

# Focus on the Kingdom

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## The Kingdom Now or Future?

by Carlos Xavier

Despite the overwhelming biblical evidence that “the Kingdom of God” primarily means the future restoration of the world when Jesus will rule from Jerusalem, some continue to teach otherwise. This article will explain some of the NT texts popularly used to teach “Kingdom now” and Dominion theology.

### 1. What is “Kingdom Now”?

Many teach a so-called *tension* between present and future statements about the Kingdom of God. For example, the *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels* rightly notes that “during Jesus’ ministry the Kingdom of God is spoken of **always** as a future event. It is expected, prayed for and hoped for...It is never said explicitly to have arrived, not even at the Last Supper.”

“But,” they add, “because the agent of the Kingdom is present and active through his teaching and mighty works, the Kingdom of God may also be said to be **potentially present**.”<sup>1</sup>

This teaching can lead to what some call “already, not yet.” In other words, some say that the Kingdom is *already here*, but not yet “consummated” or fully realized. They claim that when the Bible says the Kingdom is “at hand” or “near,” it means that it’s *present now* but not yet fully realized.

The noted German scholar Hans Küng, in his book *The Church* (1968), sums up the history of this view well:

“With Irenaeus, who placed the kingdom of God in the context of salvation-history, and Clement of Alexandria, with his markedly **spiritualistic** and **ethical conception of the kingdom of God**, as his forerunners, Origen took the kingdom of God as meaning above all the ‘kingdom of God within us,’ as referring to the *autobasileia* [‘self-Kingdom’] of Christ in the soul of each individual, and saw the Church **platonically** as the earthly image of a heavenly kingdom of God.

“Not until the historical turning-point in the reign of Constantine did the ‘Christian’ religio-political idea of an empire emerge, as developed by the Byzantine court theologians (Eusebius of Caesarea) under the

slogan: ‘one God, one Logos, one Emperor, one Empire.’ In this view the Christian imperium [empire] is **the fulfillment of the messianic time of salvation**. As a result **the Church became a State Church**, subordinate to the imperium” (p. 90).

### 2. The Kingdom According to Jesus

The word “Kingdom” appears around 113 times throughout the Gospels:

- c. 50 times in Matthew;
- c. 40 times in Luke;
- c. 20 times in Mark;
- 3 times in John

When we read these verses we find that Jesus’ overwhelming emphasis is on a future Kingdom that will one day be established on earth. Here are some examples:

- Jesus promised his Apostles, “**when the world is reborn** and the Son of Man will sit on his throne of glory, you too will sit on twelve thrones, governing the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matt. 19:28).
- Jesus also promised that he would not drink the communion cup with them “**until the Kingdom of God comes**” (Luke 22:18).
- The well-instructed Apostles (Acts 1:3) ask the resurrected Jesus, “Is this the time when you are going to restore **the Kingdom** to Israel?” (Acts 1:6).
- “**When** you see these things happening, **then** you will know that **the Kingdom of God is near**” (Luke 21:31).
- “Many will come from the east and the west and sit down at the banquet with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob **in the Kingdom**” (Matt. 8:11)
- Joseph of Arimathea “was **waiting** for the Kingdom of God” (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:51).

There are only a few exceptions where Jesus describes the Kingdom as in a different sense already present during his life and ministry.

First we again need to stress that according to the biblical prophecies, the future establishment of the kingdom will be a worldwide, geo-political, visible and *cataclysmic* event (Dan. 2, 7). The Kingdom is never described as a slow, invisible or gradual process “breaking into” the life of the believer.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Dictionary of Jesus and the Gospels*, IVP, 1992, “Kingdom of God,” p. 425.

<sup>2</sup> In the parable of the mustard seed, the *preaching* of the Kingdom is represented as a growing, spreading

For example, the coming of the Kingdom will be:

- like a fast-falling rock, crushing all other wicked kingdoms (Dan. 2:35, 44)
- like a fast-moving fire that will consume and bring to a sudden end all evil on earth (Zeph. 1:18)
- like the fast flash of lightning across the sky, (Luke 17:23-24)
- like the rush of the flood waters of Noah's day (Luke 17:20-28)
- like the sudden fire and brimstone of Sodom and Gomorrah (Luke 17:29-33)
- As a result, unbelievers will be caught off guard and the wicked speedily judged, because the Kingdom will be the Lord's (Obad. 21; 1Thess 5:3).

### Matthew 12:28

The previous verses outline the biblical glasses we need to wear in order to understand Jesus saying to his enemies, the Pharisees, "the Kingdom of God has come upon you" (Matt. 12:28; cp. Luke 11:20).

Here, Jesus is using Kingdom language as a foreshadowing and forewarning of the coming judgment.

Paul uses similar language in 1 Thessalonians 2:16 when he says "the wrath of God **has come**" upon the enemies of the Gospel (cp. 1 Cor. 10:11: "us on whom the ends of the ages have come"). Some refer to this type of biblical language as *prophetic past tense*.

### Luke 17:21

Another so-called "Kingdom now" proof text is Luke 17:21: "Nor will people say, 'Look, here it is' or 'There it is,' because the Kingdom of God is *in your midst*," KJV: "*within you*."

The saying about the Kingdom being "here" or "over there" is explained by the verses just after, describing the *future* arrival of the Son of Man.

- v. 22: "The time is coming when you **will** long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, **but you will not see it**."
- v. 23: "People **will** say to you, 'Look, there he is!' or 'Look, here he is!' but do not go running off or follow them."
- v. 24: "For just as the lightning flashes from one side of the sky to the other, so **will be** the Son of Man **in his day**."
- v. 26: "Just as it was in the days of Noah, **so it will be** in the **days of the Son of Man**."
- v. 30: "It **will be** just the same on the day the Son of Man will be revealed."

mustard seed (Matt. 13:31-32). Clearly the *preaching* of the Kingdom is not the same as the Kingdom itself.

In other words, Jesus is saying that when the Kingdom comes, it will be all over, worldwide, and not just a local event. As a result, you will not have to "look here or look there" because the Kingdom will be all over.<sup>3</sup>

### 3. The Kingdom According to John

Unlike the Synoptics, the writings of John generally refer to the Kingdom as "eternal life," properly translated "the life of the age to come." And John sometimes describes the "born again" person as in a sense already *having* that Kingdom life of the age to come even now.

#### John 5:24

"I am telling you the truth: whoever hears my word [Gospel] and believes Him who sent me **has** the life of the coming age and will not be condemned, but **has crossed over from death to life**."

The Canadian Baptist minister and theologian George Ladd noted, "It is noteworthy that in John eternal life is first mentioned after the only references in the Gospel to the Kingdom of God (3:15)."<sup>4</sup>

#### John 3:3, 36

"I am telling you the truth: unless someone is born again he cannot see the Kingdom of God."

"The person who believes in the Son **has** the life of the age to come."

John is using a biblical way of speaking of already *having* something promised for the future. For example, in John 17:5 Jesus asks the Father to "glorify me at your side with the glory I **had** with you before the world existed."

Yet, later in the same chapter Jesus says: "I **have given them** the glory you **have given me**" (v. 22). Note that when Jesus says, "I have given **them** the glory," he meant not only his Apostles but all Christians across all the ages, i.e., past, present and future!

We find that elsewhere in the gospels the word "glory" is another term for "Kingdom." In Mark 10:37 James and John petition Jesus: "Grant that one of us may sit at your right and one on your left in your **glory**." In Matthew's telling of the same story the mother of James and John asks Jesus, "Declare that these two sons of mine may sit, one on your right and the other at your left, in your **Kingdom**" (Matt. 20:21).

In Matthew 6:1, Jesus uses the idea of *having* something which is promised. He says that if we do

<sup>3</sup> See Dr. Richard Hiers, "The Kingdom of God is in the midst of you," *Focus on the Kingdom*, Dec. 2021 at [focusonthekingdom.org/magazine](http://focusonthekingdom.org/magazine)

<sup>4</sup> *A Theology of the New Testament*, p. 295.

good things only to be noticed by people, “you **have** no reward with your Father in heaven.”

The point is that the things which God has purposed and promised, even before the foundation of the world, are **as good as done** (*fait accompli*). Paul speaks of God’s “purpose and grace which was given to us in Messiah Jesus before the ages of time” (2 Tim. 1:9). God “speaks of things which are not as though they already are” (Rom. 4:17).

And elsewhere Paul describes the salvation of the elect and the Gospel message itself as predestined, preordained events:

“Those he predestined, he also called; and those he called, he also made right; and those he made right, he also glorified” (Rom. 8:30).

“He chose us in Messiah **before the foundation of the world**, to be holy and unblemished before Him. In love, He marked us out beforehand to be His sons and daughters through Jesus Messiah, according to the good purpose of His will...In him we were also made heirs, having been marked out beforehand according to the plan of the One who accomplishes all things according to the purpose of His will” (Eph. 1:4-11).

“We speak God’s **wisdom** [i.e. the Gospel message] in a now-revealed secret, the wisdom which had been hidden, which God predetermined before the ages for our glory” (1 Cor. 2:7).

Similarly, according to John, if you believe *that* Gospel of Jesus *you already have* the life of the age to come/Kingdom in promise.

#### 4. The Kingdom According to Paul

In Colossians 1:13 Paul says that God “rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the Kingdom of the Son whom He loves.”

As in the Gospels, the point here is that Christians have in a sense been removed from this present evil age by choosing the Kingdom lifestyle now. Paul alludes to this fact throughout Colossians 1:

“And so, since the day we heard this, we have not stopped praying for you. We are asking **that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will** in all **spiritual wisdom and understanding**, so that **you may conduct yourselves in a way worthy** of the Lord...You were once alienated and hostile in your minds, participating in evil activities. But **He has now reconciled you** through the death of His Son, to present you before Him **holy, faultless, and blameless**.”

And once again note the emphasis on the future:

“We heard about your faith in Messiah Jesus and your love for all the saints. This faith and love are based on **the hope stored up for you in heaven**. You heard

about **this hope in the word of the truth, that is, the Gospel**...[You must] remain in the faith, grounded and steadfast, without shifting away from **the hope promised in the Gospel** which you heard” (Col. 1:4-5, 23).

And let us also keep in mind that Paul said that humans as we are presently constituted, “flesh and blood **cannot inherit the Kingdom of God**” (1 Cor. 15:50). So we cannot be in the Kingdom now!

#### Romans 14:17

“For the Kingdom of God does not consist of food and drink, but righteousness, peace and joy in holy spirit.”

This verse is also about living a Kingdom lifestyle now. The context is about putting up with the weaker brethren among us in church. This requires strong Kingdom principles based on the fruits of the spirit, i.e., “righteousness, peace, and joy in holy spirit.” We could add that that Kingdom law is the “royal law” mentioned by James 2:8. That royal law is required of all of us *now*, if we hope to enter the future Kingdom when Jesus returns.

#### 5. Conclusion

The *Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels* is right to say: “The Kingdom is not present in any sense not reconcilable with the fact that it is also and mainly future. Jesus did not dissociate Himself from the traditional view that the end would come in the form of a catastrophic transformation, culminating in the Advent of Messiah Himself, who would come from heaven. [This final] destruction and reconstruction...would be the perfect establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.”

So it is highly misleading to ignore a mass of texts and focus on a few verses in support of a so-called “presence” of the Kingdom. It is systematically wrong to suggest that the Church *is* the Kingdom, or that Christians are in the process of “building” the Kingdom of God!

As Hans Kung warned: “There can be no question of identity (Church = kingdom of God), for the reign [Kingdom] of God according to the New Testament is the universal, final and definitive Kingdom (*basileia*). There can be no question of continuity (‘the Kingdom of God emerges from the Church’), for the reign of God is not the product of an organic development, of a process of maturation or interpenetration, but of a wholly new and unprepared action of God...So far from stressing identity, we should be concerned to stress the basic *difference between the Church and the reign of God*.”<sup>5</sup> ✧

<sup>5</sup> Hans Küng, *The Church*, 1968, p. 92.

## The Trinity and My Story

by Lewis Brague, New York

**M**y story is a somewhat common one. I attended an orthodox Protestant church where the pastor, the chairman of the deacons and I were affectionately referred to as “the three amigos.” We used to meet weekly for prayer and fellowship. One night, when the topic of the doctrine of the Holy Trinity came up, all that changed in an instant. I was accused of being a heretic and was told that all fellowship would cease and that the Lord’s Supper would not be offered to me or partaken of with me unless I repented of my heresy. Needless to say, this radically affected the dynamics of our relationship. I knew these men intimately, and I know that they are sincere and loving individuals. The pastor, a highly educated man, and I were best friends and this dissolution breaks my heart to this day. I do not condemn him or have negative feelings towards him. I know he is only doing what he feels is correct, and I continue to love him and pray for him.

The pastor was, and still is, a member of the International Church Council Project which, in 2003, was headed by, among many others, Dr. James Kennedy. I would like to quote from their statement entitled “Concerning the Trinity: Affirmations and Denials (Topic #8)”:

“It took **the careful scholars of the Church several hundred years** to clarify the accurate picture of God from the Bible, and we are indebted to them for working it out for posterity. For nearly 2000 years this doctrine of the Trinity and of God’s attributes has been believed by the Body of Christ in every century and is still considered to be necessary if one is to be truly saved and to be worshipping the one true God. We commend to the Church at large this statement on the Trinity to help her stay true to the historical and biblical position held by the Church for 2000 years, and to offer her theological clarification which may help her correct her wayward children. Thus we offer this one question as a simple test to let pastors and church members be able to tell if a pastor or layman friend of theirs is indeed a heretic who needs to be exhorted and re-trained. The correct answer is ‘yes,’ so a ‘no’ answer or an ‘I don’t know’ answer is a signal that that person is a ‘modalist’ heretic. ‘Does the one true God, the God of the Bible, exist as a Trinity of three Persons wherein all three Persons are fully God and possess all the attributes of God, but the Father is not the Son or the Spirit, the Son is not the Father or the Spirit, and the Spirit is neither the Father nor the Son?’ A true biblical and historical Trinitarian will answer ‘yes’ enthusiastically.”

So much could be written in response to the above, but I would like to come at things from a different angle. When Jesus states, “I ascend to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God” (John 20:17), it is my contention that Jesus is giving us a very clear presentation of who we are to consider as our God, namely the One who Jesus refers to as the Father. Since, according to Trinitarianism’s own definition, the Father is not the Son and not the Spirit, we are to consider the Father as our God and not the Son and not the Spirit.

When Trinitarian preachers and teachers state that the name of our God is Jesus, or that our God is the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, it is my contention that they are deviating from Jesus’ own definition of God (Mark 12:28-34) as well as the Apostles’ (1 Cor. 8:6; James 2:19). What we believe must line up with Scripture, and in my opinion there is simply not enough scriptural evidence in the Bible to proclaim the Trinity as doctrine and dogma. And there is certainly not enough evidence to proclaim it as something a person must believe about the identity of God in order for God to forgive that person of their sins and offer that person resurrection from the dead to eternal life. Of the 10 major sermons in the book of Acts, not one even mentions Trinitarian doctrine! How were thousands saved through the preaching of the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul if “the careful scholars of the Church” hadn’t yet clarified the accurate picture of God?

Philip said to Jesus, “Lord, show us the Father and it is enough for us,” and Jesus replied, “Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know me, Philip? He who has seen me has seen the Father; how do you say ‘Show us the Father’?” (John 14:8-9). Obviously Jesus was not saying to Philip that He (Jesus) *was* the Father. So what was He saying? He had already stated that He did only what He saw His Father doing (John 5:19) and spoke what His Father taught/instructed Him (John 8:28). Therefore it is entirely in keeping with the Scriptures to state that Jesus presented or personified or embodied the very words and works of the Father, who “alone is the true God” (John 17:3). For Philip to have been in the presence of the very words and works of the Father, he had, for all intents and purposes, been in the presence of the Father. On what other level should Philip have expected to be in the presence of the Father? No one has seen God at any time, and no one can see God and live (John 1:18, 1 John 4:12, Ex. 33:20). So, to repeat, when Philip was in the presence of the very words and works of God, he had, for all intents and purposes, been in the presence of God. However, and this must be reiterated immediately and with great emphasis, the Scriptures do not present Jesus as being Himself God any more than they present Him being Himself the Father.

Never once did the Apostle Peter ever re-define the identity of God to the Jews. The non-Jews, being mostly pagan, didn't even know the definition of God's identity (Acts 17:23), so the Apostle Paul would have had to go back one step further and define for them God's identity. Never once did the Apostle Paul ever define God's identity as being one God consisting of three Persons, nor did he or Peter ever present Jesus as being, among other things, the Lord God Almighty who became a human being, a man. But what is presented to the people is sufficient to convert them, in some instances, by the thousands (Acts 2:41; 4:4).

This argument should be sufficient to simply end the discussion/debate regarding the doctrine of the Holy Trinity. To continue to teach this doctrine is to go beyond the bounds of the Bible. It is to present a teaching which is unscriptural, and is certainly never presented in the Bible as a doctrine which must be believed to ensure a human being's safety from the wrath and judgment of God. ✧

## Jesus and the Eclipse of His Gospel about the Kingdom of God

From *Our Fathers Who Aren't in Heaven*, p. 341-348

**T**Hese quotations are, we think, a fair and salutary warning to all students of the Bible.

### Modern Christians misunderstand the Bible:

"The modern English Christian gives a meaning to the words of the New Testament different from that which was in the minds of the Jewish writers. Greek was the language they used to convey the universal Christian message, but their mode of thinking was to a large extent Hebraic. For a full understanding it is necessary for the modern Christian not only to study the Greek text, but to sense the Hebraic idea which the Jewish writers sought to convey in Greek words. I cannot claim to have become very skilled in this, but made enough progress to discover how greatly I had misinterpreted the Bible in the past. Like all ordained Christian ministers I had spoken dogmatically, authoritatively from a pulpit...and much of what I had said had been misleading."<sup>6</sup>

**In regard to scriptural teaching about the destiny of man, original biblical concepts have been substituted with ideas from Greek thinking and Gnosticism:**

"The hope of the early church centered on the resurrection of the Last Day. It is this which first calls

the dead into eternal life (1 Cor. 15; Phil. 3:21). This resurrection happens to the man and not only to the body. Paul speaks of the resurrection not 'of the body' but 'of the dead.' This understanding of the resurrection implicitly understands death as also affecting the whole man...*Thus [in traditional Christian teaching] the original Biblical concepts have been replaced by ideas from Hellenistic Gnostic dualism.* The New Testament idea of the resurrection which affects the whole man has had to give way to the immortality of the soul. The Last Day also loses its significance, for souls have received all that is decisively important long before this. Eschatological [forward-looking] tension is no longer strongly directed to the day of Jesus' Coming. *The difference between this and the Hope of the New Testament is very great.*"<sup>7</sup>

**Christian teaching was transformed. Messianic hopes were forgotten.** The notion of the Kingdom of God on earth disappeared. Immortality at death took the place of the resurrection into the Kingdom on earth:

"Like all concepts the meaning of religious terms is changed with a changing experience and a changing world view. Transplanted into the Greek world view, inevitably *the Christian teaching was modified — indeed transformed.* Questions which had never been asked came into the foreground and the Jewish pre-suppositions tended to disappear. Especially were *the Messianic hopes forgotten or transferred to a transcendent sphere beyond death.* When the empire became Christian in the fourth century, *the notion of a Kingdom of Christ on earth* to be introduced by a great struggle all but disappeared, remaining only as the faith of obscure groups. Immortality — the philosophical conception — took the place of the resurrection of the body. Nevertheless, the latter continues because of its presence in the primary sources, but it is no longer a determining factor, since its presupposition — *the Messianic Kingdom on earth — has been obscured.* As thus the background is changed from Jewish to Greek, so are the fundamental religious conceptions...We have thus a peculiar combination — *the religious doctrines of the Bible run through the forms of an alien philosophy.*"<sup>8</sup>

**Our creeds teach us to think in Gentile terms contrary to the New Testament:**

"The primary kinship of the New Testament is not with the Gentile environment, but rather with the Jewish heritage and environment...*We are often led by our traditional creeds and theology to think in terms of Gentile and especially Greek concepts.* We know that

<sup>6</sup> David Watson, *Christian Myth and Spiritual Reality*, Victor Gallancz, 1967, pp. 28, 29.

<sup>7</sup> Paul Althaus, *The Theology of Martin Luther*, pp. 413, 414.

<sup>8</sup> G.W. Knox, D.D., LL.D, professor of philosophy and the history of religion, Union Theological Seminary, New York, *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., Vol. 6, p. 284.

not later than the second century there began the systematic effort of the Apologists to show that the Christian faith perfected the best in Greek philosophy...A careful study of the New Testament must block any trend to regard the New Testament as a group of documents expressive of the Gentile mind. This book's kinship is primarily and overwhelmingly with Judaism and the Old Testament...*The New Testament speaks always of disapproval and usually with blunt denunciation of Gentile cults and philosophies.* It agrees essentially with the Jewish indictment of the pagan world...The modern Church often misunderstands its relation to the Old Testament and Israel, and often inclines to prefer the Greek attitude to the New Testament view."<sup>9</sup>

"The New Testament remains basically Jewish, not Greek — though Greek in language...and it can be understood only from the historical vantage point of the modified Judaism which provided the early church with its terminology and its whole frame of thought."<sup>10</sup>

**Christians do not understand the meaning of "Messiah" nor the vision of his Kingdom:**

"Christians have largely lost the sense of Jesus' Messiahship. *And they have largely lost the Messianic vision.* The Greek word 'Christos' means 'the anointed one' and is the literal translation of the Hebrew 'Mashiach' — Messiah...Christians who think or speak of Christ almost forget the Semitic word and the ideas which the name translates; in fact they forget that Jesus is primarily the Messiah. The very idea of Jesus' Messiahship has passed from their minds. Having lost the original sense of the word 'Christ,' many Christians have also lost the Messianic vision, i.e., the expectation of the divine future, the orientation towards *what is coming on earth* as the denouement of the present era of history."<sup>11</sup>

**"Heaven" is not what Jesus promised his followers, though Christians today constantly say it is:**

"Heaven as the future abode of the believers is [a conception] conspicuous by its absence from St. Paul's thought. The second coming is always from heaven alike in the earliest (1 Thess. 1:10) and the latest (Phil. 3:20) of Paul's letters...Possibly he so takes it for granted that believers will have their place in a

Messianic earthly Kingdom that he does not think it necessary to mention it."<sup>12</sup>

"Jesus was not thinking of a colorless and purely heavenly beyond, but pictured it to Himself as a state of things existing upon this earth — though of course a transfigured earth — and in His own land."<sup>13</sup>

**The entire Christian system, both Catholic and Protestant, is flawed by the mixing of the Bible with alien Greek ideas:**

"Our position is that the reinterpretation of Biblical theology in terms of the Greek philosophers has been both widespread throughout the centuries and everywhere destructive to the essence of the Christian faith...There have always been Jews who sought to make terms with the Gentile world, and it has in time meant the death of Judaism for all such. There have been Christians from the beginning who have sought to do this...*Neither Catholic nor Protestant theology is based on Biblical theology. In each case we have a domination of Christian theology by Greek thought.*"<sup>14</sup>

**While Protestants claim that the Bible is their authority, they have in fact accepted a Greek-influenced version of Christianity which abandons the Bible:**

"The difference is obvious between the mental patterns of the New Testament and most of our accustomed Christian thinking...The explanation of this contrast lies in the fact that *historic Christian thought in this regard, as in others, has been Greek rather than Hebrew.* Claiming to be founded on the Scripture, it has, as a matter of fact, *completely surrendered many scriptural frameworks of thinking* and has accepted the Greek counterparts instead."<sup>15</sup>

**The essentially political term Kingdom of God, Jesus' central theme, has been distorted in both the Church and academic circles:**

"For the Kingdom of God to have resulted in the crucifixion of Jesus, it must have carried political connotations that the governing authorities in Jerusalem considered dangerous. Astounding as it may seem, however, neither in the church nor in academic circles has the Kingdom of God been assigned the political significance its derivation and consequences demand. *Scholarly debate has largely ignored any overt political dimensions of the kingdom.*"<sup>16</sup> ✧

<sup>9</sup> F.V. Filson, *The New Testament Against Its Environment*, pp. 26, 27, 43.

<sup>10</sup> F.C. Grant, *Ancient Judaism and the New Testament*, p. 133.

<sup>11</sup> Lev Gillet, cited by Hugh Schonfield in *The Politics of God*, pp. 50, 51.

<sup>12</sup> "Heaven," *Dictionary of the Apostolic Church*, Vol. I, p. 531.

<sup>13</sup> W. Bousset, *Jesus*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1906, p. 82.

<sup>14</sup> N.H. Snaith, *The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament*, London: Epworth Press, 1955, pp. 187, 188.

<sup>15</sup> H.E. Fosdick, *A Guide to Understanding the Bible*, Harper Bros., 1938, p. 93.

<sup>16</sup> R.D. Kaylor, *Jesus the Prophet, His Vision of the Kingdom on Earth*, Westminster/John Knox Press, 1994, p. 70.

## Who God is was lost in a tragic confusion on how to count up to ONE!

The following information is largely not known to churchgoers and Bible readers. It will help you to understand the amazing grip the idea of God as a Trinity has on the minds of some of your friends and relatives.

I want to introduce you to a quotation from one of the three main architects of the idea that **God is three in one**. His name was Basil, known as the Great, and he lived in what today is Turkey. He lived from AD 330-379, and he made an amazingly instructive admission about the Trinity as a doctrine which has been claimed as essential for every professing Christian.

In Letter 8 of his writings Basil said this:

Christians “ought to confess that the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Ghost God, as they have been taught by the divine words, and by those who have understood them in **their highest sense**. Against those who cast it in our teeth that we are Tritheists [believers in three Gods], let it be answered that we confess one God **not in number but in nature**...God therefore is **not one in number**.”

In our times there is much argumentation about gender and pronouns! Arguments which a generation and more ago would have seemed to be sheer insanity are now heard on every side. Our forefathers wasted no time defining the difference between man and woman, between “he” and “she.” Everyone earlier needed no convincing that God had created mankind male and female, reenforcing the statement in Genesis 1:27: “God created mankind in His own image; in the divine image He created them; male and female He created them.”

Pronouns are essential parts of our daily communication. They bring clarity and intelligibility to what we all communicate. The Bible is full of pronouns, thousands of them, defining God as one “**He**,” one *single* Divine Person, one God and Father, one “who.” This is defined by Deuteronomy 6:4 and Mark 12:29 as “the greatest of all” the Bible propositions and instructions: “The Lord our God is **one Lord**.” Jesus, who was a Jew by descent and upbringing, was asked by a (on this occasion) friendly fellow Jew about what was the greatest, the *most* crucial and essential command of all the many commands God gives in Scripture. Jesus’ answer was that God is one “He” and “one LORD” (Mark 12:28-34).

It seems not to occur to millions of churchgoers to ask whether their church has taken to heart that greatest

of all commands, fully affirmed and emphasized by Jesus, whom we claim to follow!

**Back to Basil of Caesarea.** Basil, a convinced Trinitarian, was well aware that he and his “orthodox” believers were accused of believing in three Gods.

After all they *did* say, “The Father is God, the Son is God, and the Holy Spirit is God, and that makes one God”! Does it? Basil had this answer. He said that the “orthodox” were rightly defining God as one in **nature** and not one in number! Clever but not convincing! What about the Bible? What about Jesus’ own definition of God and who **He** (yes, “He”) is?

What Basil gave away was the secret of all the age-old confusion about God. My point is: the Bible defines God as one in **person**, one Father, and thus one in **number**. What these philosophically driven “church fathers” did was to alter the Bible language facts, and propose that God must be defined as one **in nature**. That is — God is one “what” and not one “who”!

This is the same sort of language confusion as “transgender” — irresponsibly playing with words. Why not stay with Jesus and believe him? ✧

### Online Theological Conference May 5-7

[www.focusonthekingdom.org/livestream](http://www.focusonthekingdom.org/livestream)

## Comments

• “Let me first say how grateful I am to you for the books you have written, all of which I think I have read and studied. It seems for most of my adulthood I have wandered in my religious life, seeking foundational Christian truths and answers to apparent contradictions and misinterpretations held by those purporting to be Christian. What did the earliest Christians really believe? I have even wandered in and out of the Worldwide Church of God. For a long time I was struck by what I called the ‘two-ness’ of God and also, finally, the 100% humanity of Jesus. You have helped to unlock that log-jam.” — *Virginia*

• “I just want to express appreciation for your teaching ministry. It has changed my life. I never was a Trinitarian but I have great respect for your work in that topic. It was finding the truth about the Gospel of the coming Kingdom that has been eye-opening for me, as well as understanding that water baptism was not optional. I am so grateful that I found your research. Of course, I believe the operational power of holy spirit led me to these studies.” — *Massachusetts*

• “I picked up your book *Our Fathers Who Aren’t in Heaven* in a secondhand bookshop. I find it so profound. I keep reading it and finding new truths.” — *email*