

IN RESPONSE – JESUS IS JEHOVAH, ANOTHER LOOK

by Dennis Prutow

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Is Jesus Christ Jehovah? That is, is Jesus Christ Lord, with all the baggage this title carries with it in Old and New Testaments? I maintain, in connection with an apologetic for the use of the Psalms of the Old Testament in worship, that this is the case. A critic challenges me. "Your statement of the hermeneutic principle, which you draw out of the obviously messianic Psalms, is: 'Jesus is Jehovah.' My criticism is that that is a truncated statement of hermeneutic principle, and it does not work even with the most obvious of the obviously messianic Psalms--Psalms 2 and 110, in particular."

In this short series, my aim is to show that I do not derive the principle of interpretation from a couple of obviously messianic Psalms. The principle comes from the New Testament. I derive it from the use of Old Testament texts by the apostles when they specifically define and confess Christ. My plan is therefore to review several Old Testament passages used in the New Testament.

My critic goes on to assert:

In point of fact, however, in the Psalter, as in the rest of the OT, "Jehovah" is most often either a reference to the undifferentiated Triune-God or to the Father, the first person of the Trinity, and, no doubt, in some places "Jehovah" refers distinctly to the Holy Spirit, the third person (as Paul does in 2 Cor 3:17-18). The truth is, ONLY SOME of the appearances of "Jehovah" in the Psalms, and the rest of the OT, can be legitimately construed as bonafied references to Jesus. So, when you conclude, Sept., [1998,] p 3, saying, "We confess Jesus is LORD as we sing the psalms," that's not necessarily so, at least, that is only occasionally expressly so in the Psalms.

I maintain the apostles lead us to confess Jesus is Jehovah. In fact, the apostles take texts that are "reference[s] to the undifferentiated Triune-God or to the Father" and apply them to Christ. I further maintain we follow the principle *established by the apostles* when we make the Christian confession by singing words from the psalms such as, "The Lord is my

shepherd" (Psalm 23:1); "The earth is the Lord's and all it contains" (Psalm 24:1); "'To you, O Lord, I lift my soul'" (Psalm 25:1); etc., etc. I take a first step in arguing the case in what follows.

I begin with a reference from Deuteronomy. Moses charges the people of Israel, "So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. For the Lord your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe" (Deuteronomy 10:16-17). The American Standard Version of 1901 renders Deuteronomy 10:17, "For Jehovah your God, he is God of gods, and Lord of lords." *Jehovah* is God of gods and Lord of lords. Who is Jehovah? Moses speaks of being on the mountain with Him (Deuteronomy 10:10). Moses asks what Jehovah requires of the people (Deuteronomy 10:12). They must love the Lord and keep His commandments (Deuteronomy 10:12-13). Yet the people rebelled against Jehovah (Deuteronomy 10:15). Hence the exhortation verse 16 and the ascription giving ground to the plea in verse 17.

The apostle John picks up this idea of Moses, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and ascribes it to Christ. Revelation 17:14, "These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Lord of lords and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful." Why does the Lamb overcome the "beast" and the "ten kings"? The Lamb is "Lord of lords." But Jehovah is Lord of lords (Deuteronomy 10:17). Is the Lamb Jehovah? The Lamb is Jehovah. "In the beginning was the Word [the Lamb], and the Word [the Lamb] was with God, and the Word [the Lamb] was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him [the Lamb], and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being" (John 1:1-3).

Revelation 19:16 displays Jesus Christ coming in judgment with the armies of heaven. "And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, 'KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS.'" Is Jesus Christ Lord of lords? Is Jesus Christ

the great judge of all? Indeed He is. "The Lord reigns, let the peoples tremble; He is enthroned above the cherubim, let the earth shake!" (Psalm 91:1). Who reigns? Psalm 24:8 puts the question this way, "Who is the King of glory?" The answer is straightforward, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle." Who is this Lord?

Deuteronomy 10:17 tells us this Lord of lords is Jehovah. Revelation 17:14 and 19:16 tell us this Lord of lords is Jesus Christ. Is there a contradiction? Not at all. Jesus Christ, the Second Person of the blessed Trinity, was and is God.

Here is the phenomenal thing: We are to confess this Jesus to be the Lord. He is the Lord of lords. He is God of gods. He is Jehovah; yes, He was Jehovah before the foundation of the world and before He entered the world by taking to Himself a true body and a reasonable soul. He is Jehovah in the flesh. As He judged ancient Israel, and as He judged Jerusalem in 70 AD, "He is coming to judge the earth; He will judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with equity" (Psalm 98:9).

The point the New Testament makes, and which I will attempt to verify, is that the basic Christian confession is the confession "Jesus is Lord," with all this confession carries with it from the Old Testament. In fact, as the New Testament teaches, this confession, with all the baggage it carries, import from the Old Testament, is absolutely essential to salvation. As I will attempt to show, when we cut this confession off from the Old Testament idea of the rule and reign of Jehovah, we eviscerate the gospel.

Next we turn to the testimony of the apostle Peter in two places. We look at his confession of Christ at Pentecost and his confession of Christ in his first letter. In both cases we find Peter professes Jesus is in fact Jehovah.

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IN RESPONSE – JESUS IS JEHOVAH, ANOTHER LOOK - PART 2

by Dennis Prutow

The apostle Peter quotes the prophet Joel at length. Acts 2:17-21 gives the quotation. Verse 21 [Joel 2:32] reads, “And it shall be that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” In Joel, Lord is Jehovah. The American Standard Version of 1901 renders the text, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of Jehovah shall be delivered.” Who is this Lord upon whom men and women must call? Peter presents Christ.

After arguing from Psalms 16 and 110 that David speaks of the Christ in these portions, he concludes with these telling words. “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified” (Acts 2:36).

Robert Reymond comments as follows:

Peter begins by citing Yahweh’s promise in Joel 2:28-32a that in the last days he would pour out the Spirit on all kinds of “flesh”—sons and daughters, young men and old men, and men and women servants (Acts 2:16-21). By his, “This is what was spoken by the prophet Joel” (2:16), Peter identifies the events of Pentecost as the (initiatory phase [?] of the) fulfillment of that prophecy. Then he argues from the events of Pentecost for the lordship and messianic investiture of Jesus Christ.¹

Peter’s words in Acts 2:36 confirm this train of thought,² “Therefore let all the house of Israel know for certain that God has made Him both Lord and Christ—this Jesus whom you crucified” (italics mine).

Pentecost is therefore a declaration that Christ is Lord. We ask: Who is the Lord who pours out the Spirit? The *Lord* who pours out the Spirit is Jesus Christ. “He has poured forth this which you both see and hear” (Acts 2:33). Reymond adds, [T]he fact that it was the ascended *Jesus* who poured out the Spirit (2:33) moves in the same direction, for the connection between what Peter em-

phasizes in 2:17 by his insertion of the words, “God says” into the Joel Prophecy (“‘In the last days,’ *God says*, ‘I will pour out my Spirit’”) and his later statement in 2:33 (*He* [the ascended Jesus] *has poured out this which you now see and hear*”) cannot have been unintentional. *Peter connects the God and Yahweh of Joel 2 who promised to pour out his Spirit to the ascended Jesus who poured out the Spirit.*³

Peter calls his auditors to confess with him that Jesus Christ is Lord, is God, is Jehovah. This is a central burden of Peter’s message.

This is no aberrant view. F. F. Bruce makes a point of what we are discussing. The first apostolic sermon leads up to the first apostolic creed: “Jesus is Lord” (cf. Romans 10:9; I Cor. 12:3; Phil. 2:11)⁴—“Lord” not only as the bearer of a courtesy title,⁵ but as the bearer of “the name which is above every name” (Phil. 2:9). To a Jew there was only one name “above every name”—the Ineffable Name of the God of Israel, represented in the synagogue reading and in the LXX text by the title “Lord.” And that the apostles meant to give Jesus the title “Lord” in this highest sense of all is indicated by the way in which they do not hesitate to apply to Him passages of Old Testament scripture referring to Jehovah.⁶ Indeed, in this very context, it may well be that the promise “that whoever shall call upon the name of Jehovah shall be delivered” (Joel 2:32) is viewed as being fulfilled in those members of Peter’s audience

who repentantly invoke Jesus as Lord.⁷

We can see this is exactly the case in Peter’s first letter. Psalm 34:8 exhorts, “O taste and see that the Lord is good; how blessed is the man who takes refuge in Him!” The Lord is Jehovah. Peter says with reference to Christ, “Like newborn babies, long for the pure milk of the word, so that by it you may grow in respect to salvation, if you have tasted the kindness of the Lord” (1 Peter 2:2-3).

Isaiah 8:13-14 in the American Standard Version of 1901 reads, “Jehovah of hosts, him shall ye sanctify; and let him be your fear, and let him be your dread. And he shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, for a gin and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

Peter applies both these verses to Jesus Christ. First, Isaiah 8:14.

And coming to Him [Christ, the Lord we should taste as good (verse 3)] as to a living stone which has been rejected by men [as predicted in Isaiah 8:14].... This precious value, then, is for you who believe; but for those who disbelieve, “The stone which the builders rejected, this became the very corner stone,” and, “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense [Isaiah 8:14]” (1 Peter 2:4, 7-8).

For the apostle Peter, Jesus Christ is Jehovah over whom unbelievers stumble.

Not only so, Peter also alludes to Isaiah 8:13. “And do not fear their intimidation, and do not be troubled, but sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts” (1 Peter 3:14-15). Isaiah exhorts Israel to sanctify Jehovah. Peter urges us to sanctify Christ as Lord in our hearts. That is, Peter urges us to sanctify Christ as Jehovah in our hearts. “[A]lluding to Isaiah 8:12-13, he equates the Lord of Hosts who is to be sanctified with Christ (Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts).”⁸

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¹ Robert Reymond, *A New Systematic Theology of the Christian Faith* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1998), 285-286.

² *Ibid.*

³ *Ibid.*, 287-288 (underlining mine).

⁴ We will look at these texts.

⁵ Bruce repeats the point in note 65, p. 74, “But when Peter says that God made Jesus ‘Lord,’ he gives that title a fullness of meaning far beyond that of a mere courtesy title.”

⁶ At this point, note 66, p. 74, Bruce says, “See, e. g., the application of Isaiah 45:23 in Phil. 2:10 (“that in the name of *Jesus* every knee should bow”), and Isaiah 8:13 in I Pet. 3:15 (“sanctify in your hearts *Christ* as Lord”). We will also look at these texts.

⁷ F. F. Bruce, *Commentary on the Book of Acts* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), 73-74.

⁸ Reymond, 289.

IN RESPONSE – JESUS IS JEHOVAH, ANOTHER LOOK – PART 3

by Dennis Prutow

Both Peter and John take Old Testament texts referring to Jehovah and apply them to Christ. For Peter and John, Jesus is Jehovah. This is a basic confession. Peter goes so far as to exhort us to sanctify Jesus as Lord, as Jehovah, in our hearts. This brings the confession home. Who is this Jesus? He is God. He is not simply One whom we give deference because He is the greater. He is Lord of lords. He is God of Gods. We are to tremble in His presence. Peter did so. On the Sea of Galilee, after a great haul of fish caught at the direction of Jesus, Peter, under great conviction “fell down at Jesus’ feet, saying, ‘Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!’” (Luke 5:8). Jesus did not deny this worship or the ascription “Lord” as Peter’s confession.

The scene reminds us of Isaiah 6:1-3, In the year of King Uzziah’s death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called out to another and said, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.”

Once more, the Lord is Jehovah of hosts. He is most holy. Confronted by the Lord, Isaiah cried, “Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts” (Isaiah 6:5).

Who is the King? Who is the Lord of hosts? Speaking of Isaiah, Isaiah’s commission, and of Jesus Christ, the apostle John explains, “These things Isaiah said because he saw His glory, and he spoke of Him” (John 12:41). “The evangelist takes it for granted that Isaiah saw Christ’s glory; and from this he infers that Isaiah accommodates his teaching to the future state of Christ’s kingdom.”¹ Isaiah falls before Jehovah. John says he sees the glory of Christ. Jesus Christ is Lord; He is Jehovah.

We now turn to Romans 10:9-13, 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.” The basic Christian confession is quite simple, “Jesus is Lord.” Paul tells us this confession is essential. Paul reminds us, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed” (Isaiah 28:16). Peter tells us the very same thing (1 Peter 2:6).

Paul connects the Old Testament era and the New; he connects Jew and Gentile. “The same Lord is Lord of all, abounding in riches for all who call on Him” (Romans 10:12). Paul adds a word of assurance. “Whoever will call on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Joel 2:32). But Joel 2:32 is a specific reference to Jehovah. Paul equates Jehovah with Jesus just as Peter does. John Murray notes,

This formula, “call upon the name of the Lord” is a characteristic Old Testament way of expressing the worship that is expressed to God.... Joel 2:32 has the same significance as belongs to it elsewhere. When Paul applies the same to Christ this is another example of the practice of taking Old Testament passages which refer to God without qualification and applying them to Christ.²

Putting it plainly, calling on Jesus is calling on Jehovah. Confessing Jesus as Lord means, in large measure, confessing Jesus as Jehovah, as God. This is the first step in sanctifying Christ as Lord, as Jehovah, in the heart.

This confession is not empty. It is tied to Christ’s death and resurrection. It is tied to His ascension into heaven and

to His heavenly reign. Jesus Christ is Lord, God, and King. He is Lord of lords, God of gods, and King of kings.

All of this relates directly to the conversion of the apostle. Paul was opposed to Christ and to any thought He might be God and Messiah. Christ blinded Paul on the Damascus Road (Acts 9:8). Led by his compatriots to the city, Paul sat in darkness for three days praying and fasting (Acts 9:8-9, 11). At the bidding of the Lord, Ananias went to Paul.

Acts 22:14-16 records the words Ananias speaks to the future apostle, “The God of our fathers has appointed you to know His will and to see the Righteous One and to hear an utterance from His mouth. For you will be a witness for Him to all men of what you have seen and heard. Now why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on His name.”

Paul had three dark days. All he previously stood for was shaken. He was terribly wrong. The followers of Christ were right after all. Christ was and is Lord. Ananias exhorted, “Why do you delay? Get up and be baptized, and wash away your sins, *calling on His name*” (Acts 22:16, italics added).

The principle Paul learned so well was to call on Jehovah (Joel 2:32). Was Paul now to confess Jesus as Jehovah and call on His name? The path of salvation points in this direction. The teaching, Jesus is Jehovah, blasphemous to the Jew, is gospel truth to the Christian. Paul now makes this confession and teaches its propriety and necessity. Douglas Moo puts it this way, “In the OT, of course, the one on whom people called for salvation was Yahweh; Paul reflects the high view of Christ common among the early church by identifying this one with Jesus Christ, the Lord.”³

Jesus is Jehovah. This is the basic Christian confession, made and required by the apostle Paul, and affirmed by the apostle Peter and the apostle John.

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¹ John Calvin, *The Gospel According to John*, 2 vols., T. H. L. Parker, trans. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 2:48.

² John Murray, *Epistle to the Romans*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1973), 2:57.

³ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 600.

IN RESPONSE – JESUS IS JEHOVAH, ANOTHER LOOK – PART 4

by Dennis Prutow

We have two more texts to examine. The first is Isaiah 45:21-23.

Declare and set forth your case; indeed, let them consult together. Who has announced this from of old? Who has long since declared it? Is it not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, a righteous God and a Savior; there is none except Me. Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.

Jehovah proclaims His sovereignty. He affirms He is Savior. Jehovah takes an oath. “When God made the promise to Abraham, since He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself...” This was so that the immutability of Jehovah’s pronouncement might rest on “two unchangeable things in which it is impossible for God to lie” (Hebrews 6:13 and 18). Jehovah does the same regarding the declaration, “To Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.”

For our purpose, we note that Jehovah declares that every knee will bow to Him and every tongue will confess Him. “Paul applies this passage of Isaiah to the last judgment when he says (Rom. xiv. 10, 11) that ‘we must all stand before the judgment seat of Christ.’”¹

Romans 14:10-11 reads, “But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before the judgment seat of God. For it is written, ‘As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, And every tongue shall give praise to God.’” There is a variant reading here. Some manuscripts have “the judgment seat of Christ.” The better reading appears to be “the judgment seat of God.”² We find a parallel in 2 Corinthians 5:10 where Paul declares, “We must

all appear before the judgment seat of Christ.” [T]he true way to mediate between the two expressions is seen in chap. ii. 16, Acts xvii. 31.”³ In Romans 2:16, Paul speaks of the day of judgment and warns that “God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.” In Acts 17:31, Paul again indicates how God will effect judgment. “He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.”

The judgment seat of Christ is therefore the judgment seat of God. This is in keeping with the confession Paul himself makes, Jesus is Lord; He is Jehovah. The expressions of other commentators therefore follow. “This text [Isaiah 45:23] is twice applied by Paul to Christ (Rom. xiv. 11; Phil. ii. 10).”⁴ “This is applied to the dominion of our Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. xiv. 10, 11. *We shall all stand before the judgment-seat of Christ, and give account to him, for it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me and every tongue shall confess to God.*”⁵ “In his use of the passage in Philippians 2:10, Paul adds that every tongue should confess ‘that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father’ (cf. also Rom. 14:11).”⁶

Paul does indeed apply Isaiah 45:23 to Jesus Christ in Philippians 2:10-11. “For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.” According to Paul, Jesus is Jehovah to whom every knee will bow. He is the Name above every name. He is King of kings, Lord of lords, God of gods. Jesus Christ is indeed Jehovah.

³ Ibid.

⁴ J. A. Alexander, *The Prophecies of Isaiah*, 2 vols. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 2:188.

⁵ Matthew Henry’s commentary on the Whole Bible, 6 vols. (Westwood, NJ: Revell, n.d.), 4:257.

⁶ Edward J. Young, *The Book of Isaiah*, 3 vols (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 3:217.

Finally, we look at 1 Corinthians 12:3. “Therefore I make known to you that no one speaking by the Spirit of God says, ‘Jesus is accursed’; and no one can say, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ except by the Holy Spirit.” The basic Christian confession is “Jesus is Lord.” “The word, κύριος, Lord, is that by which the word Jehovah is commonly rendered in the Greek version of the Old Testament. To say Jesus is Lord, therefore, in the sense of the apostle, is to acknowledge him to be truly God.”⁷ Once again Paul takes us to the rudimentary confession that Jesus is Jehovah.

Paul does so in the context of speaking of the work of the Holy Spirit. Chapters 12, 13, and 14 of 1 Corinthians outline various aspects of the deeply spiritual. In verse 1 Paul exclaims, “Now concerning spiritual gifts, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.” The word *gifts*, in italics, is not in the original language. We may render the text, “Now concerning things spiritual, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware.” The very first spiritual matter Paul raises is our confession. The confession, Jesus is Jehovah, is properly made only by the power of the Holy Spirit. “This does not mean it is impossible for an unbeliever to say the words *Jesus is the Lord*. Obviously he can do this in mockery. But the words can be said with full meaning only under the influence of the Holy Spirit.”⁸ Making the confession, as explained by Hodge, is a mark of the Spirit’s presence.

I therefore assert, following the apostles, that confessing Jesus to be Jehovah, is not a truncated statement of hermeneutic principle. It is a principle the apostles and Christianity stands upon.

We will development this principle further with regard to the Trinity, the appearances of Christ in the Old Testament, the gospel, and singing Psalms.

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⁷ Charles Hodge, *An Exposition of the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), 241.

⁸ Leon Morris, *The First Epistle of Paul to the Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1981), 168.

¹ John Calvin, *Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Isaiah*, 4 vols., William Pringle, trans. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1979), 3:428.

² *The Expositor’s Greek Testament*, 5 vols, W. Robertson Nicoll, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1961), 2:703.