

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 26 No. 1

Anthony Buzzard, editor

October, 2023

A Plea for a Return to Biblical Repentance

Is Forgiveness Conditional?

by Barbara Buzzard

This is a surprisingly controversial subject. It appears that society has changed the ground rules and the requirements from what they used to be, when an offense occurs. No longer is the biblical model an absolute for rebuilding a fractured relationship. Our standards for forgiveness have so broadened that even in some “Christian” counseling, repentance is no longer required. That seems to defy the biblical model as seen in 2 Chronicles 7:14: “**If** My people...will humble themselves and pray and seek...and turn...**then** I will hear...and forgive.” And Jeremiah 9:5b: “They commit iniquity and are too weary to repent” (NRSV). Isaiah 1:27: “Zion will be redeemed by justice and those in her who **repent** by righteousness.” God *requires* a contrite heart. It is the only way He can work with us. There is no substitution. Beware substitutions for a broken heart. Biblically, repentance seems to be required and that is what is at the heart of this great divide, as society and even counselors advise, “Just move on.”

Cheap Forgiveness?

“God has an open door policy, but the door we go through is marked ‘Repentance.’”¹ Repentance is the price of entry. As in Matthew 3:8 we are to bring forth fruit in keeping with or worthy of repentance. However, many authors and counselors disagree. They maintain that one must forgive no matter what, and they argue that this is the Christian way. Those on the other side regard this as *cheap forgiveness* and stress that it bypasses the injury, as well as hampering a possibility of developing a healthy relationship. They feel that the absence of *moral disgust* on the part of the offender, which should precede repentance, is *dangerous*. They see forgiveness as being accomplished when the victim no longer has to hold the wrongdoer responsible for the injustice; the wrongdoer holds *himself* responsible. There is much at stake here — the future relationship.

Forgiveness does not equal reconciliation. Nor does it necessarily restore a relationship. Without remorse, we don’t even have the assurance of a temporary cease-fire. For example, if the offense is not

repented of, how can the victim know that it will not be repeated again and again? (Obviously, there are no guarantees and we all fail, but what is in question here is whether *the heart* of the violator is changed. Is it safe to reinstate a good relationship if the offender has not changed radically?) Trust must be rebuilt and it is a spirit of remorse that can do that. When the offender demonstrates that he understands and is disturbed by the harm he has caused; when he works to make repairs, it is then that one might find it safe to invite him back into one’s life.

More popular is a “not too much required” approach, with “move on” advice, a kind of quick “one size fits all” forgive and forget for all-comers. The other side says this “forgive and forget; get on with your life” philosophy is an insult, revealing a moral shakiness that is not what Scripture teaches.

No Substitutions Allowed

Repentance seems to be the key to God’s heart. There is a constant theme of repentance in the Scriptures. Repentance is mentioned ninety times in the Jerusalem Bible. God invites, even begs His people to repent. He specifically gives us time to repent: “Do you not realize that **God’s kindness is meant to lead you to repentance**? But by your hard and **impenitent** heart you are storing up wrath” (Rom. 2:4-5). And Jeremiah 3:13a employs the same theme: “Only acknowledge your guilt.” God gives us opportunity to humble *ourselves*. It is honesty of character that He is after. The true test of an individual is admitting and fixing his mistakes. Psalm 7:12 warns that if we do not repent, God will sharpen His sword, and Proverbs 28:13 contrasts those who conceal their sins with those who confess them. The latter will be the ones who receive mercy.

Revelation 3:19 exhorts us to be diligent and repent. Repentance will be redeeming (Isa. 1:27). “Sorrow without repentance is the kind that results in death” (2 Cor. 7:10b). “People who cover over their sins will not prosper. But if they confess and forsake them, they will receive mercy” (Prov. 28:13). Is it possible that society has substituted defiance for accountability and justification for penitence?

¹Henri Nouwen, *The Road to Peace*, 1998.

Genuine Forgiveness Requires a Transfer of Vigilance

“After a traumatic injury, you, the hurt party, are likely to become hyper-vigilant, patrolling the border between you and the offender, making sure you’ll never be violated or fooled again. You may live and breathe the injury, obsessed with its grubby details. The offender, in contrast, may want to repress, deny, or minimize his wrongful behavior. With Genuine Forgiveness, a profound shift in preoccupation takes place. You, the offender, demonstrate that you’re fully conscious of your transgression and intend never to repeat it. You, the hurt party, become less preoccupied with the injury and begin to let it go.”² Please note the interaction which takes place here. The offender acknowledges the full force of the violation. **Genuine forgiveness requires the offender’s involvement and participation.** (Obviously, there are exceptions, e.g. after the death of the offender.) However, this is exactly the opposite of what is often being advised; there seems to be an ethic in place to make both “sides” equal, i.e. there is no victim and no offender. This is, in my opinion, psychology gone mad, choosing not to do the honest work involved — naming wrongdoing for what it actually is.

There is an ancient Chinese proverb which says, “The beginning of wisdom is to call things by their right names.” We *do* have the violator and the violated. Tragically, people in our society do creepy and vicious things. Part of the work of a counselor would be to urge repentance, not to avoid the sin or to equate the two parties. Resorting to group hugs at the end of the day, failing true and honest counsel, in my opinion, is a fraud.

“To forgive sin under all circumstances, unconditionally, and to reconcile with the unrepentant offender communicates a false gospel. It is not biblical. This is not what God does, nor is it what He commands us to do. However, to be unforgiving of sins against us by others also communicates a false gospel. So what is a believer to do?”³

Face the Past for the Sake of the Future

“Genuine Forgiveness is not a pardon granted unilaterally by the hurt party. It’s a shared venture, an exchange between two people bound together by an interpersonal violation.”⁴ The author also makes the point that “Genuine Forgiveness must be earned. It comes with a price that the offender must be willing to

pay. In exchange, the hurt party must allow him to settle his debt.”⁵ This simple and biblical formula is what is needed to restore trust. The “move on” approach is in stark contrast to this. It can be used as an excuse never to face the issue. We face the past *for the sake of the future*.

“And if you have taken a wrong turning, then to go forward does not get you any nearer. If you are on the wrong road, progress means doing an about-turn and walking back to the right road; and in that case the man who turns back soonest is the most progressive man...Going back is the quickest way on.”⁶ This is against our nature, but is both biblical and smart.

God seems always to work through process, e.g. learning, growing, maturing. He doesn’t just hand us a finished product. This process must be completed. As with medical prescriptions which emphasize “take exactly as directed,” so too, God’s process or recipe must be followed precisely; a step cannot be removed or eliminated. The Scriptures give us clear, delineated steps as to what action to take with regard to the offense of a brother. (It is interesting to note that Dr. Laura and Dr. Phil include this step of repentance as a *necessity* for rebuilding relationships.) They seem even to maintain a stricter code of behavior than some Christian counselors. Is there not a possibility that we have so massaged and gentled what we don’t want to face that we have done damage to those seeking help and advice? And the process becomes ineffective, that vital ingredient of repentance being undervalued and passed over. “It seems that many today want to propose sin without consequences, morality without absolutes, forgiveness without repentance.”⁷

“Reconciliation should not occur until there is repentance.”

“*If forgiveness, fulfilled in reconciliation, is to occur, evil must repent with clarity and conviction.* Does this mean that if repentance does not occur, then forgiveness cannot be offered? *If forgiveness is defined as a continuing process* of hungering for restoration, revoking revenge, and offering good gifts, then we are to forgive until there is reconciliation. *But reconciliation should not occur until there is repentance.*”⁸ This view makes sense to me. There is a time and a place to move on, but *not* without this critical ingredient. Unless people speak the truth about what they have done and change their minds and their behavior, a relationship of trust is just not possible.

² Janis Abrahms, Ph.D., *How Can I Forgive You?* p. 122.

³ Dana Neel, “Forgiveness.”

⁴ *How Can I Forgive You?* p. 123.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

⁶ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, pp. 28, 29.

⁷ J. Gerald Harris, editorial, *The Christian Index*, May 16, 2013.

⁸ Dr. Dan B. Allender and Dr. Tremper Longman III, *Bold Love*.

Which is to say that forgiveness does not always restore trust. Nor will forgiveness necessarily bring reconciliation. Repentance is the key here. It can bring a regenerative power to the relationship. It is what God wants most from us. The negative side is this: “If one does not repent, God will sharpen His sword” (Ps. 7:12).

Consider this scenario: two young boys are fighting. One purposely lashes out and kicks the other. You interrupt the fight. The offender is still angry, the other boy hurt and crying. What would you require before you let them play together again? If you insisted on forgiveness without remorse, why would the boy who has been kicked want to invite the other boy back into his life? Perhaps too few people ask themselves this question: why would X (who I have grievously offended) want to have me back in his life?

The message of repentance was both the first message after Jesus’ baptism (Mark 1:15) and the last message to the church (Rev. 3:19), both messages of extreme importance. Repentance was the urgent message of all the prophets. Paul recognizes its significance: “Now I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because your grief led to repentance” (2 Cor. 7:9). Repentance pleases God, but it *heals* us. It is restorative and nutritious to our very souls. We don’t do God or the world much good without a broken heart, one of the after-effects of true sorrow. It is a gift we can offer to God and He readily accepts it as a hugely valuable token. “I reprove and discipline those whom I love. Be earnest, therefore, and repent” (Rev. 3:19). We deceive ourselves if we think there is any other way.

No Papering over the Offense

As seen in *People of the Lie*,⁹ a healthy sense of self-loathing is a good thing after an action which has caused hurt and pain. It can move a person to action, to a place of contrite humility. A very stern warning is given in Acts 28:27 with regard to the hardening of one’s heart, which prevents one from repenting and being healed. In today’s world this hardening of the heart happens when we justify and rationalize our actions. We deceive ourselves into thinking we behaved properly when, in fact, we have violated the human condition. The essence of repentance is just to *say* and *be* sorry — authentic, genuine words of sorrow may have a hugely healing effect. As everyone will have to bow the knee, so too everyone will have to say sorry, to acknowledge guilt. It is an emotional bill of life which must be paid. No papering over the offense, no excuses and no minimizing of damage. In speaking

of the Old Testament concept of restitution which accompanied some offenses: “Restitution can also instill true moral guilt in a person, which can lead to genuine repentance and a decision by the perpetrator to make different choices leading to a better life.”¹⁰

Life Lessons

“In truth, the mechanics of good apologies aren’t difficult to understand. A bad apology is cagey and ungenerous, an attempt to avoid taking full responsibility. Good apologies are about stepping up. The 12th-century [Jewish] sage Maimonides said that true repentance requires humility, remorse, forbearance, and reparation. Not much has changed since then. Basically, you must take ownership of the offense, even if it makes you uncomfortable. Name what you did, even if it makes you squirm...Acknowledge the impact of what you did...Make reparations...If you said something bone-headed, educate yourself about why your remark was offensive. And for heaven’s sake, never present yourself as the aggrieved party. You are not the hero of this story. That’s why you have to say, ‘I’m sorry that I did something hurtful,’ not ‘Sorry if you were hurt.’ A good apology means laying yourself bare. It means putting yourself in the other person’s position, giving [him or] her what [he or] she wants and needs. In short, it’s not about you.”¹¹ This is enormously valuable, practical advice. It is what works. And it is spot on — justifying our actions rather than repenting of them turns us into victims rather than offenders, and that is delusional thinking.

How are we to obey the command in Luke 3:8 and Acts 26:20 to show/bring forth fruits worthy of repentance without first recognizing the need for this first and most basic requirement? These Scriptures seem to say that true repentance is evident and visible, as the person displays a changed heart and an obvious desire to make things right. We must not lose sight of this in our rapidly changing world. We have been given guidelines: *there will be fruit* — fruit that is consistent with repentance. “Therefore produce fruit that proves your repentance” (Luke 3:8, NET).

“One of two things precedes forgiveness: the transgressor’s expression of remorse, or the victim’s embrace of life after damage.”¹² Hax and others maintain that there are two paths after a serious transgression occurs; either the transgressor is seriously remorseful (moral disgust at his own actions), or there is absence of remorse, with justification or playing the victim. Note that in the first scenario, the one damaged

⁹ M. Scott Peck, *People of the Lie*

¹⁰ Cal Thomas, “Restitution and Shaming,” *The Citizen*, Dec. 3, 2014.

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Carolyn Hax, columnist, *Washington Post*.

is invited to interact by virtue of the repentance of the other. Lives can be rebuilt and trust regained. In the second case the victim has no choice except to embrace life after damage. It is imperative that growth happens or this injury will steal joy, rule the spirit, and possibly devastate the future. God wastes nothing, not even pain, and His brilliant principle of bringing good out of evil will defeat an ugly situation.

Shabby Chic?

There is something beautiful about making amends. One cannot do it alone, and one does not desire justice *in order* to place blame on others but *so that* one can make amends. As stated earlier, it is an exchange between two people bound together by a violation. Without repentance, one holds up the reconciliation process; no resolution, no peace. Shabby chic is very popular in decorating, but in relationships and before God, I think not.

The Amish practice forgiveness by welcoming back a straying member, but always after confession. And the Jewish Day of Atonement is marked by confession and repentance. **Forgiveness implies the other party has already confessed to a sin.** Or this is what used to be the case. It is being altered and redefined. But is there any refuge or escape from confession? Would the story of the prodigal son be a part of Scripture had he not repented? (Note that the father did not even allow the son to finish his repentance before he forgave him, so eager he was to forgive. And so should we be *eager* to forgive and praying constantly toward that end.) The very compassion and mercy which have been extended to us — we must extend to others.

We hear much about closure and how important it is. It is repentance which can bring closure. The word “repentance” actually means change, and it is knowledge of that change of heart which allows friendship to be rekindled. A wife would be considered foolish if she were to forgive her husband for adultery while he was still engaging in it. It is only after the changing of his ways and the seeking of forgiveness that it can even be considered. Until there is repentance, the offense is ongoing.

We are all aware of heroic cases of forgiveness, when, for example, a little child has been murdered and the parent says that he forgives the murderer. It is not my intent to take anything away from these astonishing acts. However, that is not the focus of this inquiry. There are amazing resources available to help one with forgiveness: research councils, organizations devoted to help, a myriad of books and counseling materials. Forgiveness is a blessed action, an awesome and beautiful thing. We are allowed no revenge, no grudges, no bitterness. We shouldn't even keep a

record of the wrongs we suffered. We are not to hold on to hurts and wrongs. In fact, to be governed by the offenses done to one can be the very bait of Satan. I can think of no example, however, when a parent would sit down with the one who murdered their child *if* the murderer still harbored that intention in his heart.

There are two exceptional circumstances in Scripture where repentance is not specifically mentioned. Luke 23:34: “Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing.” And in Acts 7:60 Stephen asks that those stoning him be forgiven. Neither Jesus nor Stephen were overriding God's directive to repent, and the ones in these passages will have to repent as well. To say that those in question need not repent is unthinkable according to the scriptural prerequisites.

Repentance Is Clean-up

We are given the brilliant formula for achieving forgiveness in Matthew 6:12: “Forgive us our sins, just as we have forgiven those who have sinned against us.” And we also know that there is no end to our forgiving when our brother repents, with the illustration of the seventy times seven model (Luke 17:4; Matt. 18:22). We know that it was wicked of the servant in Matthew 18:28-33 not to forgive when he was asked. *But Biblically forgiveness always implies repentance.* “If another believer sins, rebuke him; then if he repents, forgive him” (Luke 17:3-4). To think that one is being generous or loving by ignoring repentance would be like building on top of the devastation after a tornado, without clean-up. Repentance is clean-up.

As in nature, soil must be broken up before it can produce a crop; grapes must be crushed before they can produce wine; clouds must burst before rain can come — so there are conditions which must be met when harm has been done. We must allow the LORD to define those terms.

One of the most effective prayers we can pray is to ask our Father to show us our sins, in order that we might repent of them. As with beautiful music, our ears require it to end on the right note; so too with conflict and peace. So too, our God has a requirement: “If I had not confessed the sin in my heart, the LORD would not have listened” (Ps. 66:18).

When we follow the Biblical model and petition the throne room of heaven, we are assured of forgiveness. How totally remarkable that God forgives, and even *forgets* our sins, that what He remembers is the blood

of His Son which enabled us to be forgiven.¹³ May our walk honor the One who made this possible and the Son who sacrificed his life so that we could be forgiven. ✧

Jesus' New Covenant

by Carlos Xavier

Many believe that Jesus had to keep the Law of Moses (the Old Covenant). Some believe that Jesus' death *was* the New Covenant. Many even believe that Jesus *kept* the Old Covenant while *teaching* the New Covenant. This is based partly on a misunderstanding of texts like Hebrews 9:17: "For a covenant is valid only when people are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives." In order to explain this text we must:

1. First, explain why other translations read "will" or "testament" instead of "covenant";
2. Second, go back to the Gospels to what Jesus himself did and said.

1. Will vs. Covenant

There are 2 main reasons why "covenant" is the right translation:

1. The first is context because "*Context is king!*" The Greek word *diatheke*, appearing almost 20 times throughout Hebrews alone, always means "covenant," either the first or new *covenant*;

2. History: In those days a *will/testament* could be given out before someone's death. We have a clear NT example in the parable of the prodigal son: "The younger one said to his father, 'Father, give me my share of the estate.' So he divided his property between them" (Luke 15:12).

Therefore, it makes better sense to read *covenant* instead of *will* in Hebrews 9:17.

2. What did Jesus do and say?

In his last Passover meal Jesus symbolically *ratified*, i.e., *confirmed* his New Covenant ministry by saying, "This is my blood **of the covenant**" (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24). "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is being poured out for many" (Luke 22:20). Jesus clearly means that the blood (his death) *ratifies* the New Covenant, and not that his death alone *is* the New Covenant. The fact is that any covenant consists of *words* and not just the shedding of blood, i.e., the death of the one who made it.

Later in Luke 22 Jesus says to the 12 Apostles: "I **covenant** to you, just as my Father **covenanted** to me, the Kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my Kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel."

The noted British theologian and minister G.B. Caird rightly noted that:

"The word translated *appoint* [by others] is really a verbal form of the word for *covenant*. As God has made a covenant with Jesus, entrusting the kingdom to his keeping...so Jesus in turn makes a covenant with the twelve and through them with the Church that is to be...They will exercise authority (*judging* has here its Old Testament sense of *ruling*)."

Howard Marshall agreed: "The language [of Luke 22:29] is that of a **covenant**...so that the saying has a **decisive significance in the establishment of the new covenant.**"¹⁴

Earlier in Luke 16:16 Jesus had said, "What was written in the Law of Moses and the prophets lasted **until** John the Baptist. **From then on** the Gospel about the Kingdom of God is being proclaimed." The point is that the New Covenant is *defined* by the preaching of the Gospel about the coming Kingdom of God on earth. And this New Covenant *began* with the ministry of *both* John the Baptist and Jesus (who Malachi prophesied as messengers of this covenant). So, it is their *words* that make up the new covenant. This means that the New Covenant did not *begin* when Jesus died (as is popularly believed and taught)!

The blood of Jesus, i.e., his death, is the *ratification* of the New Covenant because "forgiveness only comes through shedding of blood" (Heb. 9:22). The Hebrews writer later alludes to this Old Covenant precedent in Hebrews 9:18-22. I like the way the Contemporary English Version paraphrases Hebrews 9:22: "The Law says that almost everything must be sprinkled with blood, and no sins can be forgiven unless blood is offered."

Throughout the New Testament we see Jesus, the New Covenant messenger, practicing what he's preaching. For example, he went around healing *ritually* unclean Jews and even Gentiles (who the Jews by default considered "sinners"). And when accused of breaking the Sabbath, Jesus explicitly says in John 5:17: "To this very day My Father is working, and I too am working" — i.e., working on the Sabbath! The writer John goes on to say that Jesus was "breaking the Sabbath" in John 5:18.

Also, in Matthew 12 some of Jesus' followers are accused of breaking the Sabbath. Yet Jesus himself justifies their actions by comparing them to the Temple priests "who **break** the Sabbath **yet are innocent**":

"Haven't you read in the Law of Moses that the priests are allowed to work in the temple on the Sabbath? But no one says they are guilty of breaking the law of the Sabbath" (Matt. 12:5, CEV). Like Jesus,

¹³ Janie B. Cheaney, "Into the Depths of the Sea," *World*, Apr. 7, 2012.

¹⁴ I. Howard Marshall, *The Gospel of Luke*, p. 814-815.

his disciples were **not sinners** because they were no longer to be bound by the Old Covenant Law of Moses.

As any good teacher, Jesus expected his listening audience to do what he was saying, i.e., not to wait until after he died!

Matthew 7:24: “Everyone who hears these **words** of mine, and **obeys** them, is like a wise man...”

Luke 6:46: “Why do you call me, ‘lord, lord,’ and do not do what I **say**?”

With this evidence in mind, we can better understand the meaning of Hebrews 9:17: “For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never **in force** while the one who made it lives.” *Barnes’ Notes on the New Testament* says that the phrase “in force” means “is ratified, or confirmed, in the same way as a deed or compact is confirmed by affixing a seal.” So the covenant (which consists of *words*) is *ratified* by the death, and is not *ratified* while the one who made it lives.

The Hebrews writer goes on to prove this interpretation by using Moses and the first covenant as an example (Heb. 9:18-22). In Exodus 24 the blood of animals effectively *sealed, ratified* the covenant at Sinai. Yet, back in Exodus 19 after Moses first spoke the *words* of that covenant, the people all answered together, “All that the Lord has commanded we will do!” (Ex. 19:8). The point is that the blood later sprinkled *was not in and of itself* the covenant at Sinai, any more than Jesus’ blood *was* the New Covenant. Instead, each covenant consists of *words*, and the blood *ratifies* or *confirms* the covenant.

Here’s an analogy: The ratifying blood is like a signature on a document, but no one would put their signature on a blank document, i.e., a document without any *words*! Again, the blood simply represents the ratifying, i.e., the seal of the covenant that had *already* been established. In the case of the New Covenant, it was established by the *words* of both John and especially the Messiah, as Hebrews 9 repeatedly says:

16b “the death of the one who **made it** [the covenant]. **17b:** “while the one who **made it** [the covenant] lives.”

So we must ask the right question. Yes, Jesus was indeed born under the Law of Moses. He was circumcised and *before his ministry* kept the Sabbath, food laws, etc. But the question is: Did Jesus continue to keep the whole Law of Moses during his ministry? And did he keep the Old Covenant *while teaching the New Covenant*?! If so, then Jesus clearly was not practicing what he was preaching, and we suggest that this is an impossible view. Instead let us follow the

Messiah who was both modeling and teaching New Covenant Christianity! ✧

United by the Kingdom

The Bible from cover to cover is a Kingdom book. The Kingdom is the *whole* story, and the Kingdom provides the happy ending to the story. The Kingdom is the core of the Bible, and the Bible ends with the triumph of the Kingdom in a blaze of glory. In the end God wins, and true believers win with Him!

“The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth He has given to the children of men” (Ps. 115:16).

“He who overcomes will rule the nations” (Rev. 2:26). “Take charge of ten cities” (Luke 19:17). “Rule over many things” (Matt. 25:23).

“He announced that He would do mighty deeds for His people, giving them the inheritance of nations...How blessed is the one who fears the Lord...His descendants will be powerful on the earth...He raises the poor from the dirt to seat them with princes, with the princes of His people” (Ps. 111:6; 112:1-2; 113:7-8).

“Live in a way worthy of the God who is calling you into His own Kingdom and glory” (1 Thess. 2:12).

Once again the voices of distinguished commentators should be heeded, as they complain, as we do in this magazine, about a serious absence of understanding on the part of churchgoing Bible readers:

“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 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 day 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 the baptism on, his whole life was dedicated to the mission of announcing its approach and of calling men to prepare for entering it upon the conditions which by divine authority he announced.”¹⁵

“While the majority of Christendom has been in the habit of thinking of ‘heaven’ as the place for which the children of God are destined, Jesus makes the startling statement that the poor (‘meek’) are to possess the *earth*. This accords with the prophetic and apocalyptic traditions almost in their entirety...The kingdom of God *comes* from heaven to earth, and earth will be fitted to be the scene of such rule.”¹⁶

¹⁵F.C. Grant, “The Gospel of the Kingdom,” *Biblical World*, 1917, p. 129.

¹⁶G.R. Beasley-Murray, *Jesus and the Kingdom of God*, 1986, p. 163.

“I am calling your attention to this passage [Mark 1:14-15] because it is such a perfect summary of Christianity and what it stands for and what the message of the Gospel really is. And I do this, because there is, perhaps, nothing that is so sadly needed in this modern world as just to get a simple, direct, unvarnished statement as to what the Gospel is about. Indeed, this is to me the standing and almost perpetual problem. How does it come to pass that, with open Bibles before them, men and women should be wrong not so much about certain details with respect to the Gospel, but about the whole thing, about the very essence of the Gospel? It is quite understandable that there should be certain points, certain facets of truth about which people are not clear and about which there may be division of opinion. This Gospel is many-sided; it has many aspects, so that this is not surprising. But I do suggest that it is indeed very surprising that at the end of the twentieth century, men and women should still be all wrong about what the Gospel is; wrong about its foundation, wrong about its central message; wrong about its objective and wrong about the way in which one comes into relationship with it. And yet, that is the very position by which we are confronted at the present time.”¹⁷

“Most people have a wrong view of the Kingdom [and thus of the Gospel!]. We will not be floating around on clouds. The Kingdom will be a government, which will operate in perfect righteousness. There will be people in positions of authority who were faithful servants of Jesus Christ on earth. Just as a good worker gets a promotion, so Christ’s faithful stewards will get promotions in the kingdom. Some will manage ten cities.”¹⁸

“Everything in the Gospels points to the idea that life in the Kingdom of God in the Age to Come will be life on the earth — life transformed by the Kingdom of God when His people enter in their full blessing (Matt. 19:28).”¹⁹

“We shall dwell in these glorified bodies on the glorified earth. This is one of the great Christian doctrines that has been almost entirely forgotten and ignored. Unfortunately the Christian Church — I speak generally — does not believe this, and therefore does not teach it. It has lost its hope, and this explains why it spends most of its time in trying to improve life in this world...But something...remarkable is going to be true of us according to the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6:1-3: ‘Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the

saints? Do you not know that the saints will govern or rule the world?’ We are destined to rule, with Christ, over the world...This is Christianity. This is the truth by which the New Testament Christians lived. It was because of this that they were not afraid of their persecutors...They knew that this glory was coming. This was the secret of their endurance, their patience, and their triumphing over everything that was set against them.”²⁰ ✧

Comments

- “I am writing to express my sincere gratitude to you for your bold, yet gracious, biblical teaching, especially on the subject of unitarianism. It has been a tremendous comfort and affirmation for me. As I watched the documentary, ‘The Human Jesus’ and began listening to your audio-book on the Trinity, you have repeatedly confirmed what I myself have been thinking or saying to my wife over recent years. What a joy it has been to hear you teach the truth about the uniqueness of the one true God, with great clarity and conviction! Thank you so much for taking this bold stand against much opposition.” — *England*

- “I’m currently incarcerated in a Florida prison. I ran into a brother who introduced me to a few of your articles in *Focus on the Kingdom* and also the book *They Never Told Me This in Church!* I was taken aback by this profound teaching. And I thank God for revealing this to me sooner rather than later. And I’m hungry for more truth. Thank you all for opening the eyes of the blind and really restoring people to the truth.” — *Florida*

- “Last year, in June, I created the website <http://focusonthekingdom.eu> where all my translations of your works are. There are also a few articles of mine written for the local environment, which is quite specific: the Czechs are probably the most atheistic nation, and I was such a person myself. That is why I feel compassion for my fellow countrymen, and I am trying hard to help at least some of them. Since September 2021, I’ve been translating every issue of your magazine. Thank you especially for the opportunity to see a live broadcast of your gathering, including the Lord’s Supper. Your vitality speaks to me, an 81-year-old man, and I thank God for this miracle. Thank God and Jesus that you exist. May our Heavenly Father continue to protect you all, encourage you and give you energy for your work.” — *Czech Republic*

¹⁷Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *The Kingdom of God*, 1992, p. 8.

¹⁸Tony Evans, *The Kingdom Agenda*, 1999, p. 165.

¹⁹George Ladd, *A Theology of the New Testament*, 1974, p. 48.

²⁰Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Romans: Final Perseverance of the Saints*, 1976, pp. 72, 75, 76.