

# Focus on the Kingdom

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## One God, One Man Messiah, Kingdom Translation of Colossians

### Chapter 1

Paul, an Apostle of Messiah Jesus in harmony with God's will, and Timothy our brother: to the holy and faithful brothers and sisters united to Messiah, who live in Colossae, may grace and peace come to you from God,<sup>1</sup> who is our Father.

We are always thankful to God, the Father of our lord Jesus Messiah, when we pray for you. We have indeed heard of your faith in Messiah Jesus and of the love you express for all the holy people. This love is built

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<sup>1</sup>The one God (*o theos*), the only *true* God, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and of Jesus. "The only one who has immortality whom no one can see or has ever seen" (1 Tim. 6:16). The God of the NT is certainly not the Triune God of later church councils. "God" (often "*the* God") means the Father over 1300 times in the NT, echoing the summary statement of the Hebrew Bible in Mal. 2:10, where the One God is defined as the One Father. Thousands of singular personal pronouns define God as a single Person. This concept is very uncomplex. It has been passionately held by Jews during the whole of their history and is the heart of Jewish belief today. The simple concept of One God, the Father became hopelessly confused when later "church fathers" tried to explain God in terms of Greek philosophical concepts unknown to Jesus and the NT. The NT creed is easily and beautifully summarized in John 17:3; Mark 12:29 and 1 Tim. 2:5. Ps. 110:1 provides the relationship between the One God, Yahweh, and "my lord" (*adoni*). *Adoni* is always a non-Deity title, every one of the 195 times it appears in the OT. The false capital on the second lord of Ps. 110:1 misleads many readers. In about every 6th verse in the NT (17% of the verses) you are going to encounter the word GOD or equivalent. The truth is explicitly stated by Jesus in Mk. 12:29: "The Lord our God is one Lord." That is not a Trinitarian creed and the founder of our faith was a unitarian. Bishop N.T. Wright says that with the expression "**The God**" (not just "God") the writers of the NT were providing "an essentially **Jewish monotheistic concept of God**" (*Jesus and the People of God*, 1992, pp. xiv-xv). This is not Trinitarianism. In the Bible when people said GOD (about 11,000 times, as *YHVH, Elohim, Adonai, Theos*) none of those statements about GOD mean a Triune God. For an intelligent devotional life and relation to God in spirit and truth, this is the *first* truth which needs to be taught. It must not be withheld from seekers after God and Jesus.

on the hope<sup>2</sup> reserved for you with Christ in heaven.<sup>3</sup> You already heard about this hope in the message of the truth, that is, the Gospel of the Kingdom, which has come to you. That Gospel of the Kingdom is bearing fruit<sup>4</sup> and growing all over the world, just as it has among you, since the day you heard it and recognized in it God's grace in the truth.<sup>5</sup> You learned all this from Epaphroditus, our much-loved fellow servant. He is a faithful minister of the Messiah on your behalf, and he has told us about your love in the spirit.

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<sup>2</sup>Of the future Kingdom on earth, Matt. 5:5; Rev. 5:9-10, etc. The fact is that hope, the second cardinal virtue of Christians, is based on, i.e. is dependent on a grasp of the future Kingdom on earth, the promised inheritance. Any confusion over the future hope will result in a diminishing of love and distorts the Gospel.

<sup>3</sup>It is essential not to misunderstand here. The reward is now promised and stored up in heaven, waiting to be conferred on true believers by Christ when he returns *to the earth* in order that the saints can rule with him on that future renewed earth (Rev. 2:26; 3:21; 5:10; 20:1-6; 1 Cor. 6:2; 2 Tim. 2:12; Dan. 7:18, 22, 27; Luke 19:11ff). Note the parallel with John 17:5 where Jesus asked for the glory which he "had with" God, i.e. prepared and promised from the beginning. In God's great plan, and in biblical idiom, you can "have" things now which are guaranteed for the future (see also Matt. 6:1). In John 17:22, 24 believers who were not even yet born "have been given" (i.e. in promise) the same glory. On no account is the NT to be read with alien English thought forms in mind. Jesus and the early church leaders (with the exception of Luke) were Jews! And Jesus never said, despite mistranslation in some versions like NIV, that he was going *back* to the Father! He was in fact going to the Father, with whom he now is, at God's right hand, until his future Second Coming (Acts 3:21, etc.)

<sup>4</sup>An obvious reference to the parable of the sower, where fruit is born by those who *first* accept and understand the Gospel of the Kingdom ("the word of the Kingdom," Matt. 13:19). All true Gospel preaching goes back to the Gospel as preached by Jesus (Heb. 2:3). Without the seed, which is the word of the Kingdom (Luke 8:11; Matt. 13:19) there can be no fruit. The Devil works at destroying the faith at its root which is the Gospel of the Kingdom. Luke 8:11-12 is dramatically significant on this point.

<sup>5</sup>Grace and truth are not opposing values. They are bound up with each other. There is no grace apart from truth and no truth apart from grace. Grace in the NT means a weakening of the importance of the truth. Jesus "came to give us an *understanding* in order to know God" (1 John 5:20) and it is by Messiah's *knowledge* that he makes us right with God (Isa. 53:11), as well as by his atoning, substitutionary death.

For this reason also, since the day we heard this, we have not stopped praying for you. We are asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding, so that you may conduct yourselves in a way that is fully pleasing to God and bearing fruit in every good work. Our prayer is that you may be strengthened with love, according to His glorious might, leading to a steady endurance and patience, accompanied by joy, giving thanks to the Father who has enabled you to share in the saints' future inheritance of the Kingdom of light.<sup>6</sup> He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred<sup>7</sup> us into his Son's Kingdom, the Son whom He loves and in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins.

The lord Jesus is the visible image<sup>8</sup> of the invisible God, the firstborn<sup>9</sup> of the whole creation, because in him<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup>In the Age to Come. The power of the spirit must be experienced now as a downpayment of the future inheritance of the Kingdom at the return of Jesus.

<sup>7</sup>The Kingdom of God has not yet begun worldwide. This happens at the future seventh trumpet (Rev. 11:15-18). But Christians in preparation for that Kingdom have been removed from the evil of the present world systems by being radically separate and different. In that sense the international body of believers, God's Israel (Gal. 6:16; Phil. 3:13), the church is the Kingdom of God in training for the coming worldwide empire of God and Jesus, when Jesus returns at his spectacular, visible return. Until that future arrival of Jesus in power and glory, Christians must be prepared to suffer affliction. This will be alleviated and brought to an end when believers receive "release and relief" at the future coming of Jesus following the Great Tribulation (Matt. 24:29ff; 2 Thess. 1:4-9). On no account should believers fall for the colossal falsehood that the teachings of Jesus, including of course in Matt. 24, Mark 13 and Luke 21, are not for them!

<sup>8</sup>Jesus as the image of God is of course the second Adam, not God or a created angel. The subject of discourse here is the Messiah supernaturally begotten in Mary (Matt. 1:20) who is the fulfillment of the wisdom of God from the beginning. Jesus is here the man Messiah as in Phil 2:5 and 1 Tim 2:5.

<sup>9</sup>Israel was also God's firstborn (Ex. 4:22). The sense is that of the preeminent one. Jesus is the head of all creation and also the preeminent one from the dead, as being the first human to be raised from death to immortality. Only God has immortality inherently (1 Tim. 6:16). Jesus the Son of God was given immortality when he was resurrected on the Sunday following his crucifixion on Friday.

<sup>10</sup>"In him." This is certainly not "by him." "*En auto*." This does not mean "By him" (*Expositors Greek Testament*, Vol. 3, p. 504). I take *en* here as causal (cp. Moulton Milligan), i.e., because of him, for his sake, with him in view, with him in intention. "We must render [*en*] 'because of' in Col. 1:16" (see *A Grammar of NT Greek*, Vol. 3 by Nigel Turner, p. 253). James Dunn translates "in him in intention."

in intention everything was originally created<sup>11</sup> by God in heaven and on earth — the visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions, rulers or authorities — all these things are now created<sup>12</sup> by God through Jesus and for him.

He is superior to all things and in him everything coheres. He is also the head of the body, the church: he is the beginning, because he is the firstborn from the dead,<sup>13</sup> so that he might be promoted to have first place in everything.<sup>14</sup> For God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in him,<sup>15</sup> and through him to reconcile everything to Himself by making peace through the blood of his cross — whether these be personalities on earth or in heaven. And you were once alienated and hostile in your mind because of your evil activities. But now he has reconciled you through the death of the historical person<sup>16</sup> of His Son, to present you holy, blameless and beyond reproach,

<sup>11</sup>Aorist of "create." The passive is a divine passive. Everything was created *by God*, as is stated some 50 times in Scripture. God was entirely unaccompanied at the original creation. Isa. 44:24 is the decisive and definitive verse on this point.

<sup>12</sup>Perfect tense of "create" with continuing results. The change of verb tense is striking and deliberate in Col. 1:16. The new creation is through Jesus and the earlier creation of authorities was "because of" Jesus, "in him in intention," certainly not "by him." God the Father created by Himself (Isa. 44:24) and God, not Jesus (who did not yet exist!) rested on the seventh day (Heb. 4:4). Jesus the Son of God is actively involved in the New Creation and Jesus is the one now sanctifying his brothers and sisters (Heb. 2:11).

<sup>13</sup>The first human being to gain immortality by being raised by the Father from death.

<sup>14</sup>Jesus was *promoted* to this position of superiority, by resurrection. It is obvious, then, that he is not God, since God cannot be promoted! Jesus gained that supreme position when God exalted him to His right hand in accordance with Ps. 110:1 which is the key theological and Christological verse governing the NT. The second lord (*adoni*) is never a title of Deity. One cannot gain first position if one always had it! The same confusion of thought is exposed by Bishop Wright's "life after life after death." You cannot become alive if you are already alive. It is likewise impossible to "begin to exist" (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35) if one already exists! The idea of a literally preexisting Son of God throws the entirety of Scripture into incoherence. There is no "God the Son" in the NT. This was an invention of the very confused philosophical theology of post-biblical "fathers." The Son was "foreknown" by God, and this is very different concept from "preexistence." The Greek word for preexistence (*prouparchein*) is never used of Jesus.

<sup>15</sup>Note that the same language about "the fullness of God" is applicable to believers also in Eph. 3:19. Having the fullness of God, via His spirit, thus does not mean that a person *is* God!

<sup>16</sup>Note the use of "flesh" to mean human person as in 2:1.

on condition, that is, that you remain grounded and steadfast in the faith and without shifting away from the hope of the Gospel which you heard.<sup>17</sup> This Gospel of the Kingdom has been heralded in all creation and I myself became a minister of that Gospel of the Kingdom.

Now I rejoice in my sufferings on your behalf and I am completing in my flesh<sup>18</sup> what is lacking in Messiah's afflictions for his body, that is, the church. I became its minister, according to God's administration which was given to me for your sake, to make God's message of the Gospel<sup>19</sup> fully known, the mystery hidden for ages and generations which is now revealed to all the holy people. God wanted to make known among the Gentiles the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Messiah in you, the hope of future glory.<sup>20</sup> We proclaim him, warning, counseling and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone mature in Messiah. I labor for this, striving with his energy<sup>21</sup> which works powerfully and energetically in me.

## Chapter 2

For I want you to know how great my struggle is for you, and for those in Laodicea, and for all who have not seen me in person. I want their hearts to be encouraged and joined together in love, so that they may have all of the riches which come from a conviction which is the result of an intelligent understanding, and possess the full knowledge of God's Kingdom mystery<sup>22</sup> — summed up as Messiah. In him all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. I am writing this so that no one will deceive you with persuasive arguments, for although I am absent in person I am nevertheless very much with you in spirit. I am rejoicing to see your good order and the strength of your faith in Messiah. Therefore as you

<sup>17</sup>An obvious rejection of the false popular teaching of "once saved always saved." Christianity in its pristine form constantly urges us to continue in the process of salvation. And "salvation is now nearer to us [not further behind us!] than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11). Some people "believe for a while," Jesus said, but they give up the Christian life when others things interfere (Luke 8:13).

<sup>18</sup>My present human life.

<sup>19</sup>The Gospel is always to be defined as **the Gospel about the Kingdom and the things concerning Jesus** (Acts 8:12; Luke 8:12; Matt. 13:19; Luke 4:43; Heb 2:3, etc.)

<sup>20</sup>Glory and future Kingdom of God convey the same idea. James and John asked for positions of authority in the future "Kingdom" or "glory" (cp. Matt. 20:21 and Mark 10:37).

<sup>21</sup>Heb. 2:11: Jesus is the one making the members of the church holy, sanctifying them.

<sup>22</sup>The mystery of the Kingdom, God's unfolding Kingdom plan, is the primary content of the Gospel and was first preached by Jesus (Heb. 2:3).

received Messiah Jesus, the lord,<sup>23</sup> conduct yourselves in harmony with him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith just as you were taught it, and overflowing with gratitude. Be extremely careful that no one takes you captive with philosophy and empty deceit based on human tradition, based on the elemental forces<sup>24</sup> of the world and not in harmony with Messiah. For in the Messiah the entire fullness of God's character and mind dwell bodily, and you have been filled by him who is the head over every ruler and authority.

In harmony with Messiah you were also circumcised with a non-physical, non-literal circumcision, one not made with hands, that is, by putting off the body of flesh<sup>25</sup> in the circumcision of the Messiah. You were buried with Messiah when you were baptized in water and you were also raised from death, so to speak, with him through belief in the energy of God who raised Jesus from the dead. And when you were formerly dead in trespasses and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, he made you alive with Jesus and forgave us for our trespasses. God erased the certificate of debt with all of its instructions and obligations,<sup>26</sup> which was against us<sup>27</sup> and opposed to us, and took it out of the way by nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and disgraced them publicly; he triumphed over them by Jesus in the cross.

Therefore, do not let anyone, whoever he is, try to exercise authority over you<sup>28</sup> in regard to food and drink

<sup>23</sup>The lower case "lord" is deliberate to reinforce the vitally important distinction between the Lord God (Yahweh) and the Messianic lord Jesus, the *adoni*, "my lord," of Ps. 110:1. This verse is an umbrella and controlling verse for the NT view of the relationship of God and Jesus. It is cited many more times by far than any other verse from the Hebrew Bible. Jesus used it to stump all his adversaries and to put an end to all dispute (Mark 12:35ff). Jesus is "the lord Messiah" who was born (Luke 2:11) and thus the Lord's (Yahweh's) Messiah (Luke 2:26). The blind men understood the meaning of "the lord, son of David." Jesus framed his final and decisive question around these descriptions of who he was and is.

<sup>24</sup>Demonic forces and teachings promoted by demons, lying spirits.

<sup>25</sup>Unregenerate human nature.

<sup>26</sup>The parallel in Eph. 2:14-15 clarifies what this is: It is those regulations which put up a barrier between Jew and Gentile, "the Torah (law) of commandments expressed in dogmas." These were "the enmity" which divided Jew and Gentile. They are no more, now that Christ has come and inaugurated the New Covenant. "Christ has abolished" those elements of the law (Eph. 2:14-15).

<sup>27</sup>Peter in Acts 15:10 admitted that the detailed regulations of Torah had been a burden which the forefathers had been unable to bear.

<sup>28</sup>That is, criticize you and try to regulate you with

or in the matter of annual holy days, monthly new moons and the weekly Sabbath.<sup>29</sup> This entire calendar is a single shadow of what was to come; but by contrast the substance and fulfillment of them is the Messiah.<sup>30</sup> Let no one disqualify you by insisting on ascetic practices<sup>31</sup> and

commands which take you back to the shadow instead of keeping you in harmony with Messiah who has come and has replaced the shadow calendar.

<sup>29</sup>On no account should the reader be misled into thinking that Paul excludes the weekly Sabbath here. Sabbath appears often in a plural form where the meaning is the singular weekly Sabbath (even in the ten commandments, see LXX of Exod. 20). The translations are correct here to write "Sabbath day" or "Sabbath," meaning the weekly Sabbath. When holy days, new moons and Sabbath are listed together the weekly Sabbath is always meant. The weekly Sabbath has no more status in the New Covenant than "new moons" or "holy days." They are all equally a shadow replaced by the Christ who has come.

<sup>30</sup>Who has come. Note that Adam is "the type of the one who is to come" (Rom 5:14), but that does not mean that Christ has not come! The OT calendar is not an obligatory shadow of things still to come, still required as obedience. This would destroy the whole context here. Messiah has come and our new life is in him, not in the shadows of calendar observance. Sabbath and holy day keeping are irrelevant and actually detrimental when enforced as obligatory in the New Covenant in Messiah. The shadow is in itself the shadow of the Christ who *has* come, and the calendar has no value now that Christ has come and effected a non-literal circumcision. Circumcision includes "the whole law" (Gal. 5:3) which goes with it, i.e. those regulations which separated Jews from Gentiles. Paul referred to this as "the works of Torah." Christians, since Christ has come, are now celebrating a continuous rest in Christ. They are to celebrate the feast continuously (1 Cor. 5:8). The spirit of the law replaces the letter of the law, and to insist on the letter simply causes believers to regress to Moses. Paul worked hard against this fatal mixing of Moses and Jesus. After all Jesus had come to fulfill, i.e. fill with its fullest meaning, the Torah. Mark 7:19 is a striking testimony to Jesus' abolition of food laws, repeated with even greater clarity in Rom. 14:14, 20, where the issue is clean and unclean foods (i.e. Lev. 11). The same contrast between the reality and the superseded shadow is found in Heb. 8 and 10. The message is that Christians are to live in the clear light of Christ and not regress into the temporary shadows.

<sup>31</sup>A banning of all alcohol is not the teaching of the Bible. Jesus turned 120 gallons of water into wine, not grape juice! It was the "temperance" movement which rejected all use of alcohol, being actually a "prohibition" movement. Paul did not say "Do not get drunk on grape juice"! The word is *oinos* which, as everyone knows, is alcohol, not grape juice. The use of alcohol for celebration (Jesus recognized the use of wine in the Lord's supper and no one would have questioned this) is not forbidden by the Bible, but excess use, drunkenness, is, it goes without saying, always condemned. On no account should churches advocate policies which make

the worship of angels, gaining access to a so-called vision and inflated without cause by his unconverted mind. Such a person does not hold on to the head, while the whole body being nourished and held together by the ligaments and tendons, develops with the growth which comes from the one God.

If you died with Christ to the elemental forces in this world, why are you now wanting to live as if you are still part of that world? Why do you submit to regulations: do not handle, do not taste? All these regulations refer to what is destroyed by being used up and consist of human commands and doctrines. Although they have a reputation for wisdom by promoting ascetic practices, humility, and severe treatment of the body, they are of no value in controlling fleshly indulgence.

### Chapter 3

So then if you have been raised with the Messiah, seek what is above, where the Messiah is seated at the right hand of God.<sup>32</sup> Set your minds on what is above, not on what is on the earth. For you have died, and your life is now hidden with the Messiah in God. When the Messiah who is your life is revealed at his Second Coming, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.<sup>33</sup>

Therefore, put to death whatever in you is worldly: sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desire, and greed which is idolatry. Because of these things God's righteous fury threatens the disobedient,<sup>34</sup> and you once walked in these things when you were living that former life. But now you must also put away all the following: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and filthy language from your mouth. Do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man and his practices, and you have put on the new man, who is being renewed in knowledge according to the image of his Creator. Here there is no distinction

their members more righteous than Jesus and weaken their testimony to the world we seek to convert! Such misunderstanding makes church members appear foolish even to outsiders, and involves a strange pharisaical tendency. Jesus performed an extraordinary miracle by turning gallons of water into wine, for celebration (cp. Deut. 14:26), and the Baptists and others, not to be outdone, performed a similar miracle by turning that wine into Welch's grape juice! The biblical model and the example of Jesus is always the right one. Jesus was also not a vegetarian.

<sup>32</sup>Ps.110:1: "my lord," *adoni*. *Adoni* is never a title of Deity but always of a human, occasionally an angel superior.

<sup>33</sup>i.e. the glory of the future Kingdom on earth. Christians will be glorified by being given spiritual bodies in the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:44). Our present natural bodies will be replaced by "spirit-animated" bodies.

<sup>34</sup>Jesus expressed exactly this idea in John 3:36, and Heb. 5:9 informs us that there is no salvation apart from obedience to Jesus.

between Greek and Jew, no circumcision and uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, slave and free, but Christ is all in all.

Therefore God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, must put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience, accepting one another and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must forgive each other. Above all, you must put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. And let the peace of the Messiah to which you were also called in one single body, rule in your hearts. Constantly be thankful. Let the Gospel of the Kingdom, Messiah's saving Gospel, dwell richly among you, as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. And whatever you do in word or deed, do everything in the name of the lord Jesus,<sup>35</sup> giving thanks to the one God, who is the Father,<sup>36</sup> through him.

Wives, be in submission to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord. Husbands, love your wives and never become bitter against them. Children, you are to obey your parents in everything, for this is pleasing to the Lord. Fathers, do not aggravate or irritate your children to ensure that they will not become discouraged.

Servants, obey your human masters in everything; do not work only while being watched, in order to please men, but work wholeheartedly with reverence for the Lord.

Whatever you do, do it with enthusiasm, as done for the lord Jesus and not for men, knowing that you are going to receive the reward of the inheritance<sup>37</sup> of the future Kingdom from the lord — you are serving the lord Messiah.<sup>38</sup> For the wrongdoer will be paid back for all the wrong he has done, and there is no favoritism.

<sup>35</sup>By his authority and as representing him and his teachings.

<sup>36</sup>The One God is the Father no less than 1300 times in the NT and God is never defined as Father, Son and Holy Spirit anywhere in the Bible — that is to say no text ever speaks of “One God, consisting of Father, Son and Holy Spirit.” Note that the faith statements of most churches are foreign in this respect to Jesus and the Bible.

<sup>37</sup>Of the future Kingdom. Refer always to the words of Jesus in Matt. 19:28-29 and of Paul in 1 Cor. 6:2: “Don't you understand that the saints are going to manage the world?” This is of course based on the promises and prophecies of Dan. 7:18, 22, 27, etc. Paul warned them that they were not *now* ruling as kings. Luke 19:11ff is the ideal parable for establishing the NT sense of the Kingdom as primarily the Messianic Kingdom to be inaugurated at the Second Coming of Jesus (Rev. 11:15-18; Mark 15:43; Luke 21:31).

<sup>38</sup>The lord Messiah who was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:11). This is the second lord (*adoni*, “my lord”) of Ps. 110:1, cited and alluded to more by far than any other verse from the

## Chapter 4

Masters, provide your servants with what is right and fair, since you know that you also have a master in heaven.

Devote yourselves to prayer; stay alert in it with thanksgiving. At the same time pray also for us that God may open the door for us to proclaim the Gospel message, to speak the mystery<sup>39</sup> of the Messiah — for which I am currently in prison — so that I may explain it clearly, as I am required to speak. Walk in wisdom towards outsiders, making full use of your time. Your speech should always be gracious, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer each person.

Tychicus, a dear brother and faithful servant and fellow worker for the Lord, will give you all the news about me. I have sent him to you for this purpose, so that you may know how we are doing and so that he may encourage you. He is with Onesimus, a faithful and much loved brother who is one of you. They will tell you about everything going on here.

Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner, greets you, and so does Mark, Barnabas' cousin, concerning whom you have received instructions (if he comes to you, please welcome him). Jesus who is called Justus greets you, too. These are the only ones of the circumcision, the Jews, who are my co-workers for the Kingdom of God Gospel, and they have been a great comfort to me. Epaphrus, who is one of you, a servant of Messiah Jesus, greets you. He is always contending for you in his prayers, so that you can stand mature, fully assured of everything God wills. For I can testify to you about him that he works hard for you, for those in Laodicea and for those in Hierapolis. Luke,<sup>40</sup> the beloved physician, and Demas greet you. Pass on my greetings to the brothers and sisters in Laodicea, and to Nympha and the church which meets in her house.

Hebrew Bible. This verse provides the umbrella, stellar witness, key to the distinction between the One God the Father and the human lord Messiah Jesus. This is the crucial difference between the One Lord God, the Father (Jesus is not once called the Lord God) and *the man* Messiah Jesus (1 Tim. 2:5). The Son is not only “the lord Messiah” (Luke 2:11) but also the LORD's (Yahweh's) Messiah (Luke 2:26).

<sup>39</sup>This is of course not a mystification! It is the unfolding immortality, Kingdom program of God and the Messiah summed up as the Gospel of the Kingdom of God announced by Jesus (Mark 1:14-15; Luke 4:43; Acts 19:8; 20:24-25; 28:23, 31, etc.).

<sup>40</sup>Luke wrote more of the NT than any other writer (if we assume Paul did not write Hebrews) and he had the unique privilege and responsibility of recording the life of Christ and the history of the church after the ascension. Luke strove to show us that the same saving Gospel of the Kingdom was preached by Jesus and that exactly that same Kingdom of God Gospel was preached after Jesus had gone to heaven (Luke 4:43; Acts 8:12; 14:22; 19:8; **20:24-25**; 28:23, 31).

And when this letter has been read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodiceans; and make sure you also read the letter from Laodicea. Tell Archippus, pay attention to the ministry you received from the Lord, so that you carry it out fully as you should. This greeting is written in my own hand — Paul. Do remember my imprisonment, please. Grace be with you all. ✧

### Following Jesus by Obeying Him in Mark 12:29

Words cannot define God more clearly — language has no more lucid way of saying that God is **one single Person**, than the words of Jesus, the founder of true Christianity, in John 17:3: “You, Father, are the only one who is true God.” This is a simple and plain unitary monotheistic statement as is also Mark 12:29, where Jesus defined God as “one single Lord.” It was the post-biblical “church fathers” who later expanded and altered the creed of Jesus and introduced the fearful complexities of Trinitarianism. Ask your friends: Is Christianity the only world religion which begins by discarding its own founder’s creed? This is *the* question which needs to be asked and answered by all who seek a relationship with God and the Messiah. Ask it on Facebook, Twitter, texting, by letter to the local paper, in conversation, etc. But do ask it!

## Comments

“I joined the Restoration Fellowship Facebook page sometime ago, and feel that it’s now time to properly introduce myself. I am from South Australia, married with three children, and gifted in the area of music and song writing. Like the vast majority of Christians, I grew up in a church that preached the doctrine of the Trinity, and although my understanding of the details was fuzzy, I never questioned the validity of this teaching. Yet my hunger for the completeness of God’s truth remained, and guided by His spirit, about three years ago I embarked upon a period of intense study and reflection, at the end of which I finally rejected the doctrine of the Trinity, and recognized the truth that God is one personality only, the Father, and that Jesus is His human Son endowed with God’s own power and character; he is the Messiah elevated to the Father’s right hand, but he is not God Himself.

“In this journey, your teaching material (web articles, *Focus on the Kingdom* newsletters, etc.) has been invaluable. By the time I got my hands on a physical copy of your book *Jesus was not a Trinitarian*, I was pretty much already convinced of the truth, and reading the book itself was the icing on the cake. I underlined large portions of the text and refer back to it often.

“My search for truth and the considerably large step of rejecting the doctrine of the Trinity was undertaken in complete isolation, e.g. without any allies on this journey whatsoever. Not only are the majority of churches in my city denominationally traditional and piously conservative, there is also a strong pro-Trinity teaching ministry based here. At best, my new position is considered erroneous by all and dangerously heretical by many. Out of a need for fellowship, my family and I attend a conservative evangelical church, but I dare not speak of my rejection of Trinitarian theology. Through various internet wanderings I have connected with the Red Words Church in Melbourne and their pastor Steve Katsaras. But Melbourne is very distant from me, and as yet I haven’t met anyone here who shares my new convictions.

“The other ‘arm’ of your teaching that has been of great benefit to me is the clear and straightforward way in which you speak about God’s Kingdom. Satan has thrown a vast deception over the minds of average Christians regarding the Kingdom of God, and I was no different. I wrestled for many years about what, exactly, the Kingdom was, and like many my answer was muddled by the claim that the Kingdom arrived with Jesus’ first appearing, and so is here now. Your insistence that the Gospel preached by Jesus and the early church was the message of a coming future political reality upon a renewed earth governed by Messiah and his saints was like a beacon to my soul, and it stripped away my confusion and fruitless wrestling with the apocalyptic Scriptures. Not only that, but it helped to reset my understanding of the Christian faith as a life-pilgrimage, a journey of hope towards a City that is currently only seen by faith, and will be on earth!

“A recent experience with my current church family serves to highlight just how serious the confusion about God’s Kingdom is for the average Christian. In a group discussion setting, the church was asked to define the Kingdom of God. Answers ranged from ‘wherever God is working, that is the Kingdom,’ to the mystical ‘the Kingdom is inside us all,’ to the downright deceptive, ‘God is now the King of the whole earth. Therefore the whole earth (in its present state) is the Kingdom of God. Everyone is already in the Kingdom; some just don’t know it yet’!

“Of even greater concern is the acceleration in charismatic churches towards a complete post-millennial mindset. The power-hungry elite in these circles covet control of the so-called ‘seven mountains of society’ and believe that it is their role to create God’s Kingdom on earth now, only after which Jesus returns as something of an afterthought. They talk much about ‘the Kingdom’ but sadly promote a false kingdom of their own creation that

is only playing right into the hands of Satan and his future global empire of the anti-christ.

“I believe that as the time draws nearer to Christ’s return, the differences between the Gospel of the Kingdom preached by Jesus and an orthodox Nicene mindset will become greater, more visible, and more pronounced. I believe that in time, I will begin and lead a fellowship here that is committed to these truths, in the hope that I might preserve some believers from the great deception that is coming and has already come. I strongly believe in the Lord’s promise to preserve for himself a remnant of true believers; however, I’m waiting for the Lord’s timing and his release before I do so, and think that at the moment the pressure of being a lone voice might be too great for my young family. But I’m certainly committed to preserving and promoting these great truths of God, his Messiah, and the coming Kingdom within my songwriting and whatever other avenues present themselves. Anthony, may Messiah bless your ongoing work for the Kingdom. I will remain in touch, and keep you updated on any developments here. Maranatha.” — *Australia*

“I just received the last *Focus* and you have put into words the many things I have thought about other religions, and how they can justify their teachings in light of the simple Bible truths. How can so many intelligent people be so deceived? But the Bible does say the whole world is deceived, and yet this is so almost unbelievable, and truly so few are really seeking the truth.” — *California*

“I read your books *The Doctrine of the Trinity* and *Jesus Was Not a Trinitarian*. Excellent work! Happy to say that thanks to your books and the insights of some others, this once devout Trinitarian now embraces the unitary monotheism of Jesus himself. Thanks!” — *Florida*

“I want to give thanks for the newsletter *Focus on the Kingdom*. I receive it each month and it has been a blessing for me and for the 3 groups of biblical study that I’m leading here.” — *Guatemala*

“I feel truly sorry for the person who sent the email to Anthony saying: ‘You work it out Anthony, because your little hips are going to toast throughout eternity in hell if you think Jesus is not God!’ I hate to think what church or group that person follows and believes in. If you truly read the Bible as it should be read, you would know there is no such place as eternal hell. You would also know that Jesus is a human man born of Mary with God being his Father. When Jesus was baptised the voice of his Father could be heard saying, ‘You are my beloved Son with whom I am well pleased,’ or did Jesus throw his voice like a ventriloquist, pretending to be his Father? It is also obvious the group or church you belong to do not teach the message that Jesus was commissioned to teach, and

that is about the coming Kingdom of God. You need to go on your knees and ask the Father to open your heart and mind for you to learn the truth. I hope you do so for your sake.” — *England*

“I want to renew my free subscription of your *Focus on the Kingdom* newsletter. Please continue sending them to me. I enjoy reading them as they contain a lot of spiritual meat. They are really valuable sources of the Kingdom which will be preached in the whole world. My learning is greatly enriched. We use your materials as tools in our home Bible study and fellowship.” — *Philippines*

*This cannot go without comment: You said:*

“Honestly, Anthony, I don’t see how you could have missed it. **I think it may be because your view is centered alone on truth revealed in the gospels rather than taking into account the truth revealed by Christ after his resurrection.** Remember Jesus’ words in John 16:13-14 and those of Paul in Galatians 1:11. Where would we be without the letters of Paul to the Church? Do we not need only the truth but the whole truth and nothing but the truth? I think most of the division among believers today is our tendency to stop short in our studies. I count on this, that if we confess with our mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in our hearts God raised him from the dead, we will be saved, and not by our theological smarts. Do we agree?”

*I believe in the whole NT. I have to stress the Synoptics because they come first! And Jesus is the first preacher of the saving Gospel (Heb. 2:3). It is a falsehood to make one verse, out of context, in Romans 10 the Gospel! If one says that believing in the resurrection of Jesus is it, alone, then one has rejected Jesus! Calling Jesus “Lord” and then **not obeying HIS Gospel** command in Mark 1:14-15 is a fraud, is it not?*

*Even in Romans 10:14, if one translates correctly (not NIV, but NASU) one must “hear Jesus preaching.” Not just “hear about Jesus” (NIV mistranslates here). Evangelicalism seems bent on rejecting Jesus and then giving us a partial Paul.*

*Obedience to the Gospel means firstly obeying Jesus (Heb 5:9; John 3:36) for salvation and then responding to the command of Jesus to “repent and believe the Gospel of the Kingdom” in Mark 1:14-15. Do we agree? The whole truth and nothing but the truth cannot mean **not** starting with Jesus (Heb. 2:3). He first preached the Gospel and spoke of salvation in Luke 8:12 (word of the Kingdom, Matt. 13:19).*

*Hope you will consider this fair dialogue. Evangelicalism, blighted by Dispensationalism, ignores the historical Jesus and his saving Gospel of the Kingdom, to which is added of course, his death and resurrection, as they happened. Acts 8:12 says it all.*