

Let us revisit our Christian foundations:

Christianity clearly is focused on Jesus.

But does today's Christian message really present the real Jesus, the Jewish Jesus, the Messiah who was predicted throughout the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament)?

Does today's Christian community have the same desire and goals as Jesus? Does it share his mission statement? Can it or should it share His mission statement?

Jesus claimed to be the Messiah (Christ), the Son of God and the Son of Man.

Matthew 16:13,15-17 When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say the Son of Man is?"

¹⁵"But what about you?" he asked. "Who do you say I am?"

¹⁶Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

¹⁷Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven."

Moses was told by God that a prophet would come who would speak everything God told him to.

Deuteronomy 18:18 I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him.

Deuteronomy 18:15 "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear,

David had a vision of the coming Messiah:

Psalms 110:1 THE LORD (God) says to my Lord (the Messiah), Sit at My right hand, until I make Your adversaries Your footstool

Daniel had a vision of the coming of the Son of Man

Daniel 7:13,14 "In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worshiped him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed."

John clearly alludes to this vision in Revelation:

Revelation 1:12-14 "I turned around to see the voice that was speaking to me. And when I turned I saw seven golden lampstands, and among the lampstands was someone "like a son of man," dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire".

Jesus was the Messiah, the 'anointed one of God'. So what was his God given role and purpose?

His purpose is summed up in 1 John 3:8 **"He who does what is sinful is of the devil, because the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the devil's work".**

His method for achieving this purpose is summed up in Luke 4:43 **But he said, "I must preach the good news of the Kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent."** (Also stated in Mark 1:38).

This is His Mission Statement. This was the purpose of his life. In fact, Jesus gave us this mission statement as well when he called us to preach the gospel. Jesus was chosen by God to announce the Gospel of the Kingdom of God. This is the heart of the Christian faith. **Jesus was an impassioned preacher of what he called the Gospel (Good News) about the Kingdom of God.** God sent him, commissioned him, authorized him to do just that — to preach the *Gospel of the Kingdom*.

The Gospel is about the Kingdom of God. That is the number one fact about Christianity.

Jesus said it was, and if you are going to follow Jesus, it is wise to adopt his Gospel of the Kingdom as the centre of your interest from now on. If you want to think like Jesus and be like Jesus, the only

sensible policy is to adopt his mission statement as yours. The Kingdom of God is Jesus' rallying cry and slogan.

To quote Amy Littler:

*This is the Kingdom of God as the Jews understood it. They were not confused in the slightest by Jesus saying, "The meek shall inherit the earth" (Matt. 5:5) or by Jesus' model prayer, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). That is exactly what they were waiting for! What they did not understand was that the Messiah had to suffer before he could reign (Isa. 52, 53). Tragically they rejected the king they had been waiting for. Luke 1:33 tells us how intimately connected Jesus was to the prophecies of the Hebrew Bible. "And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever" (2 Sam. 7:13, 16; Ps. 89:36, 37; Dan. 2:44; 7:14, 18, 27; Matt. 28:18), "and his kingdom will have no end." **Jesus Christ died for the Kingdom so that you and I could enter it.** (from Focus on the Kingdom July 2005)*

Given the centrality of Luke 4:43 (also expressed elsewhere in slightly different terms) it comes as a shock to search through Commentaries on the Bible, even those edited by very well-respected theologians such as FF Bruce and find this passage either ignored or not recognized.

Why is this so?

Perhaps, because churches have inherited much of what they believe from post-biblical church fathers and not from the Bible.

'Beware lest anyone should cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the traditions of men, according to the basic principles of the world..., and not according to Messiah...' Col.2:8

The influence of philosophy, of Plato and Aristotle began to affect the Hebrew world well before the time of the Messiah, with the arrival of Alexander the Great. Its strongest influence though, seems to have come some time after the death of the apostles and the eye-witnesses to the resurrection of the Messiah.

This Greek influence was evident in the writings of theologians as early as the 2nd century AD and certainly most evident in the creeds of the Nicene Council of 317 AD.

Since the Reformation of the early 1500's Protestants seem to follow Luther and Calvin as new "church fathers." Luther's approach to the Gospel is strangely unbiblical since he did not think that Jesus preached the Gospel. He thought that Matthew, Mark and Luke were unimportant as far as the Gospel is concerned!¹

Calvin's God is so cruel that he predestined some human beings to be tortured in hell forever. Calvin, who was well read, also authorized, or at the very least agreed to, the burning at the stake of a distinguished contemporary Bible scholar, who challenged him on an important doctrine².

Killing others for any reason is utterly unlike anything advocated by Jesus. And killing another believer over a doctrine is really murder, which the Bible forbids.

So much of what hear from the pulpit and read in our Christian books is so strongly influenced by Greek philosophical concepts (Hellenism or Christo-Platonism)³ that we do not even recognize this influence and the false traditions and doctrinal error that result.

Certainly, despite diligent, and zealous study over many, many years, I myself have only come to realise in the last couple of years, how significant the Greek philosophical mindset has been in moving us away from an accurate, Biblically grounded faith.

So how has this Greek influence, this allegorising and spiritualising of the Scriptures affected us?

We have lost the knowledge of what the 'Gospel' is. Ask a few of your Christian friends. Ask them "What is the Gospel?"

The most likely answers will be along the lines of 'the saving grace of Christ'; 'the salvation offered to men via Christ's death on the cross', etc.

They are unlikely to say 'The Good News of the Kingdom of God'.

So what is this Good News of the Kingdom of God⁴ or the Kingdom of Heaven to use Matthew's term for it?

Put simply, it is what Abraham was promised and longed to see; it is a future time or Coming Age when the Messiah Jesus will reign over all the earth. A coming age when followers of Christ Jesus, His Bride will rule with Him over a renewed, redeemed and restored Earth (currently the Messiah sits at the right hand of God until the 'restoration of all things' [Acts 3:20-22] and has done so since His ascension).

This Coming Age will be a time of true peace; a time of true justice thanks to a theocratic government. For a very full understanding of what it will be like **in** the Kingdom of God, I highly recommend Randy Alcorn's 'Heaven' – perhaps the most significant and complete treatise written on what the Bible tells us about life in the Kingdom of God. (I have also taught a series on this topic which was essentially a summary of Alcorn's book – the lecture notes are available at my website.)

For a much more complete and thorough exposition on the scriptural support for the inauguration of the Kingdom of God at the Second Coming of Jesus, I recommend 'The Coming Kingdom of the Messiah' by Prof. Anthony Buzzard – this is, in my opinion, one of the most important books of recent times. Another excellent book that also covers this topic is 'They Never Told Me THIS in Church' by Greg Dueble.

How important it is to truly believe in the Kingdom Plan of God? Look at Mark 4:11-12:

He told them, "The secret of the kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'"

Jesus appears to state here that unless someone accepts the Gospel of the Kingdom, they cannot truly repent and be forgiven. To repent and be forgiven means to be saved. That is, to be granted the gift of immortality – to be resurrected to eternal life in the Coming Age of the Messiah.

Consider the first words of Jesus in public ministry; "Repent, for the Kingdom of God is at hand" (Mark 1:15). Forgiveness and repentance are reliant on truly accepting the Good News of the Kingdom of God.

A good question at this point is to ask, where does the death, burial and resurrection of Christ Jesus fit into this Gospel message then? Is the argument regarding the Good News of the Kingdom of God, reducing or replacing the centrality of the Messiah's death on the cross?

Many, of the Jews understood (even if they did not fully believe) the promises to Abraham that he and his 'seed' would receive a future Kingdom on earth. Prophecies about the Coming Age of the Messiah were repeated so often in the Old Testament - in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Micah, Obadiah & the Psalms for example. When we also fully understand this future hope we should desire nothing more than to wish to be part of this Kingdom.

But how? We are all sinners and God tells us that the wages of sin is death. That is, our sin means we cannot enter the Kingdom of God – we do not have any qualifications that give us an entry ticket. But, hallelujah! Jesus was sinless and His death was therefore the perfect sacrifice for our sins. He paid the entry price for us – through the Cross, we can attain the righteousness to enter the Kingdom of God! His resurrection proves that God can bring man back from death; to live again; to be immortal.

The Messiah Jesus' resurrection proves that all He said can be trusted; that the Good News of the Kingdom of God is indeed Good News! Christ Jesus shared this message of hope and then through His atoning death gave us a way to share in this hope. In fact, he gave us the ONLY Way to share in this hope - *"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.* (John 14:6).

Thus, it is hopefully clear that the Gospel of the Kingdom does not in anyway diminish the Cross – the two are instead a perfect complement. Either, without the other is not the full story.

Returning again to the Kingdom of God, Acts 8:12 also confirms the importance of the Kingdom message:

But when they believed Philip as he preached the good news of the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

Armed with this simple understanding of God and His Messiah and the great future hope for man, we need to look again at the doctrines and traditions of the Church, whoever promotes them and ascertain if they fit well with this simple message of hope.

Are there in the churches doctrines and traditions, philosophies that we accept and follow today but which were not present in the minds and hearts of the inspired writers of the New Testament?

Should we base our understanding blindly on translations such as the King James which inserted extra verses not found in most versions prior to the 15th century (eg 1 John 5:7 – now removed from most modern translations) and certainly not in the Greek manuscripts available.

In fact, though recent scholarship has improved our understanding and hence translations, all our translations suffer in some way from the influence of Greek philosophical thinking.

Sadly then, we cannot have the assurance that 'our' version of the Bible, be that the NIV, NASB, ESV, AMP, NKJV or King James, etc. is the 'correct' version, but we can be assured that God has and does reveal Himself to those who seek Him with all their heart, and that all issues which are foundational or necessary for salvation are accurately revealed in 'our' favourite version.⁵

It seems that Paul is telling us in 2 Thessalonians 2: 9-11 that we must love the truth or risk losing our salvation. We need to be prepared to be open as the Bereans were to search the Scriptures and not assume because the church has promoted some position strongly for hundreds of years it must be correct.

2 Thess. 2:9-11 "The coming of the lawless one will be in accordance with the work of Satan displayed in all kinds of counterfeit miracles, signs and wonders, and in every sort of evil that deceives those who are perishing. They perish because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. For this reason God sends them a powerful delusion so that they will believe the lie..."

If we can grasp the fundamental message of the Messiah, then with diligent and thoughtful study of the Scriptures; even without being scholars of Hebrew and Greek, we may rid ourselves of many of the unhelpful ideas that lead us away from our Lord and our obedience to Him.

To quote Frank Selch in ***"Is There A Need For A Fresh Reformation Of The Church?"***

"The reality today is that the church, via her leaders and teachers, has drifted so far from her origins, that today she is barely recognizable as having her origins in Hebrew Redemptive History.

The Scriptures foretell that a time of 'Restoration of all things' is coming (Acts 3:21ff.). I believe that this time is very close. It is therefore NOW, that we must heed the voice of the Spirit, to initiate this process. A part of this process of Restoration is the proclamation of truth as a testimony against the

lies the world is being drenched in. Truth is the only guarantee against the God-initiated, coming deception of the Anti-Messiah.¹

It is not enough to know interesting things from the Word of God or to know great and wonderful thing about God. We must seek to develop fellowships where a genuine desire exists to know and to live God's Word."

In conclusion, how does the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom of God, (why Jesus was sent) align with his appearing to 'destroy the devil's work' (1 John 3:8)?

It should seem abundantly clear that the works of the devil have not yet been destroyed. The devil is still the 'god' of this age. When Jesus returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth he will then destroy the devil's work. In Revelation John describes Satan as "the one (now) deceiving the whole world" (Rev 12:9). Clearly, when the devil is banished at the beginning of the Coming Age, he will no longer influence people and thus his 'works' will be destroyed.

An all-encompassing knowledge of the **Gospel of the Kingdom of God** should give Christians the eternal perspective needed to live a life worthy of our Lord Jesus' grace and forgiveness; a life focused on the future; a life that cry's out "Come, Lord Jesus!" **He who testifies to these things says, "Yes, I am coming soon." AMEN.**

In the love of Messiah Jesus,

Paul Herring
November 2005

¹ Anti-Messiah, or more commonly referred to as Anti-Christ, does not only mean one opposed to the true Messiah, but one who seeks to replace the true Messiah (Christ); indeed, even God Himself, fulfilling the prophecy of Isaiah 14:13-14. Note also, that a number of significant passages seem to imply that the antichrist(s) may be those who follow false doctrine, especially doctrine that tries to change the Messiah to a 'Christ of faith' or some other falsehood.

Appendices:

[1] Martin Luther:

Martin Luther, a prominent source of evangelical doctrine, also avoids the Gospel as preached by Jesus: “Luther created by a *dogmatic criterion* a canon of the gospel within the canon of the books [i.e. he chose some books and ignored others].

Luther wrote: *‘Those Apostles who treat oftenest and highest of how faith alone justifies, are the best Evangelists. Therefore St. Paul’s epistles are more a Gospel than Matthew, Mark and Luke. For these do not set down much more than the works and miracles of Christ; but the grace which we receive through Christ no one so boldly extols as St. Paul, especially in his letter to the Romans.’* In comparison with the Gospel of John, the epistles of Paul, and I Peter, *‘which are the kernel and marrow of all books,’* the epistle of James, with its insistence that man is not justified by faith alone, but by works proving faith, is *‘a mere letter of straw, for there is nothing evangelical about it.’*

It is clear that the infallibility of Scripture has here, in fact if not in [Luther’s] admission, followed the infallibility of popes and councils; for the Scripture itself has to submit to be judged by the ultimate criterion of its accord with Luther’s doctrine of justification by faith.”—Moore, *‘History of Religions’* Scribner 1920. p 320

[2] Calvin & Servetus:

It certainly can be challenging to discern truth even within the Christian community when opposing camps give different renditions of some historical event.

In trying to discover historical truth I would suggest there are at least 3 approaches we can take:

1. We can look for sources who at least appear not to be pushing a particular interpretation,
2. we can look for statements that both sides affirm, i.e commonality
3. and we can look for illogical or contradictory comments and assume that the conclusions (supposed historical facts) from these are unlikely.

The debate regarding Calvin and the burning at the stake of Servetus is an example. Using approach 1, look at the following Encyclopedia comment:

The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia, 6th ed. Copyright © 2005, Columbia University Press. (All rights reserved.)
 Servetus, Michael , 1511–53, Spanish theologian and physician. His name in Spanish was Miguel Serveto. In his early years he came in contact with some of the leading reformers in Germany and Switzerland—Johannes Oecolampadius, Martin Bucer, Wolfgang Fabricius Capito, and probably Martin Luther. But he held views, concerning the Trinity in particular, that brought condemnation from the theologians of the Reformation as well as from those of the Roman Catholic Church. When he published *De trinitatis erroribus* (1531) and *De trinitate* (1532), the feeling of opposition was so strong that he assumed the name of Michel de Villeneuve, from the family home, Villanueva, and spent some time in Lyons, working on an edition of Ptolemy’s geography and other scientific works, then in Paris studying medicine. There he is said to have seen John Calvin. He became well-known for his ability in dissection and had unusual success as a physician; he discovered that some of the blood circulates through the lungs. From 1541 to 1553 he lived in the palace of the archbishop of Vienne as his confidential physician. When (1553) he had a work setting forth his ideas of Christianity secretly printed, investigation was begun by the Inquisition. Servetus, arrested, tried, and condemned, escaped from prison. Several months later, while making his way to Italy, he was seized in Geneva by Calvin’s order. There, after a long trial, in which Calvin’s condemnation was a stern factor, he was burned on Oct. 27, 1553. See biographies by R. H. Bainton (1953) and J. F. Fulton (1954).

This encyclopedia comment, along with the following excerpts from a pro-Servetus site suggest it is fair to consider him to have had a great intellect and to stand for his principles.

From http://www.socinian.org/michael_servetus.html

“... At the same ceremony, professor of philosophy Otto Karmin said: "Amidst the most inhuman sufferings, he affirmed the principles of free thought which has triumphed since and the principle of free belief which became the Magna Carta of the Unitarian Protestants and of the liberal churches. These churches live by the doctrines for which Servetus sacrificed his life." ... José Barón Fernández, who emphasized the contribution of Servetus to medicine, which alone would guarantee him immortality, called him one of the brightest geniuses through whom Spain contributed to universal culture: "The profound knowledge of any of the disciplines on which he discoursed manifests the depth of his erudition combined with the rigor and honesty of the inquiry."

Now look at a Calvinistic site: <http://www.challies.com/archives/001318.php>

Michael Servetus was a Spanish theologian and physician who lived from 1511-1553. In his early years he came into contact with many leading Reformers and while he broke with the Roman Catholic Church and became at least nominally Protestant, he adopted a particularly heretical belief, denying that **Jesus Christ was the Son of God. He also denied paedobaptism**, a belief which further alienated him from Protestant and Catholic alike. . .

Quoting Calvin: "Servetus wrote to me a short time ago, and sent a huge volume of his dreamings and pompous triflings with his letter. I was to find among them wonderful things, and such as I had never before seen; and if I wished, he would himself come. But I am by no means inclined to be responsible for him; and if he come, **I will never allow him, supposing my influence worth anything, to depart alive.**"

When Servetus, at last, arrived in the city, Calvin was left with the unenviable position of having to decide whether to allow the heretic to continue his teaching in Geneva, which would inevitably lead people to believe that the Reformed church was lenient towards heresy (softer even than the Roman Catholic Church that had already condemned this man to death), or to attempt to take action ...

In this pro-Calvin reference the statement is made that Servetus did not believe Jesus was the Son of God! It is a staggering statement to suggest that any theologian reading the Bible could come to this conclusion, as there are many scriptures that declare explicitly and directly that Jesus said he was the Son of God, as did the apostles, etc. This would certainly appear to be an illogical, erroneous conclusion.

What the Socinian (pro-Servetus) site states on this issue is much more illuminating and believable:

During the process at Geneva in the debate with Calvin he was ready to modify his views provided that his opponent's arguments were extracted from the biblical text. After he was condemned to death, Servetus with humility asked Calvin, who was directly responsible for his unjust martyrdom, for forgiveness. To be saved from the stake he only had to state "**Jesus Christ the eternal Son of God.**" Instead, his last words were: "**Jesus Christ, Son of the eternal God.**" He was convinced of the correctness of his reading of the scripture, which he revered, and died defending not his life but his doctrines Also from http://www.socinian.org/michael_servetus.html

There is absolutely no question that the Bible tells us that God is eternal; there is also no doubt that Jesus is the 'Son of God'. Where there is doubt is whether Jesus was pre-existent before His conception. Thus, Calvin was clearly trying to coerce Servetus to agree with his belief in Jesus as 'God, the Son' or some other pre-existence dogma.

Note also that the pro-Calvin site implicitly labels child (paedo)-baptism as a biblical doctrine. Also note, that the pro-Calvin site agrees that Calvin desired Servetus's death! (An example of commonality).

In summary, we can see that the pro-Calvin (Challies) site clearly contains some significant historical error as well as totally denying the error of Calvin in desiring Servetus' death, regardless of his apparent heresy! This can not be excused away by arguing it was the culture of the day – these were theologians who studied the Holy Scriptures! They have no excuse for believing it is acceptable to murder someone!

Regardless on the merit or otherwise of Calvinism and the TULIP doctrine, Calvin was unquestionably, and by his own words, to some significant degree culpable in the murder of a man who sought to seek the whole truth of God.

[3] Hellenism/Greek Philosophical thinking/Christo-Platonism:

Plato introduced the concept of the immortality of the soul. Plato said that the human being is composed of two parts, an immortal soul housed inside a mortal body. Plato built his theory on an old Persian idea called "dualism." This idea claims that two forces, good and evil, have always existed and always will exist side by side in the universe. The visible world of matter is evil. The invisible world of "spirit" is good. From this, Plato came eventually to believe in a good immortal soul trapped inside an evil mortal body. Death became a sort of liberation. The immortal soul, freed from the degraded body, can soar to the heights of bliss. Death became a "friend" in contrast to the Bible's description of death as mankind's last "enemy."

From the influence of this background, the Christian Church eventually came to view death as the immediate release of the immortal soul (spirit) from the deceased body, on its way to eternal reward or eternal damnation. Or, simply, when you die, your body returns to the earth and your soul goes immediately to heaven or to hell.

This is not the Hebraic understanding of life and death. This belief has led to many unhelpful doctrines that dilute the centrality of the Messiah's role as the King of the Coming Age and Saviour of Man – the only way and Name through which we can be reconciled to the Almighty God, the creator of the universe.

The influence of Hellenism on our New Testament translations has been very significant and is evidenced in many ways. For example the first verse of Mathew's Gospel uses Jesus' title as a surname i.e many translations write 'Jesus Christ' as for example the NIV: "*A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:...*" *Matt 1:1*

Christ is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word MASHIACH (Messiah in English). This is Jesus' title as the anointed One of God, it is **not** a surname. Thus Matt 1:1 should read Jesus The Christ or Christ Jesus or Jesus the Messiah, etc.

Also the anglicising of most of the Hebrew names of the disciples, etc. is part of this Hellenising or spiritualising of the scriptures. Mary, Jesus mother was actually a Jewish woman named Miriam (the same as Moses' older sister. Note that Moses sister's name has remained unchanged in our modern translations) John, James, Peter, etc were not the correct Hebrew names of the disciples and Apostles. Why were they changed in the New Testament but not the Old?

Quoting Frank Selch again (from "*Is There A Need For A Fresh Reformation Of The Church?*"):

"Without going into detail here it seems this de-judaising was effected to help remove the Jewishness of the Bible. If the Jewish race could be made to disappear,

1. *there would be no physical testimony to the Creator God.*
2. *the 'New-Testament' could stand as a book of its own.*
3. *the 'Old Testament' i.e the Hebrew Bible could be relegated to a museum as a historical record or Allegory.*

Without the Jewish race as a witness, Christianity is free to develop into whatever religion it desires."

How quickly did this start to occur? Look at this quote of a very early Christian writer and theologian, *Justin Martyr* (born around 100 AD):

'Christ is the Logos in whom every race of men shared. Those who lived in accordance with LOGOS, i.e. true reason, ARE CHRISTIANS; even though they were regarded as atheists, e.g. Socrates and Heraclitus among the Greeks...' in Logos, 'History of Christianity', p.106-112.

For a much more in-depth look at these issues I suggest a read of "*The Mosaic Law or the Divine Instructions of God: Grace or Truth?*" and "*Dancing with the Scimitar of Islam*" by Frank Selch (available via his website www.theolivetreeconnection.org or email: theolivetreeconnection@bigpond.com)

[4] The Kingdom of God:

On one occasion when Jesus was approaching Jerusalem, the people expected the Kingdom to appear immediately. Jesus took this opportunity to explain that he must first depart and later return to establish his Kingdom. In harmony with his promises, Jesus pictured himself as a nobleman who expected to leave the earth for a far country (heaven), there to receive a Kingdom and to return. At his return his servants were to be rewarded with positions of rulership over cities, while those who refused to accept him as King would be destroyed (Luke 19:11-27).

Jesus' message was accepted by very few of his Jewish compatriots. Though they knew that God had promised one day to send the Messiah, they refused to believe that Jesus was that promised King. Thus the Messiah was put to death by the religious and civil authorities of his day. After he had lain for three days and nights in the grave, God restored him to life, and he was seen alive by his disciples.

"He died...he was buried, he rose on the third day. He was seen by Cephas (Peter), then by the twelve; after that he was seen by James, then by all the Apostles, and finally he was seen by myself (Paul)" (1 Cor. 15:3-8).

As we have seen, Jesus had promised to come back to the earth, to inaugurate the worldwide government foreseen by all the Old Testament prophets. Speaking to his disciples just before his crucifixion, he described events leading up to his future Coming, and finished by telling them: *"And then shall be seen the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and glory...So when you see all this happen, be sure that the Kingdom of God is at hand"* (Luke 21:27, 31).

Jesus had said the same thing to the Jewish authorities: *"And what is more you will all see the Son of Man seated at the right hand of the Power and coming in the clouds of heaven"* (Mark 14:62).

After the Messiah's death and resurrection the disciples were naturally interested to know when the promised Kingdom would begin:

"After his sufferings he had shown them that he was alive by a number of proofs, revealing himself to them for forty days, and discussing the affairs of the Kingdom of God...Now when they met they asked him, 'Lord, is this the time you are going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?' But he told them, 'It is not for you to know the course and periods of time that the Father has fixed by his own authority'" (Acts 1:3, 6, 7).

The same message about the Kingdom of God was taken up by the Apostles, who announced that at an appointed time the Messiah, who had been resurrected from the dead, would come back to rule the world. He would remain in heaven *"till the period of the great Restoration. Ages ago God spoke of this by the lips of His holy prophets"* (Acts 3:21).
(From Focus on the Kingdom November 2004 www.focusonthekingdom.org)

Some other support for the argument that the Gospel of Christ was the Good News of the Kingdom of God:

Paul states in Gal 3:8 “And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all the nations be blessed.” that the Gospel was preached to Abraham.

What do you think this means? I would suggest that God through His angels gave Abraham a vision of the Kingdom of God that he would one day be part of (see Hebrews 11). Thus the Gospel was indeed preached to Abraham!

Jesus said that the saints will share meals with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Mat 8:11 “And I say unto you, that many shall come from the east and the west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven”

Luke 13:28-29 “There shall be the weeping and the gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the prophets, in the kingdom of God, and yourselves cast forth without. And they shall come from the east and west, and from the north and south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God”

Also, Jesus “came to confirm the promises made to the fathers.” (Rom 15:8). He began (repent for the kingdom of God is near) and ended (Acts 1:6) his public ministry declaring the coming Kingdom of God.

Thus the hope of living forever in the land promised to Abraham is a very significant part of the gospel. We are of-course only heirs to this promise and sons or seed of Abraham through Christ Jesus. The resurrection is also absolutely vital to this ‘good news’.

Abraham is thus “the father of all who believe” (Rom 4:11) and those who are in this family are “those who hear the Word of God” (the Word being the Gospel of the Kingdom, not just the Bible - Matt 13:19) and “do it” (Matt 12:46-50).

[5] Biblical Inerrancy & Bible Translation problems:

The question asked by some, when the issue of errors in Bible translations is raised, is how then can we have assurance when we read the Bible, that we are reading the true revelation of God? Do we all need to be scholars & experts in Hebrew and Greek?

Thousands of years of study in such areas as medicine and science have led to great agreement about the basic laws of physics and chemistry (with some notable exceptions such as the theory of evolution), and the anatomy and mechanics of the human body, etc.

However, the same thousands of years of study of religion and God have not led to any real consensus. Possibly, the opposite is true – with the relatively recent introduction of naturalistic evolution and the much greater access to different research and ideas, there is probability much greater divergence of opinion than ever before. This, at a time in history when some of us would argue that there is less excuse, theologically, prophetically, historically, & **scientifically**[#] for not believing in the God of the Bible than ever before.

Jesus of course, warned that there would be great delusion at the end of the age and even strongly hinted at this in saying rhetorically “... *when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?*” (Luke 18:8).

The Bible presents itself as the written revelation of God. It asserts that it is a special revelation of God – it claims to be a trustworthy source of knowledge of religious truth, that is knowledge of the ultimate destiny of the world and man, as well as the meaning of life. These are questions that science cannot hope to fully answer.

There are many books that detail the historical, archaeological and even scientific support for this assertion. This short treatise will assume the reader is somewhat familiar with these details.

The original manuscripts (autographs) of the 66 books of the Bible, must have been inspired and significantly directed by God, if they are to be useable and reliable divine revelations.

They could not have been truly inspired by the God of truth if they contained anything significantly erroneous or false. As no original autographs are available to study we cannot be certain of their inerrancy. While they may have been inerrant (i.e. have no errors at all), this belief can only be conjecture on our part at this time in history.

But what about the text of the Bible as we now possess it?

There have clearly been copyists errors as we have found discrepancies among handwritten copies. For example, 1 Samuel 13:1 *“Saul was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned over Israel forty-two years.”* (NIV) The NIV adds the comment that the Hebrew does not have thirty. The Amplified Bible reads *“SAUL WAS [forty] years old when he began to reign; and when he had reigned two years over Israel,”* and has the footnote: *“The complete numbers in this verse are missing in the Hebrew. The word “forty” is supplied by the best available estimate.”*

Apparently the correct number ‘fell out’ so early in the transmission of this particular text that it was already lost before the 3rd century BC.

There are a number of scholarly works that you can read which clearly establish that numerous errors have crept into our translations of the Bible.

If we are studying a religious document then, which may contain truth and error, how are we then to proceed?

While some of the approaches have already been outlined in an earlier note, to repeat, we can use the faculty of human reason to weigh the evidence by applying rules of logic such as the rule of self-contradiction.

We can also look for historical support, especially through archaeological discoveries and through the fulfilment of biblical prophecies. Unlike other religious documents which have few prophecies, the Bible is around 30% prophecy!

There is a limit though, to this rationale and logical approach.

Man cannot pass judgement on the truth or falsity of divine revelation. For such judgements to be made, they must come from a judge who possesses a knowledge of the truth superior to that of the revelation itself that is being judged. In other words, man would need to know more about God; than the Bible itself knows if he is to pass judgement on the truth of divine revelation in the Bible.

So how can these translations which are not inerrant, serve as reliable mediums for disclosing God’s will? Are we not back where we started with the same problem as we have with books such as the Koran or Vedas which contain truth and error?

No, not at all. There is a great difference between a document that was wrong at the start and a document which was right but which has been miscopied or mistranslated, despite the reverent efforts of the copyists and translators.

You can read a letter from a friend or relative and find in it common slips of the pen such as an ‘of’ instead of ‘or’; ‘and’ instead of ‘an’; ‘led’ instead of ‘lead’ and yet, by a simple process of correction in the light of context, you may easily arrive at the true sense intended by your friend or relative.

If the reader knows the author’s fundamental nature/personality and purpose in writing, then this correction of minor errors is made even easier. In the case of God and the Bible, we can know the Father’s fundamental nature and purpose.

Whether these errors are copyist errors; translation errors, or even deliberate modifications, such as 1 John 5:7, made to support doctrinal positions, would the God of love, espoused so strongly throughout the pages of the Holy Scriptures, allow them to pervert the Bible to the point where it no longer contains and reveals the most important aspects of God’s revelation to mankind?

We surely would argue no. I would contend that all modern versions of the Bible (not necessarily paraphrases such as The Message), do contain the central message of God. That is, they all clearly reveal

the nature of God; the Good News of the Kingdom of God, the Messiah Jesus and the saving grace of his crucifixion.

There is, of course, a great deal more to be said on the inerrancy of the Bible. If you would like to learn more and at the same time be uplifted and even more in awe of God's amazing revelation through the Holy Scriptures then I suggest reading 'A Survey of Old Testament Introduction' by the late Prof. Gleason Archer and 'In Search of Certainty' by Josh McDowell & Thomas Williams. To better appreciate the issue of textual corruption I highly recommend F Paul Haney's '*Exploring NEW TESTAMENT CORRUPTION... Was it ACCIDENTAL—DELIBERATE—OR BOTH?*'

** A good place to start if you wish to better understand the incredible revelation of God, the 'Intelligent Designer', through modern science would be 'The Design Revolution' by William Dembski or "the Case for the Creator" by Lee Strobel, or any book by Dr Hugh Ross, such as 'A Matter of Days' or 'The Genesis Question'.*