
◆ THE EDIFIER ◆

Volume 16

CHURCH of GOD 7th DAY - AUSTRALIA

NOVEMBER 2010

Many are happy to view Jesus as a great philosopher, prophet, healer, or orator, but balk at the suggestion that He is God in any sense. Many argue that Jesus Himself never claimed to be God, or the Son of God. In regard to the viewpoint maintained below that Jesus is God, let the reader note that I am not suggesting that He is the same person as the Father. This is a much debated and complex issue, but I believe

"... I have come down from heaven ..." (John 6:38).

"... You are from beneath; I am from above, you are of this world; I am not of this world" (John 8:23).

"... O Father, glorify me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was" (John 17:5).

John the Baptist in verses one and two:

In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, and saying, 'Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!'

If the kingdom of heaven is at hand, who then is at hand? God is at hand. God is near. God is close!

Well was He? Matthew in

Divine Declarations

"But, who do you say that I am?"

By David Kidd

Mark 8 : 29

that the story of Jesus' baptism considered below provides some useful insights on this very important topic.

Jesus on Jesus

In the story of Jesus' baptism we see several clear declarations about Jesus being divine, or God. Before we get to Matthew's eye witness account of Jesus' baptism though, it's interesting to note another eye witness account of Jesus' own words about Himself. Certainly Jesus appeared in human flesh, but the Apostle John records Jesus saying the following amazing things about Himself:

Jesus' baptism

The Apostle Matthew, in the story of Jesus' baptism, provides us with several more interesting and powerful divine declarations about Jesus from several different sources. They are powerful, because if they are true, and if we are not worshipping Jesus (as several Bible passages say people were) then why aren't we? If Jesus is our divine Creator, then why wouldn't we be paying very careful attention to everything that the most reliable source about Him, the Bible, says?

The first divine declaration in Matthew's account of Jesus' baptism in chapter three is by

verse 3 makes a startling divine declaration about God being at hand:

For this is he who was spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, saying:

'The voice of one crying in the wilderness: "Prepare the way of the Lord; Make His paths straight".'

Matthew is quoting the prophet Isaiah and declaring that John the Baptist is indeed the predicted voice in the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord.

A magazine dedicated to uplifting and transforming peoples lives through the uncompromised word of God.

Matthew is announcing the fulfillment, of a much anticipated Bible prophecy.

The deep significance of his announcement, and the divine nature of this declaration becomes plainly evident when we read in full the actual prophecy he was quoting from in Isaiah 40:3 which says:

The voice of one crying in the wilderness:

'Prepare the way of the Lord; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God.' (my emphasis)



Therefore, the one that John was preparing the way for, was both Lord *and* God. The kingdom of heaven was at hand, and God was at hand.

The people thought John, himself, was very special. They thought he was the Messiah, but he confessed, "I am not the Christ" (John 1:20). However, he did affirm that he was the voice crying in the wilderness making straight the paths of the Lord (John 1:23).

It's no wonder though that people were thinking great things about John for we read in Matthew 3:4-6:

Now John himself was clothed in camel's hair, with a leather belt around his waist; and his food was locusts and honey. Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins.

John the Baptist was behaving just like the mighty prophet Elijah, who also came as a hairy man, wearing a leather belt around his waist, eating wild locusts and honey (2 Kings 1:8).

It's also no wonder that people thought John the Baptist was the Messiah, or Elijah resurrected, because many, many people were being changed through his ministry, confessing their sins and being baptized.

Luke also records the people making divine declarations about John:

Now the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ or not.

The people were in expectation, not only because of the mightiness of John's ministry, but also because of the prophecies of their Holy Scriptures (our Old Testament), especially Daniel chapter nine, which pinpointed their day as the time in which the Christ would appear to save them. They were expecting the Messiah to expel the Romans from their land. However, the salvation of God at that time was not to be the physical kind of salvation they were expecting. It was to be spiritual, the consequences being eternal.

The people put John on a pedestal, but John then says something that would have blown them away. It would have shocked and amazed them. He said:

I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than

I whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire (Matthew 3:11).

John is effectively saying, "You think I am mighty – well you ain't seen nothing yet."

Who baptizes with the Holy Spirit – man or God? Surely, only God; John has made another divine declaration. We've had Matthew's, John's, and the people's. And now Jesus, by His very appearance on the scene just at the appointed moment in time, following closely on from the prophesied voice in the wilderness preparing the way of the Lord – now Jesus' appearance at this critical moment is a powerful and weighty divine declaration all by itself.



Matthew 3:13 simply says:

Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him.

John, knowing who Jesus is protests and tries to prevent Jesus saying:

... I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me (v14)?

But Jesus answers:

... *'permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness'. Then he allowed Him (v15).*

Now for the most startling and significant divine declaration of them all. Immediately, as Jesus came up from the waters of baptism, the heavens opened. The Spirit of God descended like a dove in bodily form. It was seen by John the Baptist (and probably the crowds – see Matthew 3:16-17, Luke 3:22 & John 1:32) and the Spirit rested, not upon John, but upon Jesus. Then there was a voice from heaven from the Father saying:

... *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased (Matthew 3:17).*

Son of God

We must appreciate the divine significance of Jesus being called 'the Son of God.' It certainly was not lost on the Jews of that day, and it is certainly not lost on Moslems today, who do not believe Jesus is the Son of God, and who are offended by such a title. The Apostle John even records that the Jews sought to kill Jesus partly for Him saying that God was His Father (John 5:18). They understood this to mean that Jesus was making Himself equal with God. They considered this to be a most shocking case of blasphemy. Indeed, it was perhaps the main reason they wanted Jesus crucified.

Does the reader appreciate why being the Son of God makes Jesus equal to God?

Consider a human father and son. A human father begets a son who is of the same substance as the father – namely human. The son also has the same potential as the father. In every sense, except for their position (and the son needing to develop to his full capacity, which he will), they are equal. Now do you see why Jews and Moslems take exception to the Christian view of Christ? The Bible says Jesus came forth from God (John 8:42) and is God's *only begotten* Son. What a human begets is human. What does this analogy suggest then about what God begets?



What is stated implicitly here about Jesus in the biblical Father/Son analogy, is also stated explicitly in many Bible texts, which refer directly to Jesus as God. John chapter one and Hebrews chapter one provide excellent examples of these texts. The New Testament is bursting with declarations that Jesus is divine, to be worshipped (as only God should be – see Revelation 22:8-9), and adored.

Contradicters

Many in Jesus' day had to make a decision as to who Jesus actually was. Today it's our opportunity to make our own decision. If we conclude

that Jesus is divine (and there's a lot more to go on than what I have discussed here) then no other religion or philosophy will do for us. They just won't measure up, as they directly contradict the one who is divine.

For example, the eye witnesses of Christ said that He is the Son of God, that He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins (which we deserved), and that He rose victorious from the grave. The Koran was written hundreds of years after Christ walked the earth by someone who was not an eye witness, but who claims to know better than those who lived at the time of Christ and who were closest to Him. It says, in direct contradiction to the New Testament, that Jesus was not God, or the Son of God, that He did not die on the cross for our sins, and that He was not resurrected from the grave. Now which version do you believe? Which version seems more credible? Who do you say that Jesus is? That's your own personal decision.

The New Testament also says that no matter how many good works we do we cannot earn our way into Heaven, or merit Heaven. Salvation is only by God's grace, through faith. The proponents of eastern religions, however, generally say the opposite. They say we can save ourselves by our own good works, and that it is therefore not necessary to have Jesus as our Saviour.

I hope we all see just how shallow it is to state, as many do, that all religions are the same.

Continues on page six



The Good Shepherd

Being a shepherd was, and is, an important job – particularly in agricultural based communities. It is also very descriptive of an ideal Christian community.

When King David was a boy, he looked after his father's sheep. When he was a man, he looked after God's people. The time spent alone in the fields with the sheep gave him plenty of time to think about God as well as the events that then faced the nation of Israel.

The skills and lessons learned as a shepherd, together with his reliance on God in fighting both lion's and bears, built and formed his relationship with God. Although considered a lowly position (his own Father didn't think to name him as a son that the prophet of God may be interested in) it forged the character that God himself regarded as being after his own heart (Acts 13 : 22)

A good shepherd finds good food and water, and then leads his sheep to it, overseeing and protecting the sheep along their journey to safe resting places. At night, the sheep are counted and any missing ones are immediately searched for (leaving the 99 and searching for the one missing). A good shepherd also checks to see that none are hurt.

Where possible, the sheep will be herded into stone corrals at night, consisting of four stone walls and an opening, but usually without a gate. A gate is not needed. The shepherd is the door, lying down across the opening with his blanket. The sheep will not step on the shepherd, while the shepherd will not let any wolves in.

King David often related to God as being a shepherd, perhaps as a result of his background, when he was alone, in danger or needing security, as he did when he was alone in the fields with his father's sheep, saying "The Lord is my Shepherd...(Psalms 23).

Jesus said: "I am the good shepherd and know my own sheep, and they know me, just as my Father knows me and I know the Father; and I lay down my life for the sheep." John 10:14.

Jesus is the shepherd charged with looking after us, in much the same way that David looked after his father's sheep. Jesus is also the door. He stands between us, his sheep, and Satan, who prowls about like a roaring lion. If need be, he will fight for us to the point of death. And that is what happened. He remained totally committed to the Father's plan and voluntarily gave up his life in bringing to an end the works of the devil. In humility he lay down his life, and in glory and power he took up his life.

Within the four walls of the corral there is safety, although he does warn us that thieves and robbers may try to come in by another means – a warning that all shepherds are not the same. In giving up his life for his sheep,

Jesus did not leave them defenseless and vulnerable. Instead, as a result of his death, a greater power and permanent security came upon his people. The guaranteed deposit of the Holy Spirit. His sheep are now divinely protected with a hedge built around them; just like the stone corral.

Richard Todd

Decisions for Christ: Real Decisions

A real decision is a free, unconditional, total and personal commitment to a choice or option. It is a decision that once made, nothing is held back – either our feelings or our rational thought. It is a decision in which we are fully committed to the choice we have made – to follow one road only, unconditionally.

In Luke 14 : 31, Jesus gives the listeners an example regarding decisions.

"... what king, going to make war against another king, does not sit down first and consider whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand?"

When it comes to following Jesus, the decision you make is both personal and yours alone. Exactly the way God wants it. This is why we are expected to develop a personal relationship with Jesus. The body of Christ is made up of many individual members, but the members are nonetheless individual, so

Paul says that 'each of us therefore must give account to God for things he has done...'

God also knows that your decision to follow his son is free in that it was made without inner threat or external coercion.

God wants our love and he wants our obedience. He also wants a total commitment concerning the totality of our lives – not just a portion. This commitment is more than just 'not looking back' – it is a concentration and focus on what lies ahead – pressing onwards to the prize – at the expense of denying yourself and deferring pleasure in the present.

Real decisions such as these allow us to fully own the process and as a result promote personal growth and individuality. Contrast this instead with people who succumb to peer pressure or who blindly accept being led. In avoiding the ownership of the decision they instead defer their power to others, leaving themselves frustrated and resentful of the conformity to false values.

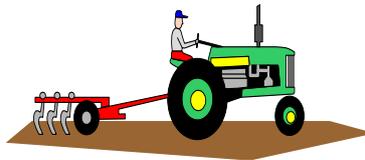
Such people tend to fall away later as the decision to follow Christ was not truly theirs. Being a part of human nature, Christians have to guard against pseudo decisions, decisions masquerading as real decisions. Some of these are very familiar to us:

- Procrastination – inert to the point of paralysis
- Ambivalence – the inability to choose

- Impulse decisions – the extreme opposite to free choice because they are made in haste due to anxiety, habit or fear.

- Inappropriate dependency – deferring your decision making to someone else

- Looking back and wondering what might have been – trying to plough a field while looking back where you have been. It's not that Christians particularly want to return to 'Egypt', rather, we fool ourselves into believing that our options remain open. It is a comforting belief that you can maintain 'one foot in each camp,' but it is highly dangerous as God does not accept this.



Jesus likens the options (lifestyle) that once were available to us in the world, as being dead, cut off. You are no longer your own, you were bought with a price. The fact that you have been made *alive* in Christ confirms that the former ways are dead and that re-birth is in Christ alone. The reality is that the former ways no longer exist. The perception however is that they still remain open to us – a comforting but vain thought. "There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end leads to death."

Jesus said of those caught up in the busy-ness and concerns of world affairs "let the dead bury the dead, but you follow me."

You already made your decision to follow Jesus sometime ago. You need to remind yourself that the bridges back to your former life have been burned. The world would not welcome you back even if you did return, and cannot give you lasting comfort and peace of mind. Satan would destroy you, lest you regret your decision and turn from your error. Far be it for us not to finish what we have started.

Richard Todd

Jesus the Messiah:



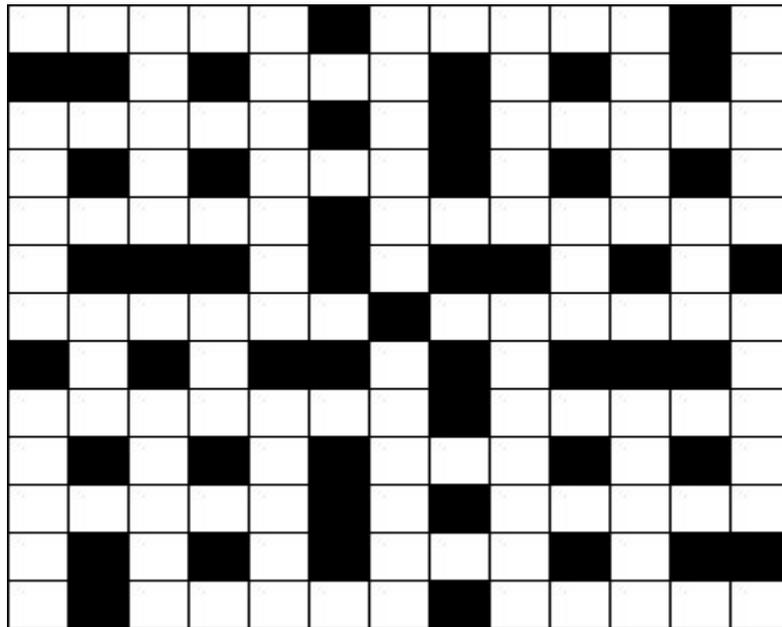
Prophecy Fulfilled

Please send for the free booklet regarding the predictions and fulfillments about Jesus



The Youth Section

Bible Fill-in type crossword solution



3 letters.

AHA
ALL
ASH
BAR
EAR
GAP
SEA
YEA

5 letters.

ABASE
CARRY
CEDAR
DEALT

DIANA
EAGLE
EASED
EATER
HEDGE
OLIVE
ORGAN
ORION
PACES
PROUD
RAINY
ROYAL
SAINT
SINAI
TENOR

WHOSO

6 letters.

DAGGER
DAMAGE
ISAIAH
PREACH

7 letters.

CHALDEA
CRYSTAL
OBEYING
SUPPORT



Insights From the Past

INTRODUCTORY

Reader, the first number of the *Hope of Israel* is now before you. The author of its title was the apostle Paul. And as we start out with a Bible title, you will of course expect that it will be a Bible paper; and as you will naturally inquire what course we intend to pursue, and what principles we intend to advocate, we will try to inform you in as few words as possible.

In conducting the *Hope*, the great head of the church shall be our example. As when He was reviled He reviled not again, so we shall neither revile those who oppose us, nor suffer any others to do so in our columns. We shall stand firmly by what the Bible reveals to be the truth, turning neither to the right nor the left for friend or foe. We shall also heed Paul's admonition to Timothy, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine."

As principles we shall maintain:

First, "that the Bible, and the Bible alone" contains the whole moral law; and that its precepts are sufficient to govern God's people in every age of the world, without the addition of any human creed or articles of faith.

Second, "that sin entered the world and death by sin," and that as the "dead know not anything," death signifies neither more or less than a total extinction of being.

Third, that "sin is a transgression of the law," and that we cannot know sin but by the law, and furthermore that the law by which sin is known is the law of "Ten Commandments."

Fourth, that man having sinned, and sentence of death having been passed upon him, he can have no hope of eternal life except through Christ; and that, too, by a resurrection from the dead. This Paul says, was his hope. For this he endured all his trials, all his afflictions and sore persecutions; and for this, he finally laid down his life.

Fifth, we shall contend that this was the hope of the twelve tribes of Israel, of the Fathers, and of the Apostles, and the primitive Church.

Sixth, that God is about to set up His Kingdom on the Earth. That Christ as King will sit upon the throne of His father David. That the twelve apostles will sit upon twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.

Seventh, that the reward of the righteous, as well as of the wicked, will be on the Earth.

Eighth, that the faithful saints, with all Abraham's innumerable seed, will sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the Kingdom of God, on the new Earth, which will be the final abode of the righteous.

Ninth, that God will dwell in the New Jerusalem; that paradise will be restored; to more than its Eden glory and beauty.

Tenth, that there man will have a right to the tree of life, from which he was driven on account of transgression. That there, "there will be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

These are in part the principles we shall advocate; contending also that all the gifts and blessings that once belonged to the Church of Christ belong to the same church in all ages. And in the maintenance of these and other kindred principles, we solicit the hearty co-operation of all God's dear children.

Editor's Note: The above article appeared in the inaugural issue of the *Hope of Israel* (fore-runner of today's *Bible Advocate*) on August 10, 1863. It contains a summary by the publication's first editor, **Enos Easton**, of the earliest doctrinal beliefs of the Church of God (Seventh Day), and as such, represents the first published statement of faith in the Church history.



The Bible Advocate is one of the oldest religious magazines in America, and is regularly distributed in print and online. The BA is devoted to topics such as Bible doctrine, current social and religious issues, Christian living, practical teachings on Bible topics, textual or biblical book studies, and personal experience.

BA Online

<http://baonline.org>

To start a free yearly subscription, please write to the address below.

