

Focus on the Kingdom

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The Messiah's New World Order

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Satan counterfeits everything, even when it comes to wanting to rule the earth one day. He promises a new one-world government which brings humanity together under one umbrella and solves all the world's problems. Meanwhile, moral and social collapse are widespread. Wickedness has infiltrated every sector of society and seeks to remove all godliness in the name of the common good. Any attempt to protest is derided as old-fashioned or even right-wing. People think truth is relative and no longer absolute. A form of collectivism has conquered the world, and yet its underlying values are rotten to the core. Good is called evil and evil is called good (see Prov. 17:15; 24:24; Mal. 2:17).

Satan is rallying his worshippers today, especially those in positions of influence. He is determined to complete this programme of world dominion, this New World Order. Most Christians and the public at large are unaware of the true extent of Satan's activities and influence. He has structures and fraternities in place at the highest levels of society which make his current rule both unassailable and hidden. He controls government, entertainment, medicine, science, education, and most surprisingly the church. Presidents are hand-picked from an early age, Hollywood stars must take the oath, teachers must teach the curriculum and pastors must teach respectable theology. Livelihoods suffer for all those who dissent.

In Psalm 2, we are warned against the rulers of the earth who conspire against the Lord and His anointed. Nimrod is an example of one such ruler who "reigned in the earth over all the sons of Noah and they were all under his power and counsel" (Book of Jasher, ch. 7). Nimrod is also associated with the building of the Tower of Babel in the attempt to reach heaven and overthrow God. The attempt failed and God took action against this common intent by confusing their languages.

In the same way, we should be vigilant today about any professed common intent to govern the world especially when its agenda is in direct opposition to God and having only a form of godliness (2 Tim. 3:5). The world is deceived and incapable of ruling itself righteously. Satan is its god (2 Cor. 4:4). The world desperately needs God's intervention.

Satan's attempt at a New World Order is a mere counterfeit which is destined to fail in due course. The Bible speaks of a genuine new world government (the Kingdom of God) which will be established here on earth

when Jesus returns. The world will not carry on forever in darkness under the grip of sin and Satan.

A New Garden of Eden

Everything was perfect in the Garden of Eden. Adam and Eve were blissfully happy and fulfilled. They enjoyed a unique relationship with God as He communed with them and took care of all their needs. They were destined to live forever. Adam had been given authority to rule over all the earth including animals, fish and birds. (Gen. 1:26). It was the first Kingdom of God established on earth and governed by Adam with an authority from God Himself. Alas, we all know that it was not to last.

The Bible is an account of how a second Kingdom of God will be established on earth one day in the future. Corruption, poverty and injustice will be problems of the past. The Garden of Eden will be restored, but this time on an even grander scale with the whole earth perfected and renewed. Man will be restored to properly reflect the image of God and to have dominion over the earth as was God's original intention. Where man has failed with his various political systems, even so-called democracies, God will now succeed. The future Kingdom on earth will be a theocracy, a dictatorship governed by Jesus Christ, and co-ruled with the saints (Dan. 7:18, 22, 27). When Jesus said in the Beatitudes that the meek will inherit the earth this is precisely what he meant. Jesus the Messiah understood the Kingdom of God to be this theocratic reign under his own headship which would come to earth in a real and political sense. It would be without end:

"And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which will never be destroyed, and that kingdom will not be left for another people; it will crush and put an end to all these kingdoms, but it will itself endure forever" (Dan. 2:44).

The briefest of glances at the first three gospels confirms that Jesus was consumed with this message of a future Kingdom on earth. Whilst Jewish listeners would have understood its significance immediately, this language is largely lost to Western ears today. Jesus was talking of the great Jewish hope promised to Abraham. The Gospel preached by Jesus was not primarily one of the cross, but rather one of a new one-world government here on earth replacing all previous earthly kingdoms. The cross is essential for our salvation, but to believe that this was Jesus' primary message is to miss the Gospel that Jesus believed and taught.

Unfortunately, the church continues to preach a gospel limited to the cross and points to heaven as our

dwelling place whilst using vague language such as “inviting Jesus into our hearts.” It fails to properly portray Jesus as a Jewish prophet announcing, as his Gospel, a future Kingdom of God on earth which he would rule over as Messiah. This dominated Jesus’ teaching and yet the church is silent on the issue, preferring instead to focus on Paul’s teaching to the exclusion of the Kingdom. We need to elevate Jesus’ words to the highest authority, as did Paul.

The Gospel According to Jesus

The Jesus in the first three gospels can be a little difficult for us to relate to sometimes. He seemed strangely unconcerned with the world’s problems and made no effort to improve social justice despite his large following and influence. Certainly, he challenged the hearts of individuals as to their attitude towards the poor and marginalised, but he never attempted to instigate a programme of social reform against the Roman tyranny or issues such as slavery. Perhaps Jesus knew that things were not going to improve whilst men governed the political systems.

God had a similar mistrust in man’s ability to govern himself when he warned Israel in 1 Samuel 8 that by installing a king, it would suffer hardships such as conscription to war, seizure of their crops and high levels of taxation. Every human king or government is destined to fail despite its various promises, reform programmes and even apparent good intentions. It is against this backdrop that Jesus found himself, but his time to rule as Messiah had not yet come, and is still a future event.

From the very beginning of his ministry Jesus passed quickly from village to village telling everyone to repent because the Kingdom of God was coming. We sense his urgency when he tells his disciples to shake off the dust from their feet and move on if people were not interested. This message of the coming Kingdom consumed Jesus.

Even from the very beginning of Mark in chapter 1:14-15 we are introduced to a Jesus who preaches predominantly about the Kingdom: “Jesus came into Galilee, preaching God’s gospel and saying, ‘The time is fulfilled, and the Kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the Gospel.’” Here the Gospel is defined for us if we are still unsure; it is the message that the Kingdom of God is coming. By believing this and repenting of our sins, we are gifted with immortality and the privilege of sharing in the Messiah’s inheritance and rule in this Kingdom by the grace of God. Mark 1:1 speaks of the *beginning* of the Gospel.

References to the Kingdom of God can be found a total of 36 times in Matthew, 14 times in Mark and 32 times in Luke. In Matthew it is normally referred to as the “Kingdom of Heaven,” but this is simply another term for the same concept, heaven being the origin of this Kingdom on earth. Both terms speak of a Kingdom from

God which will come to earth at a single, future event and last forever.

Indeed, this is the very event that Jesus encourages us to pray for in the Lord’s Prayer when he said, “May Your Kingdom come.” Its location is on earth, for the next line is “Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.” In the Day of the Lord the earth will be transformed, dead believers will be raised with resurrection bodies and the Kingdom of God will be established here on earth.

Let us consider some passages which show Jesus’ preoccupation with the Gospel of the Kingdom. It should be evident that this is not only the Gospel that Jesus preached but also the one that he commanded his disciples to preach.

“And it came about soon afterwards, that he began going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the Kingdom of God; and the twelve were with him” (Luke 8:1).

“And he sent them out to proclaim the Kingdom of God, and to perform healing” (Luke 9:2).

“But he said to him, ‘Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the Kingdom of God’” (Luke 9:60).

“When anyone hears the word of the Kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road” (Matt. 13:19).

The last verse is clear that there are consequences for those who hear the word of the Kingdom of God but do not understand it.

Jesus believed in the same Jewish hope as his forefathers and identified himself as the Messiah who would restore the nation. He preached that this hope was now at hand, that the Kingdom of God was coming. The word “preach” means to “herald” much like a town crier would announce important news in days gone by. Nobody seemed in any doubt what this Kingdom was; in fact one almost has the impression that Jesus could have equally have just said, “It’s coming, quick, repent, it’s coming!” and conveyed the same message with equal success.

This is quite different from the gospel preached by the church today which has downgraded Jesus’ central message to one of simply believing that he died for our sins, essential as that is. According to Matthew, Jesus does not even mention his death until chapter 16, so clearly the cross did not have the same prominence for Jesus as it does for us. Christianity has lost its core message as preached by Jesus. Instead of preaching of God’s reign coming down from heaven to earth, it has preached a message of us going from earth to heaven.

The Depoliticised Jesus

Although Jesus did not initiate social reform programmes, he was absolutely a political figure when it came to power and government. It was the reason that the Romans agreed to have him put to death. Any man who claimed that he would rule the whole earth one day and seemed to have God on his side was a threat to the empire's future stability.

When Jesus establishes his Kingdom on earth it will not be with the same latest initiatives found in Rick Warren's *Purpose Driven Church*. Instead, Jesus will establish his Kingdom with force and by killing his enemies. He will be the greatest military commander and political leader that the world has even seen. Those who refuse to submit to his authority will be killed in his presence as we read in Luke 19:27: "But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence." The end of Revelation 19 describes this same scene of Jesus returning to earth and slaying its rulers and armies who make war against him.

Many Christians struggle with this side of Jesus. Instead they reduce Jesus to a wise teacher who went about doing good things as an example of how we should live. They are more at home with this meek and mild Jesus who stays out of politics, but for Jesus, the Gospel and government were inseparable. Indeed, Jesus' Gospel was entirely connected to governing the world one day. The Bible is unashamedly a political book, but sadly this has been lost on many today who are taught instead that Jesus had no interest in politics or power.

The reformer Martin Luther was instrumental in promoting this separation of religion and state in his "Doctrine of the two kingdoms" where he described a "left" and "right" kingdom. The left kingdom concerns itself with the physical realm, and the right kingdom with the spiritual realm. Luther proposed that the church (right kingdom) should not impose its authority on the state (left kingdom) because the two realms were distinct. According to Luther, however, the spiritual kingdom would ultimately triumph over the earthly kingdom as the church remained faithful in spiritual matters. This doctrine is still prevalent today.

Some of the rationale behind Luther's thinking was Jesus' response to Pilate in John 18:36 when Jesus announced that his Kingdom was not of this realm. Luther understands this other realm as a spiritual one and so concludes that Jesus' Kingdom is spiritual. Luther misses the point entirely. Jesus is explaining that the source of his authority of this future Kingdom on earth is from another realm (God). Until that day arrives, Jesus will not attempt to establish the Kingdom in his own strength.

Luther was mistaken to believe that Jesus' Kingdom was spiritual and that it was the church's mandate to

establish it on earth today through human endeavour and spiritual effort. The whole world lies in the power of the evil one (1 John 5:19). Today's levels of corruption, injustice and discontent all confirm that Jesus is no more King of the earth today than he was 2000 years ago.

The church, having successfully been infiltrated by pagan and secular beliefs, is still under state control today. It has replaced its God-given discernment with a misplaced confidence in the state, or even worse, an idolatrous worship of the state. The church now endorses the state in all aspects except for perhaps the peripheral LGBT issues which are mere (but still wicked, in God's eyes) distractions from the main agenda. In the meantime, the perks for charity-based status help to keep all dissent from churches at bay.

Another way in which the future Kingdom on earth is mistakenly viewed is to claim that this Kingdom is in our hearts. The verse used to support this view is Luke 17:21 which in the King James Bible reads, "the kingdom of God is within you." Context is important, so let us first note that Jesus is talking to Pharisees. It is inconceivable that Jesus was suggesting that these hostile Pharisees had the Kingdom "within them." Besides, the Kingdom of God cannot dwell in a person. Other translations render this verse as "the Kingdom of God is in your midst," which is more in keeping with Jesus' original intention. Jesus was replying to a question about his future Kingdom on earth. The Kingdom will be unmissable when it arrives; present everywhere and in the midst of everyone.

We must view Jesus through the lens of the culture in which he was operating. Part of our misunderstanding about Jesus stems from the fact that we live in a culture orientated towards the individual. We thus view Jesus as an individual separated from his social and cultural surroundings, whereas Jesus identified himself very much as part of something bigger than himself. Jesus found his identity in his role as the Messiah in God's great plan to bring restoration to the nation of Israel, a plan which Gentiles are now also invited to participate in. As well as viewing Jesus as an individual, we also view ourselves as individuals. We incorrectly understand the Gospel primarily to be a matter of personal salvation. There is indeed truth in this, but the overarching invitation from God is that we can now be part of His great plan in the form of a future Kingdom on earth ruled over by Messiah and made possible through his blood!✠

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Why Preexistence vs. Non-Preexistence Does Matter

From the recent Human Jesus Conference

www.youtube.com/focusonthekingdom

How do you *know* that a “pre-existing,” “pre-human” Jesus is not a *different* Jesus from the Jesus of Scripture? “Another Jesus” is to be avoided as highly dangerous and misleading, and exposed as false Christology. How do you *know* that a Jesus, who began in a preexisting life, as an angel or Son of God according to some, can also qualify as the real Messiah, Son of God, coming into existence = beginning to exist, in Mary (Matt. 1:20)? This is one of the great, central, essential questions in the mind of Jesus, the best theologian of all. “Who do you say I am?” (Matt. 16:15). That is the question of all questions. It matters as a matter of life and death. We dare not guess at the question as to who Jesus is.

2 Corinthians 11:4, CSB: “For if a person comes and preaches another Jesus, whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you had not received, or a different gospel, which you had not accepted, you put up with it splendidly!” Paul here shows his impatience! Paul is strongly against carelessness in our belief.

Disagreement on this issue is not less than confusion over the identity of God and His Son. As Dan Gill told us at the recent Kingdom of God Missions Conference: “We must get God and Jesus right.” These are non-negotiable issues of truth and error. Hebrews 1:1 says that God did *not* speak in a Son in old times, i.e. in Old Testament times. That should settle the issue about the identity of the real and only Son of God, easily.

If there is a pre-existing, pre-human Jesus, then that would feature clearly in the NT Apostolic documents. Preexistence or non-preexistence dramatically affects who Jesus is! The whole NT is profoundly interested in defining who Jesus is. But there is not a hint of any preexistence in the first three gospels or Acts! You mean that Dr. Luke did not bother to tell us about a pre-human, preexisting Jesus?

Raymond Brown: “There is no evidence that Luke had a theology of Incarnation or pre-existence; rather for Luke (1:35) divine sonship seems to have been brought about through the virginal conception.”¹ Can we not settle on that easy statement of fact?

Raymond Brown’s comments on Luke actually fully admit that the “orthodox” idea of preexistence is false to the Bible. On Luke 1:35 Brown makes a fascinating comment on the words “**for that reason** [the miracle in Mary] Jesus will be called the Son of God.”

Brown observes that “orthodoxy” disagrees with Luke: “This [Luke 1:35] has **embarrassed** many orthodox theologians, since in pre-existence christology 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...Luke does not think of a pre-existent Son of God...The child is totally God’s work — a new creation.”²

I am with Luke!

Come into Existence

The Greek word *gennao* means “to cause to come into existence, to begin to exist or be.” Note too how John in his epistle emphasizes this same fact about the origin of the Son, Jesus. 1 John 5:18 tells us that “the one who **was brought into existence** [i.e. Jesus] preserves and protects the believers.” It is quite obviously destructive of Scripture and the identity of Jesus to contradict this easy idea, by holding that the Son was existing before he began to exist!

The truth of the identity of Jesus must be taught everywhere if it is taught at all — and it is not. If we have any regard for the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20), we must teach all the truth, not just one or two parts of it. In Hebrews 11:23 Moses was born, i.e. brought into existence (same word *gennao*). So also was the Son of God (1 John 5:18; Luke 1:35; Matt. 1:20). This is very easy truth about origins. Jesus, to qualify as the second Adam, cannot possibly start as non-human!

Gnosticism

It is well-known that the church quickly departed from truth, from the second century on, and Gnosticism was the evil, fatal influence! Our own Kegan Chandler, among many, has very powerfully documented this truth in his full account in *The God of Jesus in the Light of Christian Dogma* (see especially chapter 3 “Another Jesus.”)

“The Christians we find utilizing some of the most peculiar metaphysical tenets of Trinitarianism in the first two centuries of the Church were, in fact, the Gnostics...It cannot now be denied that the Gnostic schools had a far-reaching effect on the subsequent formation of Christian doctrine...Many of mainstream Christianity’s most treasured Christological ideas may in fact be owed to the Gnostics’ early pressing of the historical Jesus through the preexisting Platonic framework...The direct Apostolic conflict with the Gnostic movement is easily detected in the late first-century writings of the Apostle John” (p. 83-84).

Exactly so, but are we on guard against repeating the same mistake today? It was the Gnostics who used, or rather abused, the Gospel of John to twist the truth and to

¹ *Birth of the Messiah*, p. 432.

² *Ibid.*, p. 291 (referencing Lyonnet), 314.

promote a non-fully human Jesus. Let us not ever risk believing this pagan Gnosticism.

In fact John's Gospel was abused as it still is to this day, and Gnosticism introduced a second God Person by simply capitalizing the word as Word in John 1:1. If we say it does not matter whether a person believes in a pre-existing, pre-human Jesus — if we say that both preexistence and non-preexistence are equally good and valid — then we might as well say that truth and error please God and Jesus equally. How do we *know* that we are not falling for the very lie which John called the spirit of antichrist (1 John 4:2; 2 John 9)? These facts demand close attention in the interests of saving truth and fleeing from error.

Note too that “there is nothing in Matthew's narrative, either here [1:1] or elsewhere throughout the Gospel, to suggest that he knew or subscribed to the notion that Christ had existed prior to his birth.”³ How very unreasonable then to force this view on John! A preexisting Son is a different Jesus, and this is not a matter of indifference. Do we really want to disagree with Luke and Matthew as to who the true Jesus is? Luke wrote more of the NT than even Paul.

It is an assault on Scripture to find a preexisting Son of God only in John! To do this is to follow the Gnostics and other Protestants and the Catholics, that John is to be taken as superior to the other Gospels (who said?!). To do this is to follow and repeat the same pattern of apostasy as occurred nearly 2000 years ago.

I maintain that the Abrahamic Faith people in the 1830's recovered a colossal restoration of lost truth about who Jesus is, about his identity as fully human, and about the Gospel of the Kingdom. It will be to our shame to give this revelation away now! It would be a terrible slap in the face to our predecessors, as well as to the Bible.

Kegan's good historical analysis of how pagan Gnosticism twisted the Bible is to be studied carefully. The danger to which Kegan and I are pointing involves “a subtle embrace of the docetic Jesus” (p. 90), that is a Jesus who only seems to be, but really is not a fully human person. Kegan quotes Barnes: “John says that we must accept only what John provides, that is only an acknowledgement of the Christ as a real human being. That the Son of God was *really a man*” (p. 91). Kegan italicizes this for emphasis!

“Orthodoxy” says that “In Chalcedon and the theological development that flows from it, Jesus is called ‘man’ in the generic sense (human), but *not* ‘a man.’ He has a human nature, *but is not a human person.*” The author of that remark, a Roman Catholic critical of the “orthodoxy” of Chalcedon, says that Chalcedon “makes a genuine humanity impossible.”⁴

Lampe: Wise Words from Cambridge

The late Regius Professor of Theology at Cambridge, Geoffrey Lampe, was one of many who are critical of the Chalcedonian, Trinitarian definition of Jesus. He argued that if Jesus preexisted his human life as God, and was therefore fully God, then he could not also be fully human. This, as we have seen, is admitted by the writers quoted above. They confirm that a person who is not a human person cannot be fully man! Lampe describes the unfortunate and confusing implications of the traditional dogma that Jesus is God possessing “impersonal human nature.” What Lampe says applies equally to any form of preexistence, Trinitarian or Jehovah's Witness/Arian:

“The concept of the preexistent Son reduces the real, socially and culturally conditioned personality of Jesus to the metaphysical abstraction ‘human nature’...According to this Christology, the ‘eternal Son’ assumes a timeless human nature...which owes nothing essential to geographical circumstances; it corresponds to nothing in the actual concrete world; *Jesus Christ has not, after all, come in the flesh.*”⁵

John gave us a deliberate and clear test for recognizing the difference between truth and error, and John warned us to shun the error and embrace the true and only Jesus, the one who is fully human (who came “in the flesh,” 1 John 4:2; 2 John 9, emphatically not “into the flesh”). No one can be genuinely human if he is “pre-human”! So let us be warned.

John 1:1 and 1 John 1

“The word” (not Word), John 1:1c said, “was God.” But note that it is illegitimate to start with a huge preconception that word is really Word (capital W)! John was well aware of how his gospel could be confused and abused. In his first epistle, John countered the errors already being made out of his own gospel of John! John said six times that he had not said that the Son of God had pre-existed, but that “eternal life” had preexisted with the Father. It was “eternal life which was with God” (1 John 1:2). He called this a “that which,” a “what” six times! It was “eternal life,” not the Messiah pre-existing with the father. This is John's own inspired and clarifying and corrective comment on his earlier words in the Gospel of John. What preexisted was the word (not Word) which, not who, was God in John 1:1c. Jesus is what the word *became* in John 1:14.

In John 1:1c “God” is in emphatic position. The word, not Word (capital W) was *God Himself* and not someone else. 1 John tells us that by “God” in the gospel, John means the Father. It is dangerous to propose a non-human, pre-human Son of God based on John, twisting

³ Bart Ehrman, *The Orthodox Corruption of Scripture*, p. 89.

⁴ Thomas Hart, *To Know and Follow Jesus*, pp. 44, 46.

⁵ God as Spirit, p. 144, emphasis added, quoted with strong approval by Kegan on p. 90-91.

him and contradicting the rest of the NT. So John 1:1c tells us that the word in John 1:1 was the Father and no one else.

The word was God

The predicate noun “God” as found in John 1:1c is never to be translated as “a god.” Look at John 1:18 in the same context. Here too the sentence begins with *theon*, God: “God, no one has ever seen at any time” or “No one has ever seen God,” definitely not “a god.” This would be impossible as equally in 2 John 9: “Whoever in the name of progress does not remain in the teaching of Christ does not have God (*theon*),” not “a god.” This cannot possibly mean “does not have a god.”

An exact parallel to “the word was God” is the statement that “God is spirit” which was wrongly rendered as “God is a spirit” in the KJV (John 4:24). This again shows that “the word was God” cannot be rendered as the word was “a god.”

We have also “God is love” and “God is light.” These are not “God is a love” or “God is a light.” No standard modern translation has in John 1:1c, “The Word was a god.”

There are only 2 NT examples of *theos* as “a god” — where Herod thought of himself as “a god,” and where Paul was thought to be “a god,” when he was unharmed by a snake (Acts 12:22; 28:6).

If there was “a god” Jesus, preexisting as Son, where is he mentioned in the Hebrew Bible? What did he say? What did he do? When was he begotten as Son? He is just not there! A preexisting Jesus is nowhere in the records.

The word “word”

In the OT “word” is found 727 times and never once does it mean a person, Word (capital W). So a supposed preexisting Son disappears! Does not exist! The whole idea should be firmly rejected.

In John’s Gospel “word” (no capital) is “God thinking and planning.” That is the meaning of “word” throughout the OT. The capitalizing of “word” in John 1 simply facilitated the appearance of a second “God” or “god.” The truth is that “Jesus is what the word became, not one to one equal with preexisting Word,” as Goppelt says in his *Theology of the NT* (Vol. II, p. 297).

In John 1 “word” is a personification like “wisdom,” and not a person. That is, not a person before Jesus “came,” i.e. was born. The capital on Word in John 1:1 is not warranted by the Greek text.

It is essential to point out that many scholars recognize that the Bible does not teach the “eternal generation” of the Son. Many also recognize that John

“is as undeviating a witness as any NT writer to unitary monotheism (Rom. 3:30; James 2:19; Jn. 5:44; 17:3).”⁶

In the flesh

The spirit of antichrist is to be recognized by this test: Every teacher who does not confess Jesus as having come “in the flesh” (*en sarki*), **not** “into the flesh.” Jesus, the Son of God, came from the womb of his mother, as all humans do (except Adam and Eve!).

Luther could not deal with this “in flesh” in the Johannine test for recognizing the only genuine human Jesus. And so Luther forged the Greek of 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 9 to read “come *into* the flesh.” So desperate was he to make his traditional theology of Jesus fit the Bible!

Raymond Brown observes that “come *into* the flesh” would be an attempt to force preexistence and thus Incarnation into the text. Brown thus fully endorses my point that “come in the flesh” cannot support Incarnation and thus does not support a literal preexistence! Brown rightly points out that if Scripture supported a preexisting Son, such a Son would indeed have come “*into* the flesh.” Luther was desperate, willing to alter Scripture to make it fit with his traditional Incarnation of a preexisting Jesus. On no account should we do this! This would be tampering with the Bible.

Not going back

There is a perfectly good Greek word for “preexist” in the NT (*prouparchein*). It is never, ever used of Jesus. There is a perfectly good word for “transform,” but no text ever says that Jesus was transformed from pre-human to human.

There is a perfectly good Greek word for “return, go back” but Jesus is *nowhere* said to “return” or “go back” to the Father. See John 13:1, 3; 16:28; 20:17. That is simply because Jesus had not been there before! But there is a “crime scene” in some modern versions (including NIV), which *do* say that Jesus “went back” to the Father. This should alert us to the tendency to want to make Jesus fit with the later error of preexistence, which was the first step towards the Trinity!

How do you *know* that a preexisting, pre-human Jesus is not a different and false Jesus, to be exposed as antichristian and to be avoided as such?

All the Bible writers were obviously Socinian, i.e., non-literal preexistence unitarians. The later move away from Jesus to an alien definition of God as triune is one of the most remarkable shifts away from and loss of essential information, in the history of (mis)communication. Jesus expressed his unitarian confession of faith as we know by asserting that the “Father is the only one who is true God” (John 17:3;

⁶ Dr. J.A.T. Robinson, *Twelve More New Testament Studies*, p. 175

5:44). He told the Jews that his God was the same one Person whom the Jews claimed as their God.

These unitarian texts merely repeat the 1300 NT references to GOD as the equivalent of the Father. Jesus declares himself to be not GOD, which would make two Gods, but God's unique human agent.

John 17:3

The simplicity of the confession in John 17:3 may be illustrated like this:

"You [singular], Father [singular], are [singular] the [singular] only [singular and exclusive] true [singular] God [singular]."

Standard commentary finds itself obliged to write: "How often may these last solemn words of Jesus have stirred the soul of John. To this corresponds the self-consciousness, as childlike as it is simple and clear in its elevation, the victorious rest and peace of this prayer, which is the noblest and purest pearl of devotion in the whole New Testament. For plain and simple as it sounds, so deep rich and wide it is that none can fathom it" (Luther).

"Spener never ventured to preach on it because he felt that its true understanding exceeded the ordinary measure of faith; but he caused it to be read to him three times on the evening before his death."⁷

Meyer comments on John 17:3, "Only one, the Father, can absolutely be termed 'the only true God,' (comp. 'God over all,' Rom. 9:5), not at the same time Christ (who is not even in 1 John 5:20 'the true God')."

Meyer correctly says that the Son is in unity with the Father (John 10:30) and is His representative (14:9-10) and unique agent or *shaliach*. Meyer later loses himself in a befuddling confusion over the "genetic subsistence" of the Son, but he has already admitted to the unitarian statement of Jesus.

The famous commentary by Barrett notes that in Wisdom literature (Prov. 11:9) "through **knowledge** the righteous will be saved," and that the world will eventually be "filled with the **knowledge** of the glory of the Lord" (Hab. 2:14), and that "my people are destroyed for lack of **knowledge**" (Hos. 4:6; Isa. 5:13).

"Clearly then the notion of knowledge as the ground of salvation is very widespread...knowledge and believing are not set over against each other but are correlated. The God whom to know is to have eternal life is the only being who may properly be so described; He, and it must follow, He alone is truly God."⁸

This is straightforward unitary, non-Trinitarian monotheism. The origin and beginning of Jesus, if he is truly human, is in Mary's womb (Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:35; 1 John 5:18, not KJV).✧

Aionios, translated "eternal" in most Bible versions, means "related to the age to come"

"We need not linger over the meaning of the word. Its fundamental meaning in the Gospels would seem to be '**belonging to the aeon, the age,**' that is to say, **the coming age, the Messianic age.** It certainly does not mean 'everlasting,' though sometimes no doubt it is applied to things which are everlasting" (Hastings Rashdall, *The Idea of Atonement in Christian Theology*, p. 12).

"This age and the Age to Come...It provides the framework for Jesus' entire message and ministry as reported by the Synoptic Gospels. The full idiom appears in Matthew 12:32: 'Whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come'...

"The attaining of 'that age,' i.e. the Age to Come, is a blessing reserved for God's people. It will be inaugurated by the resurrection from the dead (Lk. 20:35)...**Resurrection life** is therefore eternal life — **the life of the Age to Come — the life of the kingdom of God.** Not only resurrection marks the transition from this age to the coming age; **the Parousia of Christ will mark the close of this age** (Mt. 24:3)...Everything in the Gospels points to the idea that life in the Kingdom of God in the Age to Come will be life on the earth — but life transformed by the kingly rule of God when his people enter into the full measure of the divine blessings (Mt. 19:28)" (George Eldon Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 46-48).

Comments

• "Thanks for the monthly magazine of *Focus on the Kingdom*. It has helped me gain understanding of who God the Father is — that He's one and His Son the Messiah also preached that He's One. This is a truth that all the prophets from the Old Testament preached and understood. It has been an enlightening experience and I have been cleared of some misconceptions I had in earlier years in the faith." — *New Jersey*

• "I'm 52, and I always had a problem reckoning the 'only begotten son' vs. 'Jesus always existed.' I couldn't fathom the method of how God metamorphized him into a DNA strand to put in Mary; it made no sense. Everyone told me the usual: 'God's ways are not our ways,' 'We don't have the capability to comprehend.'" — *Indiana*

• "Thank you for all you do in putting out the truth of what God has said. Only those who seek God and His Son with all their hearts will be able to see. I can't believe how many times I read certain Scriptures and never saw what I see now. You can be blind to God's truth if you believe without investigating on your own. Test, try, prove all things. Examine all things, even yourself." — *South Carolina*

⁷ Meyer, 1884, p. 475.

⁸ Barrett, *Commentary on John*, pp. 419-20