

# Focus on the Kingdom

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Anthony Buzzard, editor

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## What Do People “Do” When They Die?

by Anne Mbeke

### “Man is without conscious existence in death.”<sup>1</sup>

I recently went through an experience that opened my eyes to the issue of the “sleep of the dead” in a way I had not imagined possible. My doctor said I had to undergo surgery to remove some uterine tumors that were growing too fast and too big and threatening other functions in my body. I must say I went to the hospital on that morning with great trepidation. I was not sure how this was going to turn out. I had been warned or as they say “informed” of possible complications, including death! Now, I’m not a brave person — not by a long shot! I was very nervous, though I managed to conceal this very well at the time. I kept thinking, suppose this was it? What if I did not make it back? What if something went wrong...I realized then how desperately I wanted to live and not die! To make matters worse, my surgeon had an emergency that required her to travel out of the country on the day of my surgery! Some confidence I got, knowing that she would not even be around by the time I “came back”!

Well, to cut a long story short, I’m writing this paper, so things could not have gone so badly! But the point of it is, when they administered anesthesia, I had no clue —the last thing I remember is saying that I was cold, and someone putting a warm blanket over me. Almost five hours later, I woke up and had a lot of pain. However, it was as if perhaps just a fraction of a second had transpired, and not a whole five hours! In fact, if it had been a thousand years between my last conscious thought and the point of waking up, it still would not have meant anything to me. I only remember that it was evening when I was wheeled into the recovery room, while my last “awake” moment had been mid-morning. My fears were only real to me then because I had conscious knowledge of the procedure before it was initiated. But I felt nothing, knew nothing, feared nothing, and even suspected nothing because I was not conscious!

### No Knowledge at Death

So, what does this all mean? I must say I was comforted in knowing that we truly “rest” when we sleep/die. I did not die, but the process I underwent is that

of shutting down all consciousness through anesthesia, while the surgery is performed. It is the deepest sleep I have ever had, and probably the closest I’ll ever get to the sleep of the dead before the real thing! There is no more thought, no pain, no worry, nothing. I could no more share in the process of the removal of the tumors than I could in the conversation that must have taken place during this surgery, even if I wanted to. Why not? Because I was completely out of it, and my fate was in the hands of the anesthesiologist whom I was told stayed with the surgeons throughout the process, just to monitor and make sure I stayed out of it. For this I paid a handsome amount of money because my life was literally in his hands.

The writer of Ecclesiastes states, “For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten. Indeed their love, their hate and their zeal have already perished, and they will no longer have a share in all that is done under the sun” (Ecc. 9:5, 6). This verse obviously rules out one of the many deceptive expressions that people use when one dies — “he has gone to his reward” — wrongfully implying that man receives his reward at death. In a sense, this expression would be true, if by it is understood the fact that the next moment of consciousness after death will be the resurrection, the point at which believers will be rewarded. Unfortunately the proponents of this misconception are not thinking in this way. They eliminated or changed the reward/promise to mean “going to heaven” instead of inheriting the land/earth as was first promised to Abraham.<sup>2</sup> So, with a twisted understanding of what the reward is, how can they know where it is to be found?

I agree that “It is impossible to explain the Christian religion without clarifying the meaning of the term Kingdom of God.”<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately not many preachers have invested their time and energy in explaining this. It is no wonder that a lot of well-meaning and sincere Christians are stuck with the notion that when one dies, he goes to heaven to receive his reward! It is amazingly simple, yet I must say that I too grew up with the same “going to heaven” preaching. But when I took the time to study the Scripture for myself, I began to realize that I did not have the correct picture of man’s destiny, and

<sup>1</sup> Alva G. Huffer, *Systematic Theology*, Oregon, IL: The Restitution Herald, 1960, p. 155.

<sup>2</sup> Genesis 12:1; 13:15; 17:6-8; Acts 7:5.

<sup>3</sup> Anthony F. Buzzard, *Our Fathers Who Aren’t in Heaven*, Restoration Fellowship, 1999, p. 51.

consequently what dead people do — i.e. *nothing!* Only Christ has the authority given him by God to do something for the dead — resurrect them at his Second Coming.

“Behold, I am coming quickly, and my reward is with me, to render to every man according to what he has done” (Rev. 22:12). This implies that the reward will be given at Christ’s Second Coming. In any case, one cannot receive a reward at death because as Alva Huffer correctly says, “To receive a reward, one must have knowledge. The dead, however, are unconscious.”<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the writer of Hebrews makes it clear that no one has received the reward yet, not even the patriarch saints of the Old Testament: “All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth” (Heb. 11:13). This promise/reward is not allotted to individuals when they die, but rather it will be conferred to all believers at the Second Coming. The Psalmist says, “The dead do not praise the LORD, nor do any who go down into silence” (Ps. 115:17). I imagine the excitement when the reward/promise is unveiled and awarded to the believers — it seems almost inevitable that there will be great rejoicing and praise, and celebration and shouting! The Psalmist reminds us that the dead cannot do this! The prophet Isaiah also says, “For Sheol cannot thank You, death cannot praise You; those who go down to the pit cannot hope for Your faithfulness” (Isa. 38:13). Resurrection, therefore, is the only way that those who die/sleep/go down to the pit or grave or Sheol or Hades can hope for God’s faithfulness. Again, the “heroes of faith” recorded in Hebrews would not have had to wait for their reward if this was conferred at death. We are informed of this by the writer of Hebrews: “And all these, having gained approval through their faith, did not receive what was promised, because God had provided something better for us, so that apart from us they would not be made perfect” (Heb. 11:39, 40). Believers being made perfect means having immortality awarded to them at resurrection. Christ is the “perfecter” of our faith. Why? Because he is the **first fruits** among all who sleep, and the first sample of an immortalized human being. God promises the same future life to all who fear him, for “we shall be like Christ,” the apostle John says. This means we shall be resurrected to immortality like Christ is. This is what many of our church fathers call “Conditional Immortality” — awarded on condition that one meets the requirements of the Kingdom.

During my surgery, I could not make any contribution to anything even if I willed it hard enough. I

had no visions or dreams of any sort while in this state of “nothingness.” It is like power being turned off — only it was for just a few hours. Georgia Power can decide to turn off the main power supply, so that no amount of switching on of individual power switches in homes that use Georgia Power can bring any power into their homes. But a home owner may turn off the lights for a time, and then turn them back on. I felt like the main power supply — the breath of life that God breathed in Adam to make him a living being — was still on for me, except that the doctors, with the knowledge that God gave them, were able, so to speak, to turn off the switch so that there was no breath in me for a while. They waited and turned it back on when the procedure was complete. I guess if the main power supply — breath of life, which comes from God — had really been turned off, I would not have awakened regardless of what the doctors did!

For those who say that believers go to heaven at death, there is strong evidence to the contrary. As quoted earlier from Revelation, Christ would not be coming back to earth with his reward for believers if they are already in heaven enjoying the reward! Again, it is written that only Christ ascended into heaven after he was raised from the dead and crowned with immortality. The apostle Peter, preaching after Christ had ascended into heaven, says, “For it was not David who ascended into heaven, but he himself says: ‘THE LORD SAID TO MY LORD, ‘SIT AT MY RIGHT HAND, UNTIL I MAKE YOUR ENEMIES A FOOTSTOOL FOR YOUR FEET’” (Acts 2:34, 35).

Peter was obviously quoting from Psalm 110:1, which is also quoted by the writer of Hebrews as he explains who Christ is in relation to God, angels and man (Heb. 1:13). The author is referring to God speaking to Christ who alone is right now seated at the right hand of God, where, as the writer of Hebrews says, he is making intercession for believers before the Father (Heb. 7:25).

#### **Death as “Sleep,” “Rest,” even “Lying Down”**

Death has been described as “sleep” in the Scriptures — not just in the New Testament, but in the Old Testament as well. In all the cases, the reference is clearly to death. Some express it as “rest,” while other translations use the expression “lie down.” Some of these verses are listed below:

Deuteronomy 31:16: “The LORD said to Moses, ‘Behold, you are about **to lie down** with your fathers...’” This was towards the end of Moses’ life, and echoes the prophet Daniel’s vision when he was told, “But as for you, go your way to the end; then you will **enter into rest and rise again for your allotted portion at the end of the age**” (Dan. 12:13). This is a powerful statement about the sleep/rest of the dead! It further proves, as discussed earlier, that one has to “rise again” (after death) in order to receive his reward at the “end of the age.”

<sup>4</sup> Huffer, p. 158.

1 Kings 2:10: “Then **David slept** with his fathers and **was buried** in the city of David.” It is worth noting that the apostle Peter, speaking after Christ had ascended into heaven, said, “Brethren, I may confidently say to you regarding the patriarch David that **he both died and was buried**, and his tomb is with us to this day” (Acts 2:29). Later Paul said, “For **David**, after he had served the purpose of God in his own generation, **fell asleep**, and **was laid among his fathers and underwent decay**” (Acts 13:36).

Job 7:21: “For now I will **lie down in the dust**; and You will seek me, but I will not be.” Again in Job 14:12 the writer says, “So **man lies down** and does not rise. Until the heavens are no longer, **he will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep.**” He will not be awakened or “called out” until the resurrection.

Psalms 13:3: “Consider and answer me, O LORD my God; enlighten my eyes, or **I will sleep the sleep of death.**”

Jeremiah 51:39: “And may **sleep a perpetual sleep** and not wake up.”

Daniel 12:2: “**Many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake**, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt.” Here is the picture of the resurrection — when the believers will be awakened from their “perpetual sleep” to receive their reward, and sinners to answer for what they did with the life God gave them.

John 11:11-14 gives the classic example of the use of the term “sleep” by Jesus himself. When Lazarus had died, Jesus said that he was “asleep.” He then “called him out of the tomb”— note that he did not call him down from heaven. The dead cannot already be “reclining” with Christ in heaven if he has to come back and call out all those who “sleep in Christ” to the resurrection life. “He said to them, ‘Our friend **Lazarus has fallen asleep**; but I go, so that I may **awaken him out of sleep.**’ The disciples then said to him, ‘Lord, if he **has fallen asleep**, he will recover.’ Now Jesus had spoken of his death, but they thought that he was speaking of literal sleep. So Jesus then said to them plainly, ‘**Lazarus is dead**’” (John 11:11-14).

Acts 7:60 records Stephen’s death: “Then falling on his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, ‘Lord, do not hold this sin against them!’ Having said this, **he fell asleep.**”

1 Corinthians 11:30: “For this reason many among you are weak and sick, and **a number sleep.**”

1 Corinthians 15:6: “After that he appeared to more than five hundred brethren at one time, most of whom remain until now, but **some have fallen asleep.**” Verse 20 says, “But now **Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who are asleep.**” This gives me a lot of hope — knowing that just as Christ was

raised from the dead, we too shall be raised from the dead if we believe in God, and Jesus Christ His Son whom He sent to preach the message of a future hope — the Kingdom of God as it was meant to be!

In 1 Thessalonians 4:13-15 we are given an explanation about death and resurrection in very clear language. Paul obviously faced questions and challenges to the faith as we do today, and in particular concerning the matter of human destiny. Moreover, a lot of his listeners did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. He uses the word “sleep” interchangeably with the word “death” when he says, “But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about **those who are asleep**, so that you will not grieve as do the rest who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with him **those who have fallen asleep** in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede **those who have fallen asleep.**” Paul compares those who are alive (his audience) with those who have fallen asleep (those who are dead).

1 Thessalonians 5:10: “...who died for us, so that **whether we are awake or asleep**, we will live together with him.” Awake or asleep, alive or dead would seem to be interchangeable in meaning here.

While making a comment on the differences between man and beast, Edwin Froom says that when beasts die, they cease to be, permanently — no future life. Of man he says, “redeemed and regenerated man will be **called forth from his sleep** by Christ...to a life that measures with the life of God, and in eternal communion thereafter with God.”<sup>5</sup> This is the picture of resurrection. It seems clear that this author uses the term “sleep” to mean death, just as we have seen in the Scriptures. The redeemed will be called forth, just as Lazarus was called forth after he had been dead (asleep) four days.

I must say, in conclusion, that I am fascinated with the issue of the sleep of the dead, mainly because I realize just how misinformed I was as a young girl attending Sunday School. It is definitely easier for me to understand this, since even in my native language when one dies, we say he or she has “fallen asleep” (*onindo*), which is the same word as when we go to sleep every night. I thank God that I can make this connection, and find it easy to understand that the dead do nothing because they cannot! ✧

<sup>5</sup> Le Roy Edwin Froom, *The Conditionalist Faith of our Fathers*, Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1966, Vol. 1, p. 159.

## If Only We Had Listened to Gabriel

The following is an excerpt from Anthony's forthcoming book *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian: Why Are You?*

**“Calling brings to expression what one is, so that it means no less than ‘he will be.’ Interchangeability of the two phrases is seen by comparing Matthew 5:9, ‘they will be called sons of God’ and Luke 6:35, ‘you will be sons of the Most High.’”<sup>6</sup>**

In John 10:36 Jesus spoke of his own history: “God made him holy and sent him into the world.” With this simple account our other gospels agree perfectly. The supernatural coming into existence of the Son of God constituted him a uniquely holy human being and thus Son of God in a matchless way. As Son of God, God’s final agent, he was sent by his Father on the mission of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom (Luke 4:43).

Hebrew prophecy had announced the birth of Messiah in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). God had raised him up, that is, put him on the scene of history and then sent him to deliver the Gospel to Israel (Acts 3:26). This verse should put to rest any suggestion that if God “sent” Jesus it must mean that Jesus was alive and conscious before his conception. Peter says that God first produced the Messiah and then sent him as His commissioned agent. The detail of just how Jesus, God’s Son, came to be is the subject also of the united and detailed testimony of Matthew and Luke, who provide by far the longest accounts of the origin of the Son of God. Both writers intend to anchor the origin of the Son of God firmly in history.

Neither Matthew nor Luke presents us with a theological problem of vast proportions needing armies of theologians to provide an explanation. The biblical accounts describe the Son of God as the object of age-old Jewish promises — that a biological descendant of the royal house of David would appear as God’s instrument for the salvation of Israel and the world. Commentators are so accustomed to thinking of the Son as eternal God Himself that they instinctively imagine that Luke and Matthew agree with them. A writer of a tract on “Who Is Jesus?” tells us that “Luke teaches that the origins of Jesus’ *human life* were supernatural.” He does not observe that Luke describes the origin of the Son of God himself. There is not the slightest hint that he is other than human originating from his mother. Our writer claims Christ was “to be confessed as Lord and God,” but he gives no text from Luke or Acts in support of that amazing statement. He thinks that “Mary’s son was called the Son of the Highest by the angel because that is who he was from eternity.” But Luke and Gabriel say nothing of the sort. Quite to the contrary Gabriel links the

miracle in Mary expressly to Jesus being the Son of God. The Son of God is entitled to that designation because God was his father by biological miracle (Luke 1:35). No other reason is supplied, and it is quite unnecessary to imagine any other origin for the Son of God.

It is a relief to turn to the far more scientific and factual accounts of Luke’s view of Jesus found in the excellent article on “Power” in the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. The author approaches his subject from the Old Testament background:

“There can be no disputing the link with the Old Testament and Jewish picture of the Messiah. Of the Old Testament Messiah Isaiah says that the spirit of counsel and strength rest on him (Isa. 11:2). Isaiah calls him ‘a mighty hero’ (9:6).” The dictionary happily corrects the complete mistranslation of standard versions which attempt to read Trinitarian theology into Isaiah and describe the Messiah as “the Mighty God,” thus presenting us with the amazing concept of a second Almighty God! Isaiah was speaking of a descendant of David who was to be *el gibbor*, “mighty or divine hero.”<sup>7</sup> The dictionary points also to Micah’s prediction of the human Messiah. “Micah compares him with a shepherd and says that he will tend his flock in the strength of the Lord his God.” The Messiah will operate “in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of the name of Yahweh his God” (Micah 5:4). Such a portrait prevents any idea that the Messiah will be God. He works in the power of one who is his God. The same Messianic agent of God is described in the royal Psalm 110:2: “The Lord [Yahweh] will send the rod of your royal strength out of Zion.” Corroboration of this regal picture of the supernaturally endowed Messiah is found in writings half a century before the birth of Jesus. Psalms of Solomon 17:24, 42-47 read:

“And may God gird him to defeat unrighteous rulers, to purify Jerusalem of the heathen who trample it to destruction...God has made him strong in the holy spirit and wise in counsel with power and righteousness. And the good pleasure of the Lord is with him in strength and he will not be weak. Strong is he in his works and mighty in the fear of God.” The dictionary observes that “in all these passages the picture is that of the King. The power granted to him is victorious power to defeat his enemies. It is the power confessed by the King of Israel: ‘For who is strong save the Lord...the mighty one who makes me strong with strength and makes me mighty with strength to battle’ (2 Sam. 22:32, 33, 40; cp. Ps. 18:32, 39). The king attributes his success in battle to the power which Yahweh has given him. Messiah is thought of as a king like this endowed with the strength of Yahweh.”

<sup>6</sup> Raymond Brown, *Birth Narratives*, p. 289.

<sup>7</sup> *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Vol. 2, p. 299.

Luke is excited by the picture of the Messiah and he reports the prophetic power of Jesus demonstrated in his ministry: The two disciples who walked with the risen Jesus on the way to Emmaus know Jesus to be “a human prophet powerful in deed and in word” (Luke 24:19). The picture is that of a wonderful “new Moses.” Moses was likewise “mighty in his words and deeds” (Acts 7:22). What more does Luke tell us? “Jesus is unique in his existence. His existence is peculiarly determined by the power of God...This is an important feature in the Lukan infancy story...Luke describes the conception of Jesus as the miracle of the Virgin Birth...A divine miracle causes pregnancy...In the background stands the biblical conception of God who begets His Son by a verbal act which cannot be rationalized...For this reason the Son has a special name not borne by other men, namely ‘Son of God’...At the beginning of his existence a special and unique act of divine power gives him the title ‘Son of God’...The Messianic title Son of God is linked with the miracle of conception and birth.”<sup>8</sup>

God has not left Himself without powerful witness both in the text of Scripture and in expert commentary. It must be obvious to any unprejudiced reader how far these sublime accounts are removed from the later paganized view of Jesus as an eternal Son of God, begotten in eternity, and entering the womb of his mother from a fully conscious existence as God, second member of the Trinity.

### The Justification of Later Developments

Theological writings frequently tell us that the right definition of Jesus and his relationship to God was discovered only after centuries of painful intellectual struggle. The Bible however seems much more straightforward. It says nothing about a “mystery of the Trinity.” This came much later. *Post-biblical* writings invite us into a very different world of thought. J.S. Whale asks:

“How did the doctrine of the Trinity come to be formulated and why? What did it mean? As soon as the Church addressed itself to systematic doctrine it found itself wrestling with its fundamental axioms. I use the word ‘wrestling’ deliberately, because those axioms were on the face of them mutually incompatible...The first axiom was monotheism, the deep religious conviction that there is but one God, holy and transcendent, and that to worship anyone else is idolatry. To Israel, and to the New Israel of the Christian church, idolatry in all its forms was sin at its worst. ‘Hear O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord’ (Deut. 6:4). ‘I am the Lord and there is none else, there is no God beside me’ (Isa. 45:5). Monotheism was the living heart of the religion of the Old Testament. It was and is the very marrow of Christian divinity...The

systematic thought inevitably involved *a further definition of monotheism*, an elaboration of the unitary conception of the Godhead, not in terms of tritheism, but of Triunity...Christian thought, working with the data of the New Testament and *using Greek philosophy as its instrument*, constructed the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity...The popular view of the Trinity has often been a veiled tritheism [belief in three Gods].”<sup>9</sup>

This account is typical of the voluminous material published to inform us how the Trinity came into being. Unable to face the awful possibility that the Church distorted the New Testament rather than explaining it accurately, our writer speaks in low-key words of “a further definition of monotheism,” an “elaboration of the unitary conception of the Godhead.” At least he recognizes that the creed of Jesus was non-Trinitarian, but rather “unitary monotheism.” But does he deal fairly with the disaster which occurred when Jesus’ own creed was tampered with? Why is it admissible to redefine the simple creed of the Bible? God is one. He is not three. One will not become three without a major restructuring of God and thus of the universe. The New Testament contains not a word about any “wrestling” with how many Persons in the universe can be called the supreme God. There are indeed struggles over issues of the Mosaic law and its application in the New Testament. But no one amongst our apostolic writers ever broached the subject of a brand new definition of God, of monotheism. The God of the Old Testament is the God of the New. No more needs to be said.

But the Gentile pagan mind did not want to submit itself to the Jewish creed of the Jewish founder of the Christian faith. The simplicity found in Jesus needed elaboration in terms of the philosophies of the Greek culture. Hence arose all the conflict over the identity of Jesus in relation to God.

Hence the church “wrestled,” wrestled itself in fact most unwisely out of the perceived straightjacket of biblical monotheism, the very doctrine which would have spared it so much subsequent agony and division.

Other authorities who comment on our topic are forthright about the facts, particularly if they are historians with less of a theological axe to grind. The 15<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Encyclopedia Britannica* in its article on “Trinity” says: “Neither the word Trinity, nor the explicit doctrine as such, appears in the New Testament, *nor did Jesus and his followers intend to contradict the Shema of the Old Testament: ‘The Lord our God is one Lord’*” (Deut. 6:4).<sup>10</sup>

Dr. Marvin Wilson comments well on Jesus’ unmistakable confirmation of the creed of Israel:

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 299, 300.

<sup>9</sup> *Christian Doctrine*, 1952, p. 112.

<sup>10</sup> p. 126.

“Of the 5,845 verses in the Pentateuch, ‘Hear O Israel’ sounds the historic keynote of all Judaism. This fundamental truth and leitmotif of God’s uniqueness prompts one to respond by fulfilling the fundamental obligation to love God. Accordingly when Jesus was asked about the most important commandment his reply did not contradict this central theme of Judaism (Mark 12:28-34; Matt. 22:34-40). With 613 individual statutes of the Torah from which to choose, Jesus cited the *shema*, including the command to love God, but also extended the definition of the first and great command to include love for one’s neighbor (Lev. 19:18)...Yahweh is the Supreme Being, wholly unlike all other things in the universe which have been created by him.” Wilson then mentions that “Some have seen complex unity.” He wisely makes no attempt to justify this attempt to read later theology back into the simple words of the Hebrew Bible. But he strangely seems unalarmed that the church he belongs to does not subscribe to the creed affirmed by Jesus himself.

Dr. Wilson provides excellent historical comment on the creed recited by Jesus. In *Our Father Abraham*, Marvin Wilson states: The *Shema* “is one of the most crucial Old Testament texts for the foundational teachings of *both Jesus and Judaism*.”<sup>11</sup> But that foundational creed of Jesus is nowhere to be found on the books of mainline churches. For all of his good history and presentation of the facts, Professor Wilson seems unable to protest the Church’s — his own church’s — failure to uphold the creed of Jesus.

Unless, then, it can be shown that belief in three Persons who are God can be reconciled with the *Shema* affirmed by Jesus, Christians have the wrong creed. They have been mistaken for centuries. They have abandoned Jesus at a fundamental level (as well as keeping Jews and Muslims away from considering the claims of Jesus).

Let us do some further comparing. We have seen what creed Jesus established as the foundation of true religion: “the Lord our God is one Lord.” Now let us hear what Christians were supposed to recite as creed some 500 years after the time of Jesus.

#### **From the Jew Jesus to a New Gentile Creed**

Below is the so-called Athanasian creed. I will not quote it in full, but give you enough to show how it unpacks the summary statement that “God exists in three Persons.”

“Whosoever will be saved, before all things it is necessary that he hold the catholic [universal] faith; which faith except everyone do keep whole and undefiled, without doubt he shall perish everlastingly. And the catholic faith is this: That we worship one God in Trinity, and Trinity and Unity; neither confounding the persons

nor dividing the substance...The Father eternal, the Son eternal and the Holy Spirit eternal. And yet they are not three eternal but one eternal...So likewise the Father is almighty, the Son almighty, and the Holy Spirit almighty. And yet they are not three almighties, but one almighty. So the Father is God, the Son is God and the Holy Spirit is God; and yet they are not three Gods, but one God. So likewise the Father is Lord, the Son Lord and the Holy Spirit Lord; and yet they are not three Lords but one Lord. For just as we are compelled by the Christian verity to acknowledge every Person by himself to be God and Lord; so we are forbidden by the catholic religion to say there are three Gods or three Lords...and in this Trinity none is before or after another; none is greater or less than another. But the whole three Persons are coeternal and coequal. So that in all things, as aforesaid, the Unity in Trinity and the Trinity in Unity is to be worshiped. He who wants to be saved must so think of the Trinity.”

Note the heavy threats leveled at any who might question this amazing dogma. But could Jesus have possibly subscribed to that creed? Or would Jesus himself have fallen under the cruel anathemas of this “Christian” creed? The appalling possibility is that Jesus would have fled from association from this bizarre document, which presents the ordinary reader with rather obvious nonsense.

Jesus patently knew nothing about the creeds of Nicea or the so-called Athanasian creed. Jesus perfectly taught and carried out the will of his Father. Jesus’ own affirmation of the creed of Israel is testimony to the greatest fact of the universe: That there is a God, and that He is one divine Person. Could even the God of Jesus possibly believe in the Trinity?✧

## **Comment**

“Please accept my thanks for the article on Enoch in the December issue of Focus, and the article on Elijah in the previous issue. Those articles helped my understanding of two incidents recorded in Scripture which have always puzzled me.” — *Australia*

## **2007 Theological Conference**

**March 29-April 1, 2007**

**Simpsonwood Conference Center, Norcross, GA**

We want to extend a warm invitation to you to be with us March 29-April 1, 2007. This is a unique gathering of Abrahamic believers, bringing people together from various countries. A number of speakers will present papers on subjects of interest to us all, with time for questions following. The conference is a rich time of fellowship and an opportunity to meet and encourage others of Abrahamic persuasion. There will be opportunities, as usual, for shorter faith story

<sup>11</sup> p. 122

presentations. This is not an academic occasion, for specialists only! It is a meeting for Christian education and fellowship to confirm and strengthen our grip of the great truths of Scripture. Perhaps for you the social dynamics which happen in between sessions will be the highlight. Many of the participants have newly discovered the Abrahamic faith and are excited to meet others of similar persuasion.

The new venue (see [www.simpsonwood.org](http://www.simpsonwood.org)) will provide many advantages in terms of the convenience of being all together at one location. No need for shuttles to a hotel. The conference is only as good as the combination of its participants allows. Please do not deprive us of the privilege of having *you* with us to encourage and embolden us in a hostile world.

Previously the cost of the conference was divided up between hotel and conference fee. This year room, meals, breaks, and conference fee are all included in one price: \$200 for a single, \$170 per person in a double room (plus 6% tax). See the cost comparison chart below to compare the cost of the 2006 conference with the 2007 conference. **The registration deadline is March 8.** Please register by phoning Atlanta Bible College at 800-347-4261 or 404-362-0052 or mail the form on the back page. The conference will begin in the afternoon of Thursday, March 29 and end on Sunday afternoon.

For those flying into Atlanta, we will provide round-trip transportation between the airport and Simpsonwood at the most economical rate possible. Please indicate when you register that you will need airport transportation, and we will contact you regarding arrangements and fees.

Please do consider joining us. It is so important for us all to gather from time to time to celebrate our common faith.

### Day Rates

For those not staying at Simpsonwood, the day rates are (including tax):

\$19 for one meal

\$32 for two meals

\$45 for three meals

Plus the conference fee of \$20 per person (\$10 per day, Friday and Saturday)

### Intensive Course

Following the conference, Monday-Wednesday, April 2-4, Anthony Buzzard will teach "The Destiny of the Righteous." The course will be held at Simpsonwood.

### Cost Comparison for Single

Last Conference	This Conference
3 nights @ \$75=\$225	3 nights @ \$60=\$180
Conf. fee = \$105	Conf. fee = \$20
Total: <b>\$330</b>	Total: <b>\$200*</b> (+airport trans.)

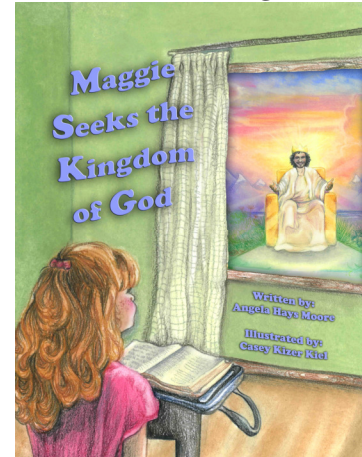
### Cost Comparison for Couple

Last Conference	This Conference
3 nights @ \$75=\$225	3 nights @ \$100=\$300
Conf. fee (2x\$105)=\$210	Conf. fee (2x\$20)=\$40
Total: <b>\$435</b>	Total: <b>\$340*</b> (+airport trans.)

\*Plus 6% tax

Anthony is heard on [thebyteshow.com](http://thebyteshow.com) interviewed weekly by GeorgeAnn Hughes. At the site, click on **Library** in the left column to access the archived interviews. He is also seen at [youtube.com](http://youtube.com)

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