

Focus on the Kingdom

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For the Love of Jesus The Mark of Jesus

by Barbara Buzzard
From the recent Human Jesus Conference

We are marked men and women (or we should be). What mark has this human Jesus left on you?

There should be no “life as usual” after an encounter with Jesus and his message. While it can be said that the O.T. can be summarized in saying that God spoke — the people didn’t listen, the New Testament offers new possibilities, i.e. *because* of Jesus — the disciples became bold, even to the point of losing their lives. They were *marked* by Jesus with character changes, previously unknown passion, and love for fellow men and for the words of Jesus.

Someone put it this way: I was in a dark room. I backed into a light switch and what I saw was such that I could never un-see it. That could be what an encounter with Jesus might look like.

You can only follow Jesus if you can determine which direction he went — not geographically, but spiritually — what he believed and stood for.

What is ahead after a Jesus encounter? Danger, falling rock, construction, delays, roadside crews. But Jesus and his Father through the Scriptures provide guard rails. Staying the course can only happen if you are going — *moving* — in the right direction.

Having a continual and profound affirmation of Jesus’ humanity will give us the possibility of so much more of a relationship with him than for those who think he has two natures. We can interact with ALL of him without having to divide him or split him up. The deification of Jesus *hinders* our identification with him.

Our affirmations of Jesus’ humanity make the parallel between Adam and Jesus so much more striking.

Our assertion of Jesus’ humanity gives us *common ground*. His perfect obedience was *not* based on the *memory of a prior existence* or a previous experience. Jesus’ assurance as he lived a persecuted life was based on the same thing that ours must be — based on the assurance of the promises — inheriting his Father’s Kingdom.

Jesus paid the price of living according to Scripture all during his life — as he was dis-believed, questioned not only about his identity but his sanity as well.

It was Mark Twain who said that the two most important days of your life are the day you were born and day you found out WHY. This surely is energizing.

Consider this in relation to the “mark of Jesus”: “But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us. We are hard pressed on every side, but not crushed, perplexed, but not in despair, persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down, but not destroyed. We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body. For we who are alive are always being given over to death for Jesus’ sake, so that his life may be revealed in our mortal body” (2 Cor. 4:7-11).

Our Environment

An odious means of cultural destruction is underway in the form of sabotage of the language — a conspiracy to change the meaning of words to suit the purposes of the ones in charge. Words that at one time had a negative connotation are turned into positives, and vice versa.

Before we look at Jesus’ teaching, we must reckon with the world we have inherited. George Orwell in his book *1984* identified the technique of changing the meaning of words — leading to doublethink as a technique which allows a person to hold two contradictory thoughts at one time and hold both to be true. As is obvious, it is a form of *lying*. We see this most clearly in theology and now in very many aspects of our world.

Lying has become such a universal and acceptable behavior that one is “marked out” by telling the truth. Lying has become a primary way of life for some. There are institutions and practices such as abortion wholly built on lies. Since we live in a world of lies and deception, the ability to detect these lies is a major difference separating the foolish from the wise. We have been warned that most human grief and sorrow and man-made disaster didn’t come from ignorance but from the consequences of lies. “It’s not from things we don’t know, but things we know that aren’t so” (Mark Twain). And Twain was also the one who originated the saying that “A lie can travel around the world and back again while the truth is lacing up its boots.”

Lying takes such subtle and unexpected forms: “Our hearts still fall into that same satanic groove [as did Eve], quickly moving from confessing ‘I believe in God’ to talking about ‘the God I believe in,’ to making

the most dire and pretentious utterance of all: 'I could never believe in a God who...'”¹ We do not notice the disparity between saying “I believe in God” and “the God I believe in.”

We all have a propensity to create our own idea of God or of His Messiah. We all have a bent to fabricate a God and a Messiah out of our own wishes, and the real possibility is that we could create them out of falsehoods.

We have a huge capacity for self-deception but that is *the most dangerous of all forms of lying — lying to one's self*. It takes the form of justifying our actions, being delusional about our own wrong doing. We are very good at fooling ourselves, lying to ourselves. We are rather good at making it up — i.e. “the God I believe in would never do such a thing,” or “I could never believe in a God who...” We twist God to our liking and then pronounce our “creation” as the real thing. Jesus was very aware of this as was David when he prayed: “*Keep me from lying to myself*” (Ps. 119:29, NLT).

A vivid example here is the “principle of dissimilarities,” which is to say that if something sounds Jewish, then Jesus could not have said it! Please be suitably shocked. And there was also a so-called Jesus Seminar where actual votes were cast as to the question: “Could Jesus have said that?” These were some of the leaders in *unbelief*, but we have sophisticated the field with much subtler approaches.

Could this be the meaning of 1 John 5:21: “Little children, keep yourselves from idols,” i.e. creating Jesus as we would like him to be.

Jesus or Bambi?

When we add to our tendency toward self-deception, the philosophy adopted almost universally as advocated in the movie *Bambi* and said by Thumper: “If you can't say somethin' nice, don't say nothin' at all” — then we have a combination that just could be dangerous. Please don't get me wrong — I love the *Bambi* movie and don't mean to demean it. I also respect that there are times to hold one's tongue, and I do believe in being “nice.” There are many Scriptures about guarding our tongues. What I am calling a “Bambi philosophy” is a sweet sentiment and many times is probably good advice. *However*, it has taken on a role and a life of its own as a valued philosophy of *Christian* behavior. *But is it valid? Did Jesus operate this way?*

No, he did not. Jesus was direct (sometimes shockingly so). Jesus shoots straight and he knows his audience.

He manages to indict us all as he speaks about those character flaws that must be acknowledged and repented of and changed (see Jer. 3:3b; 3:13; 8:12). Jesus' words were so right on every occasion and with reference to everyone. He spoke so truthfully about the nature of man and his proneness to do wrong. Jesus' words always get you. Spot on. They nail everyone. No one gets off scot-free. Man is true to what had been written: “deceitful in all his ways” (Jer. 17:9).

It seems that we make “not to offend” our *modus operandi*. That has become the measuring stick of being a good person. Our aim is to make those around us feel comfortable. And this certainly has its place, for instance at the Thanksgiving table. I am all for tact and diplomacy and good manners. But as one writer said: “We've got too many people being quiet so other people can be comfortable.”

Could any of the prophets or biblical authors have adhered to this “see no evil, speak no evil” philosophy? The problem is that it stifles critical thinking, which is essential to the process of *honest* living. In its wider context it stifles the telling of Truth. Could it possibly be the most subtle of lies? We must balance that Bambi philosophy with this brilliant insight: “Silence in the face of evil is itself evil; God will not hold us guiltless. Not to speak is to speak. Not to act is to act.”²

There are situations where we have the responsibility to **not** remain silent. Martin Luther King put it this way: “Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”

Hand in hand with the “see no evil, speak no evil” Bambi philosophy goes our substitution of sincerity for Truth. Jesus' love of Truth *must not* be exchanged for sincerity. And I move from Bambi to a rather more sophisticated source: the noted and brilliant writer Wiley Jones:

“Saul and others ‘verily thought’ that they were doing God service when they were ‘making havoc of the church’ by cruel persecutions, but did their *sincerity turn their crime into a virtue*?...Sincerity will not render harmless the believing of error any more than it will the drinking of poison. The modern theory of sincerity is not found in the Bible...And Paul did not preach to them that modern gospel of sincerity (which is a delusion and a snare), but faithfully declared to them ‘the gospel of the kingdom,’ as the Master commanded (Mat. 24:14, Acts 20:25).”³

This is a challenging statement: “Everyone on some scale of life is compelled to be an intellectual force. They must think. They must value. They must act. Avoidance of such is the very nature of depravity and the root of society's ills.”⁴

¹ Derek Rishmawy, *Christianity Today*, Dec. 2020

² Dietrich Bonhoeffer

³ Wiley Jones, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*

⁴ Patrick Gentempo

Jesus and his Teaching — i.e. Jesus and his Mission

“It may be said that the teaching of Jesus concerning the Kingdom of God represents His whole teaching. It is the main determinative subject of all of His discourse. His ethics were ethics of the Kingdom; His theology was theology of the Kingdom; His teaching regarding Himself cannot be understood apart from His interpretation of the Kingdom of God.

“And it may not only be said that all His teaching had relation to the Kingdom, but also His action, everything He did from the days of His baptism...all the events of His life until the final culminating event, the crucifixion, had reference to the coming of the Kingdom. From His baptism on, His whole life was dedicated to the mission of announcing the Kingdom’s approach and of calling men to prepare for entering it upon the conditions which by divine authority He announced.”⁵

Jesus spoke much about deception. And he spoke much about discernment. His love for us *required* that he warn us of the obstacles to come — of the nature of the beast. Our nation is sometimes referred to as a Christian nation. More correctly, it is a prodigal nation, guilty of idolatry, complacency and pride.

At the very heart of Jesus’ teaching is *repentance*, a condition of entry into the Kingdom. His teaching about repentance and his requirement of it are distinct features of his teaching.

This requirement dictates that *sin has to go*. As we know one cannot repent and continue in sin. Today, this requirement of repentance is often missing. We have lost a critical factor in not seeing the connection between repentance and our beliefs. *Repentance has as much to do with wrong ideas as it has with wrong behavior*. The Mark 1:14-15 scripture is the model for us to follow and to utilize in evangelism: “The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe in that Gospel.” In this case repentance refers to a thought process and the turning or repenting requires a change to a belief in the Gospel of the Kingdom. Not only must we repent of moral wickedness but of wrong thinking, and that wrong thinking would be non-acceptance of the Gospel of the Kingdom.

Jesus did not leave us in any doubt about what he meant by obedience. Could he have been any more specific than in the Sermon on the Mount? But this kind of obedience is radical and costly. That is why it is explained away or only obeyed with lip service. Let’s not play down how extremely difficult these teachings

are: for example, we are told to love our neighbors (we *naturally* love our friends), but then Jesus adds this radical new element: we are told to love our enemies as well. *Who is left?*

This encompasses everyone. No exclusions — no way out. An incredibly tough assignment!

Are we antagonistic in any way to anything he said? A self-inventory would be valuable. Is any part of it unacceptable? Do we succumb to this — “the Jesus I believe in” would not...?

Something is expected of us! It is only reasonable that Jesus expects us to demonstrate in thought, word and deed that we are giving our very best efforts to obey all that he directed.

Jesus knew the spectacular difficulty of obedience. That is why he promised the spirit of his Father and of himself to transform us with a new nature to enable us to obey.

The thing is — anything short of obedience is rebellion. It is treachery.

“If you want to be my follower you must love me more than your own father and mother, wife and children, brother and sisters — yes, more than your own life. Otherwise you cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:26, NLT).

One of Jesus’ favorite sayings was “It is written.” One of our biggest problems is that we want to behave as though it *had not been written*. We want optional extras when there are none. We want an “it’s all good” type of freedom. We want to have our own Truth. We want negotiables when there are none. We *pretend* that in the controversy over same sex marriage there is no mandate. There is a mandate — it is written. Our instructions and guidelines have been *written*. The case of our not liking what is written does not give us license to erase it, or ignore it, or change it. It is written — a non-negotiable for believers.

Image Bearers

Jesus’ words are to be engraved into the depths of our being. They will provide us the strength to remain strong in times of moral conflict. Moral courage will come from imitating Jesus; this is our vocation. We are to be doing what Jesus did.

How striking it is that texts that were applied to Messiah are now applied to Christians. The text in Psalm 2:8-9 is repeated in Revelation 2:26-27, but this time the promises are applied to Christians. This is the most amazing proposition: that what Jesus gets, we get! That we share in his inheritance is a not-to-be-missed, enormous Promise. Jesus was inclusive before we even knew it as a word. Jesus’ plan to share with us the

⁵ F.C. Grant, “The Gospel of the Kingdom,” *Biblical World*.

administration of justice is what makes our roles in God's Kingdom so exciting.

Praying Like Jesus — The ABBA prayer

"It was a characteristic of Jesus' approach to God in prayer that he addressed God as 'abba' and that the earliest Christians retained an awareness of this fact in their own use of 'abba.'"⁶

"Abba Father" is one of the most significant names we can use for God. The word is Aramaic and translates as "Father" or "dear Father." It denotes a very close relationship. This relationship is unique in that, while God is the Creator of all children, all children are not children of God until they become that through faith and obedience. This relationship should heighten our sense of brotherhood with Jesus. That we, like he, can call God our Father is an amazing thing. It's all about relationships — as God's children we have access to His throne room, by believing the Gospel of the Kingdom (Mark 1:14-15).

This has been spoiled for us in a way. It was at one time said by author Jeremias that Abba meant "Daddy" as in the language of a small child. And that idea became very popular. *However*, Jeremias later retracted this and said that *Abba isn't "Daddy,"* but instead it is the language that grown-up sons and daughters would use. Unfortunately the previous error lives on, and as is often the case we remember the erroneous version rather better than the correction. Some pastors still teach that "Abba" equates to "Daddy."

James Dunn speaks of the Abba prayer as *something distinctive, a distinguishing mark of those who shared in Jesus' inheritance.* **By this, we are invited to be on intimate terms with the Father.**

The Creed of Jesus — The Shema

"If this creed, and this prayer, was important to God's people in the time of the Messiah, and important to the Messiah himself, then it's imperative that we, as the people of God, give consideration to The Shema, not just as a creed, but as a prayer."⁷ Interestingly, by praying the Shema we can learn, we can follow, and we can obey. **There is an expectation of action due to listening. Listening entails and demands action.** This author points out that the pronouns for humans in the Greatest Commandment are not singular but plural, and so he renders this possibility: "YHVH is OUR God. And y'all will love YHVH y'all's God with all y'all's heart, and all y'all's soul and all y'all's strength."

What sustained Jesus? What therefore can sustain us? It appears that as with the prophet Jeremiah, Jesus would say: "Your words are what sustain me" (Jer. 15:16). Jesus put it this way: "It is written." Again, this favorite saying of Jesus actually occurs some sixty times in Scripture!

It can be said that we "know" how Jesus would react to abortion because we "know" his heart. He has revealed his thinking in his teaching; his words reveal his heart. What he would find blasphemous we should find blasphemous. He was familiar with the words of Jeremiah who commanded the people to stop murdering the innocent (Jer. 22:3).

The mark of Jesus on our lives is reflected in our living out his words. He warned us to "Beware of false prophets," "Beware of the scribes," "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees" (which is to say hypocrisy), and "Beware of covetousness," and many other cautions.

As N.T. Wright says, "What stops us from being genuine human beings bearing the divine image is not only sin, but the idolatry that underlies it. What is required for God's new world and for renewed humans within it is for the power of the idols to be broken."⁸

One of those idols might just be being spiritually sedentary — just watching the world go by. We surely all know that sin is rebellion, but *indifference — does that qualify as rebellion?* But of course, because faith is a thing we **do**. Indifference is an attribute of non-active faith. **Consider this please: Indifference, not hatred, is love's opposite.**

We have all been told that we mustn't hate. Which is to say we mustn't hate *anyone*. Matt Walsh asserts that *indifference, not hatred, is love's opposite*. He argues that whether it is a good hatred or a bad hatred depends on what it is aimed at. Of course, hatred aimed at a cancer patient is bad, but hatred aimed at the patient's cancer is good.

"The Bible repeatedly speaks of this holy and righteous hatred, and commands us—not merely allows us, but commands us—to have this sort of hatred in our hearts." Please see the several Scriptures that attest to this.⁹

- *It is right* that God's children raise their voice in protest against immorality.
- *It is right* that we stand in opposition to godless trends.

⁶ Prof. James Dunn

⁷ *Praying Like Jesus: The Shema*, Dr. Les Hardin

⁸ N.T. Wright

⁹ Ps. 97: "Let those who love the Lord hate evil." Prov. 8:13: "To fear the Lord is to hate evil." Ezek. 35:6b: "Since

you did not hate bloodshed, bloodshed will pursue you." Rom. 12:9: "Hate what is evil; cling to what is good." Gen. 4:10; Gen. 17:20; Ex. 2:23; James 5:4.

- *It is right* that we join the battle to save unborn lives. (After all, you have to join the side you are on.)

Anything less than that is tantamount to surrender(!). It is capitulation to the “evil one.”¹⁰

For moral courage — imitate me, says Jesus. Get rid of your fear of being different. Rejoice in it!

This is a challenging statement: “Everyone on some scale of life is compelled to be an intellectual force. They must think. They must value. They must act. Avoidance of such is the very nature of depravity and the root of society’s ills.”¹¹

It is not right that pastors should consider some moral issues off-limits, as in “This won’t preach.” How can we say we love Jesus and cower at his radical demands? Is it true, as Matt Walsh writes, that we have a *Church of Cowards*?

What Would Jesus Say and Do?

Not only is our vocabulary being perverted — but since words are the building blocks of thought, so too does thinking become corrupted. “Tolerance is never commanded or even mentioned in the Bible because it is a false virtue. A Christian ...should tolerate the color of his neighbor’s car and the shape of his neighbor’s head. But he should hate his neighbor’s wickedness just as he should hate his own wickedness. And the more he loves God, the greater this hatred will be. If he cannot hate wickedness ...then he is nowhere in the vicinity of loving God.”¹²

Acceptance and tolerance are being treated as if they are more or less interchangeable. They are not. Our culture is now demanding acceptance and even celebration of moral choices and lifestyles that cannot be approved of by a Christian. The culture further demands that in our acceptance of sinful lifestyles, we “acquiesce or assent to those sins.”¹³

As our world takes a dive into the unthinkable, we must prepare ourselves and our responses. We must ask ourselves what is required of us; Jesus would have agreed with Micah: walk humbly with our God and **do** justice. For the love of Jesus and for the love of our fellow man and most urgently, for the love of children, we must opt out when society contradicts Scripture — and consider most importantly what Jesus would say or do.

How Do We Get to Be With Jesus?

This is not a child’s question — but a most excellent question from an adult. I wish it could be one

of the primary topics that we teach children because they can relate to it in a way that no amount of mythical teaching about knocking on the door of your heart could possibly compare. It is our responsibility to foster this desire and this Truth in children — to undo some of the fairytale thinking and to make this ambition real. We have a *very distinct advantage in our Christology* of Jesus being human, and I am not sure that we use it to our full advantage. Children naturally want to be with their heroes; the idea that this is not only possible but is The Plan should be taught and reinforced at every possible opportunity. We have the decided advantage here in our teaching of a human Jesus, and we need to make the most of that advantage *for the sake of the children*.

We are so very blessed to have the notion of being with Jesus, the best friend we could ever have, in our thinking as an attainable goal and within our grasp — so if we identify him early as our hero, our brother in the faith, the one who had our backs, the one who received the highest possible praise from the Father, the one to whom the Father gave everything — we would do well.

Sometimes we have things a bit skewed. We hear constantly the earnest and genuine plea for people to “accept Jesus.” It is probably more biblical, however, for Jesus to accept us. “But now that you know God, or rather are known by God...” (Gal. 4:9). And also the fact that “We love because he first loved us” (1 John 4:19). This is important because it puts the responsibility on us to follow, to obey, to *be found acceptable* in his sight. It is important because we are all prone to be people pleasers — another idea we need to repent of — and the more we consciously work to please both Father and Son, the better. This concept of becoming acceptable in the sight of God and His Messiah needs to be in the forefront of our thinking so that it may dislodge and outweigh the pressure to please men.

We get to be with Jesus by **responding** to the Truth he teaches. He wants and deserves a response, not a passive acquiescence but an active, participating hearer (which means doer) of his teaching. These attributes are the same, whether we are living at the time of Jesus’ return or whether we have died — and in that case it is resurrection which will allow us to be with Jesus.

For the love of Jesus it follows (at least it does to me) that what Jesus is against, we must be against; what Jesus hates, we must hate. To do otherwise would be to consign our brains to an off mode.

¹⁰ *Zion’s Fire*, Marvin Rosenthal

¹¹ Patrick Gentempo

¹² Matt Walsh, *Church of Cowards*, p. 127

¹³ *Ibid.* p. 115

We must hate and despise falsehood as does Jesus, as does his Father. “I hate and despise falsehood” (Ps. 119:163).

We must tell **The Truth about the lies, lies more toxic than DDT**. And again, we must broaden or correct our thinking about what unrighteousness actually means: “Loving truth means refusing to believe what is not true, *and standing up for this*. Believing falsehood debilitates and dilutes the energy of the spirit of the truth which is designed to animate and invigorate us. Truth is life-imparting and falsehoods undermine our very being. Falsehood is a poison to our system and not better than adding cyanide to our coffee. Believing what is untrue is to be rejected with maximum conscientious effort. The *antichristian threat* is that we would not love the truth but believe what is not true, and thus love unrighteousness (Paul in 2 Thess. 2: believing the truth is contrasted with ‘believing what is false, and being unrighteous.’)”¹⁴

We are not free to ignore evil, cover for it, appease it, accommodate to it, compromise with it, excuse it, *or be blind to it*. We are saturated with approved ways to keep our noses clean, not get involved, keep our heads down, and all that nonsense. But the fact remains that God hates evil (Mal. 2:17). An astonishing corollary is that, according to Scripture, it is evil to be deceived. This unpleasant fact that it is *a sin to be deceived* is often ignored or not even recognized. But, nevertheless, it is there. We are told that “Wicked people and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving others and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13). How carefully we must read the Scriptures! How tenaciously we must apply these principles! How diligently we must pray for protection from the evil one! How aware we must be of the evil one’s desire to derail us!

As we are to imitate Jesus, we must note that one of his characteristics which brought him his Father’s approval and anointing is that he “*loved righteousness and hated wickedness*” (Heb. 1:9).

The End of the Matter

And so — we fight the language perversions and we know that they are only a minuscule picture of the cultural perversions. We fight our human nature, those traits that Jesus shone a light on. We fight the societal and governmental lies that surround and envelop us.

But Jesus is bound by his own righteous character to help us. As one writer put it: he is a man for others.

The resolve that we shall have to have is exhibited by Paul when he says, “We did not give in to them for

a moment, so that the Truth of the Gospel might remain with you” (Gal. 2:5).

Jesus exhibited a kind of royal law of love which we must employ — with loyalty, perseverance, and dedication. He was the second Adam, the perfect Adam who “had our backs” long before the expression was even born.

Jesus lived the life we were created to live.

One of the most wonderful scriptures for meditation and encouragement is surely this picture of the Kingdom and beyond: “But there are also many other things that Jesus did. If every one of them were written down, I suppose that the world itself could not contain the books that would be written” (John 21:25). I look forward with great anticipation to finding out what all these things were. Boredom will be impossible!

May we be challenged by the honest words of Christian and humorist Erma Bombeck who says: “When I stand before God at the end of my life, I would hope that I would not have a single bit of talent left, and could say, ‘**I used everything you gave me.**’”

Loving Jesus and loving the Truth must be done full strength. Dilution is dangerous. Do not dilute!

“But you must continue to believe this truth and stand in it firmly” (Col. 1:23a, NLT).

In response to Jesus’ love of us and our desire to be disciples, his confession of faith must be ours. May we show the love of Jesus!

And may we love his appearing (2 Tim. 4:8).

May we all develop a strong *compulsion* to recognize and accept our duty to *bear witness* to the Truth, and to stand to defend it. Integrity demands that we do so.

For the love of Jesus we:

- Love our neighbors and our friends and our enemies.
- For the love of Jesus we hold firm to and remain faithful to “the faith of Jesus.” His confession must be ours.
- For the love of Jesus we cherish and protect “the faith of Jesus.” We do not allow it to be manipulated, diluted, compromised, or explained away. There are constraints, and prohibitions. If these are not honored, we have broken faith.
- For the love of Jesus we exercise our greatest powers of discernment and continually seek wisdom.
- For the love of Jesus we imitate his courage and act boldly to speak the Truth.

¹⁴ Anthony Buzzard, “Equipped for the Word of Ministry: The Power of the Spirit of the Truth, the Spirit of Prophecy,” 2014, emphasis added.

- For the love of Jesus we testify to and for his *cause*: giving Jesus the greatest possible respect by showing that we recognize his commission (Luke 4:43) and want to be a part of it.

- A hunger for Truth is the noblest possibly way to show our love for Jesus because it is his Father's Truth that we are seeking.

We are invited to seek that quality of love for Jesus which *really does obey*. ✧

Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. "The time has come," he said. "The Kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news" (Mark 1:14, 15).

"Here's what's interesting about this passage: it tells us that the 'gospel' in Jesus' day meant the good news of the coming kingdom of God. It included nothing about the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, which was still future at the time. And this message included a call to repent. Those who claim that the gospel is solely about the 'doing and dying of Jesus' are somewhat wide of the mark."

—T.E. Crosby, *Garments of Grace*, 2010, p. 68

Jesus "received from the Father the seed of the kingdom, that is, the word of the gospel, and sowed it in his garden — in the world, of course — in man at the present day, for instance."

—Tertullian, *Against Marcion*, Book 4, Chapter 30

Comments

- "I read with interest your newsletters on *Focus on the Kingdom* over the last couple of years and have found them refreshing to read. One of your favorite topics is to demonstrate from Scriptures that the Trinity doctrine is a doctrine of men not found in Scriptures, with which I am in total agreement. Good articles on John 1:1 and 14 in your November issue. I was reared and raised Southern Baptist (SB) for years: graduated from SB Theological Seminary; pastored a couple of SB Churches; served as a SB missionary (church planter) for many years. As the Apostle Paul says, I have always been a pursuer of truth, as revealed in the Scriptures. I have read extensively on the early Church in the last year, which has enriched my understanding."

—Kentucky

- "I wrote you a little over a month ago requesting a copy of *They Never Told Me This in Church!* and wondering if there was a Bible translation that supported the truths that were spoken of in Mr.

Deuble's book. Whoever received my letter generously sent me the copy of Mr. Deuble's book but included *The One God, the Father, One Man Messiah Translation* along with it. This has started a chain reaction of God's blessing across a dorm of 100 men. (I am a prisoner in the Florida Department of Corrections.) Over the last month God has paired me with a brother of solid belief. Every day unsaved Christian men living behind the veil of Satan's distortion of God's Holy Word come to our/my bunk asking and seeking God's Truth. God has already allowed us to start a daily prayer circle and a daily Bible study teaching the good news of the Kingdom." — Florida

- "I am incarcerated in Florida and recently a fellow inmate received some very good material from you. Currently I am a subscriber to your newsletter and I find it very helpful in spreading the true Gospel! Thank you for all you do and may God the Father continue to bless you richly." — Florida

- "I am extremely happy that my search for true brothers and sisters in Christ, which began after I was expelled from the Jehovah's Witness community at the end of 2001 — after more than 30 years of participation in their work, 18 of them in a totalitarian regime, of which I spent 10 months in prison as a 'reward' for my missionary work — ended almost 6 years ago with my finding you through the Internet. I live in a country where the knowledge of English is very limited among ordinary people. Our nation, according to various surveys, is perhaps the most atheistic in the world; the idea of unitary monotheism is virtually unknown here. This is a great challenge for me and so I am trying to spread these ideas, which means translating and translating, creating documents for local people, spreading them through personal contact and electronic mail. In the spring I created a website in my native language (<http://focusonthe kingdom.eu/>) to facilitate the dissemination of these ideas here. May our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus the Messiah, grant you and your co-workers an undiminished measure of His Spirit." — Czech Republic

- "In my journey of faith, I am glad that God brought me to the right person — you, an instrument of His divine glory. I'm deeply inspired by your works; you are a great spiritual writer. Now I have an excellent guide in my journey to the truth. The books will amply serve their purpose of enriching, motivating, and awakening." — Philippines

- "I devour the *Focus* which arrives each month. Thanks to all of you for providing me with it. I'm enjoying today Job 19:25-27. Roll on, return!" — Virginia