

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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2011 Theological Conference 20th Anniversary Conference Thurs-Sun, May 12-15, 2011

This 20th annual conference at Simpsonwood Retreat Center promises to be an outstanding gathering of lovers of the Abrahamic faith and the Kingdom Gospel of Jesus, the Messiah. We are delighted to report that we will have a number of visitors and speakers from overseas — Australia, Germany, South Africa and England. The word of the Kingdom and the creed of Jesus are making an impact on a daily and ever-growing scale, thanks to books going out, in several languages, weekly at Amazon, and the astonishing power of the many websites now making the faith known to a potential of some 2 billion people. The increase in getting the message out is a constant source of joy. What a marvel is this amazing Internet.

Do take the time to spend these few days and encourage especially those who are new to the Abrahamic circle. Robin Todd will be with us to keep us posted of the fruit borne by his fine efforts to unite scattered believers. Small home fellowships are beginning to emerge, with a Restorationist flavor, as they recapture the vision of the Kingdom of God Gospel of Jesus and the ancient unitarian heritage which Jesus proclaimed as the “greatest of all the commandments.”

There is a worldwide dearth of hearing the Gospel as Jesus defined it and preached it. It is about the coming Kingdom, and its impact when fully embraced and made the center of our efforts (cp. Luke 4:43) still transforms lives and energizes. Paul described the Gospel as “the word which is energetic and active in you” (1 Thess. 2:13).

You will enjoy meeting familiar conference participants, and you will meet new family in the faith. How important it is not to “forsake gathering together.” We are responsible to each other not to sit on “islands” and operate as soloists. We must not forget that Christianity is to be done corporately. We will all learn much from what we hear and experience at the Conference. Please do not underestimate the joy you bring to others by attending. We will also celebrate the 20th anniversary with a special communion service.

To register please call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261 or 678-833-1839 or mail the form on the back page by **April 18**. The non-refundable deposit is \$50 per individual or couple.

Registration deadline: April 18

Conference Cost

Includes 3 nights, all meals, snacks, conf. fee, and tax

Single	NEW Couple Rate	Double (per person)	Triple (per person)	Quad (per person)
\$340	\$505 per couple	\$260	\$245	\$230

Transportation (Judy: 678-485-8492)

We will provide transportation between Atlanta airport and Simpsonwood for \$25 round-trip or \$15 one-way, at the following times:

Airport to Simpsonwood		
Thurs, May 12	1:00 pm	3:30 pm
Simpsonwood to Airport		
Sun., May 15	1:00 pm	

Please arrange your arrival time on Thursday early enough to catch one of the two shuttle runs. On Sunday, May 15, we will provide 1 shuttle run. In order to allow you enough time to catch your return flight, we suggest you **not book your return flight prior to 3:30 p.m.**

The conference begins with registration at 4 pm on Thursday and ends with lunch on Sunday. Driving directions to Simpsonwood Conference Center are at www.simpsonwood.org The address is 4511 Jones Bridge Circle NW, Norcross, GA 30092.

Post-conference Class

Anthony Buzzard will teach “The Titanic Struggle over Defining God, His Son and the Kingdom” from Sunday afternoon, May 15 to Tuesday, May 17. The cost for the class is \$179 for credit or \$75 for continuing education. The total cost for room/meals at Simpsonwood for Sunday and Monday nights is \$214 single, \$160 double (per person). Please call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261 or 678-833-1839 before **April 18** to register.

A New Video at YouTube

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtGhv6O_Eps

Jordan Day invited me to sit down and discuss some of the basics of Bible theology. I requested that he put a disclaimer to explain that being at his site does not imply agreement with his viewpoints. Enjoy, and add your comments to the discussion. Is the proposition “The Lord our God is one Lord” so hard? How many lords? One, not two or three. The Seventh-Day Adventists, 20 million of them, recently declared that “1+1+1=1.” They called this the “keystone” of their theology. Are our hearts

stirred with concern that this sort of theology might not be doing them any good?

Ponder that amazing proposition carefully, that $1+1+1=1$, and ask yourself whether we are supposed to believe impossible things? Are Jesus and God pleased with such blatant disturbances of God's jealous position as "the only one who is True God"? (John 17:3).

$1+1+1$ is actually 3, and 3 might be a dangerous number when counting how many God is. Many scholars have expressed concern that the traditional view of God as three in one might qualify as tritheism (paganism). ✧

Nicaragua

We came back to an (exceptionally) snowy, freezing Atlanta after two weeks of Gospel of the Kingdom teaching in Nicaragua. Our local colleague in Managua, the capital, is Alex Davila who has made strenuous efforts to promote the faith in his country. This included putting up three large banners to advertise our seminar on the Kingdom, with Acts 8:12 as the text proclaiming the simplicity of the faith of Abraham. This is a verse known to practically no one, but it states in the clearest terms what early believers expected of their candidates for baptism. An intelligent reception of God's great world-plan for restoring the Kingdom lost in Adam was essential information required of potential church members. People needed first to understand the program for immortality before they got on board with it and began the journey "through much tribulation" to the Kingdom (Acts 14:22).

About 50 fine Nicaraguans showed up at the hotel space rented for the evening. The crowd was small enough for me to dispense with microphone and hold an extended classroom discussion on the basics of Bible teaching. The audiences, here and in various other settings (Pentecostal-type churches), were attentive as well as clearly unfamiliar with the Gospel of the Kingdom. This gave me the opportunity to explain that the Protestant heritage from Luther was responsible for the surprising lack of grasp by most, that the Kingdom was and is the heart and core of everything Jesus proclaimed as saving Gospel (Heb. 2:3).

God is not worshiped properly outside of "spirit and truth" and the Gospel of the Kingdom is the center of truth as Jesus taught it. The words of Jesus "are spirit and truth" — not the unfortunate antics found in some Pentecostal churches where substance has been replaced by the spectacular.

Please remember to pray for the little group there. Raquel and her husband Guillermo (William) and then his son Guillermo (2), and a number of others. We baptized 5 into the faith at a beach, and they are determined to continue "through much tribulation" on the journey to the Kingdom (Acts 8:12; 14:22).

One of the least tolerable features of some of the Nicaraguan Pentecostal churches was the unbearable, if not actually dangerous level of amplified music. One wonders if they have realized that Paul had none of these "entertaining" additions to his hours of teaching. The great danger especially in "Pentecostal" settings is that music is substituted for substance. Could it be that the cry of Hosea applies to our present times? "People are destroyed for lack of knowledge." They certainly do not lack shiny sets of drums and giant loud-speakers. But what is the solid content of the preaching and instruction offered to the public? Do they realize that Paul spent sometimes 3 months discoursing on the Kingdom of God, using the OT as his written source? (Acts 19:8). And do they know that Jesus taught for hours every morning in the temple? Do they know that Jesus was a rabbi as well as our lord (John 13:13)?

We found people hungry for information. Sometimes three-hour sessions included all the 8 Kingdom verses in Acts or the material in Daniel 7. It is fun doing this, since most of the audience do not know this material, and thus the teacher is never out of a job! I invited audiences to consider that it is possible in "church" to deceive people in large groups. How do you get millions of intelligent folk to believe that God has several wives and that God was a man before he became God? How are people persuaded in their millions that when Jesus comes back for the millennium Satan alone will be on the earth with no human persons present?! (Seventh-Day Adventists). How do a billion believers arrive at the conviction that Mary was sinless, never had normal relations with Joseph and was taken physically to heaven when she died? What about convincing millions that Jesus is actually Michael the Archangel? (Daniel refers to Michael as both "one of the angels" and "the great angel," LXX.) Or another billion bright people that Jesus is the Messiah, and virginally begotten, but did *not* die on the cross and is *not* God's Son! All this suggests that there is a massive power of deception in religion. Now turn the finger to ourselves. Where are we mistaken due to wrong teaching? Is it credible that there is no Devil external to man? Is it fair to say that "demons" in the Bible do not mean demons? Surely it is these systematic errors which we all need to purge from our belief systems, lest Jesus be disappointed with our various forms of badly worked out "doctrines." Is it in the long run tolerable to be divided on whether Jesus really is human, or did he in fact arrive from another world and get transformed into a human being? Would he then really be human?

A preexisting Jesus can only arise when we give him a double origin (can one really begin to exist *twice*?). Is not this fatal "dividing into two" the cause of so much confusion in Christendom? What about the so-called two levels of believers in the church — the 144,000 special

ones as distinct from the rest? Or those who claim the so-called “baptism in the spirit” and those who don’t? What about the double second coming which posits a secret coming at any moment? Did not Jesus in fact tell us all that he will return “immediately POST (after)” (Matt. 24:29) the cosmic signs which introduce his second coming? There is no possible way of fitting a pre-tribulation rapture into God’s scheme as announced by Jesus. Yet people cling to these ideas, often without careful examination. The danger is that we just stick to “whatever” we first learned, and the Berean attitude is rendered null and void.

One of the shocking things we encountered was the so-called “slaying in the spirit” practiced by some. This involves asking people to slump backwards “under the power.” Yes, but what power? Jesus never did this to people who were his friends (his enemies did retreat from him and fall on one occasion: John 18:6).✧

Luke 8:12

Opinions and ideologies abound in our world. Often we hear the statement that there are many ways to God. But for Jesus the preaching of the Kingdom was revelation of a unique message, not one opinion among many in a melting pot of ideas. This portion of Luke highlights the centrality of the word of the kingdom for Jesus. The parable of the seed contains a mystery, one which disciples have the privilege to behold while outsiders are blinded and unable to see its truth. Such revelation is like light, illuminating the way to God. In fact, Jesus indicates that being related to him is a matter of responding to the message he preaches. The parable of the seed indicates the variety of responses to the word Jesus sows in his preaching (see Isa. 55:10-11 on God’s word as a seed). Not everyone embraces his message, but those who do yield a life of fruitfulness that honors God. For Jesus, the Kingdom message is special and unique. To heed it is to find blessing.

The picture of the word as seed is important. Often we think of evangelism and preaching as something that happens in an instant. But the picture of a seed makes us think of a farmer who prepares the ground, sows seed, waters and then must wait for the crop. Producing a crop is a process over time. Often the message of the word, too, takes time to bear fruit.

A correspondent wrote to us: “I have been thinking recently along the lines of your Kingdom/word/Gospel/seed. The corresponding verses in the three gospels seem indeed to define the word (sown seed) as the Gospel of the Kingdom. It seems perplexing to me now that anyone could read the gospel as preached by Jesus and not see the tremendous emphasis on what he tried to communicate to the people. He seemed to be obsessed with this message. I can only testify to the way my own eyes seemed to open (with a lot of confusing

interpretations thrown aside) when I saw this. It is so simple that it staggers me how easy it is to understand. I used to wonder about what it really means to be ‘born again.’ But it seems to me now that our minds and thus our hearts are renewed with truth. So very much of Christendom is almost deliberately complicated so as to render most of us helpless if we don’t see its utter simplicity. The entire 13th chapter of Matthew appears to say, Don’t misunderstand this message about the Kingdom. It is also so much easier for me to witness to others. Simply tell them about the Kingdom and show how Jesus was the promised Messiah from page 2 of the Bible. He was God’s Christ. It took me a while to understand why you kept emphasizing this “Kingdom thing.” I believe I now understand. If the Kingdom is not understood then nothing else one learns from the Bible will be much of a life-changing benefit. If this is what it means to be born again, then surely the Kingdom Gospel is the only ‘incorruptible seed.’”

This comment from a reader of *Focus on the Kingdom* highlights the important point that the seed Gospel of the Kingdom is indeed the seed of incorruptibility/immortality. Did not Paul tell us that immortality was brought to light by the Gospel (2 Tim. 1:10)? He was thinking, as was Peter, of the seed Gospel of the Kingdom which Jesus proclaimed as he announced the secret of immortality. No wonder that Jesus “used to raise his voice” (Luke 8:8) when he unpacked the parable of the sower.

With Luke’s usual brilliance, he gave us one of the most staggering verses of all Scripture: **“When anyone hears the word [of the Kingdom, Matt. 13:19] the Devil is there to snatch away the word which has been sown [the seed of immortality/incorruption] in his heart [mind] so that he cannot believe it and be saved [gain immortality]”** (Luke 8:12). Could any verse in the Bible be so explosively significant? In that one verse we have seven key words: Those who hear, word, heart, the Devil, sown [seed], believe, **be saved**. Isn’t Jesus here announcing to us all that we must be saved by listening to his amazing Gospel of the Kingdom? Luke 8:12 (compare Acts 8:12 for equally concentrated information) contains so many high-tension words, including the Devil, the word [of the Kingdom] and being saved = gaining immortality.

But do Bible readers listen to these words of Jesus or have they been misled into believing that the teaching/Gospel preaching of Jesus is not really relevant: all that counts is believing he died and rose? This seems to me to be the ground fallacy of much popular evangelism. This widespread lack of Kingdom language can be measured by the almost entire absence of the phrase most often on Jesus’ lips: **Gospel of the**

Kingdom. Could it be that there is lots of “church” but rather little of Jesus as saving Gospel preacher?

More on Luke 8:12

From Robertson’s Word Pictures: “**Luke 8:12:** Those by the wayside (*hoi para tên hodon*). As in Mk 4:15; Mt 13:19 so here the people who hear **the word = the seed** are discussed by metonymy. **The Devil** (*ho diabolos*). The slanderer. Here Mark 4:15 has the **Satan. From their heart** (*apo tês kardias autôn*). Here Mark has “in them.” **It is the Devil’s business to snatch up the seed from the heart before it sprouts and takes root.** Every preacher knows [We suggest: most preachers do not even have the right seed!] how **successful the devil** is with his auditors. Mt 13:19 has it ‘**sown in the heart.**’

“**That they may not believe and be saved** (*hina mê pisteusantes sôthôsin*). **Peculiar to Luke.** Negative purpose with aorist active participle and first aorist (ingressive) passive subjunctive [i.e. that they may not believe **and embark** on salvation]. Many reasons are offered today for the failure of preachers to win souls. Here is the main one, **the activity of the Devil during and after the preaching of the sermon.** No wonder then that the sower must have good seed and sow wisely, for even then he can only win partial success.”

Matt. 13:19 defines the word as **word of the Kingdom.** Mark says “**sown in their heart.**”

BBE of **Mark 4:12:** “So that seeing they may see, and **it will not be clear to them;** and hearing it, **they will not get the sense; for fear that they may be turned again to me and have forgiveness.**”

To get the Kingdom clear, go to Dan 2:44, and 7:14, 18, 22, 27; Isa. 2 etc; and Micah 4:8 (cp. “Thy Kingdom come). Luke 19:11ff: the nobleman and the Kingdom. 2 Tim. 4:1: preach the word of the Kingdom.

“Heaven” at death makes the Kingdom unclear. The Kingdom comes at the 7th trumpet (Rev. 11:15-18) and it means an international group ruling with Christ (Rev. 2:26; 3:21 and **5:9, 10**).✧

The Vital Importance of the Creative Word

“**Word**” occurs **206 times in the New Testament.**

Here is some rich and informative background from the Hebrew Scripture:

^{SV} Deuteronomy 18:18: “I will raise them up a prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee; and **I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.**”

^{ASV} Malachi 2:6 (of the priests as they should have performed): “**The law of truth** was in his mouth, and unrighteousness was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and uprightness, and turned many away from iniquity.”

^{ASV} Isaiah 51:16: “And I have **put my words in thy mouth**, and have covered thee in the shadow of my hand, that I may plant the heavens, and lay the foundations of the earth, and say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”

^{NAU} Isaiah 59:21: “As for Me, this is My covenant with them,” says the LORD: “My **Spirit** which is upon you, and **My words** which I have put in your mouth shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring’s offspring,” says the LORD, “from now and forever.”

^{JPS} Zechariah 7:12: “Yes, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and **the words** which the LORD of hosts had sent by **His spirit** by the hand of the former prophets; therefore there came great wrath from the LORD of hosts.”

Other famous “word” texts:

^{NAB} John 6:63 “It is the spirit that gives life, while the flesh is of no avail. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life.”

^{BBE} 2 Samuel 23:2: “**The spirit** of the Lord had voice through me; **his word** was on my tongue.”

^{NAS} Proverbs 1:23: “Turn to my reproof; Behold, I will pour **out my spirit** on you; I will make **my words** known to you.”

^{LXE} Proverbs 1:23: “Behold, I will bring forth to you the **utterance of my breath**, and I will instruct you in my speech.”

^{IB} Job 26:4 “Who has helped you utter these words? And **whose spirit spoke** from your mouth?”

Definition of a teacher: “By preeminence used of Jesus of himself, as the one who showed men the way of salvation” (Matt. 23:8).

Professor Caird of Oxford on LOGOS in John 1:1: Show this to Your Friends

“How is John 1:1 to be translated? The solution is that *logos* for John primarily means ‘purpose.’ ‘In the beginning was the purpose, the purpose in the mind of God, the purpose which was God’s own being.’ It is surely a conceivable thought that God is wholly identified with His purpose of love and that this purpose took human form in Jesus of Nazareth.”¹

The Fatal Introduction in Post-Biblical Times of a New, Non-Human Jesus

Consider this bizarre description of a “Jesus” who comes into Mary from a preexistent life: “Do you not remember that I previously said to you that I became like an angel to the angels and we said to him, ‘Yes, Lord.’ And he said to us: at that time I appeared in the form of the archangel Gabriel to the virgin Mary and spoke with her and her heart received me and she laughed and **I, the Word, went into her and became flesh...**for

¹ *Theology*, p. 332.

you know this, that the angel Gabriel brought the message to Mary. We answered, 'Yes, Lord.' Then he answered and said to me, 'Do you not remember that a little while ago I told you: I became an angel among the angels. I became all things in everything.' We said to him, 'Yes, Lord.' Then he answered and said to us, 'On the day **that I took the form of the angel Gabriel** I appeared to Mary and spoke with her: her heart received me and believed. I formed myself and **entered into her womb**, for I alone was servant to myself in respect to Mary" (*Epistula Apostolorum*, Apocrypha, 150 AD).

Now note the corrective advice of a standard modern commentary showing how different was the "Jesus" of the second century from the Jesus of Luke's Gospel: "The idea of Incarnation is foreign to Luke, as to Matthew."²

Then this brilliant comment: "Later church tradition made something quite other out of Luke 1:35. Justin Martyr wrote, 'It is not right therefore to understand the Spirit and power of God [Luke 1:35] as anything else than the Word, who is the first-begotten of God' (Apology 1.33). In this interpretation the two expressions are being understood as the Third Person... **It is to be noted that there is no evidence here in the Lucan infancy narrative of Jesus' preexistence or Incarnation.** Luke's sole concern is to assert that the origin of God's Messiah is the effect of His creative spirit on Mary" (p. 350-351).

Here we see the extraordinary change which came over the faith in the second century. Jesus was being turned into a visiting angel, and no longer the genuine descendant of Eve, Abraham and David. The promised Messiah was given a new identity. His origin and birth date was removed from history and placed sometime before Genesis. He could no longer be the "man Messiah" (1 Tim. 2:5) because he no longer originated in the human biological chain. The bizarre concept of "preexistence" (how do you preexist yourself?!) was introduced and the Church began to struggle and argue about who Jesus really is. Later this confusion over his origin led to the extremely complicated concept of an "eternal Son of God" who had "a beginningless beginning." (Do you understand that?!) In our time the leading exponent of the Trinity in evangelical circles admits that to be a good believer in the "Deity of Jesus" and the Trinity one must be prepared to say, "He ARE three" and "They IS one."³

Happily in recent times the leading Christologist Professor James Dunn in his fine book *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus? The New Testament Evidence* wrote: "Jesus is not Yahweh, not the God of Israel."

Jesus is of course the Son of God and Luke 1:35 tells why and how that is so. If that precious text had been left

alone and not either ignored or twisted out of existence, there would be no need for the struggle to identify Jesus as truly "the Messiah, the Son of God" (Matt. 16:16-18). The struggle is far from over and Christianity needs to return to its pristine beginnings, the faith once and for all time delivered to the saints (Jude 3). Meanwhile Jews and Muslims are aghast and dismayed at the amazing proposition that God is three in one. Jesus did not ascribe to this odd description of God which many admit is sheer contradiction. Jesus insisted on the creed of his own Jewish heritage that God is a single undivided Person, the God and Father of Jesus himself (Mark 12:29ff; 1 Cor. 8:4-6).✧

The Wonderful Simplicity of Apostolic Witness to the Resurrection of Jesus

Why We Believe Jesus Is Still Alive by Alfred Plummer, MA, DD⁴

"The important new characteristic of the mission of the Apostles appointed by Jesus was the duty of bearing witness. The twelve seem to have been selected originally because of their fitness for bearing witness. They were not specially qualified for grasping or expounding theological doctrines; nor were such qualifications greatly needed. For the doctrines which the Master taught them were few and simple...But because of their simplicity they were very credible witnesses of what they had **heard and seen**. They had been men of homely circumstances and their unique experience as the personal disciples of Christ made a deep impression on them, especially with regard to the hopeless sense of loss when he was put to death, and the amazing recovery of joy when their own senses convinced them that he had risen again. They were thus **well qualified** to convince others. They evidently did not have the wit to invent an elaborate story, or to retain it when it had been elaborated, and therefore what they stated with such confidence was likely to be true. [When told to keep quiet about the resurrection they simply said: "**We cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.**"]

Acts 4:13-22: "Now as they [the enemies of the faith] observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus. And seeing the man who had been healed standing with them, they had nothing to say in reply. But when they had ordered them to leave the Council, they began to confer with one another, saying, 'What shall we do with these men? For the fact that a noteworthy miracle has taken place through them is apparent to all who live in Jerusalem, and we cannot deny it. But so that it will not

² Fitzmeyer, *Commentary on Luke*, p. 340.

³ Millard Erickson, *God in Three Persons*, p. 270.

⁴ "Apostles," *Hastings Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, Vol. 1, p. 83.

spread any further among the people, let us warn them to speak no longer to any man in this name.’ And when they had summoned them, they commanded them not to speak or teach at all in the name of Jesus. But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to give heed to you rather than to God, you be the judge; **for we cannot stop speaking about what we have seen and heard.**’ When they had threatened them further, they let them go (finding no basis on which to punish them) on account **of the people, because they were all glorifying God for what had happened; for the man was more than forty years old on whom this miracle of healing had been performed.**”

“They were chosen to keep alive and extend the knowledge of events that were of the utmost importance to mankind — the knowledge that Jesus Christ had died on the Cross and had risen from the grave. That he had died and had been buried was undisputed and indisputable, and all of them could testify that they had repeatedly seen him alive after his burial [“**We ate and drank with him after he came back from death.**” Acts 10:41]. This was the primary function of an Apostle — to bear witness of Christ’s Resurrection (Acts 1:22; 4:2, 33) and the influence of the testimony was enormous. The Apostles did not argue. They simply stated what they knew. Everyone who heard them felt that they were men who had an intense belief in the truth of what they had stated. There is no trace in either Acts or the Epistles of hesitation or doubt as to the certainty of their knowledge. They knew that their witness was true (John 21:24; 1 John 1:1-3). And the confidence with which they delivered their testimony was communicated to those who heard it all the more effectively because, without any sign of collusion or conspiracy, they all told the same story. They differed in age, temperament and ability, but they did not differ when they spoke of what they had seen and heard...Greatly as Saul of Tarsus differed from the 12 in some things, he was entirely at one with them respecting fundamental facts. He like them had seen and heard the risen Christ (1 Cor. 9:1; 15:8, 11).”✧

The Truth that Sets Us Free

by Robin Todd, Washington

Lately I’ve heard a number of people wonder how it is that the true gospel of the coming Kingdom of God can actually change lives. How is it that this particular message is the one by which salvation comes? These are good questions. It is the purpose of this article to attempt an answer as to why there is such power in the Kingdom gospel when believed, and to encourage our diligence toward this faith that was once delivered.

God created man from the dust of the ground, breathed life into him, and he became a living being (soul, Gen. 2:7). Please take careful note that the physical man doesn’t *have* a soul, the physical man *is* a soul. The

Creator then set His children on the path to their God-given destiny — to rule the earth (Gen. 1:28). The tree of life would sustain them. Thousands of years later the prophet-king David corroborated that this was indeed man’s destiny in Psalm 8:3-8.

Around one thousand years later in the New Testament, the author of Hebrews reminds us that although we have not yet attained to that destiny, we will do so in the age to come (see 2:1-8). And finally, after being reassured in Revelation 5:10 that physical human beings who are raised from their graves and given transformed spiritual bodies will one day reign on the earth, we come to the last chapter of the Bible where man reaches his God-appointed destiny and the tree of life returns to the picture as active on the earth, healing the nations (Rev. 22:1-2).

Of course, there is a whole lot of detail to fill in the story, especially the fact that Jesus the Christ announced this coming Kingdom of God, was killed for doing so, and was raised from the dead in order to confirm that he is the one ordained by God to usher in that Kingdom, that new creation. The point here is that this message of God’s coming Kingdom and the things concerning Jesus the Messiah relative to that Kingdom are what constitute the gospel — the revelation of God’s purpose for mankind and His plan for accomplishing that purpose. Men and women have a God-given glory that will one day be fully bestowed on them (2 Cor. 3:18; 1 John 3:2).

You see, the message from God through the gospel is clear; *physical* human beings made from the dust of the ground *do* have what it takes in the eyes of their Creator/Father to successfully administer the affairs of His creation from within a Father/child relationship with Him. Of course, this success first necessitates that God’s children *believe* the message that supports this program. For we know that if children in general don’t believe that their parents truly think they are inherently “good” as they are (needing to grow and mature of course), they will become fearful and dysfunctional in their lives. This is simply the nature of the human mind. Sin follows disbelief. It was designed to be this way. This necessity for belief in the parent’s positive assessment of core worth and lovability is at the heart of every child’s ability to successfully mature and grow into what he or she was created to be. If you don’t start out from this place, the intended result will not be achieved. Somehow, you must get back to this starting point. A child (or adult) who starts out from this place has the best opportunity to mature successfully and become all of what he or she was born to be. Again, this is by design. This same principle of Father/child relationship is the heart of what makes things work in our relationship with God and our ability to secure the destiny and glory for which He created us. That’s why the gospel, or “the word of the kingdom, or

simply “the word,” is the power of God to salvation for all who believe (compare Matt. 13:19; Mark 4:14; Luke 8:11). It is *in this message* that God declares confidence in the pinnacle of His creation — His physical, human children. On the very words of this gospel message there rests the energizing power of the holy spirit to reorient a person’s life, based on belief in it (1 Thess. 2:13). By God’s design, this is how the human mind works.

Unfortunately, disbelief in this message from God has been the driving force behind mankind’s collective dysfunction and sinful tendencies since the beginning. Take a look at what happened very soon after our Parent’s simple encouragement for us to go forward in faith. In Genesis 3 is the brief account of how disbelief, followed by disobedience, crept in through the subtle deception of our enemy the devil. *Essentially we have the children being led to believe that they needed to be something more than human in order to be acceptable in God’s eyes.* Supposedly, through the acquisition of spiritually discerned knowledge, they would not be limited to life in a physical body. They were misinformed that they would “not surely die” (Gen. 3:1-5) by disbelieving God’s message and disobeying. The physical body might die, but life would apparently go on in some kind of “spirit” realm. And sure enough, in various forms, the doctrine of an “immortal soul” has become so universally accepted that it can be said to be the foundation of what is essentially a single world religious system built on justification through false philosophical knowledge. This is the very antithesis of justification by the biblical “obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26) through the Parental grace of our Father. The false system sends the subtle message that physical human beings aren’t good enough after all to reach their God-given destiny, and it has thereby had a stunting effect on the spiritual growth of God’s children. Going to heaven (or hell) via an immortal soul is not only biblically incorrect, but it is damaging to the mind and heart of God’s children. Only the good news of God’s coming Kingdom and the resurrection of dead physical human beings to administer in the Kingdom can act as a corrective force to mend the human mind and heart.

As many of our readers know, at the foundation of this immortal soul doctrine is the idea that the physical is “bad,” or at the very least less preferable than the immaterial soul inhabiting the body, which is supposedly “good.” The “real” person in this imagined scenario is this eternal/immortal soul, whereas the body is just the inferior outer casing temporarily housing that soul. This is a Greek philosophical notion, foreign to the Bible, and standing in the way of spiritual progress. It has the effect of holding human beings captive to sin, being destructive to the physical human children of God who were created in His image. It sends the message “You don’t have what

it takes” to the carbon-based children whom God designed to need His positive Parental affirmation of their inherent worth and lovability. But the truth is that we are valuable as created, because we are created in God’s image, and simply because our Father says it is so. Now that’s perfect grace, the grace of a Father toward His children! How simple, practical, logical, and yet amazing! And how powerful a message for the human mind and heart!

This material/immaterial dualism of man is not found in the revelation that comes to us from God via the Hebrew scripture, either in the old or new testaments. The Bible declares over and over again that man *is* a soul, and that this soul (physical being) dies (Ezek. 18:20; Matt. 10:28). At death, each person sleeps until their physical body is raised from the grave and given a new immortal, glorified body. Again, the message of God is that that which is physical/material is “good”; whereas the message of false religion from the beginning is that the material is “not good enough.” Children cannot operate successfully, nor mature appropriately, under the latter belief system. They become fearful, competing, jealous, envious, adulterous, and even murderous siblings from within this system. The spirit of God will not operate in a mind or a world that is based on this kind of belief (which is actually “unbelief”).

That is why the gospel of the Kingdom of God is the truth that can begin to set men and women free of sin and lawlessness (John 8:32; Luke 4:18). There is only one antidote for what ails us, and that’s this Kingdom gospel message. In a world filled with darkness, it is the one penetrating light of hope for salvation and healing.

Jesus seemed to be predicting that when he returns to earth he would scarcely find “the faith” still on earth (Luke 18:8). As it turns out, he seems to have been right. But to those who have believed he will say “Inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world” (Matt. 26:34).

Note: The concept of the Trinity which declares that Jesus, the son of God, is an eternal being who pre-existed his human birth is a naturally out-flowing companion doctrine to that of the immortal soul. Once again, we are asked (even compelled by threats of excommunication) to believe that *being human isn’t good enough.* That’s why this teaching and belief is so dangerous to human beings and to their spiritual maturation process. ✧

“The illiterates of the 21st century will not be those who can’t read or write, but those who cannot learn, unlearn and relearn.” — Alvin Toffler

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