

Focus on the Kingdom

Vol. 25 No. 7

Anthony Buzzard, editor

April, 2023

The Truth About Revival Is That Revival Should Lead to Truth

by Terri Moore, Minnesota

On February 8th at Asbury University, a Christian college in Wilmore, Kentucky, “a few students stayed in chapel to talk and pray and sing, and then felt a holy wind.”¹ More students joined them and the auditorium where they met was not closed for the night. In fact, for weeks there was a continual service in session. People from all over the country and world visited Asbury to see what was going on. One school official stated that “the Holy Spirit showed up with our students.”² The president of Asbury Theological Seminary (a separate institution) referred to this as an “awakening.”³ The University set February 23 as the final date of “hosting or sponsoring Outpouring events,”⁴ but universities in different states then reported similar student-led gatherings for prayer and worship.

At these gatherings people say they are finding community, peace, and bold declarations of God’s love. The word “revival” is being used to describe the experience. Revival is defined as a “recall, return or recovery from a state of neglect, oblivion, obscurity or depression” or “renewed and more active attention to religion; an awakening of men to their spiritual concerns.”⁵ People are wondering whether they should travel to be part of such a revival. Others are wondering if this is really a revival and outpouring of holy spirit. If so, maybe they shouldn’t miss out on it.

The believer is told: “Do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1). It is important that believers perform this test because “even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light” (2 Cor. 11:14) and one of his primary strategies is deception. For example Luke 8:12 tells us that Satan wants to prevent us from “being saved” by keeping the Gospel of the Kingdom out of

sight! It takes constant vigilance by the believer to protect from being entrapped and misled by what is false. “Be on the alert. Your adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. But resist him, firm in **your** faith” (1 Peter 5:8-9). The believer is encouraged to “put on the breastplate of faith and love, and as a helmet, the hope of salvation” (1 Thess. 5:8).

Our faith is based on the truths described in Scripture, the record of how God has spoken to us and revealed what is necessary for us to know. It is against that Scripture, and only the Scripture, that we test messages, teachings, and events to determine how we as believers should respond.

The key question about these events at the college campuses is whether it is of the true God YHWH. Are these people experiencing the result of an outpouring of holy spirit? Jesus calls the holy spirit “the spirit of the truth” (John 14:17) and says that this spirit will guide us into all truth (16:13) and, specifically, that it will testify about Jesus (15:26). This means that the holy spirit will always declare, affirm, and inspire to the truth as recorded in the Bible.

That leads to the question: What is the truth about Jesus? Who is Jesus? John says that “by this you know the spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God” (1 John 4:2). Hebrews adds: “Since then the children share in flesh and blood, [Jesus] likewise also partook of the same” so that he could deliver us and defeat the Devil (Heb. 2:14-15). To share in flesh and blood can only happen when a person is human, in all respects, from conception through death. Only at the time of resurrection was Jesus made immortal by virtue of the eternal life promised and granted by YHWH.

The Asbury statement of beliefs includes “that there is one God, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit” and “that Jesus Christ...is true God and true man.”⁶ Neither of these statements is Scriptural. They are completely missing from the

¹ “‘No Celebrities Except Jesus’: How Asbury Protected the Revival,”

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2023/february/asbury-revival-outpouring-protect-work-admin-volunteers.html>, accessed 2/27/23.

² Ibid.

³ “A nonstop worship gathering at a Kentucky school echoes an old Christian tradition,”

<https://www.cnn.com/2023/02/18/us/asbury-revival-christian-what-is-cec/index.html>, accessed 2/27/23.

⁴ Asbury University, <https://www.asbury.edu/>, accessed 2/27/23.

⁵ Webster’s Dictionary 1828, <https://webstersdictionary1828.com/Dictionary/revival>, accessed 2/27/23.

⁶ Asbury University, <https://www.asbury.edu/about/spiritual-vitality/>, accessed 2/27/23.

Scriptures. In effect, these lies about who the true God YHWH has revealed Himself to be are meant to put another god in the place of the truth. And it alters what Scripture states is true about the Messiah of God: offspring of Eve, descendant of Judah and David, the Son of God because he is conceived and procreated through the power of the holy spirit (Gen. 3:15; 49:10; 2 Sam. 7:12-16; Matt. 1:20; Luke 1:31-35). The Scriptures describe a man/human who is foretold, then lives as an obedient servant of God, and is the first fruits of resurrection to point the way for the rest of us humans, not a superhuman hybrid who accomplishes something no one else can aspire to imitate.

God is very clear throughout Scripture that “you shall have no other gods before [Him]” (Ex. 20:3). “The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deut. 6:4). Jesus calls Him “my Father and your Father, and my God and your God” (John 20:17). The God who revealed Himself as YHWH (Ex. 3:14) is Jesus’ God just as He is ours. This plainly means that Jesus is not a person of God, nor is he “true God” as the Asbury statement asserts. Jesus said that he was going to “**my** God and your God” (John 20:17).

When we stand on the truth of Scripture, then we need to call what is happening in the world what Scripture calls it. If something is the work of God, then it will match what God says is true. We cannot be swayed by what is popular or what is given the name “Christian,” when the details do not align with the Bible. Jesus calls each of us to take a stand, and there are only two choices; with him and the truth about him — Jesus *is* the truth (John 14:6) — or on the side of lies.

The words of God in the Bible are sure and accurate and complete for what we need for belief and salvation and to walk in light (John 8:12). It is important that our faith is willing to step off the cliff of what is visible into the truth of God, turning our back on whatever may be a persuasive denial of that truth. We must be firm about evaluating messages and events such as the Asbury gatherings.

The facts are that God’s holy spirit would inspire to truth. The school promotes a faith statement that is not biblical. The Asbury experience is not leading to reports or declarations of truth contrary to the school’s statement. It is not leading people closer to the true God of Scripture or to understanding the Messiah Jesus’ role as king of the future Kingdom. In fact, the Asbury crowd sang Chris Tomlin’s Trinitarian song “How Great is Our God”: “The Godhead three in one, Father,

Spirit, Son...How great is our God?”⁷ Taking all this together, when we test the Asbury events against Scripture, we do not see an outpouring of truth which would come with the holy spirit of truth.

What this event has demonstrated is that there are people all over the world who are seeking community with others of faith. The enthusiasm of these students may spur a revival of attention to spiritual matters, but since the heresy of Trinitarianism has laid a hold on those who are seeking Jesus, it is vital that true teaching of Scripture be boldly proclaimed, and the call to repent of involvement in these false doctrines is advanced. The church of Messiah Jesus must interact and respond with love and compassion, holding out the Kingdom Gospel message of hope and healing. People need the strong and clear voice of truth to overcome the multitude of ideas bombarding them on all sides. Believers must hold out the coherent Scriptural message of the Gospel of the Kingdom without compromise to lead the ripe fields into truth for their salvation to eternal life. Compromise condemns all.

If we cling to the teachings of Jesus, we are his disciples and he promises we will know the truth (John 8:31-32). Truth sets us free from lies, but it also sets us free from doubt and confusion. Trust the truth of God. Do not be led astray by excitement and crowds. Do not fear the truth or the consequences of standing firm on truth. You “are protected by the power of God through faith...His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the **true** knowledge of Him” (1 Pet. 1:5; 2 Pet. 1:3). ✧

The Return of the Gods

A Book Review by Terry Anderson, Minnesota

A few weeks ago Anthony asked me to write an article about the current state of our country and the world, in light of all the strangely anti-Christian teachings that are now saturating our society, schools, politics, churches, businesses, entertainment, et al, ad nauseum. I’m pretty sure that I’m not telling you anything that you don’t already know. It makes me think of the “writer’s inkhorn” in Ezekiel 9. Verse 4 says, “Go through the city of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the people who sigh and cry over all the **abominations** practiced in it.” Also, in 2 Peter 2:7-8 Lot is delivered from Sodom and Gomorrah: “Lot...was oppressed with the filthy conduct of the wicked, for that righteous man living among them was

⁷ “‘No Celebrities Except Jesus’: How Asbury Protected the Revival,”

<https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2023/february/asbury-revival-outpouring-protect-work-admin-volunteers.html>, accessed 2/27/23.

tormented in his righteous soul from day to day by seeing and hearing their lawless deeds.”

What we are witnessing today is pretty much unprecedented in the modern era, and probably in the Christian era, going back 2000 years. I’m talking about the openness and broad acceptance of abortion, homosexuality, transvestitism, transgenderism, transsexualism. I’m not talking about just the concepts but the charge, by those who accept all of these, that *opposition* to this new paradigm is evil. They even go so far as to “cancel” God and His Holy Scriptures. They say, “Don’t quote the Bible to us; we are progressive, and those ancient words, from an ancient God, are just plain out of touch with the modern world and its needs.” They intend to bring us all into the 21st century, and if it means taking us back to the gods that accepted mankind’s **aberrant lifestyle**, then so be it. In essence, what they are saying is that they need to bring equity and fairness to earth, and in doing so, bring peace and harmony to all its inhabitants (i.e. a pseudo-Kingdom of God!).

About the time that I began thinking about this article, a new book came out which made me realize that there was no way I could possibly improve on what the author was communicating, and to a large audience. The author, Jonathan Cahn, has spoken to the United Nations, the U.S. Congress, and millions around the world. He is a *New York Times* best-selling author and has written a number of books on prophecy and end-time events. I had already read his *Harbinger II* (2022) in which he links New York City, abortion and the curse brought on America. So when I saw Cahn’s *The Return of the Gods* at a bookstore a few of weeks ago, I knew I had to read it.

Baal and Ishtar are ancient gods (demons). I am sure you are all familiar with Joshua, Judges and Samuel and Kings. The history of Israel and Judah is one of punishment and repentance. When Israel left the true worship of the God of Abraham and set up altars to sacrifice to other gods, the consequences were devastating. Baal is often mentioned in these early books. Baal, and its other derivative forms, is mentioned often as the go-to god for the Israelites, but Ishtar is never mentioned directly (only as Ashtoreth) in the Scriptures. So just as Baal seduced the Israelites into committing grievous sins, his chief goddess, Ishtar, is front and center in bringing back the abominations of Babylon, Egypt and Rome to the modern era, and in particular, New York City.

The influence of these gods (demons) has diminished over the last couple of millennia. They were relegated to the shadows but seldom openly accepted as normal behavior in Western “Christian” cultures. That changed dramatically in the summer of 1969. The venue was The Stonewall Inn in New York City. It was

a haven for gays. It was a watershed time for the goddess to bring back her multifaceted sexual perversions. What was evil in the past now was considered good. What was good in the past now became evil. The world was beginning to turn upside down for committed Christians.

That all this began in the 1960’s should surprise no one. Woodstock and the “Sexual Revolution” were the doors which opened wide for Ishtar’s entrance into the modern world. What is even more fascinating, and Cahn illustrates this very well, is the timing of so many monumental governmental rulings and events. **June, and in particular, June 26th** are fascinating times and dates, and Cahn emphasizes the critical importance of these in court rulings and events. Cahn introduces us to his thesis by asking the following questions:

“Is it possible that behind what is happening to America and the world lies a mystery hidden in the ancient inscriptions of the Middle East? Is it possible that the ancient entities known as the ‘gods’ are more than fiction and possess an independent reality? Is it possible that they have returned to our world?”

Cahn is a Messianic Jew, and I can’t vouch for what he believes when it comes to the Gospel we know, and the identities of God and Jesus. But he seems to have a gift in relating Biblical prophecies to modern times, and eliciting the reader’s thoughts and subsequent agreements or disagreements. Either way, it provokes our interest in current events and their impact on our lives. We know that Satan is the god of this age, with strong influence over the nations and those in positions of power. With that in mind I encourage you to read *The Return of the Gods*. I think it will bring some perspective to the overall abominations we are witnessing daily. ✧

The Prophetic Context of Jesus — and Our Hope (Psalm 110:1)

by Kenneth LaPrade, Texas

When we carefully consider Jesus’ view of Scriptural integrity and his bold use of ancient prophetic statements and quotations, we might marvel at his faithful, unerring grasp of present and future truths! Our ardent Kingdom hope as biblical Christians is most certainly built on *his* dynamic, *joyful* hope, as a passionate human being with his vision squarely focused on God Himself (despite severe obstacles). We recall the beautiful encouragement which Hebrews 12:1-3 provides:

“Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses [in reference to the magnificent examples of faithful believers listed in Hebrews chapter 11 — who are currently asleep in death], let us also lay aside every weight and the sin

which so easily entangles us, and let us run with perseverance the race set before us, **fixing our eyes on Jesus**, the pioneer and perfecter of the faith. **Because of the joy set before him** he endured the cross, disregarding its shame, and **has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God**. Consider him who has endured such hostility of sinners against himself, so that you do not grow weary and give up” (OGF).⁸ In all such difficult trials, he stands above all others as our supreme model, so that we may carefully emulate his resolve!

It is clear that in the above passage in Hebrews 12:2, the words, **“has taken his seat at the right hand of God”** directly refer to Psalm 110:1 in the Hebrew Bible. *The First Testament* translation presents Psalm 110:1 in the following way, “Yahweh’s proclamation to my lord: ‘Sit at my right until I make your enemies your footstool.’” From Hebrew Masoretic texts, the first word “LORD” (according to many translations in English) in this verse is correctly rendered here as “Yahweh,” the divine name of God Himself (used over 6,800 times in the Hebrew Scriptures.) The JAV gives the following rendition of this verse with the unpronounced tetragrammaton in place: “YHWH declares to my lord, ‘Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet!’” The New English Translation declares: “Here is the LORD’s proclamation to my lord, ‘Sit down at my right hand until I make your enemies your footstool.’”

In all three of these careful renderings above (and in other accurate translations, such as NABRE, NIV, NRSV) the **“my lord”** is correctly represented with a lower-case “l” instead of a capital “L.” That is mainly because the consistent Hebrew vowel points indicate that the Hebrew word here is *“adoni,”* which in its 195 biblical uses always refers to a superior human (or occasionally an angel). The word here is **not** *Adonai*, which in its 449 Scriptural uses *always* refers to “the Lord God” Himself. The Greek Septuagint is consistent with the documents in Hebrew. This verse *cannot* be used honestly to promote the doctrine that God was somehow speaking to Himself (perhaps, as a distinct “Person” within Him)!

The November, 2022 issue of *Focus on the Kingdom* (p. 6) provides this specific documentation under the title: **Confirmation from current scholars on adoni, “my lord”**:

“F. Brown, S.R. Driver, and C.A. Briggs observe further that variations of pointing, particularly between *adoni* and *adonay* [*adonai*], are set forth to **distinguish**

between human and divine referents, respectively. In our analysis of all 774 occurrences of the *adon* root in the Hebrew Bible, we have found this to be **strikingly true** in the case of these two forms: *adoni* (see Psalm 110:1) almost always refers to a human lord/master (in a handful of occurrences, the referent is an angelic figure), while *adonay* (see Psalm 110:5) **always** refers to the divine Lord.”⁹

So when Jesus quoted Psalm 110:1, he obviously *knew who he was* as the fully human Messiah, who could be tempted (Heb. 4:15), while yet knowing the powerful promise that he would be highly rewarded and exalted upon persevering faithfully until his sacrificial death. As noted briefly at the beginning of this presentation, he is our supreme example of staying *joyful* in hope (“For the joy set before him”), despite cruel obstacles to be endured.

The first occasion when Jesus boldly called attention to Psalm 110:1 in the Synoptic Gospels can be perused in Matthew 22:41-46, Mark 12:35-37, and Luke 20:41-44, very near the end of his ministry. The context of this event is so intriguing — as Jesus had just dynamically answered some questions put to him, from *mostly* insincere opponents (though not always):

(1) He responded about paying taxes to Caesar, and then

(2) the truth of the resurrection, with his bold rebuke, “You are much mistaken! You do not know the Scriptures, or the power of God” (Matt. 22:29). This was in response to the Sadducees, who did not believe in a future resurrection.

(3) Then Jesus identified (in Matt. and Mark) the greatest of all commandments, when he so clearly established his unitary monotheistic beliefs by quoting Deuteronomy 6:4 (Mark 12:28-34).

Here then is the record in Matthew 22:41-46 of Jesus’ public question put to the gathered crowd (including some Pharisees) *after* dealing masterfully with the questions asked of him:

“While the Pharisees were gathered there, Jesus asked them a question.

“What do you think about the Messiah?” he asked. “Whose son is he?”

“The son of David,” they replied.

“So how is it that David by inspiration of the spirit calls him ‘lord’?” Jesus asked them. “David says, ‘The Lord said to my lord, sit at my right hand until I put your enemies under your feet.’ If David called him lord, how is he his son?”

⁸ *The One God, the Father, One Man Messiah*
Translation of the NT: onegodtranslation.com

⁹ Murray Smith, Ian Vaillancourt, “Enthroned and Coming to Reign: Jesus’s Eschatological Use of Psalm

110:1 in Mark 14:62,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 141:3, 2022, p. 516-517.

“Nobody could give him any answer, and nobody from that time on dared to ask him any more questions.”

Several factors should be abundantly clear in this dynamic record:

(A) Jesus believed ardently in the absolute integrity of the Hebrew Scriptures. On another occasion, in a discussion about his Messianic “Son of God” identity Jesus stated, “and the Scripture cannot be broken” (John 10:29-39). After his resurrection, according to Luke 24:44, he spoke of the Hebrew Scriptures in this way: “everything which is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms [the first book of the “Writings” – *Ketuvim*] must be fulfilled.”

(B) Naturally, this view of Scriptural precision would include Jesus’ Matthew 22 use of Psalm 110:1 when he declares that David called the Messiah “lord” — “by inspiration of the spirit.” The precise distinctions we viewed earlier in Psalm 110:1 about the use of *adoni* (a superior human) instead of *Adonai* (a reference to the Lord God) would have been extremely vivid in Jesus’ conscience and his exact awareness.

(C) Here in Matthew 22 Jesus wisely combined the concept of “Messiah” (Yahweh’s “**anointed**” from Psalm 2:2) with the “**my lord**” (*adoni*) of Psalm 110:1.

(D) Jesus’ keen focus on Scriptural integrity went far beyond that of the crowds (including the Pharisees present). They correctly perceived a truth from 2 Samuel 7:12-13 about David’s *son* (or descendant) having his Kingdom established forever. However, unlike Jesus, they failed to see how this “son of David” truth fit perfectly with the future status of the Messiah *also* being David’s human “lord” (Ps. 110:1), who would be exalted to YHWH’s right hand, until the future subduing of his enemies!

Perhaps a wider (but very brief) overview of Jesus’ previous ministry could be helpful in appreciating his pivotal use of Psalm 110:1 as seen so far in Matthew 22, Mark 12, and Luke 20. Since childhood, Jesus was fervently dedicated to learning and applying the truth of Scriptures (Luke 2:46-49), and he *grew* (2:52): “Jesus kept advancing in wisdom and years, and in favor with God and people” (Luke 2:52). As an adult (about 30 years old) he was very bold to begin declaring coming Kingdom truths (alluding to Daniel’s *future world government* prophecy in Dan. 2:44-45, with Dan. 7:13-14 clearly in mind) and the dire need *now* for **repentance** (or devotion to *changed* thinking and living). Jesus spoke profusely about such priorities from the very outset of his ministry (Mk. 1:14-15, Mt. 4:17, 23, Lk. 4:43, Mt. 5:43-48). Nevertheless, he did *not* generally reveal his Messianic role and identity in a public way until much later. (There are very few exceptions, mostly in *private* conversations: for

example, with Nicodemus in John 3 and the Samaritan woman in John 4). Jesus even rebuked demons early on so they would stop shouting out about his Messianic identity (Lk.4:41). Meanwhile, future Kingdom realities and repentant living were constantly heralded and taught in depth by Jesus, then the twelve, and a latter group of seventy disciples.

Quite a bit later, there was a dramatic change in Jesus’ overall message and his approach, starting at Caesarea Philippi among the twelve (Mt. 16, Mk. 8, Lk. 9). He then allowed exclusively, to the twelve themselves, the understanding of his Messianic identity (after Peter’s confession), while charging them not to speak about it to others (Mt. 16:20). He began speaking repeatedly to the twelve (Mt. 16, 17, 20, etc.) about his upcoming death and resurrection, though they failed to really grasp the point. Three of the twelve were even exposed to a private visionary experience (Mt. 17:1-9) to affirm Jesus’ Messianic role in the future coming Kingdom. Even when Jesus first spoke publicly about the truth of Psalm 110:1 (as we viewed in Mt. 22:41-46), he did not directly announce his Messianic identity to the crowds (though some, like the twelve, would have known). In all this, Jesus never rescinded his basic Gospel message about the coming Kingdom and repentance, but he did wisely wait until the right time to privately disclose specific details about his death and resurrection (further components of the Gospel) to the twelve. Whether by speaking in parables or by waiting until the right time to unveil certain truths, he did **not** “cast pearls before swine.”

Likewise, in Matthew 22:41-46 (which we saw already), Jesus’ timely display of Messiah as David’s exalted lord (*adoni*) gives us a picture of his own, personal, *joyful* hope — based on his firm belief in the integrity of the Scriptural declaration in Psalm 110:1. This truth, furthermore, points to Messiah’s intermediate, victorious role after his resurrection and ascension — to be seated at the right hand of God, *until* his enemies are vanquished (at his powerful, future return).

A bit later, when Jesus endured cruel mocking at his trial, he did not *downplay* his Messianic identity at all! It was *then* time to exhibit his identity publicly, even to enemies. His use of Psalm 110:1 (combining it masterfully with Dan. 7:13) to challenge the unbelief of his angry opponents is quite impressive! (Matt. 26:63-64, Mark 14:61-62, Luke 22:68-71). We will view the Mark 14:61-62 record:

“But Jesus remained silent and gave no reply. So the high priest asked him, ‘Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed One?’ Jesus replied, ‘I am, and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.’”

Clearly the title “Son of Man” and the phrase, “coming with the clouds of heaven” are from Daniel 7:13, whereas the phrase, “Sitting at the right hand of Power” (referring to YHWH) is from Psalm 110:1. Obviously, Jesus, the human Messiah (or Son of Man), was willing to stake his very life on the integrity of Psalm 110:1 as carefully connected with precise meaning to other vital Scriptures, with the “joy set before him” of knowing (according to God’s promise) that he would be ultimately resurrected, ascended, and seated at God’s right hand!

Jesus’ *joyful* hope is thus so tightly linked to *our* hope as bona fide Christians, who invest our hearts in God’s written promises in Scriptures. We know that as we stay faithful, we are promised by God to be resurrected to the Life of the Age to Come at Jesus’ glorious return: 1 Corinthians 15:22-23 and many other passages.

The rest of the new covenant Scriptures (after the historical time frame of the four gospels) continue to speak of the central truth of Psalm 110:1, showing Jesus to be *already* seated at God’s right hand after his ascension in Acts 1:9-11. In addition to an abundance of direct quotes, partial quotes, and allusions to this most-quoted verse of Psalms, **every** N.T. reference to Jesus as “lord” is, in a real sense, directly rooted in Psalm 110:1 — Jesus being the fully human “lord” (*adoni*), **not** *Adonai*, which is used exclusively of the Lord God (YHWH Himself).

In addition to the key, prominent uses of Psalm 110:1 which we have seen in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, here are a few further notable references to this verse:¹⁰

Mark 16:19 declares, “Then the lord Jesus, after he had spoken to them, was taken up into heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God.”

On the day of Pentecost Peter commented: “Now that he has been exalted to the right hand of God...For it was not David who went to heaven, but David himself said, ‘The Lord said to my lord, “Sit at My right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet”’ (Acts 2:33a, 34).

Hebrews 1:3b says, “After he had purified us of our sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.” And Hebrews 1:13 states, “But to which of the angels did God ever say at any time, ‘Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet?’”

Hebrews 10:12b mentions that he “sat down at the right hand of God, where he is now waiting until his

enemies are made a footstool for his feet” (cp. “**waiting** for the Kingdom of God” in Mark 15:43).

Ephesians 1:20-23 uses the Psalm 110:1 reality to display the following panoramic, victorious view: “He energized this same power in the Messiah when he raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above every ruler, authority, power, dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. He put all things under his feet, and gave him as head over all things to the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all.”

Ephesians even goes on to state the following, in terms of *our* (as faithful believers) spiritual identification with the ascended, seated Messiah in 2:6-7: “He raised us up with him and seated us with him in heavenly places in Messiah Jesus. This is so that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness to us in Messiah Jesus.” So, in a spiritual sense, we can live faithfully *now* as God’s **right-hand** people, figuratively “seated in heavenly places” (while emulating Jesus’ faith) until God’s kindness is fully revealed to us at the Kingdom’s future arrival on earth! ✧

Jesus Debunks the Idea of Literal Preexistence (John 6)

by Robin Todd, Washington

It is not unusual that those who oppose the Biblical Jesus would twist his own words in order to accuse him of saying something he didn’t. A good example is when some of the Jews accused him of claiming to be God, when he actually was claiming to be the Son of God. Saying “I and the Father are one” had nothing whatsoever to do with ontology or metaphysics, but with having oneness of mind and heart (John 10:30-36; see John 17:11, 22). One thing you have to admit about Jesus’ style, he had a great way of getting people’s attention through bold statements that would also tend to separate those who truly were listening to him and those who weren’t.

Another good example of this is in John 6. Here Jesus uses metaphors to describe himself as the “bread of life” and encourages people to figuratively “eat my flesh and drink my blood” for immortality. Talk about getting their attention! Many of his audience took Jesus literally and objected. Some of them were apparently his disciples up to that point, but because of these sayings they ceased to follow him (v. 66).

¹⁰ Psalm 110:1 quotations and allusions: Matt. 22:44; Matt. 26:64; Mark 12:36; Mark 14:62; Mark 16:19; Luke 20:42-43; Luke 22:69; Acts 2:33-35; Acts 5:31; Acts 7:55-56;

Rom. 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:25; Eph. 1:20; Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; Heb. 1:13; Heb. 8:1; Heb. 10:12-13; Heb. 12:2; 1 Pet. 3:22; Rev. 3:21.

The thing is, Jesus told them plainly that he was using figurative language. What was to be eaten wasn't his flesh; it was his *words* which were spirit and life (v. 63). As he had said so often in so many ways, he spoke the words of God, which he received directly from Him, having the spirit without measure (John 3:34).

It is ironic that we have the same antagonism toward this teaching of Jesus today. Some continue to dismiss Jesus' use of metaphoric and figurative speech in his teaching method, and want to literalize some kind of preexistence to him. But he explained what he meant in no uncertain terms. *That* Jesus, the one who puts focus on his *words*, and not on a personal, conscious prehistoric existence, is the Jesus whom his would-be disciples continue to walk away from today!

Jesus can be identified with the word of God because he is the embodiment of that word. Being thus filled with the fullness of God's mind/spirit, Jesus was one with the Father in mind, heart, and intention. He was everything God intended a human being to be. Of course, he had to choose to believe and live by what he knew — and he did that perfectly even in the face of temptations and death.

The tendency to twist the words of Jesus has been alive and well in the mainstream religion of those who, perhaps genuinely, want to follow the one God of the Bible. If we really want clarification of what Jesus meant by his many figurative statements in the book of John, I recommend Matthew, Mark, and Luke as a good foundation. Not a hint of "preexistence" can be found in them. Rather, Jesus is the Son of God because of the miracle of God's spirit working upon the womb of his human mother (Matt. 1:18, 20; Luke 1:35 for example). *That* is the moment he came into existence. ✧

Comments

- "I myself was Oneness for about 30 years, until about 10 years ago when I moved toward the unitarian belief, mainly through many years of your teaching. Until recently, I always thought of the Oneness doctrine as being *much less wrong* than the Trinity doctrine, but now I'm not so sure, because although it is horrible to say that God is 3 Persons, instead of 1 Person, at least Trinitarians never say that God *the Father Himself* actually became a human being, and also Trinitarians will freely admit that their belief is not strictly logical nor fully understandable, whereas the Oneness people are very-confident that their delusion is not difficult to understand!" — *Email*

- "Indeed I was paralyzed by 'Judaism' for 7 years. God woke me up in August of 2017. Since that time I have grown significantly in my relationship with God and Jesus. I am at peace once again. My journey is lonely (my family and I have no in-person fellowship)

and I long for the Kingdom. It hurts my heart to think of the masses of self-proclaimed Christians who do not know the truth about our Kingdom hope and who Jesus is and who God is. It is truly overwhelming. Then there are the heathens....To hear family members say that 'Jesus is the God of the Father' when confronted with John 20:17 is infuriating! Never before have I heard such blasphemy! No amount of Scripture will move them. Only God Himself can help them to see. Even then, they need to choose between the lie they love or the truth God shows them. Just as I had to choose to repent of my Jewish ways. Yet, despite this lonely walk, my husband and I would rather be alone in the truth than surrounded by people in a lie." — *Oklahoma*

- "I have tried to engage people about the Shema in Mark 12:29. They look at me as if I am speaking an unknown language! If they actually have *any* thought about it, I suspect it is a secret belief that Jesus must have been talking to the Jews, alone, not the Gentiles, when he proclaimed the Shema as the first commandment. This understanding complements the latent anti-Semitism of the Dispensationalists, and others who, by training, believe that when people die they don't go to sleep to await the resurrection, but go directly to heaven if they are Gentile believers to spend eternity with Jesus. It is truly bizarre that people who unhesitatingly assert that Scripture is the inerrant word of God, inspired by the Holy Spirit, are so facile at ignoring the words of Scripture. It is almost as if they don't realize that something is out of whack when they blithely assert their faith in the truth of Scripture while blithely ignoring the words of Scripture. Thank God we have a merciful God and a spectacular human mediator Messiah to plead our case!" — *California*

- "Today I talked to the pastor, and he admitted that he himself doesn't completely understand the concept of the Trinity but takes it on faith. He said he had 'made a decision' to believe that. He is sure that when he reaches 'heaven,' God will provide him with a complete understanding of this. He said that when Jesus was praying to God, he was really praying to himself(!)" — *Email*

Spirit, Heart — Mind

"He gave him the plan of all that he had **by the spirit [in his mind]**" (1 Chron. 28:12).

"By the spirit: better '**in his mind**': *ruach* (lit. 'spirit') has here the meaning which the **heart** ordinarily has in the OT: **the seat of the understanding** (cf. Ex. 35:10: 'Let everyone **wise of heart** among you come and make all that the Lord has commanded.')

— *Peake's Commentary*