

# Focus on the Kingdom

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## The Faith of Jesus

by Robin Todd, Washington

Before launching into a discussion about what is meant by the phrase “faith of Jesus” and how it applies to us, we should review some word definitions. It will become clear as to why we do this shortly.

In Romans 4:3 we read that Abraham believed God, and this faith which he acted upon by obedience was “credited” to him as righteousness. Other translations use “accounted,” “regarded,” “imputed,” and “reckoned.” These all have the same meaning. The same Greek word is used in Galatians 3:6 when speaking of Abraham’s faith and the resulting righteousness. The idea is simple. Abraham’s righteousness was based on his faith in something God had promised to give him in the future, which actually is the heart and core of the Gospel of the Kingdom in the New Testament (Gal. 3:6-9). This faith motivated him to obey God’s command to leave his country of origin for an unknown country. That’s the immensely favorable way God assessed his faith. Abraham demonstrated the “obedience of faith”: he believed and obeyed what God said (Rom. 1:5; 16:26).

The first point to be noted here concerns the word “impute.” Religious circles have wrongly made this word mean something other than its meaning in the Bible. But “impute” has exactly the same sense as “credit,” “reckon,” “regard,” etc. In a thesaurus you will see that other synonyms for this word are “attribute,” “accredit,” and “ascribe.” There is no mystery to this word. In the context of Paul’s teaching in Romans 4 (and other places) “impute” simply means that God considered Abraham right, because of his own faith, which by the way as we shall see, is completely opposite to a Law of Moses *works* orientation. Abraham’s own faith was definitely not part of a Mosaic works-justification approach to righteousness. Just like all the other words used in English translations of Romans 4, “impute” does not infer that God somehow *pretends* to give Abraham a righteousness he himself did not have or deserve.

Now that we understand that “impute” has no special meaning beyond the biblical one — “credit” or “reckon” — we should feel free to use it along with these other words. So we now move to my next logical follow-up question: Can the obedience of faith of one person be credited, reckoned, or imputed to someone else? The answer to that question becomes all the more

obvious when we ask: Can one person’s *lack* of obedient, righteous faith be credited/reckoned/imputed to someone else? The logical, reasonable, and biblical answer is “No.” God holds each person responsible for his or her own behavior, good or bad. God is adamant about this, and He even inspired an entire chapter to be written in this regard (Ezek. 18). Any righteousness (which must be based on faith), or any unrighteousness (which is ultimately based on a lack of faith) is credited/reckoned/imputed to the one person exercising it.

These definitions and clarifications are important for this article on “the faith of Jesus”. Here’s why: As I alluded to above, many claim that when Romans 3:26 says that God justifies those “who are of the faith of Jesus” (NASB margin rendering), it means that Jesus’ own personal faith is imputed or credited to those who accept him as their Savior crucified on their behalf and believe Jesus’ Gospel about the Kingdom. However, we just discounted this entire concept of crediting one person’s obedient faith to another person, as an unbiblical one. And not only that, but there is a wealth of Scripture supporting a different conclusion — that when *our own* faith is of the same *kind* of faith as that of Jesus, then God credits/reckons *that* faith as righteousness. It’s not Jesus’ own personal faith — it’s *our* personal faith in the *same* things which Jesus believed in. When this kind of faith is present, the blood of Jesus is applied to us for the forgiveness of our sins. This we will see in the Scriptures presented below.

The Scriptures that follow make it clear that Jesus’ faith saves because of what it *led him* to do: preach the Kingdom of God Gospel (Mark 1:14-15) and die on the cross for the forgiveness of our sins, not because it is credited to us without the exercise of our own faith first. This is not to say that Christ doesn’t live in a Christian or that we aren’t a new creation in Christ. That is certainly the case, but that’s because the spirit of God and Christ comes to dwell in us. But *first* we must exercise our *own* faith that is *like* Jesus’ faith, followed by repentance of sins, baptism in water and the receiving of that spirit. The Scriptures are many which support this view, despite the tradition of mainstream evangelicalism to the contrary. The logical place to start is Romans 3:21-26, where we find one of the most important uses of the phrase “**the faith of Jesus.**”

### Romans 3:21-26

“But now apart from the Law the righteousness of God has been manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through **the faith of Jesus Christ** for all those who believe. There is no distinction, for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. We are made right as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, whom God displayed publicly as an atoning sacrifice in his blood through faith. This was to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God passed over the sins previously committed. This was also to demonstrate His righteousness at the present time, so that He would be just and the justifier of the one **who is of the faith of Jesus**” (NASB margin).

So, again, when Paul says here that we are to have the “faith of Jesus” (v. 26), in what sense does he mean this? Does he mean that Jesus’ own personal faith is imputed/credited to us as our own personal faith? Can his faith be transmitted from his brain to ours like some kind of spiritual blood transfusion from one person to another? Or perhaps God sort of pretends that someone has Jesus’ own faith as long as other conditions are met? Some would say “yes,” the faith that saves or makes us right is not our own faith, but Christ’s. It is alleged that if we were to insist on our own faith for being right, this would be an attempt to be made right by our own works. However, this idea that *our* faith would be justification by works is totally debunked by the following verse of the very next chapter.

### Romans 4:1-5

“What then shall we say that Abraham, our physical ancestor, has discovered? For if Abraham was made right by his works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does Scripture say? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as making him right.’ Now to a person who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as his due. But to a person who does not work, but believes in Him who makes the ungodly right, his faith is credited as making him right.”

Notice how being made right by works is counter to Abraham’s faith. One does not equal the other, but precisely the opposite is true — they are in juxtaposition. So when we look at this whole set of Scriptures from Romans 3 and 4 we see how Christ’s sacrifice for the forgiveness of our sins comes to us *through* faith (verse 25 above). But that is not Christ’s faith; it is our faith, just as it was in Abraham’s situation.

These verses clearly inform us that our faith should be the same faith as Abraham’s (4:1-5). He had a demonstrated faith in the promises of God, and

therefore being right was credited to him. God certainly did not impute/credit His own faith or righteousness to Abraham. Abraham had to come up with his own faith, and exercise it before he was credited as right by God.

So in the context of this entire section in Romans we conclude that those “who are of the faith of Jesus” are those who follow the same pattern of Abraham. They have a faith that is their own — the same faith as Jesus’ own Gospel of the Kingdom faith. It is not Jesus’ own personal faith that is credited/imputed as righteousness to the believer. It is our own faith that is considered righteous when it matches his. There is no magical, mystical, or pretended transference of faith from Jesus to the believer. Thus Paul can say that we Christians have the “faith of Abraham” (Rom. 4:16).

Again in Galatians 3:8 it is confirmed that the Gospel was preached beforehand to Abraham, and that he **believed the message**. This faith/belief of his was then reckoned (credited/imputed) to him as making him right. Here are some more relevant verses:

### Galatians 3:2, 5-9

“I only want to learn one thing from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by believing what you heard?...So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by your believing what you heard? ‘Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as making him right.’ So know this: people who believe are children of Abraham. As it is foretold in Scripture that God would make right the Gentiles by believing, so the Gospel was preached beforehand to Abraham: ‘All the nations will be blessed in you.’ So then those who believe are blessed along with Abraham, the believer.”

Notice that, **like Abraham**, we are blessed by “believing what we heard” — which is the Gospel message God has spoken. Our own faith in the Gospel of the Kingdom we hear is our prerequisite for receiving the spirit of God, as it says above in verse 5. This is the kind of “believer” we are to be after hearing Jesus’ message. This is being “of the faith of Jesus” — a believer like Jesus.

### Romans 10:17 corroborates this:

“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.” That is, the word/Gospel of the Kingdom as Jesus preached it.

Faith comes from our hearing and then believing something Christ has spoken. It is Christ’s words and our faith in those words.

Jesus’ **Parable of the Sower** is centrally instructive of this same truth:

**Matthew 13:18, 19, 23**

“Hear then the parable of the sower: When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is the seed sown beside the road...And the seed sown on the good soil, this is the person who hears the word and understands it, who bears fruit and yields a hundred, sixty, or thirty times what was sown.”

This matches precisely with Mark 1:14-15, where Jesus said *we* are to *believe his message* about the Kingdom of God. He was sent specifically and primarily to preach this message (Luke 4:43). And even after Christ's ascension we find the Apostles and disciples continuing to preach the same message; many believed it and were baptized.

**Acts 8:12**

“When they believed Philip preaching the good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were being baptized, men and women alike.”

Notice there is no mention in the above verse about Jesus' own faith being credited or imputed to these new converts. These listeners believed the message, were baptized, and received the spirit of God by which Christ then began to dwell in them. Two verses out of the book of Ephesians verify this:

**Ephesians 1:13**

“In him, when you heard the word of truth — the Gospel of your salvation — you believed it and were sealed in him with the holy spirit of the promise.”

**Ephesians 3:17**

“so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith...”

Now there are a couple of verses which some have used to support the idea that it is not our faith, but Jesus' faith that saves us. Again, it is claimed that to say otherwise is to promote a “works-based” salvation. But that is just not the case. One of these misunderstood scriptures is in Ephesians; the other is in Galatians. Let's look at each one of them.

**Ephesians 2:8**

“For by grace you are saved through faith; and this is not from yourselves; it is the gift of God.”

The mistake that some make is in isolating the word “faith” from the rest of the sentence; and thus misconstruing faith to be not our own faith, but as a gift coming from completely outside us, from God. However, there is no justification for doing this if we simply take the entire sentence as a whole. It is the

*entire package* of standing in grace through faith that is the gift — the gift is the whole package. This package is detailed in Romans 4 below, where Paul explains that Abraham's faith in God's promise (which became the Gospel in the New Testament) was credited to him as righteousness, and that this is the same type of faith we are to have regarding God's work through Christ. He then concludes in Romans 5 that we stand in grace through this faith. It is clearly our faith, not Jesus' faith imputed/credited to us. This is so important that we should read the text in its entirety. Speaking of Abraham, we break into Paul's words in Romans 4:20, ending in 5:2:

“...with respect to the promise of God, he did not waver in unbelief but grew strong in faith, giving glory to God. He was fully convinced that what God had promised He was able to do. Therefore ‘It was credited to him as making him right.’ The statement ‘It was credited to him’ was not written for Abraham's sake alone, but also for our sake to whom it will be credited, we who believe in Him who raised Jesus our lord from the dead. He was delivered over because of our sins, and was raised to make us right. Therefore, having been made right by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. It is through him that we have our access by faith into this grace in which we stand; and we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God.”

Again, we are to be like Abraham — having a faith/belief by which we stand in the grace of God. It is not the faith of Jesus, and certainly not the faith of Abraham, which is somehow passed along to us, either mystically or any other way.

The second misunderstood scripture in this regard is **Galatians 2:20**:

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself up for me.”

The phrase “faith **in** the Son of God” has been alternatively translated as “the faith **of** the Son of God”. Either translation is appropriate. Quite simply understood, when our faith is the same kind of faith as Jesus, then the spirit of Christ enters us and we are motivated to live by that faith which is more perfectly in Jesus. This passage is not a statement that the faith we possess has never been our own. It is acknowledgment that Christ's more perfect faith is now living in us since his spirit resides in us.

Finally, in the well-known “faith chapter,” Hebrews 11, we're encouraged that all people of God exercise a faith of their own for which they are given credit (“gain approval”), and receive a common reward:

## Hebrews 11:39-40

“All these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that they would not be made perfect without us.”

In conclusion, righteousness (not faith) is credited/reckoned/ imputed to us in the same way it was to Abraham — when *we* hear, and *we* believe, and *we* react to what God and Jesus say. On the basis of that faith, if we repent and are baptized, God forgives us our sins through the blood of Jesus on the cross. God has determined that Jesus’ death on the cross is the moment at which the old covenant which condemned us dies with him, and the new covenant relationship begins. This whole process of our hearing and our believing the Gospel, repenting, and receiving the holy spirit after baptism, is due to the grace of God toward us. It is to have our own faith matching Jesus’ faith. That’s the beginning of what it means to be among those who are of the faith of Jesus. That’s why I have gone to such repetitious lengths to explain what “the faith of Jesus” means. ✧

## Law for Thee but Not for Me?

by Carlos Xavier

Some Christians teach that the Scriptures which warn against observing the Law of Moses were meant for Gentile Christians only. Therefore, they claim, *Jewish* Christians should continue observing Mosaic laws like Sabbath-keeping, food laws, etc. But Paul was certainly not some early dispensationalist, writing things applicable only to one section of the Church but not the other! He did not preach a “two-track” Christianity. Instead salvation for *everyone* is through “the obedience of faith” (Rom. 1:5; 16:26). In other words, salvation is for all those who “obey Jesus” (Heb. 5:9; see Acts 5:32).

One of Paul’s repeated points is that there is “**no distinction** between Jew and Gentile, as the same Lord is Lord of all” (Rom. 10:12). “God’s way of being right is through the faith of Jesus Messiah for **everyone who believes**, and there is **no distinction**” (Rom. 3:22).

Peter strongly agrees: God “made **no distinction** between them [the Gentiles] and us [the Jews], by purifying their hearts through faith...We believe that we are being saved through the grace of the lord Jesus, **just as they are**” (Acts 15:9, 11).

And the whole New Testament clearly teaches that there is only *one* hope and *one* faith for the *one* body of Christ: “In **one** spirit we were all baptized into **one** body, whether Jews or Gentiles, slaves or free; we were **all** made to drink of **one** spirit” (1 Cor. 12:13; see also Eph. 4:4-6; Acts 13:39; Rom. 3:28-30; 10:12; Gal 3:28-

30). All members of that one body are under the Law of Messiah, which is *different* from the Law of Moses.

Paul speaks in Acts 13 to both Jews and God-fearing Gentiles gathered in the synagogue: “Through him [Messiah] **everyone who believes** is made right from all things from which **you could not be made right by the Law of Moses**” (Acts 13:39).

In Romans 3 Paul argues, “We maintain that **people are made right by faith and not by works of the Law**. Or is God the God of Jews only? Is He not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since God is only one Person, and **He will make the circumcised right by faith and the uncircumcised right through the same faith**” (Rom. 3:28-30).

When Paul repeatedly warns against Torah-keeping he includes *himself* by saying “we”:

“Before faith came, **we** were held in custody under the Law, locked up until the faith which was to come would be revealed. The Law was our guardian until Messiah, so that **we** could then be made right by faith. But now that faith has come, **we** are no longer under a guardian” (Gal. 3:23-25).

Note that Paul, a Jewish Christian, is here speaking of himself and his fellow Jewish Christians who *were* under the Law as a “guardian” *until* Messiah came.

*BDAG* helpfully defines the word translated “guardian” as: The man “whose duty it was to conduct a boy or youth...to and from school and to superintend his conduct generally; he was not a ‘teacher’...When the young man became of age, the **guardian was no longer needed.**”

Paul continues in Galatians 3:26-29: “For in Messiah Jesus you are all children of God, through faith. For all of you who were baptized into Messiah have clothed yourselves with Messiah. There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male or female; you are all **one** in Messiah Jesus. And if you belong to Messiah Jesus then you are Abraham’s children, and heirs of the promise” (Gal. 3:23-29).

Furthermore, Paul sometimes qualifies the phrase “under the law” with a negative adverb like “not” or “never” in order to warn all Christians, Jew or Gentile, *not* to observe the Law of Moses (see Rom. 6:14; Gal. 5:18). In 1 Corinthians 9:20 Paul, the Jew and Christian, says, “**I myself** am not under the Law”! Instead, he says, he is “under the Law of Messiah” (1 Cor. 9:21). See also Romans 8:2: “The law of the spirit of life in Messiah Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death” (and Gal. 6:2: “the Law of Messiah”).

Similarly, Paul, the Jew and Christian, declares about food, “I know and am **convinced in the lord Jesus** that there is nothing unclean in itself...All things are clean”! (Rom. 14:14, 20).

Another claim is that since Paul was born and raised under the Law (Phil. 3:5), like Jesus himself

(Gal. 4:4), that meant Paul had to *remain* living and eventually die keeping that same Law. But that would be like saying that a foreigner living in another country had to continue to live and die by the laws of their birth country.

Also note that Paul equates being “under the Law” (Gal. 4:5) with being “held in bondage under the elemental principles of the world” (Gal. 4:3). The early Jewish-Gentile church could no longer serve and be subject to the strict Old Covenant system which included weekly, monthly, and annual festivals (Col. 2:16). Paul makes clear that such observance is now equal to Gentile paganism itself!

Faced with this Jewish-Christian crisis, Paul reminds the churches that they have now been set free from the yoke and bondage of the Old Covenant, because Christ “erased the certificate of debt which was against **us**, with all of its decrees opposed to **us**. He took it away by nailing it to the cross” (Col. 2:14). Therefore:

“If you have died with Messiah to the elemental spirit forces of the world, why, as if you were alive in the world, do you submit to decrees — do not handle, do not taste, do not touch? All these regulations refer to things that will perish with use; they are just human commands and doctrines. These rules may seem to be wise with their invented religion, ascetic practices, and severe treatment of the body, but they are in reality of no value in stopping sinful indulgence” (Col. 2:20-23).✧

## The “Eternal Generation” of the Son

**T**he really vulnerable element in the doctrine of the eternal Son is the concept that he was **eternally begotten**. It is doubtful if this expression contains any more meaning than “hot ice cubes or married bachelors” — as some have pointed out.

Nathanael Emmons of Yale (1745-1850) declared that “eternal generation is eternal nonsense.” Emmons was a keen logician with a terse and lucid theological style.

In our time Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ* (1998) tackles the issue of the “eternal generation” of the Son: “The idea of eternal generation is an inevitable corollary of the **eternal sonship** and figures prominently in the statements of the Nicene fathers and their successors. **But it is far from clear what content, if any, we can impart to the concept.** It is revealed, but **it is revealed as a mystery**, and the writings of the fathers abound with protestations of **inevitable**

**ignorance** on the matter. Athanasius, for example, writes:

“Nor again is it right to seek...how God begets, [Luke 1 and Matt. 1 do supply this information!] and what is the manner of his begetting. For a man must be beside himself to venture on such points; since a thing ineffable [unspeakable] and proper to God’s nature, and known to Him alone and the Son, this he demands to be explained in words...It is better in perplexity to **be silent and believe**, than to disbelieve on account of perplexity.’

“Gregory of Nazianzen spoke in similar terms: ‘But the manner of his generation we will not admit that even angels can conceive, much less you. [Gabriel announced it very clearly in Luke 1:32-35!] Shall I tell you how it was? It was in a manner known to the Father who begat, and to the Son who was begotten. Anything more than this is hidden by a cloud, and escapes your dim sight.’”<sup>1</sup>

Macleod then comments: The church “insisted that divine generation cannot be understood in terms of human generation. Here, again, Athanasius set the tone for subsequent theology: ‘As then men create not as God creates, as their being is not such as God’s being, so man’s generation is in one way, and the Son is from the Father in another.’...Whereas in human generation **a father always exists prior to a son, in divine generation this is not so.** Athanasius writes:

“Nor, as man from man has the Son been begotten, so as to be later than his Father’s existence, but he is God’s offspring, and, as being proper Son of God, who is ever, he exists eternally. For, whereas it is proper to men to beget in time, from the imperfection of their nature, God’s offspring is eternal, for his nature is ever perfect” (p. 132).

John of Damascus: “God, Whose nature and existence are above time, may not engender in time.”

**Thus God is forbidden to act, in time, within His own creation!**

Macleod writes: “To beget does not mean to originate. In human generation, of course, it does, but in divine generation it does not...The Son was not Ingenerate or Unbegotten. But he was Unoriginate. The Father was both Unoriginate and Unbegotten. This implies a clear distinction between being begotten and being originated” (p. 132).

Gregory of Nazianzen: The Son is “the unoriginatedly begotten.”

But all this is simply to rewrite the laws of language and meaning, and then claim that the Bible authorizes this massive departure from the historical and grammatical method. It was bound to lead to confusion and it has. The falsehood of the whole idea was spotted

<sup>1</sup> Donald Macleod, *The Person of Christ*, 1998, p. 131.

by Adam Clarke, the famous Methodist expositor, and many others. Clarke felt it necessary to say:

“The doctrine of the eternal Sonship of Christ is, in my opinion, **antiscritptural and highly dangerous**; this doctrine I reject for the following reasons: 1<sup>st</sup>, I have not been able to find any *express* declaration in the Scriptures concerning it.”<sup>2</sup>

And yet without the “eternal generation” of the Son there is no doctrine of the Trinity.

J.O. Buswell, former Dean of the Graduate School, Covenant College, St. Louis, MO, examined the issue of the begetting of the Son in the Bible and concluded with these words. He wrote as a Trinitarian:

“The notion that the Son was begotten by the Father in eternity past, not as an event, but as an inexplicable relationship, has been accepted and carried along in the Christian theology since the fourth century...We have examined all the instances in which ‘begotten’ or ‘born’ or related words are applied to Christ, and we can say with confidence that **the Bible has nothing whatsoever to say about ‘begetting’ as an eternal relationship between the Father and the Son.**”<sup>3</sup>

Why does a leading Roman Catholic scholar admit that Luke 1:35 is an embarrassment to orthodox scholars?

“Luke 1:35 has embarrassed many orthodox theologians, since in preexistence theology a conception by the Holy Spirit in Mary’s womb does *not* bring about the existence of God’s Son. Luke is seemingly unaware of such a Christology; conception is causally related to divine Sonship for him.”<sup>4</sup>

Dr Wardlaw wrote in 1815 in *Discourses on the Socinian Controversy*: “I entertain strong doubts about the correctness of the notion, commonly received, of what is called the eternal generation of the Son from the Father...My own conviction is that **the title, Son of God, has no reference to the eternal generation in the essence of Deity**, but to the supernatural constitution of the mediatorial person of Christ” (p. 352-353).

Volkeliu (Johannes Völkel), a Socinian leader who died in 1618, wrote: “As to the fact that it is affirmed that the Son of God was generated from all eternity from the essence of the Father, it will be strongly resolved that such a proposition is **both absurd and clearly among those propositions of which no sense can be made.** Moreover it cannot be affirmed from the testimony of the sacred writings. For the proposition is self-contradictory. For if the Son is generated — he did not exist from all eternity, but there was a time when he did not yet exist. For every

generation, especially a substantial generation, as they call it, and properly so, is a change from non-being to being.”<sup>5</sup>

Roell (1653-1718) wrote in *Of the Generation of the Son*: “It is necessary in order to discuss among ourselves ideas about a divine Person and about generation, properly speaking, that we understand whether it is possible to reconcile that idea of the generation of Deity, properly speaking. For it is impossible to conceive, properly speaking, of the generation of a truly Divine Person if we thus overthrow the idea of Deity. If an active begetting is attributed to him who is served, in order that it be *voluntary* to a purely reasonable being or at least gifted with reason, an act of begetting is required. From this it is clear that in a generation, properly spoken, the generator is prior to the one generated [so Father precedes the Son!]. And since properly speaking ‘to be generated’ means to have one’s origin from someone else and to have received that essence from another by generation, **it is not possible that a Divine Person be generated properly speaking, since the idea of a Divine Person implies necessary existence independent from all other causes.** Moreover, since it will never be true of a Divine Person that he was not, it is incompatible with that idea that he is produced, no matter in what sense that word is used. For to be eternal means never not to have existed, to be incapable of non-existence, and to be truly from oneself and one’s own nature. And since, besides, whatever generates produces what he generates from himself, and since he is the cause of that existence, it is necessary for him to preexist the one generated. For how can one who does not exist generate, or how can one who exists be generated?” (p. 21, 22, 27).

“Orthodoxy,” beginning with Origen, and followed by the Roman Catholic Church and later by Protestant Reformation leader Martin Luther, denied that “today” in Psalm 2:7 means today:

Primasius, a 6<sup>th</sup>-century bishop, wrote on Hebrews 1:5 (in Westcott): “He does not say ‘Before all ages I have begotten you,’ nor in past time; but ‘*today*,’ he says, ‘I have begotten you.’ **The adverb refers to present time. For in God neither do past things go by nor do future things follow.** But to God the whole of time is joined together. And so the meaning is: ‘Just as I am eternal and have no beginning and no end, thus I have you [the Son] coeternally with me.’”

But if God said “today,” can He not mean it? ✧

<sup>2</sup> Adam Clarke, *Commentary*, 1817 (on Luke 1:35).

<sup>3</sup> *A Systematic Theology of the Christian Religion*, 1962, p. 110.

<sup>4</sup> Raymond Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah*, p. 291.

<sup>5</sup> *De Vera Religione*, lib. v, c. xi, p. 470

### Some of the best texts against Calvinism:

- Deuteronomy 30:19: “I have set life and death, blessing and curse, before you. Therefore **choose** life, so that you and your descendants may live!”
- John 7:17: “If anyone is **willing** to do God’s will, he will fully recognize this teaching...”
- 1 Timothy 2:4-5: “God wants **all people** to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth — namely that there is one God and one mediator between that one God and humanity, Messiah Jesus, himself human.”
- 2 Timothy 2:21: “If anyone **cleanses himself**, he will become a special instrument...”
- Luke 7:30: “The Pharisees and experts in the Law **rejected God’s purpose** for themselves.”
- Luke 8:13: Some “**believe for a while.**”
- Revelation 22:17: “Let the one who **wants** it take the water of life free of charge.”

### Comments

• “Over the past three years, God has shown me many truths in His written Word challenging me to confront many of my traditional beliefs. One of those being — God the Father alone is the One True God of the Bible. There are no One God believers in my area, so my family and I have remained in fellowship with the same church we have attended for the last seven years. This has been extremely difficult since 75% of the messages and praise songs speak of God as a Trinity; or we will all fly off to heaven when we die; or the extremely dangerous proclamation that once you have converted, there is nothing one can do to forfeit that salvation (I’m sure you can detect the denomination). As in most gatherings in my area, the common ‘Gospel’ preached is Jesus’ death, burial, and resurrection. Although that is certainly ‘Good News’ it does not mirror what our Messiah and his disciples focused on — the HOPE of the Kingdom. Side note, when is the last time you have heard this part of the Gospel preached — ‘obey the gospel’: 2 Thessalonians 1:8 and 1 Peter 4:17? Additionally, when I spoke to the pastor and a deacon concerning some of these topics, I was asked to stop leading a home group of approximately 20 adults that I had been teaching for two years.” — *Missouri*

• “Barbara’s article “Our Post-Truth Culture” (August) was excellent. I suggest she collect her articles and publish them in a book. They are all well-written and timely. Lastly, thank you for the marvelous

contribution you make every day spreading the Good News of God’s Kingdom! I use your Bible translation, second edition, every day. The commentary and footnotes are invaluable.” — *Florida*

• “I regularly receive the *Focus on the Kingdom* articles that you publish, which are truly precious information for those of us who are searching for God’s truth. I consider that your publications are a very valuable instrument for the believers who study them to come to the knowledge of the accuracy and truth of the word of God. I have thought that it would be a great blessing if these articles were also published in Spanish and Portuguese, in order to reach those believers who do not have the privilege of understanding the English language. I hope to be of service to you in this hard work that you do for the blessing of our brothers in Christ around the world.” — *Venezuela*

• “First let me thank you for the excellent scholarship! I’ve been receiving the *Focus on the Kingdom* periodical since about 2001. The articles have been meaty, bite-sized ‘theological treatises.’ Your ministry has answered my prayer submitting all my doctrines to God, and asking Him instead for His. The Bible now reads consistently from cover to cover, rather than a ‘tale of two religions,’ one with one God and the other with three. I began my doctrinal re-education with *The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah* and *What Happens When We Die?* some 20 years ago, and recently completed *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity’s Self-inflicted Wound*. Currently I’m digesting my way through *The Amazing Aims and Claims of Jesus*.” — *Missouri*

### Three problematic songs:

1. “The Heart of Worship: It’s all about you, Jesus!”
2. “God in Three Persons, Blessed Trinity” (Isn’t God IN more than three persons by His spirit?)
3. “To Canaan’s land I’m on my way...My life will end in deathless sleep where the soul never dies!” Look at all the contradictions in that statement sung in perfect harmony!

And that may be the problem. Psychologically speaking, since beautiful sounds arouse emotional responses, beautiful voices are able to insert false teachings into the heart and thereby bypass the intellect. Beautiful sounds bring nostalgia. And nostalgia arouses the pleasant memory and desire to go back to it. Everyone knows that something that is nostalgic and pleasant is always right. Right? Wrong! This needs to be taught — be careful that the nostalgic sound does not contain a ruinous lie or two inserted. Be careful what you put to song, what songs you listen to, and what songs you sing. — *Terry Robinson, Arkansas*