

Focus on the Kingdom

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Does Jesus Use of “I Am” Mean He Is God?

by Alane Rozelle, Michigan

In John 9:9, the miraculously healed but formerly blind man said, “I am,” exactly the same two Greek words that Jesus uses when he makes his “I am” statements (as recorded throughout the book of John). First, it’s interesting to note that when the blind man says in Greek “ego eimi,” it is usually and correctly translated as “I am **he**,” referring, of course, to his attempt to clarify to everyone that, “Yes! I am he; I am the one — the formerly blind man, but now I’m healed.” Yet when Jesus says the same thing precisely in order to identify himself as the Messiah (John 4:26), it’s usually rendered as “I am” or even “I AM” (CEB, ISV, JUB, TLV). This in turn is popularly, but quite erroneously, used to support the falsehood that Jesus was somehow claiming to *be* God, since in the OT God/Yahweh said to Moses “I am that I am” (Ex 3.14, literally, “I will be what I will be”).

When Jesus spoke to the Samaritan woman he was making the stupendous claim to be the Messiah, the Christ of the woman’s declaration in the verse immediately preceding (4:25). Elsewhere in John, Jesus is recorded as stating that he is the “bread of life” (6:35) and “the resurrection and the life” (11:25). But saying “*ego eimi* the bread of life” is nothing at all like declaring “I am what I am/I will be what I will be” as said by God to Moses (Ex. 3:14).

Note that it’s not the “*ego eimi*” of God’s self-revelation that is the focus for those who say Jesus is God. The real declaratory focus are the subsequent two words — “o ohn”¹ — the Divine identifiers, we might say. In the NIV God says to Moses: “I am [*ego eimi*] who I am [*o ohn*].” “I am the **Self-Existing One**.” “This is what you are to say to the Israelites: ‘I am [*o ohn*] has sent me to you.’” But the English translations highlight the wrong two words, i.e., instead of *ego eimi* it should be *o ohn*: “*o ohn* [the self-existing one] has sent you.” (cp. Philo, *Life of Moses*, vol. 1.75: “He who is”).

The NT writers never record Jesus using “*o ohn*” in reference to himself, let alone “*ego eimi o ohn*.” Furthermore, what other words would you have Jesus use in order to identify himself? For example, when you say “I am a teacher” or “I am Bob” or “I am the only one

who has the key to that door,” if you were to write them in Greek the same words would be used as self-identifiers: “*ego eimi*.” There is no simpler and clearer way to identify you! Jesus never said “I AM” or “I am that I am” or “I will be what I will be.” He simply said, “I am the good shepherd; I am the way, the truth and the life; I am the vine”; “I am the Messiah” (John 4:25-26), etc. Like the healed blind man, Jesus was merely identifying himself for those asking or looking for him (cp. John 18:4-8).

Jesus from the beginning claimed to be the promised Messiah. He never claimed to *be* YHWH, the God of Israel (who is also the God of Jesus!). He never claimed to be “The Great I AM” of the OT. He did, however, repeatedly claim to be the unique Son of God, the **Messiah lord** (Luke 2.11, *kristos kurios*) and this is *not* the Lord God. Jesus is related to the One Lord God in Luke 2:26 where he is the Lord’s Anointed (Messiah). Luke has brilliantly and precisely introduced the hero and principal “player” of his narrative in the two-volume (Luke and Acts) work he gives us. Luke wrote nearly a third of the NT.

What a blessed achievement! Luke and Jesus never for a moment believed that there are *two* who are both GOD. That would shatter the great commandment, which forbids any multiplying of God (Mark 12:29; John 17:3; 5:44; Mal. 2:10). Jesus rejected the blasphemy of claiming to be GOD! (John 10:33-36). ✧

Alluring Allusions

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

Reflecting on the set of parables in chapter 13 of Matthew, it might be obvious that Jesus himself was very much like the scribe compared to a householder, as mentioned at the end of this discourse: “Well, then,” he said to them, “every scribe who has been trained for the kingdom of heaven is like a householder who brings out of his storeroom some new things and some old things” (Matt. 13:52, KNT).

As Jesus imparted uniquely vivid perspectives about **Kingdom of Heaven/Kingdom of God** realities as “new things,” he wove these fresh insights together with some “old things,” namely, several striking allusions to Old Testament truths.

For example, his intriguing parable of the weeds (13:24-30) offered the **new** insight that the farmer did not rashly send the servants to uproot weeds prematurely, even though they were the work of an enemy. The reason

¹Our transliterations reflect a modern pronunciation of Greek, which is a living language.

given is that they could have accidentally pulled up the wheat as well; thus they were to wait until the harvest. The picture of wise, forbearing patience before the upcoming judgments at the close of this age becomes clear when we reading the explanation of this parable in verses 36-43. Connected with this explicit **new** perspective are a couple of allusions to the book of Daniel, a book which related events and prophetic insights that were already about 600 years **old**. The picture of a “fiery furnace” (v. 42) is an interesting allusion to Nebuchadnezzar’s prepared punishment for those who did not bow down to his idol (Dan. 3:6). The future reward of the righteous shining like the sun in the kingdom of their father (Matt. 13:43) is an allusion to an apocalyptic picture near the conclusion of Daniel: “But the wise will shine like the brightness of the heavenly expanse. And those bringing many to righteousness will be like the stars forever and ever” (Dan. 12:3, NET).

Between the telling of the parable of the weeds and its explanation (in Matt. 13) there are two tiny parables rooted in dynamic allusions to former times. It is noteworthy that similar versions of these two parables are also presented back-to-back in another context in Jesus’ ministry in Luke 13:18-21. To touch on the use of allusions in these short comparisons is merely to scratch the surface of a vast potential web of interconnected biblical imagery.

He put another parable to them. “The kingdom of heaven,” he said, “is like a grain of mustard seed, which someone took and sowed in his field. It’s the smallest of all the seeds, but when it grows it turns into the biggest of all the shrubs. It becomes a tree, and the birds in the sky can then come and nest in its branches” (Matt. 13:31-32, KNT)

The mustard seed was well-known, then and now, as a symbol for smallness. From this “smallest of all the seeds” the garden plant or large shrub produced is sort of bumped up into the category of a tree, since its branches serve to shelter flying birds. This provision for birds is reminiscent of a couple of Old Testament pictures of mighty trees which symbolized exalted kingdoms or empires. In Daniel, chapter 4, Nebuchadnezzar’s magnificence as the head of Babylon was so pictured: “Its foliage was attractive and its fruit plentiful; on it there was food enough for all. Under it the wild animals used to seek shade, and in its branches the birds of the sky used to nest. All creatures used to feed themselves from it” (Dan. 4:12, NET).

Verses 20-22 in this context also elaborated on the abundant tree, “in whose branches birds of the sky used to rest” (v. 21b), in order to identify this impressive, ancient king. Of course, Nebuchadnezzar’s arrogance soon reduced him metaphorically to a stump until he truly humbled himself to the Most High, the one who sees the

big picture and ultimately has authority over human kingdoms.

Contemporaneous with some of the realities in Daniel, Ezekiel spoke of the cedar of Lebanon, referring figuratively to the haughty house of Israel as judged by Yahweh. Once again, Yahweh was shown as prevailing over human pride, this time with a prophetic view described as the tiny planting of a cropped off sprig! “The Lord Yahweh says this: From the top of the tall cedar, from the highest branch I shall take a shoot and plant it myself on a high and lofty mountain. I shall plant it on the highest mountain of Israel. It will put out branches and bear fruit and grow into a noble cedar tree. Every kind of bird will live beneath it, every kind of winged creature will rest in the shade of its branches. And all the trees of the countryside will know that I, Yahweh, am the one who lays the tall tree low and raises the low tree high, who makes the green tree wither and makes the withered bear fruit. I, Yahweh, have spoken, and I will do it” (Ezek. 17:22-24, NJB).

God’s judgment on uplifted human evil is given another vivid picture in the Psalms. “I have seen the wicked exultant, towering like a cedar of Lebanon. When next I passed he was gone, I searched for him and he was nowhere to be found” (Psalm 37:35-36, NJB)

Jesus, although alluding to the records in Daniel 4 and Ezekiel 17, did not compare God’s coming kingdom to the kinds of lofty trees that were judged for boastful pride. The use of the lowly mustard shrub containing a place where birds could nest involved a plant portrait that was easy to overlook. Jesus’ unique comparison was practically a parody of the powerful trees that would have been impressive to most people, but that had previously been associated with God’s judgments on human arrogance. A mustard garden herb definitely made for an unexpected analogy, when clearly alluding to former scriptural pictures of magnificent trees. Absolutely, that which was planted as a tiny, insignificant looking mustard seed would not be stopped, even if the proud might presently disregard its supreme importance. God’s reign will “grow,” intervening to prevail as a perfectly ample, worldwide provision and shelter when all human kingdoms will have turned to rubble.

He told them another parable. “The kingdom of heaven is like leaven,” he said, “which a woman took and hid inside three measures of flour, until the whole thing was leavened” (Matt. 13:33, KNT).

Leaven or yeast is commonly known for its permeating influence and its function to make dough rise. It is spoken of literally many times in the Old Testament, but it is used solely in a metaphorical sense in the teachings of Jesus, as well as in all its New Testament uses. Though leaven is neither inherently good nor evil, it is always used figuratively for an evil influence with one

notable exception! In this Matthew 13 parable (and in a similar version of it in Luke 13:20) we find that **one exception** in which leaven represents a positive influence. That makes this use an unexpected twist. Even if it goes largely undetected in this present age, the message of God's eventual reign will have God's intended good, pervasive influence where He sends His Gospel/Word and causes it to be effective.

Furthermore, there is a subtle allusion in this parable to an event that occurred some two thousand years before Jesus spoke these words. The last time the scriptures had referred to three measures of flour (Gen. 18:6), Yahweh had appeared to Abraham by the oaks of Mamre by sending three heavenly messengers (angels) to proclaim a great promise on His behalf. Specifically, the pivotal timing of Isaac's birth, through whom God's Kingdom promises would continue to develop, was established. Genesis 18 relates the details to which Jesus alluded by mentioning three measures of flour.

Interestingly, three measures of flour was a lot of flour! A measure (*saton*) was a bit more than sixteen lbs. (or seven kg.) according to data from a footnote in the NET Bible Reader's Edition. So three dry measures would be about fifty pounds of flour. Perhaps that would have been perceived as the appropriate quantity for a large, festive occasion. In Genesis 18, that was the amount deemed proper for entertaining Yahweh's heavenly representatives, who ended up announcing the timing of a powerful miracle relevant to God's future reign! "Is anything impossible for the LORD?" (Gen. 18:14, NET). Jesus' one sentence comparison (Matt. 13:33) takes into account the marvelous events of Genesis 18 by alluding to a simple quantity of flour.

"Jesus said all these things to the crowds in parables. He didn't speak to them without a parable. This was to fulfill what was spoken by the prophet:

I will open my mouth in parables,

I will tell the things that were hidden

Since the very foundation of the world" (Matt. 13:34-35, KNT).

Once again, it is amazing to view how Jesus masterfully presented the revelation of **Kingdom of God/Heaven** truths as "new things" while peppering such fresh insights with "old things," including several allusions to Old Testament pictures and events. ✧

The One: In Defense of God by Pastor Dan Gill

This exciting new book is a persuasive call to return to the genuine monotheism of Jesus and Scripture.

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Genesis 18:3

In Genesis 18:2 there are three "men" who visit Abraham. Only *one* of them is addressed as *Adonai* (Lord God), in verse 3: "Lord, if indeed you [singular, one person] have favored me..." On the principle that the name and authority of God Himself is in the angel (Exod. 23:21), on this occasion the one agent is addressed as *Adonai*. Later on in Genesis 19:2 two of the angels are addressed as "my lords," which is the plural of *adoni*, my lord, always a non-Deity title. So God is speaking in 18:3 through one of the three angels as His special agent. It would be crazy to try to prove the Trinity from one out of thousands of unitary monotheistic verses, including Mark 12:29 which is decisive. Ask your friend why God means the Father and not the Trinity 1300 times in the New Testament. Why do 99% of the occurrences of "God" in the NT mean the Father and not Jesus, the Son? Why does "God" never mean a Triune God in Scripture?

One Means Only One

A comment in email about my comparing President Obama with God misses the point entirely! It is a simple language fact that in John 17:3, "the only one who is..." the Father, in this case, excludes all others. This is not complex, and was never meant to be. If only the Father is God as the true God of Israel, then Jesus cannot also be that God!

Obama is currently "the only one who is President of the USA." No argument about that. Your child of three understands such propositions. Likewise John records that Jesus said in prayer to the Father "You, Father, are the only one who is the true God." That is genuine Christian monotheism on the lips of the Son of God. The Father Himself said, "This is my Son. Listen to him!" (Matt. 17:5).

Psalm 110:1 has been frighteningly neglected. It is cited much more often than any other quotation of the OT in the NT. It will yet change the thinking of millions! (see at restorationfellowship.org our full discussion in "Adonai and Adoni," and "Sit at My Right Hand" by Allon Maxwell. Also my booklet at our site "Who Is Jesus?" in an appendix on Psalm 110:1).

Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1 immediately after agreeing on the unitary monotheistic definition of God in Mark 12:29 (Deut. 6:4). It is quite sufficient to show that God in Psalm 110:1 speaks to a supremely highly exalted *man* (*adoni*, my lord, not Lord). God speaking to God is not monotheism! The church "fathers" from the second century are the problem, and the infatuating effect of tradition unexamined. Why not sound like Jesus (we claim to want to be like him!) and affirm the unitary monotheism he espoused in John 17:3; 5:44 and Mark 12:29, 10:18?

Listen to Jesus in Mark 12:29 and John 17:3. In John 17:5 Jesus asked to receive the reward of glory at the end of his ministry. He did not say “give me *back* the glory I once had.” Jesus asked for the glory due to him in God’s plan, in God’s mind. That same glory was promised in John 17:22, 24 to people not even born when Jesus spoke. Christians already **have** a body fit for the coming age (2 Cor. 5:1) Actually we don’t yet have it, but we do have it in promise and prospect and hope (cp. 1 Pet. 1:4). Don’t make John 17:5 contradict John 17:3, Mark 12:29 and the rest of the Bible!✧

To Christadelphian Friends

On the issue of demons, I am glad you appreciate the airing of this important topic. Many Christadelphians I talked to in the UK (after we received much help on Christology from a leading Christadelphian, Harry Tennant) obviously did not know what to do with the demons in the synoptic accounts! I read in other Christadelphian literature that Jesus and James “**seemed to believe**” in demons. “Seemed to”? They did of course, and they would be highly deceptive witnesses to speak of demons without believing in their existence! Scripture on that principle would be wiped out as honest testimony! In your letter to us, you speak of James (2:19) using the word “demons” to say that even “*the supposedly possessed* of those days believed there is/was one God.” But James was not confused. He did not muddle “demons” and “the demon-possessed.” That would be like confusing *employer* and *employee*! The *demons* are not the *demonized*, the possessed. Christadelphians have so much of value to offer, but ought not to assume that their tradition is automatically right. We must not obscure an easy matter.

The origin of demons would be connected with the awful mismatching of Genesis 6, of angels and some human females (Jude 6-7). And as Paul said, there are many (false) gods and lords (1 Cor. 8:4-6). Our monotheism, belief in the One True God of Israel and the God of Jesus, is loud and clear, as also is the witness to demons (49 times in the NT) in the words of Jesus and Luke (Luke 4:41, etc.). This aspect of Christadelphianism calls for some clear rethinking. The objection of scores of students of the Bible is that you are not dealing honestly with the easy lexical meaning of “demon.” Humans are never to be confused with demons. Demon-influenced human beings are not demons! Followers of Jesus are committed to and will be judged by his words (John 12:44-50: Acts 17:31).

It is a terrible thing to be found tampering with the sacred text of Scripture. Unwittingly Christadelphians appear to have been caught in a trap when they attempt to alter the inspired words of the New Testament in order to

justify a long-held tradition that demons (and the Satan) are non-existent! Christadelphians of course must be given full credit for their illuminating work on the Gospel of the Kingdom and for leading the field in restoring the One God of Scripture, versus the Trinity, and the Messiahship of Jesus.

However, as Bereans, they will want to be aware of their curious change of method when it comes to the matter of Satan and demons. Unfortunately Christadelphians abandon their steady exegetical hand — that skill which achieved such excellent results in defining God, Messiah and the Gospel of the Kingdom.

In Luke 4:41, the historical narrative of the careful Christian historian Luke who wrote about a third of the whole NT, records this event: “Demons were coming out of many, shouting, ‘You are the Son of God!’ But rebuking them, he [Jesus] would not allow them to speak, because they knew him to be the Christ.”

What information is conveyed by this scriptural record? Demons came out. Demons cried out. Demons spoke. Jesus rebuked demons. Demons recognized Jesus as the Christ. The verbs (participles in this case) in the Greek which show the gender of the nouns they accompany, tell us emphatically (even more clearly than the English) that it was **demons** who came out of many, shouted and were able to recognize the truth that Jesus was the Messiah. This is patently not true of mentally deranged human beings alone. These tragic folk were demonized, i.e. heavily influenced by demons. Demons, according to the text of Scripture, here and everywhere else, have supernatural information. Jesus rebuked the demons. Jesus never hesitated to correct error, but he corrected no error in this case.

It would be an assault on the sacred text to say that demons do not exist! They are part of the fabric of the historical narrative. They are supernatural spirits. That of course is what the word demon (*daimonia*, in the plural) means! On no account may any of us dispense with the dictionary and lexicon meaning of words. That would be to close our eyes to revealed truth.

Non-existent things do not speak! Non-existent things cannot recognize Jesus as the Christ!

Commenting on Luke 4:41 one discussion of demons states, “A common sense reading of the passage is that when the demons were cast out, *the people* declared Jesus to be the Son of God” (John Allfree, *Bible Study*, No. 2, emphasis added). But this is false and not even “common sense.”

The laws of grammatical agreement in Greek allow us to know with complete certainty who it was who cried out and spoke and who it was who recognized Jesus as Messiah. According to Scripture in Luke it was the *demons* who recognized Jesus, *not* their victims:

Luke 4:41: “**Demons** [neuter plural] came out of many **people** [masculine plural], **crying** [neuter plural agreeing with demons] and **saying** [neuter plural agreeing with demons], ‘You are the Son of God!’ And he rebuked **them** [neuter plural, the demons] and did not allow **them** [neuter plural, the demons] to speak, because **they** [the demons] knew him to be the Christ.”

Christadelphians must be cautioned against suppressing or altering the biblical text in the way suggested by the “common sense” reading. It is hardly “common sense” to mistranslate the Bible!

In James 2:19 we read that “**the demons** also believe and tremble.” A desperate expedient is employed by Christadelphians to avoid this plain proof that demons are conscious, intelligent beings:

“Job 32:7 says that ‘days should speak, and multitude of years should teach wisdom.’ In this verse clearly ‘days’ = men who have days and ‘years’ = men who have years. By the same figure in ‘the devils also believe and tremble,’ devils = men who have devils.”

But no evidence is cited from any source that “demon” is ever a figure of speech for a demon-possessed human person. In the New Testament the demon and its human victim are not confused. This is a very easy language fact.

And there is no justification for the word “devils.” It is a King James Version mistake. The text reads “demons.”

May Christadelphians awake to the serious interference with scriptural truth implied by such “explanations.” Jesus and James taught that the *demons* believe in the one God, and they are intelligent, supernatural personalities. This establishes the existence of demons beyond any doubt. To turn the word “demons” into “the demonized” is an alteration of the sacred text. ✧

Easy Matters of Word Meanings

by Lorna Wilt, Illinois

I had always thought “the word of God” was just a synonym for the Bible itself. However, I learned that this idea takes the focus off the Kingdom of God Gospel. It muddles and confuses NT language. To use Anthony’s analogy, it is like saying you are going to England when, more precisely, you are going to London. While the more general usage is correct, it causes the more specific, vital definition of the Gospel to fade or blur. This is one of the subtle ways the Devil works to deceive (Rev. 12:9). Foggy language is his tool and the loss of truth means that our minds are poisoned. Truth, however, is life and energy (John 6:63, etc.)

The Devil knows God’s plan and is constantly trying to thwart it, one individual at a time and often in large masses. The Bible clearly states that believing in the

Kingdom of God Gospel is a condition of our salvation. See Luke 8:12. This is the Parable of the Sower. Verse 12 states that some of the persons to whom the seed of the Kingdom Gospel (Matt. 13:19) was given allowed Satan to take it away from their minds “**so that they cannot believe it and thus be saved.**” This passage flies in the face of those who would contend for the “once saved, always saved” notion. Or those who imagine that believing only that Jesus died and rose is the whole of the Gospel (1 Cor. 15:1-3 speaks of facts “*among* things of first importance”).

Once we know and understand the Gospel about the Kingdom of God our work and God’s work in us through Jesus truly begins. We must study our Bibles and work out our own salvation “with fear and trembling.” We must study continuously in order to remember what we learned. We must keep the Kingdom in the forefront of our minds, meditating often, and thus not sin against God or fall away. We must always be ready to answer someone when they ask why we believe as we do (1 Pet. 3:15).

To begin the process of knowing and understanding (Isa. 53:11) one must repent and believe the Kingdom Gospel (Mark 1:14-15). You cannot “accept Jesus” without accepting and believing his words! Repentance is a change in our hearts and minds. It is not simply remorse. It is a complete reorientation to a new set of values, a grasp of God’s great immortality plan for us. Repentance is difficult for us, because we know it means we will have to admit we are wrong, and that God is right. We humans are a selfish and stubborn lot.

How do we begin to believe? The answer is in Romans 10 as well as in Mark 1:14-15 (above). Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word about the Kingdom of God — the Gospel as Jesus preached it. See Romans 10:17 (Acts 19:8; 20:24-25; 28:23, 31; 8:12). How do we hear? We hear by listening to someone who informs us. Hebrews 1:1-2 tells us that God has spoken to us by various methods at various times. Finally God has spoken in His unique Son. Once we hear about God and His plan we are to search the Scriptures daily to see if what we are being told is correct (Acts 17:11). Jesus was the first and distinguished proclaimer of the Gospel of salvation (Heb. 2:3; 5:9; Isa. 53:11). He is to be obeyed!

We also learned about regeneration which is synonymous with being born again. “Born again” has always been a vague idea to me and its meaning is unclear. However, when I think about a seed (parable of the sower) and a new creature, it becomes clear. Before we are born we begin as a seed. That seed is nurtured and grows until it is ready to bring forth new life. A baby is born. The word of God, the Gospel of the Kingdom message, is a seed (Luke 8:11) that is planted in us (see

also 1 Pet. 1:22-25). When we nurture it with God's spiritual help, it grows and will make us a new creature. We obtain in it the germ of immortality. We have crossed from death to life (John 5:24-25), and we will gain immortality fully at the resurrection when Jesus returns (1 Cor. 15:23; Rev. 20:1-6). ✧

John's Intense, Concentrated Expression of Truth

John has a fascinating and impressive technique for getting through to our minds the life-giving, energizing truth of the faith. Jesus, as well as dying for the sins of the world, was the Master Rabbi and teacher (John 13:13). He employed a number of powerful forms of language to imprint on our thinking the words which lead to life, both now and in the future (John 5:24-25). Consider these examples: "God **is** love." "God **is** light." "The words I speak to you **are** spirit and truth." "The spirit **is** the truth." "The word **was** God." "God **is** spirit." "This **is** eternal life: to know You, Father, the only one who is true God, and Jesus Christ whom You commissioned." "I **am** the resurrection and the life." "This **is** the love of God: to keep His commandments."

Now God is not *literally* one-to-one equal with love. God is not an emotion! But the vivid way in which John reports the teaching of Jesus is designed to penetrate deep into our psyches! These words are meant to become a high-octane, energetic force in our daily living and experience.

"The words I speak to you," Jesus said, "**are** spirit and life" (John 6:63). That is to say, they are carriers, vectors of spiritual life-giving energy and full of the fruit of the spirit, the essential character of God, which must be reproduced in us now, we who are to recover the true image of God, lost in Adam and regained in perfection by Jesus who is the final Adam, the model human being.

John and Jesus use the verb *to be*, "**is**," to tell us in the most intense and vivid way that the essence of God's character is loving. He is full of light and truth. There is no darkness in God. His ways are consistent with all those marvelous descriptions of Him. "The word **was** God" (John 1:1) is gravely misunderstood if it is taken to mean that the Word [a second member of a Triune God, i.e., "God the Son"] was conscious and alive in company with the Father from the beginning! That would immediately imply a collapse of the strict monotheism of Scripture. It would flatly contradict Luke's and Matthew's very clear teaching on how the **Son came into existence** (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:20: "begotten, caused to come into existence, in her"). You cannot come into existence if you already exist!

"The word [not Word] **was** God" (John 1:1c) means that the word was fully and comprehensively God in His

self-expression, God as planner of immortality for us. God as thinking and acting. God as the perfect Superintendent of the Universe. God as perfect Wisdom. That perfect wisdom is well expressed by Jeremiah 27:5. What is God up to? "I made the earth, humankind, and the animals on the earth by my great power and my outstretched arm; and I give it to whom it seems right to me." We could say today that "the internet is information." How true this is. The internet is chock-full of information on a colossal scale. "God is love" means that God is ultimately loving, full of love and compassion. But of course He does not leave wickedness unpunished. ✧

Fellow Inheritors of the Kingdom by Wayne Stallsmith, Florida

I picked up Edwin Lutzer's book, *One Minute After You Die*, again and started reading in Chapter 3: "The Ascent into Glory."

His words are so melodious, but they have the taste and odor of pickle juice. What do I mean?

Lutzer is, alas, a fabricator of errant interpretations. Scripture immediately exposes his book title, *One Minute After You Die*, as fraudulent. Chapters one and two are a disaster of misinterpretation, but now we go to chapter three, and we find Mr. Lutzer continues his fabrications as if he were reading directly from a Plato trilogy!

Let me touch on a few statements in Chapter 3. On page 55, he quotes 1 Corinthians 3:21-23: "all things belong to you, and you belong to Christ, and Christ to God," citing death as God's gift to us. What he does not see is a connection that has been a stumbling block for Trinitarians (among others). The passage reveals a clear subordination of Jesus, the Christ, to God. As the Trinitarian doctrine espouses Jesus *to be* God, the Trinitarians in this case are not able to explain how God can be subordinate to God. The passage concludes, "you belong to Christ, and Christ belongs to God."

On page 56 Lutzer again trips up, stating that the pagans could not rid Christians of the gift of death that would *escort them into the presence of God*. You might want to mail Mr. E.R. Lutzer the extensive list of "death" scriptures that explicitly reveal such is not the case. No one is escorted into the presence of God at death. This cannot happen until the second arrival of Jesus Christ and the attending resurrection. I would remind Lutzer of Paul's own words: "**In this way** [by resurrection or catching up to meet Jesus at his coming] we will come to be with Jesus" (1 Thess. 4:13-17).

At the bottom of page 56, our author offers this thought: "Similarly, death is the means by which our bodies are put to rest while our spirits are escorted through the gates of heaven." Escorted by whom? Give

me the Bible reference. “Our spirits are escorted” to heaven at death? When a human being dies, the unity of body and soul die together; the body/soul combination is mortal. The Greeks (Plato) taught that the body is useless and death allows the soul to shed the body and take flight to live forever a life of its own. The Greek-trained Gnostic Christians, post-Bible times, recommended that they give the separated soul a destination: the good ones go to heaven (up there), and the bad ones go to the wretched chambers of Hades or to instant Hell-fire. In reality, however, Scripture states that the mortal body/soul, the whole person, rests or sleeps in death (Dan. 12:2) until the resurrection occurs at the return of Jesus at the sound of the 7th trumpet, and not a moment before (Rev. 11:15-18). This Greek false teaching, espoused now by the majority of Christians, particularly Catholics and Calvinists, is a cleverly designed error that has become over the past thousand years “orthodox theology.”

In this same paragraph of his book, Lutzer refers to our “spirits” being escorted to heaven. But this is easily misunderstood as a conscious immediate life in heaven. Certainly at birth God sends an emission of His spirit to generate life in the child. That spirit of God resides within the individual until he/she dies. The spirit has no form or identity, but God takes it back when life, our life cycle ends. Here’s the proof: “Who knows the spirit of man that goes upward, and the spirit of the beast that goes downward to the earth” (Ecc. 3:21). “The dust shall return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return to God who gave it” (Ecc. 12:7). Meanwhile “the dead know nothing at all...There is no activity in the world of the dead [gravedom, sheol, Hades]” (Ecc. 9:5, 10). The resurrection is the only way out of death (John 11:11, 14)!✧

*The God of Jesus
in Light of Christian Dogma*
by Kegan Chandler
Now available at Amazon.com

Comments

“I just want to thank you again for all you do to provide clarity to so many Christians around the world. My wife and I have had many talks about how clear and understandable your teaching is on the true nature of Christ. I’m still reading through *Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound* and I am learning more and more about how we got where we are today. It is somewhat hard to understand just how much we could forget the faith of the Apostles and the faith of Jesus himself. I will do all that I can to spread the true Gospel and to make sure we worship the One God appropriately! I have been reading through Ephesians and many verses are jumping out to

me. How can Trinitarians read Ephesians 5:5 and believe that Jesus is somehow a 2nd person of the Godhead? It clearly says “the Kingdom of Christ and of God.” Once again, Jesus isn’t only distinguished from the Father, but distinguished from God Himself. Paul was undoubtedly a unitary monotheist as was our Savior. It has become quite clear to me in Ephesians 1:17 that our Lord Jesus Christ has a God. God can’t have a God. I believe Scripture was inspired writing by ordinary people for ordinary people. Luckily we live in a much better time today than the times of Servetus. We can freely express today what we wholeheartedly believe in as truth. Thanks again for your leadership and your teaching heart!” —
Georgia

In the hopes of keeping in closer contact with you, our faithful readers, please send us your email address if you have one. There is news from time to time we would like to share with you, and having your email address could save us a substantial amount in postage. Please send an email to anthonybuzzard@mindspring.com or enter your name and email address at focusonthe kingdom.org Thank you!

News

As of July 17, 2016 the Restoration Christian Church in Oklahoma City is now open after a successful launch on that date. They meet on the 1st and 3rd Sundays of every month, beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the Elks Lodge, 5550 NW 72nd St. in Oklahoma City. For more information, call Pastor Scott Perciful at 918-863-5656, or sp@scottperciful.com

The first pilot congregation, which is in Washington State, is about to finish its third year. Starting with about a dozen attendees, the Western Washington Church of God now consists of around 50 men, women and children. The group meets on the 2nd and 4th Sundays, beginning at 10:00 a.m. at the Columbian Hall, 6794 Martin Way in Olympia. A smaller second group meets on the 3rd Sunday each month at the YWCA, 3609 Main St., Vancouver, Washington. For more information, contact Pastor Robin Todd at 360-701-9219, or robinsings4u@comcast.net.

As we identify areas of the U.S. where God and Jesus are already working through previous and current works of evangelism, we will be planning how we might gather scattered believers together in their communities for the purpose of fellowship, mutual encouragement, spiritual growth, and outreach. Several cities have been identified at this time, and pre-planning activities have begun. As time and resources become available, and as God and Jesus guide us, we will implement those plans in order to establish more gospel sharing centers across the U.S.