

Focus on the Kingdom

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Good and Evil: God's Dazzling Integrity

by Barbara Buzzard

“‘God is light’ means that God, being the very source of light (James 1:17) may be relied upon to act with absolute consistency and dazzling integrity, and that He cannot tolerate falsehood in any shape or form.”¹

This is one of the most beautiful statements one could discover. The One who created us has dazzling integrity. As we are living in a world that has lost its mind, this is just the elixir we need. The character of God is the starting point; it's the “end game” and it encompasses all the narrative in between.

The “Cliff's Notes” version of the Bible might be this:

- 1) God spoke.
- 2) The people didn't listen.
- 3) God punished.
- 4) The people repented.

This pattern is repeated over and over and over again. Or a one-liner would be this: the people did evil in the sight of the LORD. Note the enormous contrast to the “it's all good” philosophy.

Malachi 2:17: “You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet you say, ‘How have we wearied Him?’ **By saying, ‘All who do evil are good in the sight of the LORD and He delights in them.’** Or by asking, ‘Where is the God of justice?’” **Summary statement:** we *must not* call evil good.

Malachi 3:15 continues: “Now we count the arrogant happy.” The NLT renders this: “From now on we will say, ‘Blessed are the arrogant.’” **Summary statement:** we *must not* call the arrogant happy or successful or blessed.

Isaiah 23:24 echoes this: “You have **wearied** me with your evil deeds.” So it seems that far from honoring this dazzling integrity of God, we have behaved arrogantly toward Him, wearied Him and used harsh words against Him.

The Christian Index

Isaiah 5:20: “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil.” They have rejected the instruction of the LORD and despised His word. They “deprive the innocent of their rights” (v. 23). This certainly brings us to today and the way we despise life rather than sanctify it. Abortion is celebrated, blessed, spoken of in glowing terms. It is hailed as a good thing, the very thing we are commanded not to do. Ask yourself: can anyone who has been filled with all the fullness of God (Eph. 3:19) be prepared to say OK to extinguishing the very life God gives and say yes to abortion? I think not. It is a preposterous thought. These are very sobering warnings and comprise part of the mandate of Christian living, the mandate that we don't often hear about — the command not to call evil good.²

To live out these instructions is extremely difficult because they dictate that we stand up and speak Truth. They dictate that we speak against the lie. They necessitate a stance against lies. Could they even require that we be *known* to stand alone, against current thinking or trends which we *must not* call good?

Here it is again: “Blessed are those who have no reason to condemn themselves **because of what they approve**” (Rom. 14:22b).

And again: “Whoever says to the wicked, ‘You are innocent,’ will be cursed by peoples, abhorred by nations, but those who rebuke the wicked will have delight, and a good blessing will come upon them” (Prov. 24:24-25).

And again: “One who justifies the wicked and one who condemns the righteous are both alike an abomination to the LORD” (Prov. 17:15).

Putting It All Together

Just as adultery, lying, stealing, and murder are forbidden, so too is being deceived, and praising the deceiver. It is rather similar to the bar being raised in the New Covenant to include the sin of lust in the heart in addition to the physical act; so too it is not just the one who does evil but the one justifying it whom God, His prophets, and Scripture condemn. Is it not shocking to realize that God finds *equally* abhorrent the sinner and the one who justifies or defends the sin? And what does He say to silence? Would He give it His approval?

of Abortion; The Walls are Talking: Former Abortion Clinic Workers Tell Their Stories.

¹ *Interpreter's Bible*, p. 432

² For further reading on abortion please see: *The Hand of God; Dehumanizing the Vulnerable; The Fence: The Horror*

The standard is so much higher than is commonly thought. Seeing sin in this light is revolutionary. That is why we must listen — “shema” — so very carefully to the Scriptural admonitions. Not only must we not practice sin, we must not defend or justify in any way those who do. No imitator of God, as we are told to be, could possibly bless evil (Eph. 5:1).

Going to War

And this gracious God of ours, having told us not to be deceived, now gives us the tools and the information so that we can avoid the trap of the Devil. Paul obviously viewed Christians as being active participants in a spiritual war between God and the Devil, who is hard at work to deceive us. If there is no Devil, someone is certainly doing his work for him! But since the Scriptures are very clear that there is — we are not to be ignorant of his devices.

We are told that one of the most dangerous tools Satan uses is to underestimate or disallow either his power or his cunning. The spiritual battle is a battle for the mind. Paul’s strongest warning is to protect the Truth of the Gospel of the Kingdom — at all costs, even if an angel from heaven brought a different Gospel. In saying that, he has revealed to us that: 1) there is a false gospel and 2) that there are false messengers (Gal. 1:8). Our job as Christians is to detect the true from the false, the genuine from the fake. It was then. It is now.

While the 2 Thessalonians 2 passage is mainly about the coming of the Antichrist, the import of verse 3: “let no one deceive you in any way” is of course broader than that. Verse 10 speaks of the “deception of wickedness,” leading us to ask: is it therefore wicked to *be* deceived? Paul issues his very strongest warning against being deceived and posits that the love of the Truth is its antidote. Without it, a most terrible penalty can befall. And what is that terrible penalty? *To be deceived!* (v. 11-12).

We are to have a part in the warfare: “Take no part in the unfruitful works of darkness, but instead **expose** them” (Eph. 5:11). How active a participant are you?

A Dangerous Place to Be

Surely no Christian would argue with God’s integrity. Surely all Christians would argue that God is good. And yet many Christians call themselves Calvinists. Some have subscribed to this doctrine unknowingly, a doctrine which should have been on trial by Christians. Calvinists misrepresent God and the Bible.

Double Predestination is the centerpiece of Calvinism and the term “Reformed”³ is its tagline. In Calvin’s words, “By **predestination** we mean the eternal decree of God, by which he determined with himself

whatever he wished to happen with regard to every man. All are not created on equal terms, but some are preordained to eternal life, others to eternal damnation...as each has been created for one or other of these ends.”⁴

While professing to give Him glory, with brilliant subtlety “Reformed” thinkers make God the author of sin. They accuse God of the deliberate, foreordained, predestinated damning of millions of people to eternal hell as a result of His sovereign good pleasure.

The Scriptures, dramatically opposed to this thinking, offer this view: God desires everybody to be saved (1 Tim. 2:4). He wants all to come to repentance (2 Pet. 3:9). Jesus died as a ransom for all (1 Tim. 2:5).

The unconditional and arbitrary selection of some for a conscious hell and some for a heavenly reward is in direct opposition to the rest of Scripture which focuses on the conditional nature of our decisions. Dozens of times in Scripture we are told to choose, making God a liar if we cannot choose. Likewise, it makes God a hypocrite every time He or His prophets or His Son tell people to repent. They can’t! Ask yourself: why are we told to pray, if there is no possibility of change? Even more importantly, if there is no possibility of repentance? If one has been predestined so that he cannot repent, then for me, the holiness of God is at stake. “God commands all people everywhere to repent” (Acts 17:30). What is that about, if you can’t?

And we must assert and defend at the very first opportunity God’s goodness, righteousness, and justice as He deals with us. We are given insight into Jesus’ dealing with us here: “to those who are open to my teaching, more understanding will be given, and they will have an abundance of knowledge” (Matt. 13:12). What is this about being “open” if our fate has already been sealed? And further, here is a huge key: “but since **you reject it** and judge **yourselves** unworthy of the life of the age to come” (Acts 13:46).

If God acted in the arbitrary and pernicious way that Reformed members accuse Him of, He would be disobeying His own commands: “Be just and fair to all,” says the LORD, “do what is right and good” (Isa. 56:1). Verse 2 tells us that those who *choose* this way are blessed. But in that Reformed system, they can’t choose. This corrupt thinking actually wipes out obedience. When we are told not to let anyone judge us (in regard to our keeping of days, Col. 2:16-17), it is hypocritical as we are powerless.

I think it important that we educate ourselves on Reformed (Calvinist) theology. How else can we challenge — *in love* — our Presbyterian, Lutheran or Baptist friends and neighbors? If you think I am too tough on this way of thinking, please know that it

³ Reformed sounds so good, doesn’t it? Who would not want to be reformed? But there is danger here.

⁴ Calvin, *Institutes of Christian Religion*, bk. 3, ch. 3.

actually *grieves* me that anyone could believe these things and so malign our great God. I don't want anyone to even *think* these things, as it profanes God's character. I understand that tolerance is the watchword of the day, but in the Biblical world God's warnings are issued out of love. May we proceed with that same objective.

Some say that this Calvinistic teaching is a most vulgar, obscene, blasphemous heresy. Listen to these words from Calvin: "Those therefore whom God passes by He reprobates [condemns] and that for no other cause but because He is **pleased** to exclude them from the inheritance which He predestines to his children."

And this is author Robert Shank's comment: "But we must protest that a god who, while rescuing some, simply 'passes by' others in the same lost circumstance is so little like the Good Samaritan in our Lord's parable and so much like the priest and the Levite that he cannot be the God who desires to have all men saved and none to perish. Such a god constitutes a total contradiction of the spirit of the words of James, 'To him who knows to do good and does it not, to him it is sin' (4:17). If God simply 'passes by' the mass of humanity in unconcern, His creation of man was the most dastardly act of infamy ever perpetrated, for He thus damned into irremediable perpetual misery and despair the great mass of mankind created in His own image, and He is Himself the greatest curse that could be imposed on His own creation."⁵

The Problem of Evil

Mature Christians have trained themselves to recognize the difference between right and wrong, good and evil (Heb. 5:14). What is this training? It would involve exercising the senses to discern or distinguish between good and evil, a mental exercise, and probably a vigorous one — a determined and passionate desire to know the Truth. I understand that the Greek for "discern" means "to critique," which would entail discriminating judgment and critical evaluation. I don't know that there is any way to avoid this. It simply must be done; Christianity demands it if we are not to be deceived. And to deceive us is one of the prime goals of the Devil. In the absence of our fighting for the Truth, the Devil wins.

How interesting that the very thing — judgment — which is so commonly misunderstood and seen as *forbidden*, even and perhaps especially among Christians, is that very requirement that a mature Christian *must* exercise. "I pray that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment" (Phil. 1:9). We are actually *instructed* to exercise judgment, which would include both perception by the senses and by the intellect.⁶ The problem of evil necessitates our keenest attention as disciples of Jesus.

I now come to Calvin's crimes of murder. On the charge of heresy he instigated the murder of Michael Servetus (Miguel Servet), the brilliant Spanish doctor who first discovered pulmonary circulation. Calvin apparently died not only unrepentant, unremorseful, but attesting to the fact of this killing; several other murders followed that of Servetus by order of Calvin, making him a serial murderer.

"Where did Jesus Christ, the Apostles or Paul ever advocate the killing of heretics? Calvin is not fit to be followed anywhere. I am not a Calvinist because Calvinism is non-biblical heresy."⁷

Please Consider...

A Holocaust survivor put it this way: if predestination is true, then God is the Devil.

Another observer said that it is like being ushered into a room, told to take a chair and then see what number is under your chair. That number holds your fate and there is nothing whatsoever that you can do about it — no repentance, no pleading. You are either destined for reward or damnation, despite anything you may have done or not done. To impute this horrendous unconscionable attribute to God is something we must not do. As Truth should be music to our ears, I pray that the unholy dissonant noise of this lie would allow us to see it for what it is.

Yes, there are difficult verses. Space does not allow me to address them here, but please see the Predestination Panel at "Kingdom of God Ministry and Missions" at youtube.com in which Dan Gill, Matt Sacra, Anthony and I answer those verses. ✧

The Human Messiah Jesus: The Man and His Message

by Tracy Zhykhovich, Minnesota

The "Christian" world spends a month or more thinking about, preparing for and celebrating Jesus' first *advent*, or *coming*, and in addition, that *God became man*.

When people hear the word "advent" most think of the birth of Christ. But the *advent*, or *Parousia*, that Jesus talked about and his disciples anticipated was when he would come to rule and reign on the earth. They certainly never thought this referred to his birth or, worse yet, some kind of "Incarnation," God assuming/taking on flesh.

The following is from an article by Kenneth R. Samples titled, "Thinking About the Incarnation: The Divine Word Became Flesh."⁸

⁵ Robert Shank, *Elect in the Son*, p. 193

⁶ *Discernment*, Vol. 10

⁷ Pastor A.V. Hughes, "Why I Am Not a Calvinist"

⁸ <https://reasons.org/explore/publications/facts-for-faith/read/facts-forfaith/2000/10/01/thinking-about-the-incarnation-the-divine-word-became-flesh>

“At the very heart of historic Christianity is a truly astounding truth-claim that is celebrated all around the world at Christmas. This central article of the Christian faith is known as the doctrine of the Incarnation: God became man in Jesus of Nazareth. It is this truth that sets Christianity apart from all other religions of the world (including Judaism and Islam). For it is unique to Christianity to discover a God who takes the initiative in becoming flesh in order to redeem sinful human beings. As C.S. Lewis aptly put it, *The Son of God became a man to enable men to become sons of God.*”

How many Christians follow C.S. Lewis and his writings, rather than Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, Peter or Paul, and the rest of the Bible?

The author goes on to say that “the Christian teaching that the Savior of the world is both divine and human is certainly a mysterious and unfathomable doctrine. For that reason it is often misunderstood and misrepresented.”

That should raise red flags and cause sirens to go off in the mind of any Bible student! If what they are told is a “mysterious and unfathomable doctrine,” it should be expected to not be understood; and a good Bible student should search the Scriptures to find an understandable answer!

The article then asks this question: “Isn’t the very concept of the Incarnation (one person as God and man) logically incoherent?”

I would shout “YES!”

The reply: “Christians embrace the doctrine of the Incarnation as an indispensable truth of divine revelation. God coming in the flesh to redeem lost sinners is at the very heart of historic Christianity’s gospel proclamation.”

That is interesting: “Christians embrace the doctrine of the incarnation as truth”!

Perhaps, but please consider the masses in Christianity who never thought about this way of reading the Scriptures, which culminated at the Council of Chalcedon in 451.

Samples continues:

“However, just how Jesus Christ is both God and man (two natures united in one person) is an unfathomable mystery. In fact, this may indeed be the most profound Christian mystery of all. But while the Incarnation is incomprehensible to the finite mind, it should not be rejected as incoherent or absurd.”

Why not, I say? Why would we not use the minds God gave us and reject that which is incoherent and absurd?

Please consider: God gave us an inquiring mind, one able to think and rationalize. Why would He expect us to

put aside that mind when we think about Him or His Messiah?!

The article goes on to tell us about the “true” meaning of Christmas:

“During the Christmas season, Christians celebrate the great truth of the Incarnation. For in the Christ child of Bethlehem, God enters into human history and reveals Himself up close and personal.”

This Incarnation of God comes from pagan-mythological and later Gnostic teachings that Jesus was the embodiment of a preexistent person who became flesh in order to bring *gnosis* (Greek word for knowledge) to the earth.

According to the Wikipedia article on “Gnosis”:

“It is best known from Gnosticism, where it signifies a knowledge or insight into humanity’s real nature as divine, leading to the deliverance of the divine spark within humanity from the constraints of earthly existence.”

That doesn’t sound too biblical to me!

Theologian Stanley Hauerwas says in his sermon titled “Begotten, not Made: The Grammar of Christmas”:

“Jesus was not fifty percent God here and fifty percent human there, but in everything he was one hundred percent God and one hundred percent human.”

Now, I am not very good at math, but I do know that would make him 200%, which makes no sense at all! If you ate a whole pie, you do not say you ate 200% of the pie!

Hauerwas continues:

“Chalcedon did not *solve* or explain how this Jesus was at once fully God and fully human, but the fathers at Chalcedon gave us the parameters necessary for how we can continue to explore this mystery, the mystery of the Incarnation, that is the centre of our faith.”⁹

But let’s take a moment and briefly look at what the Bible has to say about “the mystery.” The word “mystery” in the New Testament does not refer to something unknowable. Rather, it is what can only be known through revelation, i.e. because God reveals it.¹⁰

The Apostles are said to be “making known” (revealing) the mystery, that is, who the Messiah is. Colossians 1:26 says that “the mystery that has been kept hidden from ages and generations, has now been revealed to his saints.” There is no hidden mystery!

In Scripture we see one mystery is about Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32) And Ephesians 3:2-6 reveals to us the main mystery hidden for ages:

“If indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace that was given to me for you, that by revelation the mystery was made known to me, as I wrote before briefly. When reading this, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ (which

⁹ <https://www.abc.net.au/religion/begotten-notmade-the-grammar-of-christmas/10100920>

¹⁰ <https://biblehub.com/greek/3466.htm>

was not disclosed to people in former generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the spirit), namely, that through the gospel the Gentiles are fellow heirs, fellow members of the body, and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus.”

We also see the Apostles desiring wisdom to convey this mystery that had been revealed:

“Pray for me also, that I may be given the right words when I begin to speak — that I may confidently make known the mystery of the gospel, for which I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I may be able to speak boldly as I ought to speak” (Eph. 6:19-20).

And one last mystery that I will mention is found in 1 Corinthians 15:51:

“Listen, I will tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed — in a moment, in the blinking of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

Please do a study on any mystery in the Bible and you will see *it has been revealed*, and that we should be revealing it to others!

The story of the Incarnation is no hidden mystery! Christ, the human Messiah and his message have been revealed!

So, you may ask, “Is it wrong to remember and celebrate when Jesus was born?” No, just as it wouldn’t be wrong to remember and celebrate when he was baptized, turned water into wine, or was resurrected, but those things were not commanded by Christ or even practiced by the early church. There is a fine line between sincerely wanting to celebrate Jesus’ birth, and the celebration of Christmas. As most of history and scholarship confirm, Jesus was not born in the winter months. So if you truly want to celebrate his birth, why would you choose to do it on a pagan holiday or when others are celebrating unbiblical teachings like the Incarnation?

God did not become human, and there is no such thing as an Incarnation of God becoming a baby, not in Christianity anyway. However there is an incarnation in Hinduism known as an avatar, “descent of a deity.” These other teachings lead people away from the one true God, the Father, and away from the miracle He did when He created a baby in Mary’s womb — the Son of God as Matthew 1:18-20 and Luke 1:30-35 make clear.

I am sure Satan is happy that many Christians are so focused on celebrating a pagan-myth once a year. Yet, for the rest of the year (if not their lives) Christians neglect proclaiming the human Son of God and his Gospel about the Kingdom message for the world.

As for the early church, the coming of Jesus always referred to his Parousia. It was not until the Middle Ages that Christians changed the focus to his first coming, his “Incarnation.” Interestingly enough, the Trinity began

early in the third century, and it didn’t take long before Christmas was celebrated. ✧

Be Warned

There are subtle ways of claiming to be a Christian, one who follows the teaching of Jesus, while in fact denying and thus rejecting Jesus by not *in fact* following his teaching. Here is how this clever delusion works in the minds of some who have not given careful thought to the issue.

The most chilling and shattering of Jesus’ warnings to his potential followers was this: “Many will say to me on that day [the future day of my return], ‘Lord, lord, did we not preach as your representatives, cast out demons as your representatives and even do miracles as your representatives?’” (Matt. 7:22). This very sincere protest will receive from Jesus the appalling and devastating response that none of the claims offered by such “sincere” but deceived believers will be accepted as genuine. It is entirely possible, Jesus teaches, to “accept Jesus” while in fact still rejecting him by not believing and obeying his teachings.

How can this be? The answer is found in the parallel “lord, lord” statement of Jesus in Luke 6:46: “Why do you insist on calling me ‘lord, lord,’ yet refuse to **do what I say and teach?**” The missing and decisive element in the thinking of the deceived is and will be the *teaching* and *words* of Jesus.

The subtlest of all fake “theology” will be a claim to have “accepted Jesus” or even “asked him into the heart,” while denying the actual words and teaching of Jesus. Currently there is a popular notion around that Jesus was a model exponent of the *Old, Mosaic Covenant* and that Jesus was valid precisely because he perfectly kept that covenant given to Moses. The argument goes like this: Sin is defined by “keeping the Law”; Jesus kept the Law perfectly and was thus sinless; he had to be a model keeper of the Law of Moses.

The huge fallacy which has swept many off their feet and plunged them into dangerous darkness is simply this: The Old Covenant given to Moses is absolutely *not* the same as the New Covenant revealed and taught by Jesus! To eradicate the essential difference between the Old and New Covenants is, alas, a way of getting rid of the true Jesus by pushing him back under the Old Covenant and thus replacing him by Moses! Moses is not Jesus! All this is then attempted while claiming to be Jesus’ follower!

So then, falsehood number one is this: That Jesus perfectly kept the Law of Moses in the letter. But he obviously did not do this!

Proof is this: Mark 7:19 declares that Jesus abolished the Old Covenant food laws. Mark states this fact easily. He reports Jesus as saying that what goes into a person from the outside does not defile, but rather what proceeds from his sinful heart. The meaning of Jesus’ teaching is

then explained by Mark: “By saying this Jesus made all foods clean.” There it is! Jesus has expressly altered the Mosaic Covenant law on foods.

Equally, Jesus expressly altered and abrogated the Law of Moses in regard to divorce! “Moses allowed you a divorce [for reasons given in Deut. 22], but I say to you that this allowance was an accommodation to the hardness of your hearts.” Jesus then narrowed the permission for a legal divorce to one single cause (Matt. 19:7-9). It is perfectly obvious here that Jesus was not just *repeating* Moses; he was instead *repealing* Moses’ words in favor of an older and more original law about the permanence of marriage, given in Genesis.

Another example of Jesus not enforcing or repeating the Law of Moses is found when Jesus said that he and his followers were not bound by the Law requiring the temple tax (Matt. 17:24-27). In this case Jesus advised paying it anyway: “so that we do not offend” (v. 27).

This is exactly parallel to Paul’s diplomacy in agreeing to circumcise Timothy “because of the Jews” (Acts 16:3) — i.e. not because it was required by the terms of the New Covenant. We know that by the terms of the Old Covenant physical circumcision was required for every male. But under the New Covenant physical circumcision is required of no male. “Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing” (Gal. 5:6; 6:15). This again shows a strong, clear difference between Old and New Covenants.

If one then proposes that Jesus modeled the terms of the Old Covenant, one is saying effectively that Jesus is not our Christian model! If Jesus modeled the Old Covenant then we as Christian followers would have to follow his example. Immediately sabbath and holy day keeping and food laws would be obligatory for all Christians. We would be automatically guilty of calling Jesus “lord” but not doing his teachings.

The obvious truth is of course that Jesus did not model perfect obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Nor then should we, his followers. If we define Christian failure as Jesus did — as failure to follow his teachings while calling him “lord, lord” — it is obvious that Jesus and his teaching revealed under the New Covenant are the only safe standard for Christians.

It would be no excuse to claim that one is as a Christian observing *some* Old Covenant, i.e. obsolete commands, but doing this “not for salvation.” Salvation in the New Testament is *defined* as obedience, “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). “Salvation is given to those who obey Jesus” (Heb. 5:9).

The entrenched error in the thinking of many is that Jesus would have been a sinner if he had deviated from any of the Laws of Moses! This premise is a grand mistake, since Jesus did not follow the letter of the Law of Moses. *This certainly does not make him a sinner*, since the standard of New Covenant, of which Jesus was

the minister, was not just a copy of the covenant made with Moses! (Heb. 8:6).

It is true that Jesus said he came not to abolish the Old Testament, but rather to **fulfill** it (Matt. 5:17). It is clear that “fulfill” in this passage means to give the words of Moses their ultimate meaning, not just to *copy* them in the letter. Jesus is well known for his 6 “antitheses” which follow in Matthew chapter 5, the Sermon on the Mount. Here he showed what the spiritual and truly New Covenant Christian meaning of the words of the Law was.

To confuse the two Covenants, Old and New, is to arrive at a huge muddle! You cannot keep simultaneously two totally different covenants! The New Covenant is defined in Hebrews as *unlike* the Old, not a copy of it: “**not like** the covenant I made with their fathers” (Heb. 8:9).

Jesus is in fact the great and central model of the New Covenant. As the *Cambridge Bible for Schools and Colleges* on Hebrews 2 states so clearly, “Jesus was the first preacher of his own Gospel (Mark 1:14).” The Gospel of the Kingdom is the heart and center of the New, not the Old, Covenant.

There we have the central, defining key for true Christian faith. To be a follower of Jesus one must follow the teaching/Gospel preaching of Jesus himself. That “beginning of the Gospel” (Mark 1:1) is expressly and simply defined as *repent and believe God’s Gospel about the Kingdom of God* (Mark 1:14-15). Failure to follow the Gospel teaching of Jesus in the New Covenant risks incurring the awful indictment that many who claim to follow Jesus really do not!

Paul is equally clear about the difference between what he calls “the Torah of Moses” and “the Torah of Messiah.” Paul is in his own words a minister of the New Covenant of the Messiah (2 Cor. 3:6). Paul, with his typical sensitivity to those whom he desires to win for the true Christian faith, is willing to be “under the Law” when dealing with Jews who are still under the Law of Moses. Then Paul says with precision that he himself is *not* under that Law of Moses, but rather under the Law (Torah) of Messiah (1 Cor. 9:20-21).

There are other fatal ways of getting rid of Jesus while claiming to believe in him. Popular “dispensationalism” gets rid of the true Jesus by a clever and devious means: It claims that Jesus’ own Gospel about the Kingdom (Mark 1:1, 14, 15) is *not* the Gospel for Christians today, but only for Jews! By that subtle move Jesus is discarded and relegated to “Jews only.” The same fatal result is achieved, and Jesus’ protest that many will call him “lord, lord,” and still not be accepted by him will prevail (Matt. 7:21-23).

Everything depends on believing Jesus by believing his teaching summarized as the Gospel about the Kingdom of God, the “beginning of the Gospel” (Mark

1:1). What could be more reasonable than beginning at the beginning? (see Acts 10:36-37; Heb. 2:3). ✧

Richard Hiers, *The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition*, on **Luke 17:21**: “The Kingdom of God is in your midst.”

“A fact generally overlooked in discussions of Lukan eschatology [study of the end times] is that all other references to the Kingdom of God in special Lukan traditions or versions contemplate only a future coming of the Kingdom of God: Luke 10:9, 11; 19:11; 21:31; and 22:18. It would, therefore, be exceptional if Luke 17:21b alluded to a present arrival or manifestation of the Kingdom of God. Harnack and Dodd and other liberal and/or Platonizing interpreters have favored the former option: ‘the kingdom of God is within your hearts.’ Tertullian thought it meant that the ‘kingdom of God is within your reach’...

“The decisive question...becomes whether Jesus meant that the kingdom was already in the midst of his hearers or at some future point it would be in their midst...In Aramaic the present and future forms are indistinguishable. In many of Jesus’ sayings about the Kingdom of God or the resurrection the present tense is used when a future time is clearly implied by the context or meaning. The present tense is used to point to the future coming of the Kingdom of God in the verse containing the Pharisees’ question (v. 20) that introduces the pericope [passage], and appears similarly in Jesus’ response. Lukan eschatology is unequivocally futuristic, so far as the Kingdom of God is concerned” (p. 29).

Comments

- “Thank you for all the clarification, wisdom, teachings you have provided for ALL of us brothers and sisters stretched out all across the earth. When I watch you all every week, even for Q and A, I think to myself, and to God, and our King Jesus: These are the people, these are the faces, these are the brothers and sisters I want to see and will see in the Age to Come, when his Kingdom comes. What more can anyone ever want, ever desire or ever ask? Praise God our Creator, the Father, and believe and put forth faith in our Savior and Messiah Jesus Christ.” — *Texas*

- “You have been a source of light and truth to me the past few months now, since I discovered videos of you on YouTube. Your books have also been a delight to read through. Though I know the full truth of things has yet to be completely revealed to me, the veil of false-doctrines has slowly been drifting off my eyes. I was raised and baptized as one of Jehovah’s Witnesses. I know a steady influx of JW’s have reached out to you, as they each aspire to take in true knowledge. For me, it has

been a slow-burning process, instead of a single ‘Aha’ moment. However, only in the last couple months, I would say, these discoveries of truths have been made manifest in me to the degree that I can no longer deny their power. I used to tell myself that I could continue being a good JW and that these thoughts were simply ‘doubts of a sinful mind.’ Doubts of the identity of our lord Jesus, for example. Doubts of the idea of the ‘two hopes.’ Doubts of the system of ‘disfellowshipping.’ And a few others. Everyone I know and love is in this organization. It makes this ordeal of great stress and fear to me. In the organization, to leave is to leave God. Therefore, to those still in the organization you are viewed as something ‘unclean,’ and that you have ‘left Jehovah.’ All communication is thus cut off, even from those dearest to you, and even simple exchanges of small-talk, let alone deeper communication. Though I know it is what I must do, I am gripped with terrible fear of the loss of family and friends. I do not write this email in query of ‘What should I do?’ I know what I must do. However, what I would like to know is if there exists a community of truth-seeking Christians that I may join in worship and fellowship, as we continue to grow in knowledge of the Gospel teachings as we await our Christ’s glorious return.” — *California*

- “The knowledge and wisdom that is put in the *Focus on the Kingdom* magazine is like a one-on-one semester in Christian college each month. The men here are amazed to find that there are so many things being taught that they never learned in their local Trinitarian church. I thank you so much for your leadership in pulling people out of the glue of tradition, or at least offering them the knowledge to be free and accept the truth.” — *North Carolina*

- “I met a man [see comment above] who has spent time with me and others teaching and preaching about Jesus not being ‘God the Son’ but the Son of God. I’ve always believed in the Trinity; now I see the truth. Also I believed my saved family members who died went to Heaven and those lost went to Hell, and will only come out to be judged and then be cast into the lake of fire. I no longer believe this. But I want to learn more.” — *North Carolina*

- “Again I want to send you my gratitude for your constant and dedicated work. I appreciate your style of teaching in the *Focus on the Kingdom* letters. Not only has it helped me to get the questions of who God and Jesus are, of preexistence and the Gospel of the Kingdom straight, but I also enjoy reading about current (value-based) issues and the end times. Thanks a lot for granting access on your website to the book *The End-times Timeline* by J. Mattison.” — *Germany*

- “I am new to this one true God faith. I came from Trinitarian Christian belief and I am a pastor. It happened that I found your teachings on the internet.” — *Philippines*