

Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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Pride?

by Tracy Zhykhovich, Minnesota

See the video "Should Christians Celebrate Pride Month?" at youtube.com/@KOGMissions

The Bible tells us that God hates pride: "The fear of the Lord is to hate evil; I hate arrogant pride and the evil way and perverse utterances" (Prov. 8:13). Not only does God hate pride and call it evil, but He says in Isaiah 13:11 that He will punish the wicked for their sin, and He will put an end to their pride and bring down the arrogant.

The world is uninformed about love, repentance, and obedience; and unfortunately many who claim to follow Jesus are uninformed as well, or worse yet, just don't say anything.

So in June you may have been asking, why all the rainbows? Well, the United States was supposedly celebrating "Pride month," showing support to the LGBTQ+ community, to those few (compared to the majority) who identify as something or someone other than who God created them to be. The government and schools claim that they are trying to raise awareness for these people's ongoing struggles and equal rights. The weird thing though is that in doing so, they are making others suffer and are taking away their rights (for example, if you are a girl who wants to excel in women's sports).

It may seem like there are a lot of these people, but the truth is, it is because the few voices are louder than the many silent ones. Many of these voices misrepresent Jesus and Bible, but those professing to be Christians either do not know God's truths on these matters, or they fear people more than they fear God.

Christians should not celebrate what the Bible condemns! And Christians should not tell lies just to be liked or keep their jobs. Being popular or accepted by this sinful world will not last. **Calling a boy she/her is a lie!**

So, as followers of Christ what should you do? Do you follow Christ or do you follow what others tell you to follow, or do you just follow what you want to do, or what is most comfortable? **We either endorse or condemn this madness, and silence often speaks louder than words.**

If we are claiming to follow Christ and love God, we must know where Christ is leading, and we must know what God loves and what He hates so that we can obey Him.

How should Christians respond to "pride month"?

Simply do not participate! Be willing to be made fun of because in the end your Heavenly Father has your back, rather than turning His on you. **You don't have to be mean**, but you can respectfully be honest. Don't conform and "show acceptance" by accepting what they celebrate as a valid option or waving a flag to show your support.

What does the Bible say about being LGBTQ+? Romans 1 says that it is ungodly, unrighteous, and detestable and that these passions are dishonorable, shameful, and unnatural. It says that people who practice these lifestyles have senseless hearts, depraved minds, and are fools, and they dishonor their bodies. It says that they have exchanged the truth of God for a **lie** and practice unnatural sexual relations.

And Romans 1 lists envy, murder, gossip, slanderers, the arrogant, and those who dishonor their parents too! It says that those who practice these things deserve to die, and not only them, **but those who approve what they practice!** (And no, I am not saying we should kill anybody.)

God, not culture, defines love and what is righteous and what is wicked. Romans 1 is quite clear, as are various passages in the Old Testament: You must not have sexual relations with a male as one has sexual relations with a woman. It is a detestable act.

Jesus taught us in Mark 7:20-23 that "What comes out of a person defiles him. For from inside, **out of the human heart**, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, evil, deceit, debauchery, envy, slander, pride, and foolishness. All these evils come from inside and defile people."

Back in Romans 1 it tells us that the heart becomes depraved like this when we exchange God's truths for the world's lies and choose to worship things that God created, rather than God Himself. When we do not glorify God and give Him thanks, our hearts and minds become darkened (Rom. 1:21, 25).

The Bible's definition of love does not mean accepting sin; it means pointing it out — speaking the truth in love, and love means correcting. That is why parents should not go along with the lies either.

Ephesians 6:4 tells parents that they should not provoke their children to anger, but they should **raise them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.** That is love and that is truly protecting one's child, not carrying a hand gun!

God gives all of humanity free will, but this does not mean everybody's choice is acceptable to Him.

Proverbs 16:18 tells us that "pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Psalms 59:12 says that people "speak sinful words, so let them be trapped by their own pride and by the curses and lies they speak."

We see that even though we have free will to do what we want, we will **pay the consequences** for our wrong choices; and when we are prideful we will be trapped by our sinful words.

Jesus said that anyone who hurts an innocent child, it would be better for them to have a rock tied around their neck and to be thrown into the sea. Today we see many people harming children, in little ways and in big ways. Telling lies to a child deserves a big rock, as does cutting off body parts, or tearing a baby out of his mother's womb.

Today's culture mocks God and His words, which means we will be mocked too if we speak or stand for His words. But Scripture says that God will not be mocked! (Gal. 6:7). So if you are mocking God or His children who stand up for and speak out for His righteousness, you'd better look out! Jesus said to seek God's Kingdom first, **and His righteousness!**

If we love people, we will share the identity that they can have in Christ, rather than encouraging them to find their identity elsewhere. If we find our identity in Christ, then we have true and meaningful acceptance and approval. Don't you think it matters more to be approved by the Almighty God and Creator of this universe who knows how many hairs are on your head and feels your pain and knows every tear that you cry, and who can bring dead people back to life, rather than the approval of people who don't really care about you or your needs or pain, and all they will do is bring death to you one way or another?

The media and many schools even mock sheltering children's innocence. Instead, they want to expose children to every kind of evil and desensitize them, making them think the shameful acts and a depraved mind are good and acceptable. They call good evil and evil good.

Genesis 1:27-28 says that "God created humankind in His own image; in the image of God He created them; male and female He created them. God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and multiply! Fill the earth and subdue it!'"

God is not some transgender God. **He** tells us throughout Scripture that His pronouns are **He/Him**, **not she/her** and **not They!** Jesus also told us that God was his Father (not Mother)!

We are told right in the beginning that God created **two** genders, male and female. God keeps it easy for us

who are mathematically deficient. He is one and alone God, and there are only **two** genders!

God blessed the man and the woman and called them good and He told them to make babies and fill the earth. He didn't tell them to kill babies off if they had other life plans.

He also told them to manage the earth and that the earth was given to them to use. The plants and animals were not created in God's image and they were not put in a position to rule over humans. Humans and their needs come first and because they rule, they ought to care for this gift. They were given responsibility right from the beginning.

So being a Christian — that is living in obedience to God and following what Jesus said — may bring persecution and suffering into your life. **But we are told to endure suffering, not avoid it.** We must not show acceptance of what God calls wickedness. We can respectfully disagree without hating other people. We can disagree and still love.

Young people, and all people, must know simple science (along with the simple math and grammar) that males and females are born with different anatomy. Please do not accept the lies, no matter how loudly people shout them. **At a cellular level, your DNA and chromosomes cannot change with make-up or surgeries!**

1 Thessalonians 5:22 warns us to "avoid every form of evil." **Sin should be mourned, not celebrated!**

1 Peter 4:4-16 reminds us that the world will be "shocked when you do not rush with them into the same flood of evil, and they malign you. **They will have to give an account before Jesus Christ** who stands ready to judge the living and the dead...The end of all things is approaching, so be clear-headed and self-controlled...Whoever speaks, speak God's words. Whoever serves, serve with the strength that God supplies, so that in everything God will be glorified through Jesus the Messiah. To Him belong the glory and the dominion forever. Amen.

"Dear friends, do not be shocked at the trial by fire that has come on you to test you, as though some strange thing were happening to you. **But rejoice to the extent that you share in the Messiah's sufferings**, so that at **the revelation of his glory [second coming]** you may also rejoice with the greatest joy. **If you are insulted for the name and agenda of the Messiah, you are blessed...**If you suffer for being a Christian, do not be ashamed, but glorify God by bearing that identity."✧

What Do I Really Believe? Are My Actions Rewardable?

by Jennie Wyeth, Australia

Firstly, I should establish what my hope is: To live with other Christian believers as immortals forever, with Jesus as our King, and then with Father God on a renewed and restored earth. I firmly believe that the now immortal Jesus walked obediently 2000 years ago, as the human begotten son of God the Father, and the virgin Mary. Jesus Christ is my example. For the penalty of all human sins, he took my punishment, even though he was innocent himself (John 3:16; Rom. 6:23). Jesus willingly died on a criminal's cross. For his life-long obedience, faithfulness, and ultimate suffering, leading to death, God raised him back to life. Weeks later Christ ascended into heaven and is with the Father. He is patiently waiting for the Father's timing, so that he can return and with the faithful saints sort out the extensive mess that humans have gotten themselves into.

God promised that a descendant of King David would rule as the one and only world King, from Jerusalem. Jesus is that prophesied descendant, even though the orthodox Jews still refuse to acknowledge this. Jesus will have a team of godly men and women to help him rule the world when he comes back (Is 2:1-4, 11:3b-9, Jer 3:17, Ezek. 43:7, Dan 7:14, Joel 3:17, Rev 2:27). Do I want to be in this team? (Rev 2:26, 1 Cor 6:2). Only those who understand the big picture can possibly have a part in the prophecies. So, how do I join with my heavenly Father and Jesus to see this as my personal reality?

1. Acknowledge that I have an inherent sinful nature, even when I try to be good and controlled. I, along with all the human race find that I am wretched and poor in this state, desperately needing God's mercy, grace, and help (Rev. 3:17-22).

2. Acknowledge that God can never dwell with sin and wickedness, that His nature is all light, and that darkness or even a shadow cannot live in His presence (Dan. 2:21). He was so disappointed, and I can hardly imagine just how heart-broken when Adam and Eve sinned, but God never wanted clones or robots either. Rather, He desired that humans would choose to obey him, or not (Rom. 7:24). Thankfully, Jesus was born as our second Adam. He succeeded when Adam failed.

If I choose God's way, then I kneel before him in repentance of all my mistakes, errors, and deliberate wrongdoings. He promises to forgive me and forget my past sins (Ps. 103:12). The Gospel is like a seed which must be sown in my heart, and then grow through much testing (Matt. 13:8; Acts 14:22). My ground must be

productive, so that I can produce a good crop. Then I acknowledge that He created the world and every living thing for food, my enjoyment and benefit (Gen. 1:29-31). I run my daily race and live each day in grateful thankfulness to my Father as if it is my last.

I am now a son or daughter of Father God, and an heir (Gal 3:26, Eph 5:8, 1 Tim 6:6, Rom 8:14-17).

3. I must be obedient and go through the waters of baptism to show both Father God and Jesus that I am committed to being obedient to the teachings of the Messiah (Acts 2:38, 22:16, Gal 3:27). That is, to live a godly life each day, led by the holy spirit, which is the operational power and presence of God Himself, just as Jesus did, and still does (Rom. 8:14, Gal. 5:18, Ps. 143:10, John 10:27, Heb. 5:9).

4. Understand that there are two resurrections. The first is about *rewards* and has nothing to do with sin and judgement. Jesus only returns with rewards at his second coming. These are given to each of us according to our work — that is, our deeds, actions, and accomplished tasks (Rev. 22:12; Luke 19:15; Matt. 25:19). Only the faithful believers are raised at this time, and they join with those obedient believers who are still alive at his coming. All these saints will reign with Jesus and assist in the restoration of the whole earth (Rev. 5:10; 20:5-6). Isaiah prophesied twice that military equipment will be melted into agricultural implements, fierce animals will lie down with the gentle ones, and there will be an end to wars and killing. Abortions will end!

The second resurrection a thousand years later is to do with *judgement*. At this time the wicked will be judged, along with those who had never heard of God or Jesus. *Every individual will be judged on what they could reasonably have known*. Many people will be given entrance into God's presence, even though they were not believers. Is my name still written in the Lamb's Book of Life? This question has eternal significance. King David cries in Ps 69:28, "May they be blotted out of the book of life [and their lives come to an end]. And may they not be recorded with the righteous (those in right standing with God). At the final judgement, those whose names are not found written in this book are thrown into the Lake of Fire, the second death. It seems clear that this is total annihilation, rather than any type of eternal torment (Rev 3:5, Ps 69:28, Rev 20:12-15, 21:27, Phil 4:3, Ex 32:33, Rev 3:4-5, Ps 9:5).

5. Which resurrection do I want to be in? The first, where the rewards are given out, or the second where every word I have ever uttered, and every action must be accounted for. If I choose the first, then, any past or

present-day words and actions must be systematically dealt with — every day. How do I do this? I must deliberately pray and ask God to remind me of my past and ask for forgiveness (God and human) and make restitution where I am able. Yes, Father forgives me, but what about those I have hurt and harmed? Restitution must be sought wherever possible (Heb. 4:12-16).

Then, I must learn today, and for each 24-hour period that I have left — whether I am 39 or 79 years of age — to use Jesus as my example, and to not say, nor do anything that I know is not godly (Heb 5:7-14, Rom 2:10).

6. God told Abraham to live a blameless life and promised him (in doing so), that he would be the father of many nations, obtain much land, and be exceedingly fruitful (Gen. 17:1). This did not mean that God said he had to be sinless, for he knew that was not possible, but God wanted Abraham to be without blame. There's a big difference. Job 1:1 says that Job was blameless as well. Until immortality, no one can be sinless, but to be blameless means to quickly acknowledge my mistakes and errors on the same day, if possible, to always be ready for the return of Jesus (I may die in the next hour). I must deal with them systematically. I must not leave my errors "undone" (1 Thess 5:23).

7. For each day that I have left, this should become my routine: systematically seeking God's will in everything I say and do (Phil 4:4-8, Rom 8:19).

What is my daily routine?

Is it godly?

What habits do I have that (I know) will not be acceptable in Jesus's kingdom?

Do I seek His will in dedicated prayer and daily reading of His word?

Do I consciously acknowledge Him, thanking God for nature all around me, the flora and fauna?

Do I experience God's mercy and grace to me as my day unfolds? (1 Thess. 5:18).

Have I found treasure (a pearl of great price), where being grateful and content in all circumstances is of utmost importance? (Phil 4:11).

How do I not lose heart when the chips are down?

When I lose someone dear to me, my health declines, or I can no longer afford to pay my bills, eat well, heat my home, or worse still, find myself with a roof over my head, how do I respond? The Apostle Paul experienced all this, and Jesus himself understood that often the animals have it better than humans.

It's a lot to think about. In closing, may we sincerely reflect and meditate on Matthew 13:12: "Whoever already has understanding, to them more

will be given, and they will have an abundance. But whoever does not have understanding, whatever they have will be taken away from them." This verse, along with the prior and following verses, describe what preparing for this Kingdom means for me personally, day in, day out. I should be asking myself, "Are my actions rewardable?" ✧

Revelation 13 and the Last Days

by Anthony Buzzard

None of us knows when Jesus will return, and it is futile to set dates. Each of us must be ready to meet the Messiah, because we could die at any time, and in our very next second of consciousness (though years may pass while we are "asleep" in the grave, Dan. 12:2) we will arise in resurrection at "the last trumpet" to face Jesus, the returning Messiah (1 Cor. 15:51-52). We must always be alert.

Paul explained to the Thessalonians (2 Thess. 2:3) that the coming of the lord Jesus cannot happen, however, until two important events occur:

- 1) the Apostasy, or falling away from true faith, and
- 2) the revealing of the Man of Sin, the Antichrist.

This sequence is clearly outlined in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12 and should be carefully studied. (Some systems of eschatology disturb the order given by Paul, and say that Jesus will gather the church *before* the arrival of the Man of Sin. This is a contradiction of Paul's warning.)

Revelation 13 is based on the vision given to Daniel in chapter 7. The four kingdoms seen by Daniel are said to arise at a time future to Daniel's vision (see Dan. 7:17: "four kings who **will arise**"). Since Nebuchadnezzar's Babylon was about to fall when Daniel saw the vision, and Medo-Persia was already in existence, it is hard to see how Daniel 7 could include those kingdoms. What's more, Jesus in Revelation 13 sees all four beasts of Daniel 7 as one composite beast, with ten horns and seven heads.

The characteristic of these seven heads is blasphemy (Rev. 13:1). The whole beast derives its strength from the dragon, whom Revelation 12:9 defines as the original serpent in Genesis 3, i.e., Satan, the Devil, who, be it noted, is deceiving the whole world. This beast has great ruling authority (13:2), and when the Bible says "great," it means great!

One of the heads of this political monstrosity is to suffer a mortal blow but recover miraculously and thus gain the enraptured attention and following of the whole world (13:3). This is Satan's attempt to parody the resurrection of Jesus. The Antichrist will be somehow "resurrected" and revealed (2 Thess. 2:3, 6,

8). This will be a hideous counterfeit of the Second Coming.

In 13:4 the world falls for the trick and worships the Antichrist as though he were God (“Who is like the beast?” cp. “Who is like God?”). He has great military power.

The Antichrist is also a great blasphemer and persecutor of the saints, and his power is to last 3½ years or 42 months (13:5). This time period is derived from Daniel 9:27, the 70th “seven” or 7 years, split into 2 halves of 3½ years each. At the midpoint of the 7 years the beast puts an end to sacrifices and sets up the Abomination of Desolation (Dan. 9:27; 7:25; 11:31; 12:11).

Jesus makes this event the signal for Judean Christians to flee to the mountains (Matt. 24:15) and he promises to return *immediately* after the ensuing period of Great Tribulation. From the sequence given by Jesus — the tribulation and *immediately after* it the second coming (Matt. 24:29) — we know he was speaking of events yet future.

In Revelation 13:9 we are cautioned to pay earnest attention to what God says through the spirit. (13:8 should be translated as the King James has it, showing that Jesus was “crucified before the foundation of the world,” in God’s plan, that is.)

Revelation 13:10 warns the saints to be non-violent. Christians have no place in the wars of this world, and the ones suffering during the tribulation will themselves be killed if they take up arms. So Peter was ordered by Jesus to “put your sword back into its sheath” (Matt. 26:52). It was Peter’s self-defensive sword which Jesus condemned. Christians are not to indulge in physical violence. They are to be non-violent as James says Jesus was (James 5:6).

In 13:11-15 we meet the Antichrist’s “Public Relations” man who canvasses support for him. (Note how the term “Beast” applies to both the kingdom and its leader.) The false prophet’s trump card is the power to work miracles, and the creation of an image of the beast. This reminds us of the breath which God breathed into Adam who was made in the image of God (Gen. 1:27). Clearly the Antichrist and false prophet are “playing God.” It seems that Satan himself has been doing this effectively for ages. He appears to have created a position as God the Son, the second member of a Trinity, a title never claimed by Jesus. Jesus called himself the Messiah, the Son of God (Matt. 16:16).

¹ See Assyria and the Assyrian in Isa. 10:5, 24; 10:27-11:4; cp. 2 Thess. 2:8; Isa. 30:27, 31, 33; 31:4, 8; 32:1-8; Mic. 5:4-7; Zech. 10:10-11. Note also Ezra 6:22 where Persia (Iran) is referred to as Assyria.

² The prophecy of the future may possibly begin as early in Daniel 11 as verse 5, leading to the appearance of

Jesus never claimed to be God. Paul says that the Antichrist (the beast) will claim to be God (2 Thess. 2:4).

False miracles are derived from Satan’s power, just as they were in the case of Pharaoh’s magicians. No magician unaided can turn water into blood on a large scale (Ex. 7:20-22), nor can he make frogs come up on the land (Ex. 8:7). The Man of Sin (Antichrist) will perform miracles, just as Jesus did, but the power will be Satan’s (2 Thess. 2:9). How much of this is already happening in the world?

Revelation 13:16 tells us that a mark will be given to people of all classes as a badge of allegiance to the beast. No commerce is possible without that mark. The mark seems to be the number of the Antichrist which is 666. The letters in Hebrew and Greek have numerical value and this will point to the identity of the Antichrist. Genesis 34:2 gives us a preview of this, when Shechem Ben Hamor, a pagan, raped Dinah, the virgin daughter of Israel (typifying the Church). The name Shechem Ben Hamor = 666 in Hebrew and he typifies the Antichrist. So does Goliath, whose spearhead weighed 600 shekels of iron; Goliath was 6 cubits high and had 6 pieces of armor (1 Sam. 17:4-7). Nebuchadnezzar’s image was 60 cubits high and 6 cubits broad. And man was created on the 6th day. Jesus’ name, however, adds up to 888 in Greek. And 8 is the number, apparently, of superabundance.

At some time in the future the foreseen events will begin to occur. Developments in the Middle East will lead to a 7-year alliance with an Assyrian Antichrist.¹ Jesus sees Daniel 11:31 as future (Matt. 24:15), as also Daniel 12:1 (Matt. 24:21). Paul views Daniel 11:36 as a picture of the Antichrist (**Isa. 11:4 = 2 Thess. 2:8**). So that final king cannot just be history!²

Revelation 13 should be studied in conjunction with Daniel 2, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, Matthew 24, 2 Thessalonians 2, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Minor Prophets, and Revelation 17. The substance of these visions presents a picture of a monster tyrant arising east/north of modern Israel (in Iraq or Iran or Syria?) whose alliance with a confederacy of 10 nations (Ps. 83) will be crushed by Jesus at his second coming (Ps. 2; Rev. 19-21). “Look,” said Jesus, “I have told you in advance” (Matt. 24:25). The wise Christian will acquaint himself thoroughly with Daniel and Revelation, as Jesus commanded (Matt. 24:15; Rev. 1:3). ✧

Antichrist in 11:21. The whole passage in Daniel 11:5-12:13 would then be a forecast of the future. The view that Daniel 11:5 forwards is prophecy was held by Dr. Samuel Tregelles (*Remarks on the Prophetic Visions in the Book of Daniel*), G.H. Lang (*Histories and Prophecies of Daniel*). See also the remarks on Daniel 11 in *Ellicott’s Commentary*.

Believing in the Style of Abraham

by Anthony Buzzard

There is a consensus among Christians that we are reckoned righteous by faith rather than by works of the law. But that consensus seems to break up when it comes to the matter of the content of faith. What must we believe to achieve that blessed condition of being “right with God”?

There is a large-scale ignorance of the Old Covenant Scriptures in the public mind. While Paul bases his Gospel and thus his recipe for faith on the Old Testament, most churchgoers do not. The crucial base of operations for Paul is Genesis 15:6, which he quotes in Romans 4:3 and again in Galatians 3:6: “Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as making him right.”³

Faith is believing. The Greek *pistis*, faith, is directly related to *pisteuo*, to believe. As a study of Romans 4:3 remarks, “Faith is neither a work nor an intuition, but persuasion of the promises as they are summed up in Christ.” (See extended quotes from that article in the first box on the next page.)⁴

Abraham believed God by taking Him at His word. He embraced the divine promises. This is also the Christian model of faith, since Abraham is “the father of all who believe” (Rom. 4:11) and “of all those who are of the faith of Abraham” (Rom. 4:16). Abraham was a Christian believer ahead of time (Gal. 3:8). It follows that the knowledge of God is mediated through His word/promise. Apart from God’s revelation of His intention in His word, faith is impossible. Only when God spoke did He cease to be the unknown God, and only when Abraham believed what God said did the patriarch gain the status of being right with God.

The content of Abraham’s faith is defined by the promises of which he became persuaded. Firstly, he was to be the progenitor of a multitude of descendants — the **posterity** promise (Gen. 15:5; 17:4-5). Secondly Abraham laid hold of the **property** promise, the future permanent inheritance of the land both for himself and for his descendants (Gen. 12:7; 15:7; 17:8). Paul alludes to the promise of the land forever in Romans 4:13, where the land is expanded to include the whole world. Thirdly there is the **prosperity** promise, universal blessing through Abraham and his spiritual descendants.

Abraham’s willingness to be persuaded, i.e. to become a believer, by his acceptance of the divine Plan

is the paradigm of Christian faith. The promises have not changed, because the Gospel was preached ahead of time to Abraham (Gal. 3:8) and Jesus came to confirm the promises made to the patriarchs (Rom. 15:8). “The objects of his [Abraham’s] faith, both personal and propositional, are **the same** for the New Testament believers present and future.”⁵ Thus the loss of the posterity, property, and prosperity promises constitutes a threat to the Gospel itself. Christians believe in Christ, but a Christ inextricably bound up with and defined by the promises made to Abraham.

It comes as a shock to some to learn that Abraham’s faith in the divine covenantal promises and faith in Christ are essentially the same. At present this fundamentally important truth is often obscured by the pious sounding but misleading argument that Abraham believed in God rather than the promise itself; that he clung to the God who had promised rather than to what had been promised. This is a false dichotomy which tends to deprive faith of its biblical content and leaves the believer constructing his own version of the faith, as a feeling, an intuition, a desire for goodness, etc. At that point “faith” ceases to be true faith and relapses into human works.

Biblical faith is impossible in the absence of an understanding of God’s covenant propositions: His desire to bless His children with life forever in the land, which in the New Testament is alternatively called the Kingdom of God. “Blessed are the meek,” says Jesus, echoing the Abrahamic property-promise, “for they will have the land as their possession” (Matt. 5:5; cp. Ps. 37:11). Equally he can vary his terminology by stating that *the Kingdom* is to belong to them one day (Luke 12:32).

Faith is never to be divorced from believing and being persuaded in regard to the *word* of God to Abraham, “the **word** about the Kingdom” of Jesus’ famous parable (Matt. 13:19). The seed of rebirth, in fact, is that seed-word of the Kingdom, the saving Gospel which the believer allows to take root in his heart, just as Abraham embraced the divine word of promise.

Across the pages of Scripture God grants His favor to those who believe what He says. This is to treat God as the great truth-teller, and this alone brings about a condition of right standing before God. There is more to believing than just the acceptance of the death and resurrection of Jesus. There is the vital matter of the property/land promise which forms the basis of the Christian covenant. ✧

³ Also quoted in James 2:23.

⁴ Richard Holst, “The Meaning of ‘Abraham Believed God’ in Romans 4:3,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 59 (1997), p. 319.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 324.

Faith = Abraham Believed God

“For Paul, faith is neither a work nor an intuition, but **persuasion of the promises** as they are summed up in Christ. Compare Ernst Kasemann’s observation that ‘faith is neither a virtue, a religious attitude, nor an experience. It is faith by hearing. It enters into the promise of salvation and becomes obedient to it’...

“The general proposition that Abraham believed the promises demands closer analysis — which promises, in fact? **Certainly, Paul is not thinking of promises in general but those of the Abrahamic covenant...**

1. The promise of a numerous **posterity [Progeny]**
2. The land-inheritance promise [**Property**]
3. The promise of universal blessing [**Prosperity**]

“Is Abraham’s faith, then, the paradigm of Christian faith? Is he [Paul] actually saying that faith in Jesus is the same as faith in the promises? According to D.J. Hooper, ‘the objects of his [Abraham’s] faith, both personal and propositional, are **the same for New Testament believers present and future.**’...He is saying not only that Abraham is a paradigm of believers but that his *faith* is a paradigm of Christian faith...

“Paul sees Christ as the guarantee or confirmation of God’s promises... ‘in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs’ (Rom. 15:8). **Abraham’s faith in the promises and faith in Christ are essentially the same...**Christ is God’s ‘Yes’ to the promises (2 Cor. 1:20)...The climax of the covenant consists not in Christ’s first advent but his second.”

Richard Holst, “The Meaning of ‘Abraham believed God’ in Romans 4:3,” *Westminster Theological Journal* 59, 1997, p. 319-326

Comments

• “As has been the case for many years, in fact, since you first sent me your magazine (quite possibly, since you first produced it!), it is received with great joy and anticipation! I have just finished reading my July issue, received a few hours ago, and have copied a few printings of it, and will take one to a relative of mine who looks forward, herself, to your so priceless help in the understanding of the Scriptures! We are incredibly blessed by God to be recipients of your help.” — *Canada*

• “Thanks for July’s magazine. I just want to thank you for all the years you have dedicated to the Lord’s work. I am amazed at your unwaning passion and humility. As you may know, I ‘chanced’ on your ministry after years of praying to God to grant me an understanding of his ways. Did he answer my prayers? Yes, he did! I’m always grateful for the Sunday Church

Bible study online. I always pray that our Father continues to sustain you and all other like-minded ministries.” — *England*

• “Thank you for all the teachings I have seen on YouTube. You confirmed so much that I believed, but was so far out of the mainstream.” — *Tennessee*

Immortality

“Immortal means death-proof. To believe in the immortality of the soul is to believe that though ‘John Brown’s body lies a-moldering in the grave, his soul goes marching on’ simply because marching on is the nature of souls just the way producing apples is the nature of apple trees. Bodies die, but souls don’t.

“True or false, **this is not the biblical view, although many who ought to know better assume it is.** The biblical view differs in several significant ways:

1. As someone has put it, the biblical understanding of man is not that he *has* a body but that he *is* a body. When God made Adam, he did it by slapping some mud together to make a body and then breathing some breath into it to make a living soul. Thus the body and soul which make up a man are as inextricably part and parcel of each other as the leaves and flames that make up a bonfire. When you kick the bucket, you kick it one hundred per cent. All of you. There is nothing left to go marching on with.

2. The idea that the body dies and the soul doesn’t is an idea which implies that the body is something rather gross and embarrassing like a case of hemorrhoids. The Greeks spoke of it as the prison house of the soul...The Bible, on the other hand, sees the body in particular and the material world in general as a good and glorious invention. How could it be otherwise when it was invented by a good and glorious God?

3. Those who believe in the immortality of the soul believe that life after death is as natural a function of man as digestion after a meal. The Bible instead speaks of resurrection. It is entirely unnatural. Man does not go on living beyond the grave because that’s how he is made. Rather, he goes to his grave as dead as a doornail and is given his life back again by God (i.e., resurrected) just as he was given it by God in the first place...

4. All the major Christian creeds affirm belief in resurrection *of the body*. In other words they affirm the belief that what God, in spite of everything, prizes enough to bring back to life is not just some disembodied echo of a human being but a new and revised version of all the things which made him the particular human being he was.”

Frederick Buechner, *Wishful Thinking: A Theological ABC*, 1973, p. 41-43.