find."

Any difficulty about the "begetting" of Jesus the Son of God, and when it happened, can be laid to rest easily. Matthew 1 introduces his teaching about the origin (= genesis) of Jesus with some forty "begettings." Jesus is as clearly as Matthew can say rooted in the human genealogical chain. The Son is no visitor from space, no intruder from a category of existence other than human. What is special is the means of his *coming into existence*. It is by supernatural creative miracle, as initiating the new creation. Matthew 1:20 informs us that the begetting (= the coming into existence) of the Son of God is in the womb of Mary. Luke is even clearer: He wants us to grasp with clarity the basis on which Jesus is entitled to be rightly named the Son of God. It is precisely because of (*dio kai*) the intervention of God to cause Mary's pregnancy by miracle (Luke 1:35). Some 2000 years ago the Son of God was brought into existence, begotten, which means of course that he was not *already* in existence! You cannot exist and then come into existence. ✧

## Which Stream Are You Drinking From? By Peter Barfoot, Australia

There's an old bush saying: "Never drink downstream from where others are camping." But when drinking upstream from others we are unaware that others are camped further upstream from us. Likewise, as we seek to preserve our theological purity we may be unaware of the influence on our beliefs of ancient Greek philosophy. Could it be that our beliefs, and those of the great reformers, and even those of the first post-biblical "Church Fathers," are more polluted than we know?

So many different denominations have camped upstream from us in history that the doctrinal purity of the stream we now drink from is questionable. Yet we sense that if we could find the *biblical* source of the stream we could drink from it with confidence and comfort.

Many years ago, on a hot summer's day, my family and I traced our local creek upstream into the tall timber of a state forest. There we parked our car and on foot traced it even further up a mountain range, until it was little more than a trickle. Our search ended at a moss-covered pond fed by a spring. We had found the source of the stream that wound its way down into a river which flowed into a greater river that lost itself in the ocean.

Just as we traced the source of the stream we drank from, we can also trace the source of our beliefs. In so doing we should find that the closer to the source we get, the purer the truth should become; until at last we are able to drink from the pure, sweet spring of New Testament and, as background, Old Testament truth.

The spiritual river that "makes glad the city of God" (Ps. 46:4) is clear and pure, and streams God's unfailing

love and mercy to His people. It has no tributaries, yet its depth and flow are constant, and its downstream supply is as pure as its upstream source.

Not so the theological river successive church leaders drank from in the early years of the Church. Clement, Origen and Athanasius, all of Alexandria, Justin Martyr of Samaria, and Tertullian imbibed the teachings of Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, and so polluted the doctrines taught by the apostles of Christ. Those downstream from them in time incorporated into their creeds the ideas of those pagan Greek philosophers.

It was Athanasius who at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD urged Constantine the Great to accept the Nicene Creed. The Roman Emperor presided over the opening of the historic event and closely monitored the proceedings. Although Constantine treated the bishops with respect they well knew that he favored the idea of a preexistent “God the Son” who was eternally co-equal with God the Father. They also knew that their stamp of agreement would encourage the emperor’s support for the Church.

The elevation of Jesus the Messiah to Divinity severed the last remaining ties between Judaism and Christianity. No observant Jew, instructed since childhood in the Law of Moses, would accept that the One God of Israel was now to be worshipped as two divine Persons. At the Council of Constantinople (381 AD) the concept of the Holy Spirit as “the third member of the Trinity” was added, and the One God became three Persons. The Council of Chalcedon (451 AD) clarified and reaffirmed the decisions of previous councils, and from then on the scattered Jews, demonized as “God-killers,” were persecuted throughout Christendom. And so were those Christians who never accepted a triune God.

Meanwhile in the Church itself Hellenistic ideas had long blended with the tradition of the church fathers to produce a religious entity the apostles would never have called Christian. After the fall of the pagan Roman Empire the papal Roman Empire rose in its place. The world must have marveled at such a miraculous recovery! What the city of Alexandria had been to the East the revived city of Rome was to the West. Religion and politics had embraced, and their union would thereafter be known as Christendom. The question then was, and still is, whether those who are known by Christ’s name should drink from a polluted stream of pagan philosophy?

The answer is, No. Not when we can drink from the pure stream of prophetic promise. That stream has its source in God’s covenant with Abraham, a covenant later confirmed with Isaac and later again with Jacob. From His heavenly viewpoint God usually begins by referring to the promises made by Him to Abraham.

“And God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. And God looked upon the children of Israel, and God knew them” (Exod. 2:24). He recognized them! God had confirmed the covenant with an oath (Deut. 7:8). To this day Israel is “beloved for the fathers’ sake” — for the sake of the covenant God made with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Rom. 11:28). Yet the majority of national Israel has rejected its own Abrahamic promises in Messiah Jesus. In Leviticus 26:42 God does not follow the prophetic river of promise downstream, but instead traces it back upstream to its source: “Then I will remember my covenant with Jacob, and also my covenant with Isaac, and I will also remember my covenant with Abraham; and I will remember the land.”

Zacharias, the father of John the Baptist, traces the source of the stream to Abraham in his song of praise: “That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us; to perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember His holy covenant; the oath that He swore to our father Abraham” (Luke 1:71-73). Zacharias began with the promise of his people’s salvation and traced the prophetic river of promise upstream to the mercy promised by God to his fathers, and beyond that to its very source: the oath of the covenant.

Since Abraham is “the father of all those who believe” — not only of Jews but also of non-Jews — all who “walk in the steps” of Abraham (that is, in his faith) are now “Abraham’s descendants, and heirs according to the promise” (Rom. 4:11; Gal. 3:29). If this isn’t the WOW Factor, what is?

What does it mean to be a “son” or “daughter” of Abraham? When the dodgy tax gatherer Zacchaeus pledged to give half of his possessions to the poor, and to restore anything he had taken by false accusation — a statement of repentance and restitution — Jesus called him a “son of Abraham” who had been lost but was now saved (Luke 19:9-10). Only in Christ did he regain his spiritual status.

When the ruler of a synagogue was angry with Jesus for his Sabbath day healing of a woman who had been bent double for 18 years, Jesus called him a hypocrite. “Does not each one of you on the Sabbath loose his ox or his ass from the stall, and lead it to water? And ought not this woman, being a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for 18 long years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?” (Luke 13:15-16).

Jesus identified Zacchaeus as a “son of Abraham” and the woman as a “daughter of Abraham.” The first was saved and the second healed! Jesus described healing as “the children’s bread” (Matt. 15:26). Some who called Abraham their father showed they were not

his true descendants at all by wanting to kill Jesus (John 8:33-40).

Are you drinking this in? As a son or daughter of Abraham by faith in Jesus Christ (Gal. 3:29; 6:16; Phil. 3:3), you should be! Why would you drink downstream from pagan philosophy polluted by doctrines of doubt and unbelief, when you can drink from a pure stream of prophetic promise to Abraham and to Christ his seed?

Trace your belief stream back to its source, and if that source is pagan philosophy — stop drinking from it! The effects downstream on those who drink from a river indicate whether or not it has been polluted upstream.

There is such a contrast between the polluted stream of ancient Greek philosophy and the pure stream of prophetic promise that it's not all that difficult to spot the difference. The polluted stream has us in heaven in gowns, sitting on clouds and strumming harps; whereas the pure stream has us on a renewed earth, enjoying our kingdom inheritance with Abraham (Matt. 5:5; Rom. 4:13). The polluted stream would have us loathe the physical body and seek escape from it into an ethereal spiritual dimension, in a hazy life after life; whereas the pure stream brings the hope of the resurrection of the body, of life after death, and of a tangible immortality. The polluted stream would have us escape from the problems of life into unending personal bliss; whereas the pure stream renews our lives so that we can be a blessing to everyone we meet.

If your church teaches the polluted doctrines of ancient Greek philosophy, search out one that proclaims God's prophetic promises. This may take some time, though, since pure beliefs these days seem to be in short supply. ✧

## The Problem of Pagan Inheritance in Our Spiritual DNA

Rethinking our understanding of the Bible is painful but very necessary if we are going to gain the hearty approval of Jesus and hear those exciting words: “Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter your master's joy” (Matt. 25:23; Luke 19:17).

One of the most extensively confirmed errors of modern churchgoers, based on centuries of misleading instruction, is the notion that when we die, we go as a *soul without a body* straight to heaven or hell. “Heaven” holds its vice-like grip on our minds because of indoctrination, from sermon and hymn, from teachers perceived as reliable witnesses. This has happened for many from very early youth. But Jesus never offered “heaven” as the reward of the faithful. He spoke of the land/earth and the Kingdom as the Christian hope (Matt. 5:5; Rev. 5:10; Luke 6:20).

There is a mass of clear teaching from commentary on the history of doctrine and commentary on the text of the Bible which confirms what has been said by

countless scholars of the Bible: “Heaven in the Bible is never used for the destination of the dying” (Dr. J.A.T. Robinson of Cambridge). “No biblical text authorizes the statement that the soul [i.e. as a disembodied conscious person] is separated from the body at the moment of death” (*Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, Vol. 1, p. 802). “No passage speaks of any immortality of the soul, which is not a biblical doctrine at all” (Dr. Norman Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, p. 89).

To examine the issue thoroughly some of our readers would find of great interest the two fine volumes by Edwin Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of Our Fathers*. Especially if one is teaching on these essential framework doctrines of the Christian faith, some good reading is essential. For others it will I hope be sufficient to point out the simplicity of what God has graciously revealed in Scripture about our human condition the moment we die. I take it for granted that honest seekers for truth will not be persuaded by the fantastic, imaginative accounts of “journeys to heaven or hell” or of tunnels of light or welcoming angels, as reported by some, who make good money writing books about their own firsthand experience of what they call “life after death.” The issue however is this: Were they really dead? Have they reckoned with the amazing tricks of the brain when put into extreme conditions? And most importantly, do these popular accounts of “life after death” contradict the Bible? Or are they really just a legacy of our paganized forms of faith?

I suggest that the Bible is contradicted when it is maintained that either Jesus (for three days) or the dead are now conscious, i.e., alive when dead! I also warn that if one has been long a proponent of instant life in heaven the moment we die, if one has actually preached funeral sermons advocating the conscious existence of a post-mortem soul, then a change of mind will be a challenge indeed. I know this from countless correspondents who have expressed how hard it was for them to give up the Platonism of the immortal soul surviving death and come on board with Jesus and his very different understanding of what happens when we die. (Our booklet by that title, reflecting a long minor tradition from the Reformation and earlier, is available at 800-347-4261 or [www.restorationfellowship.org](http://www.restorationfellowship.org))

Imagine that Jesus might ask: What did you understand by Hebrew Scripture (on which of course Jesus was raised from childhood, Luke 24:44) when it announced this very simple proposition to you? “This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that the same event happens to all. Also, the hearts of the children of man are full of evil, and madness is in their hearts while they live, and after that they go to the dead. But he who is joined with all the living has hope, for a living dog is better than a dead lion. **For the living know that they**

**will die, but the dead know nothing**, and they have no more reward, for the memory of them is forgotten. Their love and their hate and their envy have already perished, and forever they have *no more share in all that is done under the sun*...Enjoy life with the wife whom you love, all the days of your vain life that he has given you under the sun, because that is your portion in life and in your toil at which you toil under the sun...Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with your might, **for there is no work or thought or knowledge or wisdom in Sheol, to which you are going**" (Ecclesiastes 9:3-10).

How starkly different this is from the popular preaching that the dead are now "polishing rainbows" in heaven or "tending heavenly gardens."

This passage from Ecclesiastes expresses exactly the view of death found throughout the Hebrew Bible. It is a state of non-consciousness and the dead are all in Sheol (Greek *Hades*), the unseen world of the dead. A famous prophecy in Daniel 12:2 describes where the dead are and from where they emerge when the great resurrection day, the day of Jesus' future return to the earth, dawns. Daniel 12:2 tells us with magnificent clarity and simplicity that the dead will be sleeping in the dust of the ground. Note that it says that dead people are doing this, not just their bodies. Bodies don't sleep; people do. Jesus gave a striking confirmation of this view when he said "Lazarus is dead" and "Lazarus is sleeping." He then proposed to wake Lazarus up from his sleep of death (John 11:11, 14). The mind of a child, recommended by Jesus, accepts this priceless truth.

The proper method for establishing the truth of the Bible is to build one's base in the *Hebrew Bible*. It is this insight which enables Bible readers to see that the expected Messiah, Son of God, was never in the Old Testament said to be a second member of a Trinity. The Trinity was nowhere to be found in the Hebrew Bible, since none of its thousands of occurrences of the words for "God" ever meant a triune God.

Yes, there are New Testament teachings which remained veiled until the Greek New Testament Scripture came into existence, but the doctrine of the nature of man and what happens to him when he dies is not one of those. The doctrine of the state of the dead is clearly stated in the verses we have just read and with equal clarity in Psalm 115:17: "The dead do not praise the Lord, nor any who go down into silence." Man's "spirit departs; **he** returns to the earth ["to dust **you** will return"]. In that day his thoughts perish" (Ps. 146:4). (For a complete list please see our *Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus*, Appendix 2, p. 237.)

Resurrection is the only event which brings us back from death to life. This is made clear in scores of New Testament verses also. Paul made every effort to explain how and when we get to be "with the Lord." It should be obvious that until that moment comes, we are not

literally with the Lord. You cannot be with the Lord and not with the Lord at the same time! Here is the teaching of Paul:

"But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those *who are asleep* [= Dan. 12:2], that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. *For this we declare* to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who *are sleeping*. [The Greek implies that they are still asleep.] For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And **the dead** in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together [the so-called "rapture," which occurs "immediately after — **post** — the [great] tribulation of those days" (Matt. 24:29)] with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and **so we will always be with the Lord**. Therefore encourage one another with these words" (1 Thess. 4:13-18).

Paul describes how it is that Jesus brings the saints with him. Not a word is said about bringing them with him *from heaven*! Paul states here as everywhere else that he is talking about the dead who are sleeping. How is Jesus going to have them accompany him? He explains: "The Lord will descend. The dead in Christ will rise first." Note that he does *not* say that the dead *are coming down from heaven*. Yes, Jesus is going to lead them in triumph. They are going to accompany him but only after they, sleeping dead persons, rise *first*. They come up first from the grave and go up to meet the descending Lord in order to accompany the descending Lord who will be on his way to the earth. Distinguished visitors are welcomed by their devotees in this way.

Paul concludes his important discourse by pointing out that it is "in this manner," "by this procedure" that we will always be with the Lord. By no other means can eternal life be achieved. It is very unwise to contradict Paul here and the rest of the Bible by making him say that the dead are coming from heaven *before* being resurrected from their sleep of death.

Luke is equally clear that the faithful will be rewarded. When? "At the resurrection of the just," "when the upright come back from the dead" (Luke 14:14, BBE). That is crystal clear. A golden text. Luke says the same thing in 20:35-36 where the faithful are sons or products of the future resurrection which will introduce them to "that [well-known] age." There are no rewards *before* the resurrection of the dead — no rewards before Jesus comes back. Jesus brings his rewards *with* him: "Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev. 22:12).

To imagine a person in a blessed conscious state in “heaven” *before* the return of Jesus is to sabotage God’s clear program for immortality. In Hebrew, not Greek pagan ways of thinking, the whole man dies and the whole man comes back from death. To advocate the Platonic idea that we are bipartite and contain within us a “part” which is immortal and cannot die, is to succumb to a dangerous element of paganism, found in many of the world religions. It crept also into what we know as Christianity. The same Platonic influence promoted the conscious existence of preexisting souls and eventually altered the whole biblical point of view on the human Jesus who was, after Bible times, imagined as preexisting before Genesis and later as preexisting from eternity. The same paganism which ruined the clear doctrine of God and Jesus also interfered with Christian hope and what we are to believe about the future and our destiny.

No one except Jesus has gone to heaven. “They *all* died not having received the promise” (Heb. 11:13, 39) of inheriting the land of promise (v. 9), the Kingdom of God on earth. This will happen when Jesus comes back, after the future great tribulation (Matt. 24:29), “to grant rest along with us to you who are undergoing afflictions, [when?] at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power, when he comes to be glorified among his holy ones and to be marveled at on that day among all who have believed, for our testimony to you was believed” (2 Thess. 1:7-10).

That is clear enough. The great day of resurrection and the return of Jesus is the single moment of glory marked out for the future of the faithful. It is unwise to deflect attention in any way from that stupendous moment.

Jesus was in the grave or as graphically described as the region of the dead, in “the heart of the earth” (certainly not in heaven, so he did not go immediately to heaven at death). He was put to death on the preparation day, which in the language of the day meant Friday, and he rose three days later on Sunday. It was on that “third day” from Friday that the disciples hoped he would reappear (Luke 24:21). Sunday is indeed the third day since the crucifixion, which was the topic of discussion in that passage in Luke 24. Luke had earlier described events from the preparation (Friday) for Sabbath day (Saturday), followed by Sunday, the first day of the week, as the next day (see Luke 23:54-24:1).

Peter takes up the same story in 1 Peter 3:18: “Jesus was put to death in the flesh [as a human mortal person], and made alive in the spirit.” If one has been taught the

Platonic scheme, one may imagine that being “made alive in the spirit” refers to a disembodied condition the moment he died. This is positively not the case. One has only to do a little word study on the phrase “made alive” to see that it refers invariably to resurrection, the return of the whole man to life as a resurrected person (1 Cor. 15:22, 36; John 5:21; Rom. 4:17; 2 Cor. 3:6; Ps. 71:20; Rev. 20:5). Jesus was dead for three days, inactive as are all dead persons, including Mary and so-called “saints.” In his new resurrection condition Jesus went and announced his triumph to demonic spirits (spirits are not human persons) who were disobedient at the time leading up to the flood (see Gen. 6:1-6, Jude 6 and 2 Pet. 2:4).

Finally we see “beheaded” people and others sitting on thrones active in the future Kingdom in which they are given “power over the nations” (Rev. 2:26; 5:10; Dan. 7:18, 22, 17). We note that at that future time, at the seventh trumpet which will mark the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:52; 1 Thess. 4:13-17), these persons “come to life and begin to reign” (Rev. 20:4). It is perfectly obvious that they cannot come to life if they are already alive!

This should put to rest the very confusing teaching that human persons are already alive as “souls,” either in heaven or hell. Antedating the *real* coming to life of the dead is a blight on the clear system and program God has revealed to us. And of course the one “parable” in Luke 16 about Lazarus and the rich man should never be used to overturn the remainder of the evidence. Lazarus and the rich man are anyway in the picture not disembodied souls, and so the story lends no support at all to any teaching about a conscious “intermediate” state at the moment of death. ✧

## Comments

“The problem facing the world of churches is that Trinitarians have taught earnest truth-seekers the ‘proper, theologically correct’ way to understand John 1:1, etc. The truth-seeker sees the modern English versions there which *seem* to support the concept of a preexistent Divine Son Jesus. Then he is forced to bend all passages about ‘one Lord God’ and the Father being God alone, by Himself, to match the distorted view of John 1:1. It is important to understand the cycle in which sincere Trinitarians are trapped. They are already distracted by the internal noise of an automatic rebuttal. They have been conditioned to say ‘Jesus is God,’ not realizing that this commits them to belief in two Gods. The deceptive cycle must be broken, with persistence, patience, and understanding. Such arguments as, How could God have allowed all of the modern translations to incorrectly represent John 1:1? are common. The appropriate reply: How could God have allowed (correctly) all eight English translations, *prior to the*

*KJV*, to represent the logos ('word,' John 1:1) as *it* and not *him*? Did God really not deliver the only 'true translation' until 1611, in English, about sixteen centuries after Jesus' ministry on earth?" — *Arkansas*

"I had felt in my heart nagging questions about Deity. Something did not fit and so I decided I would look for myself and see what the Scriptures had to say, and when I was done I figured Jesus was an incredible man, the king of Israel, the Messiah, my brother. I looked to find if others felt the same and I came across your site or sites that referenced you and received the books." — *Washington*

"I just wanted to write to thank you for your books and website. I have been on a journey the past ten years that has changed my beliefs and perspectives greatly. I was raised Catholic, converted to ELCA Lutheranism in order to marry my wife, then switched to independent conservative Lutheranism, then to Baptist, and finally to freedom! It has been several years now since my wife and I left the Baptist Church we were attending because, when compared to what we were reading in the Bible, the preachings and teachings of that church just did not seem in synch with God's Scripture. After much prayer and reading we came to believe in some things we never even heard of before...God is truly one and not three and that death actually means dying. It was quite a journey. So I hope you understand how grateful I was when I discovered your website and read some of your books! I had actually found someone who believes many of the things I had learned! Thank God the Almighty!" — *Minnesota*

"It isn't enough merely to *believe* in anything. We must convert belief into practice, and practice into experience. How are we to accomplish this? By **meditation**, by communion with God, by the practice of yoga. These things are necessary. That is not to say that people who are not yogis cannot find God. Many have found Him. Yet no man ever found Him who did not set aside some time daily to commune with Him. Yoga is recommended because it facilitates that communion." — Swami Kriyananda, author of *Meditation for Starters*

*Editor's response:* We agree very much that internalizing truth is important, but it needs to be saving truth! The Gospel words of Jesus and Paul and the other New Testament writers are the only words which will have the desired result, that is, a true communion with the only true God, who is the God of Israel and of the Bible and of Jesus. It is fine to meditate, but what is the content of that meditation? Only the words of Jesus are the "spirit and life" (John 6:63). There are lots of other misleading spirits beckoning you to meditate on them.

## **The Tyranny of the Trinity**

*New book argues that Jesus is not God and the Trinity is false*

In her new book, *The Tyranny of the Trinity: The Orthodox Cover-up* (published by AuthorHouse), P.R. Lackey argues that modern Christianity is based on fallacious theology — that Jesus is God — an idea found not in the New Testament, but established by a vote at the Council of Nicea in 325 AD and Chalcedon in 451 AD. Lackey explains that the deification of Jesus strays from the central creed of Jesus and the Bible that God is a single Divine Personality and robs Christians both of logic and sound faith in Scripture.

For 1,700 years the Trinity has been considered the cornerstone of Christianity by all mainstream churches. But the Bible's words for God, appearing thousands of times, never mean a triune God. The concept of the Trinity has been taught to churchgoers based solely on implication and inference. The truth is, the Scriptures don't support the doctrine of the Trinity, but it has been indoctrinated into the minds of otherwise intelligent and well-educated Christians, and perpetuated as a "mystery" not meant to be understood. The majority of Christians have not bothered to investigate the doctrine for themselves, and consequently have been duped. Far too many Christians attend church with the attitude: "Tell me, pastor, what do I believe today?"

Lackey expresses her resentment at being accused of being a heretic and non-Christian, and being condemned to hell because of her strong belief in the human Jesus, the Messiah and Son of God and not the One True God. Lackey sees the Trinity as a blight on the true Christianity taught by Jesus Christ for the benefit of humanity, and feels Trinitarian Christians have traded Hebrew theology for Greek mythology with barely a question asked. She further contends that the majority of Christians believe in the Trinity primarily because they are expected to. Not to accept this dogma would place them under condemnation from both their brethren and the clergy. Lackey invites churchgoers everywhere to consider that they may have been drawn into a thinly veiled polytheism, or a belief in more than one God.

[www.thetyrannyofthetrinity.com](http://www.thetyrannyofthetrinity.com)

## **To God Be the Glory Examining the Bible View of God by Joel Hemphill**

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