

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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2015 Theological Conference

April 30-May 3, 2015
Calvin Center, Hampton, GA

Please join us for our annual gathering of passionate Kingdom and biblical unitarian believers. We will have a full schedule of speakers, as well as your “faith stories.” We really need you to be there as a blessing for us all. The Abrahamic promise is that the seed of Abraham would not only be blessed but be a blessing. With the new venue this year, prices are even more reasonable:

Per person rates — includes 3 nights, all meals, snacks

	Single	Double (per person)	Triple (per person)
Hotel-style room (2 double beds with bath)	\$405	\$250	\$200
Bunkbed room (6 per room with bath) <i>We can assign roommates</i>	\$180 per person +\$15 for sheets and towels or bring your own		

Please note that our new location means there are **only 24 hotel-style rooms available**, so please register early. First come, first served!

Three ways to register:

1. Online at theologicalconference.org
2. Mail the form on the back page
3. Call Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261

Registration deadline: April 10, 2015

Airport Transportation (Judy: 678-485-8492)

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

Airport to Calvin Center		
Thurs. April 30	2:00 pm	4:00 pm
Calvin Center to Airport		
Sun. May 3	1:00 pm	

Please arrange your arrival time on Thursday early enough to catch one of the two shuttle runs. On Sunday, May 3 we will provide **only 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 pm.

The conference begins with registration at 4 pm on Thursday and ends with lunch on Sunday. Driving directions to Calvin Center are at calvincenter.org. The address is 13550 Woolsey Rd., Hampton, GA 30228.

How Gospel Tracts Hide the Gospel from You

Gospel tracts offering salvation do not in fact tell you about *what Jesus said* about “repenting and believing the Gospel” — and so about being saved, gaining immortality. They typically start with isolated verses from Paul or from John. Paul and John are excellent, of course, but the words of **Jesus** in Matthew, Mark and Luke come first in our Bibles. Jesus began his ministry with a clear command to us all. (The Great Commission later instructed that all the words and teachings of Jesus be taken to the whole world, Matt. 28:19-20; 24:14, etc).

Jesus, as *the* preacher of the saving Gospel (Heb. 2:3) issued this opening command to us, demanding our responsive obedience: “The Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and **believe the Gospel**” (Mark 1:14-15). Jesus much later added the information about his death and resurrection (see Matt. 16:21ff). But the basis of the Gospel is “repent and believe the Gospel about the Kingdom of God.” Jesus preached the Gospel about the Kingdom and stated that this was the basis of his saving commission from God (Luke 4:43). Paul preached the same Gospel of the Kingdom tirelessly (Acts 19:8; 20:24-25; 28:23, 31).

How that saving Gospel of the Kingdom operates to confer salvation and how the process of salvation works is beautifully described by Jesus in the parable of the sower. The seed of the Kingdom Gospel (Matt. 13:19) is the essential germ of immortality sown in the believer’s heart.

This information may be unknown to many who desire to believe as Jesus commanded us. Jesus is the pioneer preacher of the saving Gospel (Heb. 2:3). The parable of the sower (Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:12; Mark 4:11-12) unpacks the whole salvation process based on the Gospel of the Kingdom **as the foundation of the saving Gospel**. The Kingdom Gospel of Jesus is the essential message of salvation, including later of course the vital information about his death and resurrection (mentioned first in Matt. 16:21).

How did the Gospel of the Kingdom get lost? From the Reformation on Luther has been taken as the criterion for proper Gospel preaching and definition. Now note Luther’s misleading and selective choice of books and his amazing denial of the significance of Matthew, Mark and Luke. In the preface to his translation of the NT into

German, Luther penned these momentous words: “Briefly, St. John’s Gospel and his first epistle, St. Paul’s epistles, especially those to Romans, Galatians, Ephesians, and St. Peter’s First Epistle: These are the books which show you Christ and teach all that is needful and blessed for you to know, **even if you never see nor hear any other book or any other doctrine.**”

With this astonishing and stunning statement he directed you away from the saving Gospel words of Jesus! These are laid out clearly by Matthew, Mark and Luke (also in John), Acts and the rest of the NT. Luther also made some unfavorable remarks about Hebrews, James, Jude and Revelation, even noting at one stage that “Christ is not taught in the book of Revelation.”

Now notice how some evangelical authors bypass Jesus’ own Gospel of the Kingdom. One of them says: “The Gospel is a message that must be believed [true!]. Our Lord Jesus Himself teaches us this in the Gospel of Mark. ‘Now after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God [some manuscripts read Gospel of God, but this makes no difference to the sense], and saying: The time is fulfilled and **the Kingdom of God is at hand, Repent and believe the Gospel.**”

Then this misleading author (Edward F. Hills, ThD) asks, “And what Gospel was this which Jesus commanded all who heard him to believe? [great question!] That he should *die on the cross for sinners.*” This is a complete falsehood, since at this stage Jesus said not a word about his death! Only much later in Matthew 16:21 (=Mark 8:31) did Jesus *first* begin to speak a word about his vitally important death! Yet he had been preaching as the basis of the saving Gospel the Good News (Gospel) about the Kingdom of God. That *primary* element of the Gospel, its basis, has been lost from popular evangelism, and this calls for major reform. Failure to listen to Jesus is a serious matter (see John 12:44ff; Heb. 5:9; 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 John 7-9). ✧

Just a Thought

Suppose you point to a single chair and tell your two-year-old, “This is a chair.” Then you point to another chair and say, “This is also a chair.” Then you announce: “That makes one chair.” You will cause stress and confusion! You will disturb your child’s peace of mind! You will be uttering self-evident nonsense.

Alas, in church the public is subjected to the same confusion. The Seventh Day Adventist organization (multiple millions of members) declared in the title of an article that “1+1+1=1: The Keystone of Our Theology.” That proposition causes confusion also. It makes no sense, i.e. it is “nonsense.” Somehow in church one can get away with nonsense in the name of “religion” or

“mystery”! But is it honest to speak of mystery when you really mean mystification?

What about the millions of church members who, particularly at this winter season, declare in recited chorus that they believe that the Son of God, Jesus, was “begotten not made”? If you were to ask them individually what they mean by that (try the experiment gently), will you get a clear answer? Does it matter that we understand what we are saying when we make declarations before God and man? I think it must. Is it pleasing to God and Jesus that in our most solemn moments we let words pass from our minds and mouths to which we can give no recognizable meaning — like “begotten not made”? Might that be not much better than declaring that an item is “handmade, not made by hand”?

Is it loving your neighbor to inflict a nonsense proposition on him? Is it fair on anyone to impose on him an idea which, according to the rules of language we all agree on, makes no sense! The “umbrella” definition of God, the official belief of the Church, is that “The Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God; and this is one God.”

Dr. Colin Brown of Fuller Seminary, well known for his life-long work on matters of Bible understanding, says this: “For practical purposes Christians solve the Trinity problem in one of two ways. One way is...to postpone thinking about it for as long as possible. [!] The other way of dealing with the Trinity is to **practice tritheism** in all but name. Thus the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are worshipped as three separate deities and assigned separate functions.”¹ “Practice tritheism”?

The fearful complexity of the later, post-biblical official creeds caused a departure from the original teaching of Jesus and the Apostles. They were worked out with extreme and exhausting argument, and then imposed upon unsuspecting church members in terms of Greek philosophy (“hypostases,” “essence,” “two natures,” “eternal generation,” etc). Ordinary Bible readers cannot to this day explain what these creeds mean. But they are bound by long-cherished tradition to accept them, while other views are pronounced to be “heresy” or cultish. Independent examination of the core teachings is seldom encouraged!

A leading Methodist Bible scholar and theologian was not wrong when he reported to me that “the Greeks distorted the concept of Jesus’ legal agency to ontological identity, creating an illogical set of creeds and doctrines **to cause confusion and terror for later generations of Christians.**”² In other words God was defined in Greek philosophical terms as an “essence” consisting of three

¹“Trinity and Incarnation: In Search of Contemporary Orthodoxy,” *Ex Auditu*, 1991, p. 83.

² Dr. G.W. Buchanan, correspondence, 1994.

Persons. But did Jesus have the slightest interest in such language, so foreign to his own Hebrew views and so alien to his Hebrew heritage in the Old Testament?

Readers should give careful thought to the fundamental confusion which overcame churches not long after the death of the Apostles. Dr. James Dunn says: “In the centuries following the NT 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?”³

Why do “theology,” and thus matters of faith, so often 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 also the God of Israel and “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.” Jesus recited and affirmed, agreeing with a fellow unitarian Jew, the unitarian creed of his Jewish heritage in Mark 12:28ff. There was no tension or “problem” here! Just plain fact and plain logic and language. “The Lord our God,” Jesus said, “is one Lord.” Or as the Greek can also be put into English: “The Lord is our God. The Lord is one Person.”

We are supposed, for our own spiritual sanity and safety, to cling in simple faith to the words of Jesus whom we claim as “lord.” To do otherwise is dishonest and dangerous (read John 12:28ff for the full impact of Jesus’ warning). Jesus gave here, with raised voice, the summary statement of his claim on us. To forget his words — *his words, his words* — is to commit spiritual suicide (see also 1 Tim. 6:3; 2 John 7-9; Heb. 5:9 and the whole gospel of John). Matthew 7:21ff provides the severest warning against the self-deception arising from a disregard for the words/teachings of Jesus.

“The Lord our God is one single Lord” (Mark 12:29). 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 (Greek *o theos*, **the** God) refers to the Father. Jesus said that the Father is the “only one who is true God” (John 17:3). He told us to “to believe in God and believe also in me” (John 14:1).

From the second century a disastrous development occurred which led to the abandonment of Jesus’ own definition of God. While Scripture defined Jesus as “the lord *Messiah*” (Luke 2:11) who was born in Bethlehem (no one imagined that God could be born or that God could die!), 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, a loss which led to a radical change never imagined by Jesus or Paul.

The blinding mists of tradition seem to have stifled the critical thinking demanded by educators 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 12:28ff, 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? Can the eternal God have a God?

The suppression of this very easy truth of monotheism, Jesus-style, 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. That being so, he would be estranged from the Trinitarian faith statements of so-called Bible-believing churches.

Dr. Anthony Harvey, lecturer in theology at Oxford and fellow of Wolfson College, makes this easy historical point: “Jesus himself is recorded as having endorsed [as the most important thing of all] the standard Jewish confession of monotheism (Mark 12:29) and accepted the prohibition which this implied of any moral comparison between himself and God (Mark 10:18). Most explicitly in John 10:33 Jesus’ reply makes the semantic point that there is precedent in his own culture for using the word *Theos* [God] for beings who are other than the one God; but the main burden of his reply, as throughout the Gospel, is that, far from being a secondary or rival God, he is totally dependent on and united with the Father.”⁴

Psalms 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 all 195 occurrences of *adoni* in the Hebrew Bible, it is a reference **never to Deity** but 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!

A cure for cancer, if discovered, would presumably be welcomed worldwide. A cure for the confusion over

³*Unity and Diversity in the New Testament*, p. 54.

⁴*Jesus and the Constraints of History*, 1980, p. 157.

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 proponent of a unitarian faith, based on his own 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.

John is sometimes made to contradict the very easy proposition he recorded from the famous last prayer of Jesus! Jesus defined “the life of the age to come” and he defined God: “This is the life of the age to come, that they should come to know You, Father, **the only one who is true God**, and Jesus Christ whom You sent” (John 17:3). What could be less problematic than this stupendous teaching of Jesus? But do churchgoers assure themselves that their own thinking is submitted to this intentionally unambiguous and plain, easy definition of God and salvation in the age to come? Could Jesus have been clearer? Did he intend to give us anything other than an unarguable and definitively easy and clear definition of God?

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 and the God of Jesus. “Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us?” (Mal. 2:10). What is difficult about that?

How easy it is to see that John wanted one fact known. He never said that he wrote to prove that “Jesus is God.” He did write with the express intention of proving that Jesus was “the Messiah, the Son of God” (John 20:31). He repeated his central teaching when he stated in his epistle that the fatal error was failure to believe that Jesus was the Messiah and Son of God (1 John 5:1, 5). Rejoice in the confident assurance that you are thinking in harmony with Jesus when defining the only true God as Jesus did in John 17:3. ✧

The Kingdom Gospel Hated by Commentary

The Kingdom in Judaism:

“First it will be well to get this clear, that while the concept was original with Jesus the name itself was not. To Jewish ears **Kingdom of God** had a familiar sound and in Jewish writings it had a prominent place. To take only one instance out of many, that is the great cry that breaks out of the book of Daniel 7:14: ‘His dominion is an everlasting dominion and his kingdom that which will

not be destroyed.’ Now to understand Jesus’ position it is important to observe that in the generation immediately before Jesus...this Jewish thought of the kingdom... had suddenly become redoubled in intensity. This was the direct result of the foreign domination and oppression; for with Rome’s heel on Israel’s throat the only hope was that God would strike in and make his **Kingdom come**...Even the men Jesus chose for his disciples found it hard to break away from the prevailing secularism; and when James and John demanded the best places in the kingdom (Matt. 20:20-21), or when after the resurrection the disciples asked, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?’ (Acts 1:6), it showed how deeply rooted the earthly, political unspiritual ideas of the Kingdom were. In short, the Kingdom of God had come to be the slogan of Jewish nationalism...The Jews, on the other hand, crucified Jesus because they did want passionately to see an earthly kingdom...Now that was the one thing Jesus was determined not to do. ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ — that signed the death warrant of Jewish nationalism...But Christ’s rule is God’s rule in the heart. It is in the secret places of man’s moral life. The kingdom, said Jesus, is moral not nationalistic...Where is the Kingdom of God today? Here is the gospel answer: it is wherever a man or woman has made Christ the Lord of life and accepted the rule of God in the heart. That is where the kingdom is.”⁵

This excerpt shows the appalling, tragic muddle into which commentary studies of the faith have fallen. And it has to do with the core of the Christian Gospel.

If you simply take the references in the gospels to the Kingdom you will see that **the Kingdom is firstly and primarily a Kingdom which has not yet come!** Joseph of Arimathea, a disciple, was still waiting for it! This was after the ministry of Jesus was over (Mark 15:43). Jesus promised that his followers would “enter the Kingdom” and “inherit the Kingdom” **in the future, at his return!** Without this framework understanding in place you will misunderstand the Christian Gospel as announced by Jesus in Mark 1:14-15. For a solid basis for your understanding, read Daniel 7:14, 18, 22, 27.

Jesus taught us to pray that the Kingdom of God would come in the future. It will be a time when “God’s will will be done **on earth**, as it is being done in Heaven.” That is certainly not the case today. If the Kingdom had come, the nations would be beating their swords into plowshares and the lion and the ox and the lamb would live in peace! Only by denying the plain meaning of words can this conclusion can be avoided.

The deep-rooted problem is that the whole future Kingdom has been replaced by the non-biblical idea that

⁵James Stewart, *The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ*, pp. 55-62.

at death the faithful go to heaven! In which case the Kingdom of God is pointless. Christian hope is destroyed. There is also no solution forever for the awful problems of present societies.

Many students of Scripture do not define the Kingdom as Jesus did, and thus do not understand Jesus' saving Gospel of the Kingdom. To help clarify this muddled state of affairs, let us cite the plain definition of the Kingdom provided by a learned professor at Oxford. Dr. Allen defines the Kingdom as Matthew saw it. His excellent and objective analysis of the Kingdom of God in Matthew, provided by the *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, ought to serve as a much-needed guide to all our thinking about the Kingdom. The Gospel as Jesus and Paul preached it is about the Kingdom, and so an inaccurate understanding of the Kingdom leads automatically to an inaccurate Gospel:

“The Kingdom — **the central subject** of Christ's doctrine. With this he began his ministry (4:17) and wherever he went he taught it as Good News [**Gospel**] (4:23). The Kingdom he taught was coming, **but not in his lifetime**. After His ascension he would come as Son of Man on the clouds of heaven (16:27, 19:28, 24:30; 25:31) and would sit on the throne of His glory...Then the twelve Apostles would sit on twelve thrones judging [governing, administering] the twelve tribes of Israel (19:28). In the meantime he himself must suffer and die and be raised from the dead. How else could he come on the clouds of heaven? And the disciples were to **preach the Good News [Gospel] of the coming Kingdom** (10:7, 24:14) among all nations making disciples by **baptism** (28:18). The body of disciples thus gained would naturally form a society bound by common aims. Hence the disciples of the Kingdom would form a new spiritual Israel (21:43; [cp. Gal. 6:16; Phil 3:3])...

“In view of the needs of this new Israel of Christ's disciples, who were to await his coming on the clouds of heaven, it is natural that a large part of the teaching recorded in the Gospel should concern **the qualifications required in those who hoped to enter the Kingdom when it came**...Thus the parables convey some lesson about the nature of the Kingdom and the period of **preparation for it [sowing before harvest]**. It should be sufficiently obvious that if we ask what meaning the parables had for the editor of the first Gospel, the answer must be that he chose them because...they taught lessons about the Kingdom of God **in the sense in which that phrase is used everywhere in the Gospel, of the Kingdom which was to come, when the Son of Man came upon the clouds of heaven**.

“Thus the Parable of the Sower illustrates the varying **reception met with by the Good News [Gospel] of the Kingdom as it is preached amongst men**. That of the tares also deals not with the Kingdom itself, but with **the**

period of preparation for it. At the end of the age, the Son of Man will come **to inaugurate His Kingdom [Rev. 11:15-18]**...There is nothing here nor elsewhere in this Gospel to suggest that **the scene of the Kingdom is other than the present world renewed**, restored and purified.”⁶

The last sentence of our quotation makes the excellent point that Matthew (and the New Testament) does not expect believers to “go to heaven,” but that Jesus will come back to the earth to rule with them on a renewed earth (Rev. 5:9-10; Matt. 5:5, Dan. 7:27, etc). The perceptive reader of the New Testament will note the striking difference between the biblical view of the Kingdom, and thus of the Gospel of salvation, and what in post-biblical times was substituted for it: a departure of the faithful at death to a realm removed from the earth. (Bishop Tom Wright tries to have both systems when he speaks of “Life *after life* after death.” Better to shed the philosophically-based life before **resurrection** which then correctly means coming not from life, but from death!)

The popular idea that the Kingdom is mainly a spiritual state of mind or lifestyle *now* is false to the New Testament. Luke 19:11ff teaches us to connect the arrival of the Kingdom with the **future return of Jesus** (cp. above: “The Kingdom He taught was coming, but not in His lifetime”). So say leading analysts of the Gospel records.

The appalling effects of some scholarship have resulted in stunning contradictions of Jesus in the name of Jesus. This from Harold Roberts, MA, PhD: “Jesus presupposed the Old Testament, and any approach to the understanding of the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God must take the Old Testament as its starting point [so far, excellent!] The actual term Kingdom of God does not occur in the OT, but the idea of the Kingdom is central to its thought. Cp. Ps. 22:28; 103:19; 1 Chron. 29:11; Dan. 7:27. Its meaning there is the kingship of God — **never a Kingdom in the sense of a territory or an association of human beings**.”⁷

This last statement is an evident and glaring falsehood! First the Kingdom of the LORD occurs in two major passages in the Hebrew Bible: 1 Chronicles 28:5 and 2 Chronicles 13:8. In 1 Chronicles 28:3-8 David said, “God said to me, ‘You shall not build a house for My name because you are a man of war and have shed blood.’ Yet the Lord God chose me from all the house of my father to be King over Israel forever. For he has chosen Judah to be a leader, and in the house of Judah, my father's house, and among the sons of my father he took pleasure in me to make me king over all Israel. Of

⁶ W.C. Allen, MA, Prof. of OT at Oxford, *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, Vol. 2, p. 145.

⁷ *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, p. 21.

all my sons (for the Lord has given me many sons) he has chosen my son Solomon **to sit on the throne of the Kingdom of the Lord over all Israel** [cp. 2 Chron. 13:8]. He said to me, ‘Your son Solomon is the one who shall build my house and my courts, for I have chosen him to be a son to me, and I will be a father to him. I will establish **his Kingdom forever**, if he resolutely performs my commandments and my ordinances, as is done now.’” Then comes the final, fatherly exhortation of David to Solomon: “So now in the sight of all Israel, the assembly of the Lord and the hearing of our God, observe and seek after all the commandments of the Lord your God so **that you may possess the good land and bequeath it to your sons after you forever.**” Compare Genesis 28:4, Galatians 3:14, the same blessing as promised to Abraham and Christians.

Very far from being a non-territorial “kingdom,” the Kingdom of the Lord is specifically and deliberately an **empire to be ruled over by the family of King David!** It would be chaotic nonsense to say that this was merely “kingship” with no territorial meaning.

Do you see, then, how disastrous would be the technique which arrives at the New Testament and vaporizes the simple realistic idea of Kingdom, when the angel promises for Jesus that he will be “great” and “the Lord God will give him the **throne of his Father David**, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever” (Luke 1:32-33)? To lose the meaning of these phrases based on the Old Testament promises is to gut the Gospel message and deprive it of all sense in its Jewish and biblical context. Daniel 7:14, 18, 22, 27 are quoted by Luke 1:32-33.

The throne of David is not in heaven, but will be in a restored Jerusalem on earth. The throne of David is no more in heaven than the White House is in China, nor the throne of the Queen of England in Moscow! Bible readers have often been taught a “method” of reading the Bible by which its vitalizing, realistic, informational sense is dissipated in favor of vague abstract ideas such a “kingdom in the heart,” a so-called “moral” or “spiritual” kingdom. Truly as both Isaiah and Hosea lamented, “**My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge**” (Hos. 4:6; Isa. 5:13) — not destroyed for lack of “sincerity,” but for lack of knowledge. What seems to be missing in much preaching is that the “righteous servant of God, the Messiah, **makes many right by his knowledge**” (Isa. 53:11) — not only by his death and resurrection!

The most uncomfortable and unsettling statements ever to fall from the lips of Jesus occur in Matthew 7:15-29. Having delivered his sermon on the mount, as the final Moses, Jesus warned against false teachers. Jesus threatened us with this: “It is not everyone who says to me ‘lord, lord’ who will enter the Kingdom of Heaven [=inherit the land/earth, Matt. 5:5; Ps. 37:11; Rom. 4:13;

Dan. 7:18, 22, 27], but only those who do the will of my Father in Heaven. Multitudes will say to me on that future day, ‘lord, lord, did we not preach in your name and cast out demons in your name and do many mighty miracles in your name?’ And I will then respond to them: ‘Depart from me, you who are working lawlessness. I never recognized you.’” Their fault was to have been deceived, imagining a false form of Christianity. This can only point to a careless acceptance of traditional faith which will turn out not to be based on truth and the actual words of Jesus. This should surely put us all on the alert, put us in a searching mode, in a prayerful mood, beseeching God and Jesus to correct us and help us to avoid the fatal pitfall Jesus referred to here.

As the *New International Critical Commentary on Matthew* points out, Jesus echoes Jeremiah (14:14) in his earlier impassioned denunciation of men who uttered falsehoods in the name of God. So Jesus identified the false prophets (Matt. 7:15-23) as the fatal factor and peril in our experience of faith. We simply ought not to disregard these warning words of Jesus. He obviously knows only too well that the human mind is easily deceived, easily led astray, easily deprived of the necessary analytical approach to what we hear preached in the name of Jesus. Listen to Jeremiah, too: “Then the Lord said to me, ‘The prophets are prophesying falsehoods in My name. I have neither sent them nor commanded them nor spoken to them. They are prophesying to you a false vision, divination, futility and the deception of their own minds’” (Jer. 14:14). ✧

Where Is Paradise?

In 2 Corinthians 12:3-4 Paul was caught away into paradise. In or out of the body, he received a vision of Paradise, which is the condition of the earth in the future, the garden of Eden (Paradise) restored and promised for the future to the thief on the cross. This thief, who believed in Jesus as Messiah and in the Kingdom (he believed the Gospel!), asked Jesus to remember him in the future when he returned to bring in his Kingdom on earth (Luke 23:42).

The thief was rewarded for his faith in the Gospel of the Kingdom. Jesus guaranteed that the thief would indeed be with Jesus in **that future paradise of the Kingdom** (Rev. 2:7: the tree of life will be there). That promise was made “today,” that very day, as they were dying together. On that very day, as they both endured an awful death by crucifixion, Jesus promised to the believing thief a position in the future Garden of Eden of the Kingdom. “I tell you *today* [cp. Acts 20:26, ‘I witness to you *today*’], you will indeed be with me in the future paradise of the Kingdom” (Luke 23:43). Place the comma after “today.” Punctuation has been mistakenly added by

translators to give the impression that Jesus was in heaven the day he died!

Jesus had still not gone to the Father on the Sunday following his death (John 20:17; cp. Acts 2:27, 31). He could not have promised the thief a place in heaven on the day of his death. Jesus came back to life from death on *Sunday*, the third day since his crucifixion (Luke 24:21; 13:32-33).✧

“The kingdom, along with the power and greatness of all the kingdoms under heaven, will be given to the holy people of the Most High. Their kingdom is eternal. All other powers will serve and obey them” (Dan. 7:27, God’s Word Translation).

Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown agree: “The power, which those several kingdoms had possessed, shall all be conferred on Messiah’s kingdom. ‘Under heaven’ **shows it is a kingdom on earth, not in heaven.**”

Do you hear this taught clearly in church?

Hello, everyone. Here is a different idea for evangelism you might not have considered previously.

Many of you may not know that I have several music CDs of my own original music available. One of the songs on one of the CDs is called “His Kingdom is Coming.” There are songs on the other CDs which also contain Biblical truth worth sharing. What I am suggesting is that this song, and perhaps other songs, might be worth gifting to your friends, acquaintances, and families, in order to share the Good News of God’s coming Kingdom to this earth. Music can be a unique, non-invasive, and easy way of sharing the Gospel with those in your circle of influence.

You might consider these songs as valuable tools for evangelism when other forms of evangelism have been outside your personal comfort zone, or have been somewhat ineffective. You can order my CDs by clicking on the “Music” link at www.kingdomheart.org. There are two or three samples for you to listen to and an easy order/payment method using a credit card and the PayPal feature.

Working While We Wait,

Robin Todd, Robinsings4u@comcast.net

Comments

“First, let me thank you for your diligence and for sticking to your monotheistic unitarian beliefs. I started kicking around unitarianism a few years ago but abandoned the thought, honestly because I was afraid of the consequences of *not* believing in the Trinity taught to me as a young man in catechism, and later as a Fundamental Baptist. Since my departure from Baptist Bible college in 1987 I have really started thinking (something discouraged while in that movement) about

what is ‘orthodox’ compared to what is *Biblical*, and found the two aren’t the same. Fast forward to five years ago: I had latched on to Dr. James White and became a somewhat protesting believer in Reformed [Calvinist] theology, ‘protesting’ because although I liked the aspect of God being sovereign, I didn’t care for the TULIP that came with the package; it made God out to be a considerable monster. As time went on, the thought of unitarianism was still dormant in the back of my mind and would rear its head every time I would read the Gospel of John and found that if I accepted the ‘orthodox’ explanation then Jesus would appear to have Multiple Personality Disorder (I’m not being irreverent; I’m preparing for my Masters in Clinical Psychology and that’s the closest way to describe what I’m thinking). Being God but not coming out and saying it and *not being God* but alluding to it — the average person on the street would be prescribed anti-psychotic meds if claiming to be two people at once. Recently (within the last month or so) I decided to commit myself to really studying out the doctrine of unitarianism and found, with focused attention, the NT made sense: Jesus *had* to be human in his origin and to carry out the responsibilities given to him by the Father in order to be Savior, High Priest and Brother to believers. *God* cannot be tempted like we, but *Jesus* could. All that was required for the sacrifice for sin was a *lamb without blemish or spot*. *The human Jesus* was without blemish and spot, therefore, the perfect sacrifice required by God. I’m just learning to rethink my doctrine. My stomach hurts at times because I’m going against something I’ve had ingrained into me for most of my life, but I know this is correct. I realized the correctness of the doctrine by listening to a few of the debates you’ve had. When the person you’re debating runs out of material, they start threatening, by inference, pain in hell if the Trinity isn’t embraced. (For instance, the passage ‘If you do not believe I am he, you will die in your sins’ is taken to say ‘If you do not believe I am God, you will die in your sins’ when in the *real* context Jesus was saying to the Pharisees, ‘If you do not believe that I am come from God and I am the Messiah, you will die in your sins’). It’s *then* the debater has lost the argument; then you had to deal with the condescending attitudes of Mr. White and Mr. Brown....but that’s another email. Anyway, I’m still learning and thought I would drop you a note of encouragement.” — *Ohio*

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