

Who is Jesus? John R Gavazzoni

By far, most of the time, I write (hopefully) for the benefit of fellow believers possessed of a measure of spiritual maturity who not only have a vital relationship with Christ, but who also enjoy that relationship supported by an accurate understanding of our Lord's Personhood as expressed in scripture by His names, titles and the consistency of the apostolic testimony regarding the One who is our Lord, Savior, King, Head and Kinsman. The readership of this article, by and large, I believe, fits the above description, so it might seem surprising that I feel the need to address an issue that is so theologically fundamental.

I have, for some time, in the spirit of not wanting to be a doctrinal nit-picker, refrained from being as out-spoken as I might be inclined to be, knowing that the dearest of brethren can have hearts much purer than their theology, but then again, seriously flawed theology can, in time, contribute toward heart-impurities, while, at the same time, subtle seductions that take root in our hearts eventually become expressed in inaccurate theological concepts and begin a vicious cycle of errant heart-posture leading to errant theology leading to further heart-misalignment. Let's leave the consideration of which comes first, the chicken or the egg, for another occasion.

What finally triggered my conviction that it was time to be more out-spoken in my concern was a passing comment in a writing of a brother of sterling character and wonderfully life-giving revelation and insight. The comment stood out within his message like the proverbial sore thumb. It was typical of the problem that all of us as ministers of the Word---most certainly myself included---are prey to; namely, at times not thoroughly thinking through concepts that pop into, or slither into our heads.

The fundamental issue that I feel the need to address has to do with the relationship of Jesus, the flesh and blood Nazarene, with the Christ of God. Could there really be some encroaching confusion even within the ranks of those who proclaim the gospel of the kingdom, the universality of redemption, reconciliation and salvation and the message of the hope that is centered in the manifestation of

the sons of God? Yes, I believe so. So, if I have piqued your interest, please kindly give the following your most careful consideration.

The apostle Paul's statement in 2Cor. 5:16 concerning no longer knowing any man according to the flesh, not even Christ, is one of the apostle's most seminal statements, yet one that seems to trigger a tendency in some to conceptually float off into space. Nevertheless, by this one particular expression of the insight of the apostle we can--and many have---find entrance into the richest vein of truth regarding man's relationship to God in Christ. But, to repeat, it is also vulnerable to serious misunderstanding if we read it in a sloppy manner, not accurately "cutting the word of truth."

Please note that Paul acknowledges that Christ had once been known according to the flesh, but that "now we know Him thus no longer." (NAS) Clearly it was as Jesus that Christ had been known in the flesh. The question arises as to how and as whom are we to know Him in Spirit. Are we to assume that knowing Him in Spirit, that is in His resurrected, ascended, exalted, enthroned and glorified form, means that we no longer know Him as Jesus, and that there is thus some kind of a fundamental disconnect between Jesus and the Christ?

Be careful brethren. Be very careful. Allow scripture to explain scripture and take care get in touch with your most primal sense of how we ought to relate to the One whom we confess as Lord, and let the truth that we confess Jesus as Lord color all the inferences that you draw from what you read in this message.

Please consider that the same apostle who testified, "according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I shall not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness Christ shall even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil.1:20) also wrote to the Corinthians reminding them of the truth that he and they were "always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body." Did you get that? The Life that expresses itself bodily in us, is referred to by Paul as Christ and as the life of Jesus.

Are we not to understand by comparing these verses, that the One who indwells us, manifesting His indwelling Person and life in our bodies, indwells us as Jesus and as Christ, as Jesus Christ, as Christ Jesus, the Lord? The answer is quite clear---Yes! There is no disconnect of Personhood between the historical Jesus and the resurrected Christ, as seems to be implied by some who understandably desire to encourage fellow believers to identify with the risen Christ. It ought to easily come to mind that the scriptures testify specifically that Jesus rose from the dead, as they do that Christ arose.

Did God, in the tomb, terminate the humanity of the Christ, as Jesus, in favor of a Christ divested of humanness? God forbid!

As it is true that God, in becoming Man in the Person of His Son, did not, by so doing, cease to be God, and that by dying and undergoing the transformation intrinsic to resurrection and glorification, did not cease to be Man. Make it a pillar in your understanding, dear ones, that "...there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the Man, Christ Jesus." (1Tim.2:5) So also, consistent with that truth, we are not to understand that biblical affirmations concerning Christ as our life imply that He, Christ, is no longer Jesus who lives within us.

Please read 2Cor. 4:10 again.

I suspect that some of the confusion lies in questioning whether Jesus is to be understood as the Son of God, but not as God, and the discussions that I have been privy to regarding this question have never, in my hearing or reading, adequately taken into account the implications of divine sonship.

Let us be firmly anchored in the truth found in John's gospel, chapter 3, verse 16 (the "golden verse of the Bible"), keeping in mind the added force of the fact that we are not reading merely John's testimony concerning the Son of God---as true as that would be---but Jesus' own words. It is Jesus, Himself, as recorded by John, who affirms that He was uniquely birthed by God.

Please understand, dear saint: Man gives birth to man. God gives birth to God. Reproduction by birth is always after its own kind. There is no generic (emphasize "generic") difference between being God

and being the Son of God. When the Father of Spirits reproduces Himself, the result is that the Father has brought forth a Son-version of Himself without there being any diluting or diminishing of Deity in the process.

Remember that this reproduction is in and from eternity, and though fleshed-out in solidarity with creaturehood in the eon(s) in Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God, and in His many brethren whose Being is traceable to the same Seed that birthed the Son of God, that reproduction is eternal in nature, that is, not to be understood originally as on a time-line, so that the argument that if the Son is begotten of the Father, then the Son had a time-point of origin, is specious (right appearing, but without merit.)

There was/is within the nature of Deity the capacity and potential of Fatherhood and Motherhood that was inevitably realized in the eternal begetting of the Son of God. God realized familial Personhood proceeding from His conjugally-relational Being by the birth of the Son of God. The "I Am" Deity, in the eternal birthing of the Son of God, became both Parent and Child.

That God-Family became manifest in time and in flesh when the Holy Spirit came upon Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her so that she was caused, by divine favor, to participate in the conjugal relationship within God.

That "Holy Thing" which was born of her, who lived, suffered, died and in whom uniquely the intrinsic humanness within Deity was embodied, is the one, in the Spirit, and as the Spirit, who indwells us as our life.

We speak of the "Jesus" realm, and the "Christ realm" in a way that can confuse younger believers. Much confusion can be avoided if we realize the depth of the insight of Paul who saw that the "Seed" (Sperma) is essentially One, not many.

In the eternal moment, which is being unfolded in time, the Son of God was birthed by the Seed of God. The Seed of God possessed the DNA of God, the origin of all that is meant by, and included in the anointing that proceeds from the Father.

From that anointed Christ-Seed the Son of God was eternally birthed. The Seed became a Person, the Christ, the Son of the Living God. Let us appreciate the sequence in the testimony of Peter that called forth such a commendation from Jesus: "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God." He was indeed blessed, as Jesus exclaimed, to have been given that revelation by the Father.

That Seed which constituted His Person and from which His Personhood proceeded; the life of that Seed which was His inner Reality, came forth from within Him at His baptism and clothed Him with the power that was inherently His by virtue of having been given life by His Father.

When Jesus confessed that the Father was greater than He, He was not denying the identical nature that He shared with the Father, but that it was the Father from whom He had proceeded. Jesus came "out from the Father," and owes His life to the Father. Consider His words, "The Father has life in Himself and gave the Son to have life in Himself."

They both have life in Themselves, but such possession originates in the Father and is given to the Son.

In that gift, the Father grants by the very nature of the gift, equality of Being. Christ is Heir of all that the Father is and is all that the Father is as the Son. The "I Am" God, the Christ, the Son, the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of Him who raised Christ from the dead, the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead, AND Jesus, are all One, and all dwell in us as One.

Do not separate them. God did bring forth, in a sense, an Other, when He reproduced Himself in a Son, but that Other was the fulness of Himself.

In this way, God can enjoy Himself in and as an Other with whom He is One. That's why Jesus could say to Philip when Philip asked to see the Father, "Have I been with you so long, Philip, and you have not known me."

That's why Jesus could speak to His Father as distinct from Himself, yet confess no difference of Being. This Reality accrues to all men in Christ, the Christ-Seed in which we all have our Primal Origin (Barth),

so that Paul could rightly instruct pagan philosophers and include them saying, "for in Him we live and move and have our Being".

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