

Finding Jesus Again

Traditionally, we go to the Messianic prophecies and then the Gospels to share the Good News about Jesus Christ. However, Jesus affirmed that the entire Old Testament (OT), including the Torah, Prophets and Writings (the 3 components of the Hebrew Scriptures) spoke of Him personally (John 5.39, Luke 24.44). While the OT points forward to the Messiah, on closer inspection we find Jesus Himself is all through the OT. How is that?

Let us begin with the terminology. In the Hebrew OT, *Elohim* is translated as “God” in our English translations, but the personal name for God in the OT is YHWH (sometimes translated in English versions as Yahweh or Jehovah). In the Greek New Testament (NT), *Theos* is translated “God” but *Kurios* is translated as Lord, the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew YHWH. Whenever your English Bible has “LORD” in all capitals in the OT, it is referring to YHWH, the personal name for the Creator God.

Who then is the YHWH who appears throughout the OT? Was it the pre-incarnate Jesus, or God the Father? In the Greek version of the OT (known as the Septuagint), used and quoted extensively by the Apostles in the NT epistles, when God spoke to Moses from the burning bush, He revealed His name as “*Ego eimi*” (“**I, I am**”), the Greek equivalent of the underlying Hebrew, YHWH (Ex. 3.28). Jesus applied this personal name for God to Himself in John 8.12 (“**I, I am** the light of the world”¹), in John 8.28 (“...You will realize that **I, I am**”), and in John 8.58 (“Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, **I, I am**.”) The Jews subsequently tried to stone Jesus, because, “You, though only a human being, are making yourself God” (John 10.33). At the climax of John’s Gospel, Jesus accepts worship from doubting Thomas, who affirms that Jesus is “My Lord and my God” (John 20.28).

In essence, Jesus was affirming that it was He who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and who led Israel from captivity into the Promised Land. Jesus is therefore YHWH, the Creator God, and He appears throughout the OT! The Apostles affirmed this understanding in 2 Pet. 1.1; Acts 4.11-12 (based on Isa. 28.16; Ps. 118.22), Rom. 10.13 (based on Joel 2.32-33), and Heb. 1.10-12 (based on Ps. 102.1, 25-26).

Many names & characteristics of YHWH in the OT are then applied directly to Jesus in the NT. He is from everlasting (Ps. 90.2; Mic. 5.2; Matt. 2.4-6.); His years have no end (Ps. 102.27; Heb. 1.12.). He remains the same (Ps. 102.27; Heb. 1.12). He makes the clouds His chariot (Ps. 104.3; Matt. 24.30). He is the Creator (Ps. 102.25; Heb. 1.10). He is the Author of life (Gen. 2.7; Acts 3.15). He is the First and the Last (Isa. 44.6; Rev. 1.17). He is the Beginning and the End (Rev. 21.6, 22.10-16). He is the King of kings and Lord of lords (Ps. 136.3; Dan. 2.47; Rev. 19.16). He accepts worship (Ex. 34.14; John 20.38). He is the only Savior (Isa. 43.11, 45.18-22; Acts 4.12; 2 Peter 1.1, 11). He forgives sins (Isa. 42.14; Lk. 5.34). He is our Redeemer (Isa. 43.14; Titus 2.13-14), and He knows the heart of man (2 Chron. 6.30; John 2.24-25).

Finally, I have discovered Jesus afresh throughout the OT by inserting the name of Jesus Christ whenever I read “LORD” in the OT. Here are some beautiful passages: Deut. 6.4-9, 13, 16, 24; 7.1, 6; 8.2-5, 11, 14, 17-18; 10. 12-21; Isa. 40.3-5, 10-11; 28-31; 41.4; 42.8; 43.1-2, 11; 44.6-8. Try it for yourself!

Hear afresh then Jesus speaking: “I, I am He who blots out your own transgressions for my own sake, and I will not remember your sins (Isa. 43.25). “For thus says Jesus... Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isa. 45.18, 22). “Why will you die, O Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone, says Jesus. Turn, then and live (Ezek. 18.31-32). “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who sent it. How often have I desired to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing” (Matt. 23.37-38).

As outreach workers, we introduce people to Jesus. This is our solemn privilege and profound joy. My prayer is that as we ourselves read the Scriptures, we will discover Jesus afresh for ourselves. May the wonder of Jesus begin afresh!

Have a blessed Sabbath,

Conrad.

¹ The NRSV is used throughout for Scripture quotes.