

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver
Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

Which religion?

The Divinity of Christ is a teaching that separates Biblical Christianity from every other religion and cult in this world today. Many religions, including the various sects of Judaism, Islam, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, and others revere what we call the Old Testament or TaNaK (the Torah - the law, Navi'im - the prophets, and K'tuvim - the writings) as part of their holy books. Some of these religions have added other books to this collection of writings. Christians have the New Testament. Muslims claim to follow both the New Testament, the Qur'an and the Hadith. The Jews have added the Talmud and other commentaries on the TaNaK. And Mormons have 'Another Gospel of Jesus Christ'. Each religion claims to possess the truth. But can they all be right?

Old and New Testament accuracy

Since each of these religions regards the Old Testament as part of their holy writings, we should be able to compare it with what they teach to see whether or not the two correspond. Granting that the Old Testament is indeed the Word of God, which each of the religions mentioned above claim, then it should be logical to assume that the religion that agrees with the Old Testament is the one that teaches the truth. Many people make the claim that our Bible, at least the New Testament part of it, may have changed over time or become corrupted. We know that isn't the case. Over 5,600 Greek manuscripts of the New Testament have been discovered, and most of these copies have been dated to before the close of the first century, around 50-100 years after the events they describe. And these are just the copies, not the originals. We also have over 19,000 manuscripts in Syriac, Latin, Coptic and Aramaic. These were all diligently compared and found to have a 99.5% transcription accuracy. This shows us that there was no time for myths and legends to develop surrounding the person of Christ. And with so many manuscripts in circulation, there would be very little chance of errors being unwittingly introduced into the text. Not only that, but we also have scientific proof that the Old Testament has not changed in over 2000 years. In 1947 the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered by a Bedouin shepherd boy in a cave in Qumran. Copies of every book in the Old Testament apart from Esther were found preserved in clay jars. The complete scroll of the prophet Isaiah was also discovered. These scrolls were hidden in caves by followers of the Essenes, a Jewish sect which existed at the time of Christ. They were hidden during the Jewish revolt against the Romans prior to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70AD. And they prove beyond a shadow of doubt that the Old Testament we have today is exactly the same as the one that existed at the time of Christ.

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

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Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

New Testament truth in the Old Testament

Some may make the claim that what the Apostle Paul taught in the epistles is not the same as what Jesus Christ taught in the Gospels. Perhaps Paul invented the doctrine of the Trinity. Perhaps Jesus Christ never claimed to be God, and that this is something the Church has added at a later date. Well, what if we were to pretend that the New Testament did not exist? Would it be possible to prove conclusively from the Old Testament that what the New Testament teaches is in fact true? And would this show us at the same time that what Islam, Rabbinical Judaism, and all the other 'Abrahamic' religions teach is incorrect? Even if we did not have the New Testament, we would still be able to know every detail about the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, simply by reading the Old Testament. Approximately two-thirds of the Bible is prophecy. That means much of what we read in the Bible was actually written long before the events they describe took place. This is something that is unique to Judaism and Christianity. This cannot be said of the Qur'an or any other religious text. This is another evidence that the Bible is God's Word, because only God could know the future. And many of these prophecies have already come to pass, just like the Bible said they would.

Deity of Christ?

Judaism and Islam teach that there is only one God. The Jewish people will recite Deuteronomy 6:4, "The Lord our God is one Lord". Rabbinical Judaism today generally denies the idea of a Trinity, that one God could exist in three distinct Persons, although the Old and New Testament teach this. The mantra of Islam is, "There is no God but Allah, and Mohammed is his messenger". Islam expressly forbids anyone from ascribing an equal to Allah, and the Qur'an teaches that Allah begat no son. Muslims do believe that Jesus Christ was a prophet, was the Messiah, was sinless, was born of a virgin and that He performed miracles, but the Qur'an states that Allah created Jesus in the womb of Mary in the same way he created Adam out of dust. Mormonism teaches that the Trinity is not one God revealed in three distinct Persons, but three separate gods, and that the God of the Bible is just one of many gods. Mormons believe that each of us existed as spirit beings before we were born, the physical offspring of a union between a god and a goddess. They teach that just as Jesus became a god, we will also become gods. Thus they believe that Jesus Christ was the offspring of a physical union between Mary and God. They say He is a 'mighty god', but they deny He is

the

God. Jehovah's Witness also teach that Jesus Christ was an angel created by God before His birth in Bethlehem, that He became the Messiah at His baptism in the Jordan, and that He is

a

god but not

the

God. As you can see, each of these religions and cults differ in their beliefs concerning Jesus

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver

Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

Christ being God the Son. Some say He is just a man, a prophet at best, others say He is one of many gods. But each reduces Him to a subordinate role. Is Jesus Christ God the Son? What does the Old Testament teach?

The birth of the Messiah

There are at least three Scriptures which prophesy the birth of the Lord Jesus Christ, and all refer to Him as being God incarnate. The first is in Isaiah 7:14, "The virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel

", Immanuel being the Hebrew for the phrase 'God with us'. Jewish Rabbis would say this was perhaps a reference to a woman that lived in Isaiah's day, perhaps even Isaiah's wife, and that the child's name was only of significance to King Ahaz for that specific time in history. But the word 'virgin' (almah) is only used three or four times in the Bible, and it always refers to an unmarried young woman. Also, Isaiah's prophecy is addressed not to Ahaz but to the entire House of David (Isaiah 7:13), through which the Messiah was to come (Jeremiah 23:5). But if there was any doubt as to the identity of the child, there is a second reference in Isaiah 9:6. " 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

". So this child that would be born of a virgin would be known as Immanuel, and now we know He would also be a Son who would be given to Israel, and His name shall be called " the Mighty God

" and the "

Everlasting Father

". These are two titles which belong to God alone (Genesis 49:24, Isaiah 63:16). The final reference to the Messiah's birth is in Micah 5:2. This verse tells us where He would be born, further narrowing down the possibilities as to the identity of the Messiah. "

But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting

". As there were two Bethlehems in Israel at the time of Christ, the prophet is very specific in naming which Bethlehem the Messiah was to come from. This also helps us pin down the timing of the Messiah's coming, because Bethlehem today is a Palestinian Arab town. If the Messiah were to be born there today, he certainly would not be an Israeli Jew. The verse also denotes the fact that the goings forth of this Ruler would be "

from everlasting

", that is, He would have no beginning. The only Person this can be said of is God Himself (Psalm 90:2). This contradicts the teachings of Islam, Mormonism and the Jehovah's Witness, all of which say that Jesus Christ was not God but that He had a beginning.

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver
Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

The Trinity in Genesis

While it is true that the Bible teaches us that there is but one God (Isaiah 45:21), there are numerous references in the Old Testament to His triune nature. These do not contradict verses like Deuteronomy 6:4, which teach us that "the Lord our God is one Lord". This verse simply affirms the unity of God, as opposed to any singleness of being. The Hebrew used for the word 'one' here is 'echad', which denotes God's unity. It is the same word used when speaking of a husband and wife becoming "one flesh

" in Genesis 2:24. If the Lord had wanted to say that He was one single divine Person, then the word 'yachid' could have been used instead, which would have described this. Allusions to the Trinity can be found as far back as Genesis 1. In Genesis 1:26, the Lord says, "

Let us make man in our image

". The word for God in the Hebrew here is 'Elohim', which is in the plural form. Again, the plural words for 'make' (naaseoh), 'likeness' (tselemenu) and 'image' (dmutenu) are used here. Who is God talking to? Is it the angels? The angels do not have creative power. In the following verse we are told, "

So God created man in His own image

". The word 'image' here is in the singular form. The verse tells us that man was made in the likeness of God, not in the likeness of angels. So clearly these verses demonstrate the triune nature of God. It is difficult for us to understand how God can reveal Himself in three distinct persons and still remain one God. But the human body is also made in a similar fashion, being comprised of body, soul and spirit (1st Thessalonians 5:23), but at the same time remaining one complete being.

The Trinity in Isaiah

So we don't have a multiplicity of gods, as the Mormons would teach. But we have one God, revealed in three distinct Persons. But is there any evidence that there are just three as the New Testament teaches? There are numerous verses in the Old Testament that portray the unique relationship between these three Persons of the Godhead. Isaiah 48:16 is thought to be the clearest reference in the Old Testament to the Trinity. "Come ye near unto me, hear ye this; I have not spoken in secret from the beginning; from the time that it was, there am I: and now the Lord GOD, and his Spirit, hath sent me".

The speaker is God Himself, as shown by His reference to omnipresence in the first line. Yet He has been sent by the Lord God, and His Spirit. How can God be sent by God? And why the differentiation between the Lord God and His Spirit? This verse only makes sense when we understand that one God exists in three distinct Persons, and that all three are involved in the redemption of mankind. These verses illustrate the New Testament truth, that "the Father sent the Son to be the Saviour of the world

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver
Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

", 1st John 4:14.

The Trinity in Psalms

There is another verse in Psalms 110:1. This Psalm was written by King David. He said, "The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool". Who is the Lord speaking to here? David is the king, and yet he calls this person his Lord, so it can't be David himself. Verse 4 gives us another indication of who this person is. "

The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek

". David was a king. He was also a prophet. We know this because of the things he wrote about in the Psalms. But David was never a priest. Indeed no king of Israel could ever be priest, because the priestly line came from the tribe of Levi, while the royal line came from the tribe of Judah. There is only one person in the Bible who was both priest and king at the same time and that was Melchizedek who is mentioned in Genesis 14:18. But he was not an Hebrew. So there is only one person this verse could possibly be referring to. Zechariah 6:12-13 talk about a future day when there will be a King of Israel who will also be the Great High Priest. "

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: 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

". Verse 5 confirms the identity of this person, "

The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath

". The 'day of His wrath' can only be a reference to a coming day when God Himself will judge this world for its wickedness (Zephaniah 1:14-15). So both the Lord God, and the Lord who sits at His right hand, must be God.

Father and Son?

So far we have seen how that there is one God who has revealed Himself in three distinct Persons. But what about the Father and the Son relationship, so clearly revealed in the New Testament? Is there any evidence for this in the Old Testament? There are several passages in Scripture which prove that the Lord Jesus Christ is indeed the Son of God, that He was the Son of God before His birth in Bethlehem. This contradicts the teachings of Islam, which claims that Christ had no pre-existence before Bethlehem, and that He became a son of God just as Adam became through creation (Luke 3:38). Islam also teaches that 'Allah begat no son'. But what does the Old Testament say about this? Proverbs 30:4 establishes the fact that God has a Son.

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver

Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

"Who hath ascended up into heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in his fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? what is his name, and what is his son's name, if thou canst tell? " The verse is clearly a reference to God Himself, for only God has ascended up into heaven and descended, only God has power over creation, and only God has established all the ends of the earth. The writer then asks two questions. What is His name? And what is His Son's name? This verse was written around 900 years before Christ was even born. If the writer was referring to a mere mortal or a created being, why the mystery surrounding his name? And why the reference to only one son if both Adam and Jesus were sons of God?

The second Psalm, written by David around 1000 years before Christ was born, gives us greater clarity as to who this Son is. Verses one to three set the scene. "Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying, Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us

". Against who? Against the Lord, and against His anointed one. All prophets, priests and kings in the Bible were anointed with oil. The oil was symbolic of the Holy Spirit coming upon them and sanctifying them for the purposes and plan of God. So how do we know these verses are talking about the Son of God and not David himself? The word 'anointed' in the Hebrew is actually 'Moshiach' or 'Messiah'. The Greek translation of the Hebrew word 'Messiah' is 'Christos' or 'Christ'. And when we look at what God has anointed this person to do, we will understand that it can only be speaking of one individual. In verse 6 it is God who is speaking. He responds to the rebellious attitude of the nations by saying, "

Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion

". So this anointed one is to be King over Israel. In the following verse, it is the anointed one who is speaking. He says, "

I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel

". Psalm 89:27 says that God would make David his firstborn, which is a position of authority and rank, not relationship. But here something much greater is in view. God refers to this anointed one as being His own begotten Son. Not only that, but this Son would inherit the nations and exercise dominion over the uttermost parts of the earth. That is something that David never could do. Who can this verse be speaking of? It can only be the Son of God. Remember how in Psalm 110, David said his Lord was to sit at God's right hand until He made His enemies His footstool? Verse 12 confirms who this one is. "

Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him

". Did David's enemies perish from the way when his wrath was kindled only a little? No. But this person appears to have divine power and authority, and blessing is promised for all those who put their trust in Him. In Psalm 146:3, the writer warns us not to put our trust in princes, nor in the children of men, in whom there is no help. So in order for God to enjoin us to put our trust in the Son, He must also be God Himself. So we have seen that this promised one would be none

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver
Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

other than the Son of God. He would be born in Bethlehem. He would be King of Israel. And He would reign over the whole earth.

The Divine Nature of the Messiah in Deuteronomy

So far we have looked at verses which reveal to us the triune nature of God. Now we will look at some verses which reveal the divine nature of the Messiah. Rabbinical Judaism teaches that the Messiah will not be divine, but that he is just an ordinary man who will restore the people to the true worship of God. Islam teaches that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, but that He was only a prophet who worked miracles through the power of God. But what does the Old Testament teach? There are several passages in the Old Testament which speak of the divine nature of this coming one. Whenever the children of Israel were receiving the law and they heard the voice of the Lord at Horeb, they were afraid and begged Moses not to let them hear His voice again or see the great fire that they die not (Exodus 20:18-19). In response to their request, the Lord tells Moses that He will raise up a Prophet from among them who would speak in His stead. And again, "I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him", Deuteronomy 18:18. There have been many prophets throughout Israel's history, but it seems that the Lord is referring to one particular person, considering the unique description that is given of him. He would be of Moses' brethren and of the brethren of the children of Israel. He would be like Moses. He would speak all that God had commanded Him. And God would require it of those that heard Him. Muslims would claim that these verses speak of Mohammed, but this cannot be, as Mohammed is a descendent of Ishmael and not of Isaac and Jacob. Could this Prophet have been Joshua, as Jewish Rabbis now claim? Joshua is never referred to in the Scriptures as a prophet, and the Jews of Jesus' time were still expecting this Prophet's arrival long after Joshua had died (John 1:21). Could it refer to any other person? We are told in Deuteronomy 34:10-11, "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, in all the signs and the wonders, which the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt". There is only one person who fits the description fully, and that is Jesus Christ. He claimed to be the one Moses wrote about (John 5:46). He was like Moses in that He performed many miracles during His ministry. The Lord Jesus not only knew God face to face, but claimed to be the very express image of God the Father (John 14:9).

The Righteous Branch

Several of the Old Testament prophets refer to the Messiah as being the Righteous Branch, the word 'branch' meaning a physical descendent from the family tree of King David. The prophet

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver

Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

Zechariah foretells of a day when the Lord will bring forth this Righteous Branch. In Zechariah 3:8 the Righteous Branch is linked with the priesthood. Joshua the high priest, and every high priest of the nation of Israel, were incapable of perfectly representing the people before God, for they were marred by their own sin. Whenever the High Priest of Israel came before the Lord on the Day of Atonement, he had to first make atonement for himself, before offering a sacrifice on behalf of the people (Leviticus 16:11). But this 'Branch' is presented to us as the perfect High Priest, in that He is righteous, and so is able to perfectly represent the people before God. While Joshua would have had to come before the Lord every year to make atonement for the people, through the Messiah's sin offering, the Lord declares that He will completely remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

If Zechariah portrayed the Righteous Branch as the perfect High Priest, Jeremiah portrays Him as the perfect King. Not only will this King rule over the people of Israel, but He will execute justice and judgement in the earth. His reign is global, "his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth", Zechariah 9:10. Who is He? According to Jeremiah's prophecy, this King is none other than the Lord Himself. His name is called, The Lord our Righteousness.

Jeremiah 23:5-6

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. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.

It is through His sin offering upon the cross that He has become our Righteousness. Jehovah's Witnesses would deny the deity of Jesus Christ, and claim that the titles of 'Almighty God' and 'Jehovah' belong solely to God the Father. But in this verse the word 'Jehovah' is used as a title of the Lord Jesus Christ, proving that He is God. So as we have seen, Zechariah's prophecy predicts that the Messiah will be both High Priest and King over the nation of Israel in a coming day.

Zechariah 6:12-13

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: 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.

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver

Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

The Herald of the Messiah

The prophets Isaiah and Malachi foretold that the Lord would send a messenger or forerunner before the coming of the Messiah, someone who would spiritually prepare the nation of Israel for His arrival. Both of these passages refer to the divine nature of the Messiah. In Malachi 3:1, the Lord indicates that this messenger is actually preparing the way for the Lord Himself to come, "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts". In Isaiah 40:3 we have a similar prophecy, where the forerunner urges the people of Israel to prepare the way of the Lord, a highway for their God, "

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God

". Isaiah talks about the Messiah's incarnation and subsequent manifestation to the nation of Israel in verse 5, when "

the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together

". Isaiah seems to refer to this particular revelation of the Lord's glory as something that would be unique in history, something that has never been witnessed before by men, when all flesh would see Him and not just Moses or the elders of Israel (Exodus 24:10). And again in verse 9, another reference is made to the divine nature of this one who is coming, "

O Zion, that bringest good tidings, get thee up into the high mountain; O Jerusalem, that bringest good tidings, lift up thy voice with strength; lift it up, be not afraid; say unto the cities of Judah, Behold your God!

". It seems that the prophet Isaiah is looking forward to a time when God will manifest Himself to the nation of Israel, and urges them to 'behold your God', something which they could never have done at Horeb (Exodus 19:21). These verses show us that the Messiah, rather than being just a man as Islam and Rabbinical Judaism would teach, and rather than being just another god as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witness would teach, this one who is coming would be none other than the Lord Himself manifest in flesh.

The Timing of His Coming

We have already touched briefly on the timing of the Messiah's coming, when we noted that His birth in Bethlehem meant that He had to be born at a time when this town belonged to Israel and the kingdom of Judah. Israel handed over control of Bethlehem to the Palestinian Authority a number of years ago, so there would be no possibility of this prophecy being fulfilled in our time. Unfortunately many Jewish people do not know their Scriptures, and are still looking forward in vain to the first coming of their Messiah. And many false messiahs have been set forth by the religious Jews. If you go to Israel today, you will still see many posters proclaiming Rabbi Menachem Schneerson as the Messiah, even though he died some years ago. Others

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver

Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

will claim that the Messiah will not come until there is peace on earth and the Temple has been rebuilt. What does the Old Testament teach? While we do not know the timing of the Messiah's second advent, the Scriptures are crystal clear regarding His first coming. The prophet Daniel, who was exiled by King Nebuchadnezzar during the Babylonian captivity, was given a prophetic timetable by the angel Gabriel detailing the rebuilding of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple. Daniel 9:24-25 states that there would be a 69 week interval, or period of roughly 483 years, between the decree being given to rebuild Jerusalem and to the coming of the Messiah. The Persian King Artaxerxes gave the decree to rebuild Jerusalem at around 445BC. This would place the appearance of the Messiah at around 30AD. Daniel 9:26 also states that, "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". So the Old Testament teaches that the Messiah would appear around 30AD, it predicts that He would die, and that shortly following His death the city of Jerusalem and the Jewish Temple would again be destroyed.

The New Covenant in the Messiah

So far we have seen how the Old Testament foretells the divine nature of the Messiah, the place and manner of His birth and even the time of His revelation to the nation of Israel. It also predicts that He would die. This contradicts the teaching of Islam, which says that Jesus Christ did not die on the cross, but that He was rescued by God and a man who looked like Jesus was killed in His place. What does the Old Testament say about this, and the purpose for the Messiah's coming? Concerning the Messiah, Isaiah 42:6 states, "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house". We have already seen in Malachi 3:1 how the Messiah is referred to as the "messenger of the covenant". How would the Messiah become a covenant for the people? And what sort of covenant would this be? There are many different covenants mentioned in the Scriptures. There is the Noachic covenant in Genesis 9, which God established between Himself and all mankind, promising never again to destroy the earth with a flood. There is the Abrahamic covenant in Genesis 15, where God promised to give the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendents for an eternal inheritance. There is the covenant of circumcision in Genesis 17, established between God and Abraham's descendents. There is the Mosaic covenant in Exodus 19, the commandments and the sacrificial system, which God gave to Moses and the children of Israel after they came out of Egypt. This is the covenant which Rabbinical Judaism claims to adhere to today, although there are parts of it that simply cannot be applied, seeing there is no Jewish Temple or sacrificial system in existence. But the Old Testament speaks about another covenant, one that the Messiah Himself would establish.

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver

Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

The New Covenant Replaces the Mosaic Covenant

The prophet Jeremiah foretold a time when the Lord would make a new covenant with the house of Israel, one which would replace the Mosaic system of laws and sacrifices. Jeremiah 31:31-33 states, "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more". Notice several things about this passage. It is the Lord Himself who contrasts this new covenant with the one He made with Israel at Horeb. The fact that the Lord calls this a 'new' covenant suggests that there would be a time when the Mosaic covenant would grow 'old' and be done away with. The fact that the Lord Himself states that Israel was unable to keep the Mosaic covenant, though He did everything for them, suggests that He has something better in mind that will replace it. And then He lists the conditions of this new covenant. Notice that the new covenant is not based on man's ability to keep it. The Messiah, the messenger of the covenant, is the one who has done the keeping for us. No longer is it said, 'Thou shalt', but the Lord says, 'I will'. And there are no curses. Regarding the Mosaic law, Deuteronomy 27:26 states, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them". But the new covenant only brings blessing. How would the Lord write His laws on our hearts? That is, give us the desire to keep His laws, not just command us to do them? How would everyone under this new covenant have a personal knowledge of the Lord? Under the Mosaic covenant, a remembrance for sin was made every year at Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. How does this new covenant enable our sin to be forgiven and be remembered no more?

The Indwelling of the Holy Spirit

It is through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that God would write His laws on our hearts. And it is through the indwelling of the Holy Spirit that each individual can have that personal relationship with the Lord. The prophets Ezekiel and Joel spoke of a time when the Lord would pour out His Spirit upon the nation of Israel and all flesh. Ezekiel 36:26-27 says, "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them". Joel 2:28-29 adds, "

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver

Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit

". This is something that would be unique in history. In times past, the Holy Spirit rested upon certain individuals to enable them to do the task that the Lord had set for them, and left them once it was accomplished (1st Samuel 16:14, Psalm 51:11). But through the new covenant in the Messiah, the Holy Spirit indwells all believers, even the servants and the handmaids.

The Sacrifice of the Messiah

The sacrificial system is well established in the Old Testament. The concept is taught in Rabbinical Judaism, but because the Jewish Temple is no longer in existence, Jewish Rabbis have resorted to various unbiblical methods of trying to atone for sin. Some teach that repentance (tshuvah), praying or doing good works can be considered a sacrifice, others believe that sacrificing a chicken will bring them forgiveness of sin. Certainly the Scriptures teach that it is the blood of the sacrifice that makes atonement for the soul in the sight of God (Leviticus 17:11), so prayer these things cannot be considered an acceptable substitute. So there needs to be a sacrifice for sin, an innocent life being taken in place of the guilty. And since the Temple is not currently in existence, no Holy of Holies or Mercy Seat, a sin offering cannot be presented before the Lord on Yom Kippur (Leviticus 16). This is a major problem for Rabbinical Judaism. Why would God leave His people without the ability to perform a sin offering? The concept of atonement is foreign to Islam. Muslims teach that Allah is able to forgive a person's sin without another having to bear their punishment. Muslims see the teaching of the sacrifice of the Messiah upon the cross as unjust. Why should an innocent person have to pay for the wrong doing of another? Can God not just forgive?

Imagine that a man was caught in the act of stealing a sizeable amount of money from a shop. He is brought to court and stands before three judges. The first judge is a Muslim. The man pleads guilty and promises never to do it again. And he means it. The Muslim judge tells the man that he is forgiven of his crime and frees him immediately. Would justice be served if this happened? No. The law has been broken, and the penalty for breaking the law must be carried out, even when the criminal repents. The law has to be vindicated, or shown to be right. God has already declared what the penalty for breaking His law is (Ezekiel 18:4). For God not to uphold His own law and keep His own word would make Him unrighteous. And God withholding the justice we deserve for our sins, without dealing with the sin itself, could never take away our sin from us or fit us for heaven. Legally we would just be unpunished sinners, and we could never be made righteous or enter heaven in that state. The second judge is a Jewish Rabbi. The man pleads guilty. The Jewish judge then examines the good deeds the man has done, decides that these outnumber his bad deeds, and promptly releases him. Has justice been

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver

Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

served? No. The law demands complete perfection and recognizes nothing short of that. And even if the man never steals again, he still owes a debt to the shopkeeper for what he has stolen. In the same way we cannot do good works to 'repay' God for the bad ones we have done in the past. The last judge is a Christian. The man pleads guilty. The judge passes sentence, demanding he pay back the shopkeeper the amount that was stolen. The man has nothing with which to pay. But another comes forward who is willing to pay the shopkeeper the amount owed, if the judge and the man are willing to accept it. The judge is willing. The man also accepts. Has justice been served? Yes. The shopkeeper was repaid. The law was vindicated. And the man was set free.

God's absolute justice, in sending the Messiah to pay the penalty for sin, has made a way for us not only to be forgiven of our sin but to be made legally righteous as well. We have been shown mercy, and our sin has been dealt with. This idea, that an innocent life can be taken for the guilty, was established by God. In fact it is the Lord Himself who performed the first sacrifice in the Bible, sacrificing animals to make skins to cover the nakedness of Adam and Eve and the shed blood to cover their sin (Genesis 3:21). The sacrifices of Cain and Abel, the children of our first parents, prove to us that a prayer or some other bloodless sacrifice is not acceptable as a sin offering to God (Genesis 4). And the system of sacrifices is later expanded upon in the Mosaic covenant. The most notable of these sacrifices is perhaps the Passover lamb of Exodus 12, and the sacrifice on the Day of Atonement in Leviticus 16, which speak so clearly to us of the sacrifice the Messiah would make for us upon the cross. The blood of sacrifice was very closely associated with the Mosaic covenant. After Moses received the law and had come down from the mountain, " he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the LORD hath said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the LORD hath made with you concerning all these words ", Exodus 24:7-8. The new covenant in the Messiah was also made by the blood. Zechariah 9:9-11 speak about the coming of the Messiah, and how through the blood of His covenant, people could be set free from their sin. " Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth. As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water ". It is through the sacrifice of the Messiah, the blood of His covenant, that God can be just in forgiving those who have trespassed against Him. Are there verses which show us more clearly how that the death of the Messiah would be considered a sacrifice for our sin? There is perhaps no greater passage in the whole Bible than Isaiah 53.

Isaiah 53

Who hath believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the LORD revealed?

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver

Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

For he shall grow up before him 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.

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted.

But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.

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.

He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.

And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise him; he hath put him to grief: when thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand.

He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.

Salvation

There are other passages we could look at concerning the Messiah. Isaiah 42 and 49, which reveal the purpose of His coming. Isaiah 61, which speaks of His ministry on this earth. Psalm 22, which tells of His sufferings on the cross. Not to mention the many verses that point to His Second Coming. But what does the Old Testament teach us we need to do in order to be made righteous in the sight of God? How can we come into the good of what the Messiah has done for us upon the cross? Isaiah 45:22 tells of our need of salvation, "Look unto me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else

". Notice a couple of things here. Firstly, our salvation is from the Lord alone. We are told to look unto the Lord to be saved, for there is no other Saviour besides Him (Isaiah 43:11). Secondly, it is a universal entreaty, not limited to a specific people or nation. It is something the Lord requires of every human being. And since our salvation is from the Lord alone, there is nothing that we can do to save ourselves, either by good works or trying to keep the commandments. Isaiah 45:13 speaks of the Messiah, "

I have raised him up in righteousness, and I will direct all his ways: he shall build my city, and he shall let go my captives, not for price nor reward, saith the LORD of hosts

The Divinity of Christ in the Old Testament

Written by Chris Perver

Sunday, 07 August 2011 10:31

". So we cannot 'buy' God's salvation by giving to charity or the poor, nor can we earn it by doing good deeds. It is through the Messiah alone that we are saved. He is the one that is able to free God's 'captives', for He is the one that has paid the ransom price to redeem them. As we saw earlier, it is by the blood of His covenant that God will send forth His prisoners out of the pit in which is no water (Zechariah 9:11). Because the Messiah has paid the ransom price, God's salvation can now be offered freely to all who will avail themselves of it. Isaiah 55:1-5 says, "Ho, every one that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, and he that hath no money; come ye, buy, and eat; yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Wherefore do ye spend money for that which is not bread? and your labour for that which satisfieth not? hearken diligently unto me, and eat ye that which is good, and let your soul delight itself in fatness. Incline your ear, and come unto me: hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David".

I hope you have now seen that everything the New Testament teaches comes from the Old Testament. Are you a Jewish person who is still waiting for your Messiah? Are you trying to faithfully keep the Mosaic covenant, not realizing that the Lord has provided a better way? Are you a Muslim who does not know the assurance of sins forgiven? Are you a Jehovah's Witness or Mormon who believes about Jesus, but does not know who He really is or why He came? Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation today. He is the one who gave His life for you upon the cross. He is the one who bore the punishment for your sin. And it is only through trusting Him that you can have the forgiveness of sin.

Isaiah 1:18

Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool.