

SIMPLY JESUS

Biblifying and DE-paganizing, Yeshua Ha Mashiach, Jesus the Christ, Isa al-Masih

I want to make the case for a **Simpler Jesus**, a biblical Jesus. Jesus is the SECOND most important subject in the Bible. He is the second most important subject in the NT. God/**Theos** occurs 1,317 times in the NT. Jesus/**Jesus** occurs 917 times in the NT. Even John 3:16 puts the emphasis on the originator of the plan, rather than Jesus. In my little book, *Simply God, YHWH 6,828*, I make the case, I believe, that we have complicated God and His plan. I want to make a case in this paper, that we have totally confused, obfuscated, Jesus. God has had a straightforward plan from before our “time” of a Messiah, a Prophet, a Priest, a King and a Savior.

A hint towards *biblification* of Jesus, is Acts 2:36, THE summary verse of Peter’s SUPER sermon on the day of Pentecost. It says, "Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that **God** has made **this Jesus**, whom you crucified, both **Lord** and **Messiah!**" (CSB) Putting some “silly” numbers in the verse to emphasize an order of things, it might read: God/**Theos** (1,317) has made this Jesus/**Jesus** (917) both Lord/**kyrios** (607) and Christ/Messiah/**Christos** (529). Acts 2:38 is the response verse, "Repent," Peter said to them, "and be baptized [*Baptizo* (77x)], each of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins [86x], and you will receive the gift [44x] of the Holy Spirit / *Hagios* (233x) *Pneuma* (379)." *Hagios Pneuma* together occurs twelve times together in the lemma search.

Later on, we have *another* SUPER verse of the early church, Acts 8:12. It says, “But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women. (KJV) When they believed / *pisteuo* (241) Philip as he preached the good news/gospel/euangelion (76x) of the Kingdom/*Basileia* (162) of God/**Theos** (1317) and the name of Jesus (917) Christ (529) they were baptized (77) both men (210) and women (215). What’s the point? The words that appear the most, are the generally most important to believe: Theos (1317), Jesus (917), Lord (607), Christos (529), Spirit (338), Faith (244), Love (218), Kingdom (158). So I am looking at BOTH Biblifying and De-paganizing God and God’s plan in Jesus.

We live after millenniums of paganization. Pagan is defined as believing in multiple gods. Even George Washington is “deified” (*bless his heart!*) in a painting in the ceiling of the rotunda in the capitol of the U.S. The “Apotheosis of Washington,” pictures him sitting in the heavens in an exalted manner, ascending and becoming a god (*apotheosis*, just like Caesar!). From Egypt’s Osiris-Isis-Horus, to Assyria/Babylonia’s Nimrod-Semiramis-Tammuz, to Greece’s Zeus-Hades-Poseidon [et.al.], to Rome’s Jupiter-Juno-Minerva [et.al.], to India’s Brahma-Vishnu-Maheswar, to Nordic’s Odin-Joro-Thor, etc. we are in “love” with our gods, especially triads. Pictured here is the, Roman Capitoline Triad, Jupiter-Juno-Minerva.(Wikipedia)



Will the real Jesus, please stand up? I have been doing a lot of reading and rereading some things about Jesus. The “*Who is Jesus?, A Plea for a Return to Belief in Jesus, the Messiah*” 40 page booklet by Anthony Buzzard, is the one that started hundreds of Unitarian churches in Africa. It is still an excellent summary. I have also reread parts of “*The Restitution of Jesus Christ*” by Kermit Zarley, over 500 pages, just like Michael Servetus! In two chapters, Two and Three, Kermit gives an excellent “History of Church Christology” for the last two millennia. He suggests that we are currently on our Third Quest now for the historical Jesus, I would say a quest for the first century Jewish, God given Jesus. He notes the fairly recent studies, the “*Myth of God Incarnate*” flurry in England and elsewhere. “In this series of essays, seven contributing British scholars, all of them members of the Church of England in good standing, oppose the classical understanding of incarnation- that God literally became a man.” (p. 119) They allege that the doctrine of incarnation is not supported in the earliest NT texts, and it is “unessential to Christian faith.” **Interesting.** Incarnation in the big “I” sense has a pre-existing logos God, invading Mary.

Another “favorite” de-paganizer (?) is Hans Kung, who just died, April 6, 2021, at age 93. It is interesting that some of my other favorites, Raymond Brown (1998), Larry Hurtado (2019), James Dunn (2020) and have also died. Starting with my appreciation of a Catholic theologian Kung, I reread some of his *Christianity & World Religions*, especially in the section on dealing with Islam and Judaism. He states that for Jesus himself, the central problem, was in the face of the coming Kingdom of God...how to overcome legalism ... in love. One quote, “...the decisive Christian objection was that Islam denied the two basic, interconnected dogmas of Christianity; the *Trinity* and the *Incarnation*.” (p. 112) He suggests, like our British friends of the eighties and nineties, we should probably just take the big “T” and the big “I” out. He told the story of tenth century Hasan ibn Aiyub, “who had once been a Christian, after twenty years of doubts, especially about the Trinity and the Incarnation, had finally become a Muslim.” (p.113)

“The relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit became more and more of a *mysterium logicum*, [cp Tuggy, ch 5 “Mystery Mountain”, in *What is The Trinity*]. ...It was hardly surprising that in later times it became even more impossible to make a credible presentation to the Jews and, later still, to the Muslims.” (118) Kung goes on to suggest that if one sticks to the NT only, (**what a NOVEL idea!**) the big “T & I” won’t come up as much (since it is not there?). (I Cor. 4:6- do not go beyond what is written; Prov. 30:6 “Don’t add to His words, or He will rebuke you, and you will be proved a liar.” CSB) “And so the criterion for being a Christian is not the doctrine of the Trinity, ... but belief in the one and only God, the practical imitation of Christ... .” (121)

Of course in our time, Dunn probably sets the standard in *Christology in the Making*. Even the title suggests that what we have now as current orthodoxy, was not necessarily (☺) what was in the beginning, especially the first century. “So Gal. 4.4 may quite properly be paraphrased; God sent his Son, a typical human being, a Jew, that he might redeem Jews, and that we (human beings) might become sons.” (xvii Foreword to the Second Edition) Dunn uses Walter Bauer (*Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity*) to remind us that what we now call orthodoxy was not the major belief in the first century. In fact, minority and majority, have to a large extent “flipped.”

He continues trying not to step on toes, “All I ask here is **whether it is so clear** as some evidently think [☺, my emphasis] that talk of Jesus’ exaltation and sharing in God’s judgment would *ipso facto* carry with it thought of Christ’s divinity and pre-existence.” (xxi) That is the big T and I. Another quote, “*There is no evidence that any NT writer thought of Jesus as actually present in Israel’s past, either as the angel of the Lord, or as ‘the Lord’ himself.*” (158, his emphasis) Again, “*In the early stages of this development at any rate it would be inaccurate to say that Christ was understood as a pre-existent being become incarnate, or that Christ himself was thought to have been present and active in creation.*” (211, his emphasis)

When I took my first Sociology course at Southeastern Louisiana University, the professor was enamored with Peter Berger’s, *Invitation to Sociology* (1963). In fact, he said, rather crudely from my perspective, “Berger is my Bible!” Basically, if you memorized the book, you might get an A in the class. Hmmm? If we memorized the BIBLE, what would we say? In a recent Lifeway Sunday school lesson book (2021), it said “Key Doctrine: God the Son.” Later in the same lessons I found it more. I was a little shocked since they were using the CSB version (which uses the name Yahweh about 700 times). I let it go at first, but in several of that quarter’s lessons, the same thing happened, “Key Doctrine: God the Son.” Well, I started a little *BibleWorks* quest. I searched the twelve translations I most often used, searching for that phrase. Guess what, it’s not there! I want to write them and say “Do not go beyond what is written.” (I Cor. 4:6)

When Richard Rubenstein, was asked “When did Jesus become God?” His quick response was 381! (Focus on the Kingdom interview) Not until centuries later, especially with Constantine at Nicea, do we see the major Great Paganization of the church. Why can’t we at least look diligently at the Bible and that first century and DE-Paganize to at least where Jews and Muslims **MIGHT** listen about the identity of the true biblical Messiah? I guess that’s why I also really appreciate Hurtado’s work. At least he is honest enough to ask the question, “*How on Earth Did Jesus Become a God?*” (cp Ehrman, et. al) I disparage myself, because I’ve told it so often in the last few years, but at the SBL conference in Atlanta, Hurtado was asked (by the scholars in the Mark session that I was in...) “Did Jesus ever think he was God?” He responded, “HELL NO!” Again, my mother would not approve of that kind of language, but how can we keep on saying God the Son, and it’s just not there? If Jesus did not think it, believe it, or say it, then why in ... **hades** (Southern talk), should I, or anyone have to believe it?

BIBLIFYING JESUS THE MESSIAH:

John is clear, in his now somewhat controversial gospel, which many are reading anachronistically with our “Creeds.” In the last verse of the second to last chapter, “**But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name.**” (John 20:31 CSB) If CO, Current Orthodoxy, is true, why didn’t he just say, these things are written so that you may believe Jesus is GOD! **Well...** he didn’t.

Let’s begin with the root of Messiah, **before** the *Mashiach*. *Mashach*, is to pour or rub on oil or a liquid (cp Jesus and the woman anointing his feet with expensive perfume, “You didn’t anoint My head with olive oil, but she has anointed My feet with fragrant oil.” (Luke 7:46 CSB) The first to anoint, that I can find, is Jacob anointing a rock, his pillow! (Gen. 28:18) “So Jacob rose early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put under his head and set it up as a pillar and poured oil on its top. He called the name of that place **Bethel**,” (Gen 28:18,19) God had appeared to HIM, not Abraham, to whom God had already appeared nine times, not Isaac to whom God appeared to twice, but to him and his ladder to heaven dream. YHWH confirms the covenant that he had given to Abraham and Isaac. Jacob names the place Bethel, בֵּית-אֱלֹהִים , house of God!

In Genesis 31:13, “I am the God of Bethel, where you **anointed** a pillar, where you made a vow to Me; now arise, leave this land, and return to the land of your birth.” To pour oil on something, means, in this biblical sense, to make it holy, and set apart (Hebrew *qodesh*). Seventy times something is poured oil on, Aaron and his sons, about six times, about ten times David being poured on is mentioned, Saul four times, unleavened bread/wafers four times, the tabernacle three times, things in the tabernacles about ten times, etc. *Mashach* is doing the pouring, having been poured upon, is *Mashiach*. I think a “nice” one is the oiling of the wafers in Exodus 29:2. “And unleavened bread, and cakes unleavened, tempered with oil, and wafers unleavened anointed with oil...” KJV) I used the KJV because it appropriately uses the word “anoint” for the Hebrew *Mashach*. (p.s. we are not to *Mashiach* yet!) Remember *Christos* occurs 529 times in the NT.

My “story,” of remembrance, is that I grew up in the South with biscuits, homemade biscuits. Have you ever tried to swallow a dry, almost powdery biscuit? It is hard. I remember watching my Grandmother and Mother make biscuits, the last procedure before putting them in the oven, was to role then in oil, pat them down, to help make them nice and soft with a little crispy on the outside. Remember THIS initial setting. This is for Aaron, as high priest, and future high priests! They have a gold emblem on their forehead saying, “*Qodesh YHWH*,” Holy to the LORD/YHWH. The point is, this is Holy business, do not make them eat stinking dry biscuits either! (☺) The rituals and grandeur, the “pomp and circumstance” are to set things apart that remind us of *El Shaddai*, God Almighty! “Moses then took the anointing oil and anointed the tabernacle and all that was in it, and consecrated them.” (Lev 8:10 NASB)

Another interesting anointing is in Judges 9:8-15, the Parable of the Trees given by Jotham who had escaped assassination. “Listen to me, O men of Shechem, that God may

listen to you. "Once the trees went forth to anoint a king over them, and they said to the olive tree, 'Reign over us!' (Jdg 9:7-8 NAU) The point is, watch out whom you anoint, you may be anointing an assassin.

We have the "GOLDEN age," of Saul, David, and Solomon. God said to Samuel, "I will send you a man [Saul] from the land of Benjamin, and you shall anoint him to be prince over My people Israel; and he will deliver My people from the hand of the Philistines. (1Sa 9:16) "Samuel took the flask of oil, poured it on his head, kissed him and said, "Has not the LORD [YHWH יהוה] anointed you a ruler over His inheritance?" (1Sa 10:1) It went well for only five chapters, then in I Sam. 15:17 Samuel said, "Is it not true, though you were little in your own eyes, you were *made* the head of the tribes of Israel? And the LORD anointed you king over Israel, ¹⁸ and the LORD sent you on a mission." Saul is rejected and David is anointed (while Saul was still King!)

David could have killed Saul several times, but because he was "YHWHs anointed," David would not kill him. It seems as if David had a better understanding of the **office** of one who is anointed by God, than most of us. "So all the elders of Israel came to the king at Hebron, and David made a covenant with them in Hebron before the LORD; and they anointed David king over Israel, according to the word of the LORD through Samuel." (1Ch 11:3) The transition is that the one or thing that has been *mashed* then becomes the **Mashiach**. Jesus' future title, *Yeshua ha Mashiach* may be his most important title. Especially, rather than "God the Son." We will discuss "Son of God" a little later. The Messiah's last job description from Daniel 9 is to "anoint the most holy place." There, the **Mashiach** is to **Mashach** the Holy Place, the "veil being torn in two" may be the symbol of that.

Let's look at the ANOINTED things and persons more. The "anointed priests" are the first of the thirty-six usages of the anointed or the LORD's anointed. The anointed priests occur in verses like Lev. 4:3, 5, 26, 6:15. Psalm 105:15 says "Do not touch My anointed ones, And do My prophets no harm." The LORD's anointed refers to Saul several times. The main times are in David's taunt to Saul's guards in I Sam. 16: 9,11,16, 23. "David said to Abishai, Do not destroy him, for who can stretch out his hand against the **LORD'S anointed** and be without guilt?" (1Sa 26:9) "This thing that you have done is not good. As the LORD lives, *all* of you must surely die, because you did not guard your lord, the LORD'S anointed." (1Sa 26:16)

The anointed Kings are mentioned, about twenty times. Of course, the Davidic covenant of II Sam. 7:16, may be most important... that one pointing to the ultimate **Maschiach/Messiah**. "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." Remember that in the discussion from Nathan, YHWH says, "He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a **son to Me**." Though initially the reference is made to Solomon, the ultimate reference seems to be the final Davidic **Mashiach**, to whom God is truly a Father. In Isaiah 45, Cyrus is called, the LORD's anointed. "Thus, saith Yahweh, to his Anointed, to Cyrus--Whose right hand I have firmly grasped, To subdue, before him, nations..." (Isa 45:1 Rotherham) Psalms 2 fits well also, "Why do the nations rebel and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers conspire together against the LORD and His Anointed One." (Psa 2:1-2 CSB) Later in the Psalm it says "I have consecrated My King on Zion, My holy mountain.

I will declare the LORD's decree: He said to Me, "**You are My Son**; today I have become Your Father." (Psa 2:6-7 CSB) Angels are **ben Elohim**, Adam is called "son of God" also (Luke 3:38), though the Greek is simply "of God." The Title, "Messiah," represents the anointed King of Israel (and eventually the world!) and God's Son/son that we will come to "kiss the hand" of.

Daniel 9:25 may be the ultimate funding in the OT for the future Messiah. "So you are to know and discern *that* from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until **Messiah the Prince** *there will be* seven weeks and sixty-two weeks..." (Dan 9:25 NAU) Some say 483 prophetic years to the Messiah. J. Sidlow Baxter, in his commentary on Daniel (*Explore the Book, Lesson 85, the book of Daniel (4)*), thinks he has it worked out exactly to the Palm Sunday event. It seems to be about the right period. He uses Nehemiah as the starting date, March 14, 445 b.c., and ends with April 6, 32 a.d. He is using 360 day, "prophetic Jewish" years? Jesus shows up at the right time (cp. Gal. 4:4)

NEW TESTAMENT FUNDING FOR THE REAL JESUS

A MAN

John 8:40- you seek to kill me, a man who has told you the truth that I heard from God
Rev. 22:16- I, Jesus, ...am the root and the descendant of David, the bright morning star.

Jesus is called "man" about 150 times in the NT. About 70 times, others are calling him man, about 80 times he is calling himself a man, especially in the phrase "Son of Man." My favorite from Jesus' own lips is John 8:40, "But as it is, you are seeking to kill Me, a **man** who has told you the truth, which I heard from God." I also appreciate Pilate, in the "bind" that he was, often referring to Jesus as man. "I find no guilt in this man," (Lk. 23:4) and "I have found no guilt in this man." (Luke 23:14) Pilate's wife even said, "Have nothing to do with that righteous Man." (Mt. 27:19) The thief on the cross says "but this man has done nothing wrong." (Lk. 23:41) The woman at the well says, "Come see a man who told me all the things that I have done." (Jn. 4:29) The blind man of John 9, "The man who is called Jesus made clay and anointed my eyes... ." (9:11) Remember, later in that account Jesus finds him and asks him if he believes in the Son of Man. Who is he? "You have now SEEN him and He is talking to you!" John 9:35-37) Even in accusing Jesus of blasphemy, which Jesus refutes in Jn. 10:36b, the Pharisees say "You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." (Jn. 10:33) Jesus **rebukes** them saying, "**I said**, I am the Son of God!" Then in the gospels, Pilate's ultimate, "Behold, the Man!" (Latin, **Ecce homo!**)

Later in the book of Acts, "Men of Israel, listen to these words: Jesus the Nazarene, **a man attested to you by God** with miracles and wonders and signs which God performed through Him... ." (Act 2:22) WOW, is that clear, or what? It would make a nice book! (J. R. Daniel Kirk, *A Man Attested by God*.) Paul also. "For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many... ." (Rom 5:15) "For there is one God, and one mediator also between God and men, **the man** Christ Jesus." (I Tim 2:5) Jesus is called "**This Man**," thirty times. (NASB)

(Review also: Mt. 1:18,20; Lk. 1:35; Rom. 1:3; Gal. 4:4; Rev. 5:5, 22:1-6; II Tim. 2:8, Heb. 1:5, 7:14; Acts 13:33, John 7:42, etc.)

***Twenty-Five* Groups or Individuals Who CALL Jesus a MAN :**

Disciples, Jews, Crowds, Nazareth folk, Pharisees, Peter, Pilate's Wife, Pilate, Centurion, Herod, Crowd at Crucifixion, Thief on the Cross, John the Baptist, Samaritan woman, People of Jerusalem, guards, blind man, blind men, **Jesus**, Chief Priests, Caiaphas, Stephen, Paul, Felix, James, John

Son of Man

"Son of Man," is Jesus' favorite term for himself (about 90 times!). Basically and simply, it means human being, with reference to Daniel 7:13,14 also. Someone once said, "If you are born of a woman, a human being, you **are** a human being." The same could be said of cows, dogs, chickens, ducks, etc. C.H. Dodd, in *The Founder of Christianity* said regarding Jesus' referencing himself as Son of Man, "He might do so out of a certain sensitiveness in speaking about himself, or a desire to avoid the appearance of egotism." (111) In English, it would be like saying "I" or "one," in reference to one's own being.

OF GOD

A game I have come to love playing is phrase searches in BibleWorks. One of those searches was the phrase "of God." For your information (☺), "of God" occurs 529 times in the New Testament. Luke has it 63x; Romans 61x; Acts 41x; Revelation 38x; I Corinthians 34x; John 33x; Mark 27x, etc. "Son of God" occurs 43 times and usually it is on the lips of someone else, though Jesus does not deny the term. OVER 25 "things" in the New Testament relate Jesus TO GOD! **Pardon the next "sentence" but it preaches.**

Jesus is the **Beloved** of God, the **Bread** of God, the exact **Character** of God, the **Christ** of God, in the **Form** of God, the **fullness** of God, the **Gift** of God, the **Glory** of God, the **Grace** of God, The **Holy one** of God, the **Image** of God, the **Lamb** of God, the **Life** of God, the **Likeness** of God, the **Messiah** of God, the **Mystery** of God, the **Power** of God, the **Prince** of God, at the **Right Hand** of God, the **Salvation** of God, the **Savior** from God, **Servant**/Ebed of God, **Son** of God, **Truth** of God, the **Way** of God, the **Wisdom** of God, the **Word** of God... but guess what? He is not God/YHWH. (27 "things" in alphabetical order of what Jesus is... "of God"!)

Top "of Gods"=

Kingdom of God 63 [**HALLELUJAH, FOCUS ON THE KINGDOM!**]

Word of God 45

Son of God 40

Will of God 25

Grace of God 23

Children, Love, Spirit, Sight of God @ 13
Glory, Wrath, Power of God @ 12
Church, Right Hand of God @ 9 (simple RH about 20 times)

Son of God occurs 43 times in the New Testament, usually NOT on Jesus' lips. The times from Jesus are Mt. 27:43; Lk. 22:70; Jn. 3:18; Jn. 5:25; Jn. 10:36b; Jn. 11:4; and Rev. 2:18. According to Psalm 2, Messiah is linked to the "King of Israel." This is supported by Nathanael's explanation "Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel." (Jn. 1:49) As Colin Brown has said, "to be the Son of God means you are not God." (former Theological Conference, and see *Ex Auditu* (1991, v7) article. A pastor friend, Greg Demmitt, who also took classes from Fuller's Professor Ray Anderson, said that in personal discussion with Ray, Ray chose not to say "God the Son" anymore, saying in Greg's class, "Son of God." The most times Son of God is used is with John, in the gospel and the letters. His are Jn. 1:34 (Jn. The Baptist speaking); I Jn. 3:8, I Jn. 4:15, I Jn. 5, 10, 12, 13, and 20. The ones in I John 5 are:

- V, 5- Who is the one who conquers the world but the one who believes that Jesus is the Son of God?
- V, 10- The one who believes in the Son of God has this testimony within him.
- V, 12- The one who has the Son has life. The one who doesn't have the Son of God does not have life.
- V, 13- I have written these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, so that you may know that you have eternal life. (Compare John 20:31)
- V. 20- And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us understanding so that we may know the true One.

MESSIAH

Not only have I appreciated the CSB/HCSB using the name of Yahweh quite often, but also I have appreciated the use of the Hebraic term Messiah rather than Christ in many cases. "Christ" does occur 405x in the CSB NT, but 116x, it uses the term Messiah, giving a more *Mashiach* flavor. I want to put down quite a few verses, but since this is the main point of the Gospel of John (20:31), I wish to show it is the main point of the NT as well. THESE, really define who Jesus is. Here goes:

- Mt. 16:16- Simon Peter answered, "You are the **Messiah, the Son of the living God!**"
- Mt. 22:45- "If David calls Him 'Lord,' how then can the **Messiah** be **his Son?**"
- Mt. 26:63- Jesus kept silent. Then the high priest said to Him, "By the living God I place You under oath: tell us if You are the **Messiah, the Son of God!**"
- Mt. 27:22- Pilate asked them, "What should I do then with Jesus, who is called Messiah?"
- Mk 12:35- How can the scribes say that the **Messiah is the Son of David?**
- Mk. 15:32- Let the **Messiah, the King of Israel**, come down now from the cross, so that we may see and believe."
- Lk. 2:11- Today a Savior, who is **Messiah the Lord**, was born for you in the city of David.
- Lk. 4:41- ...demons were coming out...saying, "You are the **Son of God!**" But He rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew He was the **Messiah**.
- Lk. 23:2- "We found this man subverting our nation, opposing payment of taxes to Caesar, and saying that He Himself is the **Messiah, a King.**"

Lk. 23:39- Then one of the criminals hanging there began to yell insults at Him: "**Aren't You the Messiah? Save Yourself and us!**" (☺)

Lk. 24:26- **Didn't the Messiah have to suffer** these things and enter into His glory?
(*Jesus speaking*)

Lk. 24:46- "This is what is written: The Messiah would **suffer** and rise from the dead the third day. ("

Jn. 1:41- "**We have found the Messiah!**" (which means "**Anointed One** "), [Andrew to Peter]

Jn. 4:25- The woman said to Him, "**I know that Messiah is coming** " (who is **called Christ**).

Jn. 4:29- "Come, see a man who told me everything I ever did! **Could this be the Messiah?**"

Jn. 9:22- ...if anyone confessed Him as Messiah, he would be banned from the synagogue.

Jn. 11:27- "Yes, Lord," she told Him, "**I believe You are the Messiah, the Son of God**, who comes into the world." (Martha)

Jn. 20:31- **But these are written so that you may believe Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and by believing you may have life in His name.**

Acts 2:36- "Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that **God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!**" (Peter on Pentecost)

Acts 8:5- Philip went down to a city in Samaria and **proclaimed the Messiah** to them.

Acts 9:22- But Saul ...kept confounding the Jews ...by **proving that this One is the Messiah.**

Acts 17:3- the Messiah had to suffer and rise..."This Jesus I am proclaiming to you **is the Messiah.**"

Acts 18:5- Paul was ...preaching the message and solemnly testified... **that Jesus is the Messiah.**

Acts 18:28-(Apollos) ...refuted... demonstrating through the Scriptures **that Jesus is the Messiah.**

Rm. 9:3- For I could almost wish to be cursed and cut off from the Messiah for ...my brothers... .

Rm. 15:7- Therefore accept one another, just as the Messiah also accepted you, to the glory of God.

Eph. 1:20- He demonstrated this **power in the Messiah by raising Him** from the dead and seating Him at His right hand in the heavens...

Eph. 2:13- in Christ-you who were far away have been brought near by **the blood of the Messiah.**

Eph. 5:2- And walk in love, **as the Messiah also loved us** and gave Himself for us...

Eph. 5:5- Every sexually immoral or impure or greedy person, who is an idolater, does not have an **inheritance in the kingdom of the Messiah and of God.**

Col. 2:17- These are a shadow of what was to come; the substance [reality NIV] is **the Messiah.**

Col. 3:3- For you have died, and your life is **hidden with the Messiah in God.**

Col. 3:16- Let the **message about the Messiah** dwell richly among you, teaching and

Heb. 5:5- In the same way, **the Messiah did not exalt Himself to become a high priest**-[God did]

Heb. 9:14- how much more will the **blood of the Messiah**...cleanse our consciences...

Heb. 9:28-so also the **Messiah**, having been offered once to bear the sins-will appear a second time

I Pt. 4:13- rejoice as you share in the **sufferings of the Messiah**, so that you may also rejoice with great joy at the revelation of His glory.

I Jn. 2:22- Who is **the liar**, if not the **one who denies that Jesus is the Messiah?**

I Jn. 5:1- **Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Messiah has been born of God,**

Rev. 11:15- The seventh angel blew his trumpet...saying: The kingdom of the world has become the **kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah**, and He will reign forever and ever!

Rev. 12:10- The salvation and the power and **the kingdom of our God** and the **authority of His Messiah** have now come

Rev. 20:4- **They came to life and reigned with the Messiah for 1,000 years.**

Rev. 20:6- Blessed and holy... they will be **priests of God and of the Messiah**, and they will reign with Him for 1,000 years.

DE-PAGANIZING... FROM THE UGLY LEAP...

What can we make of this? I would humbly suggest, he IS one with the Father, but he is NOT the Father. He is one with God (as we can be), but he is NOT GOD!

Paganity has made quite the Kierkegaardian leap, or should we say “Constantinian” leap or should we further say “Devilish/demonic” leap, from Son of God to God the Son? Again, the creedal formulas are just not what it says in the Bible! (with some exceptions)

An example, Lee Strobel in his wonderful book, with the below limitation, *The Case for Christ*, talks about the true Messiah, the Son of God, but also in quite a few cases makes that “double talk” leap from Messiah, Son of God, to God himself, or in the least a “Deified” being. Here is a short list in two sections:

The GOOD: (*emphasis mine*)

p. 20- ...Whether Jesus is the **unique** Son of God...

p. 78- ...some people considered Jesus **to be the Christ**...

p. 78- ...which means, the ‘**Anointed One**’ or ‘**Messiah**’

p. 107- ...confirmation of Jesus’ self-identity ... **the anointed one of God**

p. 132- ...Whether ...thought he was the **Messiah or Son of God**

p. 140- ...[his BY GOD list] Appointed; agent; authorized; empowered, spoke, directed by God. **Under the Jewish concept of agency**, ‘a man’s agent is as himself...’

p. 148- ...miracles...help authenticate **Jesus’ claim to being** the Son of God

p. 160- ...he **functioned** like God when his heavenly Father **gave him** explicit sanction to do so

The NOT SO GOOD leaps to “double talk?”

p. 30- ...As you can see... the deity of Christ

p. 35- ...Resurrection... the crowning confirmation of Jesus’ divinity

p. 83- ...[citing Pliny] Christians chant verse...in honor of Christ as if to a god...

p. 84- ...It talks about the worship of Jesus as God

p. 87- ...all kinds of people... worshiped him as God

p. 88- ...about Christ, who was equal to God

p. 139- ... ‘God’ was an appropriate name for Jesus Christ

p. 145- ...[Pelikan] material about Jesus...claiming to be God incarnate

p. 166- ... To be God, Jesus must be ethically perfect

p. 169- ... God’s titles are applied to Jesus [may be o.k. if God applied them?]

Current Orthodoxy, paganized Hellenistic Christianity, or Paganity has made a giant unbiblical leap which, to many scholars and Unitarians, is totally unnecessary, as Kung says, **unessential**. The question is, WHO did first century Jewish believers and God-fearing Gentile believers and seekers think Jesus was? Not until Paganity ruled later in the fourth century in the Hellenistic Post-Constantinian era, was Jesus totally skewed to being just another god in the Pantheon of Rome or later the Roman Catholic Church. Rather than a human Jewish Messiah, he became a Graeco-Roman god in the Pantheon, “just like the Emperor!”

Yes, just another Pagan god, like Julius Caesar and the later deified Emperors, like Hercules even. However with great manipulation Paganity’s Jesus just kept getting higher and higher. I have often wondered why anyone would make Jesus higher than the “Right

hand of God” which occurs over **twenty times** in the NT. Being part of a tri-personal God, just like other Triads in Paganity, seems to me to lower the real Jesus, the simple Jesus. The now immortal Jesus **is** at the right hand of His FATHER!

There is a “down-side” if Jesus is a pre-existent, eternally powerful, eternally begotten, “God” or just a part of a Multi-Personal God. To me, no matter how strange the logic becomes, HE IS STILL NOT A HUMAN, like the Bible says and who we are. Zarley’s thoughts got to me before Hurtado’s, but he says it a little differently in his “The Real Jesus” summary:

There is *no* NT evidence that Jesus ever *thought* that He was God.

There is *no* NT evident that Jesus ever *claimed* that He was God.

There *is* NT evidence that Jesus *denied* that He claimed to be God.

At Jesus’ examination before the Sanhedrin, He was never accused of claiming to be God.

The NT regularly *distinguishes* between God and Jesus as two separate individuals.

The NT constantly interchanges the words “God” and “the Father.”

The NT repeatedly identifies “God” *exclusively* as “the Father.”

The NT contains *no* unambiguous statement such as “Jesus (Christ) is God.”

Another point Zarley makes, Jesus was tempted and died, God was not and did not.

WHAT DID JESUS SAY!!!!... THE “I AM” SAYINGS... EGO EIMI:

JESUS’... I AM...sayings

Mt. 8:2,3; **I am** willing ...to touch and heal the leper

Mt. 9:38 Do you believe that **I am** able ... to blind men

Mt. 11:29 **I am** gentle and humble in heart ...to the weary and heaven laden

Mt. 18:20 **I am** there in their midst ... to two or three gathered in his name

Mt. 20:22 **I am** about to drink the cup ...suffering & crucifixion

Mt. 23:34 **I am** sending you prophets and wise men and scribes

Mt. 27:43 **I am** the Son of God ...he (Chief priests, Pharisees, and scribes) said ...

Mt. 27:63 **I am** to rise again ... “

Mt. 29:20 **I am** with you always, even to the end of the age

Mk. 1:41 **I am** willing ... to the leper [repeat]

Mk. 10:38,39 the cup with which **I am** baptized [to James & John]

Mk. 14:61, The high priest asked Jesus “Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?
Jesus said, “**I am**; and you shall see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand...

Lk. 5:13 **I am** willing ... to the leper [repeat]

Lk. 9:20 Who do you say **I am**? Peter, The Christ of God.

Lk. 12:50 How distressed **I am** until it is accomplished ... [baptism of crucifixion]

Lk. 21:8 **I am** among you as the one who serves...

Lk. 22:70 Are you the Christ? Yes, I am! {NASB} You say that I am CSB

Lk. 24:49 I am sending for the promise of My Father upon you...

John 4:25,26 I know Messiah is coming... **I** who speak to you **am He**. [woman at well]

John 6 v,35- **I am** the bread of life; v,41- **I am** the bread,

v. 48- I **am** the bread of life v. 49- I **am** the living bread that came down
John 7 v, 28- You know me and where I **am** from 29- I **am** from Him, He sent me
V, 33 For a little while longer, I **am** with you, then I go to Him who sent me
John 8 v, 12- I **am** the light of the world v, 14 Where I **am** going...
V, 15- I **am** not judging v,16-For I **am** not alone v,18- I **am** He who testifies
V,21- Where I **am** going v, 22- Where I **am** going v,23 I **am** from above
v,24- Unless you believe I **am** He v, 28 Son of Man... you will know I **am** He
v,43- ...what I **am** saying? V, 58 before Abraham was born, I **am**
John 10 v, 7- I **am** the door of the sheep v, 9 I **am** the door
V, 11 I **am** the good shepherd, v, 14 I **am** the good shepherd & know my own
V, 36b I **said, I am** the Son of God *Uios tou theou eimi*, the *coup de grace!*
John 11 v-15- I **am** glad for your sakes that I was not there... [Lazarus]
v-25 I **am** the resurrection and the life
Jn. 12:26- "If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and **where I am**,-My servant will be
12:32- "And I, if I **am lifted up** from the earth, will draw all men to Myself."
Jn. 13:13- "You call Me **Teacher and Lord**; and you are right, **for so I am.**"
13:19- "I **am telling you** ...so that when it does occur,
you may believe that I am He." [re- Judas' betrayal]
13:33- "I **am with you** a little while longer...'**Where I am going**, you cannot come
Jn. 14:3-I will come again and receive you..., **that where I am, there you may be**
Jn. 14:6-"I **am** the **way**, and the **truth**, and the **life**; no one comes to the Father but ...
14:10- "Do you not believe **that I am in the Father**, and the Father is in Me?"
14:11- "Believe Me **that I am in the Father** and the Father is in Me..."
14:20- "In that day...know that I **am in My Father**, and **you in Me, and I in you.**"
Jn. 15:1-I **am the true vine**, and My Father is the vinedresser" [*ὁ γεωργός*, farmer]Jms5:1
15:5- "I **am the vine**, you are the branches... apart from Me you can do nothing."
Jn. 16:5- "But now I **am going to Him who sent Me...**"
16:28- "I **am leaving the world** again and going to the Father."
16:32- "Behold, an hour is coming... for you to be scattered... **yet I am not alone**
Jn. 17:11 "I **am no longer** in the world; and **yet** they themselves are & I come to You."
17:14- "...they are not of the world, **even as I am not of the world.**"
17:24- "Father, I desire that they also- be with Me **where I am** so that they may be
Jn. 18:5- They answered Him, "Jesus the Nazarene." He said to them, "I **am He.**"
18:6- "...when He said to them, "I **am He,**" they drew back and fell to the ground."
18:8- "I **told you that I am He**; so if you seek Me, let these go their way,"
18:37- Pilate said to Him, So You are a king? "You say *correctly that I am a king.*"
Jn. 19:21-Do not write,The King of the Jews'; but that **He said, 'I am King of the Jews.'**"
19:28- Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished,
to fulfill the Scripture, said, "I **am thirsty.**"
Acts 9:5- "Who are You, Lord?" And He *said*, "I **am Jesus** whom you are persecuting." [
Acts 18:10- "I **am with you**, and no man will attack you ...for I have many people...city
Acts 22:8- "He said to me, 'I **am Jesus the Nazarene**, whom you are persecuting."
Acts 26:15-And the Lord said, I **am Jesus whom you are persecuting.**[Paul to Agrippa]

26:16-17- "I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and witness-rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, **to whom I am sending you**"

Rev. 1:17- He placed His right hand on me, ... "Do not be afraid; **I am** the first and the last."

Rev. 1:18- **I was dead**, and behold, **I am alive forevermore.**"

Rev. 2:5- repent ... or else **I am coming to you** and will remove your lampstand

2:16 "Therefore repent; **or else I am coming to you quickly...**" [to Pergamum]

2:23- "the churches will know that **I am He** who searches the minds and hearts..."

Rev. 3:11- "**I am coming quickly**; hold fast what you have...your crown." [Philadelphia]

Rev. 16:15- "**Behold, I am coming like a thief**. Blessed is the one who stays awake..."

Rev. 21:5- "He who sits on the throne said, Behold, **I am making all things new.**" [God?]

Rev. 22:7- "And behold, **I am coming quickly.**" [Rev. 3:14; 19:11; 21:5]

Rev. 22:12- "Behold, **I am coming quickly**, and My reward *is* with Me..."

A quick note on Islam. Jesus, *Isa*, is one of the most mentioned people in the Quran. As the NT, the Quran says that Jesus is the Messiah (*al-Masih* = Arabic), born of the virgin Mary, rejected by the Jews, performed miracles, and was raised to heaven. Dr. Khalil Andani cites the Quran, Q 3:55 and 5:117, that Jesus DID die according to the "plan and foreknowledge of God... ." (Acts 2:23) (Restoration Fellowship Youtube interview)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Gvier9P3GE> Home page: ***khalilandani.com***

Therefore, there are some Muslims who believe that Jesus DID die. I would also note from Isaiah 19, Egypt and Assyria, will be a third with Israel, probably in the Millennium. "On that day there will be an altar to the LORD in the center of the land of Egypt and a pillar to the LORD near her border." (Isa 19:19) "In that day Israel will be the third *party* with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth." (Isa 19:24) The CSB on that verse is very interesting, "On that day Israel will form a triple alliance with Egypt and Assyria-- a blessing within the land."(CSB) In the Quran, Jesus, *ISA*, is Messiah, Son of Mary, Guidance, Messenger, sign, gift, servant, example, witness, etc. Biblical Unitarians have a great opportunity for dialogue!

Regarding the Jews, I still have high hopes that Biblical Unitarians will be able to reach out more to Judaism with the true Messiah, *Yeshua ha Mashiach*. The book of Revelation talks about the 144,000 sealed (Great Trib.?) from ISRAEL. It is almost humorous that some groups claim themselves to be the 144,000 when the Bible is clear, **THEY ARE JEWS!** I loved the interview by Bill Schlegel with Messianic Jews, David and Esther Tel-tsur. (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCCUB-4BLmE&t=4s>) What a great possibility of dialogue a true believer of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah has. He is the future King of the World and King of God's Kingdom! We pray a blessing on Bill's and our ministry to Jews who believe, "Shema Yisrael YHWH Elohinu YHWH Echad" as Jesus did.

HINTS / SUGGESTIONS FOR DE-PAGANIZING (JM 5/2021)

1. **LET THE MAIN THING... be the main thing, THE MESSIAH...Son of God**
 - a. **Prophet** Jesus (Deut. 18:18,19; John 12:49, etc.)
 - b. **Priest** Jesus “It is finished,” ONCE for all sacrifice! (I Tim 2:5; Rm 6:10; Heb. 7:27; 9:12; 10:10 | Peter 3:18)
 - c. **King** Jesus, He IS THE Messiah, **Yeshua Ha Mashiach, Isa al-Masih**
 - d. The **Savior!** God as Savior sent our Savior. (~equal usage in NT) Lk. 1:47, Lk. 2:11, Acts 5:31, Php. 3:20, I Tim 4:10, Titus 1:4, 2 Ptr. 1:11, I Jn. 4:14, Jude 1:25 (24 times Savior in NT... about ½ and ½)
 - e. **THOSE 27 things** Jesus is ... “of God!”

2. **Eliminate unbiblical words, phrases** (I Cor. 4:6; Prov. 30:6, Rev. 22:18,19, etc.)
 - a. God the Son (& stop saying Godhead, there is NO *Theoskephale* in NT !)
 - b. Don't use *God Incarnate, Trinity* (“T & I” per Kung's / Zarley's etc. suggestions)
 - c. Going to heaven (Practice- Thy Kingdom come, they will be done on earth)

3. **Focus on God's message, Jesus' message, Our message, the Kingdom of God**
 - a. The Practical message- the Paradise of the Garden to Eternity (Rev. 2:7)
 - b. The Practical message of the Patriarchs, Abraham, Isaac & Jacob & JESUS!
 - c. The Practical message of ... the Apostles, the Seventy, US... GO!
Mt. 24:14! “This gospel of the Kingdom will be preached... to all nations...”
 - d. **DIALOGUE** with others, Jews, Muslims, Seekers, all creation!

4. **Make the SHEMA great again** (☺) (Ex. 34:6,7 YHWH, C,G,SA,AL,AT, ML, FWS, YNG)
 - a. **YHWH**, 6,828 **VaYaDaTem Kiy Aniy YHWH** (77x) **Aniy YHWH** (199x)
They will know that I am YHWH I am YHWH
 - b. The Creed of Jesus (Mark 12:29) (*Anthony's substantial point!*)
 - c. Over 500 times God and Jesus are differentiated in the NT. (Greek “kai”- and)

5. **Elevate the REAL, Straightforward, Uncomplicated, Sincere, Simple JESUS!**
 - a. He IS the Messiah, Christ, King, Suffering Servant, Savior, Shepherd, etc.
 - b. He IS at the Right Hand of God
 - c. He IS the coming One (**ADDS SKR- Rev. 2,3** ...+Nike P, C, M, R, B, P, T)
Among us, Died, Dbl Edge Sword, Son of God- (in charge of) **Spirit & Angels boss, Key of David, Ruler** (beginning) of the New Creation of God, the Kingdom of God

His rewards to those who overcome (nikao, νικάω) (Rev 2:7)

Paradise, Crown, Manna, Rulership, Book of life, Pillar in God's house, Throne seat

The Basic Jesus I Always Knew

In Philip Yancey's book, *The Jesus I Never Knew*, "we affirmed Jesus, ...begotten of his Father before all worlds ...Very God of Very God.' Those creedal statements, though, are light-years removed from the Gospels' account of Jesus... ." (p. 49) The Jesus I knew, growing up in the Jerusalem Baptist Church, was a very real Jesus to me. The preacher could make Jesus real, his farmer talk... "a sower went out to sow", etc. I cannot remember ever in my single digit life hearing the word "trinity." It was Jesus, the Son of God, a real man, died for your sins. "For God so loved the world that He gave his only begotten Son... ." Repent or go to hell (that's another topic!)

Rather crude, but I've seen bulls impregnate cows. I've seen puppies born. I've seen humans born. In this last scenario, in the 1980s, there was a big "home birth" push. After only 100 years of hospital birthing and a lot of doctor delivery, (and 4,000 +/- years of natural birth before) did some want to go back to home birthing and mid-wives. I was not allowed to attend the birth of my two children, in the sixties and seventies. However, I had the joyous, surreal, invitation to be at three such home births in the eighties. In fact, at one of them, the mother, a dear friend to me and my wife, asked me to be the "official photographer." The only guideline from the mom was, "No crotch shots." I am totally amazed to see a human being enter existence! I am glad the one of Genesis 3:15 eventually came to crush the serpent's head. The "*protoeuangelion*", first good news of the Bible.

I love Christmas, and still do, despite capitalism and some pagan traditions surrounding it. (A Campolo line, "What should you buy at Christmas for the person who has everything? NOTHING, but you don't have the guts to do it!) A nativity scene with a real baby Jesus was the center of my early Christmases. A REAL BABY JESUS! Do you remember those kid plays, where we all dressed up as angels, or shepherds, or even maybe a cow or horse for the church nativity play? OR, maybe you were Joseph or Mary, and they picked the littlest baby in the congregation for baby Jesus? However, later I learned someone DIED for my sins, really died! The Old Rugged Cross, The Cruel Cross, The Cup of Baptism that only he was to offer, was REAL to me. A Savior's sacrifice for all my sins.

I had two "big" sins before I accepted that Jesus at Jerusalem Baptist Church. One when I was about nine, and one when I was about eleven. I remember my first memory verse from the balcony of the new church building during VBS (Vacation Bible School). It was Daniel 1:8, "But Daniel purposed in his heart that he would not defile himself with the portion of the king's meat, nor with the wine... ." (KJV) We also, fundamentalists as we were, focused on the Ten Commandments! I pretty much had them down to memory, especially those last five do nots, murder, adultery, steal, lie, and covet. I loved candy, especially from Traylor's little store out on the main Pumpkin Center road about a half mile away. If we had any money at all, my mother was generous enough to get us some candy now and then. I had walked to the store several times before with money from Uncle Ed or earned in the strawberry fields.

My mother left her purse on the couch, next to the big cushioned chair where my dad usually sat. Everyone was out of the house and her purse was open. I could see the tips

of four or five one-dollar bills in one section of the purse. After a little consideration about how nice candy would be, I stole one from the purse. I went into the front yard and hid in the drainage pipe going out, and put leaves over it. The plan was to later rescue it and go to Traylor's for the candy. I did not think she would notice. A dollar back then, 1950 something was more like ten dollars today.

Somehow and for some reason, she soon counted it and made the discovery. There are four children in our family, Carolyn, Bill, me (Joe), and Tony. She started going down the line. "Carolyn, have you been in my purse?!" Her quick response was, "No mamma, not me!" On to the next, "Bill, have you been in my purse?" "No mamma, not me!" THEN to me "Joe, have you been in my purse?" Like them I responded, "No mamma, not me!" If you're counting, that is two of the big ten already, possibly with covetousness in there also. However, I did add a little caveat lie, "But I did see Tony near it just a little while ago. I don't even remember her asking Tony, the "whipping" had already begun in the front yard. She was holding his left arm at the shoulder, and whipping him with the half-inch crepe myrtle limb she got from the front yard. He was crying tremendously, "Mama I didn't do it! I didn't do it!" He was running in counter clockwise circles as the force of the limb pushed him to lighten the pain. After several minutes of his agony and tears, mine started coming, I bawled out "Mama, mama, I did it!" "Vengeance is mine saith the LORD," unless mom finds out first. I could not wait to confess my sin, at home and at church.

I had another big one about ten, but I don't want to bore you with the gruesome details of ten year old sinners. So... at that Bible school, the following summer, I knew I needed God to forgive me and Jesus to cleanse me of my sins. It was a simple faith, and probably good enough for salvation at eleven years old. I never got the heaven and hell stuff. I loved to fish, hunt and just roam around the Natalbany river, behind my house too much. Floating on a cloud, playing on a harp, did not appeal to me. However, there was one "revival" where the preacher "walked us through hell" and named a bunch of sinners in the Bible. I did not want to be in that group. Luckily, I went with my dad, and even at eleven or twelve, I could lean on him and go to sleep when things did not make sense.

The Jesus, I think I know, makes complete Biblical sense to me. I guess that's all that matters. My conscious is open/clear/sincere before my Father and Jesus.

There is no "GodHead." That is an olde English word translated from two Greek words that simply meant godly, or of a divine nature. God is Theos in the New Testament. Head is Kephale in the New Testament. THERE IS NO GREEK WORD IN THE NEW TESTAMENT **Theoskephale!** God is the *Kephale* of Christ; Christ is the *Kephale* of every man. (I Cor. 11:3)

"Incomprehensibility, complexity and remoteness from life and the Bible are today the themes of a crisis of belief..." (59, Kuschel) Below: Washington's Apotheosis ☹



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