

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

March, 2020

29th Theological Conference

A Gathering of Truth Seekers, A Forum for Truth Finders
April 2-5, 2020

Calvin Center, Hampton, GA

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Airport to Calvin Center		
Thurs. April 2	2:00 pm	4:00 pm
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Please arrange your arrival time on Thursday early enough to catch one of the two shuttle runs. On Sunday, April 5 we will provide **only 1** shuttle run. In order to allow you enough time to catch your return flight, we suggest you not book your return flight prior to 3:30 pm.

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

The Gospel of Grace

by Robin Todd, Washington

An error that is often made when referring to the grace of God in the New Testament is that this is somehow different from the main theme of Jesus' preaching of the Gospel about the Kingdom of God (KOG). Some have even speculated that perhaps Jesus proclaimed the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, while the apostle Paul preached the Gospel of the grace of God — indicating two different Gospels. However, a closer examination of how Paul uses the word "grace" in his writings will clear up this misconception.

It's foundationally important to realize that the English word "grace" has been translated in the New Testament from the Greek word *charis*. When referring to God it carries the meaning of "kindness" or "favor." The same is true in the Hebrew of the Old Testament. The word *chen* (phonetic spelling: *khane*) conveys the same meaning of favor and acceptance. Thus we speak of the grace of God as His kindness, favor, and even acceptance.

As recorded in Mark, chapter 1, Jesus came preaching the Gospel of God, which he called the Kingdom of God, calling upon men to repent and believe in it (1:14-15). Later, when preaching in Capernaum, he said, "I must preach the Kingdom of God to the other cities also, for **I was sent for this purpose**" (Luke 4:43). Yes, Jesus was crucified for our sins and raised from the dead after three days in the grave, but his primary purpose in life was to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. We will see in a moment how Jesus revealed to Paul the link between the crucifixion and this KOG message.

The words of Jesus in Mathew 19:23-29 are instructive for us because they link together some important ideas which are later used by Paul in his expression of God's grace. "And Jesus said to his disciples, 'Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of heaven**. Again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the **kingdom of God**. When the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, 'Then who can be **saved**?...And Jesus said to them, 'Truly I say to you, that you who have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel...and will **inherit eternal life**'" (Matt. 19:23-25, 28-29, NASB).

Notice several things in these verses. First, the phrases "kingdom of heaven" and "kingdom of God" are interchangeable. There is no difference in the meaning.

Second, the KOG is connected to being “saved” (often referred to as “salvation”), which is also the same as “inheriting eternal life.” And finally, this salvation and eternal life is inherited when Jesus returns at the end of this current age. Also in Matthew 25:31-34 Jesus pointedly refers to this as the time “when the Son of Man comes in his glory” and at that time dispenses the Kingdom inheritance.

Now, enter the apostle Paul. Paul, following Jesus, preached constantly about the Kingdom of God (see Acts 14:22; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31). This is not surprising at all since he received the Gospel revelation from Jesus directly (Gal. 1:11-12). It is of pivotal importance in our understanding of Paul’s use of the word “grace” in his Gospel message, to take note of what he said in Acts 20:24-25 and 32: “But I do not consider my life of any account as dear to myself, so that I may finish my course and the ministry which I received from the lord Jesus, to testify solemnly of the **gospel of the grace of God**. And now, behold, I know that all of you, among whom I went about **preaching the kingdom**, will no longer see my face...and now I commend you to God and to the **word of His grace**, which is able to build you up and give you the **inheritance** among all those who are sanctified.” It is impossible not to recognize that the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and the Gospel of the grace of God are the same message, linked to our future inheritance. Now, the all-important question to answer: why was Paul able to use the phrase “the Gospel of the grace of God” when referring to the Gospel of the Kingdom? What understanding did he possess which motivated him to refer to the KOG this way? We refer to two statements from Paul which will sum up his thinking on this. I will quote them together so that we get the full impact of this revelation.

“For if the **inheritance** depends on the law, then it no longer depends on the promise, but God **in His grace** (*charizomai*) gave it to Abraham through a promise” (Gal. 3:18) “For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be **heir of the world** was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith. For if those who are of the Law are heirs, faith is made void and the promise nullified; for the Law brings about wrath, but where there is no law, there also is no violation. For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be **in accordance with grace**, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all” (Rom. 4:13-16).

The Kingdom of God is the inheritance — the salvation which comes to all by the grace of God which we have through Christ. The KOG Gospel is exactly the same as the Gospel of the grace of God. The Gospel of the grace of God is not a different Gospel, nor in any way disconnected from the KOG Gospel. Rather, it is a clarification of how the KOG salvation comes to us.

Through Paul’s teaching which was given to him by Jesus directly, we now see that the coming Kingdom inheritance is given to us by the grace, i.e., kindness and favor of God, as it was to Abraham (he as well as we stand in this grace by faith, Rom. 5:2). Both the Jews and Gentiles will receive the KOG inheritance/salvation through Christ. That is also how Paul sees the meaning of the crucifixion.

Please take note of Ephesians 2:4-17 and Colossians 2:11-17 in this regard. At the cross Jesus nailed to the cross that which stood between us and God, and between Jews and Gentiles; that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so that now the Gospel of peace (same as KOG Gospel) would apply to us all. By grace the Gentiles are now partakers of the covenants of promise made previously to Israel through their father, Abraham. And in fact, this is also the way the believing Jews now receive the inheritance/salvation as well (see Acts 15, esp. v. 9-11).

Paul summed it up well in Titus 2:11-14: “For the **grace of God** has appeared, **bringing salvation** to all men, **instructing us to deny ungodliness** and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and **the appearing of the glory of the great God, and our Savior Christ Jesus, who gave himself for us** to redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for himself a people for his own possession, zealous for good deeds.”

That’s the big picture for Paul, as it must be for us. The Gospel of the grace of God is simply, yet profoundly, a revealed and heightened understanding of how the Kingdom of God is to be received as the inheritance of those who believe and obey Jesus (Heb. 5:9). There are not two Gospels; there is only one: the one that Jesus was sent to proclaim — the good news of the coming Kingdom of God, and how we inherit it. ✧

Thoughts of an ex-Christadelphian

by Dawn So, England

I was brought up a Christadelphian (the Dawn fellowship) by my parents. I believed it was “the truth” as they call it, and asked to be baptized at age 14. So I stayed with the Christadelphians until my late 30’s. I was very active within the organisation and totally committed, and never imagined that I would ever leave! I regularly used to have discussions with “born again” Christians, Jehovah’s Witnesses, and unbelievers alike, all the time impervious to any of their arguments because I believed I was right, and had closed my mind to anything different. I was unteachable.

However, during a prolonged period of depression, I began to have a feeling of dissatisfaction with the legalistic, and habitual unthinking behaviour and attitude of the others I was meeting with, which prevented any spontaneity in our actions and meetings. I also began to see that their ideas on Jesus — his current status — were

defective, especially in view of Philippians 2:9-11; 1 Peter 3:21, 22; Ephesians 1:20-22, and Jesus' own words in Matthew 28:18!

It was believed to be wrong to address Jesus directly, either in song or prayer, and definitely wrong to worship him. They believed that Jesus has a three-phase life — firstly the suffering servant, currently our high priest (only), and in future, our king — and not till then! The argument that was put to me was that Jesus is now fulfilling the “type” of Aaron, the high priest, and that as Aaron wasn't worshipped, neither should Jesus be. A very knowledgeable “brother” wrote to me telling me this! Of course, I could immediately see the flaw in this argument! Jesus is a high priest after the order of Melchizedek — who held both the office of king and high priest simultaneously, as does Jesus! Jesus was born a king (Matt 2:2; Mark 15:2; Luke 2:11) — not after the order of the Aaronic priesthood! Melchizedek was considered by Abraham to be greater than himself; thus he honoured Melchizedek by giving him a tenth of the spoils of his victory in battle. Then “The lesser [Abraham] was blessed by the greater [Melchizedek]” (Heb. 7:1-7).

Paul's letter to the Philippians (ch. 2) makes it quite clear that Jesus has already been exalted; and he is currently sitting with the Father in His very throne (Rev 3:21)! Jesus has already been given the name above all names, so that every creature everywhere (“those on earth” = us!) should bow at his name! Jesus can go no higher! Obviously, the complete fulfillment of *every* creature worshipping Jesus (“to the glory of God the Father,” v. 11) is yet future — but *we* know who Jesus is, and his exalted position *now*. What kind of attitude is it to say, “No, we will not worship Jesus till he returns to sit on *his* throne”?!

The Christadelphians contested that believers have nowhere been commanded or instructed to worship Jesus. Yet even from birth, and right through his life on earth — even before his exaltation — perceptive people were spontaneously worshipping Jesus as Messiah! They needed no “command”! Did not Jesus himself say, “All should honour the Son just as they honour the Father. He who does not honour the Son does not honour the Father who sent him” (John 5:23). Can we give Jesus too much honour? I very much doubt it! Yet the Christadelphians I left seemed to be very afraid of any public expression of honour to Jesus! I found/find this extraordinary!

Then there was the idea that believers should not address Jesus directly (prayer), as it was claimed that there are no examples of this in Scripture (which I would now dispute¹), and that there is no instruction for believers to do so. There was a debate in the meeting I attended as to whether our prayers would even be acceptable, if we

¹ Consider John 14:14: “If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it.” Compare 1 John 5:13-15; Eph 5:19-20: “singing...to the lord [Jesus], and giving thanks...to God the Father”; Rev. 22:20: “Amen! Even so, come lord Jesus!” said

did not add “through Jesus” or similar, at the end of the prayer! So we admitted we were praying through Jesus (as our high priest, the mediator) but denied that we were actually speaking to him? I just couldn't get my head around this at all! It all sounded so clinical — like saying “through Jesus” was some kind of automated process on a switchboard, that would get us through to God! I can remember feeling that something was very wrong during this “debate,” which had been triggered by a “visiting brother,” who had made the mistake of praying without adding the “magic” formula at the end!

I just felt that I couldn't understand how I could have a relationship with Jesus, if I had no communication with him at all! I became very aware that as Christadelphians, we did a lot of looking back at Jesus' life here on earth — and a lot of looking forward to his return. But there seemed to be this big void right in the middle! The other Christadelphians I spoke to about this, for the most part, could not seem to see or understand what my problem was, and did not want to think about it, but were quite happy to carry on the way they always had. I used to go to the meetings feeling depressed, and come away feeling worse!

Since leaving, I have come to realize that the fundamental flaws in the Dawn Christadelphian movement stem from: 1) their defective view of what Jesus' sacrifice actually accomplished for believers; 2) their refusal to acknowledge that Jesus is a **King**/High Priest, as was Melchizedek, as well as Jesus' current position of exaltation; and 3) their lack of understanding that God *still* dwells in His temple — the believers — by His Holy Spirit.

Of course, there are other differences of doctrine between true believers and the Christadelphians, the next big one on the list being their denial of the existence of the Devil as an evil supernatural being. We are told that Jesus was “tempted in all points as we are” (Heb. 4:15), and after his temptation in the wilderness, the Bible tells us that “then the Devil left him” (Matt 4:11), and “when the Devil had finished every temptation, he departed from him until an opportune time” (Luke 4:13). The Christadelphians teach that “the devil” is really a personification of sin in the flesh, which each of us (including Jesus) has. I would like to know how, if Jesus was tempted in all points like us, by his own sin-prone nature — “the devil” — how was it that this “devil” sin nature could actually leave him, or depart from him until later — until “an opportune time”?

One of the arguments put to me as to why there could be no outside tempter for us, was that if this was the case, it would take away our own responsibility for sin. However, this argument falls down when the problem in

John; and Stephen, as he was dying, addressed two requests to Jesus (Acts 7:59-60). And these may not be the only examples.

the garden of Eden is considered. Eve was tempted by an external tempter, but she was still held responsible for her disobedience, and punished accordingly. She in turn tempted Adam, and he also was held responsible for his sin.

Then there is the “armour” which believers are encouraged to put on — helmet, breastplate, shield, and sword (Eph. 6:10-16), “that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the Devil,” and “the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one.” The fiery darts are being aimed at us! There’s not much point in putting on protective armour, if the enemy is within! Remember Peter’s warning to the believers that their enemy, the Devil, is constantly prowling around like a roaring lion, seeking (a straying believer?) one of the flock to devour! (1 Pet 5:8). It’s important to know *who* and *where* your enemy actually is, in order to either avoid, attack, or defend! Don’t you think it would be quite deceptive of Paul and Peter (and actually the Holy Spirit that inspired them!) to be warning the believers of danger from without, if all the time the danger is really within ourselves?

Praise God that He called me out of the darkness of Christadelphia into the light of His dear Son, and has given me the Spirit of sonship, that I might truly call Him “Abba, Father,” and that I might, by that same Spirit, have a living relationship also with His Son! Jesus truly said, “No one comes to the Father but by me” (John 14:6). Jesus is “the door” and “the way” to the Father. This cannot be achieved by learning many doctrines and then being baptised into any one religious group. If one doesn’t have a living relationship with Jesus, one cannot have one with the Father! Jesus is the door to the sheepfold, John 10 and 14. Meet Jesus first! ✧

Truth Is in Crisis

by Barbara Buzzard

It is said that truth has nothing to fear. I would ask you to stop and consider:

- Truth has everything to fear when truth and error are blessed equally.
- Truth has everything to fear when it is not loved and prized (2 Thess. 2:10).

Truth has everything to fear:

- When it is not preached vigorously so as to be internalized, understood, integrated and lived.
- When it is thought to be divisive.
- When it is silenced out of apathy.
- When it is compromised.
- When it is not spoken of often and repeatedly.
- When it is spliced, not accurately handled.
- When it is intimidated by majority views.
- When error/sin/evil is not recognized as dangerous.

- When it is sidelined, not responded to, not hallowed.
- When there is no participation in it.
- When it is not protected (1 Tim. 5:20).
- When it is not owned.
- When it is soft pedaled.
- When error is coming against it fiercely without an equally fierce defense.
- When the Evil One’s power and ability to deceive are not reckoned with.
- When it is not deployed.
- When it is not recognized as an essential for the biblical view of a Christian.

Truth is the standard by which we will be judged: “He will judge the world with righteousness and the people with His Truth” (Ps. 96:13).

In our efforts to engage the culture, we have whitewashed, diluted, sacrificed, downsized, substituted and apologized for Truth. We defend this logic by saying that we will add Truth down the line, when it might be found more acceptable. But sometimes that never happens. With the paganization of the culture, with its worsening and the “whatever” thinking, we are being led to new and different and questionable virtues. For example, tolerance has become the watchword of the day. But as it creeps in, absolute Truth is dismissed as unworkable, unkind, unaccepting, divisive.

Truth is in crisis and perhaps this is even more true *in* the church than outside it. It appears that while current philosophies are doing all they can to encourage acceptance, blending, merging, toleration and even compromise — the biblical position still maintains that the narrow way is required in the Truth-finding process. Since believing what is false is determined to be wickedness, we may deduce that believing what is true is the criterion for God’s acceptance (2 Thess. 2:11-12).

What does Truth consist of? It encompasses all of the teachings of Jesus: what he said of his Father, what he said of himself, what he said about mankind and our mortality, what his purpose was, what he warned us about, who the enemy is, the promises, the Gospel, our Hope, what he and his Father require, and what will be the “endgame,” the point of it all.

What would loving the Truth look like? It would look like this scene: “The elder to the elect lady and her children, whom **I love in the truth**, and not only I but all those who **know the truth, because of the truth** that abides in us and will be with us forever” (2 John 1-2). And we know that we are to contend for the faith: “I find it necessary to write and appeal to you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints” (Jude 3). What does contending for the faith look like?

“You have heard of this hope before in the word of the truth, the Gospel that has come to you” (Col. 1:5). Would we recognize Truth or has it become foreign

looking? Perhaps not fashionable enough? Could it be mis-identified as divisive? Must we have unity at all cost? Or is Truth to be valued above unity? “Buy truth and do not sell it; buy wisdom, instruction and understanding” (Prov. 23:23).

How does Truth relate to grace? Is it on the opposite pole? It was never meant to function in opposition to grace but to complement it, to be hand in glove with it. Grace and truth are definitely not opposites! The Gospel of the grace of God is precisely synonymous with preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom (Acts 20:24-25). “Grace and truth were realized through Jesus Messiah” (John 1:17). Truth is the opposite of lies, and genuine grace will always try to assert truth, and not falsehoods.

Truth is a critical asset for a Christian. It is a required part of his wedding finery. It is a major part of his identity. For example, “If you meet some who say that their souls go to heaven when they die, do not believe that they are Christians.”² I do understand that such a strong remark would not be acceptable in today’s world, and yet it is a good reminder of how far we have come from biblical Truth.

May our love for our God and His Messiah also necessitate a *corresponding love for His Truth*. ✧

Who Did Isaiah “See”? John 12:41

by Carlos Xavier, Georgia

John 12:41: “These things Isaiah said because he saw his glory, and he spoke of him.”

The “Jesus-is-God,” i.e. Yahweh, argument: *Isaiah said these things because he saw Jesus’ glory as God [YHWH] in a pre-incarnate state.*

What John actually describes: *Isaiah said these things [John 12:38 citing Isa. 53:1; John 12:40 citing Isa. 6:10 and not 6:1-3!] because he saw the Messiah’s glory and spoke of him.*

A prominent theme of Isaiah the prophet is “the servant of YHWH,” *not* Jesus “in a pre-incarnate state”!

In other words, the prophet refers to Messiah’s **future** “glory”:

Isaiah 4:2: “In that day the branch of YHWH shall be beautiful and **glorious**.”

Isaiah 49:5, LXX: “And now, thus says the Lord who formed me from the womb to be his own servant, to gather Jacob to him and Israel. I shall be gathered and **glorified** before the Lord, and my God shall be my strength.”

Isaiah 52:13-15, LXX: “Behold, my servant shall understand, and be exalted, and greatly **glorified**. You will amaze many...and **your glory** shall not be honored by the sons of men [people]. Thus shall many nations wonder at him; and kings shall keep their mouths shut: for

they to whom no report was brought concerning him, shall see; and they who have not heard, shall consider.”

“[**John 12:41** need not] relate solely to the quotation drawn from **Isaiah 6:10**....The prophetic testimony presented by Isaiah (**53:1; 6:10**) reflects his vision of Jesus’ earthly glory, which enabled him to speak as he did about Jesus’ earthly mission and to predict the unbelief that Jesus would encounter during his earthly life.”³

Compare: **Isaiah 9:6-7; 11:1-10; 16:5; 32:1; 33:17; 42:1-4; 52:13-15; 61:1-3.**

Again, the prophet *never* identifies the Messiah as God but as the servant, i.e. the Messiah of God (Luke 2:26):

- “the branch of the Lord” (**Isa. 4:2**)
- “My chosen one, in whom My soul delights” (**Isa. 42:1**)
- “servant” (**Isa. 49:1-7; 52:13**)
- “he grew up before Him like a young plant” (**Isa. 53:2**)
- the suffering servant (**Isa. 53:6**)

But even if **John 12.41** had cited **Isaiah 6.1-3**, the glory of God is the glory of His Messiah!

Matt. 16:27: “For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of his Father with his angels, and will then repay everyone according to their deeds.”

Matt. 25:31: “When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne.”

Lastly, Isaiah is among the prophets who “saw” Messiah’s glory according to **1 Peter 1:10-12:**

“As to this salvation, the prophets who prophesied of the grace and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you made careful searches and inquiries, seeking to know what person or time the spirit of Messiah, which was in them, was indicating, as it predicted the sufferings of Messiah, and the glories that would follow.”

Compare: “Abraham rejoiced to ‘see’ my day” (**John 8:56**).

“Targum Jonathan (an Aramaic paraphrase) to Isaiah 6:1 reads not ‘I saw the Lord’ but ‘I saw the glory of the Lord,’ while the Targum to Isaiah 6:4 reads not ‘the King, the Lord of Hosts’ but ‘the glory of the *shekinah* of the King of the ages, the Lord of hosts.’ It may not be necessary to appeal to the Targum; even in the Hebrew text Isaiah 6:3 already speaks of God’s glory.

“Alternatively, whether or not John appeals to the Targum, it is possible to think he is saying that Jesus *is* God’s glory, i.e. that Isaiah ‘saw his [i.e. God’s] glory, namely Christ.’ If we follow this suggestion, then the final clause, ‘and spoke about *him*,’ may refer to God’s glory, i.e. Jesus. At that point it is tempting to observe several tight connections between Isaiah 53:1 (cited in v. 38), and

² Justin Martyr in 150 A.D.

³ Williams, *Isaiah in the New Testament*, pp. 112-113.

Isaiah 6:10 (cited in v. 40). The two passages from Isaiah are not connected by the obduracy [stubbornness] motif alone, but also by the themes of being lifted up (Isa. 6:1; 52:13), of glory (Isa. 6:3; 52:13, LXX), and of sin (Isa. 6:7; 53:12). Especially the themes of being lifted up and of glorification would strike resonant chords with the Evangelist's [John's] Christology; the forgiveness of sin (Isa. 6:7) or the bearing of sin (Isa. 53:12) might resonate with John 1:29, 34. Thus, when the Evangelist says that Isaiah saw God's glory, namely Jesus, *and spoke about him*, he may well be thinking of the Suffering Servant who was exalted. The linkages just outlined suggest it; what makes it very likely is the dozen or so overtones of Isaiah 52:13-53:12 found within John 12 that show the Evangelist had the Servant Song in mind when he composed this chapter."⁴ ✧

A Key to Successful Prayer

Jesus was a master of prayer. His level of communion with the Father is a model for his followers. In John 15:7 he made this statement: “**If** you abide in me and **my words** abide in you, you will ask what you want and it will be granted to you.” Such a *carte blanche* promise needs to be understood. The key, plainly stated, is the condition presented by Jesus: “**If** you abide in **my words**...” **If** and only **if**...

It is wise to examine ourselves in the light of Jesus' insistence that we must remain within the sphere of *his words*, i.e., his teachings, his Gospel. It should not be assumed automatically that our church training places us within that indispensable, desired realm of his words. Jesus did not address God as a member of the Triune Deity. He addressed his Father as “the only One who is truly God” (John 17:3). Jesus did not come before the Father as a coequal member of an “eternal God-Family.” He did not think of God as a “Triune Essence.” He knelt before the One God of Israel knowing himself to be *not* God, but His uniquely begotten Son — coming into existence in the womb of Mary (Matt. 1:20: “*begotten*,” Luke 1:35, “the child to be *begotten*...”).

Jesus never instructed his disciples to seek “heaven” as a place to go at the moment of death. He never once said that any of the faithful had “gone to heaven.” He urged his students always to look forward to the Kingdom of God coming on a renewed earth at the return of the Messiah (Acts 1:11). Jesus taught a strictly non-violent lifestyle. He urged separation from the world's paganized religious practices. He took no part in the politics of present nation-states. He spoke, in the critically important Sermon on the Mount, of a “fulfillment of the Law,” and went beyond the Law of Moses in the letter, as he introduced, with his teachings, the New Covenant to be ratified later by his death. He knew that his blood was

essential for ratifying the New Covenant, making it the only covenant now acceptable to God.

Jesus taught that communion with the Father must be based on a knowledge of the truth. “God is seeking people who will worship Him in spirit and truth” (John 4:23-24), that is to say, people informed about Truth and able to approach God in a frame of mind shaped and instructed by the Truth as Jesus taught it. Religious zeal, uninformed by Truth, was not enough for Jews in Paul's day. Paul acknowledged the undoubted zeal for God among his countrymen, but lamented the fact that it was “zeal without knowledge” (Rom 10:2-4). He then set out to save his fellow Jews from their destructive ignorance.

“If you abide in me and my words abide in you, then you may ask God freely and expect answers.” The **word** of Jesus is summed up in what the New Testament calls **the Gospel about the Kingdom of God**. Those who seek to commune with God in a way which is productive should concentrate first and foremost upon grasping the mind and spirit of Jesus, his teachings and words. “Seek first the Kingdom of God,” he urged (Matt. 6:33). Consider the Kingdom the pearl of incalculable value. Give up whatever is necessary for the only possession which has real and permanent significance — an understanding of the Gospel of the Kingdom, which is the word or Message of Jesus. Be a son of the Kingdom, a disciple of the Kingdom (Matt. 13:38, 52). Become a member of the royal family of Israel in training. Set out on the road which leads to immortality by taking into your heart the spark of indestructible life imparted by the seed “Word/Gospel of the Kingdom” (Matt. 13:19), as Jesus offers it to all who will listen.

If we remain constantly within the words and teachings of Jesus (Col. 3:16), we can “ask what we will and it will be done for us” (John 15:7). By thinking like Jesus and being taught by his spirit (Acts 16:7), our wills — our agendas — become conformed to his. This is a process which demands that we abandon the mistaken teachings we may have received in our ignorance and embrace the truth of Jesus' Gospel and all the truths associated with that Good News. Ignorance alienates us from God and frustrates successful prayer (Eph. 4:18). Paul instructs us all to stop being “tossed to and fro, driven here and there by every wind of doctrine, by the craftiness of men and their cunning strategies with which they lie in wait to deceive” (Eph. 4:14).

To be a disciple of Jesus is to learn what he taught, to absorb the content of his words. **To receive Jesus means to believe Jesus**, *what he said*, not just confess that he died and rose. A Jesus without his words/Gospel is a “shell” of a Jesus, a Jesus without a heart. His words are the expression of his heart. Let Jesus impart *his* heart to you via his words. In this way the crucial condition of John 15:7 will be fulfilled: “**If** you abide in me, and my

⁴ D.A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John*, p. 449-50.

words abide in you, you will ask what you will, and it will be done for you.”✧

Use Your Slogan

Every sales advertisement makes full use of a short summary statement or slogan designed to grab the attention of viewers and listeners. People of the “Abrahamic faith” astutely fixed on Acts 8:12 as a brilliant summary of the Christian religion. Would-be participants were required to grasp the meaning of the Gospel concerning the Kingdom of God, the prospect of world government under the Messiah. Only then were they considered fit to undergo baptism in water. Along with Acts **8:12**, Luke **8:12** (easy to remember!) highlights the same essential belief in the Gospel/Word of the Kingdom (cp. Matt. 13:19). The Devil knows this fact well, and does his tricky best to block the saving knowledge of the Kingdom of God and everything to do with Jesus — his teaching and his work. Show your neighbors these verses. They almost certainly will not be aware of their enormous power.

Comments

• “I enjoyed your talk in Sydney last year. It was encouraging to meet others who have only one God. I am currently just over halfway in reading *Born Before All Time?* by Karl-Josef Kuschel. It is a long but marvelous book. The book demonstrates context and history that provides a clear explanation of texts commonly used to ‘prove’ the pre-existence of Jesus. His style is clear and easily understood. He brings out points that illuminate history and the future. He points out that the texts used to show a pre-existent Jesus are in fact eschatological in nature. I am sure you would recommend it to your readers as a book that clears up many issues. It has helped me understand scripture in a new way for me.” — *Australia*

• “I am an ex Jehovah’s Witness. I left my faith and walked into a Pentecostal Church that believes in the Trinity. I believe in the Trinity somewhat, but I have doubts about it. I live in Iceland and I have tried to search for a non-Trinitarian church.” — *Iceland*

• “I’m writing to you firstly to thank you for all of the content you have put out which has helped draw me closer to God the Father and His Son Jesus. Your videos and the videos made by other biblical unitarians have really helped clear up so much for me since beginning to read the Bible nearly a year ago. Things fall into place so well when looking at the biblical narrative through this understanding. Since I have seen that many, if not most, of the church doctrines which today’s ‘Christians’ follow do not line up with scripture, I looked for a Bible study or a church which holds the faith of one God the Father and one Son of God, Jesus Christ. I was unable to find one. My family, whom I love dearly, have always claimed the Christian faith and are believers in the Trinity amongst

other things (salvation by faith alone, traditional view of hell as the eternal torture chamber, heaven as the ultimate goal for the body of Christ, etc.) Any small mention of the things I have come to understand seems to stir up a resentment towards me, and I am now looked at as a proud, self-righteous person in error who doesn’t know God (Jesus in their eyes). Recently I have begun to feel the need for fellowship with other biblical unitarians, as a gift from God through his loving grace.” — *Texas*

• “I grew up Baptist, got saved at a Baptist church and later found out more about the power of the Holy Spirit and have been Pentecostal in belief (not denomination) ever since. A brother and friend whom I used to go to church with 20 years ago started sharing the truth of God’s Word. I had always prided myself in being open to learning and being taught. One thing about Scripture always stood out and that was how could Jesus truly understand our temptation if he was God. This friend shared many Scriptures and invited discussions. I studied, studied and did more studying. I researched apologetics, early church fathers, Scripture, Hebrew and Greek, watched debates, some with Anthony Buzzard. I about drove myself crazy, I would think about it for many hours during the day. I about gave up a few times. One day out of the blue God opened my eyes and I saw the Father and His love and I saw the Son with Him and the Scriptures have never been more alive. It’s like God took me up on a mountain and opened the Scriptures to me. I will never be the same.” — *North Carolina*

• “In my local area I am surrounded by Trinitarian orientated seminaries only. I have reached new levels of being astounded by the daily repetition of the ‘Triune’ God. It is really quite incredible. Best wishes and thank you again for your continuous stream of sanity-bringing preaching.” — *Italy*

• “I have almost finished your good and informative book, *Our Fathers Who Aren’t in Heaven*. That book, along with Greg Deuble’s book *They Never Told Me This in Church* has cleared the way for me in many instances to receive the truth, the Gospel as Jesus preached it. With this, as you know, comes the ability to repent. Good news for us, and news we want to spread. Seeing the holy writings come alive when read and understood within the context of the greater and central message of the Kingdom has been a miracle for us! Once again we give thanks that our God has led us to a great place of understanding.” — *Canada*

• “Thank you so much for your permission to translate your precious book *Who Is Jesus?* into my mother tongue, Korean. Your books as well as your lectures/sermons through YouTube are wonderful sources for my enhanced understanding of God, Jesus and the Bible. I will continue to read your books and listen to your lectures/sermons, waiting for Jesus’ *Parousia* and the Kingdom of God.” — *Korea*