

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 27 No. 6

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March, 2025

Online Theological Conference
April 11-13, 2025
See theologicalconference.org

Singularity The Tower of Babel Revisited: Satan's Promise of Immortality

by Terry Anderson, Minnesota

From the beginning Satan has wanted to be like God, and if he couldn't do that, then he wanted to destroy everything that God made. We get a glimpse into past eons of God's creation in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. These are amazing chapters that give us a look into what happened in the spiritual realm prior to the creation of mankind. The limits placed on Satan by God determine how fast Satan can bring about destruction of the Creation. From the time of Babel mankind's technological advance has been extremely slow. But in the last 100 years (about 2% of the time of man's existence on earth) there has been an explosion of knowledge, and in particular, the last 50 years (less than 1% of man's existence). This was predicted to occur when God declared, at the **Tower of Babel**, that "nothing that man could imagine would be withheld from him" (Gen. 11:6).

It has only been in the last 20 years that technology has brought us to the brink of "godhood." And what is the evidence of this? Moore's Law describes the exponential increase in computational capacity. It states that the number of transistors that can be placed on a chip doubles every 2 years. If you go back to the beginning of the computer age (the 60's), and use that as a starting point, the increase in computing power has increased by 10 to the 10th power or greater. That's 10 with 10 zeros behind it (100,000,000,000). That's 100 billion times the power of a computer that used to take up a room and now can be put on a handheld device. In 1959 a DEC PDP-1 computer could carry out about 100,000 operations per second. By 2023 a Google Cloud A3 virtual machine could carry out roughly 26,000,000,000,000,000 (quintillion) operations per second (Ray Kurzweil, *The Singularity is Nearer*, p. 15).

Christianity Today wrote about **Artificial Intelligence (AI)** in October, 2023: "Artificial intelligence — machines trained on massive data sets that allow them to simulate behaviors like visual

perception, speech recognition, and decision making — is ubiquitous. It already steers autonomous vehicles and autocorrects text messages. It can spot lesions in mammograms and track wildfires. It can help governments surveil their citizens and propagate deepfake images and videos. No surprise that it can also pass the bar exam and write a screenplay."

Elon Musk made this observation even in 2018: "The pace of progress in artificial intelligence is incredibly fast...You have no idea how fast — it is growing at a pace close to exponential."

In an article in the *Wall Street Journal* on November 16, 2024, entitled "A Powerful AI Breakthrough Is About to Transform the World," author Christopher Mims states, "the AI revolution is about to spread way beyond chatbots. From new plastic-eating bacteria and cancer cures to robots and self-driving cars, the generative-AI technology that gained prominence as the engine of Chat GPT is poised to change our lives in ways that make talking bots look like mere distractions."

Singularity is the concept of melding the brain of man with Artificial Intelligence to create a superhuman. I'm saying "brain" because we are talking about the organic coupling of brain tissue to Artificial Intelligence. This superhuman would have almost godlike qualities with the possibility of living for hundreds of years, not unlike mankind before the Flood. Not only could this superhuman live an extended life (longer than God's ordained 3 score and 10), but this human could have access to trillions of bits of information that we now have to access the internet to read. His/her brain could access all this information instantaneously.

It seems like a week doesn't go by that I don't read something about **AI** and its advancement toward reality. Ray Kurzweil is a scientist/futurist and has written a number of books including *The Singularity is Near* and *The Singularity is Nearer*. He writes in *The Singularity is Nearer* (2024): "A key capability in the 2030's will be to connect the upper ranges of the neocortices [part of the brain] to the cloud, which will directly extend our thinking. In this way, rather than AI being a competitor, it will become an extension of ourselves" (p. 9).

Satan wants mankind, and especially the "elites," to believe that they can thwart death and control their futures. **AI** may very well be the vehicle that will enable man to escape death and live the **lie** — "God

knows that you will not die, but your eyes will be open and you will understand good and evil, and be like God” (Gen. 3:4-5). This is **Satan’s promise to mankind of immortality**.

But you might say that living to 900 is not immortality, and you’d be correct. But the vision of Singularity is a constant increase in knowledge to the point that mankind could rid itself of death, disease and poverty. If this could be done, then Satan could convince man that indeed he had escaped the fear of death and attained immortality.

The big question is: how close will God allow us to get to that point, and is it another indication of how close we might actually be to the end of the age? God has always had Satan on a rope. Satan can only do what God allows him to do. As we get closer and closer to the “end,” God will loosen His grip and give Satan more latitude to influence man in ways we never would have contemplated even 100 years ago, considering the advance of technology. I repeat what I wrote in my first paragraph concerning the **Tower of Babel**: God said that whatever man could think up or envision would *not be held from him!* Satan knows this and will use it against man’s best interests in getting him to believe in a **promise of immortality**.

I realize that what I am presenting here involves some speculation, but just imagine if we could extend lifespans, solve our most pressing disease problems and eliminate poverty. And also imagine the potential of AI to fulfill the prophecy in Revelation concerning the Mark of the Beast. What if you could accomplish all of these promises with a simple visit to your favorite clinic. An outpatient visit to insert an interactive device the size of a grain of salt or smaller up through your nose could give you extended life, free from disease and connected to all the knowledge accumulated in the past 6000 years. If you weren’t really grounded in God’s Scripture and committed to it you might very well accept the offer.

We are told to watch (Luke 21:36). I wonder how those in the days of Jesus were to watch? There was no universal means of gathering information. You could watch your neighbors or maybe even what was happening in your town. But information spread slowly at best. And even then it wasn’t so much a matter of watching as it was hearing. Now we have the ability and technology to hear and watch instantly through the “miracle of the internet” and television. In fact, we are so bombarded by information that we are sometimes forced to turn off these sources to maintain our sanity.

God disrupted the technological advancement of mankind by dividing the earth’s population through languages. They became confused and unable to communicate. Consider that we have come full circle from the **Tower** to an **AI** world that has given us the

capability to instantly communicate with just about anyone and any language on earth via instant voice translation apps on our phones. Speak in English and you can communicate in Chinese or Italian or many other languages.

We have never had an opportunity to link prophecy to reality as we are now experiencing, and this will only accelerate as **Artificial Intelligence** becomes widely accepted and incorporated into our everyday lifestyles. Since it seems to be in the news daily, it won’t be difficult to keep an eye on the progress as we continue to **watch** always and pray that we may have the strength to escape all these things that are coming upon the earth. So **keep your eye on AI**. ✧

John 1:1 in 50+ Translations

by Anthony Buzzard

The opening verses of the Gospel of John have proven to be, unfortunately, a veritable battleground and storm center of theological argument. Translators have often edited John to make him fit much later systems of theology. John had never heard of the “Trinity,” the mystifying proposition that God is one and yet three. Jesus knew nothing of that teaching. Jesus was a Jew and he publicly affirmed, as the greatest of all the commandments, the central, cardinal creed of his Jewish heritage. Every Jew was required to recite daily the immortal words of Deuteronomy 6:4: “Listen, Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord.” Jesus never departed one iota from that Jewish creed. Judaism has always had a unitarian creed (unitarian means that God is one Person only) and Jesus made that creed the basis of his own teaching. He repeated the words of Deuteronomy 6:4 in conversation with a colleague Jew who had asked him about the rock-foundation of true religion. You will find this interchange between Jesus and a theologian in Mark 12:28-34.

Since Jesus believed in the one Person who is God, as prescribed by the Hebrew Bible and affirmed in the New Testament, it would make sense that followers of Jesus would join him in confessing the creed which Jesus confessed. It is a tragedy of our times that churchgoers have been taught a different creed. And they have been catechized to recite this different creed on pain of excommunication and various “anathemas.” The so-called Trinitarian creed which underlies, as a sort of constitution, the work of most Protestant churches proposes that God is three-in-one. Church members have often not given this creed much attention. If anyone challenges it, they will tend to become defensive, not because they really know what

it says or how it developed, but because the massive weight of tradition backs it.

Jesus' Creed vs. The Churches' Creeds

Jesus delivered stern warnings to the churches of his day, the synagogues of Judaism, that tradition can be a menace to real spirituality. Protestants ostensibly stand for the principle of private investigation and for Scripture as being the only binding power for the believer.

One of the most illuminating exercises a churchgoer can carry out is a personal search for the God of the Bible and a biblical definition of Jesus. It was not until the 4th century, at the Council of Nicea, that a number of bishops convened and decided on the creed held by Roman Catholic and many Protestant churches to this day. That creed of Nicea declared that Jesus was "very God of very God," begotten before all ages. In a very fierce postscript to the creed, the bishops "anathematized," i.e. pronounced a sentence of damnation on anyone who did not agree to the formula of "orthodox" belief.

They seemed not too troubled that Jesus could not have signed that creed. Jesus was a unitarian, reciting the unitarian creed of Judaism. Jesus never made the claim to *be* God Himself, but always deferred to his Father as the One God of Israel and of all creation. Jesus' confession ruled out any hint of God being three in one. When uttering a solemn prayer towards the close of his ministry, he referred to the essence of salvation as knowing "You, Father, the only one who is truly God, and Jesus Christ whom You commissioned" (John 17:1, 3).

The Origin of the Son of God

Matthew and Luke provide crystal clear accounts of the origin of the Son of God. Luke and Matthew could not by any stretch of imagination have underwritten the creed hammered out at Nicea in 325 AD. Luke reports the words of Gabriel who announced the basis on which the title Son of God was to be applied to Jesus. It was "for that reason expressly (*διο kai*) that the holy one being begotten will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). For what reason? The miracle of new creation by which the One God fashioned and formed in Mary His own uniquely begotten Son. Matthew speaks with equally transparent words of the genesis or origin of Jesus: "That which is **begotten in her** will be from holy spirit" (Matt. 1:20). It is a creative act of God which brings into existence the Son of God, a unique human being without a human father.

The creed of Nicea had long lost the simplicity of the original faith. After centuries of futile argumentation, and borrowing heavily on alien

philosophical language and categories to express themselves (why was not the language of Scripture adequate?), the "fathers" of the church pushed back the origin of the Son into eternity past and thus fashioned an essentially non-human person, who did not originate in the womb of his mother as all real human beings do (Adam and Eve were necessary exceptions).

Appealing to John 1

At the end of their official declaration the bishops at Nicea declared as "beyond the pale" and unfit for salvation any who would say that the Son did *not* exist before he came into existence. To be "right" one had to agree that the Son existed before he came into existence! What this means exactly, let every church member ponder deeply. There is everything to be gained by examining why we believe the things we believe. Do you think that the Son "existed before he came into existence"? Can you explain why you do or don't? These are reasonable questions since the witness and confession of Matthew and Luke have declared with simplicity that the Son did *not* exist before he was brought into existence in the womb of a virgin. To beget is to "cause to come into existence." Since the Son was begotten, it is impossible for him not to have a beginning of existence. Yet the creed said otherwise. It forced on an unsuspecting public the impossible notion that one can exist and still come into existence.

Overlooking the plain accounts of the origin of the Son in history, the churches made an appeal to the opening verses of John. They managed there to contradict the witness of Matthew and Luke and present the reader apparently with a second eternal Person alongside the Father — which of course makes two Gods. This fatal move was achieved by first putting, incorrectly, a capital letter on "word" (*logos*) making it look like a second Person, "Word." Having altered the meaning of "word," the next move was to refer to the word not as "it," but as "him." The Greek word *logos* had appeared in the Old Testament some 1500 times and never was "word" a person, but always an utterance, command, promise, decree, etc. This is also its meaning at the opening of John's gospel, where he draws a parallel between the Genesis creation through the word and the New Creation which occurred when God's word, promise, design, intention and plan became a human being, Jesus Christ. There was no Son of God until he began to exist in the womb of Mary.

Better Translations

Happily there are some 50 translations of the Bible which reflect the original meaning of the text either by not capitalizing "word" as "Word" to turn it into a second divine Person, or by using the pronoun "it" for the word, rather than "him." Others have creative

paraphrases for “word” and suggest the Intelligent Design of God one day to produce a Son who would be the center of God’s immortality program.

If you had been reading the English Bibles which appeared before the King James Version of 1611 you would have been introduced to God’s grand design, or word, His master-plan which later in history became the man Messiah Jesus, Son of God.

We begin with the translation of William Tyndale, martyred for his efforts to get the Bible to the public.

Before the King James Version (1534-1611)

“In the begynnyng was the worde, and the worde was with God, and the worde was god. The same was in the begynnyng with god. All thinges were made **by it**, and **without it**, was made nothyng that was made. **In it** was lyfe, and the lyfe was the lyght of men, and the lyght shyneth in the darcknes but the darcknes comprehended it not” (William Tyndale, *The New Testament*, 1534).

“In the begynnyng was the worde, and the worde was with God, and God was the worde. The same was in the begynnyng with God. All thinges were made by the same, and without **the same** was made nothyng that was made. In him was the life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shyneth in the darknesse, and the darknesse comprehended it not” (Miles Coverdale, *Biblia: The Byble, that is, the holy Scripture of the Olde and New Testament, faythfully translated into Englyshe*, 1535).

“In the begynnyng was the worde, and the word was with God, and the worde was God. The same was in the begynnyng wyth God. All thynges were made **by it** and **without it** was made nothyng that was made. **In it** was lyfe, and the lyfe was the lyght of men, and the lyght shyneth in the darknes, but the darknes comprehended it not” (Matthews’ Bible, *The Byble, that is to saye, all the holy Scripture: in whych are contayned the olde and new Testamente, truly and purely translated into English, and nowe lately with greate industry and diligence recognised*. London: John Daye and William Seres, 1537).

“In the begynnyng was the worde, and the worde was wyth God; and God was the worde. The same was in the begynnyng wyth God. All thinges were made **by it**, and **wyouthout it**, was made nothyng that was made. **In it** was lyfe, and the lyfe was the lyght of men, and the lyght shyneth in darcknes, and the darcknes comprehended it not” (Great Bible, *The Byble in Englyshe, that is to saye the Content of al the holy Scripture, both of the olde, and newe Testament*, London: Edward Whitchurche, 1539).

“In the begynnyng was the worde, and the word was with God, and God was the worde. The same was in the begynnyng with God. All thynges were made **by**

it, and wythoute **it** was made nothyng that was made. **In it** was lyfe, and the lyfe was the lyght of men, and the lyght shyneth in darkenes, and the darkenes comprehended it not” (Richard Taverner, *The Epistles and Gospelles with a brief Postyl upon the same*. London: Richard Bankes, 1540).

“In the beginning was the word, and the worde was with God, and that worde was God. The same was in the begynnyng with God. Althinges were made **by it**, and **without it** was made nothing that was made. **In it** was lyfe, and the lyfe was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkeness, and the darknes comprehended it not” (William Whittingham, *The Newe Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Conferred Diligently with the Greke, and Best Approved Translation*, Geneva: Conrad Badius, 1557).

“In the beginning was the Worde, and the Worde was with God and that Worde was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made **by it**, and **without it** was made nothing that was made. **In it** was lif, and the lif was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darkenes, and the darkenes comprehended it not” (Geneva Bible, *The Bible and Holy Scriptures conteyned in the Olde and Newe Testament*, Geneva: Rouland Hall, 1560).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and God was that Word. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made **by it**, and **without it**, was made nothing that was made. **In it** was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in the darknesse, and the darknesse comprehendeth it not” (Bishops’ Bible, *The Holie Bible*, London: Richard Jugges, 1568).

“In the beginning was that Word, and that Word was with God, and that Word was God. This same was in the beginning with God. All things were made **by it**, and **without it** was made nothing that was made. **In it** was life, and that life was the light of men. And that light shineth in the darknes, and the darknesse comprehended it not” (Lawrence Tomson, *The New Testament of Our Lord Jesus Christ, Translated out of Greeke by Theod. Beza*, London: Robert Barker, 1607).

After the KJV (1611-2002): A Selection

“Before the Creation of the World, **Reason** did exist, for **Reason was then in God**; indeed was God himself, it not being possible for God to be without it. Reason, I say, did exist in God before the Creation of the World, every portion of which was created with the greatest Reason; nor can any thing be produc’d that has been made **without it**” (John LeClerc, *The Harmony of the Evangelists*, London: Samuel Buckley, 1701).

“In the beginning was **Wisdom**, and Wisdom was with God, and Wisdom was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made **by it**, and

without it was nothing made” (Gilbert Wakefield, *A Translation of the New Testament*, London: Philanthropic Press, 1791).

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This was in the beginning with God. All things were made **by it**, and **without it** not a single creature was made. **In it** was life, and the life was the light of men” (Alexander Campbell, *The Sacred Writings of the Apostles and Evangelists of Jesus Christ, Commonly Styled the New Testament, Translated from the Original Greek*, Buffalo, Brooke County, VA: Alexander Campbell, 1826).

“**The Love Thought** was the beginning. In the very beginning **it** was with the Father of Love and **it** was the Father of Love. All things were made **by the Love Thought** and **without it** was not anything made that ever was made. **In it** was Life and the Life was the Light of men” (Dwight Goddard, *The Good News of a Spiritual Realm*, New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1916).

“In the Beginning there existed the **Divine Reason**, and the **Divine Reason** was with God, and the **Divine Reason** was God. This **Divine Reason** at the Beginning was in closest relation with God. Through the Divine Reason all things came into being; and **apart therefrom** there was not brought into being even a single thing which has come to exist. **In the Divine Reason** there subsisted Life; and that Life was the spiritual Light of mankind” (G.W. Wade, *The Documents of the New Testament Translated and Historically Arranged with Critical Introductions*, London: Thomas Murby, 1934).

“In the beginning was **the plan of Yahweh**, and the plan was with Yahweh, and the plan was Yahweh’s. The same plan was in the beginning with Yahweh. All things were done **according to it**, and **without it** nothing was done, that was done. **In this plan** was life, and that life was the light to mankind” (Yisrayl Hawkins, *The Book of Yahweh: The Holy Scriptures*, Abilene: House of Yahweh, 1987).

“In the beginning there was **the divine word and wisdom**. **The divine word and wisdom** was there with God, and **it was what God was**. **It was** there with God, from the beginning. Everything came to be **by means of it**; nothing that exists came to be without **its agency**. **In it** was life, and this life was the light of humanity” (Robert J. Miller, *The Complete Gospels: Annotated Scholars Version*, Sonoma, CA: Polebridge Press, 1992).

“In the beginning was **the message**, and the message was directed toward God, and ‘God’ the message was. The same one was directed toward God in the beginning. **Through it**, all things were done. And **without it** nothing was done. What has been done **in it** was life. And the life was the Light of humanity”

(Frank Daniels, *The Four Gospels: A Non-Ecclesiastical New Testament*, 1996).

“Nothing but God, and **all that He means**, existed in the beginning of absolutely everything. There was no possible way to separate God from **His meaning, for only by His meaning can He be identified as God. God’s intentions and purposes existed with Him from the very beginning of everything**. God, through **His intentions and purposes**, created everything that has, or has had, existence in all of time” (B.E. Junkins, *A Fresh Parenthetical Version of the New Testament*, New York: University Press of America, 2002).

See more translations after the KJV at focusonthe kingdom.org/articles

The following article originally appeared in the May, 2005 issue of *Focus on the Kingdom*:

Ignoring the Words of Jesus by Paul Fiorilla

Ignoring the words of Jesus has led to the introduction of tragic error into orthodox Christian theology, as readers of this newsletter well know. Reducing Jesus’ words to window dressing before his all-important death has an equally insidious effect on the behavior of people who call themselves Christians.

This point was hammered home to me recently while sitting in church listening to yet another sermon about how the world has “gone to hell in a hand basket.” The pastor asserted that people are by and large more immoral than they were at some unspecified time in the past. He bemoaned the evaporation of societal “shame,” which in better times served to modify the behavior of potential sinners. And moving on to politics, he spoke out against the lack of moral fiber in our elected leaders, which — after hearing the sniggering from the audience — I realized was a coded reference to the gay sex scandal that prompted the resignation of New Jersey Governor James McGreevey.

Anyone who attends an evangelical church or listens to mainstream Christian media is bombarded with the notion that the world is a more immoral place than it was in the past. And it is getting worse all the time. I’ve heard this so much since I began attending evangelical churches some 35 years ago that my brain normally lets it pass by without notice, chalking it up to simpleminded generic pining for the “good old days.”

But in truth such grumbling is not a harmless pastime, not among Christians, who have been commanded by God to cast aside their human nature and follow the example of Christ. Not only are the ideas wrong, and therefore promoting untruths, but the attitudes involved contradict the attitude and actions of Jesus, who should be our example.

Biblical support for the idea that the world will grow gradually worse often comes from quoting 1 Timothy chapter 3, in which Paul declares that there will be “terrible times” in the “last days,” and lists a litany of sins that people will commit in such times. But it is far from clear that Paul was referring to any particular year in this current generation, as many would believe.

The idea also is contradicted by any rational review of history. When was this magical time when people were “better” than they are today? Was it earlier this century, when good Christians in the southern U.S. used to pack lunches on their way to lynchings? Was it the last century, when men killed each other by the tens of thousands in the Civil War? Was it in centuries past when Protestants and Catholics warred in Europe, when reading the Bible was illegal and John Calvin burned heretics? Was it during the Crusades? Was it in the Middle Ages when people converted to Christianity at the point of a sword? Was it in antiquity when much of the populace was enslaved and many religions had official prostitutes?

A new and growing trend among evangelical Christians is a sense of outrage at being slighted by secular culture. Christians across the country have sprung into action to fight the use of the greeting “Happy Holidays” at stores and parades rather than “Merry Christmas.” Not only is there rich irony in protesting the commercialization of Christmas by demanding that religious symbols be exhibited at shopping malls, but it is impossible to imagine that Jesus would have had the same lust for power and entitlement. Jesus lived in a society that was truly oppressive — after all, he and 11 of his disciples were executed for their faith. But he did not resent his situation, and told his followers to cooperate with the hated Romans.

The pining for better times goes hand in hand with the frequent call for the return to a societal shame in an effort to prevent immoral behavior. While this may sound good, rarely is it explained how exactly this shame would be resurrected. Do we prosecute doctors that perform abortions? Do we spit at single mothers or label their children as bastards?

The bottom line is, whatever the details, such shame mongering is completely contrary to the actions of Jesus. Confronted with those accused of immoral behavior by the good religious people in his society,

Jesus displayed a profound sense of love and mercy. He freed the woman accused of adultery, and spoke respectfully to the woman at the well, as much to her surprise as that of his closest followers. In those cases and others, Jesus clearly felt a closer bond to the sinner than the “pious.” And he repeatedly warned against judging others, saying that God would measure mercy toward individuals as much as they doled it out to others. One could imagine Jesus responding to the call for shaming by reciting the story of the Pharisee at the temple who thanked God that he did not act like the sinners. The evangelical church of today seems often more interested in recreating the behavior of the Pharisee than reproducing the attitude of Jesus.

The disconnect between church behavior and Jesus’ words is most clear with the issue of war and peace. Evangelical churches in the U.S. today are by and large nationalistic and militaristic, and public polls would indicate that most people who call themselves Christians support the war in Iraq. It is clear that many Christians are more offended by a homosexual act than they are by the senseless slaughter and/or torture of tens of thousands of civilians in Iraq.

But this does not reflect the ideals of Jesus, who spoke frequently about nonviolence. The meek will inherit the earth. The peacemakers will be called the sons of God. Love your enemies. Do not resist those who aim to harm you (a principle which he followed to his death). Now it can be logically argued that a nation is better off not adhering to nonviolent principles. But that can never be the Christian principle, because Jesus calls us to be like him, not the world.

Reviewing two books about Iraq in the *New York Review of Books*, senior war correspondent Chris Hedges describes war in profound terms: “The vanquished know the essence of war — death. They grasp that war is necrophilia. They see that war is a state of almost pure sin with its goals of hatred and destruction. They know how war fosters alienation, leads inevitably to nihilism, and is a turning away from the sanctity and preservation of life.”

The bottom line is that the church takes on the characteristics of its teaching. If people are taught that the most important aspects of Jesus’ life are his birth, death and resurrection — and not *his words* — they will certainly fail to follow his instructions and the example of the life he lived. That leaves an almost incomprehensible situation in which millions of people claim the name of Jesus, yet act completely contrary to the lifestyle he both espoused and lived.

“Not everyone who says ‘Lord, Lord’...” ✧

Through the Wilderness to the Promised Land

N.T. Wright on **Ephesians 1:11-14**:

“It’s the new Exodus, the new inheritance; and the new wilderness wandering. As often in his writings, [Paul] sees the church in the present age as doing again what Israel did in the desert: coming out of the slavery of sin through God’s great action in Jesus the Messiah, and on the way to the new promised land.

“But what is this new promised land? What is the promised inheritance?

“The standard Christian answer for many years and in many traditions has been: ‘Heaven.’ Heaven, it has been thought, is the place to which we are going. Great books like John Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress* have been written in which the happy ending, rather than an inheritance suddenly received from a relative, is the hero reaching the end of this worldly life and going off to share the life of heaven. **But that isn’t what Paul says, here or elsewhere.**

“The inheritance he has in mind, so it appears from the present passage and the whole chapter, is the whole world, when it’s been renewed by a fresh act of God’s power and love. Paul has already said in verse 10 that God’s plan in the Messiah is to sum up everything in heaven and earth. God, after all, is the creator; **he has no interest in leaving earth to rot and making do for all eternity with only one half of the original creation.** God intends to flood the whole cosmos, heaven and earth together, with his presence and grace, and when that happens the new world that results, in which Jesus himself will be the central figure, is to be the ‘inheritance’ for which Jesus’ people are longing.

“At the moment, therefore, the people who in this life have come to know and trust God in Jesus are to be the signs to the rest of the world that this glorious future is on the way. Equally, the sign that they themselves have received which guarantees them their future is the holy spirit. The spirit is to the Christian and the church what the cloud and fire were in the wilderness: the powerful, personal presence of the living God, holy and not to be taken lightly, leading and guiding the often muddled and rebellious people to their inheritance” (N.T. Wright, *Paul for Everyone: The Prison Letters*, 2004, p. 12-13).

Why not stop talking of “heaven” and start speaking rather of the coming *Kingdom*? ✧

Jesus Was a Biblical Unitarian!

John 17:3 describes Jesus as praying to “the only true God.” Jesus was a biblical unitarian, who agreed with a fellow Jew about what was called the “greatest of all the commandments.” This is found in a fascinating passage in Mark 12:29. A modern commentary, entitled *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, gives us a very fine observation on John 17:3. It reads:

“That God is ‘the only true God’ (17:3) is affirmed supremely in the Shema: ‘Hear, O Israel: the LORD our God, the LORD is one’ (Deut. 6:4; cf. John 5:44; 1 Thess. 1:9; 1 John 5:20). **Jesus, in turn, is the exclusive agent, sole authorized representative of this one true God;** he is the God-sent Messiah, God’s anointed one, the Christ. Just as there is only one true God, so also there is only one way to the Father: Jesus Christ” (Beale and Carson, *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*, 2007, p. 243).

It is easy to see that Jesus in John 17:3 was a unitarian believer in the one and only true God of Israel, the Father. Why then are Jesus’ followers not in harmony with him? Ought not the followers of Jesus to have the same understanding of who God is as Jesus had?

Comments

• “Thanks for the February edition. I’m also grateful to the contributors, Carlos and Tracy. I find a great deal of comfort from the comments section, as some of them express my sentiments.” — *England*

• “I am a Brazilian Christian and a unitarian for 15 years. However, I only ‘came out’ about six years ago, and since then, I have faced many retaliations from Trinitarians. In the city where I live, there are no unitarian churches in my region — nor, in fact, in Brazil as a whole. Brazilian Christians are predominantly Trinitarian. I sincerely appreciate your time, and please know that here in Brazil, you have a great admirer! May the Eternal always bless you!” — *Brazil*

• “I used to attend a local church in our village which my parents introduced me to at a very tender age. After many years I came to realize that many leaders at the church were not interested in serving God in truth and righteousness, but were rather after their personal interests and gains. They had also abandoned the truth and replaced it with the false doctrine. One day miraculously and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, while I was doing my usual studies I came across your website which was teaching majorly about the kingdom of God.” — *Kenya*