

# Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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## A Letter from the Lord Jesus: About God and Me<sup>1</sup>

by Dr. Dale Tuggy, Tennessee

Dear Christian,

I've been meaning to talk to you about God and me. I know you mean well; you're trying to rescue my honor from people who say I'm just one of many "great spiritual teachers." In truth, I do not wish to be lumped together with the likes of Muhammad, the Buddha, or Gandhi. (I don't mind being compared to Moses, although my ministry has far surpassed his.<sup>2</sup>) I do wish, though, that you would pay attention to my teaching, both during my bodily ministry on earth and in my post-resurrection ministry through my hand-picked apostles.

I need you to stop confusing me with God, our heavenly Father. You pray to God and then call him "Jesus," as if that were his name. He has a name, but "Jesus" is not it!<sup>3</sup> Then you pray to my Father and you thank him for dying on the cross for you. But this never happened! Pay attention, my children.

I am God's *Son*, not him!<sup>4</sup> I am a *man*, and it should go without saying that the Almighty is not a man.<sup>5</sup> He, my Father, is the only true God.<sup>6</sup> I am his Messiah,<sup>7</sup> his Christ, his anointed one, not the anointer. I died, and thanks be to God, he raised me and made me immortal.<sup>8</sup> But he has always been immortal, and so can't be killed.<sup>9</sup> Notice that my apostles and I never told you that it was because I am God that I could be "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."<sup>10</sup> An immortal being can't die any sort of death, including a sacrificial death! We never told you that only a being with the divine nature could atone for the sins of humanity. In truth, God my Father, who was pleased with me,<sup>11</sup> considered me to be a worthy sacrifice, yes, a man with flesh and blood

like yours.<sup>12</sup> He showed how much he loves you by sending me to sacrifice my human life for you,<sup>13</sup> something he could not do himself, being immortal. It was certain imaginative men among you, not my apostles or I, who told you that the gospel is that *God* came and died for you. Nor should you listen to peddlers of the nonsense that I died "as human" while remaining alive "as divine," as if I could have been both dead and not dead, and alive and not alive at the same time! Nor was I composed of a dying man and an immortal "divine Person." It was only yours truly on that cross. I was there, and I assure you that on that terrible day no one thought that *God* had been crucified.<sup>14</sup>

God was the one I had prayed to earlier in the garden, hoping for a moment that I might be spared. But the whole terrible series of events was his will, and I submitted my will to his.<sup>15</sup> As my apostle Paul explained, this is why God raised and exalted me.<sup>16</sup> I now rule, so to speak, at the right hand of God.<sup>17</sup> You could say that I share his throne,<sup>18</sup> yes, but that doesn't make me him! Again, as Paul and other early writers clearly explained, even in my exalted position, where as predicted I have been given authority, honor, and sovereignty over all the nations of the world,<sup>19</sup> still, I am under God. We all are!

The one true God is godless; no one is *his* god. He's the only one like that. The rest of us are under him. My God is your God; God is Father both of me and of you all. I told you this plainly, right after he raised me.<sup>20</sup>

I did something that even God could not do: I lived as an example for you of a human life lived in faithful submission to God, walking out the two most important commandments, to "love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind," and to "love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>21</sup> You can't tempt God Almighty;<sup>22</sup> but I was tempted, and I passed the tests.<sup>23</sup> I prayed to God both in secret and in public,<sup>24</sup> I

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<sup>2</sup> Acts 3:22, 7:37; Deut. 8:15; John 1:17-18.

<sup>3</sup> Ex. 3:15.

<sup>4</sup> John 10:33-36.

<sup>5</sup> John 8:40; Num. 23:19.

<sup>6</sup> John 17:1-3; 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:6; 1 Tim. 2:5; 1 Thess. 1:9-10; 1 John 5:20.

<sup>7</sup> John 4:25-26.

<sup>8</sup> 1 Cor. 15:3-4, 42-56.

<sup>9</sup> 1 Tim. 1:17, 6:16; 2 Tim. 1:10; Rom. 1:23.

<sup>10</sup> John 1:29.

<sup>11</sup> Matt. 3:17, 17:5.

<sup>12</sup> Heb. 2:14-18, 1 Tim. 2:5-6.

<sup>13</sup> Rom. 5:8.

<sup>14</sup> Mark 15:32, 39.

<sup>15</sup> Mark 14:36.

<sup>16</sup> Phil. 2:8-9.

<sup>17</sup> Mark 14:62; Eph. 1:20-21.

<sup>18</sup> Rev. 7:17.

<sup>19</sup> Dan. 7:14.

<sup>20</sup> John 20:17.

<sup>21</sup> Matt. 22:37, 39.

<sup>22</sup> James 1:13.

<sup>23</sup> Luke 4:1-13; Heb. 4:15.

<sup>24</sup> Luke 5:16, 22:41.

worshiped him in the temple, and from a young age I studied his revealed words.<sup>25</sup> I taught you to pray to him and I showed you how to relate to him.<sup>26</sup> As I explained clearly, it was God who sent me,<sup>27</sup> God who empowered me,<sup>28</sup> God who vindicated my claims by the amazing miracles he did through me,<sup>29</sup> and later through my messengers.<sup>30</sup>

Did I make myself God? No, as I explained, that was a false accusation. All I ever claimed to be was God's *Son*, his Messiah.<sup>31</sup> Notice that my messengers and I never once said I am "God the Son." I did say that the Father and I "are one,"<sup>32</sup> yes, even as the one who plants and the one who waters are "one." That is to say, we're about the same business.<sup>33</sup> Neither I nor my apostles ever told you that the Father and I are the one God; no, he is my God.<sup>34</sup> I am your lord, but not your God; God is one.<sup>35</sup> My disciples wanted to see the Father,<sup>36</sup> and I told them to look at me in order to see the Father — not because I *am* the father, but because I am *like* him. I am his image,<sup>37</sup> and truly he was and is at work in me.<sup>38</sup> Eventually even Thomas was given eyes to see the Father at work in me, reconciling the world to himself.<sup>39</sup>

That life-changing power, it comes from us. And one who truly follows me fellowships with us, with the one true God and also with me, his unique Son, your human lord. God and I are, respectively, the one God and the one lord.<sup>40</sup> Follow me, and truly, we will dwell with you.<sup>41</sup> But don't confuse us with one another, and let go of speculations to the effect that we are two "Persons" in some imagined "triune" god. I didn't teach you that, and neither did my messengers. My Father is God, all of God; he is not merely one of three "Persons" in God, whatever that may mean!

Did I say "I am"? Yes! As in, "I am *he*." Or you might say "I am *the one*." And I also said *which one* I am: the Messiah. I explained this clearly to the Samaritan

woman.<sup>42</sup> Will you listen to me? Does the fact that you must worship me show that I am God himself? No! I must be worshiped *because* God has exalted me to his right hand.<sup>43</sup> This was done as a reward for my unique service to him, in winning people of all nations to him.<sup>44</sup> Will you adopt the scruples of a false prophet about "associating" another with God?<sup>45</sup> God forbid! Obey God and honor me; this gives him glory. "Who can forgive sins but God alone?" The answer is: someone who God has authorized to forgive sins on his behalf, like me,<sup>46</sup> and like my followers.<sup>47</sup>

What could possibly convince you that I am not God, but rather his unique human Son, when I have already plainly told you that he knows more than me,<sup>48</sup> that he is greater than me,<sup>49</sup> and that I only do his will and follow his lead,<sup>50</sup> and when everyone *knows* that I was killed? No one can kill *God*! He leads and does not follow; no one is greater than him.<sup>51</sup> While he is eternally all-knowing, I *told* you there was something I didn't know.<sup>52</sup> If you say I really *did* know in my "divine nature" or in my "divine mind" then you are calling me a liar. Don't do it!

Notice that at my trials my enemies never accused me of claiming to be more than God's Messiah, the promised King of Israel.<sup>53</sup> I tell you the truth: I never said a single thing that it would be blasphemous for a man to say, so long as that man really was God's chosen Messiah. And so I am.

Listen to me, and I will help you to see that the Lord God and the Lord Jesus Christ are not the same "Lord." Even though I am a unique lord, the Father is my God even as he is yours. Don't be confused by the fact that I now share some of his titles. He has graciously inspired his servants to call me many things that he has been called: "Lord,"<sup>54</sup> "God,"<sup>55</sup> "Savior,"<sup>56</sup> "Master,"<sup>57</sup> "First and Last,"<sup>58</sup> "Alpha and Omega,"<sup>59</sup> and even "Lord of

<sup>25</sup> Luke 2:41–42, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Matt. 6:5–13.

<sup>27</sup> Mark 9:37; John 13:20.

<sup>28</sup> Luke 4:18; Acts 10:38.

<sup>29</sup> John 5:36, 14:10–11; Acts 2:22.

<sup>30</sup> Acts 2:43, 4:30, 5:12, 6:8.

<sup>31</sup> John 10:22–39.

<sup>32</sup> John 10:30.

<sup>33</sup> 1 Cor. 3:8.

<sup>34</sup> Rev. 3:12.

<sup>35</sup> 1 Cor. 8:4–6; Mark 12:29; Gal. 3:20.

<sup>36</sup> John 14:8–11.

<sup>37</sup> Col. 1:15.

<sup>38</sup> John 14:10; Heb. 8:1.

<sup>39</sup> John 20:28; 2 Cor. 5:19.

<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor. 8:6; Eph. 4:4–6.

<sup>41</sup> 1 John 1:3.

<sup>42</sup> John 4:25–26. Compare: John 14:24–25.

<sup>43</sup> Phil. 2:6–11.

<sup>44</sup> Rev. 5:9–10.

<sup>45</sup> <https://www.thoughtco.com/shirk-2004293>

<sup>46</sup> Matt. 9:2–8.

<sup>47</sup> John 20:23.

<sup>48</sup> Mark 13:32.

<sup>49</sup> John 14:28.

<sup>50</sup> John 5:19–20.

<sup>51</sup> Ps. 89:6; Isa. 40:18; Deut. 10:17.

<sup>52</sup> Rom. 11:33–35.

<sup>53</sup> Matt. 26:59–66, 27:17, 22, 29, 37, 42–44; Mark 14:55–65, 15:2–5, 12, 18, 26, 32; Luke 22:66–71, 23:1–5; John 18:33–38. Some readers infer that Jesus must have been making some sort of "divine claim" because in Matthew and Mark he is accused of blasphemy. But the careful reader should note that Jesus there claims only that he will be seated at God's right hand, which assumes that Jesus is not God himself, but rather someone else.

<sup>54</sup> Rom. 1:4.

<sup>55</sup> Heb. 1:8.

<sup>56</sup> Luke 2:11.

<sup>57</sup> Jude 1:4.

<sup>58</sup> Rev. 2:8.

<sup>59</sup> Rev. 22:13.

lords and King of kings.”<sup>60</sup> Just remember that the very people who ascribe these titles to me also clearly teach that God is my God, the God over me, the God to whom I submit.<sup>61</sup> It should be no surprise, since I am like him, his very image, and am still about his business, that he would generously allow me to share some of his wonderful titles. I praise him for it!<sup>62</sup>

Yes, I know that some sophisticated people among you, noting the differences between God and me, will avoid saying that I am God himself. They instead proudly discourse on “the deity of Christ,” and argue that I have a “divine nature.” In truth, they have muddied the waters with their rulings requiring people to say that I am “perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity, the same truly God and truly man...one and the same Christ, Son, Lord, only-begotten, acknowledged in two natures.”<sup>63</sup> Neither I nor my apostles taught you these things. If a “human nature” is a man, then I am a human nature. If the “divine nature” is a god, you should remember that there is only one God, and he is our Father.<sup>64</sup> If “human nature” is instead supposed to be the defining qualities which any human must have, then like any human being, I have human nature. But if “divine nature” is supposed to be the defining qualities which any god must have, then I do not have divine nature, as I have already explained.

After hundreds of years of telling people that I was feigning having anything like typical human limitations, which would mean that I was deceiving those around me, more recently some of you, willing to do anything to save your godman theories, have changed your theology, saying that God can temporarily give up his perfect knowledge, his immunity to temptation, and his unlimited power. Perish the thought! The Lord God Almighty can’t be killed, can’t be tempted, and can’t be ignorant of any fact. Yes, he can appear in human form, even wrestle with a man,<sup>65</sup> visit a man and receive his

hospitality,<sup>66</sup> or be seen by Moses and the elders of Israel<sup>67</sup> — nothing is too hard for him. But appearing in human form is not the same as *being a man*, is it?<sup>68</sup> Don’t shrink your idea of God down to human size just to save your theory that he is me! Better you should re-examine your teachings about me in light of what I and my apostles actually said, not to mention the prophets before me. They all agree that I am a man, a descendant of David,<sup>69</sup> and they do not offer the dark saying that I am “man” but not “a man” or that I am “human” but not a “human person.”<sup>70</sup>

About this speculation that any “LORD” or “God” seen in the times of the patriarchs was me,<sup>71</sup> I never told you that, nor did any of my apostles. Listen to us! It was *in these last days* that God has spoken through me.<sup>72</sup> And let me also clear up this matter of my allegedly creating the universe. I never claimed this. I proclaimed what I was taught by my Jewish ancestors, that it was the one God alone who created.<sup>73</sup> The universe is the handiwork of our Father in heaven. No, I did not help. He did not *need* any help.<sup>74</sup> He did it all by his mighty word.<sup>75</sup> He did not need some intermediary to insulate him from direct contact with the good works of his hands. Even if he had needed that, I wasn’t around back then. I had not yet been conceived!<sup>76</sup> Yes, as my friend John wrote, there was something in the beginning which was with God and which was God, and it was through this that God made all things.<sup>77</sup> Of course I’m talking about God’s word, or in other words, his wisdom.<sup>78</sup> It was that wisdom which much later as it were came down to earth and was available in my teaching and in my example.<sup>79</sup> Of course, I am a sort of creator, but my handiwork is the new creation, the new order, the new ages.<sup>80</sup>

To sum up, I am God’s unique Son, and I have been raised up to be his right-hand man, a Joseph to his Pharaoh.<sup>81</sup> Someday I will be your judge; God has appointed me to that role.<sup>82</sup> I will rule and reign from a truly godlike position which I was given by the one true

<sup>60</sup> Rev. 17:14.

<sup>61</sup> John 20:17; Rom. 15:6; 2 Cor. 1:3; Eph. 1:3, 17; 1 Pet. 1:3; Rev. 1:6, 3:2, 12.

<sup>62</sup> Rev. 15:3–4.

<sup>63</sup> <https://www.theopedia.com/chalcedonian-creed>

<sup>64</sup> John 17:1–3; 1 John 5:19–20.

<sup>65</sup> Gen. 32:22–32. Even if these are done through the mediation of an angelic being, nonetheless it is God who (indirectly) does such things.

<sup>66</sup> Gen. 18:1–22.

<sup>67</sup> Ex. 24:9–11.

<sup>68</sup> New Testament writers, firm in their conviction that Jesus was a real man, speak loosely of him as “in the likeness of sinful flesh” (Rom. 8:3), “revealed in flesh” (1 Tim. 3:16), “come in the flesh” (1 John 4:2) and “being born in human likeness” (Phil. 2:7). But they do not thereby mean to suggest that Jesus only seemed to be human, or that Jesus transitioned from being a disembodied spirit to being embodied in a human (or humanoid) body. For them, he is the supernaturally conceived but human Son of Mary (Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:18), a

literal descendant of David (Rom. 1:3), “a man” (Acts 2:22; John 8:40) although “from heaven,” that is to say, God-sent and godly (1 Cor. 15:47; John 3:13).

<sup>69</sup> Luke 1:32; Rom. 1:3; 2 Tim. 2:8; Rev. 22:16.

<sup>70</sup> <http://www.ncregister.com/blog/steven-greydanus/is-jesus-a-human-person>

<sup>71</sup> Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*.

<sup>72</sup> Heb. 1:1–2; Col. 1:13–20; 2 Cor. 5:17–18.

<sup>73</sup> Mark 10:6, 13:19. Compare: Rom. 1:20; Acts 4:24, 14:15, 17:24–31; Heb. 11:3; Eph. 3:9; 1 Tim. 4:3–4; Rev. 4:11, 10:6, 14:7.

<sup>74</sup> Isa. 44:24b.

<sup>75</sup> Gen. 1:3, 6, 9, 11, 14, 20, 24, 26; Ps. 33:6; John 1:1–3.

<sup>76</sup> Luke 1:31.

<sup>77</sup> John 1:1–3.

<sup>78</sup> Ps. 33:6; Prov. 8:22–31.

<sup>79</sup> Matt. 11:19, 13:53; 1 Cor. 1:24; Col. 2:2–3.

<sup>80</sup> Heb. 1:2.

<sup>81</sup> Gen. 41:37–45.

<sup>82</sup> Acts 17:31.

God.<sup>83</sup> I'm a man still, although God has raised me up to be "a life-giving spirit" with an immortal body.<sup>84</sup>

If you think that it would be wrong to worship or pray to "a mere man," you need to fearfully reconsider what you just called me. Would you stand in front of one of this world's kings or emperors, point your finger at him and say out loud that "he's just some guy"? When you stand before me as your judge, you will see how "mere" I am! You will bow your knee to me, "to the glory of God the Father."<sup>85</sup> Although I am not your God, I am your lord, and you ought to love *and* fear me.<sup>86</sup>

If you think that God could not possibly put a human being into this position I now enjoy — well, that's just the voice of unbelief. I *told* you that I am "a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God."<sup>87</sup> Empowered by God, yes a real man can do all that God's Messiah must do. This man is forever your priest who stands between you and God.<sup>88</sup> This man is the one intermediary between God and all of my brothers and sisters.<sup>89</sup> This man is "the first and the last, and the living one. I was dead, and see, I am alive forever and ever; and I have the keys of Death and of Hades."<sup>90</sup> Now listen closely: I am not the first and last *God* — that position has been taken! I am the first and last exalted human lord, raised to immortality, and exalted until all are subject to me, even as I am subject to God.<sup>91</sup>

I once stumped my own countrymen by asking them how in the prophetic Psalm David could call the Messiah, his own descendant, "lord."<sup>92</sup> They didn't know, but a reader of the New Testament should understand that God has exalted me, the very point of the prediction I quoted to them.<sup>93</sup> I am not the Lord God Almighty, I am the first son of Mary whom God "has made both Lord and Christ."<sup>94</sup> Do not confuse the Lord God with the Lord Jesus, his Christ.<sup>95</sup>

When you read the accounts of my life, you can see that I am a man and that God is someone else, the true God, the God of Israel whom I worship and serve. And yet, in some contexts powerful and impressive people insist that my whole message counts for nothing unless "the deity of Christ" is part of it. But listen carefully, my child: you must prefer me to them, just as some of my first followers had to turn from even the most prestigious and powerful scholars and scribes in order to take me as their teacher. Just come to me, and learn from me, and I

will resolve your confusion. My earliest followers faithfully recorded the truths God gave me, and even more truths, which God's spirit soon taught them. "Very truly, I tell you, whoever receives one whom I send receives me; and whoever receives me receives him who sent me."<sup>96</sup> Do you really think my theology needs some help, some correction? Why do you call me "Lord, Lord" and yet treat my teaching about God as something desperately in need of supplementation, using words that I never used, even demanding that my followers use them? You dare not load them down with requirements that my disciples and I did not establish as conditions of the new covenant!<sup>97</sup>

Listen to me, and plug your ears when people presume to tell you what I *really* must have been hinting at. Don't be seduced by alleged deep secrets about my imagined "inclusion in the divine identity," discernible only by the learned or by the "spiritual." "I have spoken openly to the world;" truly, "I have said nothing in secret."<sup>98</sup> Yes, for a short time I did have to keep my identity as Messiah quiet so that it would not result in misunderstanding, or even an armed revolt. But I told my messengers the whole truth about me and my mission; "I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father";<sup>99</sup> I have held nothing back from you.

Therefore, you should attend carefully to what my messengers did and did not write. They explained how my life fulfilled prophecies about the Messiah, and also prophecies about God. But in citing these last, they did not hint that I am God himself. Rather, in some of them, the fulfillment is God working through me,<sup>100</sup> and in others, my God revealed to them another meaning of the ancient text, another, more recent fulfillment.<sup>101</sup> If you think a text from my messengers is hinting at some deep, unexpressed truth about me, look to see if the author or a worthy character in their narrative draws that conclusion. If not, you may be jumping to that conclusion. The chroniclers of my earthly ministry wrote plainly; they did not write esoteric treatises which can be understood only by an elite. Listen to what they actually say. This game must end, of "finding" hidden claims in their writings such as that I am God or a "godman." No, that I walked on water was not a hint.<sup>102</sup> Nor is my claim that I will return on the clouds.<sup>103</sup> Nor are my statements that "I am

<sup>83</sup> 1 Cor. 15:27.

<sup>84</sup> 1 Cor. 15:42–46.

<sup>85</sup> Phil. 2:11.

<sup>86</sup> Rev. 6:16, 17:14.

<sup>87</sup> John 8:40.

<sup>88</sup> Heb. 2:17, 3:1, 4:14–15, 6:20, 8:1, 9:11.

<sup>89</sup> 1 Tim. 2:5.

<sup>90</sup> Rev. 1:17–18.

<sup>91</sup> 1 Cor. 15:20–28, 11:3.

<sup>92</sup> Mark 12:35–37.

<sup>93</sup> Mark 12:36; Psalm 110:1.

<sup>94</sup> Acts 2:36.

<sup>95</sup> Luke 1:32; Acts 1:21; Rom. 1:7.

<sup>96</sup> John 13:20.

<sup>97</sup> 1 John 4:15.

<sup>98</sup> John 18:20.

<sup>99</sup> John 15:15.

<sup>100</sup> Mark 1:3.

<sup>101</sup> Matt. 1:23; Heb. 1:10–12.

<sup>102</sup> Matt. 14:33; Mark 6:45–52; John 6:16–21.

<sup>103</sup> Matt. 26:64; Mark 14:62.

various things.<sup>104</sup> I told you plainly *who* I am.<sup>105</sup> I am a teacher, not a mumbling soothsayer, and my students understood me. But will you? If you think these writings' clear message that I am God's Messiah is boring, you have not yet understood it. Pray that our Father in heaven will open your eyes to it. Even I will pray for you, if I see that you are trying to humbly receive "the words of eternal life"<sup>106</sup> which I have brought you from the Father.<sup>107</sup>

In conclusion, look at the record of one of the truly great days in this new era. My servant Luke has given you a faithful summary of the first sermon of this new age. In it, my friend and messenger Peter does *not* preach that I am God in human form. He does *not* say that I am God himself or call me a "godman." He does *not* theorize that I have a divine nature. He does *not* credit me with creating the world. He does *not* credit me with God's deeds in the times of Abraham or Moses. Rather, he quite correctly describes me as "a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you."<sup>108</sup> Is that not good enough for you? That, friends, is the good news of this new era. There is no need for another god, a second god, or an additional "true God" who is someone other than the one who *I say* is *the only* true God.<sup>109</sup> Peter did not fail to preach the good news. Rather, he preached it unencumbered by unnecessary human speculations. Now you go to all nations in my name and do the same.

Sincerely,  
Jesus

## Are You Sure You Know What the Gospel Is?

The Gospel of Mark is supremely valuable for defining the Christian Gospel. Mark's opening statement in Mark 1:1 defines his whole purpose with the greatest precision. For all the Bible writers one task was all-consuming — telling the public how they could be saved, that is, how they could learn the way to living forever and ever. Immortality is found in the Gospel (2 Tim. 1:10). If that does not get our attention, nothing will.

Mark opens his treatise with a title: "The **beginning** of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God." Particular attention must be given to Mark's definite word "**beginning**." But Christians today seem alarmingly uncertain as to how to define the saving Gospel!

Such ignorance of the way to immortality is the riskiest and most tragic position to be in! Mark has made every effort to ensure that we understand the definition of the Gospel. He wants us to grasp the most basic of all God's truths in a way that allows for no possible doubt or argument. Mark declares that the saving Gospel had its **beginning** in the Kingdom Gospel preaching of Jesus himself (Mark 1:1, 14, 15). The content of that Gospel preaching is then defined with exact language. The Gospel's content is **the Kingdom of God**, and that saving message of the Kingdom Gospel is the one and only saving Gospel. Mark says that it is the "Gospel of God" Himself (Mark 1:14) as found also in Romans 1:1; 15:16, 2 Corinthians 11:7; 1 Thessalonians 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Peter 4:17.

Mark's word "**beginning**" (1:1) is crucially important, since today nearly all (there are very few exceptions) contemporary offers of salvation fail to say a single word about the Kingdom! They appear to offer "Jesus" ("Won't you receive him or ask him into your heart?") for salvation, but omit entirely Jesus' primary Kingdom theme and command. They speak only about the death and resurrection of Jesus. But this according to Mark is *not* the "**beginning** of the Gospel." The **beginning** of the Gospel is glaringly absent from most of today's offers of salvation.

Luke shared Mark's perspective perfectly. Luke in Acts 10:35-37 records Peter stating that "in every nation the person who fears God and does what is right is welcome to Him. The Gospel Message [word] which He sent to the people of Israel, **preaching the Gospel of peace through Jesus Christ** (he is lord of all) — you yourselves know what happened throughout Judea, **beginning** from Galilee after the baptism which John proclaimed."

Exactly the same precision as to timing and **beginning** is found in Hebrews (2:3), where we are strongly advised not to neglect "such a great salvation which had its **beginning** [as the Greek says] in the words spoken through the lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard him." The content of that essential Kingdom Gospel preaching was the subjection of "the world to come" (2:5) to man, and thus to Jesus and Christians. The world to come is of course the coming Kingdom on earth to be inaugurated at the future Second Coming (Parousia) of Jesus.

The Gospels conscientiously define Jesus' Gospel teaching over and over again, and that of John the Baptist who introduced Jesus, by the same express formula: "Repent because the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Matt. 3:2; 4:17). "This simple though widely comprehensive

<sup>104</sup> John 6:35, 8:12, 10:7, 10:11, 11:25, 14:6, 15:1.

<sup>105</sup> Matt. 16:15–17; Mark 8:29; Luke 9:20; John 20:31.

<sup>106</sup> John 6:68.

<sup>107</sup> John 8:28, 12:49, 14:10.

<sup>108</sup> Acts 2:22.

<sup>109</sup> The Nicene Creed from the year 325 mentions one "true God" (the Son) who exists because of another "true God" (the Father). This was a reference to Origen's doctrine that God "eternally generated" his Logos or Word.

indication gives us our surest knowledge of his teaching. We may regard it as certain, first because it remained the fundamental element in the faith of his earliest followers who continued his work...the same idea — the coming of the Great Kingdom. We know moreover that the hopes of the Jewish people all came to a head precisely in that idea, and that Jesus was regarded as appointed to bring the realization of these hopes to his faithful followers.”

The coming of the Kingdom will replace “at a stroke all the kingdoms of flesh [the present evil systems], which the powers of our...world were upholding in unjust exercise of the mandate committed to them by the Master of the universe.” The future Kingdom will be “the end of the present age, the end that is of Satan’s Kingdom and of the earthly powers set up by him, the coming of God [in Christ], the reign of the just, the resurrection of the dead, and the Great Assize [Judgment] at which the wicked everywhere would be sentenced to extermination. With the view before him of judgment about to fall, let the wicked man repent and change his life!”<sup>110</sup>

This was the first and fundamental command from Jesus to us all: “Repent and believe God’s Gospel about the coming Kingdom” (Mark 1:14-15). If you want to be in that Kingdom you **must begin** by obeying that **command to believe** the Gospel of the Kingdom. Unless you respond to Jesus’ opening and summary command, you have no certainty of being in the Kingdom when it comes. In other words you will not be saved. The Devil or the Evil One knows this very well, and so he directs all his efforts to thwarting Jesus’ Gospel preaching of the Kingdom so that people “will not believe it and be saved” (Luke 8:12).

“The dominating perspective of the Gospel, and the dominating thought of Jesus, is the concrete, real...conception of the Kingdom of God, involving the complete renovation of the human order both inward and outward...The sum and substance of the Gospel can always be found, and *must* always be found, in the eschatological [future] idea of the Kingdom of God, all the rest being subordinate to that.”<sup>111</sup>

Even the essential atoning death and subsequent resurrection of Jesus were secondary to the primary cry of Jesus to us all, Jew and Gentile, that we are to grasp and understand the great Good News of a brand new world coming. We are to enlist in the service of Jesus now to play our part in Jesus’ continuing commission of preaching that great event and preparing for the Kingdom to come.

Jesus had a clear mission statement. But is this yours also, as it should be? I have read whole books about the “Purpose Driven Life” and the “Purpose Driven Church” but they contained no word of Jesus’ own purpose

statement. Jesus stated his own mission like this: “I am driven by God to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom: That is why God commissioned me!” (Luke 4:43). Do you eat, drink and live that same mission statement? Unless you do, you do not sound like Jesus, and sounding like Jesus is the only safeguard against being deceived (1 Tim. 6:3; 2 John 7-9). Jesus was vigorously and relentlessly emphatic that the Kingdom of God Gospel is the only thing of ultimate value! “Let the dead bury their dead,” Jesus said to a half-hearted follower, “but you go and preach the Gospel about the Kingdom” (Luke 9:60).

Every reader should think hard about what definition of the Kingdom and Gospel he has been given. You cannot risk not doing this. If you have been exposed to what is called “Dispensationalism,” you have been fed a false Gospel. You have been taught to twist the words of Paul in Galatians 3:19-29. Paul spoke the truth when he said that the Law of Moses lasted until “faith came” (3:23), that is, “until Christ *came*” (3:24). Paul absolutely did *not* say “until Christ *died*.” Similarly in Luke 16:16 “the Law and the Prophets were *until John*” the Baptist, not until Jesus finished his work. Such a falsehood would cleverly pass over the Gospel preaching of Jesus! It would violate the stern warnings of 1 Timothy 6:3 and 2 John 9. Beware! ✧

## Was Jesus Begotten from the Womb or the Tomb?

by Carlos Xavier, Georgia

“You are My Son; today I have fathered [begotten] you” (Ps. 2:7).

Many noted scholars and commentaries argue that Psalm 2:7 should be understood in reference to Jesus’ resurrection and not his birth!

This is due to early mistranslations of Acts 13:33, which should read: “This promise God has fulfilled to us, their descendants, by raising up Jesus, as it is written in the second psalm, ‘You are My Son; today I have fathered [begotten] you.’” Some translations misunderstand this verse as a second reference (the first being at v. 30) to Jesus having been raised up *from the dead*. But the text doesn’t say that. The KJV (1611) went so far as to add the word “*again*” in verse 33 and some modern translations add the words “*from the dead*.”

Note that the same phrase “raised up” (v. 33) is used of David in verse 22: “God raised up David to be their king.” So in Acts 13:33, God is said to have “raised up” His Son onto the scene, just as it was said of King David.

Also note the very next verse: “And as for the fact that He raised him **from the dead**...” Paul goes on to quote another Old Testament verse to make a *different* point.

<sup>110</sup> Alfred Loisy, *The Birth of the Christian Religion*, 1962, p. 75-76.

<sup>111</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 77.

The popular *Vine's Expository Dictionary of the New Testament* notes that the Greek word translated "raise (up)" (*anistemi*) in Acts 13:33 can be used "of 'raising' up a person to occupy a place in the midst of a nation, said of Christ, Acts 3:26; 7:37; **13:33**, RV, 'raised up Jesus,' not here by resurrection from the dead, as the superfluous 'again' of the AV [KJV] would suggest; this is confirmed by the latter part of the verse, which explains the 'raising' up as being by way of His incarnation, and by the contrast in verse 34, where stress is laid upon His being 'raised' from the dead, the same verb being used."

So, even though the word *can* be used in reference to being raised up from the dead, the context dictates the meaning of the expression.

This is in complete harmony with the writer's use of Psalm 2:7 as the begetting, procreation of the Son from the womb and not from the tomb!<sup>112</sup> ✧

## Comments

• "We are a family living in the UK and have been on quite a journey with our Christian life. For many years we attended a Charismatic church until we realised that much of the teaching wasn't biblical, and then for 2 years (until the start of COVID) we attended a Reformed Baptist church which we have become increasingly uncomfortable with, especially when we learned about conditional immortality from Edward Fudge. For the past few months every Sunday morning I lead a little Bible study with my wife and (almost grown-up) children. I discovered you a couple of months ago and I just wanted to encourage you by saying that the Kingdom message that you talk about has been very powerful for us in bringing a lot of clarity about Jesus and his teaching. We can see now that the church preaches only a part of the Gospel that Jesus preached. We have talked about the Kingdom for the last 4 weeks now and last week we listened to your '8 Kingdom passages in Acts.'" — *England*

• "I have been one of the few quiet participants, an eager and interested listener/watcher on some of the recent Sunday morning online teaching. My friend and I share your convictions about the nature of Jesus, and the incongruity of him being so often spoken of as the God-Man, God the Son or 2<sup>nd</sup> Person of the Trinity by orthodox and mainstream preachers. It's been a journey for us both over 15 years or more, after our somewhat unconventional house church pastor-teacher (who had no formal training but searched and taught the Scriptures diligently) raised questions on the Trinity doctrine for us. Anyway, thank you for your commitment and articulate, frank sharing online. And Carlos, you are so adept at managing the tech side of it, with rapid bring up of

references etc. Incidentally, like you, when I was in my early Christian days of being provoked to check out reading material for the truth as a 19-21 year old, it was indeed Herbert Armstrong and the *Plain Truth* magazine that occupied quite a bit of my read time. While not a convert to it, I did learn to discern and look beyond the standard evangelical line on some issues." — *Australia*

• "It has been a while since I wrote about my faith journey to the Abrahamic understanding of the Scriptures. Our heavenly Father continues to bless me through your magazine and other input. I also appreciate your fight for the truth as I perceive some biblical unitarians to lower some standards when it comes to pre-existence and/or the appreciation of 'church fathers' whose anti-Jewish feelings brought a lot of trouble into Biblical teaching." — *Germany*

• "I have been sharing and teaching on the Kingdom for the last 25 years in a similar fashion, using the same teaching points and Biblical references as Sir Anthony Buzzard. I refer to the Bible as 'The Kingdom Book.' Only about two weeks ago, I came across Buzzard's book *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah*, and was delighted to find a fellow brother in the Lord who emphasizes much of the same thing and has written on it." — *Kentucky*

• "My husband and I listen to Sir Anthony and the rest of the crew on Sunday mornings. It's refreshing to read/study the Scriptures 'as is' rather than with the 'church father' filter that is reiterated in denominations today." — *Michigan*

• "Having been raised as one of Jehovah's Witnesses and leaving the organization about 10 years ago, I lived my life seeking meaning in the pursuit of riches. I have since felt a longing to draw close to God once again. I began my own study routine and Bible reading and have come to find that it is very challenging to find a group that holds the whole truth. I thank you for your articles, videos, and debates." — *email*

## Scattered Brethren

Robin Todd's Scattered Brethren Network continues its mission to connect scattered biblical unitarians around the world for local fellowship opportunities. Currently there are over 1000 of you on that network list. Unfortunately, some of you who signed up have since changed your email address, without notifying Robin of the change. Please email him at [robinsings4u@comcast.net](mailto:robinsings4u@comcast.net) to update your email address.

Also, there is a Scattered Brethren Network Facebook page for you to "Like," as well as a YouTube channel to which Robin livestreams **every Monday night at 6:30 PST**.

<sup>112</sup> See also "The Begetting of the Son — When?" at <http://focusonthekingdom.org>