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05 Jul 09

This morning, we welcome into our fellowship those who are baptized, reaffirmed and transferred from other congregations. We pray that you will find in Calvary BP Church a place where you can worship and serve. May our Lord continue to use us to encourage and edify one another in the holy faith.

I thank God for a fruitful time in Ebenezer BP Church in Melbourne, Australia. Please also pray for us as my family and I head for Vancouver tomorrow. I will be preaching at the Vancouver BPC Camp (7-10 July). God willing, we will also be helping out at the Daily Vacation Bible School (20-24 July). We hope to squeeze in a week of vacation (25-31 July) before we return home.

The name of our saviour

One of the favourite topics of hymn-writers is the Name of Jesus. They write about the name of Jesus from every conceivable angle. One wrote about the power of His Name – *All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name*. Yet another extols the beauty of His Name – *That beautiful Name, that wonderful Name, that matchless Name is Jesus*. Several others write about the sweetness of His Name – *Jesus is the Sweetest Name I Know*, *There is No Name so Sweet, How Sweet the Name of Jesus*. And there are others who exhort us to bless His Name – *Blessed be the Name, We Bless the Name of Christ*.

As one more contemporary song-writer says, “there’s just something about that Name.”

The Uniqueness of the Name “Jesus”

“Jesus” is the Name that brings comfort to many aching hearts through the ages. It is the Name that evokes the harshest words from those who oppose the Christian faith. It is also the Name that Christians invoke in our prayers. Strangely enough, the name “Jesus” is seldom used today. It was a popular name for boys during the time of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Jewish historian, Josephus, identified some twenty people who were named “Jesus,” some of whom were contemporaries of our Lord Jesus Christ. The popularity then could be attributed to the fact that the name “Jesus” identifies one of the greatest military leaders in the history of Israel, namely Joshua, the son of Nun. Joshua, Moses’ successor, was also the one who led the children of Israel in conquering and driving out the Canaanites from the Promised Land.

“Joshua” is Hebrew, and “Jesus” is the Greek equivalent. Historical annals showed that the name “Joshua” was popular until the end of the first century, and then it was suddenly dropped by the Jews and Christians. The Jews stopped using the name because of its association to the Christian faith. Christians stopped using the name “Jesus” for very different reasons. To the Christians, “Jesus” is a name to be held in high honour. And up till today, except for some in the Philippines and Latin America, Christian parents never name their sons “Jesus.”

The name “Jesus” is unique for a second reason. It appears 942 times in the New Testament. It is preceded by the title “Lord” 308 times, accompanied by “Christ” 700 times. The Apostle Paul often addressed Jesus as the “Lord [His title] Jesus [His Name] Christ [His Deity].” There is, as far as I know, no biblical record of anyone who addresses our Lord solely by the name “Jesus” during His earthly ministry. Our Lord Himself used the name to identify Himself only twice, and both times occurred after His ascension (Acts 9:5; Rev 22:16).

The Meaning of the Name “Jesus”

The name was given to Joseph by the angel, *“Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matt 1:20-21).

In Hebrew, that would have been “Yeshua” or more popularly “Joshua.” The name “Joshua” was a contraction of “Jehoshua,” which means “Jehovah Saves.” There are at least two other persons in the Old Testament that had that name; one is Hoshea, the last king of Israel (2 Kings 17:1-6), and the second is Joshua, the high priest who returned from the exile with Zerubbabel (Ezra 3, 4). The most popular person to have that name was of course Joshua, the son of Nun, and the minister of Moses. Actually Joshua’s given name was Oshea, and it was Moses who changed his name to Jehoshua (Num 13:16), as he was being sent out to spy the land of Canaan.

The name Joshua is an expression of faith that God could and had promised to do for His people. God delivered the children of Israel from slavery in Egypt and brought them to the Promised Land. Joshua was only one of two men above the age of twenty that lived to see this reality.

The Significance of the Name “Jesus”

The first mention of “Jesus” is in the Gospels. The angel appeared to Mary with these words, *“And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David”* (Luke 1:30-32).

Later the angel also appeared to Joseph with these words of assurance, *“Fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins”* (Matt 1:20-21).

The name “Jesus” then is associated with the miraculous birth of our Saviour; Jesus is Jehovah the Saviour. The Jews held the name Jehovah with the utmost reverence so much so that they would not speak the name for fear of violating the Fourth Commandment. In the New Testament, Jehovah came in the person of Jesus. That is the not only the mystery of the incarnation, but also the manifestation of God’s love. Jehovah, the eternal God became Jesus, the incarnate God. John says, *“The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14).

Paul writes, *“For [God] hath made [Jesus] to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in [Jesus]”* (2 Cor 5:21). And to the Philippians, Paul says, *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (Phil 2:9-11). It is no wonder then that Christians hold the name of Jesus in such high regard.

The mission of Jesus was that he would save the people from their sins. Jesus is the Saviour that would bring salvation to His people. The mission that was associated with the name Jesus was not fully realized by the Jews. The Jews thought that Jesus was the Saviour only of the Jews. And ironically, it was the Samaritans who declared, *“Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world”* (John 4:42), and this was way before Peter made a similar confession (Matt 16:16).

Our Association with the Name “Jesus”

What is in a name? There are some people who are known because they have made a name for themselves. There are others who are known because of the name that they were given. The Bible tells us that *“a good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favour rather than silver and gold”* (Prov 22:1).

Christians have a special association with the name “Jesus.” The Bible teaches us to pray in that Name. *“And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it”* (John 14:13-14). The Apostles baptized in that name (Acts 2:38). They preached that name (Acts 8:12; 9:27). We fall down in worship of that name (Phil 2:10).

We are believers in Christ. We bear His Name; that ought to mean some thing. There is one thing that we must never do with that name. Paul told the Jews in Rome, *“Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you”* (Rom 2:23-24). As Christians, we need to be reminded of that too – let not the name of Jesus be blasphemed among the unbelievers through us. May the Lord help us!

12 Jul 09

By the time you read this, the Vancouver BP Church Bible Camp would have been over. This year, we meet in new conference centre known as The Firs. As implied by the name, the retreat centre is nestled amongst a forest of fir trees in Bellingham, Washington. The campers are housed in cabins, not quite as luxurious as Marriott Putrajaya, but the rustic feel makes it more like a Bible Camp.

We went through a series of seven messages on the theme “Living Faith and Faithful Living” based on Hebrews 11 and 12. The highlight of the camp is that we ended each night with a singing session in an outdoor shed with an open fireplace. We praise the Lord for a blessed camp. Next week, we begin the daily vacation Bible school back in Vancouver. Continue to pray for us and VBPC.

LORD

A young unmarried lady is called “miss.” A young unmarried man is called “master.” When they get older and married, the titles changed to “Mrs.” and “Mr.” When they have children, the woman will be called “mom,” and the man “dad.” In the office, he may be known as “doctor” if he practices medicine, or “professor” if he teaches in a place of higher learning. If he works in a church, he is called a “pastor;” if he is ordained, his name is preceded by “the Reverend” which is the formal way to address him. A man’s title changes over the course of his life according to the roles that he assumes. It is the same with our Lord Jesus Christ.

In the Gospels, our Saviour is known primarily as Jesus. In fact the title “Lord Jesus” is used only once in Luke 24:3 when the women went to the tomb where His body was buried, and Luke, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote that they “found not the body of the Lord Jesus” (Luke 24:3). The title “Lord Jesus” became commonly used in *Acts of the Apostles* (Acts 1:21; 4:33; 7:59, etc.)

Jesus is Lord

If Jesus is Lord, it means that He must have dominion over something or someone. First, He is the Lord of the universe because He is the Creator. “For by Him [Christ Jesus] were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: And he is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And **He is the head of the body**, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have the pre-eminence” (Colossians 1:16-18).

Paul also wrote in Philippians 2:9-11, that “God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:9-11). The day will come when every person will acknowledge Jesus as Lord. The question is whether one will also bow before Him as Saviour (the Lamb of God) or the Judge (the Lion of the tribe of Judah).

Paul exalts our Saviour as “the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Timothy 6:15). The supreme title “Lord of lords” is also used in the *Revelation* (Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

The Meaning of “Lord”

The word “Lord” (Gk: *kurios*) is used and translated in the New Testament in several ways. It is used in reference to an owner – “And as they were losing the colt, the **owners** thereof said unto them, Why loose ye the colt?” (Luke 19:33). It is used to identify a master, one who has the power over others – “No man can serve two **masters**: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. (Matthew 6:24).

In Acts 25:26, “Lord” is as an address for a king – “Of whom I have no certain thing to write unto my **lord**. Wherefore I have brought him forth before you, and specially before thee, O king Agrippa, that, after examination had, I might have somewhat to write” (Acts 25:26).

Lord is also used as a formal address for father – “And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, **sir**: and went not” (Matthew 21:30). It is a form of address for husband – “Even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him **lord**: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement” (1 Peter 3:6). An angel is also addressed as Lord – “And when he looked on him, he was afraid, and said, What is it, **Lord**? And he said unto him, Thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God” (Acts 10:4). It is a polite address for a stranger – “And brought them out, and said, **Sirs**, what must I do to be saved?” (Acts 16:30). A pagan idol is also known as lord – “For though there be that are called gods, whether in heaven or in earth, (as there be gods many, and **lords** many,)” (1 Corinthians 8:5).

Above all, “Lord” is also the translation for several names of God (Matthew 4:7; 1:22; 1 Peter 1:25).

The Meaning of “Lord Jesus”

When “Lord” is used to Jesus, it means that He has the right of honour. Lord is a title of honour used for fathers and kings. It also means that Jesus has the right of ownership. He also has the right of a master to be served and worshipped. Jesus has the right to rule and exercise authority. In the Christian context, when the title is used, it also references the deity of Jesus Christ.

There are several incidents in the New Testament when the disciples’ perception of our Lord Jesus changed as a result of what He did, and their address of Him also changed. In Luke 5:4, our Lord Jesus told Simon, “Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets [plural] for a draught” (Luke 5:4). Simon who was fatigue and frustrated by a night of empty catch, said to Jesus, “And Simon answering said unto him, **Master**, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net [singular]” (Luke 5:5). Simon Peter’s reluctance is seen in his addressing Jesus as “master” – a different word in Greek – his letting down only one net. However, Peter obliged, and when he pulled up the net, the catch of fish was so great that the net broke. When Simon came before Jesus, he fell on his knees and said, “Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, **O Lord**” (Luke 5:8).

An example is the last supper when Jesus told the disciples that one of them would betray Him. The disciples “were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, **Lord**, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22). The only exception was Judas Iscariot, who said, “**Master**, is it I?” (Matthew 26:25). The title used by Judas Iscariot proved that Jesus was not his Lord.

The third incident concerns Thomas who after he had seen the resurrected Jesus cried out, “**My Lord** and my God” (John 20:28).

The Meaning of “Lord” for the Christian

Jesus is Lord implies a relationship between Him and those who addressed Him as such. First, Jesus is the Lord of our salvation – “That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the **Lord Jesus**, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved” (Romans 10:9). We must also bear in mind that for a repentant sinner to use the address “Lord Jesus,” it necessitates the indwelling and work of the Holy Spirit – “No man can say that Jesus is the **Lord**, but by the Holy Ghost” (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Second, Jesus is the Lord of our lives. In some Christian circles, much confusion has been made of Lordship Salvation. The confusion comes from those who believe that to be saved and remained saved, there must be evidence of good works. But salvation is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9). Having said that, there is no other way for a believer to accept Jesus but as Saviour and Lord. We are bought with a price, and we are Christ’s (1 Corinthians 3:23; 6:20). The Christian to take up his cross, deny himself and follow Jesus.

Third, Jesus is the Lord of our sanctification. Without recognising Jesus as the Lord of our lives, our Christian experience will be frustrating and defeated. Recognising the Lordship of Jesus in our life is the mark of our consecration and the key to our sanctification.

Modern Christianity has devalued the Lordship of Jesus. Many want to be saved, yet few want to surrender their lives to our Lord Jesus. Individual believers and the church today must exalt Jesus as Lord. The challenge is not the act of surrender per se; rather it is the extent of our surrender. The hymn writer says, "All to Jesus I surrender, All to Him I freely give." Dearly beloved, make this your prayer.

19 Jul 09

Greetings from Vancouver. It is supposed to be summer here, and usually the temperature around this time goes up to a high of low to mid-thirties, but it has been chilly, with some of the locals even putting on jackets during the day. Please continue to pray for Daily Vacation Bible School which starts tomorrow. The DVBS has always been an evangelistic outreach to the community. Please pray for Sis Wei Ping and the rest of the team.

CHRIST

The word “Christ” is *Christos* in Greek means “the anointed one.” In Hebrew, it is “mashiah” translated as “messiah” in Daniel 9:25-26. The Christ of the New Testament and the Messiah of the Old Testament are therefore the same person. The context, however, is different. The Old Testament Messiah points to the hope of God’s anointed; whereas the New Testament Christ represents the fulfilment of that hope, and the official name of our Lord Jesus because of the work that He had accomplished.

The Old Testament Messiah

In the Old Testament, the Messiah is always represented as a hope. “Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times. And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined” (Daniel 9:25-26).

The Messiah not merely represents the hope of deliverance of the Jewish people, but he is also the pre-incarnate Christ. “The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed” (Psalm 2:2).

Messiah as Prophet: In the Old Testament, the Messiah has three specific offices – prophet, priest, and king. In Deuteronomy 18:15, we read that “the LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a **Prophet** from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deuteronomy 18:15).

This is a clear reference to our Lord Jesus, whom Peter later affirmed in Acts 3:20-22. “And He shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you: Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; Him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever He shall say unto you” (Acts 3:20-22).

Messiah as Priest: In Psalm 110:4, in a messianic prophecy and in reference to the priesthood of our Lord Jesus, David wrote, “The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4). We see this affirmed repeatedly in *Hebrews*. “So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but He that said unto Him, Thou art My Son, to day have I begotten thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec” (Hebrews 5:5-6).

Messiah as King: In 2 Samuel 7:12-13, God promised David, “When thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom for ever” (2 Samuel 7:12-13). The kingship of our Lord Jesus was seen His genealogy in Matthew, in which He was identified as “the son of David” (Matthew 1:1). When our Lord Jesus returns in triumph, He shall be called, “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (Revelation 19:16).

The New Testament Christ

The disciples of our Lord Jesus understood the office of Christ. John the Baptist this affirmed that he is not the Christ (John 1:20). And whether or not they were aware that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the people affirmed the three offices of the Old Testament Messiah in our Lord Jesus.

Christ as Prophet: The office of a prophet includes not just foretelling but also forth-telling. The former refers to predicting future events, and the latter is more closely akin to preaching and revealing the Word of God. Our Lord Jesus was a foreteller. He told the disciples about the coming of the Holy Spirit (John 14:26). He foretold the details concerning His death and resurrection (Matthew 16:21). Our Lord Jesus also prophesied about events surrounding His second coming.

Our Lord Jesus also fulfilled the office of a fore-teller. The people often addressed Him as rabbi and a teacher came from God (John 3:2). He taught, and He taught “as one having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:29). But unlike the prophets in the Old Testament who had to preface their words with “thus saith the LORD,” our Lord taught on His own authority. In His Sermon on the Mount, Jesus says, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time...but I say unto you” (Matthew 5:21-22; see also 5:18, 20, 28, 32, 34, 39, 44). The prophetic office of our Lord Jesus is also affirmed in Hebrews 1:1-2 – “God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds” (Hebrews 1:1-2).

Christ as Priest: The Priest acts as a mediator between God and man. In the Old Testament, it was the duty of the high priest to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings on behalf of the people. The epistle to the *Hebrews* tells us that our Lord Jesus Christ was God’s High Priest but not after the order of Aaron but of the order of Melchisedec. The deficiency of the Aaronic priesthood is that “in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:3-4). The sacrifices had to be repeated day after day. Whereas “we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all...But this Man [our Lord Jesus Christ], after He had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified” (Hebrews 10:10-14).

Christ as King: The Gospel of Matthew traces the lineage of our Lord Jesus to King David (Matthew 1:1). Our Lord Jesus is the legal heir to the Davidic throne as God had promised (2 Samuel 7:12-13). When the wise men came looking for the infant Jesus, they came to Herod with the question, “Where is he that is born King of the Jews?” (Matthew 2:2). At the giving of the Great Commission, our Lord Jesus claimed the authority of a king, “All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth” (Matthew 28:18).

The Apostle Paul praised our Lord Jesus as “the King eternal” (1 Timothy 1:17; see also 1 Timothy 6:15). In his epistle to the Philippians, Paul also said that the day will come when “at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father” (Philippians 2:10-11). And when our Lord Jesus comes again, He will come as the King of kings (Revelation 17:14; 19:16).

Christ as Our Prophet, Priest and King

The Apostle Paul used the title “Christ” some 370 times in his epistles. And one of the great themes of Paul’s letters is the believers’ union and communion with Christ. Paul writes about the believer being “in Christ” over 70 times.

The expression “in Christ” refers to our identity with Him. It speaks of our position in Christ Jesus, a reference to our salvation. This union is described as a mystery. “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is *Christ in you*, the hope of glory”

(Colossians 1:27). Paul says that a person without Christ is condemned. “Examine yourselves, whether ye be in the faith; prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves, how that *Jesus Christ is in you*, except ye be reprobates?” (2 Corinthians 13:5).

A believer must have union with Christ, and he must also have communion with Christ. That is the key to our sanctification. “And if *Christ be in you*, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness” (Romans 8:10). Practically, Christ in us means that Christ lives in us, and it also means we live in and for Him. “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but *Christ liveth in me*: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me” (Galatians 2:20).

26 Jul 09

Greetings from Vancouver. On 17 July (Friday) evening, the VBPC Youth Group organised a forum on Predestination/Free Will. It was supposed to be a one-hour meeting, but it ran over by more than 30 minutes. The meeting was organised for the young people, some of whom are new believers, who are grappling with these issues concerning the Christian faith.

This past week 20-25 July, we ran a Daily Vacation Bible School for some 40 children. As usual, all hands were on deck from the youths to the seniors. It is particularly heartening to see some of the younger ones who grew up attending DVBS and AWANA Club now helping in these ministries. Please continue to pray for us. God willing, we will return to Singapore on 7 August.

Old Testament Names of Christ

Augustine of Hippo said that the New Testament is in the Old Testament concealed, and the Old Testament is in the New Testament revealed. Throughout the Old Testament, the identity of the Christ is not revealed, although His ministry, life and work are seen in various types and titles.

The Seed of the Woman (Gen 3:15)

The earliest reference to a deliverer came shortly after the fall of Adam and Eve when God cursed the serpent. “And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and **her seed**; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel” (Genesis 3:15). The seed of the woman is a reference to the virgin incarnation of Christ and to His work of sacrificial atonement. The Apostle Paul writes that “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).

The Sceptre of Shiloh (Gen 49:10)

One of the earliest references to Christ is found in Genesis. “The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be” (Genesis 49:10). This was the blessing that Jacob pronounced on Judah, his fourth son.

Shiloh is generally translated as “the peaceful one” although the Latin Vulgate translates the word as “the sent one.” Shiloh – the peaceful one – is a reference to the Christ being the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Genesis 49:10 is a prophecy on the lineage of the Christ, that He would come from the tribe of Judah (Matthew 1:2; Luke 3:33).

Prophet (Deut 18:15)

“The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken” (Deuteronomy 18:15). Through Moses, we read of the coming of a Prophet. He would come from amongst the children of Israel – a reference to His lineage. And He would speak the Word of God – a reference to His office and ministry.

This Prophet of whom Moses talked about is our Lord Jesus Christ, and this was affirmed in Peter’s sermon (Acts 3:22ff), and Stephen’s sermon (Acts 7:37).

The Branch

Our Lord Jesus is referred to as the Branch in several Old Testament passages. And each of these references corresponds to one of the four Gospels. “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and

justice in the earth” (Jeremiah 23:5). Jeremiah’s righteous Branch is a righteous King who will reign and execute justice, and this corresponds to the Matthew’s Gospel in which the lineage of our Lord Jesus Christ is traced back to David (Matthew 1:1).

Zechariah also prophesied of a Branch – “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH” (Zechariah 3:8). Zechariah’s Branch was a servant, and this corresponds to Mark’s Gospel in which our Lord Jesus Christ is portrayed as a Servant of the Lord (Mark 10:45).

Zechariah also prophesied of a man who would be the Branch. “And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD” (Zechariah 6:12). The man who would be a Branch is seen in Luke’s Gospel, which traced the genealogy of our Lord Jesus back to Adam, the first man (Luke 3:38).

Isaiah prophesied of the Branch who is the LORD Himself. “In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel” (Isaiah 4:2). This prophecy is seen in John’s Gospel which presents the deity of our Lord Jesus. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (John 1:1).

The Desire of All Nations

The prophet Haggai came into scene at a time when the children of Israel were disheartened. They had left the rebuilding of the temple, and Haggai urged them to resume the work of building God’s house. So he encouraged them with these words, “And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the LORD of hosts” (Haggai 2:7).

The “desire of all nations shall come” is a messianic prophecy. There are some who say that this could not be a reference to the Messiah because Isaiah 53 – also a messianic prophecy – says that the Messiah “hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him” (Isaiah 53:2). However, Haggai is not saying that all nations would desire Christ, but that He would be the only One who will satisfy the longings of those who desire a Deliverer. And while Israel – God’s chosen – would reject Christ (John 1:11), He would be the desire of all nations.

The children of Israel in the Old Testament looked expectantly to the coming of the Messiah. And “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son” (Galatians 4:4). Tragically, as prophesied by Isaiah, the Messiah came up as “a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not” (Isaiah 53:2-3). The children of Israel rejected the Christ because they had expected a conquering King, but what they saw was a suffering Saviour.

Today we know better; we know that Christ was “wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities...and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all” (Isaiah 53:5-6). We know that Christ is the “propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world” (1 John 2:2). And what greater tragedy, then, it would be if we who know still reject the Christ and His work of redemption on our behalf. Dearly beloved, we who know must believe in Christ Jesus, and believing, we live in Him and for Him.

02 Aug 09

Greetings from Vancouver. This will be our last Lord's Day in Vancouver B-P Church. It has been a fruitful trip. We had a wonderful Bible Camp and Daily Vacation Bible School, and in between those times, we managed to take a short holiday as well as visit some of the members of VBPC who had moved to other parts in British Columbia. Please pray for us as we fly out of Vancouver on 5 August, and God willing, we will be back in Singapore on 7 August.

Salvific Names of Christ

Our Lord Jesus Christ is also known by names that are related to His work of salvation. In the New Testament, our Lord Jesus is often known as the Saviour (Titus 2:13). Oddly, the title – Redeemer – was never applied to Him in the New Testament

Redeemer

The title “Redeemer” never appears in the New Testament although our Lord Jesus Christ is described as being the Person who had wrought the work of redemption. The Apostle Paul says that our Lord Jesus “hath **redeemed** us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us” (Galatians 3:13a); that “when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, To **redeem** them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:4-5).

The title, however, is used in the Old Testament, especially by the prophet Isaiah (Isaiah 41:14; 43:14; 44:6, 24; 47:4; 48:17; 49:7, 26; 54:5, 8; 59:20; 60:16; 63:16; see also Psalm 19:14; 78:35; Job 19:25; Jeremiah 50:34).

The concept of redemption is also seen in the Book of Ruth, where the land that was owned by Naomi was redeemed by Boaz, a kinsman. That transaction also included taking Ruth – a Moabitess – as his wife. It is also seen in the Book of Hosea, where God told Hosea to buy back his unfaithful wife, Gomer. “So I [Hosea] bought her [Gomer] to me for fifteen pieces of silver, and for an homer of barley, and an half homer of barley” (Hosea 3:1-2).

“To buy back” is to do the work of redemption. In the New Testament, “redeem” is translated from several Greek words. In Revelation 5:9, John says that our Lord Jesus was the only one who is “worthy to take the book, and to open the seals thereof: for Thou wast slain, and hast **redeemed** [Gk: *agorazo*] us to God by thy blood out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation” (Revelation 5:9). Here the word “redeemed” emphasizes the very act of purchasing, and the price that was paid for that transaction is the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul tells us that we “are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

“To redeem [Gk: *exagorazo*] them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons” (Galatians 4:5). In this verse, the word “redeem” means “to buy out from the marketplace,” and the emphasis here is on the change of position of the person who had been redeemed. The redeemed sinner is not adopted as a child of God.

Paul tells us that our Lord Jesus “gave himself for us, that He might redeem [Gk: *lutrao*] us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:14). In this case, “redeem” is derived from the root word for “ransom.”

Whatever the nuances of the word “redeem,” the point is that our redemption is not transacted at nothing. We are “not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish

and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). And our redemption is not transacted for nothing. We are “bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's” (1 Corinthians 6:20).

Saviour

Considering the fact that our Lord Jesus is often known as the Saviour of the world, this title was used only sparingly in the New Testament. “Saviour,” however, is the first title to be used on our Lord Jesus. At the announcement of His birth, the angel told the shepherds, “For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord” (Luke 2:11).

“Saviour” is also first used by the Gentiles on Christ. The Samaritans testified that they had heard our Lord Jesus, and that He was “indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world” (John 4:42).

“Saviour” [Gk: *soter*] literally means “deliverer.” To acknowledge our Lord Jesus as our Saviour is to confess that He has delivered us from the eternal consequences of sin (Romans 6:23) and also from the dominion of sin (Romans 6:14).

The Lamb of God

This title is used exclusively by John the Baptist (John 1:29, 36). John, being the son of a priest, would have been familiar with the temple offerings and sacrifices. When he pointed to our Lord Jesus and said, “Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29), John the Baptist would have no doubt understood the work that our Lord Jesus had been ordained to do.

John’s prophetic words were based upon Isaiah’s prophecy on the suffering messiah (Isaiah 53). “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth” (Isaiah 53:7). Our Lord Jesus is our Passover Lamb.

The Last Adam

The Bible teaches man is a sinner because Adam sinned. “Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned... Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over them that had not sinned after the similitude of Adam's transgression, who is the figure of him that was to come” (Romans 5:12, 14). This is known as the federal headship of Adam. Reformed theology called the sin that came from Adam as original sin.

It would be cruel to judge the rest of humanity by the sin of Adam had it not been for the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. The hope for humanity is that “since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Corinthians 15:21-22).

Our Lord Jesus is also the federal representative of all humanity in the same way as Adam was. Our Lord Jesus is the last Adam. “So it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit” (1 Corinthians 15:45). And because of His perfect obedience, He paid the price for our sins.

Adam, by his disobedience, plunged the world into sin. Christ, by His obedience, delivered the world from sin. Because of what the first Adam did, we need to be saved. Because of what the last Adam did, we can be saved.

Author and Finisher of our Faith

The writer of Hebrews tells us to look unto Jesus “the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2). The word “author” is also translated as “prince” (Acts 3:15; 5:31) and “captain” (Hebrews 2:10). This title implies that our Lord Jesus is not merely a worker in the plan of salvation; He is the designer. He is the architect. Our Lord Jesus is not merely the cause of salvation, He is the source.

Jesus is the also the finisher of our faith. The word “finisher” means “complete.” There is nothing that we can add to the work of salvation. There is nothing that we should add. Our Lord Jesus is the finisher of our faith in the sense that He ensures that our faith will be kept to the very end and it will be completed. He, being the captain of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10) will see to it that we would not lose our way, that we would never be shipwrecked, that we will be thrown overboard, that we will reach our heavenly home safe and sound.

Mediator

The Apostle Paul also described our Lord Jesus as the Mediator. “For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). The word refers to a person who acts as a go-between. Our Lord Jesus is a mediator in two ways. First, He is the mediator between a holy God and sinful men. By His death on the cross, our Lord Jesus effects reconciliation between God and sinners.

Our Lord Jesus is also described as being the mediator of a better covenant. “But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Hebrews 8:6). In this case, our Lord Jesus is a mediator in the sense of being a guarantor to secure for us a covenant which would otherwise be unattainable for sinners. By His death, Christ is our mediator.

Advocate

The Bible describes Satan as the accuser of the brethren. His work is to accuse us before God day and night (Revelation 12:10). However, in Christ Jesus, we have an advocate. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1). The word “advocate” literally means that “comforter;” the same title used for the Holy Spirit (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7).

The ministry of advocacy is the ministry of upholding and lifting. There will be times in our lives when insecurities set in, and our faith wavers. But our Lord Jesus lifts us up. “When I fear my faith would fail, He will hold me fast.”

Conclusion

The salvific names of our Lord Jesus Christ ought to refresh our appreciation for the saving grace that God has wrought in our hearts through His Son. Our Lord Jesus is our Redeemer and Saviour. He is our Lamb of God, our last Adam, the Author and Finisher of our faith. He is our Mediator and Advocate. Do you know Him? More importantly is He your Redeemer. The Bible says that the salvation offered by our Lord Jesus is great. And “how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?” (Hebrews 2:3). And how shall we who have been redeemed and saved by grace neglect so great a salvation by keeping the good news to ourselves? May the Lord help us to preach Christ and His salvation.

09 Aug 09

As I write, we are preparing to return to Singapore after four weeks in Vancouver. It has been heartening to see the congregation of Vancouver Bible-Presbyterian Church steadfast in their service and witness for our Lord Jesus Christ despite the absence of a resident pastor. On 2 August, after preaching at VBPC, we travelled to Vancouver Island, an hour and half boat-ride, to minister at the evening service of Victoria Free-Presbyterian Church whose pastor, the Rev Aaron Dunlop, is the son-in-law of Rev Ian Goligher. This is a Gospel work which began some three years ago, and it is encouraging to see young families serving in the church. We thank God for establishing a faithful witness for the Gospel on Vancouver Island.

the incarnational names of christ

Continuing with our theme on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, we want now to consider the incarnational names of the Messiah. The Prophet Isaiah writes, "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

There have been debates amongst theologians whether there are four or five names in this verse. There are some who do not put a comma between Wonderful and Counsellor and hold to the idea that there are four compound names. There are also others who separate Wonderful and Counsellor, and say that there are five names.

But whether one believes that there are four compound names of Christ or five, there are many precious truths in this one verse on the multi-faceted ministry of the Messiah.

Wonderful Counsellor

First, the Messiah is wonderful, and He is a wonderful counsellor. The word "wonderful" is derived from the verb meaning to separate or distinguish. It is used in the Old Testament to refer to something that is spectacular. It is often used in conjunction with "signs" (Deuteronomy 6:22; Nehemiah 9:10; Jeremiah 32:20). Here, it is used to describe the qualities that distinguished the Messiah.

The Messiah is wonderful not just in the sense of His being miraculous, but He is wonderful in the sense of His being distinguished beyond and exalted above the ordinary. The Messiah is wonderful in the sense of His being divine.

In what ways is the Messiah wonderful? He is wonderful both in His identity and ministry. The work and Person are never divorced. The Christ is wonderful for who He is. He is also wonderful for what He has done. Whether it is creation, providence, or redemption; in His life, words and works, allies and adversaries marvelled at Him. When our Lord Jesus taught, the people "were astonished at his doctrine: for he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes" (Matthew 7:28-29). After He had calmed the storm, the disciples said, "What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!" (Matthew 8:27). And Albert Barnes writes, "The Messiah was wonderful in all things. It was wonderful love by which God gave him, and by which he came; the manner of his birth was wonderful; his humility, his self-denial, his sorrows were wonderful; his mighty works were wonderful; his dying agonies were wonderful; and his resurrection, his ascension, were all suited to excite admiration and wonder."

The Messiah is also the wonderful counsellor. The word "counsellor" means more than one who gives advice; it also denotes one who has a position of honour. And this agrees with what Isaiah says, "This also cometh forth from the LORD of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working" (Isaiah 28:29). The Messiah is Counsellor also denotes His deity because the omniscient God needs no counsel, but God the Father works in complete harmony with God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in creation and providence and redemption (Genesis 1:26; 11:7; Romans 8:26-29).

In Zechariah 6:13, we also read of the council of peace. “Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both” (Zechariah 6:13) by which salvation would be wrought.

The Mighty God

The Messiah is the Mighty God. This is one, and but one out of many, of the instances in which the name “God” is applied to the Messiah (John 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:16). The title “Mighty God” which is *El Gibbor* in the original language is translated as “mighty men” in other portions of Holy Scripture (Genesis 6:4; Joshua 6:2; 1 Samuel 2:4). This has caused to presuppose that Isaiah was merely ascribing divine attributes to a human king as the heathens did with their kings. Such a position would deny the deity of the Christ.

The Messiah is the Mighty God and the God of might. He has the strength of God, and He is the strength of God. “The remnant shall return, even the remnant of Jacob, unto the mighty God” (Isaiah 10:21).

The Everlasting Father

The Messiah is the Everlasting Father, literally it means “the Father of eternity.” There are some who are confused with this title. In the doctrine of the Holy Trinity, our Lord Jesus Christ is God the Son. How then can He be the Everlasting Father.” The three Persons of the Godhead are distinct. In other words, the Christ is here described as the Everlasting Father not in the same sense as God the Father is the Father.

The word ‘father’ is used not merely as a term of respect for the Person but also as a description of Person. The father is an instructor and a ruler. The father is wise and honourable. The father protects and provides [John Calvin].

The word “everlasting” is translated “forever” (Exodus 15:18; Psalm 10:16). Our Lord Jesus describes Himself as the “I AM.” He declares to the Jews, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:58) – a reference to His eternity. However, when we speak of the Messiah being the Everlasting Father, we are not just speaking of Him being the eternal God but also of His omnipotence.

The Messiah as the Everlasting Father means that He will never die, so that God “which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ” (Philippians 1:6).

The Prince of Peace

The Messiah is the Prince of Peace, meaning to say that His work is the work of reconciliation and restoration. The ultimate goal is to bring about peace. We see this described in Isaiah 11:6-9, where the predators would dwell in peace with the prey so that “the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the cockatrice’ den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all my holy mountain: for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea” (Isaiah 11:6-9).

The word peace (Heb: *shalom*) means more than just the cessation of war and troubles. Peace refers to the overall well-being of a person. The picture is one who remains calm and tranquil in a world that is full of turmoil and trouble. It is the peace that our Lord Jesus promised, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). It is the “peace of God [that] rule in your hearts” (Colossians 3:15), and the “peace of God, which passeth all understanding” (Philippians 4:7). It is the peace that will enable us to endure every adversity of life.

Conclusion: What Do these Names Mean to Me?

Christ “shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

He is Wonderful because His works and Word are beyond compare. There is no truth and reality outside the revelation of God in His written word and living Word. He is the Wonderful Counsellor, and He is not just willing but also able to help. The Psalmist says, “Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God. They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright” (Psalm 20:7-8).

He is the mighty God who is our strength in time of our weakness. As the Psalmist says, “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble” (Psalm 46:1).

He is the Everlasting Father which means He is our stronghold forever. There will never be a time when God is absent or unavailable. In our times of distress, He is there with the soothing balm. The Christ is the Everlasting Father means that we will never leave those whom He has redeemed comfortless and fatherless. His providence stretches from eternity to eternity, and we have everlasting life, and abide in His everlasting love.

The Christ is the Prince of Peace means that when we are caught in the turmoil of life, He gives us the peace that counts. Dearly beloved, submit to the Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God; live under the dominion of the everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace, and life will never be more blessed and fulfilling.

16 Aug 09

Starting this Lord's Day and stretching over the next few months, in the English Congregation, we will be considering the Christian family. What does the Bible say about the formation of families, the structure of families? What does the Bible say about the role of parents in bringing sons and daughters in the faith, and in preparing them for marriage? There have been quite a few young people who have requested some Bible study material on the subject of dating and courtship, and the sermons in this quarter are in part a response to that request. I pray that the Holy Spirit through the counsel of God's Word will give us some biblical principles on this vital aspect of Christian Living.

The incarnational names of christ

The birth of the Messiah was prophesied hundreds of years before He was born. The prophet Isaiah wrote, *"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel"* (Isaiah 7:14). The birth would be a miraculous one not just because of the nature of the birth, but also of the supernatural conception. The Messiah would come from the seed of a woman (Genesis 3:15), and He would also be conceived of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:20).

The spiritual significance of the birth of Christ, however, goes beyond the virgin birth and the Holy Spirit conception. Christ is God in human flesh. He was *"the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth."* (John 1:14). He was, as the Apostle Paul says, *"being in the form of God...but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men"* (Philippians 2:6-7).

In light of who Christ was, we would expect that He would be given due recognition. And this is seen in the titles that were given Him at His birth.

Dayspring from On High

Zecharias, the aged father of John the Baptist, *"filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people, And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David"* (Luke 1:67-69).

Zecharias also described his son as the *"prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins"* (Luke 1:76-77).

In reference to the Christ, Zecharias said that He is the *"Dayspring from on high hath visited us, To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace"* (Luke 1:78-79).

"Dayspring" simply means "sunrise." It is the dawn of morning, of the first light of a new day breaking over the darkened horizon. But this is a dayspring that comes from "on high," referring to the exalted origin of this light. This "Dayspring" was no ordinary light; rather it was an exalted light.

To Give Us Light

And it should be because the Dayspring was given to *"give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death."* Just as physical light dispels darkness, so the Dayspring from on high dispels the spiritual darkness of sin. Sin casts a pall of darkness over humanity. We stumble and fall. We lose our way. And we eventually end up in the wrong destination. The only hope for sinful humanity is a light. Our Lord Jesus Christ is that light, and He is also life. *"In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the*

light shineth in darkness" (John 1:4-5a). He declares, *"I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life"* (John 8:12).

To Guide Our Feet

Zecharias also mentioned a second purpose for that Dayspring. It was to *"to guide our feet into the way of peace."* The implication is that we are walking in darkness, and we are on the way to destruction. Man may think well of himself and his ways, but the Bible tells us that *"all we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way"* (Isaiah 53:6); that *"the way of peace [we] know not; and there is no judgment in [our] goings: [we] have made [ourselves] crooked paths: whosoever goeth therein shall not know peace...we walk in darkness"* (Isaiah 59:8-9).

The way of the sinner is not only in darkness, but it is also the way of death. *"There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof are the ways of death"* (Proverbs 14:12).

But God, in His mercy, sent the Dayspring from on high to guide our feet. By the rising of the Dayspring, we are shown the way of peace. This peace is our reconciliation with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. This peace is also the assurance of our forgiveness and salvation.

Zecharias' prophecy (Luke 1:67-79) is known as the *Benedictus*. It is also called the Song of Hope. Truly it is, for we who were once sinners walking in the darkness of sin toward eternal destruction are now walking in the Light even as our Lord Jesus is in the light (1 John 1:7).

Immanuel

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). The meaning of "Immanuel" is given to us in the Gospel of Matthew; *"Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us"* (Matthew 1:23).

"God with us," to the Jew, is the highest of God's blessings. This was God's promise to Isaac, *"Sojourn in this land, and I will be with thee, and will bless thee; for unto thee, and unto thy seed, I will give all these countries, and I will perform the oath which I sware unto Abraham thy father"* (Genesis 26:3; see also 26:24).

It is also God's promise to Jacob (Genesis 28:15); Moses (Exodus 3:12); Joshua (Joshua 1:5); to the Jews in general (Haggai 1:13).

In the Old Testament, the presence of God is the mark and assurance of His blessings. We see Joseph that his success was due to the fact that the LORD was with him (Genesis 39:2; 21). Conversely, Samson failed because the LORD departed from him (Judges 16:20). Likewise, Saul's reign was also a major failure because the LORD *"was departed from Saul"* (1 Samuel 18:12).

In the New Testament, the meaning of "Emmanuel" became more significant. Emmanuel is the incarnation of God. He became flesh and dwelt among men. It also gives special meaning to the phrase *"Christ in us."* It is Christ in us that we are saved (2 Corinthians 13:5). It is Christ in us that we have the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27).

Conclusion

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the Dayspring from on high. He is also the Emmanuel. In the former, He is our light and our life. As Christians, we must therefore walk in the light as He is in the light. In the latter, He is our abiding presence and our blessed assurance. The Apostle Paul asks, *"What shall we then say to these*

things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?...Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?...Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, Nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Romans 8:31-39).

Dearly reader, is Christ your light and life? Is your life hid in Him?

23 Aug 09

Last Saturday (15 August), I had a blessed time with the young people from the youth fellowship groups of the English-speaking and Mandarin-speaking congregations. It is commendable that they realise the need and importance for them to come together for fellowship from time to time. It is my prayer that the adults in our church will also see the importance of that unity, and work to improve it. As Paul says we must endeavour “to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace” for we are “one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in you all” (Ephesians 4:3-6).

Over the next week (24-28 August), I will be in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, to start the inaugural lecture of the Vietnam Bible Institute (VBI), which is the brainchild of Preacher Phan. The VBI will run a six-year part-time programme to train local Vietnamese preachers and pastors. Singapore pastors will be going to Vietnam once in two months to conduct week-long classes. The prayer and goal is that over the course of six years, the local pastors and preachers will be adequately equipped with the Word of God for effective ministry. Please pray for Deacon Peter Goh and I. God willing, I will be back by this Saturday. Please also remember to pray for Phan and Hoa and their ministry.

Ministerial names of Christ

“For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45). This is our church motto. It is also the mission and purpose of the life of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord did not come so that He could be served; He came to serve. His whole life was driven by what He could do for others. He healed the lame. He opened the eyes of the blind. He cast out demons. He raised the dead. He taught. He fed. He saved. Our Lord Jesus met the needs of people. Our Lord Jesus was a minister to others.

Jesus as Teacher

One of the first things that the people said about our Lord Jesus was that He was an excellent teacher. There were several names by which our Lord Jesus is known for His teaching ministry. He is the rabbi, rabboni, master-guide, and teacher/master

During His earthly ministry, one of the most common titles used to address our Lord Jesus was “rabbi” (Matthew 23:7-8; John 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 6:25). “Rabbi” means “master” and it is the title that was used to address a religious teacher. Another variation, “rabboni,” was also used when Mary Magdalene recognized the risen Saviour (John 20:16).

A third title used of our Lord Jesus is Master/Guide. “Neither be ye called masters [Gk: *kathēgētēs*]: for one is your Master [Gk: *kathēgētēs*], *even* Christ” (Matthew 23:10). The word means master-teacher-guide. It describes one who not only teaches but guides and counsels.

A fourth title used to address our Lord Jesus is “teacher.” Nicodemus came to our Lord Jesus and said, “The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a **teacher** [Gk: *didaskalos*] come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him” (John 3:2). The word “teacher” is also translated as ‘master’ on 40 different occasions (Matthew 8:19; 9:11; 10:24-25, etc). This title not only describes the ministry of teaching of our Lord Jesus, but it also speaks of the authority of His teaching.

In our Lord Jesus’ exposition of the Ten Commandments, there was a constant reference to what had been taught, and what He was now teaching. He said, “Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment: But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever

shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire” (Matthew 5:21-22; see also 5:28, 32, 34, 39, 44).

What was “said by them of old time” refers to the teachings of the prophets. The prophets always prefaced their words by the phrase, “Thus saith the Lord,” relying on the authority of the Lord. On the other hand, when our Lord says, “I say unto you,” He is speaking on His own authority. Our Lord Jesus Christ does not appeal to any authority outside of Himself. He is the Truth in the sense that He is teaching the truth, but more importantly in the sense that He is the standard of truth. Our Lord is the Truth by which the veracity of all things is measured. That is why after His sermon on the mount, “the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as *one* having authority, and not as the scribes” (Matthew 7:28-29).

Jesus as Creator

The creation of the universe involved the Holy Trinity. In the beginning, “God said, Let *us* make man in our image, after our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). The plural pronoun tells us that the counsel of the Trinity was involved in the creation. John writes, “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made” (John 1:1-3). We know that “him” refers to our Lord Jesus Christ.

The creatorship of our Lord Jesus Christ is also seen in Paul’s epistle to the Colossians. “For by Him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether *they be* thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him: and He is before all things, and by Him all things consist” (Colossians 1:16-17).

Paul also identifies pre-eminence and the providence of our Lord Jesus Christ. He is before all things not just in the sense that He is first, but He is unique from them. The word “consist” in Colossians 1:17 means “to hold together.” Our Lord Jesus does not, as the Deists teach, go to sleep after He has done creating. Rather, He is intimately involved in every aspect of His creation together.

Conclusion

Our Lord Jesus speaks authoritatively, “I am the Truth.” It means that there is no other truth that is independent of Him. It means that He is the reality. The person who lives in rejection of Christ is living in world of make-believe. The person without Christ lives in this physical world, and everything seems real, but the reality will hit him when he realizes that beyond this physical world there is life. A person who ignores that reality of life hereafter is not living in reality. Hence when Christ says, “I am the Truth” we must live in the realm of that truth. We must live in Him. We must live by His Word.

Our Lord speaks authoritatively also on His role as Creator and Provider. “By Him all things consist” tells us of His personal care for every believer. Our Lord asked the disciples, “**Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows**” (Matthew 10:29-31). Our Lord Jesus who has the power to create also has the love for each individual. He who “inhabiteth eternity, whose name *is* Holy; I dwell in the high and holy *place*, with him also *that is* of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones” (Isaiah 57:15). Dear reader, are you living in that reality and love of Christ?

30 Aug 09

Thank you for praying for Deacon Peter Goh and me during our trip to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. After ministering at Pasir Panjang Christ Church at the Lord’s Day Worship Service, I flew to Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. After a brief delay in my flight to Vietnam, I was met at the airport by Deacon Peter Goh and Preacher Phan. The lectures (on the doctrine of Christ) began at 8:30am and goes on through to about 12:00pm. There is a lunch break before resuming again at 2:00pm. The day ends at 4:00pm. There were

eleven Vietnamese preachers and pastors who attended the lectures. All of them had been in the ministry longer than I, and most of them had to travel long distances to attend the lectures. I am humbled by their willingness and their zeal to learn, and it is always heartening to see the servants of God preaching the Gospel.

Next Friday and Saturday evenings (4-5 Sep 2009), the Mandarin-speaking congregation will be organising a Gospel Rally. The preacher is the Reverend David Wong of Kulai Bible-Presbyterian Church. If you have any unbelieving Mandarin-speaking friends or relatives, this will be an excellent opportunity for you to invite them to the Gospel rally. Please pray for Pastor Wong as he delivers God's Word.

The Lordship Names of Christ

The believer cannot divorce Jesus Christ being a Saviour from His being Lord and Master. The two are inseparable. No man can receive Jesus Christ as Saviour without also acknowledging Him as Lord and Master. There are at least three different names that are used of Jesus Christ that speak of His Lordship.

Christ as Master

In Luke 5:5, we read, "And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." The word "Master" [Gk: *epistates*] means "commander." Our Lord Jesus Christ was appointed to have authority over other people.

This title is used consistently by the disciples – by the disciples when they were caught in a storm (Luke 8:24-45); by Peter at the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:33); by John who wanted another person to stop casting out demons in the Name of Jesus (Luke 9:49); by the lepers (Luke 17:13). In each of these instances, the title was used by those who had an inadequate view of the Person and authority of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord had to correct their view and to increase their understanding of His Person and His work.

Christ as Master of the House

The Lordship of our Lord Jesus is also seen in the use of another word *oikodespotes*. The word is translated as "master of the house" (Luke 13:25; 14:21; Matthew 10:25), "goodman of the house" (Matthew 20:11; 25:43; Mark 14:14; Luke 12:39), and "householder" (Matthew 13:27, 52; 20:1; 21:33).

This is the title used to define the position of authority of the master over the servants of his household. Used in reference to our Lord Jesus Christ, He is Master specifically over His disciples who are "stewards of the mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1). Our Lord Jesus Christ is also the Master over believers because we are all to be "good stewards of the manifold grace of God" (1 Peter 4:10). And lastly, our Lord Jesus Christ is the Master of all mankind in general because everyone – believer and unbeliever – shall have to "give account of himself to God" (Romans 14:12).

Christ as Lord

The third Lordship title that is used of our Saviour is simply Lord or *despotes* (2 Peter 2:1). The title, according to Vine, suggests "one who has absolute ownership and uncontrolled power." Of the three titles, *despotes* is the strongest title that argues for the Lordship of our Lord Jesus Christ. The title implies absolute authority, and it is the word from which we get the English word "despot." The English word has a bad connotation. A despot is a tyrant who abuses his power. But used in reference to Christ, there is no focus on the abuse of power, only on the absolute authority of it.

The Mediatorial Names of Christ

“For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus” (1 Timothy 2:5). Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. Our Lord Jesus is our mediator not only with regard to our salvation, but He also has a present mediatorial ministry as our intercessor and advocate.

Christ as Intercessor

An intercessor is one who pleads on behalf of another. Our Lord Jesus Christ is our intercessor. “It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Romans 8:34). “Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them” (Hebrews 7:25).

In this role, our Lord Jesus functions as the High Priest. What an encouragement it is for believers to know that our Saviour is also intimately concerned with our spiritual well-being. Our Lord Jesus not only saves, but He also intercedes. In the context of Romans 8:34, our Lord’s intercession is the ground for our assurance of salvation. Because He intercedes for us, therefore we can be assured that nothing, not “tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword” shall separate us from the love of God (Romans 8:35-39).

Christ as Advocate

The Apostle Peter warns us about our “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). Revelation tells us that the devil is “the accuser” (Revelation 12:10). But praise God that in the face of the accuser, we have our Lord Jesus as our advocate. “My little children, these things write I unto you, that ye sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous” (1 John 2:1).

The word “advocate” [Gk: *parakletos*] is also translated as “comforter” (John 16:7) in reference to the Holy Spirit. The advocate/comforter is one who comes alongside to help and strengthen. Our Lord Jesus intercedes on our behalf so that we will not fall, and He also advocates for us when we fall.

“If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father” in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 2:1). This is not to say that believers can sin, but the reality of sin in a believer is genuine, and when we commit sin, while we sorrow over our sins, there is the advocacy of our Lord Jesus to keep us from falling into despair and despondency. The Bible tells us that “if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 John 1:9).

When we sin, the only recourse is to flee to our Lord Jesus. The role of our Lord Jesus as our advocate is different from that of the lawyer in the court. The advocate in the court is also known as “a friend of the court.” He pleads on behalf of the accused. If the accusation is false, the advocate’s job is easier. But if the accusation is true, the advocate cannot plead for the innocence of the accused. In the case of our Lord Jesus being our advocate, the accusation against the sinner is always true. “If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us...If we say that we have not sinned, we make [God] a liar, and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:8, 10).

The advocacy of our Lord Jesus is not based on our innocence because we are not. Rather the advocacy of our Lord Jesus is based on His righteousness. As sinners, we have neither merits nor rights to plead our innocence before God. But our Lord Jesus Christ can plead for us before God because He has paid the penalty for our sins. In this role, our Lord Jesus is our advocate not just on the basis of His righteousness, but also on the ground of His sacrifice. May the Holy Spirit help us to flee to Christ, as the hymn-writer reminds us, “Nothing in our hands we bring/Simply to the cross we cling.” Christ is our only plea before God.

06 Sep 09

Praise God for the two nights of Gospel Rally meetings organized by the Mandarin-speaking congregation. Like the Apostle Paul, we can rejoice whenever and wherever the Gospel is preached. On the 13th September 2009, the Mandarin-speaking congregation will be celebrating their 35th Anniversary. As a church, we rejoice with them, and we praise God for the blessings that He has bestowed upon His people.

Sonship names of Christ

The Son of Man

The psalmist says, *“I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee”* (Psalm 2:7). This is the messianic prophecy concerning the sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christians know our Lord Jesus as the “only begotten Son” (John 3:16). In the Gospels, our Lord Jesus referred to God as the Father over 160 times.

In John 5:19-27, the relationship between God the Father and God the Son was laid out in great detail.

- The Son could do nothing of His own, *“but what He seeth the Father do: for what things soever He doeth, these also doeth the Son likewise”* (John 5:19).
- The Son is the object of the Father’s love (John 5:20).
- Just as the Father has the power to give life, so does the Son (John 5:21).
- The Son is given the authority of judgment (John 5:22, 27).
- The Son and the Father deserve the same honour (John 5:23).
- The Son has the power of resurrection (John 5:26).
- The Son of God is also the Son of Man (John 5:27).

Of all the Sonship names of our Lord Jesus Christ, the most commonly used and prominent one is the “Son of Man.” Our Saviour identified Himself as Jesus only once when He met with Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:5). But He identified Himself as the Son of Man some 80 times in the Gospels. Equally interesting is that other than our Lord Himself; no one else addressed Him as the Son of Man.

The importance of the title is also evidenced by its use in the Old Testament. The name appears 61 times in Ezekiel, and once in Daniel. The prophet Daniel wrote, *“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the **Son of man** came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him”* (Daniel 7:13).

Daniel’s use of “Son of man” comes in the context of his vision of the rise and fall of the world empires. The lion with eagle’s wings represented Babylon, was succeeded by the Medo-Persian empire symbolized by the bear. The Medo-Persians were in turn replaced by the Greeks represented by the four-headed leopard. And the Greeks were defeated by the powerful Romans who were represented by a “dreadful and terrible” beast. But all these kingdoms rose to power and fell, but the one that remains is *“the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed”* (Daniel 7:13-14).

Our Lord Jesus identified Himself as this Son of man in the Gospels. *“And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven”* (John 3:13). A study of the title – Son of man – shows that our Lord Jesus used this title in three contexts.

First, it is used to refer to His humiliation. Our Lord Jesus says, *“foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head”* (Matthew 8:20).

Second, our Lord Jesus also used the title to refer to His role as Saviour. *“The Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins”* (Matthew 9:6). *“For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost”* (Luke 19:10).

Third, the title is used in the context of His betrayal, sufferings. *“And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men”* (Matthew 17:22; 20:18). *“Saying, The Son of man must suffer many things”* (Luke 9:22).

Fourth, the “Son of man” is used to refer to our Lord’s death. *“For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale’s belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth”* (Matthew 12:40; John 3:14).

Fifth, our Lord also used this title when referring to His resurrection. *“And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead”* (Matthew 17:9). *“The Son of man must suffer...and be slain, and be raised the third day”* (Luke 9:22).

Finally, it is also used in the context of our Lord’s second coming, when He shall return as the righteous judge. *“The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity. And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father”* (Matthew 13:41-43; see also Luke 18:8; 21:36).

The Son of God

Our Lord Jesus was referred to as the Son of God over 40 times in the New Testament. Our Lord Himself made no reference to Himself as the Son of God, although He often referred to God as His Father. Our Lord also did not stop others from applying the title to Him. During His trial, the priests asked, *“Art thou then the Son of God? And He said unto them, Ye say that I am”* (Luke 22:70).

The term “Son of God” is used by Christ to refer to His deity. The first reference to the Sonship of Christ is in Psalm 2:7 – *“I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.”*

Some Bible interpreters raise a question as to when Jesus became the Son of God. There are people who teach that Jesus became the Son of God at the incarnation, when the angel announced, *“therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God”* (Luke 1:35). Note that the passage does not say *“the holy thing”* should be or become the Son of God, but He should be called so.

There are others who say that Jesus became the Son of God at His baptism. Then, God announced from heaven, *“This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased”* (Matt 3:17). There are also people who believe that Jesus became the Son of God at His resurrection because Paul said, *“Declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead”* (Rom 1:4).

All these views fail to recognize the teaching of John 3:16 – *“For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but have everlasting life.”* Jesus was recognised as the Son of God before He came to earth to provide eternal salvation.

The Holy Scriptures present our Lord Jesus as the Son of God by eternal generation (John 3:16-17). Our Lord Jesus is declared to be the Son of God and begotten in the day of eternal decree. That means that He is eternally the Son of God as the decree itself is eternal. He is not only declared the Son from eternity but also begotten from eternity. We believe that our Lord Jesus Christ was the Son of God from eternity and not from any point in time.

The errors concerning the eternal sonship of our Lord Jesus Christ are due to a mistaken understanding of the word “son.” The Son of God does not mean that He is inferior to God the Father. The Son of God simply means that He is of the same essence and nature of God the Father. There is a difference in the office of the Son of God and God the Father, but there is no difference in power and glory (Phil. 2:6). The Reformed theologian, J.O. Buswell calls this difference as the economic subordination and NOT essential subordination.

Thus, when our Lord Jesus was addressed as the Son of God, the title indicates that He has a unique relationship with God the Father, one that is not shared by any man.

Conclusion: So What?

Our Lord Jesus asked His disciples, *“Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?”* (Matthew 16:13). The answers from the disciples were as varied as they were non-committal. Then our Lord asked a more pointed question, *“But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God”* (Matthew 16:15-16).

A similar question can be asked of us, “What is Christ to you?” The answer has eternal consequences. *“This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He that hath the Son hath life; and he that hath not the Son of God hath not life”* (1 John 5:10-12).

13 Aug 09

Today, we rejoice with our Mandarin-speaking brethren as they celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Mandarin-speaking congregation. *"It is of the LORD's mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not. They are new every morning: great is thy faithfulness"* (Lam. 3:22-23). Every anniversary – everyday – is a reminder of God's loving kindness and tender mercies for us. Everyday therefore is reason enough for our praise and thanksgiving to God. However, today is all the more reason to rejoice and render to our LORD all praise and worship.

Another matter for thanksgiving is the Gospel Rally that was held on 4-5 September. There were several who confessed our Lord Jesus as their Lord and Saviour, and we pray that, through the follow-up work of the church, their faith in Christ will grow from strength to strength.

I am that I am (Part i)

When Moses told God that he did not know what to tell the children of Israel if they were to ask him for God's Name, God revealed to Moses, *"I AM THAT I AM: and He said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you"* (Exod. 3:14). The "I AM" became the most holy name of God. It is printed in the English Bible in capital letters. The Chinese Bible has it as "Jehovah." The name "I AM" is so sacred that the Jewish scribes had devised a ritual which they had to follow when they come to this name. They had to wash themselves and change their clothes. They had to write the name with a new reed.

It is no surprise therefore that when our Lord Jesus said "before Abraham was, I am," the Jews wanted to stone Him. Our Lord Jesus used the title "I am" on eight different times in John's Gospel. The use of this name is evidence of His deity.

I AM the Bread of Life (John 6:35)

"And Jesus said unto them, I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst" (John 6:35). This statement is important in light of the Jews' understanding of the Messiah. From Deuteronomy 18:15, the Jews knew that God would one day raise A Prophet like Moses. The implication is that this Prophet would do what Moses did.

It is no surprise therefore that before the Jews would accept Jesus of Nazareth as the Prophet, they wanted Jesus to show them a sign that they might see and believe. The sign that they demanded was for Jesus to provide them manna just as God, through Moses, had provided manna for their forefathers when they were travelling in the wilderness. They said to Jesus, *"Our fathers did eat manna in the desert; as it is written, He gave them bread from heaven to eat"* (John 6:31).

In response, our Lord Jesus said, *"Moses gave you not that bread from heaven; but my Father giveth you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he which cometh down from heaven, and giveth life unto the world"* (John 6:32-33).

Bread sustains life. Likewise, spiritual bread sustains spiritual life. Our Lord's reasoning is very clear. First, our Lord Jesus says that He is the Bread of life (John 6:35, 48). Second, He says that we must eat of this bread (John 6:50-51). Third, He makes it clear that this bread is His flesh (John 6:51). The conclusion is that our Lord gave His flesh so that sinners may eat of it and live. The word "eat" used in John 6:50-53 has the idea of necessity. One must eat the bread, not merely taste it (Hebrews 6:4). To eat Christ – the bread of life – is to believe in Him.

As much as the idea of eating human flesh is repulsive to the Jews, our Lord Jesus did not tone it down. In John 6:53-58, He talks about the necessity of eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Of course,

our Lord Jesus was only talking in symbols. Leviticus 17:11 makes it clear that *“the life of the flesh is in the blood...for it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul”* (Leviticus 17:11).

Our Lord Jesus was speaking of His sacrifice; that His blood was shed and His body was broken for our sins. By that, He means that only those who, by faith, accepts His death and sacrifice on the cross will have “eternal life” (John 6:54), and “shall live forever” (John 6:58).

I AM the Light of the World (John 8:12)

The Pharisees had brought an adulterous woman to our Lord Jesus for His judgment. After much haranguing from the religious leaders, He said, *“He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her”* (John 8:7). When the Pharisees were convicted of their own sinfulness, they left one by one. Our Lord Jesus then turned to the crowd and said, *“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”* (John 8:12).

Our Lord spoke these words in the “treasury” of the temple (John 8:20). Some say that the treasury of the temple was next to the court of the women, and where the lighting ceremony usually took place. If that were so, it would certainly render our Lord’s words even more appropriate.

“I am the light of the world” (John 8:12). Our Lord Jesus is the light of the world. He alone – and no one else – is the light. And *“we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father...full of grace and truth”* (John 1:14).

By declaring Himself as the “light of the world,” our Lord is saying that He is the source of illumination through whom humanity will know the truth. He is the light that is shed abroad in our hearts. Our Lord is the light of the world to give wisdom to the ignorant, to give light to those who sit in darkness, to give understanding to the confused.

He further adds that *“he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”* (John 8:12). To follow the light is to obey our Lord Jesus. This means the follower cannot chart his own course. It is like the Jews moving through the wilderness, there was a pillar of light to lead them.

This also means a parting of ways from the darkness that envelopes the life of the unbeliever. With our Lord Jesus as our light, believers will never again walk in darkness of sin and ignorance.

“In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:4-5). What a tragedy to dwell in the midst of the Light and still be ignorant. Dearly beloved, is Christ the light of your life?

20 Sep 09

I am that I am (Part II)

We have been considering the “I AM” declarations of our Lord Jesus Christ. To the hungry multitude, He said, *“I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst”* (John 6:35). To those who lived in darkness of sin, our Lord Jesus said, *“I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”* (John 8:12).

I Am the Door (John 10:7, 9)

Our Lord Jesus teaches the people to distinguish between the true shepherd and the poacher. The former is one who enters by the door; while the latter is one who enters the sheepfold by another way but not the door. The intents of the two persons are also vastly different. The shepherd cares for the sheep, and he knows the sheep by name (John 10:3); whereas the poacher’s real goal is to exploit the sheep for his own gain; he is the thief and robber (John 10:1).

The reason our Lord told the people this parable is to warn them about the dangers of false teachers (poachers) who would lead them astray. However, the people did not know the meaning of the parable (John 10:6). So our Lord Jesus said to them, *“I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture”* (John 10:7-9)

The personal pronoun “I” is emphatic and exclusive; our Lord Jesus is saying that He alone – and no one else – is the door of the sheep. “I AM the door” has several meanings. Our Lord Jesus is both the door to the sheep and the door of the sheep. For the sheep, our Lord Jesus is the door to salvation. *“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved”* (John 10:9). There is no other way of salvation other than through our Lord Jesus Christ.

For the true shepherd, our Lord Jesus is the door to the sheep. The man who enters the sheepfold through the door is a true shepherd and he has access to the sheep. The man who enters by some other way (i.e. not through faith in our Lord Jesus) is not a shepherd but a thief and robber.

I Am the Good Shepherd (John 10:11, 14)

Following the parable, our Lord Jesus declares, *“I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep...I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine”* (John 10:11-14).

Our Lord Jesus is the good shepherd. Literally, verse 10 reads, “I am the Shepherd, the good one.” It makes the distinction between the hireling and the shepherd. The word “good” means “excellent.” When our Lord Jesus speaks of Himself as the good shepherd, He is stating that He is perfect in both His character and work. He is the perfect shepherd, and there is no one like Him.

The excellent character of the Shepherd is seen in His laying down His life for the sheep. This very act of sacrifice places our Lord Jesus above the best of all shepherds. A good shepherd will give his life to protect his sheep. However, in the case of our Lord Jesus, He did far more. Our Lord Jesus did not merely protect His sheep with His life; He laid down His life as a voluntary sacrifice for His Sheep. Our Lord Jesus gave Himself for sinners. *“For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God”* (1 Pet. 3:18). The prophet Isaiah wrote that *“it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin”* (Isa. 53:10).

It must also be pointed out that our Lord Jesus laid down His life for His sheep. The atoning work of our Saviour is intentionally restricted. He dies for those who were given Him by God.

Contrast the work of the Shepherd with that of the hireling. The hireling who sees his ministry as employment flees at the first sign of danger. The man who serves God for money will run to the highest bidder. The spiritual soldier-for-hire is dangerous because he leaves the sheep unprotected.

Unlike the hireling who is a stranger to the sheep, and one with less than honourable motives, our Lord Jesus as the Good Shepherd knows the sheep, and He is also known by them. *“I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine”* (John 10:14).

Being the Good Shepherd, our Lord Jesus says that He must bring other sheep into His fold. *“And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd”* (John 10:16). This was a great prophetic statement that the door of salvation would be thrown open wide to all mankind. Salvation would be for the Jews as well as the Gentiles. And every believer, whether Jew or Gentile, shall be of one fold and under one Shepherd (John 10:16).

I Am the Resurrection and the Life (John 11:25)

Among the friends that were closest to our Lord Jesus included a family from Bethany consisting of sisters, Martha and Mary, and their brother, Lazarus. News was sent to our Lord Jesus when Lazarus fell ill. But our Lord delayed His going to Bethany until four days after the death of Lazarus.

When our Lord met the inconsolable Martha, He said, *“Thy brother shall rise again”* (John 11:23).

Martha replied, *“I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day”* (John 11:24).

To Martha’s answer, our Lord Jesus declared, *“I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die”* (John 11:25-26). This “I AM” statement has immense spiritual significance. Our Lord Jesus is not merely the source of resurrection and life. He is not the one who merely has the power of resurrection or who is the giver of life. Our Lord Jesus is the resurrection and life. Because of who He is, we have the hope of resurrection and eternal life. As our Lord Himself says, *“because I live, ye shall live also”* (John 14:19).

Martha’s reply revealed that her belief in the resurrection was somewhat deficient. Martha believed that he would be raised again at the last day, but between now and then, he was dead. But our Lord Jesus says, *“he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die”* (John 11:25-26). The person who believes in Jesus though he were physically dead (as Lazarus was), yet he shall live; and the person who is alive and believes in Christ Jesus (as Martha was) shall never die.

Conclusion

There is a natural progression in these three “I AM” statements of our Lord Jesus. He is the door of the sheep through whom sinners can receive salvation. He is the door to the sheep by which He protects the sheep by keeping out the thief and robber of our souls.

Our Lord is the good shepherd who lays down His life for His sheep. He is the good shepherd who leads, protects, and provides for His sheep. And to the extent that we hear His voice and follow Him, we will be safe and secure in the presence of our divine Shepherd.

Our Lord is the resurrection and the life. He is our life. Faith in Christ is followed by life in Christ. Life in Christ is to never die. This is the glorious hope of the believer. At the time when our Lord Jesus made this statement to Martha, her understanding of these things was limited. It is by faith alone that Martha could know these truths, so our Lord Jesus gently asked, *“Believest thou this?”* (John 11:26). To

this probing question, Martha gave a Peter-like confession, *“Yea, Lord: I believe that thou art the Christ, the Son of God, which should come into the world”* (John 11:27). Dearly beloved, like Martha, we have the benefit of hindsight and the entire revealed truth, and we must also give heart-searching diligence to consider the same question – *“Believest thou this?”*

27 Sep 09

I am that I am (Part III)

“I AM that I AM” is the name that God revealed to Moses. The children of Israel revered that name. When our Lord Jesus applied that name on Himself, the Jews recognized its significance. Over the last few weeks, we have been looking at these “I AM” statements of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our Lord declares, “I am the Bread of life. I am the Light of the world. I am the Door. I am the Good Shepherd. I am the Resurrection and the Life.”

I am the way, the truth and the life (john 14:6)

On the night before He was betrayed, our Lord gathered His twelve disciples for the Passover meal. After the meal, He also took a basin of water and began to wash the feet of the disciples. Following that, our Lord gave His parting words to the disciples. He told them, *“Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also. And whither I go ye know, and the way ye know.”* (John 14:1-4).

The ever-doubtful Thomas said that if they did not know where Jesus was going, how could they know the way? And our Lord Jesus said, *“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6).

“I AM the Way.” Our Lord Jesus Christ does not only show the way; He is the Way. In other portions of Scripture, our Lord was said to have taught the way. The Pharisees said to Him, *“Master, we know that thou art true, and carest for no man: for thou regardest not the person of men, but teachest the way of God in truth”* (Mark 12:14). In Luke’s Gospel, Zecharias said that the Christ was *“To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace”* (Luke 1:79).

Our Lord Jesus is able to teach and guide us in the way because He is the way. Our Lord is the only way to God. This is Christ’s mediatorial role. “I am the Way” also means that Christ is our salvation. The Bible tells us that *“there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus”* (1 Tim 2:5).

Our Lord Jesus is the way because He knows the destination. Taoist philosophy teaches any way to nowhere in particular, and every Taoist devotee finds his own way to nowhere in particular. In Christianity, the way and the destination are clear. Our Lord Jesus declares, *“I am the way...no man cometh unto the Father, but by me”* (John 14:6). One commentator says that our Lord Jesus is the way “in a twofold sense...He is the way *from God to man*...He is also the way *from man to God*.”

There is another way to look at our Lord’s declaration. The personal pronoun “I” tells us that salvation comes to the sinner not by his following some principle but his abiding in a Person. Sin is not merely doing the wrong things; sin is separation from God. The removal of sin and reconciliation with God therefore necessitates the removal of the separation between God and the sinner. The only person who has inseparable communion with God the Father is the God the Son. Thus, any one who is united with Christ will also be united with the Father because our Lord Jesus says, *“I am in the Father, and the Father in me”* (John 14:10a).

“I AM the Truth.” Our Lord Jesus is not merely saying that He is teaching the truth; or that He is the source of truth. The statement is also not merely His stating that He had and has been and will forever be making truthful statements.

In declaring that He is the truth, our Lord Jesus is saying that He is the standard of truth. He is the embodiment of truth. He is truth. He is the reality. This is significant because it means that our Lord Jesus Christ is the one by which all knowledge will be measured. In Christ, there is truth and reality. Without Him, there is no truth or reality.

The person who lives his life without Christ is living in a state of fantasy. It is just the rich farmer who had a bumper crop, and he said to himself, *“Soul, thou hast much goods laid up for many years; take thine ease, eat, drink, and be merry”* (Luke 12:19). But God called the rich farmer a fool. The man was not a fool in the sense that he was intellectually deficient. He was well able to make and execute plans to ensure the security of his future.

The man was a fool because he was not living in reality. He had no room for God. His “reality” consisted of laying treasure for himself on earth. The Bible tells us that there is life hereafter, and after death we will all have to give an account of ourselves before God. To ignore this truth is foolish and to ignore reality. The rich farmer lived for himself; he was living outside of true reality without the real. Thus every unrepentant sinner is like the rich farmer – a fool living in his own “reality.” The humble Christian, on the other hand, has truth and lives in reality because he has Christ.

“I AM the Life.” Our Lord Jesus is the Bread from heaven, which *“giveth life unto the world”* (John 6:33). He has the *“words of eternal life”* (John 6:68). He came that we might have life and that we might have it more abundantly (John 10:10).

However, when He said, “I am the Life,” He was not talking about His being the spirit of man; He was not referring to His being the life source; He was not talking about His being the energetic force that moves our bodies.

“I am the Life” simply means that our Lord Jesus is life as opposed to death. With Him, there is life. Without Him, there is death.

“I am the way, the truth, and the life.” Put all three statements together, and we have a wonderful truth. Our Lord Jesus is the Way that unites us with God. He is the Truth that gives our lives meaning and reality both now and hereafter. And He is the life that brings us into the everlasting communion with God because no man can come to the Father except by the beloved Son.

I am the true vine (John 15:1)

In the same discourse given on the eve of His death, our Lord Jesus also said, *“I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman”* (John 15:1). This metaphor is a familiar one to the Jews. The word “true” comes from the same word as “truth” in John 14:6. The vine is the source of nourishment and life to the branches. Our Lord Jesus is the True Vine in the sense that source of all real strength and grace to His disciples. He is the source of life and vitality for the believer. He is the reason for our fruitfulness.

God the Father is the farmer who removes the dead branches and trims the fruitful ones so that they will bear more fruit. *“Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every branch that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit”* (John 15:2).

Our Lord also goes on to say that a *“branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me”* (John 15:4). That means that the fruitless branch that was removed by God the Father is also the branch that does not abide in God the Son.

Thus when our Lord Jesus says, *“I am the vine, ye are the branches”* (John 15:5a), He is saying that life and fruitfulness of the branch depends on its being attached to the vine. *“He that abideth in me, and I in*

him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing” (John 15:5b). The person who is separate from Christ is neither alive nor productive.

Conclusion

Our Lord Jesus is the way to God the Father. He is the Truth. He is the Life. And He is the very reason and purpose for our living. We can be all that God wants us to be, and do all that God wants us to do only because we abide in Him.

---The End---