

The world, and especially Christianity, is in a deep spiritual identity Crisis!

That such a global confusion would come to pass was foretold by Jeremiah in the context a return of Israel to her covenanted possession. Jer.16:14-18

“O LORD, my strength and my stronghold,
And my refuge in the day of distress,
To You the nations will come
From the ends of the earth and say,
Our fathers have inherited nothing, but falsehood—
Futility and things of no profit.” Jer.16:19-20

This prophecy is being fulfilled in our day & time. The reason you are here indicates that you are seeking to know the truth. And I say this also, just as the form of Biblical Judaism practiced in Jesus’ day had become grossly distorted, so has just about everything that was once true in Christianity— up to our day.

Yeshua – The Son of God

‘And truly Yeshua did many other signs in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Yeshua is the Messiah, the Son of Elohim, and that believing you may have life in His name.’ Jn. 20:30-31

Who is that man?

The question, “Who is that man”, has vexed people since the days of the first disciples. When *Yeshua* asked them who the people said that he was, they came up with a variety of answers, but when he asked them who they thought that he was— only Kepha came up with the goods. “You are the Messiah, the son of God!”

And this precisely the problem the followers of Jesus have today. People come up with very similar answers, viz. “Some say that he is God – capital G - and others say that he is a mere man!” But he is still asking the same question he did way back then— of you and me: “*Who do you say that I am?*”

If the blood-bought, born-again, Bible believing Christian is a co-heir to the KoG with the Son of God, then those of us who answer to that ought to have a very clear understanding of ‘whom we are following.

For the simple reason, that if we don't know him then how do we know who is our Master and the chance is that on THAT DAY he may just say to us, "Who are you? I don't know you either!"

It is not enough to have a vague, theological notion as to his identity, because if we don't know him we will not know what he expects of us. mention the denial of YESHUA BY ISLAM.

Identity!

So, I am asking you today, "Who is Yeshua to you?"

For most of the world, Christianity is JUST another religion and Jesus another g – o – d. To a large extent they are right, because few, by comparison – I dare say even most mainstream Christians - are conscious that the '*Jesus Event*' is the continuum of God's plan of Redemption, set in motion by the Almighty by the calling of Abram (Gen 12:1-3).

I will be dealing with the topic of Redemption in my last talk on Sunday, but today I want to focus on God's agent of redemption: *Yeshua, the Messiah; Son of Elohim— or Jesus Christ erroneously named.*

The stark reality is that Yeshua is not so much seen as the 'change agent of God par excellence', but a personal trouble shooter; one who brings healing and provides parking spaces. But tis is not how he saw himself during his brief life on earth. His key message was and is even today, one of repentance – *metanoia*, of change toward the same God centred and God-filled life that he lived. In John 17:21 he prays that his followers may be filled with the life of the father in the same way that he was/is.

For now I want to concentrate on the biblical meaning of '*Son of God*' – or '*Ben Elohim*'.

There are four (4) aspects of Yeshua I want to focus on, that stand out for me

1. The Son of God

Resurrection: The point of identification

Our starting point for an understanding of Yeshua must not be his birth, his ministry or even his death on the cross, but his **resurrection**. The resurrection is the single-most and unfailing testimony that the Almighty has begun something entirely new. It sets Yeshua apart from every great teacher or prophet, for it signals

- a) the culmination of the redemptive process, and
- b) that the Kingdom of God is not only an approaching reality, but that it has actually broken into the world of Adam.

As Paul points out in 1 Cor.15:12-18

Resurrection is different from any other ‘miraculous event’ that may have ever occurred in history. Dead people have been brought back to life, but ultimately they died. Moses divided the sea and brought water out of rocks – even Yeshua himself demonstrated control over nature, he restored diseased body parts and even brought dead people back to life. But, never before has a deceased person been restored to life, with physical properties that also belonged to another dimension.

Why was the resurrection necessary and why is it so significant to understanding the meaning of Son of God?

- the resurrection is the clearest testimony to the redemptive process, a foreshadowing of a Restoration of the Earth, of which the Creator declared that it was VERY GOOD!
- The resurrection also cuts right across the mistaken belief of an eternal existence in an ethereal, heavenly sphere — residing in spiritual mansions and amusing ourselves with harps and eternal banquets!
- Why bother to resurrect dead bodies onto this earth, when they already exist in heaven as much of Christian theology envisages (e.g. *‘he/she has gone to be with the Lord!’*)?
- The resurrection declares also, that the Almighty is vitally interested in replacing this corrupt humanity with one that is reborn and reshaped into the image of His Son to rule over the earth, at the head of a new and redeemed humanity - as He had intended from the very beginning.

It is by resurrection that Yeshua was shown to be different from the rest of humanity. He was raised as a consequence of the life of obedience he lived toward his God and Father. As Steve pointed out yesterday, the cross and the attending events are not part of some divine theatre, but the interaction of rebellion and hatred of God on the one side – and total obedience on the other. Rebellion will always try to kill off obedience – a clearly observable phenomenon around us. The resurrection is God’s answer, stamp of approval and reward !

Disobedience punished: Gen 3; c/f. De 8:20, viz. *As the nations which the LORD destroys before you, so you shall perish, because you would not be obedient to the voice of the LORD your God.*

Obedience rewarded: *‘For as by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man’s obedience many will be made righteous.’ Rom.5:19*

2. God’s Agent of Redemption

The world cannot deal with the Son of God. He is therefore disempowered by

- **By having him vacillate between the manger and the cross and never really leaving the cross (RC) between Easter and the next Christmas Season. His life has no greater meaning than being the originator of a new religion and a fresh manifestation of God.**
- **By turning him into a ‘Christ of Faith’ who has no historical identity or existence (Bultman)**
- **By deifying him and seating him in place of his Father on the throne of the Universe**

In Yeshua we see **the manifestation of everything that was meant to be operative in the first Adam;** viz. *‘Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” ‘ Gen 1:26*

John, in his first epistle also foreshadows the future status of all who align themselves now with the Son of God, that his glory will be ours also (1 John 3:2-3) *‘Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. ³And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure (free from any defilement, but set apart).’*

The Scripture present us with abundant evidence that the Son of God is intended to be the **Change Agent par Excellence** for the human race. However, he will only become and remain that if he is seen in the correct light. If we see him as a mere man, he is no different than Mahatma Ghandi, Buddha, or any of the

²Is. 53:11, 12; [Phil. 2:8]

men who ever inspired humanity to greatness. God’s plan was never that humanity should attain to greatness – His plan was and is for the human race to regain His image. And this image is on His son.

On the other hand, if we see Yeshua as more than the uniquely begotten son, endowed with the image and fullness of deity as the first Adam was, but as God Himself, we also miss out, because we take on the adversary’s nature by saying we will be like God – perpetuating the rebellion that began in the garden.

Our obedience to the Word of God, led by the Spirit of God, will assist us in seeing him how we ought to see him.

3. Crown of Torah – The Word Made Flesh

1. Obedience to torah

Yeshua learned obedience by the things he suffered

2. Goal of Torah

The Torah is the schoolmaster, or *Paedagogue* to lead the world to Messiah and the KoG

3. New authority

In Yeshua, the authority of Moses is restored, hence the comments in Matth 7:29; 28:18. He has the authority of the Son of Man spoken of by Daniel 7:13-14

There are two major areas of challenge,

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Islam2) The Church itself. |
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Let’s talk about Islam! Denies truth of Bible re Yeshua

Islam is on the march and will not stop until it either conquers the world or is vanquished beyond a possible recovery! The challenge that comes to us from Islam is very serious, as it comes via a two pronged attack. What is of particular concern to me is the lack of visionary attention Islam receives. Where are all the prophets who loved to proclaim in the decades gone by, “*thus says the Lord!*”

Islam is NOT a man-made religion like Buddhism, etc. It is NOT sufficient to write books on what Islam is and how it treats its women – these are important issues – but **it is catch-up wisdom!** The church **needs prophetic wisdom**, wisdom from on high to determine where all the Islamic activity will lead!

On the one hand it is the Qur'an, which challenges the Bible and Christian theology by stating **that Allah has no son!** This is serious enough, but quite simple and relatively easy to deal with due to the self-contradicting nature of the Islamic Holy Book and thus requires little refutation. However, **the Qur'an also denies Yeshua's death on the cross** and thereby also the Resurrection (c/f 1 Cor. 15:12-19). As Paul says, '*...if there is no resurrection, we have believed in vain...*'! The other portion of this Islamic attack involves the pro-Islamic Arab/Palestinian Christians, who emphatically deny the Hebrew connection of Yeshua, thus severing the connecting, redemptive thread between Abraham and Yeshua. For NT only Christians this is no real problem. However, if this connection is severed, then indeed the OT (Hebrew Bible) becomes at once a mere historical record (and a questionable one at that) at best.

A careful study of this Islamic/Palestinian theological alliance reveals it to be a breeding chamber for the anti-christ (replacement Messiah) spirit.¹ The word '*anti*' meaning *replacement*, rather than opposition — a factor foretold in Psalm 2. Indeed, if there is no OT (Hebrew Bible), there is no sinfall and if there is no fall of man— there is no need for any Redemption or resurrection and the Son of God becomes a (dispensable) myth.

The challenge that comes to us from the church is far more subtle, and therefore much more insidious!

Modifies truth re Yeshua

However, the main focus today needs to be on the understanding of who Jesus is within the Christology of the church itself. The understanding of who Yeshua is vacillates throughout Christianity from a mere man to the second person of a trinity of divine beings, also referred to as the godhead – a doctrine established at the Council of Nicaea, re-enforced by subsequent Councils and maintained ever since by most of Christianity. Discussions on each of these perspectives fills libraries, yet most Christians are as confused on this issue today, as they have been for the last 2000 years. At the same time, many Christians— to their own detriment, are as indifferent to this important issue as they are to weather forecasts in Antarctica, in terms of doing any meaningful research on their own. They rather leave the theological stuff to their leaders! Thus: "*My priest, pastor, minister, etc tells me so, therefore it must be true!*"

4. Crown of Creation

1. The Son of God is no ordinary being.

Although He is in the form and likeness of man, He alone is worthy to come into the presence of the Ancient of Days (Dan. 7:13-14). The book of Revelation confirms that the Son of God is no ordinary

¹ It is important that we see this term as a function or office, rather than a mere title. Messiah, or anointed, simply means someone especially chosen by HaShem to perform a given function. The OT knows many such anointed people – it is the resurrection that sets this Messiah apart!

being. This information revealed about him there continues to demolish the notion of a meek and mild Jesus. The letters to the seven churches indicate to the world that it will have to reckon with someone different than the meek & mild ‘Picture Book Jesus’, when He returns as King of Kings; **c/f. Ps.2; Rev 19:15.** The Psalmist clearly foresees that this One will rule the world with absolute justice – a rod of iron – viz.

Jesus is portrayed as the ‘*Good Shepherd*’ – indeed, he refers to himself as such. In Psalm 23 we read King David’s vote of confidence in the Divine Shepherd and His Rod. The shepherd’s rod is a symbol of protection for the flock; “...I will fear no evil...your rod and your staff they comfort me...”. That the Messiah will rule with a *Rod of iron* (Ps 2; Rev.19:15) is both a symbol of His authority and strength. If David as a shepherd protected his sheep with a wooden rod, the Messiah will protect His flock with an unbreakable one.

He has been given a Kingdom that cannot be destroyed; one that will never pass away— it is the Kingdom of God, or Heaven (Jn.18:36). What makes v.8-9 of Ps. 2 particularly interesting is that John reflects on them in Rev 19:15. The very fact that this passage is included in the description of the Second Coming should make us sit up and pay particular attention. Why? Because it will change our view of Jesus considerable and influence the type of ‘Good News’ we preach.

2. If Jesus is not an ordinary being — then who is he?

After almost 2000 years of Constantinian Christianity we have come full circle in our attempt to understand the Son of God; and in many respects, we are no further ahead when one looks at the language of the global church.

I mean, how does one speak about someone, whose record of origin and current existence are from a dimension that is inaccessible to us. For every great historical person we have an abundance of recorded evidence — except for Yeshua.

There are two avenues open to us, 1) to engage in speculation (church history), and 2) to study the scriptures and agree to be content with what IS REVEALED TO US in and through them!

Let us look at these two possibilities in detail:

- a) **Speculation**: the dictionary defines this word thus: *conjecture, rumour, gossip, assumption, theory, guesswork, thought, supposition, hearsay*. In short, he who engages in speculation admits that he has no anchor point for the subject in question. Since we are dealing with a matter of eternal

consequences, I would say that it is not advisable to engage ourselves in this manner. Sadly, church history is replete with speculation and alleged facts!! that are established on suppositions.

b) **Study of the Scriptures:** the main rule of Scriptural study is: context, context and context!

Where would we have to turn to find the right context for a study of the person of Jesus? There is only one place — the Hebrew Bible! And how do we make the link? Via the links provided in the NT.

From the opening verses of the NT we learn that Jesus is actually of Jewish/Hebrew descent and of the line of David. For this reason, and to honour his lineage, I like to refer to him as Y^eshua. We discover that he was (most likely) an observant Pharisee and a travelling Rabbi, who **fully upheld the teachings of the Torah** (c/f. Matt. 5:17-20), but one who had serious issues with the (lack of) practical implementation of the Torah by many of the religious leaders of his day and their interpretation of the Oral Torah (traditions of the Elders).

We also discover that Jesus had gained the reputation of a (miraculous) healer, which fuelled speculations that he might be *'the One specially anointed by God'* to deliver his people Israel from the spiritual quagmire they had slidden into, as well as from the Roman oppression.

His main call to the people of Judah, Samaria & Galilee was of repentance in face of the imminence of the KoG. He remained adamant in his belief that he was the Son of the Most High and often alluded to the prophecy of the Son of Man referring to him. He confirmed himself to a few select people (i.e. the Samaritan woman at the well and Kepha/Peter at Caesarea Philippi) to be the awaited Messiah, but refuses public recognition.

All of this, places— and keeps him, in a totally human, albeit Jewish context!

What changes things is when we take his conception, the voice from on high at his immersion (baptism), the transfiguration, his resurrection from the dead and ascension into account. Although Yeshua is still Jewish & human, there is also now a different dimension that is at work. It is these issues that caused the early churchmen to engage in a struggle to define the nature of this unusual human being.

Was he indeed human, was he God or a composite thereof?

I am not going to enter into this debate, but I want to present an alternative that has not been presented before. Namely, the meaning of redemption and the role of the Son of Man!

3. The Son of Man – the Image of the Creator.

In the Book of Daniel, the reference to *'one like a son of man'* (7:13) needs to be heeded, since we have here, for the very first time in the Scriptures, *'one like'* a representative of the human race being admitted into the Presence of the *'Ancient of Days'*, which is undeniable the Most High, the Elohim, or God of

Abraham, Isaac & Jacob. However, we are not told what the origin of this uniquely privileged human being is. He appears in Scripture in a similar way to Melchizedek, who is mentioned alongside Abraham, but never heard of again. Yeshua calls himself the Son of Man and Paul teaches that he now resides at the right hand of his Majesty on High. It is also obvious from the reaction of the high Priest, that the term *Son of Man* — out of the mouth of Yeshua as a reference to himself — was understood by him as the one spoken of in Daniel 7.

Paul furthermore teaches that Yeshua is the Last (New) Adam and calls him the first-born of all creation, made in the image of Deity (Col.1:15-16).

It is at this point that we need to set a different thought-process into motion. We need to read the term '*first-born*' not in its strict etymological sense, but in a much broader term. In Ps. 2 & 89 we come across similar terms, e.g. first-born, begotten. (there are many such expressions throughout scripture), but they are not to be understood in their strict grammatical sense, but as being given a similar status possessed by a '*first-born*' or '*first-begotten*'; what is implied is the privilege – and responsibility - that goes with having such status. (For example: Israel is called first-born, so is David, so is Ephraim— as is Yeshua).

The conclusion to this is in my last talk: Kinsman-Redeemer.