

REVISED AND UPDATED



THE GOD OF TWO

TESTAMENTS



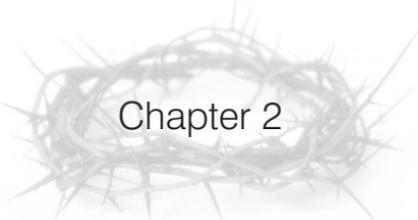
Who was Jesus of Nazareth:

fraud, prophet, or God Himself?

And what is the relationship of

Jesus and the Trinity?

| R. Brent Graves

A crown of thorns, rendered in a light, semi-transparent style, is centered at the top of the page. The thorns are sharp and interwoven, forming a circular shape.

Chapter 2

Jesus: Yahweh-Savior

In his book *Christ: The Theme of the Bible* Professor Norman Geisler (who happens to believe in a trinity of three persons) made an astonishing claim for Jesus. In his own words: “*Jesus of the New Testament is the Jehovah of the Old Testament* [emphasis his]. . . . Jesus is Jehovah, that is, the God of the Old Testament.”¹ This is the kind of statement that we hear scholars make from time to time—whether they be trinitarian or not. Why Bible scholars refer to Jesus as “the God of the Old Testament” is the subject of this chapter. One enlightening verse of Scripture in this regard comes from the Book of Philippians, penned by the apostle Paul:

“That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,

of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those 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, NKJV).

The apostle made a remarkable application in testifying that at the name of *Jesus* every knee will bow and every tongue confess, for in so doing, Paul claimed for Jesus exactly what Isaiah had claimed for Yahweh! Yahweh was speaking (Isaiah 45:21) when He declared through this Old Testament prophet:

“Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself . . . that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath. He shall say, ‘Surely in the LORD I have righteousness and strength’” (Isaiah 45:22-24, NKJV).

“To me,” proclaimed Yahweh, “every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.” Commenting on the two related passages above, Professor Geisler added: “Jesus is Jehovah and some day everyone will confess it.”²

Other verses of Scripture drive home the same point. Because Moses chose to be identified with God’s people, he considered “abuse suffered for the *Christ* to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward. By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king. For he endured as seeing the *One* who is invisible” (Hebrews 11:26-27).

Likewise, the apostle Paul reminded the Christians of his day that the ancient Israelites were punished because

they had “tested *Christ*” in the wilderness, and he warned his brethren not to make the same mistake. (See I Corinthians 10:9.)³

In the Old Testament Yahweh was the spiritual husband of Israel.⁴ The New Testament reveals *Jesus* to be the spiritual husband of the church, the spiritual successor to Israel.⁵

That misunderstood prophet, John the Baptist, gave us further evidence of the identity of Jesus. Many thought that John himself was the Messiah, but he answered that he was not. “Then who are you?” they asked. He replied: “I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, ‘Make straight the way of the Lord,’ as the prophet Isaiah said” (John 1:23).

John eventually learned that “the Lord” for whom he was preparing the way was none other than Jesus of Nazareth, for John was the forerunner of *Jesus*. When he quoted from Isaiah, however, John referred to Yahweh Himself! Here is his reference from the Book of Isaiah: “A voice is crying: In the wilderness prepare the way of *Yahweh*. Make straight in the desert a highway for our *God*” (Isaiah 40:3).

John the Baptist did not misunderstand Isaiah’s prophecy when he identified the Messiah as Yahweh. In addition to the Gospel of John, by inspiration Matthew, Mark, and Luke all made the same identification in their books. (See Matthew 3:1-3; Mark 1:1-8; Luke 1:76; 3:2-6.)

The Old Testament Book of Malachi also expresses this identification. Here, Yahweh Himself is the One speaking:

“Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me” (Malachi 3:1, NKJV).

Because the Gospel of Mark quotes the first portion of Malachi 3:1 immediately before it quotes Isaiah 40:3, the context shows that it associates “the messenger” in Malachi with Isaiah 40:3. Before Mark quotes the two verses of Scripture, it refers to them as “prophecies” (plural) that found their fulfillment in John the Baptist. After it quotes Malachi 3:1 and Isaiah 40:3, it then describes John the Baptist’s ministry, showing that he is the one who prepared the way for the Lord.

Malachi’s prophecy appears to have a dual sense. Although Mark explains that the messenger in the first part of Malachi 3:1 is John the Baptist, quoting only the *first* part of that verse, the context of Malachi 3 indicates that “the Messenger of the covenant” in the *second* part of Malachi 3:1 is the Messiah Himself. The subsequent verses also confirm that the Messiah is being discussed.

Prophecy in the Old Testament often has a dual sense, and this appears to be the case with Malachi 3:1 and Mark 1:2. The New King James Version correctly recognizes this duality in Malachi 3:1 by translating the first “messenger” with a small “m” and the “he” after it with a small “h,” while the “Messenger” of the covenant and the “He” referring to Him have a capital “M” and “H” since the verse identifies *Him* as “the Lord.”

In Malachi 3:1 the LORD was speaking. This was Yahweh speaking. And Yahweh claimed here that the time would come when a *messenger* would appear; “and that messenger,” said Yahweh, “will prepare the way before *Me*.” The messenger came, and the Messiah followed—in the person of Jesus. (By “person,” we refer to Jesus’ physical Sonship; please note the comments in the preface regarding the use of “person” in this book.)

When the rulers of the people rejected that One and had Him crucified, another amazing prophecy from the Book of Zechariah was fulfilled. Again, Yahweh spoke through His prophet: “And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn” (Zechariah 12:10, NKJV).

Although some of the English translations say, “They will look on *Him* whom they have pierced,” the original Hebrew has Yahweh Himself predicting, “They will look on *Me* whom they have pierced.”

In the Zechariah prophecy the Hebrew word for “pierce” is *dakar*, the linguistic source of the English word “dagger,” according to at least one English etymological dictionary. In any case, Semitic scholars agree that the Hebrew word definitely means “pierce.” This is an amazing prophecy because it reveals several specific aspects of the Messiah’s sacrificial death, stating that (1) Yahweh Himself (2) would be pierced (3) by His own people (4) at Jerusalem (5) so that the Lord Himself could later pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication (6) on a people who will mourn for Him as an *only* son (7) who is a firstborn son!

This one Old Testament verse alone establishes that Yahweh Himself would later perform the role as a son in becoming the Messiah. And many other Old Testament and New Testament passages give the same revelation.

It is interesting that Old Testament prophecy predicted that the Messiah would be “pierced,” particularly since the ancient Israelites carried out the death penalty

through *stoning*, not crucifixion. In looking back about two thousand years, we can appreciate that the Book of Zechariah looked ahead in anticipating that both Jews and Gentiles would be involved in the piercing of that perfect sacrifice. It is well documented that the Romans, a great Gentile empire, perfected the “art” of public execution by crucifixion. And Old Testament prophecy predicted the crucifixion of the Messiah several hundred years before Rome appeared on the scene! In this regard, the New Testament reveals that the Jewish and Roman leaders conspired together to crucify Jesus, thus fulfilling the prophecy of Zechariah 12:10 that the Messiah’s own people would “pierce” Him. (See Acts 2:23, 36.)

Some have speculated that Zechariah must have known of public execution by crucifixion and that it may have been commonly practiced before the Roman Empire and perhaps as early as the Persian Empire. However, historical evidence is lacking to support this speculation. In addition, other relevant Old Testament prophecies earlier than the Book of Zechariah foretold the crucifixion of the Messiah, long before even the Persian Empire.

Psalms 22 was written about 1000 B.C., and it contains several prophecies concerning the crucifixion of the Messiah. Verse 1, which introduces the psalm, is the very verse that Jesus quoted on the cross. Verses 1, 6-8, 16, and 18 contain specific prophecies that the Nazarene fulfilled in His death, and other verses in the psalm contain general prophecies that Christ fulfilled at the same time. Verse 16 says: “For dogs have surrounded Me; the assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet” (Psalm 22:16, NKJV).

The English versions have customarily translated the

final verb of the verse as “pierced”; however, some of the translations have unfortunate, misleading editorial comments about the verse. For example, the Revised Standard Version has a footnote to the verse that states: “Gk Syr Jerome: Heb *like a lion*.” The translators of the RSV and some other modern versions have translated the verb as “pierced” because of ancient versions that were *translations* of the Hebrew (e.g., the Greek Septuagint and Jerome’s Latin translation). Some modern versions’ footnotes on Psalm 22:16 leave the *false* impression that either all or most of the Hebrew manuscripts have “like a lion” (RSV) or “like the lion” (NIV), and not “pierced” at all!

The scholars who wrote these notes believe that the Hebrew word in the verse means “lion.” It is correct that the Hebrew term, *ka’ari*, *could* be understood as a noun (“the lion”) after a prepositional prefix (“like”), but Hebrew syntax makes it improbable. Such a translation would leave the sentence without a verb, and the awkward sense of such a sentence is noticeable even in English.

The root word of *ka’ari* is *ka’ar*, and what the liberal scholars have not admitted in the modern versions’ footnotes is that *ka’ar* is a very real Hebrew verb that the Hebrew lexicons define as “to pierce”! There is even a related verb with the same root, which is pronounced *kur* and has exactly the same meaning as *ka’ar*. In addition, other Hebrew words from the same root have either identical or similar meanings.

It is possible that David was making a pun with the term. Because lions do have sharp teeth and claws, they are capable of piercing hands and feet. Also, verses 13 and 21 mention a ferocious lion. If the writer had a pun

in mind, Hebrew syntax indicates that the *primary* meaning is “to pierce” from the verb *ka’ar*, with “like the lion” as a possible secondary meaning. In any case, we should translate *ka’ar* as the verb “pierce” since the Hebrew is simple and straightforward here and since the parallel clauses (so common in Hebrew poetry) in verse 16 have verbs that are parallel to the verb *ka’ar*. On the other hand, if we understood the term as something other than a verb, then we disrupt the Hebrew parallelism in the verse, and the latter part of verse 16 becomes awkward. It is no wonder that the ancient versions have the verb “to pierce” in their languages. They were simply following the original Hebrew verb that the Hebrew manuscripts still preserve.

In summary, Psalm 22:16 is another remarkable prophecy of the Messiah’s suffering and death on the cross, specifying that His “hands” and “feet” will be “pierced.”

This psalm, the entire chapter, is commonly known as the “Psalm of the Cross” because of its numerous prophecies that Jesus fulfilled when He went to the cross. It may be more than a coincidence that this is the twenty-second psalm, since the twenty-second and final letter of the Hebrew alphabet is *tav*. The letter *tav* in paleographic Hebrew (the ancient script) is not only in the *shape* of a cross but also actually *means* “cross”! (For further discussion of *tav*, see the section “A Mark and a Name” in chapter 8.)

Besides Zechariah 12:10 and Psalm 22:16, Isaiah 53:5 is another verse of Scripture which predicts that the Messiah would be pierced. The Hebrew word *khalal* in verse 5, which is normally translated as “wounded,” generally means “slain”—and specifically “pierced”! A related

word, *khalil*, means “something hollowed out; a pipe; a lute.” Some Semitic scholars believe that the English words “hollow” and “hole” come from the Hebrew root *khalal*. The New International Version and the New American Standard Version correctly translate *khalal* in Isaiah 53:5 as “pierced.”

Like Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 is another majestic chapter that describes several aspects of the Messiah’s suffering and crucifixion. And like Psalm 22, Isaiah 53 was written long before *either* the Roman Empire *or* the Persian Empire appeared on the scene. Therefore, we can be certain that the Messianic “piercing” prophecies in the Old Testament were not borrowed from the contemporary practice of a pagan nation, despite what some liberal scholars claim.

The Messiah was pierced and put to death as if He were a common criminal, thus fulfilling Isaiah 53 and other prophecies like it. But the bonds of death could not hold that One. In Paul’s words: “There it is said, When He ascended on high, He led a host of captives; and He gave gifts to men. In saying, He ascended, what does it mean but that He had also descended into the lower parts of the earth? He who descended is He who also ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things” (Ephesians 4:9-10).

The apostle here discussed the death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ, as we noted in chapter 1. But did he not realize that he was appropriating for Jesus another *Yahweh* passage from the Old Testament Scriptures? Indeed, Paul certainly knew, for he knew the Hebrew Scriptures well. Before his conversion, he had been taught from those Scriptures as a Pharisee “zealous

after the law.” And his teacher had been the famous Gamaliel, the most renowned Jewish teacher of that time. Thus when Paul wrote the foregoing passage, he naturally realized that he was quoting from the Book of Psalms, where David had praised Yahweh. We referred to this psalm in chapter 1 in our discussion of *Adonai*. Here is the complete passage from Psalms:

“The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of thousands; the Lord is among them as in Sinai, in the Holy Place. You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, even from the rebellious, that the LORD God might dwell there. Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, the God of our salvation! Selah. Our God is the God of salvation; and to GOD the Lord belong escapes from death” (Psalm 68:17-20, NKJV).

As we discussed in Chapter 1, by identifying the risen Christ in Ephesians 4:8-10 with the God of Psalm 68:17-20, the Bible gives us a great revelation that Jesus Himself is Yahweh, Yah, Adonai, El, and Elohim. As the apostle Paul said, “He who descended is also the One who ascended far above all the heavens, that He might fill all things” (Ephesians 4:10, NKJV).

The Great “I Am”

We saw in the first chapter of this investigation that the most popular appellation for God in the Old Testament was the unique name *Yahweh*. Consequently, for the inspired writers of the New Testament to identify that name with Jesus is not something we can take lightly.

Dr. Harry Rimmer well stated that “this subject is too important to pass over quickly. What we are saying now is that Jehovah, the God of the Old Testament, is the same person as Jesus, the Savior of New Testament records.”⁶

This subject is certainly “too important to pass over quickly.” So let us now turn our attention to the Book of Exodus, where we find Moses experiencing a strange encounter with God at a burning bush. Moses was a mere shepherd at the time, but God had plans for this shepherd. So He appeared to him and identified Himself as Yahweh, the God of his fathers.

“And God said to Moses, ‘I AM WHO I AM.’ And He said, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, ‘I AM has sent me to you.’” Moreover God said to Moses, ‘Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: “The LORD [Yahweh] God of your fathers . . . has sent me to you. This is My name forever”’” (Exodus 3:14-15, NKJV).

Moses had just asked the Lord His name (Exodus 3:13), and in answering this question, God used “I AM” interchangeably with the name “Yahweh”—“the LORD.” We saw earlier that the name “Yahweh” signifies in the Hebrew the idea of “self-derived and permanent existence.”⁷ The very basis of this name is derived from the Hebrew of “I Am.” Why? A scholar answers that “we must connect the name *Jehovah* with the Hebrew substantive verb *to be*, with the inference that it expresses the essential, eternal unchangeable *being* of Jehovah.”⁸

His name *identifies* Him to His people. The God of Israel is not a piece of wood or a stone. He is not an idol

or an image carved out by the hands of humans. He is not dead. On the contrary, Yahweh makes Himself known as the self-existent, eternal One—the great I Am.

Do we fully appreciate what Jesus Christ claimed in the New Testament record when He referred to *Himself* as the I Am? From the eighth chapter of John, we hear the Christ declaring:

“Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.’ Then the Jews said to Him, ‘You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?’ Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.’ Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by” (John 8:56-59, NKJV).

Yahweh had appeared to Abraham on a number of occasions. Did Jesus claim that He Himself was the great I Am—the God of the Old Testament who had made Himself known to Abraham, Moses, and the prophets? Obviously, the Jews nearby who heard Jesus’ statement took it in that light. They then made a vain attempt to stone to death the Nazarene for what they thought was blasphemy!

Besides the New King James Version, several other versions have also brought out the point of Jesus’ words. The New Testament in Modern English by J. B. Phillips renders the “I Am” in all capital letters: “‘I tell you in solemn truth,’ returned Jesus, ‘before there was an Abraham, I AM!’”

Likewise, the careful New American Standard Bible

and other English translations capitalize the “I Am,” evidently because the scholars of these versions are aware that Jesus was specifically identifying Himself as the great I Am of the Hebrew Scriptures.

While a recent edition of the Revised Standard Version did not capitalize the phrase, the editors made an interesting comment in a footnote to John 8:58: “The *I am* is the divine name (Exodus 3:14), a claim to pre-existence and oneness with God (John 10:30-33).”⁹

For those who might question this line of thought, we should note that Jesus did *not* say, “Before Abraham was, I *was*.” He said, “Before Abraham was, I *Am*.” What else could it be other than the divine name? Indeed, this is why His Jewish hearers tried to stone Him to death. (See also John 18:5-8, where Jesus may have associated “I Am” with Himself again, since the clause “I am He” does not have “He” in the Greek. It is interesting that the Jewish guards were in shock in verse 6 when Jesus said, “I Am.”)

What more can we say? Jesus said it all. By associating Himself with the “I Am,” He directly made the claim to be Yahweh. It is indeed ironic that when He made the claim, misguided Jews began to pick up rocks in an attempt to stone to death the *Rock* of Israel!

The Rock

From earliest times the Israelites metaphorically looked to God as their “Rock”—their foundation. Moses declared to his people:

“I will proclaim the name of Yahweh. Ascribe greatness to our God. He is the Rock, and His work is

perfect; for all His ways are justice. A God of faithfulness and without iniquity; just and right is He!" (Deuteronomy 32:3-4).

Again in the same chapter he chastised the Hebrew nation: "You were unmindful of the *Rock* that begot you, and you forgot the God who gave you birth" (Deuteronomy 32:18).

Through Isaiah, Yahweh declared to the house of Israel: "Fear not, nor be afraid. Have I not told you from of old and declared it? And you are My witnesses. Is there a God beside Me? There is no Rock beside Me. *I* know not any" (Isaiah 44:8).

King David beautifully expressed the same thought: "My soul waits for God alone; from Him comes my salvation. He *alone* is my Rock and my salvation" (Psalm 62:1-2).

Through the pen of His spokesmen the prophets, God predicted that the time would come when He, the Rock of Israel, would become a sanctuary for some but a Rock of offense for others: "Regard Yahweh of hosts as holy; let Him be your fear and your dread. And He will become a sanctuary, but also a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense to both houses of Israel" (Isaiah 8:13-14).

This amazing prophecy found its fulfillment in Jesus; for it was *Christ*, as Yahweh, who became a rock of offense to the unbelievers. Jesus Himself merely quoted David and the Book of Psalms when He asked the inhabitants of Jerusalem:

"Did you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cor-

nerstone. This was the LORD's [Yahweh's] doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:42-44, NKJV). (See Psalm 118:22-23.)

The context of this passage indicates that the Jewish leaders of the day knew Jesus was discussing *their* rejection of Him as the Messiah.¹⁰ Nevertheless His scathing indictment did not convince and convict them—because of stubborn wills and closed minds. The religious establishment of that age conspired and finally had the Christ put to death.

But by rising from the grave, Jesus proved to humanity that He was, in fact, the “Rock of Ages.” Accordingly, His disciples began to shout this truth to the world. Peter proclaimed: “This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone’” (Acts 4:11, NKJV). (See Psalm 118:22-23.)

Paul told his readers concerning Jesus: “As it is written: ‘Behold I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of offense, and whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame’” (Romans 9:33, NKJV). (See Isaiah 28:16.)

Humanity has invented various religions and many gods. Many have rejected the God of the Bible, but such rejection will bring consequences. Jesus, the Rock, is precious to those who believe in Him and seek His guidance for their lives, but He is a rock of offense to those who reject Him—whether they be Jews or Gentiles.

An apostle reminded Hebrew Christians in the first

century: “I want you to know, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud, and all passed through the sea. And all were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. All ate the same spiritual food, and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank from the spiritual Rock that followed them. And that Rock was Christ” (I Corinthians 10:1-4).

In a comment on the foregoing passage, the Biblical scholar Leon Morris was certainly correct when he stated regarding the apostle Paul’s intent in I Corinthians 10:1-4: “He refers to Christ. In doing so he transfers to the Lord the title, ‘the Rock,’ used in the Old Testament of Jehovah (Deuteronomy xxxii.15; Psalm xviii.2, etc.).”¹¹ Thus according to Paul, as Moses led the Israelites out of Egypt toward the Promised Land, Christ was there. Christ was that Rock—Yahweh Himself!

It behooves us to build our lives upon the foundation of *that* Rock. All else is simply sinking sand, which drifts away with the passing of time.

The Good Shepherd

Most of us are acquainted with the words of Psalm 23:

“The LORD is my Shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters” (Psalm 23:1-2, NKJV).

To the psalmist, Yahweh is the Shepherd, and we are His sheep. Several writers in the Old Testament depicted Yahweh as the Shepherd—the good Shepherd who cares for His sheep. It is no coincidence that the New Testament depicts Jesus as the good Shepherd. For in

Jesus Yahweh continues the role of a shepherd. The Christ announced:

- *“I am the good Shepherd. I know My own, and My own know me” (John 10:14).*
- *“I am the good Shepherd. The good Shepherd lays down His life for His sheep” (John 10:11).*

Yahweh, as Jesus, is the good Shepherd who *has* laid down His life for His sheep. *His* sheep know His voice and are known by Him. In a parable comparing human beings to sheep who become lost, Jesus said that there is great joy in heaven when only one lost sheep is found—when one human being repents and turns again to the Shepherd for guidance.¹² There is joy in heaven because He is the *good* Shepherd who cares for His sheep.

On a certain day when Jesus of Nazareth observed the multitudes before Him, “He was moved with compassion toward them, because they were as sheep not having a shepherd. And He began to teach them many things” (Mark 6:34).

Jesus also expressed this concern after His crucifixion and subsequent resurrection. At least three times the risen Christ instructed Peter: “Feed My sheep!” (John 21:15-17).

After Jesus’ ascension into the heavens, the apostle Peter did just that, as one of the spiritual leaders of God’s church in the first century. In obvious reference to the Christ, this apostle reminded fellow Christians: “For you were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls” (I Peter 2:25, NKJV). Similarly, he wrote concerning the second coming of Jesus:

“And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away” (I Peter 5:4, NKJV).

According to the Book of Hebrews, “our Lord Jesus” is the “great Shepherd of the sheep” (Hebrews 13:20).

Some people have the concept of an Old Testament God who was harsh, stern, and without mercy. But the Bible presents a Yahweh who possessed the attributes of grace and mercy—a compassionate Shepherd. The following passage is a metaphor not only of the power of God but also His gentleness: “See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and his arm rules for him. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him. He tends his flock like a shepherd: he gathers the lambs in his arms and carries them close to his heart; he gently leads those that have young” (Isaiah 40:10-11, NIV).

The Bible plainly states: “And there will be one flock and one shepherd” (John 10:16, NKJV). One Shepherd! While David of old cried out, “Yahweh is my Shepherd,” Jesus says to you and me: “I am the good Shepherd” (John 10:11, 14).

The Author of Life

A great edifice demands the existence of an architect to construct it. The existence of physical laws, such as gravity, demands a Lawgiver to create and sustain those laws. Life demands a Life-giver, since life only comes *from* life. The creation demands a Creator. And the evidence of the Creator is all around:

“For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the

things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse” (Romans 1:20, NKJV).

Paul warned that the atheists and the skeptics are *without* excuse. Madalyn Murray O’Hair? Without excuse. Robert Ingersoll? Without excuse. Voltaire? Without excuse. And Thomas Paine has not been the only skeptic who has cried out from his deathbed for his God to forgive him!

God Almighty challenges the atheists and the skeptics of our day by asking through Job of old, “Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Tell Me, if you have understanding. Who determined its measurements? Surely you know! Or who stretched the line upon it? . . . Can you bind the cluster of the Pleiades, or loose the belt of Orion? Can you bring out Mazzaroth in its season? Or can you guide the Great Bear with its cubs? Do you know the ordinances of the heavens? Can you set their dominion over the earth?” (Job 38:4-5, 31-33, NKJV).

Two honest evolutionists who are scientists *have* replied to the above challenge—frankly speaking on behalf of their evolutionist contemporaries. They have admitted: “At the moment, we have to confess that our *ignorance* of the actual creation is more or less complete!”¹³

The ignorance of humans is “more or less complete” if they reject the record of the creation as found in Genesis. Their ignorance is more or less complete if they refuse to acknowledge the evidence of a Creator in that creation. Their ignorance is more or less complete if they choose to grasp a *theory* that has yet to be proved after

thousands of years of the most intensive investigation and speculation. (Theories of evolution were expounded by the ancient philosophers!)

The Bible gives the ultimate answers that the various theories of evolution do not and cannot give. Christianity has the answers because it points us to the One who is not only a Creator but who is *interested* in His creation. In this regard, Dr. Carl Henry has pointed out: “Christianity says at the same time that Jesus Christ who is the Redeemer is also the Creator.”¹⁴

Jesus the Creator? Why would this famous theologian make such a statement? When we turn to the Bible, we begin to find out.

According to the Gospel of John, God, as the Word, “became flesh and dwelt among us” in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. In John’s words:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life” (John 1:1, 3-4, NKJV).

“All things,” John stated, “were made through Him.” Some other creator did not create this One, for He Himself brought *all* things into existence. Because this One is eternal, He was there “in the beginning” of the creation of all things.

The Gospel of John reveals that God Himself was the Word. According to John, God, as the Word, became personified in Jesus in order to communicate with us in a personal way as a human being:

“And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory” (John 1:14, NKJV).

Just as our words represent us, the Word of God represents Him and cannot be separated from Him. Therefore, the Word (1) is “with” (Greek, *pros*: “toward, pertaining to”) God and (2) *is* God (John 1:1-2).

The Book of Genesis immediately informs us that the Lord brought His creation into existence by using *words* (Genesis 1:1-31; 2:1-3). David said the same thing: “By the Word of *Yahweh* the heavens were made, and all their host at *His* command!” (Psalm 33:6). (See also Hebrews 11:3.)

This Creator put on flesh, and His creation refused to recognize Him for what He was. John testified: “He was in the world, and the world was made through Him. Yet the world did not know Him. And He came to His *own things* [literal Greek]; and His own people did not receive Him” (John 1:10-11).

The phrase “His *own things*” signifies ownership, as the scholars are aware. Jesus came to His *own* land, His *own* people, His *own* world—His *own* possessions! “Yet,” John stated, “His own did not know Him.” His own rejected Him. His own conspired against Him. His own put Him to death! By asking for the release of Barabbas and demanding the death of Jesus, “you people,” said Peter, “disowned the Holy and Righteous One and asked that a murderer be released to you. You killed the author of life” (Acts 3:14-15, NIV; see also RSV).

Some translations have “the Prince of life,” but the Greek is more correctly translated as “the Author of life.” The Greek word in question is *archegos*, and the Greek

lexicons render it either as (1) “leader, ruler, prince” or (2) “author, originator, pioneer, founder.” However, the lexicons normally give Acts 5:31 as the *only* New Testament reference in which “prince, ruler, or leader” is the “more likely” meaning. This is because the New Testament customarily uses the related Greek word *archon* for “ruler” or “prince” in the New Testament.

Actually, the context shows that the meaning of *archegos* in Acts 3:15 is “Author.” Let us notice the irony of Peter’s words. First of all, he contrasted Barabbas, a murderer, with Jesus, the Author of life. Second, the murderer was spared and released, while the Author of life was condemned and put to death. (Compare Acts 3:14-15 with Matthew 27:15-26.) Third, the name *Barabbas* literally means in Aramaic “the son of the father”—a human father—in contrast to Jesus, the Son of God, the heavenly Father. Fourth, the apostle Peter reminded his audience that “the Author of life,” who had been put to death, had indeed risen *from* the dead. In this regard, it is important to remember that even though the Man from Nazareth was killed, dying on the cross for our sins, the eternal Spirit that was in Jesus, “the Author of life,” never did die.

Archegos is the word that Hebrews 2:10 uses when it refers to Jesus as the “Author” of our salvation. (See NKJV and NIV.) It also appears in Hebrews 12:2, which calls Jesus “the Author” and Finisher of our faith. (See NKJV and NIV.) The Author and Finisher of our faith (Hebrews 12:2) and the Author of our salvation (Hebrews 2:10) is the same Author of *life* whom Peter discussed in Acts 3:15. It was as the Author of life that Jesus Himself had earlier predicted, in speaking of His physical body: “Destroy this temple, and in three days *I* will raise it up!”

(John 2:19, 21). As the Author of life, this One could not be bound by physical death, for God is an *eternal Spirit*.

Being both Lord and Spirit, Jesus Christ continues to hold together the universe by the very *power* of His Being:

“For in Him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or authorities—all things were created through Him and for Him. He is before all things; and in Him all things hold together!” (Colossians 1:16-17).

This passage is discussing Jesus Christ, for the writer continued in the next verse: “He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn *from the dead*—that in all things He might have the preeminence!” (Colossians 1:18).

Jesus has the preeminence precisely because He is the Creator of all things. Even during His earthly ministry the Christ exhibited the characteristics of Yahweh, the Creator.

As Creator, Jesus supernaturally brought food into existence in order to feed several thousand people. As Creator, Christ displayed complete control over the forces of nature when He said, “Peace! Be still!” As Creator, He miraculously healed the sick and gave speech to the dumb, hearing to the deaf, and sight to the blind. As Creator, Jesus Christ commanded the dead Lazarus to come forth from a tomb—thus *re-creating* life from dead flesh! And as Creator, Jesus Himself rose from the grave as a “life-giving Spirit” (I Corinthians 15:45).

This One is our Creator, who has promised to create *eternal* life within the very beings of those who trust Him and obey Him. “Therefore, let those who suffer according to God’s will do right and entrust their souls to a faithful Creator” (I Peter 4:19).

Jesus: Yahweh-Savior

Two statements from the Book of Isaiah declare to us that Yahweh considers Himself to be Savior, and He alone:

- “*I am Yahweh your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior*” (Isaiah 43:3).
- “*I, even I, am Yahweh; and beside Me there is no savior*” (Isaiah 43:11).

Through Hosea we have the same testimony from Yahweh: “There is no savior beside Me” (Hosea 13:4).

The days will come, according to the prophets, when the people will rejoice in Yahweh as their Savior. God predicted through Isaiah: “And in that day you will say: ‘O LORD I will praise You; though You were angry with me, Your anger is turned away, and You comfort me. Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid; ‘for YAH, the LORD, is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation’” (Isaiah 12:1-2, NKJV).

Would the LORD God Himself of the Old Testament become our salvation? This is what was prophesied, and if we accept the claims of Jesus, we must acknowledge that in *Him* Yahweh has become our salvation. The writers of the New Testament referred to Jesus as Savior many times (Titus 2:13; I John 4:14, etc.). Concerning the virgin Mary and the Savior who was about to come

into the world, an angel informed Joseph:

“She shall bring forth a Son. And you shall call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

This verse takes on significance when we recognize what that name means. The English word “Jesus” is actually from the Greek form of the Hebrew name “Joshua.” The name “Joshua” means “Savior.” Thus a reliable source informs us that in Matthew 1:21 “the Hebrew and Aramaic forms of ‘Jesus’ and ‘he will save’ are similar. The point could be suggested by translating, ‘You shall call his name “Savior” because he will save.’”¹⁵

The careful translation of Charles B. Williams illustrates that in this verse the Greek verb is an “imperative future indicative.” Therefore, Dr. Williams correctly rendered the clause: “You *must* name Him Jesus” (Matthew 1:21).

He must be named “Jesus”—“Savior”—simply because He, and only He, is the One who can save His people from their sins.

We should note, however, that the rendering of “Savior” only gives *part* of the Hebrew meaning. In the original Hebrew, “Joshua” literally means “Yahweh saves” or “Yahweh-Savior”!¹⁶ The first syllable of “Joshua” in the Hebrew is *Yah*, an abbreviated form of *Yahweh*, and *Yah* is the form in Isaiah 12:1-2, which we just quoted. The name *Yah*, as another form of *Yahweh*, was used many times in the Old Testament.¹⁷ In the Psalms, King David was fond of using the word “praise” with “Yah” in the well-known exultation *Hallelujah*,

which actually means “Praise the LORD”—“Praise Yah!”

It is no accident that the Hebrew term for “salvation” in Isaiah 12:1-2 and elsewhere in the Old Testament is very close in sound to the Hebrew pronunciation of “Jesus.” This is because both the Hebrew noun for “salvation” (*yoshuah*) and the Hebrew name for “Jesus”—“Joshua” (*Yehoshua*)—are two forms of the same root word, which means “salvation, savior,” as just noted concerning Matthew 1:21.

Because “Yah” is the prefix of the name “Jesus,” we today, in praising Jesus as our Savior, can agree with Isaiah in singing: “For YAH, the LORD, is my strength and my song; He also has become my salvation!” (Isaiah 12:1-2, NKJV).

Since the name “Jesus” means in the Hebrew language “Yahweh-Savior,” God has literally stamped upon the Messiah’s name (1) His *own* name—*Yahweh*—and (2) His own title—*Savior*.

Thus His very name directly identifies Jesus as the God of the Old Testament Scriptures. The great I Am, the Rock, the Shepherd, the Creator—Yahweh Himself—has *become* our Savior; and the name “Jesus” affirms it: *Yahweh-Savior*.¹⁸