

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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Unmasked

by Barbara Buzzard

“It is now possible in this country to carry on the expected work of a Protestant congregation with no reference to the Bible whatsoever.”¹

And this was said some years ago! One might think we have arrived at an identical place to some in the Church of England where it would be an embarrassment to take a Bible to church or to consult it or to bring it up in conversation. More typically though, a Scripture might be read and then a homily presented, all to add to the illusion that one is “getting” Bible. As our society becomes more and more distanced from the Bible, we have filled in with psychology, support groups, seminars, encounter groups, etc. These may all have their place, but are they valid? Would Jesus recognize these substitutions as his church? Will he find the faith when he returns? (Luke 18:8).

Jesus, when he comes, will be the great unmasker, the great revealer of all deceptions, the great divider of wickedness and Truth. Scripture tells us that there is that indispensable quality required for salvation — the love of Truth (2 Thess. 2:10). Surely that would have to be an *active* love of Truth, as the opposite of loving the Truth entails a *refusal* (active) to believe the Truth.

We are not only required to love the Truth; we are required to hate evil and wickedness. (That would entail a judgment call on our part.) “The LORD loves those who hate evil.”²

It seems that although it is more pleasant to ignore it, there is much to do as Christians rather than just “sitting tight” or “hunkering down.” Our perceptions of what is required of us depend on that template we have mentally absorbed. (And they could be faulty.) Believing as a Christian is not passive; it is not easy; it does not come with citizenship. Retirement is an example of a model that might need to be rethought. May I gently disabuse you of the idea of being forever comfortable? To live is to work. And we know that we are to be about God’s work. We speak of imitating Jesus, but we must remember that all that God did in the life of Jesus is now to be continued in and through his people. Retirement does not cancel our duties as doers

of the Great Commission. It does not cancel our requirement to be productive.

The word “adult” has taken on a different meaning currently. It is being used as a verb as in “adult up.” (This is much more to my liking than some of the pronouns we are being forced to use.) While teaching a youth lesson recently, I found it necessary to correct the idea that being an adult makes one brave. Not so! Courage does not come with arrival at age 21. And the temptations we face as adults only increase. Even those we think might have minimal impact — the “let slide” type — lead us to an easy acceptance of a soft lifestyle (even though this may include church).

The Mess We Are In

Oh, what damage those pastors who like dogs who cannot bark have done! Some have let Truth *slide*, be overridden by tradition, be shrouded in mystery. Isn’t it interesting that pastors seldom urge research or study in order to confirm what is being said? They dare not. Of all the dozens and dozens of true stories we have heard of individuals going to their pastors to inquire as to how it is that what they are hearing from the pulpit appears to contradict Scripture — never has the pastor ever expressed appreciation or a promise to look at the subject. And likewise, when pastors become aware that certain ones in their congregations do not believe what is taught in that church, most often the pastors tell them they can stay as long as they don’t try to teach or speak of their alternate views. What a tragedy! Rather than being the shepherds leading their flocks to water, they are an evil blight. Pastors are meant to watch and therefore to warn. They are to alert us to the mess we are in, point us to the Scriptures as to why this is so, warn us of what is to come and what to watch for and how to be ready. And then to assure us of the only remedy Scripture endorses, which is the return of the lord Messiah and the ushering in of God’s Kingdom.

Stop the Spin

The loss of the Bible in the church is exemplified by the fact that many times what is passed down in Sunday School is simply an amalgamation of the most popular secular, moral and social values of the day. Yes, lip service is often paid, but the fact is that the Scriptures are losing ground at a terrifying rate. “Cancel culture” was here long before it became evident. Some pastors are even unwilling to use a biblical text when

¹ Elizabeth Achtemeier, *The Old Testament and the Proclamation of the Gospel*, 1973, p. 13

² Ps. 97:10. Also Ps. 45:7, Prov. 8:13, Amos 5:15, Heb. 1:9

preaching. There is a “strange silence of the Bible in the church.”³

It is a long-term masquerade which will inevitably lead to profound crisis just as it has in our schools. We *thought* we were a Christian nation. We *thought* we knew what was being taught in our schools. What began possibly as an underground or underhanded movement to divorce us from our convictions has developed into a slick sleight-of-hand abandonment of the Bible. We were asleep and failed to see the “gloss” — i.e. something goes out the back door but a new and improved version steps in almost unnoticed, overlaid with similar and sound-good and positive veneer that only an expert⁴ could detect.

We are in dire need of a course correction; the content of the Scriptures has been replaced. As A.W. Tozer said: Instead of pursuing God “we have broken with God.”

The Bible is lost in the church?! But how are we to find God without His Scriptures? Deceit, detours and substitutions are everywhere. How are the sheep to be fed? How are answers to be found? How do we recover? “This is not a situation to be taken lightly, for unless the church’s life is rooted and nourished in the Bible, it has no possibility of being Christian...The fact that the Bible is being lost in the church is therefore a crisis of the most serious proportions. We are in danger of losing all relationship to the only God there is, which means, of course, that we are in danger of chaos and finally, total death.”⁵

Turning Our Backs on Truth

How very popular it is to say “we are not to judge.” How can this be when the Scriptures tell us over and over again *how to judge*. How can this be when it is said that judging or administrating, fixing or managing is the very thing we shall be called on to do?⁶ Granted, the word “judge” has taken on a negative connotation, but biblically the injunction against judging is really an injunction against *condemning*. And so what has happened is that secular society and Christian society has joined together in this damnation against judging. This is very dangerous as it leaves us at risk of not making those critical judgments which delineate good and bad, Truth and error. It leaves us prey to acceptance of abhorrent (by the Bible’s standard) behavior. The idea that one should not judge, as it is commonly expressed, would lead to mental anemia. It leads us to

be terrible examples to others and to allow fear of man to be uppermost in our behavior.

It allows us an excuse for not voicing an opinion or objection but to go with the flow. This encourages weakness and frailty and the idea that we have *the right to hide*. Being silent on things that matter is not right. Today’s watchwords of “Just stand up” are functioning in all sorts of circles to make a difference. They should function in the life of a Christian even more so, as we are to fear God and not man. Staying quiet on biblical issues such as abortion, the taking of an innocent human life is not an option for Christians. What is blasphemous for God should be blasphemous for us.

Please note that as we speak of judging/managing/directing as our given role in the Kingdom we are focusing on *justice*, the very thing our Supreme Court Justices are examining in *Roe v Wade*. Is your heart not longing for justice, that beautiful solution to so much of the evil which has invaded our world? Jesus’ plan to share with us the administration of justice is what makes our roles in God’s Kingdom so exciting. May the mind of Christ enable us to appreciate that truly incredible promise, and may we have readied ourselves for the job by practice: “for those whose faculties have been trained by practice to distinguish good from evil” (Heb. 5:14). We can only really hope for what we truly desire; let us pray for a passion and a love for justice and a desire to *do* justice.

We do not judge to condemn but to discern. “What does the LORD require of you but to **do justice**, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Mic. 6:8). *Doing justice* is not a forbidden, angry sort of behavior. In fact, it goes hand in hand with walking humbly and loving kindness! It is far from being unloving, harsh and finger-pointing. Could it just be that we have this all wrong? God’s justice has to do with love. Is it possible to pray for grace and truth and not love justice? Loving justice and desiring to have a role in it are the natural end products of hating evil, which is commanded for us: “Hate evil and love what is good; remodel your courts into true halls of justice” (Amos 5:15). Again justice is paired with love: “You completely forget about justice and the love of God” (Luke 11:42).

It is not only in the removal of the Bible that we must be wary, but we must be on red alert when it comes to the “add-ons” and the “mix-ins” and the combination tactics. We had examples of both this week as we encountered a pastor who was using the Bible to prove that Jesus was wrong! And secondly, we were asked to believe that one could subscribe to a Buddhist philosophy as well as being a Christian. It is a time of universal deceit.

As a final unmasking thought: post-biblical is post-Truth. ✧

³ Title of a book by James Smart.

⁴ Isn’t that what we must be as Christians?

⁵ *The Old Testament and the Proclamation of the Gospel*, p. 15

⁶ Other job titles or roles might be facilitator, supervisor, counselor, which do not have negative connotations.

Paul's Example of Kingdom Priorities

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

I can sum up my long experience of more than 49 years (since I was 18 years old) with the following assessment: I am an ex-dispensationalist who finally learned the Gospel of the Kingdom of God! I hope you can fathom that this means quite a miraculous change, since a classic dispensationalist relegates Jesus' actual words (and especially his bold Kingdom message) to a previous "dispensation" or time period. Just as Saul of Tarsus underwent a drastic change from hostility towards Jesus and his followers to genuine adherence to Jesus as the anointed Messiah, so we can change vastly, even if we have been formerly stuck stubbornly in erroneous ruts for decades! In The Way International (TWI), we were, in a sense, staunch "Paulists," regarding Paul's church epistles as very exclusively "addressed to Christians," in stark contrast (according to our blinded minds) to Jesus' outdated teachings presented in the four gospels. Nevertheless, there is an extremely sad irony evident in how badly we (as die-hard dispensationalists) collectively misunderstood Paul's biblical example and teachings! Though I now find myself standing **against** the adamant mindset which I so sternly embraced (at some level) for over thirty years, I humbly do so without bashing the beloved people who were misguided along with me. By God's amazing mercy, transformational **change** is always a real, viable option! Praise God for that!

Paul wrote, "Even if you had ten thousand tutors in Messiah, you do not have many fathers, because in Messiah Jesus I became your father through the Gospel. I beg you therefore to be imitators of me" (1 Cor. 4:15-16). He also wrote, "Follow my example, just as I follow the example of Messiah" (1 Cor. 11:1). He gave other similar exhortations, such as Philippians 4:8-9. So, even though there are many keen Scriptural models (and other dynamic examples) to emulate, there is something quite special about Paul's concerted imitation of the Messiah.

Acts 20:17-37 is a marvelous section which focuses specifically on Paul's ardent model of faithful integrity despite crushing pressures and obstacles. Among other factors, in verses 20-21 and 31-32, "I [Paul] did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, teaching you publicly and from house to house. I testified to both Jews and Greeks about repentance [a change of heart and life direction] towards God and faith in our lord Jesus Messiah...So be on guard! Do not forget that for a period of three years I never ceased to admonish everyone, night and day, with tears. And now I entrust you to God and to the Gospel-

word of His grace, which is able to build you up and give you the inheritance among all those who are holy."

Along with Paul's total Jesus-like (John 15:15) commitment **not** to withhold anything which was profitable to them, in this same context of Acts 20 (verses 24-25), he totally **equated** the fully preached "gospel of the grace of God" with "preaching the Kingdom." This truth constitutes a major Kingdom emphasis concerning Paul throughout the book of Acts!

One might keep in mind that in southern Galatia (Acts 13 and 14), despite persecutions, Paul and Barnabas offered **encouragement** to continue in the faith, saying, "It is through many trials that we enter the Kingdom of God" (14:22). In Ephesus, Paul **persuaded** them about the Kingdom of God (19:8). Why in the world would someone bother to "persuade" folks about outdated tidbits of history which are no longer relevant? Also in 28:16-24 we see that Paul spoke to some leading Jews in Rome, explaining from morning to night, testifying about the Kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus. Then comes the decisive conclusion of the book of Acts (28:30-31) in which Paul has relative freedom (while renting a house for two years), even though he was a prisoner: "he welcomed all who came to him, proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom of God and teaching about the lord Jesus Messiah with complete openness and without restriction." From clear, abundant evidence throughout the book of Acts, as seen above, it would be wildly far-fetched to theorize that Paul separated his own Gospel preaching from Jesus' dominant, consistent thesis: repent (change) now due to the certainty of the approaching Kingdom of God!

When Paul formally defended himself before Felix (Acts 24:10-21), he demonstrated that he was not fearful about being mistreated by either Jews or Romans. He wisely used the occasion to boldly herald what mattered most to him. "But I confess this to you: According to the Way which they call a sect, I serve the God of our fathers, believing everything taught in the Law and written in the prophets. I have the same hope in God as they have, that there will be a resurrection of both the just and the unjust [upcoming, essential Kingdom realities]. That is why I do my best to always have a clear conscience before God and before people" (24:14-16). What a vital attitude: having a God-fearing **conscience** — because of authentic Kingdom hope!

Paul once again defended himself before Agrippa and Festus in Acts 26, earnestly striving to reach others present with pertinent Gospel truths about Jesus (26:4-29). Then in Acts 27 he very lovingly and prayerfully took care of 276 "neighbors" on a ship, speaking God's encouragement and assuring that they eat so they could survive the shipwreck (27:21-26). As far as we know,

only three of them on the ship (Paul, Luke, and Aristarchus) were believers.

When Paul wrote (1 Timothy chapter 6) about the attitude of “slaves” (indentured servants) toward masters, he emphasized his uncompromising devotion to the **sound, healthy** words of Jesus himself! Far from separating his own Gospel ideas from those of Jesus (in the tradition of adamant dispensationalists), he wrote, “If anyone teaches other doctrines and does not agree with the health-giving words, namely the teachings given by our lord Jesus Messiah, and thus with the teaching which promotes godliness, he is conceited, understanding nothing” (v. 3-4a). This theme of **sound, healthy** words (such as those taught by Jesus in the four gospels) is further highlighted in a few verses in the books of Timothy and Titus. In 2 Timothy 1:13-14 we see: “Hold on tightly to that pattern of **sound words** which you have heard from me, in the faith and love which are in Messiah Jesus. Guard that **good deposit** that has been entrusted to you, through the holy spirit which lives in us.” One might keep in mind that Jesus’ own words “are spirit and are life” (John 6:63). In Titus 1:9 we read, “He [a genuine elder] must hold to the faithful Gospel-word as it has been taught, so that he will be able both to encourage others with that **sound teaching** and also refute those who contradict it.”

Perhaps 2 Timothy 2:22-26 illustrates, in a sense, the potential effectiveness of Paul’s keen example of using **sound, healthy** words — while he exhorts Timothy to do the same. “Flee from youth’s evil desires and pursue uprightness, faith, love and peace, in fellowship with those who call on the lord from a pure heart. But reject foolish and ignorant disputes, because you know that they generate only conflict. And the lord’s servant must not be engaged in conflict, but kind to everyone, competent to teach, and patient, with gentleness correcting opponents. Perhaps God will grant them repentance leading to the knowledge of the truth, and they may come to their senses and escape the Devil’s trap, after being captured by him to do his will.” What a powerful possibility for deliverance from outright evil comes from the gentle, patient use of **healthy words!**

Though Paul’s writings might include some things which are difficult to understand, they are carefully regarded as Scriptures (2 Pet. 3:14-18), which should **never** be twisted in foolish, destructive ways, such as (for example) making them **contradictory** (in a dispensational way) to Jesus’ pertinent Gospel message of the coming Kingdom of God!

Though Paul’s valid, Kingdom-focused example shines through more than half of Acts and in thirteen thought-provoking letters, we will conclude this very cursory study by listing 6 key points regarding Paul’s model, which we can now enthusiastically emulate:

1) For decades Paul was an avid preacher and teacher of the Gospel of the Kingdom of God, not withholding **anything** which was profitable for his listeners. One example of this involves his ministry in Thessalonica. Though he was there for only a few short weeks (Acts 17:1-9) and had to leave under pressure, Paul wrote detailed truths to them about the coming hope in two letters, including how the deceiving times of the future man of sin (the Antichrist) would precede Jesus’ return (2 Thess. chapter 2).

2) Paul refused to be distracted by financial gain; he worked hard with his hands (Acts 20:33-35), being a tent maker. He did not confuse financial gain with godliness (1 Tim. 6:5-11), an error which is so commonplace among many modern proponents of the “prosperity gospel.” When Paul, as a prisoner, needed generous financial help from the Philippians, he received it with totally ethical motives (Phil. 4:10-19).

3) Paul did not merely distribute information in a cold, distant, bureaucratic way! He personally and intimately poured out his heart and life to folks (as we briefly viewed in the mention of the shipwreck chapter, Acts 27). See 1 Thessalonians 2 and 2 Corinthians chapters 6 and 7.

4) Paul was a remarkable model of extreme patience and understanding, while dealing gently with folks at different levels of learning and maturity. He could masterfully “become all things to all people” in order to save or win some (1 Cor. 9:19-23; Rom. 14:1-15:7; Acts 21:17-26). He did not fly off the handle harshly and dogmatically with those people still needing to grow and mature.

5) At the same time (while being so very patient), he was not reluctant to boldly elucidate new covenant truths. He urgently refuted the wrong-headed legalism of continuing to submit to circumcision and other old covenant requirements (Acts 15:1-3; Col. 2:16-23, and all of Galatians). He truly achieved and **exemplified** the balance between patient gentleness (point 4) and uncompromising, bold assertions (point 5) so that the authentic Gospel might be clearly made known. Paul successfully avoided the common pitfalls of falling into unfruitful, exaggerated extremes.

6) The final point would be Paul’s faithful dedication as a man of perpetual prayer. The model prayers in Philippians 1:3-11, Colossians 1:3-12, Ephesians 1:15-21 and 3:14-21 indicate his constant, heartfelt commitment to help others produce lives of fruitfulness with in-depth spiritual wisdom and understanding. Instead of being distracted by worldly politics (as so many are nowadays), he simply encouraged Timothy to pray for such leaders in the world (along with prayers for all fellow human beings) — to the end that God’s intervention help us lead

tranquil, quiet lives with all godliness and dignity (1 Tim. 2:1-5) as we arrive at knowing the central truth of the entire Bible: “namely that there is one God and one mediator between that one God and humanity, Messiah Jesus, who is himself human.”

Although one could add other aspects of Paul’s supreme example of imitating and following the Messiah Jesus, these six points can serve as a simple set of reminders as we pray continually (Matt. 6:10) that God’s coming Kingdom arrive here on earth. Along with Paul, who toward the end of his life knew that he would be richly rewarded with the crown of righteousness for having **fought the good fight** (2 Tim. 4:6-8), we can likewise “love his appearing” and be faithful to the vibrant Jesus-centered truths taught and emulated by Paul. Jesus’ undeniable, historical resurrection is a prototype and a proof of God’s ultimate plan to raise **all** the dead with the lord’s powerful return (1 Cor. chapter 15) and usher in his Kingdom and our mighty, certain, kingly inheritance. Far from being mere wishful thinking (that God through Jesus will make all things turn out right in the end), we should confidently, like Paul, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the lord, knowing our labor is not in vain in the lord (1 Cor. 15:58).

A relevant, fairly recent book which I recommend is *Paul: A Biography* by N.T. Wright. ✧

The Various New Testament Titles of the Gospel about the Kingdom

The following list of expressions provides first the “master definition” of the Gospel and then gives the equivalent Gospel titles found throughout the New Testament. All evangelism in the Bible is evangelism about the Kingdom of God as Jesus preached it. All invitations to salvation are invitations not “to go to heaven,” but *to inherit the Kingdom of God*. Following Jesus involves using his terminology, not our own. To speak like Jesus (allowing, of course, for translation into our native languages!) means to think as he did and does.

If one combines references to “the Gospel of the Kingdom,” “the Gospel” and “preaching” or “proclaiming,” there are some 325 references to the Gospel of the Kingdom. “Believing” in the New Testament means believing in “the Gospel about the Kingdom and the name of Jesus Christ” (Acts 8:12). The next verse (Acts 8:13) says that Simon “believed,” i.e., believed in the Gospel of the Kingdom and the name (agenda) of Jesus. That is the meaning of Christian faith (in Simon’s case belief did not last).

In Acts 28:24 some were persuaded by the Gospel of the Kingdom (v. 23) and some did not believe. To believe, therefore, in the New Testament is to be persuaded about the Kingdom of God and Jesus.

The Kingdom of God is the key which unlocks the secret to the teaching of Jesus and gives us knowledge of God’s Plan for ourselves, the whole of the human race and the future of this earth.

The “parent definition” of the Gospel comes from Jesus himself, as the model exponent of the Gospel (Heb. 2:3). Jesus was the original herald of the Gospel Message of the Kingdom (introduced briefly by John the Baptist, Matt. 3:2 and then preached by Jesus beginning in Matt. 4:17). The Gospel comes with a specific definition. Its primary and fundamental title appears 18 times:

The Gospel about the Kingdom of God

(Matt. 3:2; 4:17, 23; 9:35; 24:14; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2, 6, 11, 60; 10:9; 16:16; Acts 8:12; 19:8; 20:25; 28:23, 31)

God is training His people to fix a very broken world. A variety of interchangeable phrases describe this same **Gospel about the Kingdom**:

- = the **word** about the Kingdom (Matt. 13:19; see 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Rev. 1:9)
- = **God’s Gospel** (Mark 1:14 = “Believe in the Kingdom,” v. 15; Rom. 1:1; 15:16; 2 Cor. 11:7; 1 Thess. 2:2, 8, 9; 1 Pet. 4:17)
- = **the Gospel** (Matt. 11:5; Mark 13:10; 14:9; 16:15; Luke 3:18; 4:18; 7:22; 9:6; + 80 times)
- = **this Gospel about the Kingdom** (Matt. 24:14)
- = **this Gospel** (Matt. 26:13)
- = **the Gospel of the grace of God** (Acts 20:24)
- = **proclaiming the Gospel of the Kingdom** (Acts 20:25)
- = declaring the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27)
- = the Gospel of salvation (Eph. 1:13; Rom. 1:16)
- = **the Gospel of Jesus Christ** (Mark 1:1)
- = the Gospel of Christ (2 Cor. 9:13)
- = the Gospel of the glory of Christ (2 Cor. 4:4)
- = the Gospel of the blessed God (1 Tim. 1:11)
- = the mystery of the Gospel (Eph. 6:19; see Rom. 16:25)
- = Your (God’s) word(s) (John 17:6, 8; “receive words”)
- = **the word of God** (37 times)
- = **His word** (Tit. 1:3; 1 John 2:5)
- = **the word** (46 times)
- = the word of truth (2 Cor. 6:7; Eph. 1:13; Col. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:15; James 1:18)
- = the knowledge of the truth (1 Tim. 2:4; 2 Tim. 2:25; 3:7; Tit. 1:1; Heb. 10:26)
- = the truth (50 times)

= repentance and forgiveness of sins in Jesus' name (Luke 24:47)

= the word of the Lord (Acts 8:25; 12:24; 13:44, 48, 49; 15:35, 36; 16:32; 19:10; 19:20; 1 Thess. 1:8; 4:15; 2 Thess. 3:1; 1 Pet. 1:25)

= the word of the Gospel (Acts 15:7)

= our Gospel (1 Thess. 1:5; 2 Thess. 2:14; 2 Cor. 4:3)

= the Gospel of our lord Jesus (2 Thess. 1:8)

= the word of His grace (Acts 14:3; 20:32)

= grace and truth (John 1:14, 17)

= the word of the cross (1 Cor. 1:18)

= the words of God (John 3:34; 8:47; Rev. 17:17; 19:9)

= the words of the Life of the Coming Age (John 6:68)

= my (Jesus') word (John 5:24; 8:31, 37, 43, 51, 52; 14:23, 24; 15:20; Rev. 3:8)

= my (Jesus') words (Matt. 24:35; Mark 8:38; 13:31; Luke 6:47; 9:26; 21:33; John 5:47; 14:10, 24; 15:7)

= my teaching (John 7:16; 2 Tim. 3:10)

= these words of mine (Matt. 7:24, 26)

= my sayings (John 12:47, 48)

= my (Paul's) Gospel (Rom. 16:25)

= my (Paul's) words (Acts 26:25)

= my (Paul's) message (1 Cor. 2:4)

= my (Paul's) preaching (1 Cor. 2:4)

= **the mystery(-ies) of the Kingdom of God** (Matt. 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10)

= the preaching of Jesus Christ (Rom. 16:25)

= the mystery of Christ (Col. 4:3; Eph. 3:4; Col. 1:27)

= the mystery (Rom. 16:25; Eph. 1:9)

= the mystery of the faith (1 Tim. 3:9)

= the mystery of godliness (1 Tim. 3:16)

= the word of Life (Phil. 2:16; 1 John 1:1)

= the mystery of God (Rev. 10:7)

= the word of faith (Rom. 10:8)

= the word of Christ (Acts 10:36; Rom. 10:17; Col. 3:16)

= the abiding word of God (1 Pet. 1:23)

= the implanted word of God (James 1:21)

= our report ("the word of hearing") (John 12:38; Rom. 10:16)

= the faith (32 times)

= the word of this salvation (Acts 13:26)

= this salvation (1 Pet. 1:10)

= this salvation of God (Acts 28:28)

= our common salvation (Jude 1:3)

= the faith once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3)

= the manifestation of truth (2 Cor. 4:2)

= the word of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19)

= the sword of the spirit (Eph. 6:17)

= the word of righteousness (Heb. 5:13)

= the word of my perseverance (Rev. 3:10)

= the word of their testimony (Rev. 12:11)

= the testimony of Jesus (Rev. 1:2, 9; 12:17; 19:10; 20:4)

= the Gospel about the coming Age⁷ (Rev. 14:6)⁸

"The word of God" is not the Bible, but the Gospel about the Kingdom!

"The various 'in-house' terms of early Christian discourse [include] the references to 'the word' (*o logos*) as a technical term for the gospel message (Mark 2:2; 4:14-20, 33), a use of the term also well-attested in Luke-Acts (e.g., Luke 1:2; Acts 4:4; 6:4; 8:4; 10:44; 11:19; 14:25; 16:6), with early uses in Paul as well (Gal. 6:6; Phil. 1:14)."

Larry Hurtado, *Christology in Mark's Gospel: Four Views*, 2021, p 87

The Angel of the LORD

by Carlos Xavier

Many teach that "the angel of the LORD" refers to *one* specific angel only, namely the "preexistent" Son of God. But the Hebrew phrase *malak YHWH* can also be translated "**an** angel of YHWH" or "**a certain** angel of YHWH" (depending on the context).

The *NET Bible* comments on Genesis 16:7: "Some identify the angel of the Lord as the preincarnate Christ...However, it is more likely that the angel merely represents the Lord; he can speak for the Lord because he is sent with the Lord's full authority. In some cases the angel is clearly distinct from the Lord (see Judg. 6:11-23). It is not certain if the same angel is always in view. Though the proper name following the noun 'angel' makes the construction definite [grammatically], this may simply indicate that a definite angel sent from the Lord is referred to in any given context. **It need not be the same angel on every occasion. Note the analogous expression 'the servant of the LORD' which refers to various individuals in the OT.**"

Similarly, in Deuteronomy 15:17 God commands masters to take an awl and put it through the ear of a servant. The Hebrew here literally says "**the** awl," but are we to suppose there was one specific awl that was kept since the time of Moses and used all the time? Of course not.

⁷ "Eternal Gospel" is a mistranslation. The Gospel is not eternal; it is Good News of the Coming Age of the Kingdom. "*Aionios*" in Greek means "to do with the coming age." "The *aionios* Gospel is not in Christian language the 'everlasting Gospel'...Rather it is the Gospel of, or concerning, the Kingdom-age" (Nigel Turner, *Christian Words*, p. 456). "Eternal" ("everlasting") is thus in many passages equivalent to "millennial" or "having to do with the age to come of the Kingdom."

⁸ For evidence of the Gospel deprived of the Kingdom see the *New Scofield Reference Bible* on Revelation 14:6 and the article "Gospel" in *Unger's Bible Dictionary*.

Also the Bible speaks of plural “angels of God” (Gen. 28:12; 32:1); these are clearly the same as angels of the LORD (see Ps. 103:20). ✧

“It is likely that the genius and authentic essence of both Judaism and Christianity has to do more with a perception of **God’s activity in the world** and less with definitions of his ontological [relating to the nature of being] personhood...The early Christian theologians...**instead were preoccupied with definitions of God’s nature and personhood and with Greek philosophical categories.** This led the course of their thought **away from the biblical agenda**, certainly away from Jesus’ self-concept...”

“I believe the early Christian theologians, and the church from Nicea to Chalcedon, intended to claim that Jesus of Nazareth was God’s ultimate divine ontological agent in history. **That is a Greek philosophical statement.** A biblical perspective would have [been]...a statement about **God’s activity in history regarding himself and us**, rather than a statement about God’s ontological nature and ontological presence in history. It would have identified Jesus as a man from Nazareth...in whom God is profoundly manifested.

“The agenda of the ecumenical councils of the Christian Church during the fourth and fifth centuries, which permanently shaped the dogmatic tradition of the Christian faith...**was not a biblical agenda.** It was rather a special type of Hellenistic and Neo-Platonist agenda.”

J. Harold Ellens, *The Ancient Library of Alexandria and Early Christian Theological Development*, p. 38-39

Comments

- “In my journey on this mission field [prison], I’ve tried to share truth, and the truth shall make you free. I know over 100 men have come to realize the truth of the Bible believing unitarians that you share in your material. I could only bring 5 books here, so I left my books with one of our ‘Berean Bible Group’ at my previous location. I will only ask for *The Doctrine of the Trinity: Christianity’s Self-Inflicted Wound*. I really love all the books that I’ve read, but *The Doctrine of the Trinity* really gets people’s attention.” — *North Carolina*

- “Congratulations on your dedication to the truth, and on the magazine you work each month. I’ve been reading in Romanian on my Youtube channel several articles from your magazines so far, and from the books available. I am a young man from Romania who has been following you since 2018 and I am glad in all respects to know you and the work that I am convinced you have from God. In the fellowship group I was in before 2018, I believed that Jesus was the first being

created by God in the beginning of creation, and that the Holy Spirit was also a personal being created by the Son, and that any soul that separates from the body goes either to a temporary punishment until judgment, if he was an unbeliever, or to heaven if he was a Christian. The teacher in our group presented things so convincingly that it took over a year and a half to make the wrong connection with this group until I understood the mistakes and spoke boldly, yet I was immediately rejected and excluded. I rejoice now to know the only true God and the man Jesus, the Messiah, His Son. God willingly let him be caught, accused, and crucified to atone for our sins, and he is risen and stands at the right hand of God as intercessor for us and will return to clothe us with immortal nature. I am almost blind and cannot read in print, but through the miracle of technology and the internet, which is a gift from God, we blind people also have access to works and even the facility to translate them instantly into our language. I have posted many paragraphs from your works because they bring a clear recovery of the faith taught by Jesus and the apostles. And if I think they are on the right path, I want others in my country to come to salvation. I no longer long for going to heaven, as I thought before, but I am aligned with the prayer learned from the Lord Jesus to ask the Kingdom to come as soon as possible to do God’s will on earth as in heaven. I rejoice in the day when we may partake of the program of immortality which we now have as a living promise in our hearts, and that we too may partake of God’s great work of cleansing the planet from all evil and administering it according to God’s mind with our supreme ruler, the Messiah Jesus, and will be absolutely sanctified and full of the presence and knowledge of God. And I am not afraid of death because I will not live it; it will be more than a sleep, a total unconsciousness that will last like a moment until I wake up in front of Christ, no matter how long it will be until then. And if we are allowed to go through great trials, they are not worthy to be compared with the glory that comes through Jesus, from God. My wife also held on to certain teachings of the Trinitarian Pentecostal movement before she met me, but when she began to know the truth slowly through me, she saw an excellent alignment with the Bible and a continuation of the apostolic truth, and we rejoice. Let us follow the path of God together. We always remember you in our prayers before God, that He may always strengthen you in His work and open through you the minds of many to choose the truth and to repent, to be renewed, and to be messengers of the truth. We want God to keep you all healthy and full of energy.” — *Romania*

- “This magazine enlightens me more about the truth of who is God and who Jesus really is according to the Scriptures.” — *Philippines*