

The Lord Jesus
John R Gavazzoni

I've assumed the story to be true, that when Karl Barth, the eminent Swiss theologian, in the later years of his life--- having established himself as someone who many would agree had something substantive to say to the Christian world---was asked, by an interviewer, if he might sum up his theology, replied, "Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so."

How very childlike a statement to come from a man whose very name, in the minds of many, is associated with grace-pondering profundity, serious, mature spiritual reflection and disciplined devotion to probing biblical exegesis.

Having combined preaching and singing in the proclamation of the Word down through the past 52 plus years, I have many times included a stanza and chorus of that child-friendly hymn into many informal gospel concerts that I've been privileged to present, and have always noted its special appeal to all hearts, young and old. Our brother Karl also seemed to have a special place in his heart for its simple message.

I've said this in order to set the scene, as it were, for the following question--- addressed specially to those who place great value on having a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. My question is: "Have you outgrown Jesus?"

Allow me to expand the question: "In seeking to know Christ no longer according to the flesh, have you abandoned knowing Him as Jesus?"

Allow me, please, to expand the question even further: "Is there some smattering of a concept in your thinking along the line that the Christ was only intended to appear on the scene historically and in our experience momentarily as Jesus, to then no longer to be known as that personage, having sort of dissolved into that 'Christ' who is more of an 'it;' much to be desired and sought-after, but rather nebulously defined?"

We can become---at least to my perception, dismay and amusement-- caught up in an essentially narcissistic spirit of seeking nuances of spiritual understanding that can easily bring us to a shipwreck of faith. Whatever be your understanding of the glorified Christ, the Christ who is our life, the Christ who is, at the same time, the Head of the body, and the whole of the body, have you forgotten the ongoing prominence of, specifically, "Jesus" in the life of the believer and in the administration of God as unfolded in scripture?

The note of Jesus-prominence is trumpeted from the very beginning of new covenant ministry, when Peter declares, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ---this Jesus whom you you have crucified." (Acts 2:36 NAS) I could go on and on about Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost, but that statement is sufficient for purposes of this article.

We go on to Stephen, the first Christian martyr, at the very crisis-moment of his participation in Christ's suffering and death, his face aglow with the glory of God, sees Who standing at the right hand of God? He sees Jesus! It's pretty obvious that the Christ is still Jesus to Stephen at that point. He's still Jesus to a disciple so awesomely and resplendently exhibiting the very heart of the Spirit of Christ.

When we read of one, Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee quite singularly possessed by a Christ-opposing spirit, being confronted by a light that every inch of his intuition tells him is of divine origin, and of such brightness that it throws him to the ground, ought not we to be deeply impressed that the Light identifies Himself specifically as ".....Jesus whom you are persecuting."

Saul will, in the coming years, have his heart flooded with that same Light, the Light of Jesus, the Light that IS Jesus.

The Christ of God had chosen out from among men, by absolute sovereign grace, a man in whom He intended to, and did classically reveal His grace, and in so doing, He made sure that Saul, who would become, Paul, knew exactly Who it was that day Who proclaimed over him His unqualified Lordship.

Forever after, Saul of Tarsus, who we now know as the apostle, Paul, would be in love-bonds, not to a better religious idea, not to merely a

new revelation, as such, not to some esoteric idea of Messiah, but to the very Son of God, the Christ, who IS the very same Jesus of history.

Years later, when writing to the church in Corinth, Paul is careful to make it clear just whose life is being manifested in the bodies of those who are ministering to the saints of that city. He could have written of "Christ" manifested in ministering bodies, and in mortal flesh (see 2Cor. 4: 10 & 11), but he chooses to tell them specifically that it is "the life of Jesus."

There is not even a hint in the progression of revelation in the New Testament of Jesus fading out of the picture as a temporary figure in the economy of God, and of some kind of purer form of the Christ continuing on.

For instance, in the Book of Hebrews, an epistle certainly having more than just the milk of the Word, it is especially clear that the One whom the writer proclaims as the better of the best, is presented by a multi-twined thread running all through the epistle composed of and intertwining together "The/a Son," "Christ," "Jesus," and "Jesus Christ." Remove any of those descriptions and you diminish the full-orbed nature and character of the One who is the express Image of God, the radiance of God's glory.

The same is, of course, more than evident in all of Paul's epistles, and comparing John, Peter, Paul and whoever wrote Hebrews (my vote is for Apollos), the progression of the personhood of our Lord unfolds from Seed, to Son, to Word, to Christ, to Jesus, to Christ Jesus, to Jesus Christ.

I have often felt it of great importance both in spoken and written ministry. that when God, in the incarnation, became Man in Jesus Christ, He, by that incarnation, did not cease to be God, and likewise, when He died and rose from the dead, He did not cease to be Man.

In like manner, when the eternal Christ became Jesus of Nazareth, He did not cease to be the Christ, and when Christ died and rose from the dead, He did not cease to be Jesus. He is Christ Jesus

(emphasizing His descent from heaven), and He is Jesus Christ (emphasizing His ascent back to heaven).

There is, to be sure, a particular emphasis upon His humanity when He is called, "Jesus," and when just "Christ" is used, the emphasis is upon the authorization and empowerment that flows out from His First-born nature.

What He is by nature is what overflows upon Him as the Anointed One. He is the perfect example of the principle that all of God's dealings are essentially from the inside out. As Christ, He is God's authorized and empowered One, authorized and empowered by His own Reality. In other words, He effectively and unfailingly does what He is. To be touched by His anointing is to begin to know Him as He is.

There is so much to be said regarding the Jesus-centricity of Christ-centricity, certainly not the least being that it is at the name of Jesus that every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the Glory of God the Father. (Phil. 2, 9,10 & 11.

Lastly, I would find it difficult to understand that anyone could be unimpressed with the fact that the last book of our canonical scriptures draws to a close with these words, beginning in vs 16: "I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches.....
.....He who testifies to these things says, 'Yes, I am coming quickly.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus." The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all.
Amen."

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