

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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The One God, the Father, One Man Messiah Translation

New Testament with Commentary

The notes confirm belief in the unitary monotheistic creed of Jesus and his Gospel of the Kingdom. Jesus' allegiance to the One God of his Jewish heritage ought to provide for us, his claimed followers, our own definition of God.

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The War Against Christians Culturally and Physically in the Last Days

by Cathy Cunningham, South Carolina

When I was assigned this title to teach, I thought it to be quite a mouthful. Then I remembered the prophet John's reaction to the same subject. That information proved to be quite a mouthful to him as well, making his "stomach bitter" (Rev. 10:8-11). Told to "prophesy again concerning many peoples and nations and tongues and kings," John went on to record the **devastating events which will affect God's people in the last years of this age**. Although sent to the house of Israel, the prophet Ezekiel had a very similar reaction to this subject. His **mouthful** contained "lamentations, mourning and woe" (Ezek. 2:7-3:3). Even though this topic truly is a mouthful that is bitter for us to stomach, it is necessary information to digest.

Pertaining to the times which will immediately precede his return, Jesus often cautioned, "**See to it that no one misleads you**" (for example Mark 13:5). According to him, believers have a responsibility to know the truth, the accurate information. He tells us to *make certain* that we are not misled. It is our responsibility therefore to comprehend this advance information (the prophecies provided through the Holy Scriptures). Having been told "**everything in advance**," we have no excuse for ignorantly following anyone's distorted teaching (see Rom. 11:25; Mark 13:23; 2 Pet. 3:16-17). We each have access to these prophecies contained within our Bibles.

As we pursue these prophecies together, remember Paul's admonition to "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, **accurately** handling the word of **truth**" (2 Tim. 2:15).

Biblically speaking, "**the last days**" officially began with Jesus' ascension. His departure from this earth initiated God's prophetic time period of "summer," the very last biblical "season" of the "kingdoms of men." During this time span, conditions worldwide will increasingly worsen, "wax worse and worse." As this "season" draws to a close, there will be a climactic conclusion to "this present evil age." Much like a dramatic crescendo in a well-orchestrated musical composition, the end of this age will dramatically conclude with heightened intensity. That final stage, "**the end of the age**," will officially bring "**the last days**" to a close. The "kingdom of the world" will then become "the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ" (Rev. 11:15).

Although officially begun at ascension, "**the last days**" in Scripture zeroes in on the activities which take place **just prior to the second coming**. As the time for Christ's return nears, the age known as "the last days" intensifies to such a degree that great prophetic emphasis is placed upon its final stage. **So much Scripture is designated to that specific time**. Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Jesus, John, Paul, Peter, etc. **all foretell events in that significant time period!** With such biblical emphasis having been placed upon it, our attention as good Bible students would fall far short of the Christian standard if it overlooks the **significance of the time which precedes the second coming**.

Focusing on events "**at the end of the age**," Jesus, and the other prophets as well, carefully depict both **concurrent** and **sequential** signs of that time. Happening **concurrently**, but increasing in intensity as Christ's return nears, are many general signs of the time. There will be a plethora of false religious leaders claiming to be Christian, including false Christs and false prophets. Wars, and the reporting of wars, will be numerous. In various parts of the world, earthquakes and famines will increase. Basic morality as well as justice will be diminished. Lawlessness will be increased. Society as a whole will lack compassion. Love will grow cold, even lacking natural affection for family members. (All of this sounds familiar — like listening to the nightly news.)

As the time known as "the last days" nears its **completion**,¹ the intensity heightens greatly.

¹Used more than 700 times in Scripture, **seven** is God's number for completion. The last generation of man born

All the prophets agree in their announcement of the events which will happen during the final seven years of this age (Dan. 9:27). The first half of that seven years will be a rapid build-up to the **extremely significant last half**.

Referred to variously as “1260 days,” “forty-two months,” “a time and times and half a time,” “a thousand two hundred and threescore days,” etc., that last half of the final seven years is **3 ½ years²** in duration. Marking the onset of that last period is the “**Abomination of Desolation**.” Taking place mid-point in the final seven years, this abominable event (and **person** “standing where **he** ought not to,” see Mark 13:14) is a **major prophetic milestone**. In foretelling this event, Jesus is very concerned for our welfare, stressing the **urgency** of this matter (Matt. 24:15-20; Mark 13:14-18; Luke 21:20-24). He refers us to “Daniel the prophet” from whom we learn explicit details which “pertain to the time of the end” about things which “will occur at the final period” (Dan. 7:8-27; 8:17-19, 23-25; 9:21-27; 11:21-45; 12:1-13). Paul also provides enlightenment concerning this pivotal prophetic event (2 Thess. 2:1-12).

It is from this mid-point that we begin the **sequential** signs of the second coming, announcing “**when** you see the Abomination of Desolation...” This major event is followed rapidly by the “**great tribulation**” — “**then** there will be a great tribulation.” Next in the sequence is the abundance of false signs and wonders performed by false Christs and false prophets, “**Then**...false Christs and false prophets will arise and will show great signs and wonders.” Next on the schedule, the lights go out: “**immediately after**...the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.” The climax of the sequence is: “**then** the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky.” Following in sequence, “**then** all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with

during Adam’s lifetime, Lamech, the seventh-generation grandson of Adam, completed in triplicate that antediluvian age of man, living to be 777 years old. This “present evil age” will not be complete until God’s designated seven completes it. The final seven years of “the kingdoms of the world” will complete man’s rule and usher in the “Kingdom of God” to be ruled by “the King of Kings.” The last seven years which precede Christ’s return will complete “the last days,” making “an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy place” (Dan. 9:24).

²You do the math; all of those terms are equal to 3 ½ years. 12 months + 12 months + 12 months + 6 months = 42 months = 3 ½ years. 360 days + 360 days + 360 days + 180 days = 1260 days = 3 ½ years (360 days = Jewish year). 7 years divided into 2 parts = 3 ½ years + 3 ½ years.

power and great glory. And he will send forth his angels with a great trumpet and they will gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.” Found throughout this period, the sequence of “preaching the gospel of the kingdom” **precedes** the establishment of God’s Kingdom. “This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and **then** the end will come.”

Throughout the entire final period another sequential agenda will be taking place. I do not like to be the presenter of the gloom and doom portion, but my assigned topic does include that unpleasant material. If you want to have itching “ears tickled” with “myths,” I am afraid you have come to the wrong place. This article is intended to provide “sound doctrine” (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

We have stressed the good news of the kingdom. The bad news is that before Christ returns the final seven years of this age will be no picnic, and the last 3½ years (“the great tribulation”) will be terrifying. A time of “apostasy” and “persecution of the saints,” it will be a time of “betrayals” — even among family members and church members. It will be a time of “deceit” and “intrigue,” “insolence” and “lawlessness,” a time of destruction “to an extraordinary degree.” It will be a time **unprecedented** in human history. A “time of distress such as never occurred” (Dan. 12:1), that time is described by Jesus as “unequaled from the beginning of the world until now — and never to be equaled again” (Matt. 24:21).

Advising that we would “do well to pay attention” to “the prophetic word,” Peter compares prophecy to “a lamp shining in a dark place” (2 Pet. 1:19). Prophecy does indeed illuminate future events for us. It allows us to see what the future holds. Without prophecy we would be truly in the dark, surrounded by darkness, unaware of what is coming our way. The prophet Hosea warned us not to be “destroyed for lack of knowledge” (Hos. 4:6; cp. Isa. 5:13; 53:11). At the very center of God’s prophetic plans is Christ. As the “light of the world” (John 8:12), he has brought to light many of God’s plans. Christ is “the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles” (Acts 26:22-23). Remember, too, your part. You must be “the light of the world” (Matt. 5:14), ready at all times to speak and teach truth. ✧

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What Is “Preaching the Gospel”?

What, according to Jesus, was the purpose of his whole mission? What is the purpose of Christianity?

“I came to call sinners to repentance” (Luke 5:32).

“I came to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10).

“I came to destroy the works of the Devil” (see 1 John 3:8).

But how did he do it?

“I must preach the Gospel about the Kingdom of God. That’s what I was sent to do” (Luke 4:43).

A popular form of evangelism tells us that Jesus appealed to the public to “ask him into their hearts” or “accept him.” This language apparently has no basis in the recorded words of Jesus. It gives free rein to the human imagination. It does not seem to reflect Jesus’ evangelistic method. It encourages deception and false security. We must bear in mind that Jesus warned that a vast majority would think they had been Christians but really were not (Matt. 7:15ff).

How then did Jesus invite sinners to become believers? The answer to this question was the primary concern of the Bible writers. After all, they were also evangelists, hoping with their written records to win others to salvation. What was their message and method?

Undoubtedly it was the message and method learned from Jesus’ own example of preaching the Gospel. Today, however, many seem puzzled by the idea that Jesus was a Gospel preacher. Did he not just die and rise from the dead? Was that not sufficient basis for salvation? The answer must be a clear-cut “no.” If the death and resurrection of Jesus are all there is to *the Gospel*, why did Jesus preach the Gospel for some three years *without at that stage presenting any information about his death and resurrection*? How were the apostles able to go out under Jesus’ supervision and *preach the Gospel and offer salvation* (Luke 8:1; 9:2, 6), when the death and resurrection of Jesus were as yet unknown to them? (see Luke 18:31-34; John 20:9).

The facts are very simple. Jesus came to save the lost. He came to call sinners to repentance. How he went about this central task, however, seems largely to escape the notice of churchgoers. The plain answer is that Jesus presented a message and invited people to believe that message. Here are his opening summary words, and they are typical of his whole ministry.

Everything Jesus said is really an expansion of this opening statement about how salvation is to be gained. Listen to Jesus: “Repent and **believe the Gospel Message about the Kingdom of God**” (Mark 1:14-15). This is a summary statement of the Christian faith provided by Mark at the outset of his evangelistic account of Jesus and his career as evangelist and Savior. The

Kingdom is the organizing center of all that Jesus taught as Gospel. Jesus was the original evangelist: “Salvation was first proclaimed by the lord [Jesus]” (Heb. 2:3).

How could we have missed the basis of the Christian faith as Jesus preached it? The answer is that we have been bombarded with language about sin and forgiveness and the blood of Jesus (also essential elements of the Gospel), but we have apparently been steered away from the obvious fact (once one sees it) that such *forgiveness is secured also on the essential basis of responding intelligently to Jesus’ **Gospel about the Kingdom***.

Jesus’ teaching is straightforward on this point. He compared his saving Gospel teaching to a seed sown in the heart. The seed is called the Gospel/Word about the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19) — abbreviated sometimes to simply “the word of God” (Luke 8:11), “the word” (Mark 4:14). That seed/message he commands us to understand, believe and embrace. It must be accepted by our minds and become the mainspring of our lives.

According to Jesus, repentance means abandoning our own philosophy of life and becoming devoted to his Gospel of the Kingdom: By turning away from our own agendas we are to embrace his agenda — what he constantly called the Kingdom of God Gospel. Many churchgoers today are heavily committed to current political programs, but Jesus was very little concerned with social action. He was interested in the ultimate question of God’s politics. The kingdoms of this present world are by definition not Christian. They are part of Satan’s world. Christians do not belong to this system; they are “not of this world.” The world will become the Kingdom of God only at Christ’s return (Rev. 11:15-18; Dan. 7:14, 18, 22, 27; 2:44; Mic. 4:8; Obad. 21).

The Kingdom of God is the new world order to be inaugurated by Christ at his return to this earth (Acts 1:6; 3:21; Luke 19:11ff). We must prepare now with all urgency for its coming. Christians are to help others to respond also to Jesus’ Kingdom Gospel challenge, including, of course, his sacrificial death and his resurrection.

Jesus complained that many are reluctant to repent *on his terms*. They prefer their own terms. They may well be disposed to give up whatever they have conceived as sinful and ungodly. But the issue for Jesus is not a vague conviction of ungodliness but an **understanding response** to his saving appeal: *belief in the Gospel of the Kingdom*. Jesus laid out this central fact about salvation in Mark 4:11-12. He explained that it was failure to embrace *his Gospel/word about the Kingdom* which prevented people from coming to him and being saved. “To you [Christian disciples] the mystery of the Kingdom of God has been given or made known [Matt. 13:11], but to the others the message comes in parables. They see and do not perceive and they hear and do not understand. **If**

they did they would repent and be forgiven” (Mark 4:11-12).

The issue in regard to repentance is very obviously here the *reception or non-reception of Jesus’ Gospel of the Kingdom*. Luke reports the same truth with equal clarity: “When anyone hears the Gospel/word [about the Kingdom, Matt. 13:19] and does not understand it, the Devil comes and snatches away the Gospel which has been sown in his heart [mind] so that he cannot *believe it and be saved*” (Luke 8:12). Here evidently repentance and forgiveness are *conditional upon* the intelligent acceptance of the preaching of the Kingdom of God by Jesus. Luke 8:12 is a devastatingly important verse, worthy of being placed on your refrigerator!

Yet, in current evangelism, no such information about the Kingdom of God is offered to the potential convert. Rather he is told to “acknowledge his sin” and “accept Jesus” who died for him. But this method skips over — bypasses — the essential step on which Jesus laid so much emphasis. On the evidence of the words of Jesus above, is forgiveness offered apart from repentance and acceptance of the Gospel of the Kingdom? Is repentance possible in the absence of a grasp of the Kingdom of God?

Luke in Acts 8:12 presents a very clear “formula” for becoming members of the body of Christ. Once again, following Jesus’ own evangelistic model, the issue is the acceptance or refusal of the Gospel about the Kingdom. “When they believed Philip as he preached the Gospel about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were getting baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12). All the NT preachers were evangelists, dedicated to the Gospel about the Kingdom.

Surprisingly this is not the way modern evangelicals see salvation. In their minds the death and resurrection of Jesus have swallowed up any necessity to heed the actual words of Jesus when he preached salvation. A remedy for this puzzling situation would be to insist on preaching the Gospel from the gospels themselves, *starting* with the words of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. These four corroborating accounts make it impossible to avoid the simple fact that the primary and fundamental element in the Gospel is the acceptance of Jesus by accepting his Gospel of the Kingdom. “If you do not believe Moses, how can you believe my words?” “He who *hears my message/Gospel* and believes him who sent me has eternal life” (John 5:47, 24). The following sayings of Jesus are most pertinent to our subject and should, we think, call for a revolution in what is presented to the public for salvation:

“Whoever does not receive the Kingdom of God like a child will not enter it” (Luke 18:17; cp. John 17:8: “receive my words”).

“Unless you are converted and become like children you will not enter the Kingdom of God” (Matt. 18:3).

“Unless a person is born again, he cannot see/enter the Kingdom of God” (John 3:3-5).

Combining Jesus’ various statements we have this: Unless you hear and understand the Kingdom Gospel of Jesus and the Apostles you cannot repent and be forgiven. Unless you are converted, become like children, get born again and receive the Kingdom of God, you won’t enter it, be saved (Mark 4:11, 12, 14; John 3:3, 5; Luke 8:12; Matt. 13:19).

When his audience had refused Paul’s solemn, dawn till dusk exercise in persuasion and testimony *about the Kingdom of God* from the Bible, “some were not persuaded, would not believe; some believed” (Acts 28:23-24). So then, being persuaded about the Kingdom and Jesus means believing, becoming a Christian.

“If they did not close their minds, if they heard and saw and understood [the Kingdom Gospel] with their hearts they would repent and be forgiven” (Mark 4:12).

Salvation in the words of Jesus is always dependent on an intelligent understanding and reception by the mind of the truth about the Kingdom of God and Jesus’ death and resurrection.

Hence, “He who **hears my word** [about the Kingdom of God] and believes Him who sent me has eternal life” (John 5:24). **Salvation is dependent on hearing, understanding and obeying the words of Jesus.** Faith means believing what Jesus and the Apostles say and acting on those words (John 3:36). Thus Paul concludes, as a career preacher of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Acts 20:25), “Faith originates in hearing and hearing by means of Christ’s message” (Rom. 10:17). But the missing link in the chain of salvation, as popularly presented, seems to be a massive disregard for what Jesus proclaimed as the Gospel. ✧

A Plea for a Return to Messianic Christianity

Part 1

Contemporary evangelicalism seems very easily to close track of the fact that Jesus is the Messiah. It is dangerous to proclaim “another Jesus” (2 Cor. 11:4, *allos*, “another, but of the same type”). This will happen unless we believe in the Jesus, the Messiah predicted by the Hebrew Bible, whom God has appointed heir of the coming Kingdom, as foreseen by all the prophets.

The summons to conversion by “the voice crying in the wilderness” (Mark 1:3) takes us immediately to Isaiah 40, where the great prophet Isaiah (quoted some 85 times in the New Testament) foresees the national **restoration of Israel** and the coming of the glory or Kingdom of the Lord (Isa. 40:5). A comparison with Isaiah 52:1-10

shows that this event is the coming of the time when “Your God reigns” (Isa. 52:7). This grand occasion comes to us in the Greek of the New Testament as the Good News of the Reign or Kingdom of God, which is the Christian message of salvation (Luke 4:43; Mark 1:14-15; Acts 8:12; 19:8; 28:23, 31).

Thus to proclaim the biblical Kingdom of God is to announce the impending arrival of Yahweh in His Kingdom, in the person of His chosen and anointed agent and king. No wonder that the New Testament is so excited about the return of Jesus in glory to establish the Kingdom. No wonder it urges us to pray for “Thy Kingdom” to come.

To preach a “reign of God” as though this means primarily the sovereignty of God in an individual’s heart is not to preach the biblical message. It is to substitute a vague, psychological “feel good” message for the simple realism of God’s Kingdom plan for the world in Jesus. The New Testament evangelists proclaim in the Good News the coming universal Kingdom of Christ and then invite a response now to that tremendous future event (see our *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah* at restorationfellowship.org). The arrival of the Kingdom is in the future though signs of it may be seen already in the ministry of Jesus. Our response to the announcement of the Kingdom must be made in the present.

The process of salvation begins when the Good News of the Coming Kingdom is accepted as true, and an appropriate change of attitude occurs in the believer’s heart. The vital question of the sinner’s status before the King and the Kingdom is covered by the sacrifice of Jesus for sin. Faith must be expressed, not only in the Message about the Kingdom (Mark 1:15; Acts 8:12), but in the work of the suffering servant to atone for sinners (Mark 10:45). We insist, however, that faith in the sacrifice for sin loses its point unless there is also an intelligent, believing acceptance of the message of the coming reign of Jesus as Messiah. Unless the believer grasps the Gospel of the Kingdom, he has not come to believe in the real Messiah, though he may well have accepted a “Jesus” who died for our sins. Herein lies the danger of a false conversion based on inadequate information. Herein lies the danger of bypassing the Gospel always announced by Jesus. A loss of the teachings of Jesus is the fatal danger against which the New Testament warns us (John 3:36; 2 John 7-9).

The work of Satan has ever been to counterfeit the content of the true Gospel so that people will think that they have believed in the Savior, even though the real Savior and his message have never been presented to them. We see, then, why Paul was so agitated by the threat of “another Gospel” (*heteros*, “of a different kind”). The other Gospel (Gal. 1:6-10) would inevitably be a perversion of the genuine message and its

consequences would be fatal to those taken in by it. Having not been exposed to the real content of the biblical Gospel-Message, or drawn away from it, they would be unable to believe in a way which would lead to salvation! Satan’s strategy, Luke tells us, is to snatch away the Message (of the Kingdom, Matt. 13:19) “in order that people cannot believe and be saved” (Luke 8:12). This is a “John 3:16” verse of shattering significance.

Paul’s urgent warnings in 2 Corinthians 11:1-15 merit our closest attention in this theologically chaotic age. Paul expressed his nervousness about the Corinthians who seemed all too ready to accept “another Jesus,” “a different spirit,” and “a different Gospel.” The Apostle’s choice of words is significant here. The “Jesus” is another, but of the same kind. The Gospel is, however, of a different kind, and so is the spirit that comes with it. The clear implication is that “the other Jesus” is presented in terms which closely resemble the real Jesus, perhaps even as a Savior who died for our sins. The Good News, however, was of a different order from the true Gospel, though it masqueraded as the inspired message, and a cleverly counterfeited spirit was offered with it. Such were the diabolical fake versions of Christianity against which Paul warned. He expresses no easy optimism about this matter being a problem for his own time only. The danger would increase as time went on, as evil men went “from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13).

The one question which is so seldom considered by students of Christianity is the matter of the content of the Message of the Good News. It is constantly assumed that we all know what is meant by the Gospel. But it is here that the danger of deception is so menacing. A Catholic writer has sensed the underlying problem when he says in a paragraph entitled “Message Not Understood”: “The main thrust of renewal in the church has proceeded on the basis of presupposing that the ‘Kerygma’ [the proclamation], the basic Christian Message, has been effectively appropriated by the Christian people.”³ Yes, that presupposition that the true Gospel has been presented, needs to be questioned with all urgency.

Belief in the Good News entails the acceptance by the mind and heart of a definite body of information. Should that body of information be distorted by subtraction from or addition to the biblical formula, it will become impossible to believe in biblical terms, though easy to believe what may be falsely labeled and presented as the Good News. Thus the definition of the content of the Good News becomes the first and all-important consideration in salvation. ✧

³Ralph Martin, *Unless the Lord Build the House*, 1972, emphasis added.

Finding the Pieces of the Puzzle: A Faith Story

by Jackie, Peru (translated from Spanish)

Sometimes it can be frustrating wanting to finish a puzzle and realizing that there are several pieces that do not fit into place. And even worse when some pieces have been lost. Something like that happened to me. My name is Jacqueline Flores Bedon [known to us who baptized her as “Yackee”] and I was born in Huanuco, Peru, a small town in the center of my country. In my childhood I heard some things about the Gospel, as taught by my parents who are ex-evangelical (now sadly without religion). At some point they were Catholic, and sometimes not; in my development as a human being and in my daily life I knew for certain that God existed. Moreover, He seemed always to be present, even though I did not understand the Bible. My infancy, childhood and adolescence passed by and, as do many, I drifted away from God, in the midst of family difficulties marked by the tragic fact that my father drank excessively.

One day when I was 16, I heard a woman testify on radio that she had died and gone to hell. When I heard this I was thrown into terror for what would happen to me when I died, and even worse I heard the preaching of the pastors who threatened me that if I continued in my worldly life I would go to eternal hell.

So I arrived at a Pentecostal congregation, where I attended about 14 years. They taught me many things — that Jesus is God and that he had always existed; the mystery of the Trinity; that we could all speak in other languages and dance like David; that one day soon Jesus would return for the secret pre-tribulation rapture; and many other things that I embraced as my own in order to be in that congregation.

Perhaps it would be obvious to think that all Christian religions derive their teachings from the Scriptures, but this stopped being so for me when I started reading the Bible without their help. The truth is that every time I read and understood the Bible I found more questions, like, If they say that Jesus existed forever then why is he not found in the Old Testament? or Why in Matthew 24 does it obviously say that the rapture, gathering of the faithful, is **after** the Great Tribulation, not before?

These were questions that I hoped would be answered, but the answers I got from the pastors left me with even more questions. I began to realize that most pastors do not really *study* the Bible thoroughly, but they simply give “motivational” or sentimental messages. So I thought maybe the Bible was not meant to be understood by me, but only by important ministers and reverends, and I decided to ask no more questions, and I continued to read the Bible from the point of view that my religion

gave me. In this way I pretended the Bible was like a puzzle that could only be put together by the great religious leaders.

So the days passed and I began to realize that the environment in which I found myself was not that of a “normal” religion, but it had some quirks, like talk of a “move of the Holy Spirit.” What I began to observe was far from being praise to God, but was in fact a confused disorder, something scary to some people. We were looked at as crazy. I began to suspect that many of the leaders were only interested in the offerings and tithes, and some brothers fell away from practicing love of neighbor and only spoke ill of their brothers. The worst thing was that I became like them. I began to think it was fine and started to say things that displease God, like telling everyone that my religion was the only one which had the whole truth — that other religions and preachers would only lead to hell.

They taught me an unbiblical legalism, preaching that “holiness” meant that a woman’s hair (even the ends) should never be cut. If you wore pants you were worldly, and if you wore earrings and makeup you were a slave to Satan. Shame on me now when I remember the entire load of nonsense that I believed! Living so far from the truth, worse hearing every day from Monday to Sunday (because we forbade missing a single meeting) the shouts and curses hurled by my pastors preaching from the pulpits, often giving us entirely moralistic messages, legalistic and “motivational,” yet false to the Bible. Nevertheless in that religion I met many good people who really wanted to know more about the Bible, and even in their ignorance they were examples for me.

This is how I met my beloved husband and many friends, including one of our pastors who, having restudied everything, guided us to the knowledge of the Bible in its original context and to the true gospel of the Kingdom, which we preach and believe now. When we first heard these new teachings I felt we had found pieces of the puzzle which we could not put together for years. It all started to make beautiful sense in Scripture. It was like finding a pearl of great price.

I decided to leave behind the senseless teachings I had learned all my life and worship the only God our Father, and recognize that Jesus is the Messiah and future King of the coming Kingdom. There is no such thing as a Trinity which I could never understand (I’m sure they couldn’t either!). Our one God never changed the plan, which was always the same: for us to **inherit the earth** (Matt. 5:5) and reign with Christ on a renewed earth (1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 2:26-27; 20:1-6). Do you still have a puzzle with missing pieces, or do you have it assembled and ready, like me? ✨

Comments

“My son and I are the only ones in our area who have come to understand the one true God and Jesus His Son as a human man. I have shared the truth with three people, and one asked me to leave the church, another said I’m not saved, and the last couldn’t comprehend why I would not believe in the Trinity. I feel like I have to relearn everything I ever believed. I do use your website as well as truthmattersradio.wordpress.com and christianmonotheism.com and 21stcr.org. They have been wonderful resources to use.” — *Pennsylvania*

“Thanks a lot for all your helpful and edifying writings and the big-eye opening articles in the *Focus on the Kingdom*. I try to make some photocopies to send to some preachers, pastors and heads of some denominations to make them see the truth about the Bible stand on our One God who is the Father. I suspect some may contact you directly or perhaps ignore the message as heresy. I have a small group of students and non-students who we try regularly every week to study the Scriptures together. I make sure everyone gets a photocopy of the *Focus on the Kingdom* and they have direct access to your books and booklets that you sent in the past. Thank you so much for all your huge support, encouragement and assistance to my growing faith and being a helping hand to young people here to understand the precious truths of God’s promised kingdom and the nature of God who sent His Son to be the human mediator between Himself and fallen mankind. May the Lord continue to bless you and your family and supporters/staff at the Restoration Fellowship.” — *Nigeria*

“Just reading your introduction in your New Testament translation is incredible and heart lifting! Most excellent! We’ve landed!” — *Washington*

“Dear friends of *Focus on the Kingdom*,

I want to thank you for sending *Focus on the Kingdom*. I lead a Bible study in jail, and one on one at times, to help open these men’s eyes to the truth of Jesus being a unitarian. This wonderful little bulletin is filled with such truth. I always enjoy it and find tools to help in my ‘mission field.’ I am so hungry for more and more truth, as one of those who are Bible unitarians. We do not have the privilege of using a computer and thus we can’t go online. We just have the old-fashioned ‘snail mail.’ I do have a big question. I was taught as a teenager (now I’m 54) that there will be a rapture seven years before the second coming. The saved will be in heaven with God and Jesus for the seven years of tribulation. Next we come back to the earth for 1000 years, in which Satan is in the bottomless pit. After the 1000 years Satan will be released for a short time, and then the saved go to heaven forever. I understand now that we will not go to heaven

forever, but will live on the new earth. But I just don’t understand the order of 1) rapture, 2) 7 years tribulation, and then 3) the second coming of Christ. By the way, Dr. Joe Martin and our Anthony Buzzard are my two favorite heroes of the faith. I thank God for these two men.” — *North Carolina*

There is positively no pre-tribulation rapture in Scripture. Jesus will come back one time visibly and will raise the dead and begin to reign in the Kingdom on earth. It is totally misleading to use the word “rapture,” unless you define it as pre- or post-tribulation rapture. The catching up of the saints will occur at the single future return of Jesus. Please read 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 carefully. This is the single future coming of Jesus. It will be after the future Great Tribulation (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21, 29-31). The millennium will begin at the second coming of Jesus and it is the first stage of the future Kingdom of God to continue in subsequent ages.

“I have been learning so much from the 21st Century Reformation website (www.21stcr.org) and Restoration Fellowship videos on YouTube and two of Joel Hemphill’s books and three of Mr. Buzzard’s. I am so happy to find you have a group on Facebook. Here is a little info on how I got this far: As I continued to study the position of ‘Fulfilled Eschatology’ [Ed. *Fulfilled eschatology can be fatal to the whole Gospel. That is, the Kingdom predicted by the OT as a Jewish-Christian empire/theocracy with Jesus on the throne of David has not yet come. It can be tasted now in advance in the spirit, which is a down-payment. It certainly did not come at Pentecost or in AD 70!*] I still found myself so troubled by Trinitarian doctrine (as I have been since the Lord called me to himself in 1981), that I just had to stop and focus on it completely before I could press on any further. Laying aside all preconceived ideas about the person of God, I am studying with an open heart and mind the other positions, and am praying to my Father in heaven, through His Son Jesus Christ, to teach me the truth about Himself — no matter what the cost to me personally. I have already been condemned by two Trinitarian Christian friends for even considering the doctrine to be un-scriptural. I still hold them in the highest love and esteem, but I definitely smell smoke! As I pray for them, I can’t help but be grateful that this isn’t the year A.D. 1550 or something, as I am sure I would be burning at the stake!” — *Kentucky*

“I have been receiving copies of *Focus on the Kingdom* since Volume 1. Your long continued witness to Bible truth is greatly appreciated.” — *Jamaica*