

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 23 No. 3

Anthony Buzzard, editor

December, 2020

Who Is the One God of the Bible?

Pick up a Bible and ask the simplest and most basic of all questions: Who is the one God of the Bible?

Deuteronomy 32:39: “See now that I, even I, am He, and there is no God besides Me.”

Isaiah 43:11: “I, only I, am the LORD [YHVH], and there is no Savior besides Me.”

Isaiah 44:6: “This is what the LORD says, He who is the King of Israel and his Redeemer, the Lord of Armies: ‘I am the first and I am the last, and there is no God besides Me.’”

Isaiah 44:8: “Is there a God besides Me, or is there any other Rock? I know of none.”

Isaiah 45:5: “I am the LORD, and there is no one else; there is no God except Me.”

Isaiah 45:6: “So that people may know from the rising to the setting of the sun that there is no one besides Me. I am the LORD, and there is no one else.”

Hosea 13:4: “I have been the LORD your God since the land of Egypt; and you were not to know any God except Me, because there is no Savior besides Me.”

Deuteronomy 4:35: “You were shown these things so that you would know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other besides Him.”

Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord.”

Mark 12:32: The scribe said to Jesus, “Well said, teacher. You have truly stated that He is one, and there is no other besides Him.”

It is perfectly obvious that Jesus confirmed the age-old creed of Israel. As every Jew knows, this creed asserts that the true God, the God of Israel, is one Person — certainly not three! Jesus subscribed to the understanding of his fellow Jews. Jesus allied himself to the Jews when he defined God. He said, “We [Jews] know whom we worship” (John 4:22). And no Jew ever worshipped the Triune God. Jesus did not deviate one inch from the unitary, non-Trinitarian monotheism of Israel. He quoted the Old Testament definition of who God is and thus presented us Christian disciples with our basic creed. It is arrogant in the extreme for us Gentile converts to Christianity to interfere with the creed declared with such clarity by Jesus himself. Note carefully how many persons there are in this creed: “The Lord our God is one Lord.” One Lord is one Person, not three!

A popular theory declares that God is “one ‘what’ and three ‘who’s.’” This of course depersonalizes God. The one God is never a “what” in the Bible. He is presented as one personal being, denoted thousands and thousands of times by the personal pronouns in the singular: I, Me, Thou, Thee, He, Him. In the Bible the word “three” never occurs in connection with the word “God.”

God had a unique, virginally conceived Son, the Messiah, and God’s spirit is the Spirit of God, His divine presence and power active in the world to enlighten and save. But God never spoke to His own Spirit and the Spirit never sent greetings, was never worshipped nor prayed to.

Both the Father and the Son are addressed in prayer and both are worshipped, Jesus as the Messiah and the Father as the one true God. The biblical word “worship” is an “elastic” term with a meaning different from our English word “worship.” David was “worshipped” alongside the one God (1 Chron. 29:20) and the saints are going to be “worshipped” by their former persecutors (Rev. 3:9). The Hebrew and Greek words for “worship” apply both to God and to persons who are not the one God, but superior human agents of the one God.

Jesus is the ultimate spokesman for God, His very image, reflecting His mind and character perfectly. But this does not mean that Jesus *is* God. If Jesus were God, this would make two Gods, a biblical impossibility. The Father is the one Lord God, and Jesus is the lord Messiah.

The distinction between the Father and the Son is brilliantly illumined for us by Psalm 110:1 where the one God, Yahweh, is a different, separate and distinct person from the lord Messiah. The lord Messiah is addressed in this prophecy as *adoni*. *Adoni* means “my lord.” It never refers to God, but always to a person who is *not* God, but a human superior (occasionally an angel). If Jesus were God he would be described in this Psalm as *Adonai*, the Hebrew word used exclusively for the one God (449 times in the Old Testament). Psalm 110:5, by contrast, depicts *Adonai*, the one God, as supporting the Messiah in his future battle for world dominance. The distinction between *adoni* and *Adonai* is maintained in every case. *Adonai* is the one God and *adoni* is never a reference to God. How very striking then that in Psalm 110:1 the Messiah Jesus is distinctly given the superior human title, not the title of eternal Deity! The Jews knew well what was at stake in any departure from the strict monotheism of the creed of Israel.

John and all the Apostles were outstanding exponents of unitary monotheism (i.e., God is a single Person). John recorded Jesus as defining the Father as the “the one who

alone is truly God” (John 17:3; 5:44). It follows then that the Apostles and Jesus would have difficulty with some current mainstream religious authorities who would express horror that they were not Trinitarian following the creeds of the 4th and 5th centuries!

Some try to defend post-biblical creeds by appealing to John 1:1. But they read this passage with their minds already made up that the Son of God was an uncreated eternal second Person in the Godhead. They then make the huge assumption that “the word” means the Son before his birth. But the text tells us that God’s *word*, not His Son, preexisted from the beginning. A world-known systematic theologian of Fuller Seminary, Dr. Colin Brown, said correctly: “It is a common but patent error to read John 1:1 as if it said ‘In the beginning was the Son.’”¹

Anyone familiar with Jewish ways of thinking recognizes here a strong parallel with Wisdom which is figuratively presented as being “with God” from the beginning (Prov. 8:1, 6, 12, 14, 22, 30). Wisdom is personified (i.e. “she” speaks as though she is a person). She says “I was always with Him [God]” (Prov. 8:30). Thus the word or wisdom of God was “with God” (John 1:1) and was itself God, that is to say fully expressive of God. Wisdom says, “I am understanding” (Prov. 8:14). She is the fullest expression of the mind of God. The word “was” God, not as a one-to-one identity, because the word was also “with God,” but as fully expressive of God. The word is God in His self-revelation.

But note carefully that there is only one *Person* in John 1:1-2. It is the Father and His word/wisdom by which He created everything. Then, amazingly, in verse 14 the *Son* is introduced for the first time, and we learn of the only begotten *Son* who reveals the Father. John’s intention is to tell us that the very word/expression/wisdom/idea of God was manifested in history in a human person, *the Son* of God. Jesus is therefore what the word/wisdom of God became. Just as the car on the designer’s drawing board becomes “flesh” as a real, functioning automobile, so the wisdom/word of God was fully expressed in Jesus. Jesus is the most perfect demonstration of God speaking in a human being, but Jesus is not himself God; that is to say the Son is not an uncreated eternal Person.

There is only one such uncreated Person in the universe, and that is the Father. No wonder the Father is called “the [one] God” (*ho theos*, in Greek) over 1300 times in the New Testament. The term “God” is very occasionally applied to Jesus as reflecting God. Remember that Moses was to be “God” to Pharaoh (Exod. 7:1). This does not mean that Moses *was* actually God, but that he was His spokesman. In a parallel way Jesus is the ultimate speaker for God, the supreme prophet and the chosen King of David’s royal line.

Over and over again the New Testament informs us that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God, a title applicable also to the converted Israel of the future (Hos. 1:10). Jesus founded his church on the firm belief that he was the “Messiah, Son of the living God.” Remember what Professor Brown of Fuller Seminary told us, along with many other expert biblical scholars: “To be called Son of God in the Bible means that you are *not* God.”² This is an obvious truth which can be searched out and confirmed by anyone. Simply note that Adam, Israel and men especially close to God are called “sons of God.” Christians are said to be “sons of God.” Jesus is the pioneer Christian, the perfect model of what it means to be “Son of God.”

Now listen to Paul: How does he define the one God in whom Christians believe? Paul repeats exactly the Old Testament one God texts quoted above. His statement defining the God of Christianity is based on the Old Testament words we have cited earlier (Deut. 32:39, etc.). Paul tells us precisely *who* that unique divine Person is: “We know that there is no God but one...To us [Christians] there is one God, the Father” (1 Cor. 8:4-6). This is unitary monotheism. Why didn’t Paul write, “There is one God, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit”? Paul believed that “there is one God and one mediator between God and man, the man Messiah Jesus” (1 Tim. 2:5). Was Paul a Trinitarian? Hardly. He wrote: “God is only one Person” (Gal. 3:20, Amplified Version).

Paul’s and Jesus’ creed is strikingly different from the creed of contemporary churches which reads: “We believe in one God, existing eternally in three Persons.” Listen again to Paul: “There is no God but one...There is one God — the Father” (1 Cor. 8:4-6).

The extent of the confusion about this most basic of all questions can be measured by the confident assertions of some, that unless one believes in the “historic creed” (of the church councils) that God is three in one, you are a “cult figure” and “decidedly non-Christian.” It is to be regretted that Paul and Jesus would not qualify as Christian by the standards decreed by some of America’s “Bible answer men.” Something has gone terribly wrong!

The tragic loss of Jesus’ insistence on the superlatively greatest commandment, “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord,” was powerfully stated by Harvard professor of Theology, Dr. Andrews Norton:

“When I am told that the same being is both God and man, I recognize, as I have before said, a very intelligible, though a very absurd proposition...When it is affirmed that ‘the Father is God, and the Son is God, and the Holy Ghost is God; and yet there are not three Gods, but one God,’ no words can more clearly convey any meaning, than those propositions express the meaning, that there are three existences of whom the attributes of God may be predicated, and yet there is only one existence of whom

¹ *Ex Auditu* 7, 1991

² *Ibid.*

the attributes of God may be predicated. But this is not an incomprehensible mystery: it is plain nonsense.”³ ✧

The War on Truth: How a Generation Abandoned Reality by Mark Fairley

Review and Comment by Barbara Buzzard

As I write, Alex Trebek, star of the game show *Jeopardy!* for 37 seasons, has just died. One of the astute comments about him was that he fostered a love of trivia in the minds of his vast audience. I am longing for someone to foster the love of Truth in the hearts of Christians. Instead, we have a decided *war on truth*. Does it not seem that the world has taken leave of its senses? Do we see even an aversion to Truth?

Author Mark Fairley from Scotland is a prolific, articulate and passionate writer and speaker with a worldwide network of churches.⁴ His investigation into the humanist attack on our society is thorough and compelling. He makes the point that what marks our current state of affairs is that we can no longer name things as bad or warped. Previously we could challenge idiocy. We no longer can, or we will be labeled hateful and intolerant bigots. What would have made you sane a decade ago now makes you an insufferable and narrow-minded jerk. Scientifically verifiable facts are now heard as hate speech. The author attempts to explain the mechanisms of where we are headed through a biblical lens. In fact, he even guarantees that if one looks at the world through his prism of faith, things will make sense.

His basic premise is this: “God’s character is broadly composed of two virtue types... ‘Hard Virtues’ and the ‘Soft Virtues.’”⁵ These are not incompatible but rather essential for good character. An example of a hard virtue is justice. “Moral rightness, or righteousness, means identifying good and evil, then taking firm, decisive, hard action to punish the latter.”⁶

Examples of soft virtues are love, grace, mercy, kindness and forgiveness, while the hard virtues are justice, righteousness, holiness and truth. Before you come to the conclusion that this is all a bit simplistic, Fairley is taking strides to understand how it is that so many of the current generation think of God as a monster. He asks: where would they be getting such a picture?

³ *A Statement of Reasons for Not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians*, 1873, p. 169-170.

⁴ He began The Fuel Project in 2010 and has authored seven books. I grieve that Fairley is a Trinitarian, and on the basis of the Nicene Creed he would have to find me a heretic. Has he assumed the truth which he fights so hard for? What does he make of all those through history who have not complied with the dogma and in fact, have given their lives for the Truth of the One God?

⁵ *The War on Truth: How A Generation Abandoned Reality*, 2016, p. 10.

And they would answer: from the Bible and the Old Testament stories of destruction of cities, men, women and children, plagues, etc.

Fairley’s book is an attempt to “dismantle the violent monster.” He does this by analyzing God’s actions. For example, was God right and just to punish by death all but the eight who survived the flood? Here are some facts: God did give the world a grace period. Noah warned the people over and over again *for over a century*, urging repentance. “And yet when the people didn’t listen and persisted with their wickedness, the grace period eventually elapsed, and God’s judgment fell. It had to... He gives fair warning and then He acts. You can say that’s terrifying, and you can say that it was lamentable that all those people had to die in Noah’s day, and you’d be right. But what can’t be denied is that it was also *good*.”⁷ Similarly, God wanted to give everyone in Sodom and Gomorrah every possible chance to repent, even sending angels to give a final chance.

In the case of the Amalekites, God actually gave them 400 years to repent and change course — from their first attack on Israel and continuing after that — until God stopped them. The author’s analysis: terrifying, yes; lamentable, yes; but also good because it was *just*.⁸

Is There a Battle Between Truth and Love?

“Conservatives⁹ are driven by their heads rather than their hearts; by logic rather than emotion; by objective truth rather than subjective feelings. They are thinkers rather than feelers. When deciding on the right course of action, they don’t care so much how people feel about the truth, as they care that people get the truth... And this is where the conflict between Right and Left begins... What matters more: Love or Truth? ... Truth, by its very nature, excludes. Truth, by its very nature, marginalizes. Truth, by its very nature, establishes inequality and hurts feelings.”¹⁰

“Both Truth and Love matter. God embodies both. And he demonstrated that in Noah’s day, in Lot’s day, to the Amalekites and to Nineveh.”¹¹ This self-imposed requirement of God (to do what He said He would do) is what isn’t grasped by those who see God’s actions as cruel, unloving and vengeful. This book strives to correct that impression, to *explain* God, to defend Him against baseless charges.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 11

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 21

⁸ A most interesting fact is that Haman, a descendant of the Amalekites, was the one who tried to have all the Jews killed in a mass genocide in Persia. The Jews were saved by Esther’s intervention.

⁹ Not a political term; the author is speaking generally and ideologically.

¹⁰ *The War on Truth*, p. 54

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65

It's NOT All about Love

Mr. Fairley makes the interesting point that Jesus was not all about love; he was partly about love and partly about doing what is right (otherwise known as righteousness, but I think that this religious word would not be well accepted by the ones he is trying to reach).

If it were all about love, a case could be made for adultery, could it not? Love could override promises, oaths and restraints. Likewise the shattering thinking of "If it feels right, it can't be wrong" and the devastating "The heart never lies." Fairley calls this thinking "*ruinous nonsense*," and anyone familiar with Scripture would have to concur. He speaks frankly about homosexuality and related behavior and provides ample and interesting statistics to make a biblical point. He also tackles the gender identity issue, noting that some people actually believe that there are 300+ genders and that children as young as six are being given gender reassignment surgery. He provides masses of hard facts so that we might be educated as to how very serious are the consequences of illicit behavior of any kind.

The Left Pit

Fairley speaks about the liberal mindset: "Their god, if they believe in one at all, is so timid a softie that he would never condemn them for their behavior. Their god is basically a hippie."¹² And from this window into their world we can see that the idea of correction or judgment is totally absent and foreign to their thinking. This is an insightful point; since they are biblically illiterate, when they are confronted with the idea of punishment for sin, they react badly. Their ignorance has undone them; into the vacuum of that ignorance a new morality gained a strong foothold.

Mr. Fairley suggests that by placing all their emphasis on feelings and heart, liberals end up shutting down their brains. When one denies Truth, one begins to hate it. And then blame is heaped upon it and the bearer of Truth becomes an intolerant bigot. So upside down is our world that when Truth is spoken, it is heard as hate speech. And the tragedy is that since they have come to hate the Truth, it actually is hate speech to them.

Mr. Fairley refers to the above as the "Left Pit." It is characterized by: 1) being increasingly permissive, 2) immoral, 3) disease-prone, 4) taking the lives of unborn children, 5) engendering mental illness and irrationalism, 6) criminalizing Truth, and 7) being destructive, repressive, and bullying. Left unchecked it will lead to self-destruction.

The Right Pit

We are reminded that it is Satan who draws us from one error to another. The "Right Pit" is most starkly exemplified by the Pharisees and their ungodly stance with law over compassion and love. One has only to consider the man with the withered hand¹³ and the eating of the grain by the disciples. In both cases, Jesus was furious with the Pharisees; in fact our author perceptively points out that they had become imbalanced, giving cause for Richard Dawkins' caricature of God as a wrathful monster. What was so desperately missing here was the *application* of Truth, i.e. the Truth of God's overwhelming (and overriding) love. Truth without love is a misnomer, a *biblical impossibility* because it ceases to be the truth when absent of love.

What is at stake here would be the failure to be in obedience to the Great Commission. Pharisees would just not be interested, and it is candidly pointed out how very many Pharisical attitudes and mindsets Christians have. Conservatives, like liberals, have created a god in their own image. "We must never say, 'I could never believe in a God who...' because we are then saying we don't want a God above our comprehension. The real God of the Bible *will* challenge you and disagree with you and tell you that you're wrong and mould *you* into *his* image."¹⁴

Those in the right pit are characterized by: 1) unpleasantness, 2) lack of love, 3) legalism, 4) jealousy, 5) pride, 6) pettiness, and 7) unforgiveness. Jesus hated Pharisism. The Christian must be wary of both camps. Fairley emphasizes that counterbalance is required and that the hard and soft virtues must be held in tension but without hostility.

Truth is in Crisis

"Truth is exclusive. As soon as you say something is true, you automatically infer that all competing claims are false."¹⁵ Fairley compares the modern era with the bloody Dark Ages and finds that it only got worse. That leads me to think that in this post-modern era we have excelled all previous cruelties and inhumanities (albeit without the blood). We have done it not with blatant persecution but by the principle of shunning: you won't say the right words; therefore you are not a valid Christian.

This new age of post-modernism is characterized by throwing out all absolutes. Why? Because the ones making the headlines *feel* that when people subscribe to absolute truths, the inevitable result is conflict. They *feel* that surety and confidence about God is hateful. Relativism is the new way. "Truth is just whatever you want it to be." And as this new age progressed, a different sort of spirituality took hold. It was a "confusing, vague, mish-mash of whatever you wanted it to be... A pinch of

¹² Ibid., p. 72

¹³ See Greg Deuble, "A Withered Hand and Some Shrivelled Souls!" thebiblejesus.com

¹⁴ *The War on Truth*, p. 90.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 103

Eastern mysticism, a sprinkle of occultism... Christianity was rejected, of course.”¹⁶ And how has this affected us? Fairley’s conclusion is that under these influences we have become permissive, immoral and hedonistic, with the hard virtues increasingly absent from public life, with liberals in charge of education and most of our institutions for well over thirty years. The not-so-subtle “don’t believe your own eyes; believe us” suggestion has contorted our thinking. “With Truth suppressed, our generation has witnessed absurdity taking over.”¹⁷

What Happens Next? Abandoning Reality

“In the last times some will turn away from the true faith; they will follow deceptive spirits and teachings that come from demons” (1 Tim. 4:1). “And when you add to this picture the Biblical prophecies describing globalisation, cashless payment technology, the rise of world leaders, a rise in natural disasters, disease and war, and you look around and see that all these signs are coming to pass in front of our eyes today, you start to get the impression that we may not be very far away from Jesus’ return at all.”¹⁸ He hastens to say that we don’t know when it will be. He does, however, make two very grim prophecies that I will not speak to. (I am sensitive to some of our international readers whose countries are not so “progressive,” a term which can be a cover for uncivilized behavior. He compares our demise to that of other wicked civilizations.)

This book reminds me of an accordion. Only when Truth is stretched out like this do we get the full impact. Ignorance will prove to be devastating. Could it be that we know no better than Pilate who asked: “What is truth?”

There is fascinating and essential information on Islam and the character of Mohammed, which exemplifies the earlier assertion that the ideology of Islam cannot be questioned or criticized without shouts of “racist.” Here, as with many other subjects, Fairley reveals how and why it is that we have abandoned reality. This situation, however, leaves us in great peril and necessitates an examination of our nation in light of a humanist attack.

Mr. Fairley bravely and frankly speaks the facts surrounding transgenderism, feminism, indoctrination of children, religion, and politics as well as our moral breakdown in many other respects. His aim is that having seen through the dangers of both “pits,” we will be strong enough to avoid them. He points out on the positive front that as we see the unfolding of events prophesied in Scripture, we can be joyful about the fact that we must be on the final approach to Jesus’ return. Although there

might be hundreds of years left, “the route through which the world is returning to the Days of Noah and Lot is painfully clear.”¹⁹

“If any man seeks for greatness, let him forget greatness and ask for truth, and he will find both.”²⁰

Perhaps we will see the brightest light in the darkest darkness. Fear not; our Father’s perfect plan will not be delayed, nor will it be cancelled. ✧

Do Not Go Beyond

by Tom Land, Tennessee

As one who grew up in a deeply devout Southern Baptist home in Tennessee, I have always had at least a passing knowledge of Scripture. I was in church from the time I was born, and though I did have several of my adult years when I was not in church, I have never doubted the Scripture or the sovereignty of God. In my early 20’s I was introduced to a man who had some questions for me about things that Southern Baptists do not think much about. What those things were are for another day; but I answered him with all of the knowledge I had, and he challenged me to read a particular book, which I did. This book was a turning point in my life as I believed the sincerity of the author of the book, even if I did not agree with everything he was teaching. His sincerity caused me to speculate about much of what I had been taught as a child in church. Some of his questions were questions I could not answer, and that bothered me.

Let me say at the outset that no one has ever had better parents than I had. I didn’t fully realize that as a child, but as I grew and saw more of the world I became more and more convinced that I had the best parents ever. Those loving parents were part of the problem with my new-found questions, because my parents, along with various teachers in the church, were the very ones who had taught me the things I was now calling into question. I knew these people loved me and would never intentionally deceive me or teach me anything that was incorrect, but something deep inside me agreed with some of the questions I was being asked by the author in this particular book. I determined in my early 20’s that I would settle every religious or spiritual argument I ever heard or had with myself, by letting Scripture be what I would hold as truth — no matter what that truth was.

What I found, not only in the case of the man I met, but even more so as I addressed more and more doctrinal questions, was that much of what is taught in most evangelical churches is inferred from Scripture or based on Scripture, but not founded on the explicit words of Scripture. Anyone who has ever watched a movie that was “based on” a book they had read and liked, understands

¹⁶ Ibid., p. 110

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 117. He gives the examples like a Norwegian woman identifying as a cat, a man identifying as a dog called Spot.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 125

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 227

²⁰ Horace Mann, 19th-century American educator.

just how much that story can be altered. I began to find the same thing with Scripture. When people “base” their beliefs on Scripture, they are not necessarily believing the words of Scripture itself, but instead they believe someone’s idea or interpretation of what that Scripture means. Only by a careful and constant reading of Scripture, and paying close attention to exactly what the Scripture says, and also how any particular Scripture harmonizes with all other Scripture, can one begin to find the true message taught to us by Scripture.

Often we are not actually believers in Scripture but instead fans of a certain teacher of Scripture, and what the teacher says, we simply believe. We may not take the time to read the Scripture ourselves, because we trust that this favorite teacher has done the study and the work, so that we don’t need to take the time to actually read the Bible. I would be negligent if I did not insert a warning here about the dangers of doing this. Unfortunately many of those who claim to be Christian do just that. We want to believe in God. We want to have a relationship with God. We want to be able to count on God. We would tell anyone who asks that we are Christians, but we really spend very little time with God. It just isn’t fun. It is hard to understand, and it is very complicated.

If we are listening to most of what is taught today, it isn’t much fun; it is hard to understand; and it is very complicated. The reason for that is that we are not learning or listening to Scripture, but learning and listening to someone’s opinion of Scripture. We have become the ones spoken of in 2 Timothy 4:3-4: “The time will come when people will not tolerate sound teaching. But following their own desires, they will accumulate teachers for themselves, wanting to have their ears tickled. And they will turn away their ears from the truth, and turn aside to myths.” Anything that is not exactly Scripture will not build us up and will not turn us to God. It will in fact lead to arguments and confusion.

From that one question in my early 20’s, I have found myself on an almost constant quest to find the truth in Scripture — trying to separate the teaching of men from the teachings of the Bible. As a young man in my early 20’s I actually made the statement that probably as much as 15% of what I believed was either wrong completely, or was at least altered somewhat from its original intent. Now as a man in my 60’s I think the percentage was much higher. Over the years I have studied and changed my mind on many topics of the Bible including the Trinity, once saved always saved, the immortal soul, eternal torture, the effect of sin in our lives, “Jesus’ name only” doctrine, steps to salvation, and the list could go on and on. As I tried to determine how one man could be so wrong on so many topics, I again looked to Scripture and found the answer in 1 Corinthians 4:6. I like the way it is in the ESV: “I have applied all these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, brothers, that you may learn by us not to go

beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up in favor of one against another.”

I am aware that many teachers use this to tell us not to follow one teacher over another; and when taken in context I agree fully with that. If no teacher goes beyond what is written they will teach the same thing, which is the plain Scripture, and all will be edified. When teachers go beyond what is written, then the people with itching ears choose who is teaching what they like and that is who they listen to. We are not to go beyond what is written. That is such a simple thing, but it is almost never taught. “Scripture only” or “sola scriptura” is a phrase that many today laugh at, but Scripture is the only document containing the absolute truth.

I don’t speak or read Greek or Hebrew. I am incapable of explaining some of the linguistic complexities inherent in Scripture; but I do believe in a God who is powerful enough to get across to me what He wants me to know. And for me, that means simply taking the Scripture for what it says, and earnestly studying, in order to avoid going beyond what is written. ✧

My Faith Story

by Don Bryan, Arizona

I was raised and baptized as a Jehovah's witness. Unlike many stories I have seen, I did not leave because I found fault with them and was seeking the truth. Rather I left because much like the prodigal son, I wanted to spend my inheritance. I wanted to see the world and be like “normal” people. Of course, I was disfellowshipped, but it did not matter to me. I was setting out to add to the list of reasons anyway. I was 18 and could do what I wanted, so I joined the military to see the world and get paid to do it.

As the years went by, I studied many things, from the occult to other religions and most Christian denominations. Eventually I came back to believing in God but did not give it much thought other than that. That was until my first tour in Iraq. As the saying goes, “There are no atheists in foxholes.” I had been given one of those little Gideon Bibles before getting on the plane, along with a deck of cards and various toiletries. I don’t remember which mortar round or rocket it was that made me finally say this prayer: “Lord, I know you are up there, and if you get me out of this alive, I promise I will read more of your word.” God kept His end of the bargain; unfortunately I did not do so well. I read from time to time but I was back to enjoying life, or so I thought.

By this time, I had met my soon-to-be wife and I was only a year from retirement. Twenty years in the military and I was ready to move on with my life. Not so fast — you are going back to Iraq again. This time was only for 6 months rather than a full year, but somehow I thought, “I should have kept my end of the bargain.” I do not remember when I decided to pick up that Bible again but

once I retired, I decided to use my GI bill to get a degree in divinity from Regent University, a “non-denominational” college. I quickly found out that “non-denominational” means as long as you believe in the Trinity. I still did not believe in the Trinity, so I dropped out rather than have myself indoctrinated into a false teaching.

Disenchanted, I allowed myself to fall back into a pattern of sin, then struggled back to reading the Bible again, trying to beat my flesh on my own. One thing they never teach you as a JW is that you can and must have the Holy Spirit. That is only for the governing body, so I felt like I was on my own. I struggled for the longest time thinking that I had sinned too much in my life to ever be forgiven. I am sure many have felt the same way, but I would encourage you to read Luke 7:36-50. Who do you think will love him more? The one whom he forgave more. Consider how Peter reacted to Jesus in Luke 5:8: “Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.” I felt the same way. But that is what the Devil wants us to believe.

I remembered the words of Jesus in Matthew 19:26 that all things are possible with God. I prayed repeatedly, “Lord, I surrender. Give me the strength to overcome sin. I can do nothing on my own. I am nothing without you.” I asked God to change my heart and believed that He could, and He did. God never leaves us; we leave Him. The prodigal son was finally home.

My wife and I started reading the Bible every day. Neither one of us believed in the Trinity. So many times, I had searched for fellowship with those who believed the way we did only to find something wrong with their doctrine. Finally, God led us here. We read the beliefs page and watched many videos that helped us confirm what we had already been led to believe. We were not the only ones anymore. We are anxious to see where God leads us next. ✧

“To be sure, Revelation proclaims a ‘new heaven and a new earth,’ but that does not mean that God gives us a replacement for this current earth when we damage it beyond recovery... Rather the earth becomes ‘new’ in the sense of resurrection or renewal — just as our bodies will be resurrected, brought to new life, but they are still our bodies. The whole creation is longing for redemption, the apostle Paul writes — this is the sense in which there will be a new creation. It, too, will be redeemed, made new. The Greek word used for the ‘new’ earth in Revelation 21:1 can mean either ‘renewed’ or ‘new’ — but it certainly does not mean a ‘different’ earth.”

— Dr. Barbara Rossing, *The Rapture Exposed*, p. 7

***The One God, the Father, One Man Messiah*
Translation: New Testament with Commentary
2nd edition now available at Amazon.com (\$20)**

Comments

“Greetings from a devoted 84-year-old brother in Christ, who actually came into understanding from the time I was given *one* and *further* publications of your ministry — and also from reading and studying that truly inspired book by Greg Deuble, which I have read often. I have been receiving your magazine, *Focus on the Kingdom*, many years, and am grateful to GOD to have led me to an organization that is faithful to His word. It was only reading your work that I began an intensive study of my own.” — *England*

“I’m a Jewish believer in Jesus the Messiah, currently residing in Israel. As you might know, most Christians/Messianics here (or anywhere) deify Jesus, and teach that God the Father is one among three, a teaching which — as hard as I tried — I never could reconcile with the Bible itself (and logic). I’ve been an avid follower of your work which has been extremely helpful in delivering from that confusing delusion. After a long journey of coming to a more biblical understanding of the exaltation and lordship of the MAN Jesus, I now wish to be baptized in his name.” — *Israel*

“I appreciate all you do and say as concerning the right understanding of the Gospel, Christ, and the Kingdom that is to be on this earth. And thank you, with all sincerity, for your great efforts and tireless diligence in the re-sowing of good seed in a field the tenants had so badly abused and corrupted at every opportunity, and still do. May you and your companions ‘come again rejoicing’ (Ps. 126:6).” — *England*

“My son, who is now in his forties, came to lunch today and mentioned that he has become persuaded by unitarian views and had been watching some of your material/interviews on 21st Century Reformation (21stcr.org). I was terribly proud!” — *Zimbabwe*

“When I was a teenager, I was baptized by immersion in a church pool. The church believed that the only true God is the Father, but I had some doubts on some of its unique claims and church doctrines. They didn’t even preach about the Gospel of the Kingdom. Eventually, I strayed away and believed in the Trinity for a while because of Protestantism, and then I eventually went back to being unitarian after some questions have been answered by God. As I was seeking truth, I was also exposed to your ministry and the Gospel of the Kingdom. Afterwards, I accepted the Kingdom message as the true Gospel that Jesus preached after investigating it for myself, and I have held on to it for almost a decade now. I am now involved in sharing this Kingdom Gospel to one of my friends. My friend’s reaction is in complete awe after understanding the Gospel of the Kingdom and its Old Testament foundation. If God wills, I hope my friend becomes a true believer.” — *Philippines*