

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

April, 2013

22nd Theological Conference

May 2-5, 2013

Simpsonwood Conference Center, Norcross, GA

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: APRIL 19

Once again we urge all of our readers to join us in beautiful Georgia (the weather is spectacular in May) for the 22nd annual Theological Conference. Do not be alarmed at that particular title. This is a gathering of fellow biblical unitarian and Gospel of the Kingdom believers, many of whom will not before have encountered each other face to face. These are Christians of the “radical reformation” belief system. Your presence there, and your personal faith story, have provided the highlights of this event for the past 22 years. You will bless others immensely by your presence at this conference. There will be more formal presentations to instruct and encourage. We plan to have Kermit Zarley with us, author of the significant book on *The Restitution of Jesus Christ*. I am hoping that he will share his very interesting insights on prophecy. We are hoping that Ray Faircloth of the extensive website biblicaltruthseekers.co.uk will be with us. We hope for updates on the growing number of scattered brothers and sisters who are now in contact with each other, thanks to the tireless work of Robin Todd.

This year’s conference will, we think, bring a number of new people together (as well as the seasoned ones we all enjoy seeing!). Do bless us with your presence and share your excitement for the great saving Truths of the One God, the Messiah and the Gospel of the Kingdom. Meetings like these enable us all to take part in the Great Commission which is our joint Christian task, prior to the return of Messiah to rule in his Kingdom on a renewed earth. Do not underestimate the important contribution you make personally by being with us annually. Teamwork is so important in any joint venture and our task is very much a “David and Goliath” enterprise. The world is being engulfed by error and confusion on every possible issue.

If there are some who would like to stay on until the Wednesday following the conference (which ends on Sunday), do please immediately call the college at 800-347-4261. There has been some interest in this, but we need to know that we have at least a small class who would enjoy further Bible discussion and instruction. Teachings would be interactive and I will try to guide them. All questions and topics are valid. We will

concentrate on how to get our truths over in a hostile world! This is a unique chance for intense Bible instruction.

To register for the conference please call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261 or 678-833-1839 or mail the form on the back page by **April 19**. The non-refundable deposit is \$50 per individual or couple.

Registration deadline: April 19

Conference Cost

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

Single	Couple Rate	Double (per person)	Triple (per person)	Quad (per person)
\$357	\$550 per couple	\$285	\$262	\$235

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 2	1:00 pm	3:30 pm
Simpsonwood to Airport		
Sun., May 5	1:00 pm	

Please arrange your arrival time on Thursday early enough to catch one of the two shuttle runs. On Sunday, May 5, 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.

Hebrews 1:1-2 as a Key to the Real, Human Jesus

The book of Hebrews begins with a detailed instruction on the identity of the human Messiah, the uniquely begotten Son of God. The New Testament labors to get over to the reader the identity of the true Jesus. “Other Jesuses” always threaten to obscure the real Jesus of history and fact. None of us can afford to dispense with the hard work involved in settling who this real Jesus is! Worship is acceptable to the One God only “in spirit and truth.” We must approach God believing things which are true and not false. 2 Thessalonians 2:10 provides us with Paul’s impassioned plea to us. He warns

that people will fail: “Because a passion for truth they would not accept, so that they could be *saved*.” The issue of the identity of Jesus and God is a deadly serious one. **Salvation**, as in Luke 8:12 and the issue of the **Gospel of the Kingdom**, is involved. There is only one true God and only one true Messiah. Because of a failure to believe true things and true facts about the Son of God, “God abandoned them to a spirit of delusion.” (We are amazed at the wholesale abandonment of Scripture in the current debate about “marriage equality.” Has the Bible and has God nothing authoritative to say on this issue? And has not the USA claimed to be one nation under God?)

So we orientate ourselves firmly on Hebrews 1:1-2 for defining who Jesus is. The writer makes the deliberate point that GOD did *not* speak through a Son in Old Testament times. He spoke through His unique Son Jesus only at the end of that OT period. That is because there was no Son until the Son came into existence in Mary (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18, 20: “brought into existence in her”).

“But now, **at the end of these days**, it [God’s revelation] has come to us through his Son, to whom he has given all things for a heritage, and through whom he made **the order of the generations**” (Heb. 1:2, The Bible in Basic English).

“God has **at the end of these days** spoken to us through a Son, who is the pre-destined Lord of the universe, and through whom He made the Ages” (Weymouth New Testament).

The whole point here is that God did *not* speak in a Son in the OT times. This rules out immediately any possibility of the Son being the angel of the Lord of the Hebrew Bible! It is hard to imagine why anyone would cling to the idea that Jesus was an angel (or anyone else!) **before being begotten and born a man**. Human beings are by definition conceived in the womb of mothers! A pre-human Son is a quite different sort of person and by definition not genuinely human! If you are pre-human, that is what you originally are — non-human. A prehuman, originally non-human Jesus is disqualified as Messiah because the Messiah *must be* the lineal descendant of David. A prehuman Son of GOD would be older than his own ancestor (David). Why do people seem so content with this most confusing picture of a Jesus who is mysteriously human and not human at the same time?

False conceptions of the Messiah are detrimental to our spiritual health and sanity. Matthew and Luke penned their “birth narratives” with the express and deliberate purpose of defining **the origin** (Matt. 1:18; Luke 1:35) of the Son of God. They are meant to thwart by every possible means the mistaken notion that the Son of God **came into the womb of Mary from the outside**. This would not be a conception/begetting at all, but rather the

transformation of an already existing personality (a “pre-human” personality) into a personality who in some mysterious way engineers his own conception, reduces himself to a fetus and has himself born! Does not the very expression of this bizarre Jesus invite an immediate rejection of such a person?

A Jesus who comes from outside into the womb of his mother was exactly the error of Gnosticism, against which Paul and John warned. Luther was so indoctrinated by the popular tradition about an Incarnation of a pre-existing God the Son that he mistranslated the Greek of 1 John 4:2. Instead of echoing John who was warning (as do Luke and Matthew) against a non-human Son of God, Luther rendered the Greek: “He who does not confess Jesus as coming *into* the flesh.” That is false to the original and has happily been corrected by modern German versions.

John wrote that he who does not confess belief in Jesus Christ as the one who came “in flesh,” i.e. as a real human person, is in grave danger of espousing a false antichristian spirit. In verse 3 John reinforces his point by saying “He who does not believe in *that* Jesus” —that is, the one he has just described as fully human, as distinct from one who only *appears* to be human.

Satan is a clever counterfeiter. How well is the public schooled in seeing the difference between “the spirit of truth and the spirit of error” (1 John 4:6)?

The issue for John is exactly the same as for Paul in 2 Corinthians 11. There are false “Jesuses” to be avoided. The Devil is very clever! He does not deny the existence of “Jesus.” What he does is to present false versions of Jesus — other “Jesuses.” They are counterfeit Messiahs who do not match the biblical blueprint of the Messiah who is begotten = brought into existence in the womb of his mother by divine miracle. Psalm 2:7 (“Today [not in eternity!] I have begotten, you, brought you into existence”), repeated in the NT, describes the true Messiah as one who is to be *brought into existence* (=begotten) by the Father. Luke and Matthew in their detailed accounts at the start of our NT tell us exactly how and when this stupendous event took place, some 2000 years ago. Before that, the Messiah was planned by God but not literally existing. God prepared His whole plan with the Messiah in mind. You cannot “come into existence = be begotten, fathered, procreated” if you *already* exist! Is that easy proposition so difficult to process?

It is a puzzle to us as to why people cling to a pre-human and therefore not really human Jesus. Of course some passages in John have been mistranslated in subtle ways to encourage and “help” the reader to embrace a God the Son, second member of a Trinity. But Jesus affirmed belief in the non-Trinitarian monotheism of Israel (Mark 12:29; Deut. 6:4). His followers should

follow the words of Jesus at all costs. The warning is powerful in Mark 8:38: “The person who is ashamed of me and my words, the Son of Man will be severely ashamed of him when he comes in the glory of his Father” — at the Second Coming (Parousia). ✧

The Dangers of Dispensationalism

A very subtle and highly dangerous undermining of the one true Gospel of the Kingdom of God (preached first by Jesus, Heb. 2:3) occurs when “dispensationalism” is embraced. “Dispensationalism” is a theory which implies an abandoning of Jesus’ and Paul’s constant proclaiming of the Gospel of the **Kingdom**. Here is how the trick is played. An example is found in dispensationalist Clarence Larkin’s remarks in his *The Book of Daniel*. Note this astonishing complication and confusion of the Gospel: “We must not forget that there are ‘Four Gospels’ spoken of in the New Testament: The Gospel of the Kingdom, the Gospel of the Grace of God, the Glorious Gospel, the Everlasting Gospel.” He goes on to tell us that **the Gospel of the Kingdom was preached by Jesus to Jews and “was then withdrawn, and it will be preached again, after the pre-tribulation resurrection/rapture**. Between the two preachings of the Gospel of the Kingdom, in the past to Jews and again to Jews in the Great Tribulation, we have the preaching of the Gospel of the Grace of God. This is the proclamation of salvation through the atoning sacrifice of Christ on the cross” (p. 260).

The uncritical reader might easily be taken in by this abolition of the true Gospel, which is the one Gospel of the Kingdom preached first by Jesus and then by Paul and commanded until the end of the age. The “dispensationalist” trick is easily exposed when we read in Acts 20:24-25 that the Gospel of the grace of God, far from being a different Gospel from the Gospel of the Kingdom, is **in fact exactly the same as the Gospel of the Kingdom**. There is no difference. There is only one saving Gospel. Paul defines his own career as the preaching of the Gospel of the grace of God, which he immediately equates with the proclamation of the Kingdom of God (Acts 20:24-25). A form of dispensationalism, and thus a rejection of Jesus’ saving Gospel of the Kingdom, underlies most contemporary thinking about the Gospel. Rejecting Jesus’ Gospel is the same as rejecting Jesus.

To be at odds with Jesus amounts to a failure to believe and obey Jesus. This is the greatest mistake we can make (John 3:36; Heb. 5:9; John 12:44-48, 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 John 7-9; Mark 1:14-15).

Listen carefully to sermons and preachings of all sorts. Are you hearing the phrase **Gospel of the Kingdom of God**? If not, are you hearing Jesus?

Salvation is by “hearing Jesus preach” (Rom. 10:14). Note this clear rendering: “But how can people call on him if they have not believed in him? How can they believe in him if they have not heard his message? How can they hear if no one tells the Good News?” (Rom 10:14, God’s Word to the Nations).

Compare the French translation: “Avant d’abord l’entendre?” That is, how can they believe before hearing Jesus preach, i.e. the Gospel of the Kingdom? ✧

“A child is born to us; a Son is given to us” (Isa. 9:6). Would you believe what Evangelicals have done with this precious text?!

“As the Son of God He was not born; He was given” (Dr. Chuck Swindoll, *Understanding Christian Theology*).

The Detail of Bible Study

Intelligent Bible study involves good information. Sometimes that good information is missing even from some translations.

Thus there is a notable **fact** to be observed in Mark 13:14. This is information about “the Abomination of Desolation standing where HE ought not to.” Jesus made the Abomination the key event in his warnings about the future.

The words of Jesus here give us the key to the events of the end of the present evil age (Gal. 1:4), leading to the future age of the Kingdom of God on earth at Jesus’ return.

Mark records that the Abomination is a *personality*, not just a thing, but a “he.” Some translations show you this; some don’t. The Greek has a masculine participle *esteekota* with a neuter noun “abomination.” The phenomenon is well known to Greek grammarians. It is called an agreement which gives the sense: *Ad sensum* agreement.

Thus *A Greek Grammar of the Greek NT and Other Early Christian Literature*, Blass and Debrunner, 1960: “*Constructio Ad Sensum*, Mark 13:14: **A masculine participle referring to a neuter noun which designates a personal being**” (p. 74).

A number of good translations of Mark 13:14 make this point clear. The Abomination is a personality, or perhaps an image of a personality, appearing “where **he** ought not to,” and thus desecrating a holy place.

Thus Jesus speaks of a personal being in a temple or sacred area, as the key to the end-time events. Paul spoke likewise of the Man of Sin in *the* Temple. He uses the definite article to speak almost certainly of a building, not the church or an individual Christian whom he introduces as “*a* temple,” not “*the* temple.”

Note too that this prophecy about the Abomination of Desolation does not work for 70 AD! The Christians fled some years before the Roman armies even appeared in

Jerusalem. And, even more important, the tribulation of 70 AD did *not* lead to the Second Coming of Jesus (see Matt 24:29-30). Jesus has a warning for us and for as long as the present evil age continues.

Mark is very careful to tell us also in Mark 9:20 that the demon was a personality! The demon “saw” (**masculine participle, giving personality to the demon**) Jesus. The gender of the noun is overlooked so as to give *personality* to the spirit/demon. Demons are personalities — non-human, of course. Again an agreement *ad sensum* (see *Swete’s* commentary on Mark).

The notion that demons do not exist but are just an accommodation to the popular ignorance of the day is quite false. Such a theory would make Jesus less than honest. Jesus obviously believed as do the writers of the gospels in the very real existence of demons. A demon is a non-human, supernatural evil personality. The demons “cried out” using the vocal chords of the human persons they were influencing. The demons recognized that Jesus was the Messiah (Luke 4:41). The demons also “believe in the one GOD and tremble” (James 2:19). It is a matter of easy common sense that demons are not human persons, and certainly “demon” does not mean a mental disease, although of course they are responsible for causing disturbances of all sorts. When the demon saw Jesus coming he threw the unfortunate victim, the child into convulsions (Mark 9:20). ✧

New age ideas in the following amazing quotation are very appealing, but they contradict Jesus (John 17:3) and the New Testament:

“The most dangerous idea is that my God is the only true God and my religion is the only true religion.”
— Deepak Chopra

The word “one” in Hebrew is very simple. It is the number “one” when we count. The word “one” means “one single” and is sometimes equivalent to the indefinite article “a.”

Daniel 10:5: “I looked up and saw a man.” “Heb. ‘one.’ The Hebrew numerical adjective is used here like an English indefinite article” (NET, New English Translation note).

Detect the mistake! “Nowhere in the New Testament is the Lord [Jesus] referred to as ‘he that is begotten of God.’ John 1:13, 3:3, 5, 6, 7, 8; 1 John 2:29; 3:9; 4:7, **5:1, 4, 18** all refer to the born again believer, not Jesus Christ.”

This statement is misleading. **1 John 5:18** says “the one who was begotten [by GOD]” keeps the believer safe. It is Jesus who keeps us safe. The KJV is wrong here, based on a corrupted Greek manuscript which tries to avoid Jesus as “the one who was begotten by God.”

What Happened to the Real, Human Jesus?

World class Christologist, Dr. James Dunn: “In the centuries following the New Testament the tension between the Lordship of Jesus and the oneness of God **became the central problem of theology. And to this day it remains the chief stumbling block in Christian-Jewish, Christian-Muslim dialogue.** To an important degree also it is the basic problem which underlines much of modern Christian theology: how to speak of God and Jesus today?” (*Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, p. 54).

How indeed to speak correctly of Jesus and God in Holy Scripture? Why does “theology” and thus matters of faith always have to be “a problem” and the cause of “tension”?!

The Bible has a very simple definition of God. He is a single divine Self, a single Person. He is “the God and Father of our lord Jesus.” The Father is the God of Israel and the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Jesus recited and affirmed the unitarian creed of his Jewish heritage in Mark 12:28-34. There was no tension or “problem” here! That is, until from the second century “church fathers” abandoned Jesus’ definition of God as “Jewish”! You see the ugly head of anti-Semitism being raised here against the Jew Messiah Jesus!

“The Lord our God is one single Lord.” That is the essence of simplicity and non-complexity. Jews to this day, and Muslims, know that God is a single divine Self. 1300 times at least in the NT the word GOD (*o theos, the God*) refers to the Father. Jesus said that the Father is the “only one who is true God.”

The *real* problem is that churches do not affirm what Jesus affirmed as the heart of true faith! And if anyone is bold enough to suggest that the Church ought to repent and return to obedience to Jesus’ creed, he is likely to be firmly rejected. The approval of men is much preferred by most above the approval of Jesus! Tradition has its alarming power of blinding Bible readers to the simplest truths.

From the second century a disastrous development occurred which led to the abandonment of Jesus’ own definition of God. While Scripture defined him as “the Lord Messiah” (Luke 2:11) who was born in Bethlehem (no one imagined that God could be born!), the Church, after several centuries of furious dispute, eventually settled on a creed very much at odds with Jesus himself. The councils pronounced their official view that Jesus was the Lord GOD, the second Person of an eternal Triune God. It is an embarrassing fact that most churchgoers seem untroubled by the loss of Jesus’ definition of God, never imagined by Jesus or Paul.

The blinding mists of tradition seem to have stifled the **critical thinking** demanded by educators of their students in every other field except that of thinking about who God and Jesus are. How many sermons are delivered on the staggeringly significant words of Jesus in Mark 12:28-34 where he announced as the most precious truth of all that the true God is a single Lord, the Father, whom Jesus addressed as his God?

The suppression of this very easy truth has caused interminable division and confusion. If exposed and repented of, the result would be to relieve the theological world of its central “problem” and the vast tensions which it produced for Muslim and Jewish-Christian dialogue. At the easiest level, it is not hard to understand that Jesus was not a Trinitarian, and he would them be estranged from the Trinitarian faith statements of so-called Bible-believing churches.

Psalm 110:1 is an umbrella text, supervising the whole NT, and declaring that God is one Person and the Messiah Jesus is the supreme human lord. Pages of learned literature fully acknowledge that this Psalm provides a golden key to the mind of Jesus and the NT.

The second lord, who now sits at the right hand of the one God, is *adoni*, “my lord.” In every single one of the 195 occurrences of *adoni* in the Hebrew Bible, the reference is never to Deity but invariably to a **human superior**, occasionally an angel. This easy fact seems to escape notice from scholars who otherwise intently analyze the meaning of Hebrew and Greek original words!

Adoni properly translated is “my lord,” not “my Lord,” which would of course lead to belief in two Gods. Only a few translations translate *adoni* in Psalm 110:1 honestly and accurately. Others pretend to their readers that the word is *Adonai*, the Lord God!

A cure for cancer, if discovered, would presumably be welcomed worldwide. A cure for the confusion over God and Jesus is readily at hand. Jesus is the lord, not LORD at the right hand of the One God (Ps. 110:1). *Adoni* is never a title of Deity. But that easy fact has been (unconsciously?) withheld from the public.

Jesus would then be revealed as the founder of a unitarian faith, based on his Jewish heritage. The definition of God proclaimed by Jesus did not differ in any way from that definition of God he had learned from Scripture.

Jesus knew who it was at the right hand of the Father. He said that they would see the **Son of Man** (the human being) sitting at the right hand of power (Mark 14:62). Stephen likewise saw “the **Son of Man**” standing at the right hand of the Father (Acts 7:56).

This verse in Psalm 110:1, more often quoted from the OT than any other verse by far, will yet change the face of Christian belief, if it is allowed to do so.

Yes, Jesus, and Paul working under inspiration from Jesus, waived physical circumcision, food laws (Mark 7:19; Rom. 14:14, 20, etc.) and observance of the Jewish calendar, defined as annual holy days, new moons and weekly sabbath (Col. 2:16-17). But Jesus and Paul would be aghast at the notion that God had mysteriously become THREE in ONE, when everyone knew that He was a single Divine Self, the Father (Mal. 2:10). ✧

Deuteronomy 6:4 and 5 “constitute the so-called *Shema* (after the first word שְׁמַע, *sh'ma*, ‘hear’), widely regarded as **the very heart of Jewish confession and faith**. When **Jesus** was asked what was the greatest commandment of all, he quoted this text (Matt. 22:37-38)” (NET, New English Translation note).

But ask your friends this question: **Was this not Jesus’ own definition of God?**

Generally the name of Yahweh (the Tetragrammaton) has been translated into English in the Old Testament by “LORD” in block capitals. Where it is written as “Lord,” in the original manuscript it is *Adonai*. But note Judges 6:15: “Gideon said to him, ‘But Lord, how can I deliver Israel?’”

“Note the switch to אֲדֹנָי (*adonay*, ‘Lord’). Gideon seems aware that he is speaking to someone **other than, and superior to, the messenger, whom he addressed as אֲדֹנָי** (*adoniy*, ‘my lord’) in v. 13” (NET Bible note).

Adonai (for the Lord God) and *adoni*, for non-Deity superiors. Psalm 110:1: The second lord is non-Deity, lord.

The Trinity

by Keith Relf, New Zealand

There is no doctrine in the history of the church that has caused so much pain, division, violence and inhumanity, or been adhered to with such tenacity. And things have not changed much!

Birthing in political dissension — sponsored by a pagan emperor — enforced with bigoted violence — “burned” into the orthodox psyche — defended with diligence by confused apologists — “biblically” supported by false translations — “believed by faith” in doubtful but unquestioned authorities — unexplainable by its devotees — confusing the faithful. (Do read, for this appalling and eye-opening history, *Jesus Wars* by Philip Jenkins.)

A Trinitarian, GOD-Jesus could not be tempted, or atone for the sins of Adamic man. Only the miraculous “second Adam” (1 Cor. 15:45), born of a human female (Luke 1:26-35), could do this — only one who was truly human. For without the shedding of real human blood

there can be no atonement (Heb. 9:22). Jesus did not “endure the cross” in the safe knowledge of an eternal existence that could not cease for him, but rather “for the joy that was set before him” (Heb. 12:2). Otherwise, how could it be said “God has made him both Lord and Christ” (Acts 2:36) if he always had been a co-equal person of a Godhead? What could God (the Father) “have made” a “co-equal, co-eternal, co-substantial” being? How could such a being “become obedient unto death”? (Phil. 2:7-9). Indeed, how could he die at all? Jesus as Son of God was “tempted in every respect as we are” (Heb. 4:15). Church members should be instructed to escape this appalling muddle for their own sanity and salvation!

“It’s all a mystery,” we are told. How can it be a mystery when the concept is nowhere in Scripture said to exist? Also, if there are not “links” in logic which God created in us as the means of reason and discernment, then this Trinitarian doctrine is similar to the scientific doctrine of evolution — a man-made, false idea out of nothing, without proof, and which defeats credibility.

How can a just God expect us to love and serve Him when who He is, His very nature and personality, is an insoluble confusion to the marvelous minds He created for us? It is an almost greater miracle that many devout Trinitarians are able somehow to mentally corral the confusion and still love and serve Him. But zeal without knowledge is not advised! We are saved “by his knowledge” too! (Isa 53:11).

However, we who know Him as He is love Him more with the right understanding of the fearsome cost of the sacrifice of God’s “only begotten Son” and who he really was — Son of God and Son of Man. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5).

“This is eternal life: that they might know YOU, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have commissioned” (John 17:3).

Blessed truth and simplicity. Paul said that a passion for truth is the prerequisite for being saved (2 Thess. 2:10). Believing or confessing what is false is a deadly poison, and always was!

Is Jesus to go unheard? “The most important command of all is ‘Listen, Israel, the Lord our GOD is one Lord’” (Mark 12:29).

Does anyone care? Eventually God and Jesus will insist that everyone listen to the words of Jesus in order to preserve their lives!✧

Words of Wisdom Which Carry Powerful Meaning and Warning for Our Times

On the Kingdom, God’s Empire of the future:

“I, *ADONAI*, will be their God; and my servant David will be prince [**Head of State**] among them. I, *ADONAI*, have spoken” (Ezek. 34:24).

On the danger of blessing evil:

“They keep on saying to those who have no respect for the word of the Lord, ‘You will have peace’; and to everyone who goes on his way in the pride of his heart, they say, ‘No evil will come to you’” (Jer. 23:17, Bible in Basic English).

“They keep saying to those who scorn God’s message, ‘All will go well for you,’ and to those who follow their own willful hearts, ‘Nothing bad will happen to you’” (Jer. 23:17, Common English Bible).

“They keep reassuring those who despise me, ‘*ADONAI* says you will be safe and secure,’ and saying to all living by their own stubborn hearts, ‘Nothing bad will happen to you’” (Jer. 23:17, Complete Jewish Bible).

Questions on the Devil

When did God create a Devil or Satan? Satan is a created angel who fell into condemnation (1 Tim. 3:6) and was punished for his rebellion. He was not created evil! As with “the sinning angels” (2 Pet. 2:4), Satan became guilty. These sinning angels were confined to Tartarus, and human beings do not go to that place of restraint exclusively for angels. Satan “transforms himself into an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14), implying that he is in fact an angel of darkness. Some who are inexpert in languages try to dissolve these easy truths by mistranslating “angels” as “messengers.” This is a very poor misjudgment since in the NT *aggelos* obviously means an angel on almost every occasion, the exceptions being quite obvious. To translate against every professional translation, when one has no special training in languages, risks exposing a person as having a huge sense of over-importance in regard to his own skills!

Is the Devil mortal or immortal? Angels were created not as mortal human beings, but with a permanent life. There is no evidence that the holy angels (the phrase “holy angels” of course implies that there also unholy ones) will in the future sin and lose their immortality. But God can remove the life of any creature if he sins against God. The Satan will be torturously destroyed eventually and that destruction will never be reversed (cp. Ps. 92:7; Job 20:7). Revelation 20:10 speaks of this final end of Satan for whom the fire of destruction has been prepared (Matt. 25:41).

How did the Devil get past the flood? The flood was a destruction of mankind, not of spiritual personalities like demons or Satan. Angels, good or bad, were not drowned.

Can we blame a Devil for our sins? Of course not! We are warned in the Bible about our own sinful tendency, and we are equally warned about the wicked power of the Satan who goes about like a roaring lion trying to destroy us (1 Pet. 5:8). We are to resist him and his demons, just as we resist sin.

Is he a spirit or a real person? The question reveals a misunderstanding of “person” in Scripture. Jesus is a real person and he is now a “life-imparting spirit” (1 Cor. 15:45). A spirit, an angel, an evil spirit or a demon is a person and a personality. Jesus knew this since he spoke to these individual spirit persons. They spoke to Jesus. The demons recognized Jesus as the Messiah, when the public did not (Luke 4:41). This in itself shows the existence of wicked supernatural, non-human persons. Sometimes the Greek of the NT explicitly describes the personality of the demon, as distinct from the personality of the human being affected by the demon. The word “demon” is a perfectly clear word in the Greek language, and it never means a disease (diseases do not speak and do not recognize Jesus as Messiah!). “Demon” certainly never means a human being. If one thought that demons do not exist, the last thing would be to lace the narrative accounts with the activity of the demons! If demons do not really exist, you certainly would not include them in the historical accounts of Jesus and his activities! The denial of their existence is an assault on the integrity of Scripture as truth. In Mark 9:20 the Greek text says that “the demon, seeing Jesus, threw the child into a convulsion.” Nothing could be clearer than the presence of the demons in the historical accounts, repeated three times in Matthew, Mark and Luke. It involves a wholesale shredding of Scripture to get rid of them.

Where does the Devil get his power? All created angels are powerful and they were given free will to rebel against God. When this happened in the case of the Satan, his fate was sealed and he will be finally crushed in the future. Meanwhile God permits the Devil, within strict limits, to operate as God’s opponent. The “serpent” (a code word like “that fox [Herod]”) is identified as the “ruler of the world” and “the one who is now deceiving the whole world” (Rev. 12:9). Revelation 20:2 identifies him as the same person as the Devil and the Satan, his Greek and Hebrew titles. Revelation 12:7 shows the Devil to be an angel, opposed to Michael. ✧

Ray Faircloth’s *The Kingdom of God Version. The New Testament* is now available from Amazon.com, Amazon.co.uk and all other Amazon European stores

Comments

“I just want to say thank you for your existence. I already read some of your books, like the one title Trinity and *The Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus*. I also drop by to the website restorationfellowship.org when I have time to learn some more. I really learned a lot from them. May God never stop blessing you so that you can still continue to train and educate others about the truth our one God and Jesus Christ wanted for everyone to see and believe.” — *Philippines*

“I just had to write and thank you for recommending the book *The Only True God* by Eric Chang in *Focus on the Kingdom* magazine. I received a paperback copy a few days ago. As yet I have only read ninety pages, but it tastes really good. Already I have come across many lovely ideas and new viewpoints on familiar scriptures. And as always when this happens I ask myself, ‘Now why didn’t you think of that for yourself?’ Some things are so plain when pointed out. I am so blessed by the LORD our God to be guided into the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth, which is what I asked of Him after first finding (by God-incidence) and reading the writings of Greg Deuble and yourself.” — *England*

“I have been reading your newsletter for 3 years already. Halleluyah for your zeal in standing up for the true gospel. It is apparent that you realize the power of religious traditions and institutional doctrines and how difficult it is for one (especially full-time workers) to have the courage to put aside such baggage, even when faced with the cold truth.” — *Canada*

“Thank you for sending *Focus on the Kingdom* all these years. Your February issue was a masterpiece. I will make copies of it and give it to all the Trinity people I know.” — *Wisconsin*

“I’m halfway through reading *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah*. I find it to be really good so far. For one year I’ve been delving into this subject and this book clearly explains the detail of it. You have constantly strictly focused on the subject without engaging subjects that most people consider to be controversial such as the Trinity and the conditional immortality. This would make the book more accessible to most Christians because most Christians would freak out to hear that they are not going to heaven or that Jesus was not Yahweh. I’m very excited about the Kingdom. I’m very grateful about the book. Maybe someday I’ll have the courage and time to translate some of your books into Indonesian, my native language.”

How thrilling for us to know this! We would love to have the Kingdom book in Indonesian. It is in several languages already but that would be a great blessing. What an opportunity for you to bless us with your talents and take part in the Great Commission!

Focus on the Kingdom
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Focus on the Kingdom
April, 2013

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