

Focus on the Kingdom

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The Land Promise to Abraham and His Descendants

The Key to the Whole Bible Plot

Underlying the entire Bible story, running like a golden thread through Scripture, is the promise made to Abraham that he would receive, as a reward for his obedience to God's call to leave Ur of the Chaldees, **prosperity, progeny, and property.** This amazing, divinely promised guarantee of success, which Christians are invited to share as spiritual children of Abraham, is summed up in the compact phrase "the blessing of Abraham." This beautiful and memorable phrase is found only twice in Scripture, in Galatians 3:14 and Genesis 28:4. This provides the essential link between the two Testaments. That blessing of prosperity, progeny and property (land forever) is defined by Paul in Romans 4:13 as "the promise to Abraham and to his descendants that he would be heir of the world" — "God's promise to give the whole earth to Abraham and his descendants" (NLT).

This is exactly the promise of Jesus to his followers in Matthew 5:5. "The meek will inherit the earth/land," citing the amazing Psalm 37 which no less than five times defines the goal and destiny of the faithful. This has not a word to say about "going to heaven as a disembodied soul at death." To confirm this point, note the fearless words of Dr. J.A.T. Robinson at Cambridge: "Heaven' is in fact never used in the Bible for the destination of the dying" (*In the End God*, p. 104). You get a very different impression at funerals and in commonly heard sermons! The only recognizable goal of the believer is "heaven." But not according to Scripture.

The entire biblical drama hangs on this remarkable tension: Abraham and his seed have never yet inherited the land/earth. In fact Stephen in the sermon which cost him his life (Acts 7, the longest chapter in that book) explicitly says that Abraham did not inherit as much as a square foot of the promised land! But "God promised it to him and his descendants" (Acts 7:5). That marvelous promise is rooted of course in Genesis 12, 13, 15 and constantly throughout the Hebrew Bible. How is that staggering promise to find fulfillment, since Abraham is long dead? God will indeed as always be vindicated.

The obvious and only solution is that Abraham will have to be resurrected when Jesus comes back in order to take up his allotted place in the Kingdom/land of the new order to be introduced by Jesus. Hebrews 11:8 clearly recalls that Abraham once lived in the promised land, as

did his children, but in verses 13 and 39, "these [heroes of the OT] all died, not having received the promises." There it is! Everything hinges on the faithful attaining to the inheritance of the earth/land as promised to the meek by Jesus in Matthew 5:5 and unpacked in more detail in Revelation 5:10 (cp. Rev. 2:26-27; 3:21; 20:1-6; Jer. 27:5). Not only do they gain the earth; they rule and reign as kings with Jesus on it.

Add to this the astonishing promise of Jesus to Peter, who inquired as to what reward the Apostles might expect (Matt. 19:27), after all the exhausting trouble and maltreatment they had received from the established "church." Jesus' answer was transparent. In that reborn world when the Son of Man returns to the earth and takes up his position on his throne of glory, the Apostles will also occupy twelve thrones and set about the task of governing the tribes re-gathered at that time in the land (see Matt. 19:28, and put this verse up on your refrigerator!). The reference of course is to the new order of society, the genuine new world order, foreseen in all the prophets and especially in Isaiah 65:17-25 and 66:22.

There is coming a brand new world order on earth, to be inaugurated at the return of Jesus, and we are urged by the Gospel, the one Gospel about the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15), to prepare with all urgency for that coming event. This is the substance of Christian hope, and hope is the basis, Paul said, for the companion virtues of love and faith (Col. 1:4-5). Without a proper grasp of hope, faith and love are diminished and thwarted. It matters very much what you believe. And believing and having a passion for truth is of paramount importance (2 Thess. 2:10). So start by believing and obeying Jesus in Mark 1:14-15! That is what repentance is all about.

The Christian faith is called "the faith of Abraham" (Rom. 4:16), and Abraham is the spiritual father of the faithful (4:11). No wonder then that the Gospel was preached in advance to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). This in short is the Gospel of the Land/Kingdom, the Gospel as preached by Jesus and Paul (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; Acts 19:8; 20:24-25; 28:23, 31), which is conspicuous by its absence in churches and preaching! For further detail please read my *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah* (free at our site). Also my *Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven*. For a short summary see our ten-minute Youtube video "Jesus Is Still a Jew."

Here then is the easy story of the whole Bible, to be taught to the old and the young alike. God is working to restore peace to our tortured earth, using His agent the Messiah and Son of God. Luke 1:35 explains with lucid

simplicity the basis for Jesus being the Son of God. (Do not read the KJV on this verse. It misleads you into thinking there is more than one reason, “also,” for Jesus’ Sonship!)

Jesus, the lord Messiah (Luke 2:11), was fathered in the womb of Mary by miracle. He certainly did not arrive from a pre-human life elsewhere! He announced the Kingdom of God, which is to bring about the reversal of the calamity which came to the human race in Adam and Eve. Mark 1:14-15 commands us to stop *not* believing in the destiny of man, which is to rule in the Kingdom, the very task at which Adam failed.

Jesus, the perfect and sinless human person, the second Adam, modeled the perfect Christian life, devoted to the will of his Father, who is the one and only God of true monotheism (John 17:3; 5:44). Jesus affirmed belief in the unitary monotheistic God of his biblical heritage (Deut. 6:4; Mark 12:29).

Jesus also confirmed the promises made to the fathers of the Hebrew Bible (Rom. 15:8). Thus the Christian Gospel was preached in advance to Abraham (Gal. 3:8). The promise was that the faithful believers would receive the whole world as their inheritance (Jer. 27:5). The promise to Abraham was specified as the guarantee that he would be “heir of the world” (Rom. 4:13). Thus the land promise to Abraham is exactly the Kingdom of God promise of the New Covenant, and Jesus stated this by promising possession of the earth/land to the gentile (Matt. 5:5).

The fascinating fact is that Abraham has until this day not received a square foot of his inheritance. Acts 7:5 is a marvelous “John 3:16” verse! The point to be gained is that Abraham and all the faithful who are now dead, sleeping the sleep of death (Ps. 13:3), must at the future return of Jesus rise from the sleep of death (1 Cor. 15:23) to receive their promised inheritance. (So also Daniel in Dan. 12:13.)

The ideal conditions on earth will then be introduced, and such scenes as Isaiah 65:17-25, where some mortals (not the saints who will by then have gained immortality) will be considered exceptional and unfortunate, or even under judgment, if they die at the age of 100! Jesus and his disciples loved and looked forward to the great “restoration of all things” (Acts 3:21). There is to be a rebirth (*palingenesia*) of the world, when the Messiah will be sitting on the throne of his glory. At that time the Apostles will be co-rulers with Jesus, and they will be administering the 12 tribes regathered in the land (see Matt. 19:28 and Luke 22:28-30). This is the heart of the New Covenant (Luke 22:29: “I covenant...”)

This coming new world order on earth is also called the *apokatastasis* — “putting everything back in order.” Heaven, where Jesus is currently, must retain him there “until the restoration [*apokatastasis*] of all things, about which the prophets spoke” (Acts 3:21, cp. Acts 1:6).

None of this is remotely connected to the very misleading popular idea about “going to heaven” when we die! Mary, even, is currently dead, sleeping the sleep of death, certainly not functioning as an intercessor. She will awake when Jesus comes back and be part of the great Kingdom of God to be set up on a renewed earth (Dan. 2:44; 7:18, 22, 27, etc.).

Please read the following and be suitably shocked: A commentary rightly observes: “We must guard against a one-sided spiritualizing. Certainly the prophets do not think of heaven. Plows and pruning hooks have as little to do with heaven as swords and spears. And what has the high place of Mount Zion to do with heaven?”¹

“The gospel records of our Lord’s life and teaching do not speak of ‘going to heaven,’ as a modern believer so naturally does...Especially is there no suggestion that Jesus is offering to his disciples the certainty of ‘heaven’ after this life.”² ✧

The Chasm

by Barbara Buzzard

Webster’s: Chasm (kaz’m) n – a marked especially irreconcilable division, separation or difference; any break or gap; rift.

Of all the hundreds of questions Anthony has been asked, I think that one of my questions is the most revealing. As most of you know, Anthony has a Church of England background. Years ago when I asked him what connection the Church of England had with the Bible, he promptly replied “none.” What prompted my original question is the fact that Church of England churchgoers did not take a Bible to church.³ “Why not?” said I. “It would be embarrassing,” said he. In fact (dare I say it) it would be regarded as a stupid American thing.

Ah, yes, what would people think? I was tempted to find this hilarious but the seriousness of the situation immediately sobered me.⁴ I add this to further your understanding: Anthony said, “Our concept of God was that He had about as much moral authority as Father Christmas.”⁵

I have visited this Church of England church with him on occasion for a family function. We took care not to

¹ *Lange’s Commentary* on Isa. 2.

² William Strawson, *Jesus and the Future Life*, p. 38.

³ Nor were Bibles supplied in the pews. This was true even before technology allowed one to have access to the Bible on his device.

⁴ Mark 8:38. “If a person is ashamed of me and my message in these adulterous and sinful days, I the Son of Man, will be ashamed of that person...”

⁵ Paraphrasing J.B. Phillips in *Your God Is Too Small*.

embarrass anyone by taking a Bible!⁶ The service was as foreign to me as a language I don't know. You just follow the protocol of everyone else. And you comfort yourself with the idea of the lunch to come: roast beef or lamb, roast potatoes, Yorkshire pudding if you are lucky, and two vegetables with rich gravy, to be followed by a choice of two puddings (desserts).

Subsequent to those visits, we met with the vicar after the death of Anthony's mother. He actually confided in us that he "leaned toward the idea of conditionalism."⁷ But tragically he said that he couldn't possibly teach or preach it.

A visit to another vicar elicited from him that his least favorite sermon to preach was the one he was duty bound to present on "Trinity Sunday." In fact, he said that was the sermon he most hated to preach. While visiting relatives and being invited to attend church with them, we encountered one of those Trinity Sundays. The church bulletin simply stated that "while we know that the Jews of old worshipped one God, today is Trinity Sunday." (Nothing else was said in the service about Trinity Sunday; i.e. it was just *announced*.) May I suggest that a great *rift* has taken place, an unorthodox and unapproved substitution for that One God?

Closer to home and to show that this is not just a British foible, a friend's experience in church years ago was that every Sunday, the pastor would say, "If you have your Bibles, turn to..." The only rustle of pages in the church week after week was my friend's.

Do these examples bear any relation to Jesus? Is there any connection at all? Could they be flying under false colors? If they are not *joined to Jesus* in purpose (Luke 4:43) they are simply doing their own thing. Might they not run the risk of being unrecognized by him?⁸ And perhaps the acid test: Do they *sound* like Jesus?

Satan has engineered every possible detour and diversion, as well as division, so that one might think he has the Gospel when he has only one half of it. We know that a half-truth is also a half-lie and perhaps even more dangerous than a flat-out lie. Does this not apply here? Substituting going to heaven or hell for the coming of the Kingdom of God is a subversion of the Christian faith.

G Free?

"G Free" is usually a positive term, highly advertised, indicating the absence of gluten from a food item, which may be a very positive thing for some people. However, when G Free refers to a church which is *Gospel Free* the ramifications are decidedly negative, if not downright terrifying.

⁶ I truly hope that this is not the case today. And it would not be true of all Churches of England; they are categorized "high" and "low," with the high church being most averse to Bibles in church.

⁷ The belief that the dead are actually dead, i.e. the whole person is dead.

Surely this would be an oxymoron: a church without *the* Gospel. No doubt, there is a gospel of sorts, but if it is not the Gospel that Jesus taught, then there is no connection, rather like an electrical appliance that is not plugged into a source of power. All can *appear* good in a Gospel-Free theological package but it is only with investigation and comparison to Jesus' teaching that it will be revealed that all is not well.

Consider: "It may be said that the teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God represents his whole teaching. It is the main, determinative subject of all his discourse. His ethics were ethics of the Kingdom; his theology was theology of the Kingdom; his teaching regarding himself cannot be understood apart from his interpretation of the Kingdom of God."⁹

How shocking that with all the churches and seminaries that dot our land, a 2005 survey asking "What is the Gospel?" produced these answers: "The Word of God. Look at creation"; "The gospel? Just live by it"; "Oh, I don't know. And I go to Mass every Sunday. To me it would be the sermon"; "Peace, love, loving everybody, all depends on your belief"; "The gospel? I'm a little fuzzy on that"; "A way of life or a guide for a way of life. Just like the Ten Commandments."¹⁰

The interviewer had a hunch that a sizeable number of people would answer something like: "We should love one another." She continues, "That, of course, is no 'good news' at all but very bad news indeed: If the gospel is the Golden Rule, then all of us are damned. And if churches are leaving that impression, we're in trouble." You have no doubt heard that the easiest place to hide is in plain sight. Is it not incredible that in this sophisticated land where Christianity has been taught for over two hundred years, we actually don't know what the Gospel is? It would be like a mechanic not knowing what a carburetor is or, worse yet, not knowing whether the engine even needed one. And here I diverge from the interviewer whose favorite answers to the question "What is the Gospel?" were these: "The good news, Jesus Christ saves." And the one she found best of all: "Good news...the bad news is I'm a sinner. The good news is Christ took care of it for me."

Lost Connections

I almost wish I hadn't found such good examples of a Gospel-Free faith. Jesus' own definition has been excluded, not even mentioned. The connection between the Messiah and his Kingdom has been replaced by an imposter of an idea of going to a place which is only appointed for God.¹¹ The Kingdom has been untethered

⁸ Matt. 7:23: "I never knew you. Go away; the things you did were unauthorized." (NLT)

⁹ F. C. Grant, "The Gospel of the Kingdom," *Biblical World*, Sep. 1917, p. 127.

¹⁰ Andree Seu, *World* magazine, Aug. 6, 2005.

¹¹ Ps. 115:16 (and of course Jesus and the holy angels).

from the Gospel! The heart of the Gospel has been cut out! It's the old "you are saved," but without telling you "what for."

As one would be given an "Incomplete" grade on an unfinished essay, so too would an incomplete Gospel have consequences. A half measure in a recipe brings disaster. One half of an engine will not work; one half of the Gospel is not compelling enough to motivate one to seek the Kingdom. The Gospel of the Kingdom has been *pried away* from Jesus. Only an integrated whole will work. There is only one foundation of the faith.

A perceptive writer adds: "The Scriptures are best understood as the message of Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom." He continues, "Thus began the replacement of Jesus' gospel of the kingdom of God by the gospel of 'Christianity,' which increasingly substituted 'the Church' and its creeds for Jesus' gospel of the kingdom."¹²

The fact that Jesus preached the Gospel for thirty chapters in Matthew, Mark and Luke is totally compelling when one realizes that while preaching the Gospel he had not spoken of his imminent death. He "*began*" to speak of his death only from Matthew 16:21. I mention this because it is a shocking thing for people to discover and therefore an excellent tool to help pry open a mind.

As N.T. Wright puts it: "The New Testament's message...what we are promised in the gospel is the kingdom of God coming 'on earth as in heaven.'"¹³

"It may not only be said that all his teaching had relation to the Kingdom, but also his actions, everything he did...All the events of his life until the final culminating event, the crucifixion, had reference to the coming of the Kingdom. From the baptism on, his whole life was dedicated to the mission of announcing its approach and of calling men to prepare for entering it upon the conditions which by divine authority he announced."¹⁴

If this is true— and I hope we ask ourselves if it is— how do we relate to it? Is this the model we follow? Or has it been superseded by a newer, more modern, more friendly "consumer oriented" approach? Does this galvanize us or is it just possible that we have been influenced by mega preachers to "live your best life now"? Or to think that it would be sheep stealing to speak to an uninformed Christian about what our hope really is?

Missing the Link?

Is it possible that Plato has had a greater influence on the churches than Jesus' Gospel of the Kingdom?

¹² Robert Hach, "Eschatology, the Cross, and the Wrath of God."

¹³ N.T. Wright, *The Day the Revolution Began*, p. 146

¹⁴ F.C. Grant, "The Gospel of the Kingdom," *The Biblical World*, Sep. 1917.

As with royal lineage, the chain of succession cannot be broken.¹⁵ There must be *continuous succession*. Isn't that why God always provides for a remnant of people who have the true faith?

What is the connection between the creeds of the churches and Jesus and his creed? "Abide in me as I abide in you. Just as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself unless it abides in the vine, neither can you unless you abide in me" (John 15:4).

Is it possible that the creeds on which many churches are established are simply man-made? Is it possible that a religious system can simply *wear the face* of Christianity? Could it be that a religion is not only Gospel-Free but Christless as well?

As we have lost the link between forgiveness and repentance, so too any idol will break the connection. And worshipping a God who is not the God of the Bible creates a chasm, that "marked especially irreconcilable division," that yawning abyss between what is true and what is not.

What then of the Gospel of the Kingdom? Since it is God's Gospel, is it not essential that it be ours?¹⁶ "One of the most mischievous and fatal mistakes ever made in Christian history was the mistake of St. Augustine, who identified the Kingdom of God with the Church of God...The Church is no more the Kingdom than the British army is the British Empire. It is high time for all Christians to ponder the long-lost teaching of Christ with respect to the Kingdom of God."¹⁷

There *are* impossibilities: it is impossible for there to be no connection between Jesus and his message and his church. If there is no link, there is an imposter at work. That link, like a thread, must be unbroken. *That link to Jesus' teaching is essential for validity. It is your password, your security code* (1 Tim. 6:3; 2 John 7-9).

Parachuting Cats

"In the early 1950s the people of Borneo suffered from malaria, and the World Health Organization's solution was to spray DDT all over the place. Sure enough, this killed the mosquitoes and the malaria declined. But there were many side effects. One of the first things people noticed was that the roofs of their houses were falling down on their heads because the DDT had also killed the parasitic wasps which had previously controlled the thatch-eating caterpillars. Then they noticed that all the CCT-poisoned bugs were getting eaten by geckos, which in turn were eaten by cats. As the DDT accumulated in the food chain, the cats died. Without the cats the rats flourished and multiplied. The WHO then found the country threatened by outbreaks of typhus and plague that it had itself created, and was thereby obliged

¹⁵ How well understood this was when kings were slow to produce an heir!

¹⁶ Mark 1:14-15; Rom. 1:1, 15; 1 Thess. 2:2, 8, 9; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Pet 4:15.

¹⁷ Hugh Price Hughes, *Essential Christianity*, p. 58-59.

to parachute live cats into Borneo. The point of this little parable is that if you don't know how things are connected, then quite often the cause of problems is solutions."¹⁸

My point in including this parable is to say that if we don't understand *how* things are connected and also the fact that they *cannot* be disconnected without serious damage, we are in perilous waters. I would submit that, in fact, a partial Gospel is also a dysfunctional Gospel.

"Can there be such a thing as evangelism which does not hold in highest honor and emphasis the very Gospel heralded by Jesus and mandated by the Great Commission until the end of the age?"¹⁹

When a Jew Rules the World

"We seem to be faced with what can be called an *eclipse of the reign [Kingdom] of God from the apostolic age to the present, particularly in our theology for evangelization...* The reign of God is God's own dream, his project for the world and for humanity! He makes 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."²⁰

Speaking of dreaming, it is something we should do but won't or can't because of the Platonic information we have been fed. Let's be real. No one does this better than Randy Alcorn: "We do not desire to eat gravel. Why? Because God did not design us to eat gravel. Trying to develop an appetite for a disembodied existence in a non-physical Heaven is like trying to develop an appetite for gravel. No matter how sincere we are, and no matter how hard we try, it's not going to work. Nor should it. What God made us to desire, and therefore what we *do* desire if we admit it, is exactly what he promises to those who follow Jesus Christ: a resurrected life in a resurrected body, with the resurrected Christ on a resurrected Earth."²¹

Please note the *detachment* and the *reduction* in the following summary. And please note also that nature teaches us that a split seed, i.e. one half of the seed, a damaged embryo, will not grow. One half is not a legitimate entity in the Gospel either.

"Far too many Christians view the Gospel, or the 'good news,' in the most minimalistic of terms, something along the lines of 'Jesus died for your sins so that someday, when you die, you can go to heaven forever.' The fact of the matter, however, is that the good news as it was proclaimed by Jesus and the apostles was so much more than this... Bluntly stated, as the title of this book reminds us, if the Gospel that one preaches does not culminate with a Jewish man ruling the world,

then it is not the Gospel of the New Testament. The Gospel today has been reduced to a simplified formula whereby one might 'get saved,' but it has been fundamentally detached from the coming kingdom that we are saved unto."²² ✧

The Cart Before the Horse

by Carlos Xavier, Georgia

In the 1500s Protestant Laelio Sozzini (or Socinus) set about to reinterpret John 1:1. He argued that since the Gospels sometimes use the word "beginning" to describe the beginning of the ministry of Jesus,²³ John 1:1 must mean the same thing. This interpretation was not known before the 16th century and influenced Laelio's nephew, Fausto Sozzini (Faustus Socinus), the founder of Socinianism, or the Polish Brethren.

These early non-Trinitarians were hoping to counter the millennia-old interpretation of John 1:1 about the "eternal God the Son," i.e., the second Person of the Trinity. But the novel Socinian reading seems like a non-Trinitarian overreaction, predicated on the false notion that "the word of God" of John 1:1 is an individual separate and distinct from God.

For the Old Testament writers "the word of God" is the self-expression of God or a quality of God. So when John 1:1 says that "the word was *with* God" it doesn't mean that a person was with God.

In the Old Testament qualities of God, things belonging to God are said to be "with Him" — His reward/salvation in Isaiah 40:10; 62:11; His purpose/plan in Job 10:13; 14:5; 23:14; 27:11; wisdom and strength in Job 12:13, 16; mercy in Psalm 130:7. (See also Gal. 2:5: "the truth of the Gospel would remain **with you**.") And the famous passage in Proverbs 8-9 describes "wisdom" as a woman beside God, with her companion "prudence."

We know from Psalm 33:6 that "by the **word of the Lord** the heavens were made, and by the **breath of His mouth** all the starry hosts." As you can see from the parallelism, "the word of the Lord" here is synonymous with "the breath of His mouth" (*ruach*, breath = spirit), which can be linked to "the spirit of God" in Genesis 1:2 (cp. "by faith we understand that the ages were set in order by the word of God," Heb. 11:3).

The words and phrases used in John chapter 1 clearly echo Genesis chapter 1, for example, "In the beginning" (Gen 1:1 LXX, *en arche* as in John 1:1). This same phrase is also used for wisdom in Proverbs 8:22-23 (LXX).

John does sometimes use the word "beginning" for the start of the ministry of Jesus, but it is not the same phrase as in John 1:1: "in the beginning." As a matter of

¹⁸ Lovins, *Soft Energy Paths*.

¹⁹ Anthony Buzzard, *Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven*, p. 296.

²⁰ Mortimer Arias, *Announcing the Reign of God*, 1984, p. 58, 116, emphasis mine.

²¹ Randy Alcorn, *Heaven*, 2004, p. 7.

²² Joel Richardson, *When a Jew Rules the World*, p. 7.

²³ Mark 1:1; Luke 1:2; John 15:27.

fact the Greek phrase (*en arche*) is not used anywhere else by John.

In Genesis 1:3 the Greek word translated “Let there be” (*egeneto*) is the same Greek word translated as “came into being” (*egeneto*) in John 1:10 in connection with the creation of the “world” (*kosmos*). And the phrase “the light (*phos*) shines in the darkness” in John 1:5 echoes Genesis 1:4 where God separates “the light from the darkness” (Gen. 1:4, LXX).

The “all things” in John 1:3 is also a reference to the Genesis creation. This same phrase is used by other NT writers in connection with creation (cp. Eph. 3:9; Heb. 3:4; Rev. 4:11).

The Catholic scholar Raymond Brown summed it up well when he observed that if John 1:1 refers to the beginning of the ministry of Jesus, “then the clearer reference to his coming in John 1:9 and 10 seems tautological” (i.e., a needless repetition).

Dr. Brown says the writer of John “has inserted a reference to John the Baptist *after* vs. 5, and one can scarcely imagine that the [writer] would introduce John the Baptist *after* describing the ministry of Jesus and its effect. Clearly the [writer] thought that the references to the coming of Jesus began in vs. 10; he put the coming of John the Baptist in vss. 6-8 *before* the coming of Jesus, and used vs. 9 to connect John the Baptist to the moment of that coming.”²⁴

In other words, John did not put the coming of Jesus before the coming of John the Baptist, which would be putting the proverbial “cart before the horse”! ✧

“My lord,” the Key to the Identity of Jesus as Son of God

A Lesson You Cannot Afford to Be Without

Scripture is precise in its description of who in the Bible is God, and who is not God. Defining God is the primary and principal issue in Scripture. Not to define God rightly is to be guilty of idolatry.

There is no need for the public to be confused by the disinformation which sometimes parades as “scholarship.” Central to the identity of the Messiah, **as distinct from God**, is Psalm 110:1, quoted in the New Testament more often than any other passage from the Old Testament. Psalm 110:1 was a favorite text of Jesus, who silenced his opponents with his quotation of this psalm. Jesus had just agreed with a friendly Jew that the true God “is one Lord” (Mark 12:29, the Shema). One Lord, as every child understands, means one Person. Jesus was in total agreement with Judaism that God is one, single Divine Person.

Jesus then asked his audience a brilliant question: “How is it that the scribes [the Bible scholars] teach that

the Messiah is the son of David?” Jesus then quoted Psalm 110:1 which reports that under inspiration David had said, speaking of the Messiah to come, “The LORD gave an oracle to my lord, ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies subject to you, under your feet.’”

The first LORD in that staggeringly important verse is YHVH, the one God of the Bible.

YHVH’s inspired oracle was addressed to “my lord,” the Messiah. You may be reading a translation of the Bible which capitalizes that second lord as “Lord.”

Let me explain why that second lord ought not to be capitalized (it is correctly *not* capitalized in such translations as BBE, CEB, EHV, ERV, GNT, JPS, LEB, MEV, NAB, NET, NIV, NRSV, RSV, TNK). The reason is simply that a falsely capitalized “lord” as “Lord” in Psalm 110:1 misleads you into believing that the Messiah, Son of God, is in fact GOD!

The Hebrew word for that second lord, defining the Messiah, is *adoni*, pronounced “adon-ee.” Here are the facts about that Hebrew word. *Adoni* is precisely distinguished from a similar, but different word *Adonai* (pronounced “Adon-eye”), which always means the Lord **God**. That word for the one God, *Adonai*, is found about 450 times in the Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament. It is deliberately and carefully distinguished from a different form of the word “lord.” In Hebrew that second lord of Psalm 110:1 is *adoni* **which never means God**. *Adoni* is the Bible word which tells you that a person so described is not GOD, but rather a human (occasionally angelic) person. *Adoni* appears 195 times in the OT and rightly describes a prophet, husband, prince, king, father, priest, captain, general. These are of course all references to human persons.

Scholars today use the *Brown, Driver, Briggs Lexicon* of biblical Hebrew, equivalent one might say to the *Webster’s Dictionary* for English words. The BDB states the facts clearly. *Adoni* and *Adonai* “are variations of Massoretic [vowel] pointing to distinguish divine [i.e. for GOD] reference from human” (p. 10). *The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* confirms this easy fact: “The form *adoni* (‘my lord’), a royal title, is to be carefully distinguished from the divine title *Adonai*” (Vol. 3, p. 157). We have thus a total of 195+450 = 645 samples to observe and learn about the clear difference between God and “not God.” This, too, from the *International Critical Commentary* on 1 Peter: “We are not to suppose that the apostles identified Christ with Jehovah; there were passages which made this impossible, for instance Ps. 110:1” (p. 99).

These plain scholarly facts tell you that “my lord” (*adoni*), which occurs 195 times in the Old Testament Hebrew, defines a person as *not* God, not Deity. Therefore the Messiah is not God, not Deity. So Jesus confirmed.

²⁴ *The Gospel According to John*, Anchor Bible, p. 26.

There is a single interesting example in Judges 6:13, 15 where it is not clear whether the angel or God is addressed. Note the switch in verse 15 to *Adonai*, “Lord,” God. Gideon seems aware that he is speaking to someone other than, and *superior to*, the messenger angel whom he first addressed as *adoni*, “my lord,” an angel in verse 13. All this shows the minute precision of the Bible text to show us who is God and who is not!

In Psalm 45:11 “the King will be attracted by your beauty. Because he is **your lord**, bow down to him” (the Messiah). This word for “your Lord” is used for God in Isaiah 51:22. But this is a different form of *adon*, not *Adonai* or *adoni*. Finally, *adon+i+* can be used to form proper names for people, like Adoni-zedek (Josh. 10:1). But this should never be allowed to contradict the 195 appearances of *adoni* = my non-Deity lord.

If your friends want easy confirmation, invite them to understand that “God alone has immortality” (1 Tim. 6:16), i.e. it is *impossible* for God to die! But do we not all know that Jesus, the Son of God, died? (Rom. 5:10). Hence it follows inevitably that Jesus cannot possibly be God! ✧

Comments

- “If someone asked me about 2020, I wouldn’t say COVID-19. I would say it was the year that the Bible became alive to me, the year I stopped being a Trinitarian; the year I believed in the simple and wonderful Gospel of the Kingdom.” — *Cameroon*

- “I’ve been following your YouTube videos and your books, notably, *The Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus*. I’m glad to have seen your channel, among the sea of Christian channels. I’ve learned that the Kingdom is to be on earth with the saints as its administrators; the soul is the entire being, referring to humans, animals, and God; hellfire is public execution.” — *email*

- “We are formerly UPCI (United Pentecostal Church International) members and I raised my children in that denomination, so the journey was more than 30 years in the making. Interestingly enough, it was a Oneness minister (formerly, anyway) who brought the one God and one Messiah message to my attention. That was about seven years ago. My daughter left her own church about a year ago. She was especially concerned that her children were being taught incorrectly. She loves this new understanding of the Bible and now enjoys reading and studying more than ever. Bible truths are clearer and more easily understood. We are happy that God was gracious enough to deliver us from our former misunderstandings.” — *Maryland*

- “I appreciate this ministry as a beacon of truth for the biblical unitarian. I’m a former Seventh Day Adventist who wanted to understand the personality of God. I studied books and periodicals for years. Initially, studying about Arius brought me from three down to two. But as always, just when you’re ready, I got the

whisper in my brain: ‘What if Jesus isn’t God?’ Of course, my initial reaction was to want to spiritually vomit, because how can these heretical thoughts be entertained in my brain? How are they even conceived? The Father *will* lead into all truth if one is willing to hear it.” — *Youtube*

- “I am so glad I found you! I’ve never belonged to a church, but have spent thousands of hours reading the Bible over the last 17 years. I could never find a church that teaches anything remotely close to the true faith that I’ve come to know. I could never get involved with a Trinitarian church, so I’ve been a solo Christian, not knowing one other ‘Christian’ that I can intelligently discuss beliefs with or fellowship with.” — *Massachusetts*

- “I am a 58-year-old pastor of a small church in the Philippines, with a Oneness background. I early retired voluntarily from the denomination (UPCI) 5 years ago and was isolated from then on. Almost all the churches around our fellowship are Trinitarians and Oneness. I was able to download the two books of Eric Chang, *The Only True God* and *The Only Perfect Man*, free online and print them. Then I started to name our fellowship as Biblical Monotheist (as opposed to Oneness and Trinitarian).” — *Philippines*

- “I find the Return of Christ to set up His Kingdom on Earth the only real hope we’ve got. The Church of England seems to suggest the Church will be packed off, one by one, to a very far-off Kingdom. How could any Christian be at ease in a paradisaical or intermediate state when the Earth would be going through such convulsions?! I pray consistently for the Kingdom to come. It can’t come soon enough for me, yet so many Christians I have met are not looking forward to a renovated Earth (and Heavens).” — *England*

- “It was just one video of yours that changed my mind about preexistence. Of course, I had to double-check with the Scriptures, but when you said, ‘You cannot exist before you existed’ and ‘You cannot pre-exist yourself,’ it really had an effect on me, and I thank you for that. I’m sure it has an effect on countless others as well.” — *email*

- “It was in my research to go behind the development of the contextual Christian theology in order to find the original Jewish-Hebrew theology, which in my understanding should be much better fit to develop a contextual oriental Muslim theology, that I came across your unitarian theology. I myself was brought up with a non-explicit subordination Trinitarian theology — Christ as subordinate to the Father — but also with a preexistent Christ who left the glory he shared with his Father and came down to save us. Thus, I did not have a problem with definitely burying classic Trinitarian theology, but giving up the belief in the actual preexistence of Christ was not easy. I went through this process during the course of last year and your ‘conservative’ biblical teaching was most helpful in this.” — *Switzerland*