

IN RESPONSE - JESUS IS JEHOVAH, PART 1

by Dennis Prutow

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We continue a discussion of the use of the Psalms of the Old Testament in worship. One of the criticisms of psalmody is that we do not sing about Jesus. I maintain the real issue is the lack of the familiar English name *Jesus* in the Psalter. In addition, our reluctance to sing psalms may be based upon a faulty biblical theology. At the same time, when we sing the psalms, we do sing about Jesus Christ. However, we use specific biblical terminology and concepts and biblical theology which may be unfamiliar.

In this short series of lessons, I propose we look at the biblical use of the concepts of Christ as *Lord* and Christ as *Shepherd*. I have two psalms in mind, Psalm 23 and Psalm 80. Along with this, it is necessary to enter into a short look at how dispensationalism affects the use of psalms in singing.

Psalm 23 begins with these familiar words, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." Who is this Lord? This question is not mute. Romans 10:9-13 points us in the proper direction.

If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek; for the same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him; for "Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Faith is the instrumental means of salvation. The confession of faith Scripture requires is plain and to the point, Jesus is Lord.

Paul tells us something of the content of this confession by quoting from the Old Testament. He uses Isaiah 28:16 first. "Therefore thus says the Lord God, 'Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed.'" God the Father, the Lord God, lays a costly cornerstone in Zion. The apostle Peter shows us this

stone is Jesus Christ. He quotes Isaiah 28:16 in reference to Christ.

You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For this is contained in Scripture: "Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious corner stone and he who believes in Him will not be disappointed." (1 Peter 2:5-6).

Paul uses this text in the same way in Romans 10 to point to Christ.

Paul also quotes Joel 2:32. "And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord will be delivered." If we look at Joel 2:32 in context, there is no doubt the *Lord is Jehovah*.

It will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind; and your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days. I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth, blood, fire and columns of smoke. The sun will be turned into darkness and the moon into blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of the Lord Will be delivered; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be those who escape, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls.

The Lord is Jehovah. The American Standard Version of 1901 translates Joel 2:32, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered; for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those that escape, as Jehovah hath said, and among the remnant those whom Jehovah doth call."

Back to Romans 10:9-13. What is Paul saying? Jesus Christ is *the* Lord. He is Jehovah. Paul equates Jehovah of the Old Testament with Jesus Christ of Nazareth. They are one and the same. Part of the confession required of Christians is that we recognize Jesus Christ as Lord and God.

This was the confession abhorred by the Jewish people of Jesus' day. "The Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18).

The only way to reconcile the confession that Jesus is Jehovah, required by Scripture, lived by Christ, and interpreted by Paul, with the monotheism of the Bible is by way of the doctrine of the Trinity. There is one God who manifests Himself in three persons. The Westminster Shorter Catechism explains. "There are three persons in the Godhead; the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; these three are one God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory" (Answer 6).

"The Lord is our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). At the same time, the Father is God (Ephesians 1:3), the Son is God (Titus 2:13, 2 Peter 1:1), and the Holy Spirit is God (Acts 5:3-4). There is no contradiction here. The Trinity does *not* teach God is three persons and one person at the same time. The Trinity does *not* teach God is one essence and three at the same time. The Trinity is one essence and three persons. Understanding this, Christians confess the Lord is God, that is, the Lord Jesus is God.

The Arian heresy denied Christ was one with the Father. It held Christ to be the first creature and thus not of the divine essence. The council of Niceae (AD 325) declared Christ to be the same substance as the Father. This declaration acknowledged Christ to be "on a level with the Father as an uncreated Being and recognized Him as *autotheos*."¹ Next time we'll complete this discussion with reference to Psalm 25 and Psalm 27.

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¹ Louis Berkhof, *The History of Christian Doctrines* (Carlisle, PA: The Banner of Truth Trust, 1975), 87.

IN RESPONSE - JESUS IS JEHOVAH, PART 2

by Dennis Prutow

Last time we saw the confession, Jesus is Lord, means Jesus is Jehovah. This confession carries with it the idea God is one in essence eternally manifest in three persons. Romans 10:9 itself bears the mark of the Trinity, "That if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved." Paul speaks of two persons of the Trinity in Romans 10:9. You must be Trinitarian to be a Christian.

Certain cults such as The Church of Latter Day Saints known as the Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses deny the Trinity. A smaller sect, The Way, considers itself the proper heir to the doctrines of Arius and also denies the Trinity.¹

However, when we sing Psalm 23:1, "The Lord is my shepherd," of whom do we sing? According to Paul, we sing about Jesus who is Jehovah. We confess Jehovah Jesus is our shepherd. Of course the name Jesus is the Greek form of the Hebrew name Joshua which means Jehovah saves. We confess the second person of the Trinity is our Shepherd. We sing of Jesus. We sing of the Trinity. Psalm 23 is therefore a Christian song.

How many other songs in the Psalter may we sing in the same way? The proper name, Jehovah, appears 726 times in the Psalter in 648 verses in the American Standard Version of 1901. All but seventeen of the Psalms use this sacred name. Psalm 25:1-15 is typical. Read the Psalm through the eyes of Paul. Jehovah is commonly translated LORD in the Authorized Version.

Unto thee, O Jehovah, do I lift up my soul. O my God, in thee have I trusted.... Show me thy ways, O Jehovah; Teach me thy paths.... Remember, O Jehovah, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindness.... Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: According to thy lovingkindness remember thou me, For thy goodness' sake, O Jehovah. Good and upright is Jehovah.... All the paths of Jehovah are lovingkind-

ness and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. For thy name's sake, O Jehovah, pardon mine iniquity, for it is great. What man is he that feareth Jehovah?... The friendship of Jehovah is with them that fear him.... Mine eyes are ever toward Jehovah; for he will pluck my feet out of the net.

Compare *The Book of Psalms for Singing* which renders the Name *Jehovah* as LORD.

To Thee I lift my soul, O LORD I trust in Thee.... Show me Thy ways, O LORD.... Thy tender mercies, LORD, To mind do Thou recall.... My sins of youth, my faults Do Thou, O LORD, forget.... The LORD is good and just; the way He'll sinners show.... The pathways of the LORD are truth and mercy sure.... Now for Thine own name's sake, O LORD, I Thee entreat.... Who fears the LORD is taught The way to understand.... The secret of the LORD shall all who fear Him know.... My eyes upon the LORD continually are set....²

Surely we sing to Christ the Lord when we lift our voices to God in sacrifices of praise with Psalm 25. No, we do not use the familiar name, *Jesus*, in the Psalm. But if we understand the loaded biblical terminology when we sing, and we certainly should, we know we sing to Christ in accord with the confession Paul enjoins us to use and by which we must live. Surely we ought to live by this confession in our worship of the Lord who saved us from the wrath to come.

We may compare versions of Psalm 27 in the American Standard Version of 1901 with the Book of Psalms for Singing in the same way. Remember, Jesus is Jehovah; Jesus is Lord. I added the emphasis.

Jehovah is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? Jehovah is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?... One thing have I asked of Jehovah, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of Jehovah all

the days of my life, to behold the beauty of Jehovah, and to inquire in his temple.... I will offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto Jehovah. Hear, O Jehovah, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me. (When thou saidst), Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, Jehovah, will I seek.... Jehovah will take me up.... Teach me thy way, O Jehovah; and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.... (I had fainted), unless I had believed to see the goodness of Jehovah in the land of the living. Wait for Jehovah: be strong, and let thy heart take courage; yea, wait thou for Jehovah.

Once again, Compare *The Book of Psalms for Singing* which renders several uses of the Name *Jehovah* as LORD.

The LORD'S my light and saving strength.... My Life's strength is the LORD.... One thing I of the LORD desired.... That I the Beauty of the LORD behold and admire....³ There praises to the LORD I'll sing.... LORD hear me when I cry.... Your face, O LORD, I'll always seek....⁴ Though parents may betray, The LORD will care for me. Teach me, O LORD, Your way.... The goodness of the LORD with those that living be! Wait for the LORD! With strength restored, be brave in heart. Wait for the LORD.⁵

We sing of Christ in Psalm 27. Jesus Christ proclaimed, "I am the Light of the world; he who follows Me will not walk in the darkness, but will have the Light of life" (John 8:12). Who is our salvation? An angel told Joseph, "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). Who teaches us? Jesus commanded us to make disciples "teaching them to observe all that I commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). Whom do we seek? Jesus answers, "Come to Me" (Matthew 11:28). Psalms 23, 25, and 27 lead us to Christ.

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¹ Victor Paul Wierwille, *Jesus Christ is not God* (New Knoxville, Ohio: American Christian Press, 1992), 23-27.

² *The Book of Psalms for Singing* (Pittsburgh: The Board of Education and Publication of the Reformed Presbyterian Church of North America, 1973), 25A.

³ *Ibid.*, 27A.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 27D.

⁵ *Ibid.*,

27F.

IN RESPONSE - JESUS IS OUR SHEPHERD

by Dennis Prutow

We are looking at Psalm 23, particularly verse one, "The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want." We already know Jesus is the Lord. This is the basic Christian confession. We should also realize, Jesus is the Good Shepherd; He is our shepherd. Matthew Henry says of Psalm 23 with reference to Christ, "To this our Savior seems to refer when He says, I am the shepherd of the sheep; the good shepherd, John x. 11. He that is the shepherd of Israel, of the whole church in general ([Psalm] lxxxiii. 1), is the shepherd of every particular believer."¹

Here are the words of Christ in John 10:14-16, "I am the good shepherd, and I know My own and My own know Me, even as the Father knows Me and I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep. I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd."

Christ's acknowledgment of His office as the Good Shepherd fulfills the prophetic Word of the Old Testament.

For thus says the Lord God, "Behold, I Myself will search for My sheep and seek them out. As a shepherd cares for his herd in the day when he is among his scattered sheep, so I will care for My sheep and will deliver them from all the places to which they were scattered on a cloudy and gloomy day. I will bring them out from the peoples and gather them from the countries and bring them to their own land; and I will feed them on the mountains of Israel, by the streams, and in all the inhabited places of the land. I will feed them in a good pasture, and their grazing ground will be on the mountain heights of Israel. There they will lie down on good grazing ground and feed in rich pasture on the mountains of Israel. I will feed My flock and I will lead them to rest," declares the Lord God. "I will seek the lost, bring back the scattered, bind up the broken and strengthen the sick; but the fat

and the strong I will destroy. I will feed them with judgment (Ezekiel 34:11-16).

The imagery is very similar to Psalm 23. Ezekiel 34:23 goes on to say, "Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he will feed them himself and be their shepherd." Beyond doubt, the one shepherd who is the servant of David is Jesus Christ. Once again, Jesus gives this testimony, "I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they will hear My voice; and they will become one flock with one shepherd" (John 10:16). Jesus Christ is the One Shepherd. The church of Jesus Christ is the one flock formed by the Great and Good Shepherd.

As indicated by Matthew Henry, Psalm 80 presents a similar image. "Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who are enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth! Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh, stir up Your power and come to save us! O God, restore us and cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved" (Psalm 80:1-3). Henry observes, "Christ is the great and good shepherd, to whom we may in faith commit the custody of his sheep that were given to him."²

Salvation comes to men and women when glory from the face of the shepherd shines upon them and transforms them. Moses pled to see the glory of God (Exodus 33:18). God relented (Exodus 33:19, 34:6-7). Moses was transformed (Exodus 34:29). We too need to see the glory of God. How does the face of God shine upon us? How does the face of the Great Shepherd of the sheep shine upon us and transform us? The apostle Paul explains in 2 Corinthians 4:6. "God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."³ The phrase *to*

give the Light of the knowledge may be translated as follows: *for illumination of the knowledge*. We may therefore translate 2 Corinthians 4:6, "God, who said, 'Light shall shine out of darkness,' is the One who has shone in our hearts for illumination of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ."

We see the face of Jesus Christ today on the pages of Scripture, especially Gospels, but also in the Psalms. We gain knowledge of the glory of God through Scripture as we see the face of Christ in Scripture. God shines in our hearts to illumine this knowledge so we see His glory in the face of Christ. We may therefore pray, "O God, restore us and cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved" (Psalm 80:3). Again, God's face shines on us through Jesus Christ, through the Scriptures. The light of Holy Spirit shines in our hearts to illumine the knowledge of Christ derived from Scripture. When we see the glory of Christ and embrace Him, we have been changed.

In addition, Psalm 8:8-18 speaks of the vine of Israel. Matthew Henry again comments to the point, "The church is here represented as a vine (v. 8, 14) and a vineyard v. 15."⁴ We will explore the identity of Israel and the church and how this impinges on psalmody in our next lesson. Henry continues, "The root of the vine is Christ, Romans xi: 18. The branches are believers, John xv. 15."⁵

Jesus is Jehovah. Jesus is the Good Shepherd. Jesus appears large in Psalm 23 and Psalm 80. When we sing these psalms, when we sing of the LORD in other psalms, we frequently sing of and to Jesus Christ *the* LORD.

We should sing the psalms of the Old Testament. They speak of Jesus in supremely biblical terms by relating a much needed biblical theological view of Jesus of Nazareth. In addition, the Psalter leads us to the basic Christian confession required by Romans 10:9. We confess Jesus is LORD as we sing the psalms.

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² *Ibid.*, 6: 544.

³ Gk.

ὅτι ὁ θεὸς ὁ εἰπὼν, Ἐκ σκοτῶν φῶς λάμψει, ὃς ἔλαμψεν ἐν ταῖς καρδίαις ἡμῶν πρὸς φωτὶ σμὸν τῆς γνώσεως τῆς δόξης τοῦ θεοῦ ἐν προσώπῳ [Ἰησοῦ] Χριστοῦ..

¹ Matthew Henry, *Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Whole Bible*, 6 vols. (Westwood, NJ: Revell, n.d.), 3: 316.

⁴ Henry, 6: 546.

⁵ *Ibid.*

IN RESPONSE - ISRAEL AND THE CHURCH

by Dennis Prutow

Psalm 80:1 implores, "Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel, You who lead Joseph like a flock; You who are enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth!" The shepherd to whom Asaph directs his plea is the shepherd of Israel. We are uncomfortable singing about the shepherd of *Israel*. We want to sing of Jesus, the shepherd of the church. Our discomfort stems from an approach to Scripture called dispensationalism popularized by *The Scofield Reference Bible*. Dispensationalism is the majority report in fundamentalist Christianity in America. It impinges upon our thinking within the church in many and sundry ways. One of the ways is worship and the use of the Psalms of the Old Testament in worship.

Dispensationalism maintains the church is distinct from Israel. In his popular exposition of dispensationalism, Charles Ryrie says, "All nondispensationalists blur to some extent the distinction between Israel and the church."¹ Ryrie adds, "Further, natural Israel and the church are also contrasted in the New Testament. Paul wrote, 'Give no offense, neither to the Jews, nor to Gentiles, nor to the church of God.' (1 Cor. 10:32)."² Dispensationalists insist Galatians 6:15-16 shows a distinction between Israel and the church. "For neither is circumcision anything, nor uncircumcision, but a new creation. And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God." Of this distinction Ryrie says, "Use of the words *Israel* and *Church* shows clearly that in the New Testament national Israel continues with her own promises and the church is never equated with so-called 'new Israel' but is carefully and continually distinguished as a separate work of God in this age."³

If this approach to Scripture, this view of Israel and the church, is true, we are properly uncomfortable when we sing the psalms of Israel and improperly refer them to the church. The psalms should not be the hymnody of the church. A couple worshipping with the Sterling, Kansas

Reformed Presbyterian Church was quite uncomfortable with psalmody. This couple continued to worship with us for two or three years. It dawned upon them that it was their dispensational leanings which made them uncomfortable with psalm singing. They spoke to me about this and began attending a another church which was more to their theological liking.

Because of the pervasiveness of dispensational thinking in conservative Christianity, many people, including those in Reformed churches, approach Scripture with at least a subliminal idea there is a wall of separation between the Old Testament and the New Testament. Israel is not seen as the church in the Old Testament saved by grace through faith in the promised Savior who was yet to come. As a result psalmody has fallen by the wayside.

Up to this point we have maintained Psalm 80:1 refers to Christ. He is Jehovah. He is the shepherd. What of Israel? Once again, the apostle Paul assists our understanding. From the New Testament perspective, what is it that makes a person a Jew, a true Israelite? "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God" (Romans 2:28-29).

Paul bases his position on Moses. "Moreover the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live" (Deuteronomy 30:6). True circumcision is an inner work of God in which He grants a new heart. True Jews are people with new hearts.

With regard to salvation and our relationship with Christ, the apostle Paul declares, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise" (Galatians 3:28-29). God's children, Abraham's true descendants, are Christians. Paul confirms this in romans 9:8. "It is not the

children of the flesh who are children of God, but the children of the promise are regarded as descendants."

What is the central promise given to Abraham and transmitted to Isaac, Jacob, Israel as a whole, and fulfilled in Christ? God promised Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3, 22:18, 26:4, and 28:14). Note how Paul interprets this promise. "The Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying 'All the nations will be blessed in you'" (Galatians 3:8). The promise given to Abraham is the *gospel*.

Furthermore, the covenant promise was to be fulfilled through the seed of Abraham by way of promise. God said to Abraham, "I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your seed after you" (Genesis 17:7)⁴ Paul interprets, "Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ" (Galatians 3:16). Christ fulfills the gospel promise made to Abraham.

The distinction between Israel and the church falls. True Israelites are those with inner circumcision of heart made by God without hands. With regard to salvation there is no distinction between the Jews and others. This is the case because God preached the same gospel to Abraham He presents to us. We are recipients of the same covenant promise given to Abraham and fulfilled in Christ. When we trust in Christ, we are Abraham's children. Christians are the Israel of God. Since this is the case, we may and we should sing psalms. We may sing Psalm 80:1, "Oh, give ear, Shepherd of Israel.... You who are enthroned above the cherubim, shine forth!"

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⁴ *New American Standard Bible*, margin.

¹ Charles Caldwell Ryrie, *Dispensationalism Today* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1965), 137.

² *Ibid.*, 138.

³ *Ibid.*, 140.