

Focus on the Kingdom

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The Message of the Kingdom as the Only Tool to Create Immortality

According to 2 Timothy 1:13 the proclamation of Paul is a **model** of sound teaching (cp. Rom. 6:17: “**model** of teaching”). The Greek word *tupos* (model, shape or form) describes the “outline” of the teaching of Jesus and Paul.

There is a fixed form of teaching in the NT and it all goes back to the teaching of Jesus about the Kingdom of God. Jesus lays out this “paradigm” or “model” in Matthew 13:11-23. The **seed** is called “**the Message of the Kingdom**” in the parable of the sower (actually the parable about the progress of the Gospel of the Kingdom):

“To you is given the knowledge of the secrets of the **Kingdom of God**...When someone hears the Message about the Kingdom and fails to understand it, the Devil comes and snatches away what was sown in his mind...As for the one who is sown on good soil, that is the one who hears the Message [about the Kingdom] and understands it, who bears fruit.”

Luke’s report of Jesus’ teaching makes reception of this Message the absolute essential for salvation. The Kingdom is the object of faith and it is the means of salvation:

“**The seed is the Message of God [the Message about the Kingdom, Matt. 13:19]**. Those beside the road are the people who hear, but then the Devil comes and carries off the word from their hearts, so that they may not believe it and **be saved**” (Luke 8:11-12).

Those who receive the message of the Kingdom become “the sons of **the Kingdom**” (Matt. 13:38) = the royal family in training for rulership in the coming Kingdom.¹ The Devil sows his ideas and produces “tares” (darnel, which looks very much like true wheat). A Christian disciple is one who has been instructed in **the Kingdom** (13:52).

Jesus obviously believed that certain information had to take root in the heart of an individual for the salvation process to get under way. That information is “knowledge of the Message of the Kingdom of God”: “To you it is given to understand the mysteries of the

Kingdom of God, but it is not granted to these others” — those who choose not to believe (Matt. 13:11).

Peter, who was chosen as the “rock” apostle, describes the same process: Christians are “born again not from corruptible **seed** (*spora*) but incorruptible seed, through **the Message** of the living God which remains forever...This is **the word** which was preached to you **as the Gospel**,” i.e., the Gospel of **the Kingdom** (1 Pet. 1:23-25; see Luke 4:43; Matt. 13:19; 24:14; Acts 19:8; 28:23, 31).

The germ of immortality is transmitted to the believer only by this one process, the incorruptible seed of the word of the Kingdom. Satan knows this and tries to remove the seed or corrupt it so that it will not develop into immortality (by resurrection).

There is no other message than the Gospel Message of the Kingdom that Jesus and the Apostles preached which can possibly transmit the seed of immortality. Having been sown, it has to be cultivated so that it can bear fruit. This being true the early church proclaimed the Kingdom, made sure it had been grasped and then baptized the convert: “When they believed Philip as he proclaimed the Gospel about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus [everything Jesus stands for], they were getting baptized, both men and women” (Acts 8:12).

The Bible teaching has a definite “mold” or shape (a Messianic apocalyptic shape). Unfortunately there is another, Greek philosophical “mold” through which the teachings of Jesus were run in the second century. No wonder that the faith came out bearing a different shape! People are shocked when you give them the biblically-shaped faith.

The Platonized Christianity of the denominations (since the 2nd century) promotes a *present* “kingdom” and a destiny which has to do with departing as a disembodied soul to heaven at death. Jesus never taught these things and would have rejected them as dangerous counterfeits. The denominational system, unable to give up its cherished Gnostic Platonism, merely twists the model of the Bible to fit its non-Messianic understanding. Thus it can have the “comfort” of the Bible while maintaining the traditional status quo. That’s “the mess we’re in”!

Everyone who hears the **Kingdom** teaching/Gospel of Jesus is a candidate for immortality or destruction depending on whether they take to heart the Kingdom Message or not (including, of course, in addition the cross of Jesus and his resurrection and coming again).

¹Cp. Eric Sauer: “the Church is the official administrative staff, the ruling aristocracy of the coming Kingdom” (*From Eternity to Eternity*, 1993, p. 93).

The **seed-Message** (Luke 8:11) contains the spiritual information designed to spark new life (**rebirth**). God causes the rebirth through this word/seed and it launches in us a living hope (1 Pet. 1:3-4), namely the hope of **the inheritance of the Kingdom** and immortality in it.

No wonder then that Paul speaks of “the health-giving words, namely the words of the Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Tim. 6:3). These words lead to good health forever — immortality through resurrection.

Some say that the Kingdom of God is not part of the Gospel but merely of interest to students of prophecy. This theory overlooks two basic facts:

1. Jesus calls the Gospel **the Gospel about the Kingdom** (Matt. 13:19; Luke 4:43, etc.). Philip and Paul preached the Kingdom as the Gospel (Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). The Gospel of the Kingdom is equivalent to “the Word of the Kingdom” and these phrases are identical in meaning to “the Word of God/the Lord” and “the Gospel of God.” They also appear in the NT in the shortened form “the Word” and “the Gospel.” Another synonym is “the Gospel of Christ,” or “the Gospel of salvation.” The same Message of the Kingdom appears also as “the Word of Truth,” or “the Truth.” All these terms are traced to the “parent text,” given by Jesus: The Gospel (Word) **about the Kingdom of God/heaven**. In John’s account of Jesus’ ministry the same Gospel is “the word” or “words” of Jesus. Many Bible readers have never grasped the meaning of the Gospel as it originated with the historical Jesus (see Heb. 2:3).

2. There is only one Gospel and it is the **Gospel of the Kingdom** as proclaimed first by Jesus when he was here on earth. After the resurrection and ascension of Jesus the same Gospel — “this Gospel about the Kingdom” (Matt. 24:14) — is to be announced until the end of the age, when Jesus will return to inaugurate the Kingdom of God on earth (Matt. 28:19-20). The Kingdom is the Christian hope as well as the subject of the Gospel. Reception of the Gospel message and hope bears on everything we do now. Even love and faith **spring from hope** (Col. 1:4-5).

Popular evangelism asks people to “receive Jesus.” Jesus asks us to “receive the message of the Kingdom.” There is an essential difference. Jesus is accepted through his Message about the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19; John 17:8, 14, 20). This is God’s creative tool designed to transmit the germ of immortality to the believer. Today it is extremely rare even to hear mentioned the biblical phrase “Gospel about the Kingdom” which is the basis of all that Jesus and the Apostles taught.

Jesus, John, Peter and Paul all agree that becoming a Christian involves responding in faith to the “seed,” which is the **Gospel about the Kingdom** (Matt. 13:19). John says of believers that “God’s seed remains within

him and he cannot go on sinning” (1 John 3:9). In the same verse John says that these are the ones who are born again (born of God).

Why is so much said today about being “born again” and *almost nothing about how that process comes about?*

According to Jesus and the Apostles it is intelligent reception of the “seed,” the Message about the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19; Luke 8:12), which causes Christian rebirth. There is a vast difference between vaguely “accepting Christ” and “understanding and accepting the Gospel word about the Kingdom.” In the language of Jesus becoming a Christian means “hearing and understanding the Message about the Kingdom.” That was the whole point of his most fundamental parable — the parable of the sower.

In Mark 1:14-15 we learn that Jesus began his saving ministry by giving a command. He said, “Repent and believe God’s Gospel [of the Kingdom, v. 14].” Repentance means giving up our own ideas and wrong behavior and bringing our thinking and our lives into line with the Gospel of the Kingdom. Forgiveness comes from God when we repent and believe *on the terms laid down by Jesus*, God’s accredited agent.

In Mark 4:12 we find that repentance and forgiveness come to us when we open our eyes to understand and believe Jesus’ Gospel. The problem is that people have “closed their eyes” so that they cannot repent and be forgiven. Ponder these words of Jesus in Mark 4:12. Repentance is more than just giving up what we consider bad life-styles. Repentance as Jesus taught it means ceasing to resist the saving Gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus preached it. All repentance and forgiveness is contingent upon our acceptance of the Gospel as Jesus proclaimed it. And that Gospel has a specific content. It is all about God’s Kingdom and His desire to give you a place in it.

God’s Kingdom is the theme of the entire Bible and so it makes perfect sense that the Gospel of the Kingdom would be the tool by which God, through Jesus, brings us into line with God’s agenda and thinking. By understanding and receiving the Gospel of the Kingdom we say “yes” to God and His plan and we become agents of that plan and thus help to bless others with the precious knowledge of how to be saved in the Kingdom to come.

God opened His mind to us all, if we are willing to believe. The Great Plan is revealed in Jeremiah 27:5: “I made the earth and all the people and animals on it. I did this with my great power and my strong arm. **I intend to give the earth to anyone I choose** [or ‘anyone who pleases me’].” Quite a gift! ✧

Doomed to Repeat It (continued)

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

In the previous part we have briefly seen how awareness of past roots might help folks not be **in denial** about present trends that could be very misleading. Such harmful influences might include American “Evangelical” assumptions, corrupt religious leadership by coercion, and the particular unbiblical nature of a 20th-century cult. In all these cases, there are real sources of information that might help steer us clear from unfruitful thinking and actions.

When it comes to dispensationalism, there is currently a vast network of theological interpretation that has quickly developed and influenced multitudes. As will be seen here briefly, the historical roots of this system are clearly traceable to certain groups and events in recent centuries. One can very readily document how this whole complex of beliefs stands in stark contrast to the faith of early Christians! I write this as one who struggled for over four decades to rid myself of certain twisted dispensational ideas.

Before full-blown dispensationalism, the Protestant Reformation itself was rooted in Luther’s “by faith alone” rhetoric (using Romans) as a rebuttal to Roman Catholic dependence on religious “works” as a means of “salvation” (or lessened time in Purgatory). Though Luther was right to refute medieval errors, he twisted Scriptural realities (through his prefaces of N.T. books) to indicate that some books were more “the gospel of grace” than others. For example, he called James an “epistle of straw,” since he failed to understand how “faith without works is dead” does **not** contradict Paul’s assertion that we are “saved by faith and not by works” (of the law). Five centuries of Protestant confusion have built upon such bad misunderstanding!

I recommend the following YouTube presentations by David Bercot (though not all his presentations): “How Do We Harmonize Paul and James? (parts 1 & 2)”; “What the First Christians Believed About Salvation.” Nevertheless, instead of relying on Bercot’s assessment of the Trinity, I suggest slowly reading a detailed Christological study: *The God of Jesus in Light of Christian Dogma* by Kegan A. Chandler.

Anyway, getting back to dispensational thinking, in compounding the blatant errors of Luther, a whole theology of “this against that” got developed in a variety of ways. Typically, in such “administrational” systems, there are four to seven time periods (with distinct rules for each); two standards for salvation; two or more groups to whom promises are made (in different books of Scripture); two hopes: one for Israel (earthly) and one for “the church” (heavenly); two returns of Christ, etc. There is an abject failure to see how Biblical **covenant** truths can be studied, and differences noted — without

extreme measures. One such devastating extreme would be rejecting Jesus’ teachings in order to embrace a twisted “new gospel” idea about Paul’s writings! For the most part, with some historical background, it is not hard to see that these “dispensational” paradigms are mostly 19th-century theological developments — which have been anachronistically imposed on first-century New Testament documents! Practically no one in history believed, before the 1800s, that “rightly dividing the Word” (a striking mistranslation in KJV of 2 Tim. 2:15) meant separating Jesus’ teachings (as if **not** addressed to Christians) from Pauline doctrine, as if such interpreters were truly distinguishing law from grace, or works from faith, etc.

One can find a concise history of the roots of dispensationalism in chapter 8 (pages 195-221) of *The Time of the End* by Tim Warner. (The rest of Warner’s book has some interesting, but not necessarily convincing, conjectures about chiliasm and chronological topics.) Before John Nelson Darby bought into dispensational ideas, a “proto-Charismatic” cult in England led the way. Edward Irving was influenced to mix ideas from Manuel de Lacunza (a Chilean Roman Catholic Jesuit priest who wrote in Italy in the 18th century) with some popular Protestant “historicist” ideas.

Irving began preaching some core dispensational concepts in 1825, a few years before Darby embraced them. At the same time there was a break-out of “visions,” “prophecies,” “tongues,” and other “gifts” in his church. George MacDonald and his sister Margaret were instrumental in these activities. In 1830, after 18 months of severe sickness, Margaret MacDonald had a series of visions about a secret, partial pre-tribulation rapture which would remove “spirit-filled” Christians from the earth, and leave others behind to face the great tribulation! I often wonder how many modern proponents of a pre-tribulation rapture know the “visionary” source of their doctrine? (Warner’s book documents all this with some excellent quotes.)

Within months of these visions, Irving profusely published pre-tribulation rapture theology. Darby jumped on this bandwagon shortly **after** these events, and established this paradigm among the Plymouth Brethren. Later followers of Darby, like Cyrus Scofield (the Scofield Bible), spread the message of a pre-tribulation rapture and dispensationalism in the U.S. The influential Dallas Theological Seminary was founded by disciples of Darby. As a side note, my old “cult” (The Way International) was highly influenced by V.P. Wierwille’s obsession with E.W. Bullinger’s similar works, such as *How to Enjoy the Bible* and the highly annotated *Companion Bible*.

A great danger in all this is the terribly misleading idea that “salvation by grace” by automatic formula (as

in quoting Romans 10:9 out of context), is in **contrast** to the “works” of the previous “dispensation” of Jesus’ teachings. Sadly, disregarding necessary obedience to Jesus, by proclaiming salvation by mental assent to “Jesus’ lordship,” has led multitudes into accepting “once saved, always saved” (OSAS) fallacies. Such twisted assumptions will prove to be totally tragic in the future judgments (Matt. 25:31-46). Undoubtedly, our efforts in faithful love (or, conversely, our lack of love) will **count** in the future!

Honest Christians should embrace accountability for day-to-day attitudes and actions, instead of using dispensational, OSAS, false comfort as a cop-out for not staying faithful or loving! Do I really want to weasel my way into a relatively modern excuse for turning my back on Jesus’ words? What are the potential consequences of trusting dispensationalists?

So far, we have briefly covered the importance of (1) not putting assertive Americanism before God; (2) not cowering in fear and giving in to the coercive manipulation of Gentile-styled “Christian” leadership (including dark, cultic influences); and (3) not being deceived by the tenets of dispensationalism. The point of this is not to criticize and condemn anyone, but to be of genuine help to so many who need deep recovery in order to be on track regarding love-based fruit bearing.

In this concluding part of this invitation to check out certain roots for historical backgrounds to current trends — which have had pervasive impacts on many — we will note some sources for modern experience-based Christianity. By the way, these historical observations are not meant to deny that God can be at work in marvelous ways in our experiences! They do focus on doctrinal/practical movements in which “faith” in experiences has trumped humble trust in the Scriptures given by God. We noted that the widespread doctrine of the pre-tribulation rapture came out of the “visions” of Margaret MacDonald in 1830 in England!

In tracing Pentecostalism, the Charismatic movement, and other similar trends, one could point out many bizarre details about a wide range of misleading leaders and events. The Azusa Street Revival (1906 in Los Angeles, William Seymour) involved daily 10-hour meetings with long bouts of rolling on the floor while wildly vocalizing syllables. (This is the actual origin of the Assemblies of God, etc.) From this root one could go to Smith Wigglesworth’s bold slapping and punching of folks (to drive out demons and sicknesses), to the exotic, theatrical showmanship of Aimee Semple McPherson and Kathryn Kuhlman (despite questionable private behavior), to Oral Robert’s announced vision of a 900-foot tall Jesus, followed later by “prophecy” that God would “take him” (in death) if he did not raise several million within a short time, to the newer movements of “laughing in the spirit,” to the weird, millionaire-making

antics of Benny Hinn, Kenneth Copeland, and Kenneth Hagin! (See Youtube clips of Hagin.)

At the initial roots of this complex modern movement, there are a couple of very important people to consider: Charles Parham and E.W. Kenyon. Parham (not too familiar to many people nowadays) was the real founder of the modern “tongues” movement and “baptism in the Holy Spirit” theology. Kenyon (“What I confess, I possess!”) was very especially well-known and influential in my background group. Though the rebuttal in the following books is sometimes partially tainted by the authors’ distorted theologies, they are excellent sources for historical background and for noting certain obvious flaws in this fast-growing complex of popular experience-based movements: *The Pentecostal – Charismatic Movements: The History and Error* by David W. Cloud, *Charismatic Chaos and Strange Fire*, both by John MacArthur, and *Defining Deception: Freeing the Church from the Mystical-Miracle Movement* by Costi W. Hinn (the nephew of Benny Hinn) and Anthony G. Wood. (This last book updates this experience movement to very current times and activities.)

An unconventional Methodist minister named Charles Parham had dabbled in the 1890s with the Holiness movement’s “second work of grace” idea of receiving an automatic sinless state, before exploring a *third* work of grace: “the baptism in the Holy Spirit.” In the early morning hours of New Year’s Day in 1901 (Topeka, Kansas), Parham and a group of students were seeking a “tongues” experience. The first to vocalize syllables was Agnes Ozman, followed by others. According to Parham, Agnes was speaking a Chinese language, and was unable to speak English for three days! It was immediately assumed that this was a new “Pentecost” from which missionaries would go out and evangelize distant lands without having to learn foreign languages! Actual later attempts to do this failed.

Beginning at that time, syllable patterns were jotted down phonetically and compared to real languages. Since then, tens of thousands of samples have been recorded and compared, with the same negative results. Linguists have studied in depth for decades to verify that these utterances are gibberish. (Using 1 Cor. 13:1 to claim that these are all “tongues of angels” is farfetched!) Along with tongues, Parham’s students began writing automatically, while in trances, (similar to what is practiced by spiritists) to “record” their tongues in writing. These proved to be “chicken scratches” corresponding to no known written language patterns. Despite the failure at producing convincing evidence of real languages, and the quick closure of Parham’s school within a year, a movement spread. By the way, very similar vocalization of syllables has been currently (and anciently) a practice among many non-Christian cults!

In Houston, Texas, Parham's student William Seymour was "converted" to "tongues," and he took the experience to Azusa Street, the famous birthplace of all the older Pentecostal denominations. Parham himself was sort of sidelined from the movement after being arrested for sodomy charges (San Antonio, Texas, 1907) and due to his increasing promotion of racial segregation, even publicly endorsing the Ku Klux Klan (in the 1920s). Interestingly, when Parham visited his student's movement at Azusa Street, he called their activities "demonic" and not what he (Parham) had really started!

Meanwhile, E.W. Kenyon had been a student in the late 19th century of "New Thought" metaphysics, a popular movement that had its roots in a previous philosopher and hypnotist, Phineas P. Quimby. Quimby popularized the concept that the mind could tap into a mystical divine force to alter physical realities. One could use "positive thinking" to be free from sickness and poverty. A Quimby follower, Mary Baker Eddy, incorporated "New Thought" in the founding of Christian Science. Kenyon, though never a Pentecostal, took "name it and claim it" thinking (for decades) to Bible use. All modern "Word of Faith" preachers have their roots in Kenyon's "New Thought" perspective (p. 28-31 of *Strange Fire* by MacArthur). William Branham and Oral Roberts brought this twisted "word-faith" thinking (and the "prosperity gospel") to Pentecostalism. Interestingly, Joel Osteen (whose dad was Word of Faith preacher John Osteen) preaches a message indirectly rooted in, and blatantly similar to the "New Thought" origins of Kenyon (p. 37 of *Defining Deception* by Hinn and Wood). Exploring these real roots might help us not build seemingly "good" efforts on faulty premises! ✧

Believing in the Right God and the Right Gospel

For the open minded there is nothing to argue about! Put yourself to the test with the easy words of Jesus.

In John 17:3 Jesus declared in very simple, clear words the basis of **true religion**. He defined God as "the Father, who is **the only one who is true God**." There is nothing to argue about in this proposition. If the Father is the only one who is genuinely God, then anyone with a modicum of understanding will conclude immediately **that no one else can be the one true God**. That excludes Jesus, of course, who is someone else than God his Father. John 17:3 demonstrates that Jesus cannot be God. Only the Father, the Father alone, is the true God.

Jesus makes belief in the **unitary monotheistic** God (Mark 12:29), who is also the God of Jesus, and of the universe, a basic requirement for gaining the life of the age to come (Dan. 12:2), that is, **immortality** in the

coming Kingdom of God on earth (Dan. 12:3), to be established at the one future second coming of Jesus.

If you are serious about living forever and never dying (what will you be doing 20 trillion years from now?!), you will want to, indeed you *will need* to embrace the teachings of Jesus wholeheartedly. Salvation is given only to those who have a passion for Truth and who **obey Jesus** (see 2 Thess. 2:10; **Heb. 5:9**). For confirmation you can read in 1 Timothy 6:16 that the Father is "the **only** one who has immortality in Himself." You can have it too, but not by believing in the wrong God. And not by failing to believe and obey the Gospel teachings of Jesus (Heb. 5:9).

Have you listened to Jesus carefully? He began by commanding us all to believe and obey the Gospel **about the Kingdom of God**. Look at this in Mark 1:14-15. The Gospel is not vaguely about "asking Jesus into your heart," or just being "sorry for sins" or any method other than that given by Jesus:

Jesus said and says, "Repent, change your mind and **stop NOT believing in the Kingdom of God**" (Mark 1:14-15). Why is this so important? Firstly because salvation is based on obedience to Jesus (Heb. 5:9). Jesus speaks for God and is the supreme agent of the One God.

Churches have been so wedded to their post-biblical traditions that they carefully avoid Jesus' own definition of God. Our task is to come alongside them and present **John 17:3** as a nonnegotiable requirement for intelligent faith and salvation. The Gospel of salvation was first proclaimed by Jesus (Heb. 2:3). **The words of Jesus (and the rest of Scripture)** are to be taken as the basis of true faith. Be warned that the world is full of false versions of the Gospel (1 Tim. 6:3).

What then about the Gospel? Put yourself to the test on this, an equally basic, non-negotiable issue of faith and salvation. The problem with man is that he failed in Genesis to carry out his mandate from **God to rule the world**, to take care of the amazing creation given him by God, to be king, vice-regent, for God. Jesus came to undo the disastrous failure of man, you and me included. So Jesus makes belief in the **recovery of the Kingdom of God** the starting point of the Gospel. Jesus invites us, i.e., by command from God, to "repent and believe the Kingdom restoration program, to fulfill your royal destiny" (Mark 1:14-15). This is the destiny we all lost in Adam who refused to listen to God.

In addition, there is a way to avoid the penalty of your sins: Jesus died in your place, bore your sins. In that way we can be forgiven, but that is not the total Gospel! (In 1 Cor. 15:1-3 Paul said that the resurrection is one of the important elements of the Gospel but not the whole Gospel.) The Gospel is still about the coming Kingdom (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; 2:44; Luke 19:1-27; Matt. 19:28). You must **hear Jesus preaching** the Kingdom.

It is about your preparing now with God and Jesus' help to **get ready for rulership with Jesus in that future Kingdom** (Rev 2:26-27; 1 Cor. 6:2; Dan. 7:27, etc). The idea of "going to heaven when you die" is the antithesis (contradiction) of the Gospel. Do not believe it, since Jesus never preached any such "heaven-going" idea.

Here is something simple: Jesus speaks to us with urgency about recovering our **royal destiny** to be kings with him in the future Kingdom. We join God's program by listening to the first order of Jesus in Mark 1:14-15. We embark on the journey of faith, through trial and tribulation (Acts 14:22), and the journey ends at the future visible one Second Coming of Jesus in power and glory to conquer the hostile world (Luke 21:27; Dan. 7:27; Rev. 19, etc.).

At this future coming in splendor Jesus will defeat and kill the final wicked Antichrist, man of sin (2 Thess. 2). Jesus will also then arrest and imprison the Devil who is currently deceiving the entire world with his crafty lies (Rev. 12:7; 1 John 5:18; Rev. 20:1-6). Then will follow the first 1000 years of the Kingdom of God on earth, the millennium. This is the climax of the divine project to reverse the catastrophe produced by Adam, with Satan leading.

The Kingdom of God is the great restoration program and believing begins, or ought to, in Mark 1:14-15. This is your royal destiny, the reversal of the monumental and fatal error of Adam, whom we have all followed mindlessly.

Underlying popular Christianity is the gigantic error, i.e., that the teaching of Jesus is not really for us, or that obeying and understanding Jesus is not the center of the faith. But the NT teaches the opposite. Everything to do with your immortality hinges on hearing and obeying Jesus and his seed/**Gospel of the Kingdom**. Without rebirth by that unique seed Gospel of the Kingdom, there is no true faith. To make this point, please be horrified by the following:

Dr. D. James Kennedy of Coral Ridge Ministries:

"Many people today think that the essence of Christianity is **the teachings of Jesus. That isn't so.** The teachings of Jesus are somewhat secondary to Christianity. If you read the epistles of the Apostle Paul, which make up about half of the New Testament, you'll see almost nothing whatsoever said about the teachings of Jesus. Not one of his parables is mentioned. In fact, throughout the rest of the New Testament, there's little reference to the teachings of Jesus. In the Apostles' Creed, the most universally held Christian creed, there's no reference to the teachings of Jesus or to the example of Jesus. In fact, in recounting Christ's earthly life, the creed states simply that He was 'born of the virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, dead and was buried.' It mentions only two days in Jesus' life — that of his birth and that of his death. Christianity

centers not in the teachings of Jesus but in the person of Jesus as the incarnate God who came into this world to take upon Himself our guilt and to die in our place."²

Dr. Harold O.J. Brown wrote similarly and misleadingly:

"Christianity takes its name from its founder, or rather from what he was called, the Christ. Buddhism is also named for its founder, and non-Moslems often call Islam Mohammedanism. But while Buddhism and Islam are based primarily on the *teaching* of the Buddha and Mohammed, respectively, Christianity is based primarily on the *person* of Christ. **The Christian faith is not belief in his teaching, but in what is taught about him.** The appeal of Protestant liberals to 'believe as Jesus believed,' rather than to believe in Jesus, is a dramatic transformation of the fundamental nature of Christianity."³

Dr. James Dunn:

"Hurtado does '**not think it necessary for Jesus to have thought and spoken of himself in the same terms as his followers thought and spoke of him in the decades subsequent to his crucifixion, in order for the convictions of those followers to be treated as valid by Christians today,**' though he also notes that most Christians probably think that there was 'some degree of continuity' between what Jesus thought of himself and subsequent Christology."⁴

Has Hurtado read the New Testament?!

Professor Richard Hiers is right:

"Interpreters of Christian persuasion have ordinarily **not been especially interested in what Jesus intended and did in his own time.**"⁵

Listen to the amazing abolition of Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom! In the name of Jesus, Jesus is set aside as not important for us! Beware of such wrecking of the faith by some leadership. The following statement is from a commentary on Matthew by A.C. Gaebelien. He starts with a true statement about what Jesus preached, i.e., "the glorious things of the earthly Kingdom and the promised blessings to Israel." Then he says, with not a word of Bible to support him:

"With that event, the preaching of the Gospel of the Kingdom by Jesus, the Gospel of the Kingdom ceased. **Another Gospel was preached.** The Lord gave it to the great Apostle whom he called himself, Paul. Paul calls this Gospel, 'my Gospel,' It is the Gospel of free grace to all who believe the Gospel of the glory of God, the Gospel of the risen and glorified Lord. The mystery of

² D. James Kennedy and Jerry Newcombe, *The Presence of a Hidden God*, 2008, "How I Know Jesus Is God," p. 82.

³ Heresies, 1984, p. 13.

⁴ Dunn, *Did the First Christians Worship Jesus?*, quoting Larry Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ*, p. 9.

⁵ *Jesus and the Future*, 1981, p. 1.

the church is made known to Paul and it is part of that blessed Gospel that every believing sinner, Jew or Gentile, is baptized by the one spirit into the one body. The Gospel of grace declares that all who believe on the Lord Jesus Christ are quickened together with him, raised up and seated with him in the Heavenly, that they are sons of God and heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ. This then is the Gospel of grace” (p. 190).

This fatal splitting into **two Gospels** is a colossal mistake. It has been accepted mindlessly by masses of churchgoers. The **fact is** that Paul preached **the same Gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus**, and the Gospel of the grace of **God is exactly the same as the preaching of the Kingdom** (Acts 20:24-25). See our website focusonthekingdom.org for much more in confirmation of our statement here. A revolution is needed and a return to Jesus’ and Paul’s **Gospel of the Kingdom** (Mark 1:14-15; Acts 1:3; 1:6; 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; 28:23, 30, 31). Paul agreed with Jesus totally. ✧

Our Recent Trip to Europe

We have just returned from an exhilarating, action-packed trip to Turkey, Switzerland, Germany, Romania and France. Our purpose was first to attend the vigorous and intense German One God Conference, now going since 2010 and excellently hosted by Stephan Gerber and his amazing wife who with her team prepared food for some 60 people. Our contacts are the result of my books and Youtube videos making their way round the world in several languages. We had the benefit of an excellent translator from my English into German, and there was much scope for questions and discussion.

My impression is that much teaching needs to be done. Some were unaware of how to explain the Transfiguration story, or what to do with the comma in Luke 23:43. All in all the proceedings were orderly and enthusiastic.

Before the conference we were privileged to baptize 6 people in Turkey, all of whom were deeply impressed with the unitary monotheistic idea and wanted to seal their conversion with the water baptism constantly commanded by the New Testament. In Romania we met a young man who had only recently been investigating the Scripture and had arrived at all of our core doctrines by his own studies. We baptized him in a local river. We were able also to meet with a former JW of many years, and she reported, as usual, a sense of relief and freedom as she escaped the clutches of the Watchtower organization.

Our journey included a memorable visit to the bronze statue of Michael Servetus in Annemasse, France and in Geneva, where he was tragically burned at the stake, at the instigation of John Calvin, for refusing to accept the Trinity. Passers-by, engaged in their

shopping, are completely unaware of the tragic event by which a leading so-called “Christian” killed a brilliant theologian and doctor. Under no circumstances can the brutal murder of a believer be reckoned as Christian.

The amazing Turkish Airlines transported us with a high degree of efficiency for the 13-hour trip back to Atlanta. There is nothing inexplicable about such trips. The printing of books, and above all the Internet, Facebook and email enable us to find these industrious truth-seekers, and in many cases to put them in contact with each other. As believers we need to be highly trained in a range of biblical topics, and to instruct them as disciples on the road to the Kingdom of God when it comes. Thanks to all of you for praying. ✧

Comments

• “I came to understand the Kingdom Gospel message and the one true God and the Messiah Jesus a year ago. For the thirty years before that I was part of the King James only crowd and have studied and read through that version a number of times. I think the notion that the KJV is the only preserved and inspired word of God for English speaking people is one of the most pernicious lies the Devil ever came up with. If we refuse to believe that there can be errors in our translations of the original inspired by God manuscripts we will never see or believe the truth. There is just enough error there to let us hang onto beliefs like the Trinity. Thank you for all you are doing to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom in all the world.” — *Washington*

• “I have been receiving your *Focus on the Kingdom* for several years and am very interested in knowing more about your beliefs. After reading your statement of beliefs, and some of your books, I find that you believe and teach exactly what I have learned from my study for more than 50 years. I have never come across any churches or groups in the past that I can say that about.” — *Florida*

• “I wanted to write you, first and foremost, to thank you for your teachings both on YouTube and the books you have written. I’ve been on a journey with my faith since I first believed in 1999! Your teaching on YouTube **opened my eyes** to many errors of the present-day church and I’ve started reading your books as well. I first came upon your debate with James White, and from there did much research and seeking. I always asked the Lord to guide me and show me truth, and He has been faithful. Now, I’ve shared the truth of biblical unitarian teaching with my husband and three children and they immediately agreed that the Trinity is unbiblical. I’m so glad my family is in agreement.” — *New York*

• “I was raised Catholic and went online and in the Bible searching for the truth and found this teaching of the Kingdom. I believe in this with my whole heart, mind and soul (which is my body/self).” — *Youtube*