

# Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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## What's So Bad about Lukewarm?

by Barbara Buzzard

Lukewarm is just the ticket for filling a baby's bottle, watering houseplants, activating yeast, and a myriad of other purposes. But according to Revelation it is disastrous for us, in fact *fatal*. "I know all the things you do, that you are neither hot nor cold. I wish you were one or the other! But since you are like lukewarm water, I will spit you out of my mouth!" (Rev. 3:15-16, NLT). Why is it so important to Jesus that we be either hot or cold? He does not want us "dead or alive," but *only* alive. "The walking dead" may be suitable for a TV show title. It is impossible for a Christian.

One of the astonishing factors here is that Jesus said this to church members! Can there be any such thing as a lukewarm saint?!

Perhaps it would be good for us to run a self test and take inventory. All healthy management teams take inventory, do evaluations, and analyze effectiveness. Why should Christians be exempt? These church members were warned with the most serious consequences to cease their indifference. In fact, their half-heartedness was causing them not to be able see straight. They thought they were doing well but they were desperately deficient.

An interesting note in my NLT Bible: "John exhorts the readers to love God and one another...but warns them not to encourage false teachers in any way, whereby they would open the door to false teaching and *share* in their evil work" (emphasis added). This is a very real effect of lukewarmness — that it all blends in together: "we all worship the same God" and other false ideas. The consequences of blending/merging/tolerance are devastating in that they blur that sharp edge on Truth that is essential to true worship. Or at least it *used* to be essential. A recent poll shows that 51% of adults agree that "God accepts worship of all religions including Christianity, Judaism and Islam."<sup>1</sup>

### God's Dream: The Kingdom of God

"The reign of God is God's own dream, his project for his world and for humanity! He made us dreamers, and he wants us to be seduced by His dream and to dream with Him...It is not we who dream but God who

dreams in us."<sup>2</sup> And it has been said that God must love us extraordinarily because He chooses to have us with Him *forever*.

The poet John Milton was so moved by God's story that he compiled his epic *Paradise Lost and Paradise Regained*, founded on that biblical story. Perhaps one helpful tip would be to see ourselves in the story. We *must be* in the story! Are we *entranced* by the story? God essentially tells Adam and Eve to get out of the garden. To those who meet His approval the message will be quite different, perhaps: "Come in! Welcome to Paradise."

Is it true that knowledge is power? Or is it only true when it is *applied and used*? I think the latter, while acknowledging that knowledge has the *potential* to become powerful. I am sometimes cowardly in not wanting to be thought weird or foolish. But sometimes I summon the courage to speak. On one occasion several supposedly Christian ladies sounded more like proponents of Shamanism than of their Baptist, Lutheran, or Presbyterian backgrounds. But I fear it is all running together, becoming diluted into a kind of slushy no-offense-to-anyone conglomeration of aspects from various faiths — as it would, without the knowledge of biblical guidelines. And this leaves us at very great risk.

The risk, as I see it, is to think that we are all in this together. Jesus certainly did not think that of those religious Pharisees. Are we willing to sound like fools for Jesus? "Because of Christ we are thought of as fools" (1 Cor. 4:10a). The very great danger for us is acceptance of all comers. Discernment (for which we should pray daily) comes with a price for the honest heart. It would mean the willingness to stand against what is false. Tolerance also comes with a price, even though it can serve to make us popular and accepted and is all but required in our present culture. And yet we are cautioned to "Be diligent and turn from your indifference" (Rev. 3:19b).

### Your Words Give You Away

Our vocabularies can be most revealing. Our words can say a lot about our views on life. Our words have color and flavor. If we adopt evangelical-speak and use "passing away" language we imply that there is no actual death but life in another dimension. We imply

<sup>1</sup> State of Theology survey, Ligonier Ministries

<sup>2</sup> Mortimer Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God*, p. 115-116.

that *there is no death* (is this not Satan's first lie?). Why not (since there are so very few of us who believe the truth about death) let your words be heard as a testimony to Scripture?<sup>3</sup> It is interesting to note that some of the sayings on old gravestones now sound antiquated rather than the truth that they represented, for example: "Awaiting the resurrection," "Sleeping until the resurrection," "Laid to rest."

Another ubiquitous addition to our language is the use of "moving on." Author Janie Cheaney asks: to what? "Traditional moral theory, both Biblical and ancient, asks us to consider purpose when determining value. In other words, part of understanding how to behave in relation to food, sports, sex, children, education, etc., is to ask ourselves, What are these things for? To bypass vital questions in order to get where you want to go may indeed look like 'moving on.' But it's really standing still. If the purpose of one's life is to avoid as many unpleasant experiences — or even tragic situations — as possible, there's no real movement at all. Avoidance is stationary."<sup>4</sup>

And of course the use of the words "choice," "women's healthcare," "right to choose," etc. in reference to abortion is deliberately misleading, not to say brilliantly evil.

### Nature to the Rescue

In nature, the health of a plant is gauged by the fruit it produces. So too in the Christian walk. We are all familiar with the truth that if you are not growing, you are not just standing still but actually going backwards. Standing still is stagnation and therefore not an option for us — and so we must ask ourselves this very difficult question: *how are we growing?* I call upon nature again for this shocking fact: *death for a tree is the one year it didn't grow!* Fortunately God in His wisdom is very much more patient with us.

### God's Perspective

Complacency, as in lukewarmness (as in that tree that didn't grow for just one year) is death. The Christian walk is not a lullaby but more accurately a rousing can't-sit-still march.

Lukewarmness will enter by way of various guises, all designed to draw us in and blind us to danger. Yes, compromise can be a good thing. But what price compromise?

Is it possible that we **trade** the love of the Truth<sup>5</sup> for youth groups, cool music, large attendance, etc? But this becomes a self-inflicted wound. As with a drug — there

<sup>3</sup> I hasten to add that making this point to someone who has just lost a loved one doesn't seem a wise thing to do.

<sup>4</sup> Janie Cheaney, *World Magazine*, April 18, 2018.

<sup>5</sup> 2 Thess. 2:10

are always side effects. Truth cannot become taboo. It cannot become generic. It cannot become passé. Unless there is a direct link to Jesus — all could be done in vain (Matt. 7:21). We must desire and invite God's perspective on our actions/inactions. And consider this sobering thought: abounding in the work of the Lord is just one step away from *not* abounding in the work of the Lord.

### The Obedience of Faith

In our church we collect and create groups of verses which are in the same mode, saying the same thing but perhaps in a different way. We have done this with the biblical but little known theme of the obedience of faith. 1 Timothy 6:3 reads: "Teach these truths, Timothy, and encourage everyone to obey them." Obeying the truth? This is not widely known, but it is an eye-opening theme of Scripture. Jesus is the source of salvation for all those who obey him (Heb. 5:9). Not to stay with the teachings of Jesus cuts us off from fellowship (2 John 9). Those who don't obey the Son are subject to God's wrath (John 3:36).

"Through Christ, God has given us the privilege and authority to tell Gentiles everywhere what God has done for them, so that they will *believe and obey* him, bringing glory to his name" (Rom. 1:5). This is a tall order but one that appears indivisible. True faith must move into action and it works because one begins to "do" the Word.

### Fools for Christ

It is proverbially said that older people are wiser, smarter and bolder. (Such a pity that youth is wasted on the young!)

How do we translate belief into action? It is an absolute necessity, a crucial part of the Christianity package.

Would it be unnecessarily dramatic to ask if Christians aren't in a dangerous position just by *thinking* they are Christians? Is it something you *are* or something you have to *be*? (As in continual action.) We must be willing to look like a fool and I believe this to be one of the most difficult assignments ever.

As we pray earnestly for opportunities to bless others with Truth, we must have prepared and equipped ourselves to be able to do so. Does anyone succeed at anything without practice?

### Profiles in Courage

We need to consider whether ours will be a profile in courage or in cowardice? We must pray for courage. It is not a natural talent. And it is the antidote to being lukewarm. We need nothing short of that radical integrity which Bonhoeffer speaks of. It is warfare of a spiritual nature.

There are many wonderful verses conducive to a healthy, optimistic view of the future:

2 Thess. 3:3a: "But the LORD is faithful; he will make you strong."

2 Thess. 1:5b: "For he will make you worthy of his Kingdom."

May we all find ourselves spoken about as Paul spoke of the Thessalonians: "As we talk to our God and Father about you, we think of your faithful work, your loving deeds, and your continual anticipation of the return of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Thess. 1:3).

And also: "So you received the message with joy from the Holy Spirit in spite of the severe suffering it brought you. In this way, you imitated both us and the LORD. As a result, you yourselves became an example to all the Christians in Greece. And now the word of the LORD is ringing out from you to people everywhere" (1 Thess. 1:6-8). The obvious question: is the word of the LORD ringing out from us?

God says to us: "My people will live as long as trees" (Isa. 65:22b). There is a Spruce tree in Norway which, according to experts, is more than 10,000 years old. Forever is even longer! ✧

## The Hebrew Word for One Means One!<sup>6</sup>

### One more than zero and one less than two

Faced with a traditional creed which contradicts the strict unitary monotheism of Jesus and of the Bible, some believers in Jesus as Messiah, even, remarkably, Messianic Jews, have felt compelled to find a way to justify their departure from Jesus' creedal monotheism. This has led to one of the most bizarre exercises in the distortion of simple words known, I suppose, to the history of ideas. It needs to be exposed as a bold venture in twisting the straightforward terminology by which the God of the Bible declares that He is one single Person.

The assault on common sense, simple language facts, and biblical authority we are speaking of has to do with the Hebrew word *echad*, which is the cardinal number "one." In counting in Hebrew one says *echad*, *sh'nayim*, *shalosh*: "one, two, three..."

Extraordinary verbal acrobatics have been performed with the word *echad* by some Trinitarians, in an effort to convince the public that the number one does not mean one. It is a tactic of desperation. It takes in only those who are not alert to the meaning of simple words. The obstruction of the straightforward meaning of the Hebrew *echad* (one) must rank amongst the most

amazing pieces of bogus propaganda found in theological writing.

We cite some examples. Professor Boice attempted to find good reasons in the Hebrew Bible for believing that God is three in one. He wrote:

"It has been argued that because the verses we have quoted from Deuteronomy [6:4] begin 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one' that the Trinity is excluded. But in this very verse the word for 'one' is *echad*, which means not one in isolation but one in unity. In fact, the word is never used in the Hebrew Bible of a stark singular entity. It is the word used in speaking of one bunch of grapes, for example, or in saying that the people of Israel responded as one people. After God has brought his wife to him, Adam says, 'This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' The text adds, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh' (Gen. 2:23-24). Again the word is *echad*. It is not suggested that the man and woman were to become one person, but rather that in a divine way they do become one. In a similar but not identical way, God is one God, but also existent in three 'persons.'"<sup>7</sup>

The statement proposed by Professor Boice about the meaning of *echad* is completely untrue. *Echad* occurs 970 times in the Hebrew Bible and it is the number "one." It means "one single." It is a numeral adjective, the ordinary word for "one" functioning very much like our English number "one." The Hebrew for eleven is "one (*echad*) plus ten."

Lexicons of the Hebrew offer no support at all for any complication of the simple word "one."<sup>8</sup> Some unsuspecting readers have been bamboozled into the

<sup>7</sup>J.M. Boice, *Foundations of the Christian Faith*, InterVarsity Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, 2019, p. 102.

<sup>8</sup>Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, *Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament*; Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*; Koehler and Baumgartner, *Lexicon of Biblical Hebrew*. The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* speaks of diversity within unity, but states rightly that this sense is found in its plural form *achadim*, an adjective never used for the One God. Abraham was viewed as "the one" (*echad*) and "the one father." He was certainly not plural. The same work, however, curiously and without citing any examples, says that *echad* "recognizes diversity within that oneness." *Actual* definitions then follow: "one single blessing," "Solomon was alone," "uniqueness," "a single man," "one voice" (Moody Press, 1980, Vol. 1, p. 30). The word "one" displays no sense of diversity. The complaint about the popular misuse of the Hebrew word for "one" is made well in Lindsey Killian and Dr. Emily Palik, *The God of the Hebrew Bible and His Relationship to Jesus*, Association for Christian Development, 2005, Appendix A, p. 35-37.

<sup>6</sup> Expanded from my *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*, p. 307-312.

fraudulent argument that because “one” in English or Hebrew can *modify (describe) a collective noun*, then the word “one” itself must be “compound”! One can think of humorous ways of exposing this trick. Does the word “one” mean “black and white” in the phrase “one zebra”? Does “one” mean “one single” in the phrase “one loaf of bread” and yet *more than one* in the phrase “one loaf of *sliced* bread”? We trust that the point is clear. One tripod is still one tripod, despite the three legs on the tripod. It is the *noun*, in these examples, which contains the idea of plurality (three legs), while the word “one” maintains, thankfully, the stable, unchanging, meaning of “one single.” One tripod is a single tripod. “One Lord” in the Bible does not mean two or three Lords. The meaning of “one” is precisely the same in “one rock” and “one family.” The numeral adjective “one” is not affected in any way by the collective noun “family.” To say otherwise would be to enter the mad world of hot ice cubes, married bachelors and square circles.

According to numerous popular websites and even a number of textbooks, the combination “one bunch,” we are invited and lured into believing, means more than one, so-called “compound one,” or “composite one,” or “complex one.” The mistake should be quite obvious. One bunch is still in Hebrew and English *one* bunch and not two or more bunches! It is nonsense to suppose that the word “one” has altered its meaning when it modifies (describes) a collective noun. It is *the noun* which is collective and gives us the sense of plurality. The word “one” is fixed, unchanged and delightfully stable in meaning, in both “one pencil” and “one bunch.” The numerical adjective, “one,” retains its meaning always as “one single.” When Adam and Eve are “one flesh,” they are not two or more “fleshes”! One still means one. The combining of Adam and Eve as “one flesh” has not in any way altered the meaning of “one” (*echad*), one single, one and not more.

On this amazing piece of verbal trickery Christians have been persuaded that in the phrase “one God” the word “one” imparts some sort of plurality or complexity to the word God. This is completely unfounded. It is plainly false. Imagine the confusion which would ensue if when we present our one-dollar purchase at the check-out counter, we are told that “one” is really “compound” or “complex one.” Thus the item will cost three (or more) dollars! A collective noun, like family, is clearly made up of a number of items. But the word “one” which stands before it is not in any way changed by its proximity to the collective noun. However, the unwary have been taken in, scammed, by the most amazing assertions that *echad* tells us that God is *more than one*!

We are dealing with the most critically important of all issues, defining the true GOD. Professor Boice’s assertion that *echad* “in fact is never used in the Hebrew

Bible of a stark singular entity” cannot possibly have been checked by that author. One suspects that it is a piece of misinformation passed on uncritically as heavy-handed dogma. It has, however, no basis in fact.

Equally unreasonable is the suggestion of Dr. Michael Brown on Zechariah 11:8, where the prophet speaks of “one (*echad*) month.” Brown asks, “What does that tell us about the essential nature of a month? Does it mean that a month does not have thirty days because it is one?” But the word “one” modifying (describing) “month” is not remotely connected to how many days there are in one month! On Brown’s argument the word “one” loses its fixed sense as “one single.” And the whole argument is then brought to bear on the central question of monotheism and is used to justify a plurality in the Godhead. Such teaching defies the easy words of Jesus in Mark 12:29 and John 17:3.

How would the proponents of one as “compound one” explain Nehemiah 11:1: “one [*echad*] out of ten”? Or Ezra 10:13: “one [*echad*] day or two”? “Two are better than one [*echad*]...If two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one alone [*echad*] keep warm? Where a lone [*echad*] man may be overcome, two together may resist” (Ecc. 4:9-12). The rest of the 970 appearances of *echad* might be cited to make exactly the same point.

Ignoring this massive and simple evidence for the meaning of the word “one” as “one single,” “one alone,” Robert Morey asserts that *echad* “means a compound or unified oneness. If the authors of the Bible were Unitarians, we would not expect to find *echad* applied to God.”<sup>10</sup> But the facts are precisely the opposite. *Echad* always means “one single” and it is applied to God who is a single Divine Person. Morey invites his readers to imagine that “one” means more than one. He cites eight examples, including “one day” (Gen. 1:5). The word “one” refers, he says, to compound oneness, because the day combines evening and morning! The truth is that this means one day and not two or more days. The whole congregation from Dan to Beersheba can of course assemble “as one man” (Judges 20:1). But the word “one” means just as much “one and not more” as in every one of its occurrences.

Robert Morey claims that the Hebrew word “one” (*echad*) really means “more than one”! He claims support from a lexicon that “one” means “compound oneness.” Morey includes a footnote to the standard Brown, Driver and Briggs *Lexicon of Biblical Hebrew* for support.<sup>11</sup> But the authority he appeals to contains

<sup>9</sup> *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus*, Baker Books, 2000, Vol. 2, p. 10.

<sup>10</sup> *The Trinity: Evidence and Issues*, World Publishing, 1996, p. 89.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 104 referring to page 25f of Brown, Driver and

not a word of support for his theory that “one” really means “compound unity.”

The lexicons rightly define “one” as the cardinal number “one.” *Echad is the word for “one” in counting.* Imagine the chaos of communication if “one” really means more than one. The use of “one” in the sentence “They shall become one flesh” (Gen. 2:24) does not mean that “one” is really plural. It means that two human beings in marriage become one thing (not two). The idea of plurality is not found in the word “one” at all. It is found in the context: male and female human persons. Students of Scripture should be alerted to the fact that they have been taken in by a camouflaged attempt to force them into tritheism. Isaiah 29:21 observes that it is possible to “defraud the one in the right with meaningless arguments.”

The idea that the word *yachid* (unique) would be the only word suitable to describe a unitarian God is false. *Yachid* in Scripture is very rare and has associations like “lonely” or “solitary” which are not appropriate for God. *Echad* itself is the mathematical term meaning one, and it is sometimes rendered properly as “unique” or “lone” (Ecc. 4:12, NAB) or even by the indefinite article “a.”

Professor Boice’s extraordinary assertion above that *echad* never means anything other than “compound one” raises my suspicions as to how far people will go to force their Triune view of God on to Scripture. When a contemporary author cited uncritically Boice’s misinformation on the meaning of *echad*, I wrote to him, and received the following gracious reply:

“Following our recent correspondence I have taken theological and academic advice, and it seems clear that...my comments on the Hebrew word *echad* are inaccurate. I am very grateful to you for pointing this out, and assure you that in the future printings of the book the paragraph will be replaced by one that uses other Old Testament arguments for the plurality of Yahweh’s being. Thank you again for preventing that particular error being perpetuated in the book.”<sup>12</sup>

This elementary information about the word “one” deserves the widest publicity. At present, the alleged “plurality” of the word “one” is being inadmissibly used to substantiate the completely unfounded idea that God in Scripture is composed of a plurality of Persons. In 2002 the Seventh-Day Adventists, who were earlier not Trinitarians, produced a complete book on the Trinity to reassure the religious world of their “orthodoxy.” A team of their scholars argued for a personal tri-unity in God, and in support of this doctrine spoke of “the inherently plural word *echad*”<sup>13</sup> found in Israel’s creed

in Deuteronomy 6:4. But if “one” is “inherently plural,” then language has ceased to have any stable meaning, and (to quote Henry Alford from another context, Rev. 20:4-6) “there is an end to all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a testimony to anything.”<sup>14</sup>

For too long some systematic theologians have blithely inserted a post-biblical dogma into the pages of the Hebrew Bible. Gustav Oehler refers to the Shema (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29) as “the locus of the unity and trinity of God.”<sup>15</sup> Jesus, and many another rabbis, would feel strongly that this is to deface the sacred text.

The famous Cardinal Newman was refreshingly honest when he conceded that “the mystery of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity is not merely a verbal contradiction, but an incompatibility in the human ideas conveyed. We can scarcely make a nearer approach to an exact enunciation of it, than that of saying that **one thing is two things.**”<sup>16</sup> Think about that. It would mean that the well-accepted laws of language and logic have been scrapped.  $3x$  or  $2x$  cannot equal  $1x$ . If we lose the logic of language we lose our minds and utter nonsense prevails.

Try this out respectfully on your church-going friends: What do they mean when they declare these words in the creed week by week? The Son is “begotten, not made.” They will probably have no idea. Trinitarian scholar Dr. Millard Erickson candidly admits that a good Trinitarian ought to be willing to say of God that “He are one, and They is three.”<sup>17</sup> How can such nonsense please the Creator? ✧

## The Race Is Not Always to the Strong

by Lonnie Craig, Arkansas

Many years ago I remember listening to some friends of mine discussing why the Apostles chose *seven* men to wait on the widows and others while they could continue the work of teaching the Gospel of the Kingdom (see Acts 6:1-6). Back then, just as today, the significance of the numbers in the Bible had a fair amount of scrutiny, and a lot of study has been done into the symbolic meaning of numbers like three, seven, or twelve in biblical writing and thinking. So naturally, the conversation led to most of my friends talking about the significance of the number seven — six days in God’s creation work and then He rested on the seventh day (Gen. 2:2); seven clean animals taken aboard the ark and

*Trinity*, Review and Herald, 2002, p. 76.

<sup>14</sup>*Greek Testament*, Vol. 4, p. 726.

<sup>15</sup>*The Theology of the Old Testament*, Funk & Wagnalls, 1893, p. 30.

<sup>16</sup>J.H. Newman, *Select Treatises of Athanasius in Controversy with the Arians*, 1895, p. 515.

<sup>17</sup>*God in Three Persons*, p. 270.

Briggs.

<sup>12</sup>The reference is to John Blanchard, *Does God Believe in Atheists?* Evangelical Press, 2000, p. 450.

<sup>13</sup>Woodrow Whidden, Jerry Moon and John Reeve, *The*

just two unclean (Gen. 7:2); the seventh year was when slaves and servants were to be set free according to the Torah (Ex. 21:2); and many other examples which space will not permit to list. So, according to them, this is why seven men were chosen to “wait on the tables” (Acts 6:2); it was a reflection of the specialness of the number seven in God’s economy.<sup>18</sup>

But then a friend of mine spoke up and asked a simple question: “Why are we so obsessed with trying to find a spiritual application to every single word that we just don’t simply read the Scriptures as they are and consider a more practical application? Has it occurred to us that maybe the reason why the Apostles chose seven men to serve in this capacity is that six men would have been insufficient for the task, and eight men would have been too many?”

Honestly, I don’t remember the reaction my friends had to this, but it made me pause and realize that I had been making the same mistake that so many people throughout history have made with the Scriptures. I had been guilty of, if I may put it this way, “over-spiritualizing” everything I read and not just taking a simpler approach to reading it!

The recent tragedy of the burning of the Cathedral of Notre Dame on April 15, 2019, has, on some levels, revived this line of thinking. Is there a spiritual meaning or symbolic significance to this magnificent church burning? There are many who think this is the case. Some have argued that the burning of Notre Dame is symbolic of the world no longer needing religion, and that the world needs to allow such outdated, antiquated beliefs to burn up in the fires of “reason” and “science.” Others have said that the burning of the cathedral represents the decline and destruction of Christianity, especially in the West, and that if it isn’t stopped, the fire will not just burn up religious beliefs and religious people, but entire civilizations.

I understand the thinking behind these theories and on a certain level even think there is merit to them, particularly the parallels between the burning of Notre Dame and the destruction of Christianity by paganism and secular humanism. But at the same time, another thought entered my mind. Maybe the burning of the beautiful cathedral in Paris is just another example of what my favorite Old Testament writer once said. The wise Teacher in Ecclesiastes 9:11 wrote, “The race is not to the swift or the battle to the strong, nor does food come to the wise or wealth to the brilliant or favored to the learned, but *time and chance happen to them all.*”

<sup>18</sup> *Editor*: I add that sometimes there does seem to be significance in numbers: 666 is the number of the Antichrist; 888 as super-abundance is the value of the name Jesus; and David, whose name has the value of 7, is connected to 3 series of 14’s in Matt. 1:17.

Instead of attaching some kind of significance to the burning of the Cathedral of Notre Dame, maybe we should consider that its destruction is simply an aspect of a fallen world.

Sometimes, bad things happen. Sometimes, lightning strikes without warning. Sometimes, the poisonous snake bites. Sometimes, a tire blows out on a car and it crashes, killing the occupants. Time and chance (which are the Teacher’s way of describing events that are unpredictable, not a description of a force or power that guides or shapes one’s destiny) simply happen in a world that has been cursed by God because of our sin. Not everything lasts forever, and sometimes even the strongest structure or the strongest person can fall prey to either the ravages of time or a swift stroke of disaster. In many cases, if not most cases, we may never know why it happened either. God is under no obligation to answer all of our questions (see God’s response to Job’s questions in Job 38-42), and even if He did answer all of our questions, how satisfied would we be with the answers? Those who demand answers are rarely happy with the answers they receive anyway!

As of this writing, we don’t yet know how the fire started. Perhaps we will discover that someone who hates religion started it, or we will find out that a Protestant who hates Catholicism started it, or any other number of reasons could pop up as to why the fire started. But before we start placing blame or placing symbolic significance on such a tragedy, maybe we need to remember that first and foremost, we live in an imperfect world where tragedy is going to happen to us, no matter how good we are or how much we may prepare for it. Furthermore, let’s remember that such tragedies can just as easily happen to us. When they do, will we cling tighter to the One who can save us and who cares for us? Or will we look for excuses? ✧

## Comments

“I am a Christian converted in 1971. I grew up with the Baptist doctrine. God has given me, by His grace, the revelation that He is the only God and that Jesus is His Son (not God the Son). I have already read Brother Eric Chang, *The Only True God* (wonderful), and God shows me the need to meet brothers who have, like you, the same doctrine. Most of the believers in Mexico are idolaters, traditional evangelicals, worshiping Jesus as God, etc. I would like to get in touch with believers like you in Mexico. (I understand and speak little English, but I use a word translator.)” — *Mexico*

“I have followed your teachings diligently for the past year and have studied the word of the Bible without a break every day. You kindly sent a sister to get in touch with me and we keep regular contact and share the Lord’s supper online every month which I am grateful

for. I have noticed a big difference in my life and can testify that the truth sets you free. I have found wonderful truths through you and other ministers of the truth; however I find that the Trinity permeates throughout most of the online preachers except from yourself and the rest of your community. I have also been enamored by certain commentaries that seem sound but then eventually expose their doctrines, and I hear sadly 'Jesus is God.' How disheartening! Have I to realize that it is only a small group of believers that appear to follow Jesus' true teachings? How sad that after leaving the elitism of the Jehovah's Witnesses to find that the Christian congregation on earth at this point in time is following false doctrines with such fervency. I studied at university both English Language and Celtic studies, and discovered the pagan routes of the Trinity were ingrained in Celtic beliefs from pre-Christian times to the Culdean monks who professed the Trinitarian beliefs up to the Edict of Milan. Then when the Catholic Church took over from the Coptic Culdees the Triad gods were entrenched in people's belief systems. What a mess! I am only commenting on this to let you see that my country too is entrenched in this belief. I pray that people will see and I try to discuss it with others. Please keep on preaching God's marvelous work." — *Scotland*

"I am from south India. In the year 2013 God revealed the truth about HIM:

"1. God is only one 'person,' not a trinity of persons. He is the Father, the Creator, and has His own personal name, Yahweh. He is repeatedly called the Father and God of the lord Jesus Christ.

"2. Jesus the Christ (Messiah, or Anointed One) is the Son of God, not God the Son. Jesus has a God, just like we do. Jesus is our Savior, soon coming King, High Priest, and unique human agent of the One God. According to the Bible, he was miraculously begotten and has been raised from the dead to a position at the right hand of God.

"3. The holy spirit is not a person. It is the operational power and presence of God on earth and in those who believe in the biblical Jesus, his Father, and their gospel of the coming Kingdom.

"4. The gospel is primarily the message of the coming Kingdom of God to this earth, and that this will occur at the hand of Jesus through whom we have forgiveness of sins. Jesus will return to usher in the government of his Father on this planet, and he himself will reign as the king for 1,000 years to bring all men to God. The saints will administer with and under him.

"After this revelation I left my denomination. Now we have no fellowship with others because people reject us because of our faith in GOD and His Son Jesus. We are looking for fellowship of the same faith in our local area." — *India*

"As a former Jehovah's Witness, I was thinking about the requirement of being born again as Christ commanded. If a person is being taught or chooses not to be born again, what protection is there against Satan and his dupes? As a former JW (which I have totally renounced before man and the true god Yahweh as my witness), if I have to do it alone with no family members at my side, so be it! Love of truth compels me to do it. Where is the defense a person can say to the Lord? 'Well, I didn't know. That's why I didn't do what was commanded.' There is no defense! For we all have a Bible and can read it. If a person allows an organization to do their thinking for them, they are in grave spiritual danger and their eternal salvation is on the line. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living and true God who can give life and take life. I did not attend the JW's last memorial because of their view on being born again not required for them personally. Little do they realize that their governing body have instituted a caste system in their organization, separating Christian from Christian! For me this is blasphemy and sinning against the Holy Spirit! I have taken the Communion on my own. Until things change in my situation or I find a local Christian group that does not believe in the Deity of Christ (all of them here do), I will attend in spirit and the internet with you and the precious sheep there, who I am developing a closeness to! That's the power of the spirit at work." — *Canada*

"I very much appreciate your Trinity refutations. I'm a former Trinitarian who realized too many inconsistencies, contradictions and flaws that emerge out this bizarre doctrine, and because from the perspective of Biblical unitarian truth a trinity of gods doesn't make any sense! Let alone to Yahweh God himself! I'm starting a unitarian monotheist Gospel Kingdom preaching to bring evangelicals closer to the Shema's radiance and truth. I'm very thankful for your teachings and pray to God that He go on inspiring and guiding you in this straight path of our Christian life in this dark age, until morning comes with Jesus, our savior, the Anointed one of Yahweh!" — *Brazil*

## Europe Missions Trip

Tracy Zhykhovich and her daughter of **Kingdom of God Missions** will be traveling to visit believers in Europe from June 4<sup>th</sup> through mid-July. The trip will include Denmark, Sweden, England, Switzerland, Hungary, and more. At least three baptisms are planned, and they will participate in a weekend fellowship of scattered brethren in England. Please see <https://kogmissions.com/europe-2019> for more details and contact information.