

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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“The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you”

Dr. Richard Hiers¹

“Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God was coming, he answered them, ‘The Kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor will they say, “Lo, here it is!” or “There!” for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (Luke 17:20-21).

Luke 17:21b is one of the celebrated *cruces interpretationis* [problems of interpretation] in New Testament study, particularly in discussions of the Kingdom of God. It was the favorite proof-text cited by liberal Protestants in support of their contention that the Kingdom of God is (and so also for Jesus was) immanent [indwelling] in human history and society, or, at any rate, in the hearts of men. More recently, it has been construed to mean that Jesus thought that the Kingdom of God was present somehow in his own person...

A fact generally overlooked in discussions of Lucan eschatology is that all other references to the Kingdom of God in special Lucan traditions or versions contemplate only a future coming of the Kingdom of God — 10:9, 11; 19:11; 21:31; and 22:18. It would, therefore, be exceptional if 17:21b alluded to a present arrival or manifestation of the Kingdom of God.

Much discussion has revolved around the question whether the prepositional phrase *entos humon* should be translated “within you” or “in the midst of you.” Harnack, Dodd, and other liberal and/or Platonizing interpreters usually have favored the former option: “the Kingdom of God is within your hearts.” But why should Jesus have told *the Pharisees* that the Kingdom of God was within *their* hearts (17:20)?...

Most recent interpreters, however, prefer, “in your midst” or “amongst you.” The decisive question, in that case, becomes whether Jesus meant that the Kingdom was already in the midst of his hearers or that **at some future point it would be in their midst**. The fact that

estin (“is”) is in the present tense is not decisive...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.² Neither “in the midst of you” nor “is” explains the meaning of the half verse in question. It is necessary to examine the context in which it appears.

Verb tenses in the adjacent verses are significant. The present tense is used to point to the future coming of the Kingdom of God in the verse containing the Pharisees’ question that introduces the pericope [v. 20], and appears similarly in Jesus’ response, which actually is the first part of the sentence that carries through v. 21. Furthermore, the future is clearly intended and the future tense is used in v. 21a and in the description of events with which the saying closes (17:22-37).

Another prominent feature of the context, the phrase “not ...with signs to be observed,” (RSV) in v. 20b has been variously interpreted...Usually...the term *parateresis* (“signs to be observed”) and in fact the whole saying have been interpreted in an anti-apocalyptic sense: Jesus intended to deny that it was possible to predict when the Kingdom of God would come by consulting prophecies and deciphering the signs of the times. If the Kingdom had already come, there would be no need at any future time to search for signs of its coming. Is that what Jesus (or Luke) meant? It is not likely. For one thing, Jesus and Luke clearly expected the coming of the Kingdom of God in the future, whether or not they also thought that it was already present or had come previously.

Furthermore, it is not evident that the term “signs to be observed” in v. 20b should be understood to designate a *preliminary* apocalyptic sign at all, at least not the kind of sign that could be used as the basis for calculating the “day and the hour.”...Despite this fact, Luke 17:20 is commonly read by those who see it as an anti-apocalyptic polemic as if it [meant]: the Kingdom of God is not coming *after* (preliminary) signs. In 17:20ff, however, it is not a matter of *preliminary* signs. Rather, Jesus declares, there will be no *accompanying* sign to mark the arrival or imminence of the Kingdom.

of man and Judgment, and entering the Kingdom were all to take place in the future, it would not have been natural for them to make a special point of using the Greek future on every possible occasion. They would not have visualized a need to prove to readers in later centuries that Jesus had expected the Kingdom to come in the near future.

¹ Chapter 2 of *The Kingdom of God in the Synoptic Tradition*, 1970. Used with permission.

² Mark 9:43-48=Matt. 18:8-9; Matt. 18:4; Luke 18:24ff; Mark 12:18-27 and parallels. It need not be supposed that the Synoptic writers were in error in using the present tense for future time, though the practice might be regarded as Semitic. If they assumed that the resurrection, the coming of the Son

The most significant portion of the context has generally been overlooked, namely Luke 17:21a: “nor will they say, ‘Behold here!’ or ‘There!’” It is particularly interesting that this wording, which appears here in connection with the arrival of the Kingdom of God, is repeated nearly verbatim in v. 23, but with explicit reference to the *future* arrival of the days of the Son of man. This parallelism or repetition suggests what is generally evident elsewhere in the synoptic tradition, that Jesus associated the coming of the Kingdom of God with the coming of the Son of man. The latter event, clearly, is thought of as still future (v. 23ff). But while v. 21a reads, “...*nor* will they say, ‘Lo, here!’ or ‘There!’” v. 23 reads, ‘And they *will* say to you, ‘Lo, there! Lo, here!’ Why do the prospective bystanders on one occasion claim to have identified or located the Kingdom of God (and/or the days of the Son of man) but on another occasion keep silent? How explain this apparent contradiction? What is the point here? In particular, why, on the one occasion, will they *not* say, ‘Lo, here!’ or ‘There!’?”

The Pharisees, Luke says, have asked Jesus when (*pote*) the Kingdom of God is coming. To this he replies that its coming is not or will not be accompanied by a sign (17:20b). Note that they do not ask him about signs. His reply, however, passes over their question concerning “when.” Instead, he answers as if they had asked him whether there would be some sign by which the arrival of the final period could be identified, as if he were responding to the second part of the question raised by the disciples in Matt. 24:3=Mark 13:3=Luke 21:7.

Interpreters generally have overlooked the fact that Luke 17:21a is also a response to this latter kind of question, a question that, to be sure, may be implied in the first: when the time comes, *how will men know that the Kingdom of God is here?* What is said in 17:23ff is obviously in answer to this second point: *when the Son of man comes, there will be no mistake about it.* Thus, those who in the meantime, in the interim before his coming, say “Lo, there!” or “Here!” should be ignored, “for just as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of man be in his day.” Those guides who will point to some sign or clue in order to prove that the days of the Son of man have come, or will offer to lead Jesus’ disciples to a hidden Son of man somewhere, will be in error, therefore, and the disciples should not follow them. This is the meaning of Matt. 24:26ff; Luke 21:8, and also, perhaps, of the “vultures” saying in Matt. 24:28=Luke 17:37.

Elsewhere, Jesus had stated, against the desire of the Pharisees and “this generation” for a sign, that none would be given (Mark 8:11ff). The Markan context does not show whether Jesus (or the Pharisees) had in mind a future sign that would (or would not) accompany the

eschatological events, or a sign that would be given in advance. Perhaps the Pharisees sought a sign that would demonstrate Jesus’ prophetic authority. Signs and wonders are mentioned in Mark 13:22=Matt. 24:24; however, these are to identify the presence of false prophets and false Christs. Such might point to signs as evidence of “realized eschatology” (Mark 13:21-23=Matt. 24:23-26), but when the real Son of man comes, there will be no need for signs of the times. **The evidence will be clearly visible and incontrovertible** (Matt. 24:27; Mark 13:24-27 and parallels).

The negative statement “nor will they say: lo here, or there” in v. 21a, and the positive declaration “and they will say to you ‘lo, there, lo here’” in v. 23a do not contradict each other. In both instances Jesus is saying exactly the same thing about the Kingdom of God or the Son of man. In the earlier saying, the point is that the Kingdom will not come with an accompanying sign, i.e. in such a way that it will be necessary to look for some way of verifying it in case of doubt. The latter saying warns that in the coming days, before the Kingdom of God has come and while the disciples are passionately longing for the coming days of the Son of man, some will claim to have found him (the Son of man) or it (the Kingdom of God), but the disciples must not be misled, **for the arrival of the Kingdom of God and Son of man will be so distinctive as to be self-evident and self-authenticating. There will be no doubt about it.**

The parallelism extends beyond the anticipated silence and exclamations of the respective future bystanders; in each case, their responses are explained by reference to the character of the coming events, and the explanation is introduced by the conjunction “for” (*gar*). Verse 24 explains that the disciples are not to follow those who will mistakenly say “Lo, there!” or “Here!” *for* when the Son of man or the day of the Son of man really comes, it will be just as evident as when the lightning flashes from one side of the sky to the other (cf. Mark 13:24-26). Similarly, our *crux interpretationis*, v. 21b, follows v. 21a to explain why, when the Kingdom of God really comes (or while it is coming), the bystanders will *not* say, “Lo, here!” or “There,” the reason being that then the Kingdom of God will be visibly and dramatically in their midst. **When the Kingdom of God comes, one will neither have to look for any special sign to identify it nor need a guide to find it somewhere.**

The reason it is pointless to look for signs is not that the coming of the Kingdom of God and the Son of man will be invisible, but that, on the contrary, **it will be universally and unmistakably visible**, “as the lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other.” That is why *then* the bystanders will *not* say, “Lo, here!” or “There!” And that is why those who *in the meantime* say “Lo, there!” or “Here!” are to be ignored...

In 17:21b Luke understands Jesus to have meant that the coming of the Kingdom of God would be a future, obvious, and all-encompassing event...All of the sayings in Luke 17:20-18:8 have to do with the coming of the Kingdom of God and the Son of man, and with the responses men will or should make in the interim and at the time the Kingdom and Son of man are revealed. Throughout this section, it is clear that these decisive events are to take place in the future...Elsewhere also, as has been mentioned, the peculiarly Lucan material speaks only of a future coming of the Kingdom of God...There is...no reason to suppose that Luke thought that the *Kingdom of God* has come or appeared in or with Jesus and his ministry. Lucan eschatology is unequivocally futuristic, so far as the Kingdom of God is concerned.

What Jesus meant by the saying in Luke 17:20ff...cannot be determined as a matter of certainty....However, it does not support the view that Jesus considered the Kingdom of God to be present in his own person, or, for that matter, present at all. On the contrary, these verses point to its appearance dramatically and unmistakably in the future. **When Luke 17:21b is taken in its context, the meaning emerges clearly enough: when the Kingdom of God comes, everyone will know it; there will be no need for authenticating clues or signs.** Such also was the OT expectation — “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together” (Isa. 40:5).✧

Why Not Get Baptized in Water?

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

I write this as a person who, due to previous indoctrination, was sternly opposed to water baptism for about 43 years (from 1972 to 2015), but, after careful study, I experienced a drastic change of mind and heart! I fully realize that this is an emotionally charged topic for the beloved folks from my old background, but I still believe that calm, reasoned dialogue is wise, vital, and helpful.

First of all, I will very briefly outline the fairly unique beliefs of The Way International (TWI) about baptism. A spin on Acts 1:5, as quoted from the KJV, was quite emphatic among us: “For John truly baptized with water; but ye shall be baptized with the Holy Ghost not many days hence.”

Victor Paul Wierwille: “In other words, with the coming of the greater (holy spirit), the lesser (water) came to an end. This replacement was initiated on Pentecost. On Pentecost the replacement first applied.”³

“Being baptized into the body of Christ doesn’t mean baptized with the old physical element of water, but with the new spiritual element of holy spirit.”⁴

Among us, John’s water baptism — and any current use of water — was regarded as a dangerously distasteful reversion to Old Testament legalism, an application of outdated norms belonging to a previous “administration” (our preferred term for **dispensation**): “The day of Pentecost founded a new period or administration.”⁵ “Since the day of Pentecost, we are indeed free from the law; and part of that law was water baptism.”⁶

Where clear, biblical records show a **continuance of the practice of water baptism** for years and decades after the day of Pentecost, we would either cleverly explain away such records — or simply avoid them. Also (despite real textual evidence) we collectively dismissed Jesus’ command to baptize in Matthew 28:19 as a forgery with a false formula.

We will later assess whether or not our old group’s bold assertions (based largely on our adamant interpretation of Acts 1:5) really measure up to thorough, biblical scrutiny.

We linked our baptism views to our use of Romans 10:9, employed as an automatic, OSAS (Once Saved, Always Saved) formula for instant salvation and *irrevocable* “born again” status. Such thinking was coupled with our enthusiastic beliefs about being “baptized in holy spirit” — a subject which, God-willing, I will address in the future.

A few facts about exact word usage along with certain Scriptural considerations might help all of us to avoid presumptuous theologies and obviate several serious errors!

“Baptize” and “baptism” are terms derived from Greek words for dipping, dunking, immersing, and washing. I will list, for your perusal, a few pertinent Greek terms, showing how they are usually translated, with references from Strong’s numbering system, and I will also indicate how many times (approximately) each word is actually used in the New Testament:

A root word for other **baptism/baptize** terms, *bapto* (#911), is usually rendered as “dip.” It is used 3 times. A similar word for “dip,” *embapto* (#1686) is also used 3 times. The verb *baptizo* is used 83 times (#907) and is usually rendered as “baptize” (including “baptized” and “baptizes”), but it is also rendered as “Baptist” twice and “washed” or “wash” twice (in most versions). *Baptizo* is really a primary verb, generally indicative of **literal washing by dipping in water**, although (as we shall see later) it can also be used figuratively (or metaphorically). “*Baptizo*, to baptize, primarily in a frequentative form of

³ Victor Paul Wierwille, *The Bible Tells Me So*, American Christian Press, 1971, p. 134

⁴ *Ibid.*, p.134

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 133.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 141

bapto, to dip, was used among the Greeks to signify the dyeing of a garment, or the drawing of water by dipping a vessel into another.”⁷

The noun *baptisma* (#908) is usually rendered as “baptism” in its 22 uses. There are 3 or 4 uses (depending on its inclusion or not in the text of Mark 7:8) of another noun *baptismos* (#909) which is usually rendered as “washing” or “washings,” often rendered as “baptisms” in Hebrews 6:2. The term for “Baptist” is *baptistes* (#910) and in its 14 uses, it always refers to John the “Baptist” or Baptizer.

There are some other significant terms for “wash,” “washed,” and “washing,” in addition to those already listed above. “Wash” (in its varied forms) might be *nipto* (#3538) which is used 17 times; *breco* (#1026), a usual term for “rain” (5 times) but used twice in Luke 7 for the washing of Jesus’ feet with tears; *apolouo* (#628) which is used twice; *aponipto* (#633), used once; *louo* (#3068), used 6 times; *loutron* (#3067) used twice; *pluno* (#4950) used 3 times.

Of the above uses of dipping, baptizing, and washing terms (approximately 166 occurrences altogether), it is mostly very easy to distinguish which words are used for:

(1) **literal baptism/baptizing** (i.e. dunking a person in water)

(2) metaphorical ways, or

(3) other types of washing or dipping (such as washing of feet, dipping in the dish, etc.).

I refer to **literal baptism/baptizing** according to standards of authentic biblical clarity. Some folks (from my Way background), in order to defend a theology of **waterlessness** after the day of Pentecost, have (perhaps subconsciously) defined **baptism/baptizing** vocabulary mentally as vaguely immersing into “whatever.” Nevertheless, there is no such vague idea in Greek usage or in English translations. Such people (despite having fervent, sincere beliefs) tend to convert **baptism/baptizing** vocabulary into a hazy, ambiguous idea. If the term **water** is not directly mentioned in a specific context, they assume that **baptize/baptism** uses might be vague or ambiguous. (We shall see shortly that the 13 figurative uses of **baptize/baptism** words are not vague or ambiguous either!)

“In water” or “with water” is **only** used with “baptize” words 6 times: Mt. 3:11, Mk. 1:8, Lk. 3:16, Jn 1:31, Acts 1:5 and Acts 11:16. Also, Acts 8:36, Acts 10:47-48, and 1 Peter 3:21 are very direct in mentioning “water.” (I have already mentioned the 13 clear figurative uses which are **not** about **literal** plunging into water.)

That leaves approximately 90 uses of baptism/baptizing/Baptist words which are **not** at all

figurative (even though the actual word “water” is mostly absent). In such cases, **literal** dunking into water is quite obviously suggested because of the **literal** meaning of baptizing terms — simply washing by dipping into water! We could list dozens of clear examples here, but a few references should suffice.

The 14 uses of “Baptist” and **many** uses of “baptize/baptism” (about John) are clearly about his dunking folks into water (though “water” is not usually stated). Jesus’ supervising of baptisms as compared to John’s baptisms is very clearly about dunking into water: John 3:22-23, 4:1-2. Years, and even decades after the day of Pentecost, faithful disciples and Apostles clearly continued to baptize new believers in water: Acts 8:12, 16:14-15 and 16:31-34, 1 Cor. 1:12-17. Also, because of the literal, watery nature of the baptizing terms, water **should not at all be extracted** from baptismal truths carefully written by Paul and Peter: Rom. 6:3-4, Gal. 3:27-29, 1 Cor. 12:12-13, Col. 2:12-13, 1 Peter 3:19-22. The only reason to make any of the above baptism records vague or ambiguous (and thus **waterless**) is to defend a quirky, erroneous “dispensational” theology! For example, Romans 6:3-4 surely deals with our identification with Christ, but it is also about humbly and obediently getting plunged in water to **enact** our identification with his death, burial, and resurrection!

The 13 figurative (or metaphorical) uses of baptism/baptize terms do **not** involve **literal** splashing down into water. They include Mt. 20:22-23, Mk. 10:38-39, Lk. 12:50 (6 uses in all) where the terms are used of the lord’s (Jesus’) anticipation of being figuratively “immersed” in an upcoming situation of extreme stress and suffering. Being baptized in holy spirit (also metaphorical, since dunking in liquid is not involved) is used 6 times: Mt. 3:11, Mk. 1:8, Lk. 3:16, Jn. 1:33, Acts 1:5, and Acts 11:16; (the references in Mt. and Lk. include a future picture of “fire” in the baptizing action). 1 Corinthians 10:2 refers to ancient Israelites being under the cloud and passing through the sea, being symbolically “baptized” into Moses — though not **literally** dipped in water. **No other** uses of baptism/baptizing vocabulary (other than these 13 figurative, metaphorical examples) fail to communicate the **literal** idea of being dunked in water!

Of course, the true importance of a water baptism event has nothing to do with being cleansed by water itself, but it is a very meaningful, spiritual action of humbly professing repentance (a heartfelt disposition to change) and publicly swearing loyalty to God (1 Pet. 3:20-22) in light of Jesus’ resurrection — and also being obediently identified with Christ’s death, burial, and

⁷ Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 1952, p. 97

resurrection (Rom. 6:3-4). Why not eagerly participate in such a wonderful event?

Something that might help the beloved folks from my background is the following consideration of Acts 1:5. The word “but” in the verse is **not** the term usually used for a strong contrast, such as the Greek word *alla*. Rather, it is the weak connective in Greek, *de*, which is mostly translated “and.” So one could render Acts 1:5 in this way: “For John baptized in water, **and** you will be baptized in holy spirit not many days from now.” The exaggerated, “dispensational” **contrast** between “water” and “holy spirit” is totally unwarranted throughout so very many, clear Scriptural records!

In fact, genuine holy spirit reception is often **closely connected** to getting dunked in water in the Scriptures! John 3:5 has a possible reference to water baptism: “Unless a person is born from water and spirit, he will be unable to enter the Kingdom of God.” The same connection is probably true of Titus 3:5 “By His mercy, through the washing (*loutron*) of rebirth and renewal of holy spirit.” Acts 2:38 is crystal clear: “Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized [**literally**: splashed down in water] each one of you, in the name of Jesus Messiah for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of holy spirit.’” Carefully read Acts 19:1-6.

About 6 and a half years ago, (when I was almost 61 years old), my concerted studies led me to **change** my perspective on this important baptism topic! Among other things, I realized that I had been formerly guilty of what I will call **lightweight** repentance! My previous indoctrination had led me to regard “repentance” as an easy formula:

“‘Confess with thy mouth’ [in reference to Rom. 10:9] does not say confess one’s sins. If it had said ‘confess your sins,’ salvation would be of works; and we are not saved by works, but by grace. A man does not confess his sins; he confesses the Savior from sin, the Lord Jesus Christ.”⁸

Six and a half years ago I perceived quite a few dark errors such as this from my previous indoctrination and misguided thinking!

John the Baptist’s ministry was **not at all** a matter of outdated, old covenant law, but the very relevant forerunner of new covenant **repentance** in view of the future coming Kingdom of God: Mt. 3:1-2, Lk. 16:16! Just as folks needed to confess their sins (and actively move away from them) before getting baptized by John (Lk. 3:7-14), I needed to do the same, and wholeheartedly commit myself to producing the constant fruit of repentance. My professing of Jesus’ lordship could no longer be within the hollow formula of arrogantly dismissing Jesus’ own words and teachings,

as if they belonged to a previous **dispensation**! An opportunity to get baptized presented itself, and, by the grace of God, I responded. The mental, spiritual, and even physical healing has been amazing since May of 2015! Despite former blind spots, it was not too late to get joyfully dunked! Now, I do not take this as a presumptuous, OSAS action, but a simple, obedient step.

I’ll close with a simple Scriptural reminder, as I prayerfully consider the mindset of my beloved fellow-Wayfarers! Don’t get tripped up by aggressive assertions (from our background) about the phrase “one baptism” in Ephesians 4:5 — as if baptism in holy spirit is to be ardently chosen above and beyond **mere** dunking in water! The same list of seven points of unity (in Eph. 4:4) **already** mentions “one spirit”! God is not being redundant! We can graciously take the reality of “one spirit” to heart, as well as the “one baptism” reality — being literally dunked in water, in the name of Jesus the Messiah (Acts 2:38; 8:12; 10:47-48; 16:33; 19:1-6; John 4:1-2).✧

Infant Murder

by Barbara Buzzard

Dr. Kathi Aultman explains how it was that, as she says, “I became a mass murderer.” The entire country, she says, became effectively brainwashed to accept abortion. As the brain-washing dissipated and her brain cleared, this former abortionist doctor became a pro-life advocate.⁹

She gives this interesting explanation as to why younger people are more actively pro-life than the older generation who have undergone that brainwashing: They escaped it. After the ruling was made in *Roe v. Wade* (1973), the push to de-humanize the unborn and the push to reverse our moral compass became not so critical. After all, the deed was done. For years before that the pro-choice lobby had had a hotline to our brains, so much so that we all might have earned the equivalent of a doctorate in pro-choice thinking. But that thinking was twisted; it celebrated “choice” without examining the content of that choice.

What is abortion other than euthanasia for infants? The “right” to abortion is built on a lie and maintained by lies. The truth is that any child can tell you that it is wrong to kill a baby.

Dr. Aultman is not alone in her radical change nor in her honest and frank assessment of what she had been doing. I am told that not many abortionist doctors can continue this practice for long (even though they have stifled their consciences). They simply burn out and want to sleep at night.

⁸ Victor Paul Wierwille, *Power for Abundant Living*, American Christian Press, 1971, p. 296

⁹ We have only gratitude that anyone involved in any way with abortion has repented and embraced the truth of it.

It seems common among former abortionists that when the scales fall from their eyes, they view their abortion practices as demonic. Repentant abortionists do not mince their words when they describe the horror of their previous deeds. This aligns with the historical narrative: “Those angelic hosts who sinned were numerous, but they were led by certain archangels [who]...taught men various sins...One taught...the art of abortion.”¹⁰ The lies have been so forceful and so embedded in our culture that they have tricked us into killing our own children.

This is a part of Dr. Aultman’s testimony before the Senate Judiciary Committee Hearing of March 15, 2016:

“I have always thought of myself as a good person, but at one point I was horrified by the realization that I had killed more people than most mass murderers. Today when I meet young men and women that I delivered, the joy of meeting them and knowing that I played a part in bringing them into the world safely, is clouded by the thought of all the ones I will never meet because I terminated their lives. I would not want to be in your shoes and have the burden of knowing that I could have prevented the deaths of thousands even millions and did nothing. I would encourage you to vote for both of these bills.”¹¹

As technology advances, the clearer the horror of abortion becomes. A recent study suggests that unborn babies feel pain much earlier than thought — as early as five weeks! My question is: What are we doing murdering infants?

It is most interesting to see that the book of Job recognizes that the one in the womb is a baby:

Job 3:16: “Why wasn’t I buried like a stillborn **child**, like a **baby** who never lives to see the light?” (NLT)

“as **infants** that never saw light” (NASV)¹²

“like unborn **babes**” (Jerusalem Bible)

Job 10:18: “Why, then, did you bring me out of my mother’s womb? Why didn’t you let me **die** at birth?”

Obviously if there is a possibility of death at birth — there has to be life *before* birth.

In the New Testament, the Greek word for a born child is the same as that for an unborn child (*brephos*; see Luke 1:41 and 2:12). There are multiple NT Scriptures which reveal that the unborn are persons. (That is why it is wrong to kill them.) The Messiah is called “my lord” while still in the womb (Luke 1:43).

“The abortion holocaust is beyond the ordinary discourse of morality and rational condemnation. It is not enough to pronounce it absolutely evil...The abortion

industry is a new event, severed from connections with traditional presuppositions of history, psychology, politics, and morality...This is an evil torn free of its moorings in reason and causality, and ordinary secular corruption raised to unimaginable and limitless extremity.”¹³ ✧

Faith Is the Same as Believing!

“Many people are confused by the words *faith* and *believe*. Some suggest they mean two different things. Arthur Farstad pointed out that the words actually translate the same concept: ‘Oddly enough, the most important Gospel word-family in the Greek NT is obscured in English. This is because we translate the Greek verb *pisteuo* by the Anglo-Saxon word *believe*, and the related noun *pistis* by the totally unrelated word *faith* (from the Latin *fides*, by way of French)...Actually, *believe* and *faith*, as the Greek shows, are just the verb and the noun for a concept that is really no different in English than in Greek. That concept is *taking people at their word, trusting that what they say is true.*’ ...To *believe* and to *have faith* mean the same thing.”

Swindoll and Zuck, *Understanding Christian Theology*, 2003, p. 869

Romans 4:13

“To our initial astonishment, Paul portrays God’s promise as being that Abraham *would be heir of the world* (Rom. 4:13). Yet in the Genesis text Abraham was promised Canaan, ‘north, south, east and west’ of where he was standing, whose boundaries were later delineated.

How then did ‘the land’ become ‘the world’? It is partly that, as a general principle, the fulfilment of biblical prophecy has always transcended the categories in which it was originally given. It is partly that God made the subsidiary promise that through Abraham’s innumerable posterity ‘all nations on earth’ would be blessed...**The third reason for Paul’s statement that Abraham would inherit ‘the world’ is surely messianic.** As soon as Abraham’s seed was identified as the Messiah (Gal. 3:16; cf. Jn. 8:56), it was further acknowledged that he would exercise a universal dominion (e.g. Ps. 2:8; Is. 9:7). Further, his people are his fellow heirs, which is why the meek will inherit the earth (Matt. 5:5), and why **in and through Christ ‘all things are ours,’ including ‘the world’ (1 Cor. 3:21ff).**”

John Stott, *The Message of Romans*, p. 130

¹⁰ *Hastings Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, Vol. 4, p. 600, referring to the Book of Enoch.

¹¹ One bill was to ban abortions after 20 weeks. The other was to ensure medical care to a baby accidentally born alive during an abortion.

¹² The term “infant” is used in 25 translations. The comment by Keil and Delitzsch on this verse denotes “abortions and stillborn.”

¹³ Dr. Bernard Nathanson, former abortionist

The Purpose of the Food Laws

by Carlos Xavier

Did God introduce food laws for health reasons? Of course not!

We must remember that from the beginning God made all things “good” (Gen 1:25).

When God made the covenant with Noah he was told, “Everything that lives and moves will be food for you” (Gen. 9:3).

This means that “unclean” does not equal bad or unhealthy.

The real purpose for the institution of food laws is given to us by God Himself in passages like **Leviticus 20:24-26**. The reasons can be summarized as follows:

1. To set Israel apart from other nations (v. 24)
2. To remind Israel they were God’s special, chosen nation (v. 26);
3. To test their obedience (v. 25).

But did God want the Gentiles to be unhealthy or poison themselves?

Note the ESV Study Bible comment on Leviticus 11:1-8: “The diet of these animals is apparently not the basis of their cleanness or uncleanness. The passage itself says nothing about what the animals eat, and the camel, rock badger (hyrax), and hare are exclusively vegetarian but unclean.”

The New Covenant Law introduced by Jesus confirmed that food laws were not for health reasons but for the reasons already stated by God. For example, in Mark 7 Jesus uses his criticism of the tradition of the Jewish elders to make a further comment regarding food laws:

“Then Jesus called to the crowd to come and hear. ‘All of you listen,’ he said, ‘and try to understand. It’s not what goes into your body that defiles you; you are defiled by what comes from your heart.’ As a result, Mark later says in verse 19 that by saying these things Jesus had made all foods clean.

Joe Sprinkle, *Leviticus and Numbers*: “From a Christian perspective, it seems inconceivable that Christ would have abolished these laws (**Mark 7:19**) if health were their primary purpose.”

The New Covenant law regarding food was also ratified:

- By God Himself in the vision of Peter: **Acts 10-11**;
- By the Jerusalem council church, **Acts 15:19**; cp. James, the lord’s brother, almost 10 years later, **Acts 21:25a**
- And of course by Paul, **Rom 14.14, 20**.

So ask yourself or your food law-keeping family/friends: Why would God want everyone else before Moses to be unhealthy, including the patriarchs and other righteous persons like Noah?!✧

Comments

• “I thank you for your past unflinching support in the area of study materials sent some years ago and the monthly *Focus on the Kingdom* which is a blessing on its own. Though I have not sent any financial help, yet you have not hesitated in sending me materials. May our Father in heaven continue to bless your ministry more abundantly in Jesus’ mighty name.” — *Nigeria*

• “I’m totally a dead man walking. I never liked or loved Jehovah’s Witness religion. It messed up everything from an early age (5 years). I was drawn into it by somebody outside the family. I went along with it, but I would never step foot in a Kingdom Hall again. I have three sisters, two of whom are JW’s, and I’ve really lost them too since they became Witnesses. So I’m down to just one sister who sticks by me as she used to go to the halls and didn’t like it. She feels like she has missed out and been cut off from life and love, so if you could send us some stuff to make us once again be loved by that light of love of Christ that was there before JW’s came along.” — *England*

• “I’m 25 years old. I was baptised at age 13 and since then I have been chasing the truth, but I found out really early that what most were teaching didn’t seem to match up with Scripture. I was a part of the apostolic church (modalism) by the way. So at about age 22 I came across a debate between Anthony Buzzard and James White. To be honest, Anthony’s arguments were on point, but that fear of not believing Jesus is the God-Man was ever present with me. Anthony said in his closing remarks pray, and a year later you’ll be back to this debate. A year later I’m back there, and being convinced that the Father alone is God. I’ve been following the material on your youtube, your websites, blogs and so on.” — *Jamaica*

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