

The Sacrifice (and Pre-Existence) of Jesus Christ

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The holy days portray God the Father's plan of salvation for all of mankind, and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is central to that plan. But the holy days are not all about Jesus Christ, and, frankly, the Passover is not all about Jesus Christ. Throughout my years in the church, including Passover services that I have presided over myself, one would think it was all about Jesus Christ because that was who the focus was on, and, not that that isn't a very high level of order, but the fact is, it isn't quite like that. God the Father is the Redeemer who offered the sacrifice. If you go and memorialize the sacrifice that was given, and God the Father isn't even mentioned, you've missed part of what the whole purpose and point was. I'm sure there have been years of my own Passover services in which I didn't include that as part of the focus. Jesus Christ, the Redemption, was the sacrifice. So, Jesus Christ is not the Redeemer and God the Father is not the Redemption.

Imagine going into a shop, such as a pawn shop, and you have something on hold, and you have to redeem it from pawn. The money you lay down is the redemption. The person who lays the money down is the redeemer. That's just how it works—that's the concept. That is the way the scriptures are written as well. But the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, and His pre-existence, are woven together in such a way that they cannot be separated into two parts. When you start to talk about the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, you are also talking about the fact that He existed before His human birth, and was not just pre-existent by having been created a little earlier, but He is un-created. That is an important distinction and it's never been one I've had to sort out; as we're coming into the spring holy days, I thought this would be a good time to walk through that.

The role and identity of Jesus Christ, prior to His human birth, is not primarily recorded in the Old Testament. It is primarily recorded in the New Testament. So we've actually, in our traditional, former teaching, set that up a little bit backwards. In the New Testament, it wasn't the existence of God the Father that was revealed, it was the pre-existence of Jesus Christ that was revealed. That God is love is what Christ came to show us, and we saw that by His actions, but it's interesting that when the Jews worshipped God, it was the Father they worshipped; He didn't have to come tell them; Paul says, I worship the God of my fathers, and Paul didn't have to tell them who that was; they knew who that was, they just didn't obey Him, and they didn't really know what He was like.

The New Testament contains the revelation of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ. That's where the proof is. Many of the references in the Old Testament, quite frankly, have been distorted; I had not known any better, even over the decades of my own ministry.

I don't want to review things that have already been addressed, because those are on the record. Take, for instance, John 1:1—I'm not going there today; that's already there on the website and there's a study paper on the meaning of John 1:1. The best I will do is simply read you a translation of that passage from the New English Bible; I've mentioned it before, but let me just read it. I think it's a more accurate rendition of John 1, verses 1 through 3.

John 1:1 *When all things began, the Word already was. The Word dwelt with God, and what God was, the Word was.*

2) *The Word, then, was with God at the beginning,*

3) *and through him all things came to be; no single thing was created without him.* (NEB)

He was with God in the beginning.

Now, again, that's the New English Bible. It's not a popular version, and the common versions are in more agreement with each other, but they don't actually portray what was recorded in the original Greek.

So the point of John 1:1—Jesus was the same as God in existence; what God was, the Word was; Jesus was not the same as God in authority; He was not the God—the Word was with the God—so there is a distinction that is made. Jesus, though, was not the Creator, He was with the Creator. Now, again, that's all material that has been addressed, more than once, so I don't want to go back over that, I simply wanted to walk through that and point it out on my way.

If we look at the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, there is a type of that in the Old Testament, and it's in Genesis 22. God tells Abraham to offer up Isaac as a sacrifice, as a burnt offering. A burnt offering, in the Hebrew, is an ascending offering. That is basically where we get the phrase "to go up in smoke"—that's what it means. The smoke ascends into the air and the sacrifice is completely consumed. The burnt offering was killed by the person who offered it. (In an animal sacrifice, it was totally consumed, except for the hide—that was removed—and it went up in smoke.) So that is what Abraham was told by God to do with Isaac.

Now in Hebrews 11, you could not have Isaac fall on his own sword. The person who offered the sacrifice had to kill the sacrifice—had to put him forward, in that respect. So Isaac had to let himself be killed. He had to let his father pour his blood, so to speak, out on the ground. He had to be willing. God intervened and chose not to fulfill that command in that way.

In Hebrews 11, in verse 17, there is a reference to Abraham, which says,

Hebrews 11:17 *By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18) of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called ... (NKJV)*

If you don't have Isaac, you have no future in My plan, and God says, I want Isaac.

Isn't it amazing, if you're holding on to something, if you're avoiding something, if you're running away from something, you're probably going to find out that God is going to take that and put it right, square, in the middle of your path. You're going to have to face the one thing that will prove that you will put God first. You can say, well, I have extra of this, so take it; or, I don't care for this any more, it's worn out anyway—you can have that. But that's not what God wants. God wants our focus, our loyalty, our conviction, our service—we are His servants.

18 repeated) ... *In Isaac your seed shall be called,*"

19) *concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense. (NKJV)*

Abraham's wife's womb was dead, but God says, I will give you life.

So that is the reference to Abraham, who is a type of God the Father. Abraham and Isaac, as father and son, are a type of God the Father and Jesus Christ. Again, where do we learn that? We don't learn that in the Old Testament, we learn it in the New Testament. The example is there, but the understanding of the example is in the end of the record, not the beginning. And that's interesting as well. Jesus had to be willing to let Himself be killed, and He had to put Himself totally in His Father's hands.

Now, knowing that these things would happen, reading prophecy before it is fulfilled is not quite the same as reading it after it has been fulfilled. You could say, oh yeah, it's right there—they had the prophecy; it's hard to say exactly how much they specifically understood, but in Isaiah 53 we understand the meaning of the reference here. I'll begin in the middle of the passage, starting in verse 4.

Isaiah 53:4 *Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted.*

5) *But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed.*

6) *All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD [Yehovah—God the Father] has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.*

Verse 10:

10) *Yet it pleased the LORD [Yehovah] to bruise Him;*

Not that it made Him happy, no—it was necessary; it was fulfilling what had to take place.

10 continued) *He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the LORD [Yehovah] shall prosper in His hand. (NKJV)*

Then it goes on and expands it a little further, but God the Father is the one who put Jesus Christ's life at stake; He offered the sacrifice. That's what is portrayed with Abraham and Isaac. Now it was actually a Roman soldier who ran the spear through His side, so the physical event of the final letting out of the blood of the body was in that way, because, as you know, the blood had to be poured out on the ground. That's how a sacrifice is completed—the blood is poured out on the ground. But it was God the Father who offered Him.

Who then was Jesus Christ, in His own words? I will address some passages about who He was in the record of scripture, but who did Christ say He was? That has to be at least the first order of what we would consider.

I want to mention John 3. If you're using my outline, there is a comment at the very end of that outline, and, here's the danger of sharing an outline. If you write something (while you have guests in your home, and you have to feed them and treat them nice, and then they stay late, so you don't get to finish working on your sermon), in the middle of the night, when you're doing the last edits, you think, oh, the outline has already gone out the door, otherwise I would have erased one little word there, so I'll just clarify it while I'm here.

John 3:12 *If I have told you earthly things and you do not believe,*

Christ is speaking now. I'm first going through what Christ said—who He was *in His own words*—so we're not interpreting, and we're not quoting somebody else,

12 continued) ... *how will you believe if I tell you heavenly things?*

13) *No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven,*

Did Christ begin to exist when He was born on the earth? That's not what the Bible says. It says He came down from heaven—not a concept that came down, not an emotion that came down—no. A Being was emptied and came down from heaven—Jesus Christ—and He began to live on this earth.

13 continued) *that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven.* (NKJV)

The New King James says, *the Son of Man who is in heaven.* He's on the earth, so He's not actually in heaven, and it's not the trinity. The King James actually says, *came down from heaven.* If you go into the Greek (that's where I get into trouble, so I usually call my friend, Mark Sappington), the comment that He came down from heaven is my point, and that point is valid. Christ came down from heaven, which means He was there, before He came down, and the statement, *who is*, is actually the same statement that's in the middle of the reference to "I AM", if you can understand that. So, without me getting myself into trouble, trying to explain which part of the grammar that comes from, that statement is a reference to the Being in heaven, or the fact that the Being existed in heaven.

So I'm going to try not to go too deep, to get too definitive; I'll let someone like Mark Sappington come out with a more technical answer. But the point is this: The reference in John 3 is that Christ was in heaven prior to being on the earth. That's what that verse means. Sometimes the interpretation is trinitarian, as when they take away the word "the" from before "God", thus implying He's not unique—that's on purpose, maybe out of good intentions, but it's still on purpose and it's still not true.

So I just wanted to clear that up. Those who are looking at my outline, where I have the word "exists", it's in that direction but I don't think it's technically correct. It's only on paper, and you can just cross that off, and pretend I didn't say it anyway ((laughs)). Verse 14.

John 3:14 *And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness,*

Now notice, first you have the reference, in John 3:13, to the fact that He was in heaven, then here you have the reference to His being lifted up. They are connected—they are always connected. Thus,

14 repeated) *... as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up,*

He's going to be sacrificed, but when you talk about the sacrifice, you have to understand what it is that's being offered, and who offered it, and where the offering came from.

15) *that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.*
16) *For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son,*

And that is the phrase that explains it.

16 continued) *that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.*
17) *For God did not send His Son into the world ...*

Jesus Christ didn't begin to exist in the world, *He was sent* into the world. That's actually the intent of the passage, and it's consistent with the verses previous to it.

17 repeated) *... that the world through Him might be saved.*

If that reference was simply in one place, you'd say, well, okay, that's interpretation. But it's not just in one place. Let's go forward a little bit further, to John 8:21. At this point, I want to, again, restrict myself to the statements that are specifically and directly from Jesus Christ.

John 8:21 *Then Jesus said to them again, "I am going away, and you will seek Me, and will die in your sin. Where I go you cannot come."*

22) *So the Jews said, "Will He kill Himself, because He says, 'Where I go you cannot come'?"* (NKJV)

There's always a contest. Here are the Pharisees, challenging Him, and then more of the Jews, in a broader context, are there, gathered around, and begin to challenge Him. So He responds,

23) ... *"You are from beneath..."*

Down here on the earth,

23 continued) *I am from above.*

That means the same thing in John 8 that it meant in John 3—I am from up there; that's where I came from, that's where I was—in heaven.

23 continued) *You are of this world; I am not of this world.*

24) *Therefore I said to you that you will die in your sins; for if you do not believe that I am He, you will die in your sins.*" (NKJV)

Do you know what's interesting here? There are three occurrences of "I am" here above. Three times He says, I am from above, I am not of the world, I am He (and then the word "He" is actually in italics, meaning it was added by the translators). Those words are *ego eimi*, the Greek words for "I am", but they don't mean that in the same way. You have to understand that the translators have sometimes taken a very specific statement and made a very specific point that isn't justified, even in the language of the text, but it kind of fits the commentary.

So we can get into a situation where one might say, well, what's a two-word phrase in the New Testament that begins with "I", and what's a two-word phrase in the Old Testament that begins with "I"?—they must mean the same thing! No—that's not how that works. When people begin to argue that the spelling of a word, in *English*, is the proof of their argument, I'm sorry, it's breach. It's breach and we need to do better than that. We need to understand scripture, frankly, better than that.

John 8:25 *Then they said to Him, "Who are You?" And Jesus said to them, "Just what I have been saying to you from the beginning.*

26) *I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.*" (NKJV)

Later on I'm going to address Christ's role in a specific way, but when you walk through this, and He says, I heard this from My Father, understand that He's laying out another argument, to show what His role is, and how that role is portrayed in scripture.

John 8:27 *They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.*

28) *Then Jesus said to them, “When you lift up the Son of Man [when you go to kill Me], then you will know that I am He,*

Again, the word “He” is in italics, and Christ is not saying He is the “I AM” of Exodus 3—He’s not saying that, He’s saying, you’re going to know that I am—that I exist—and you’re going to know who I am. Again, at some point, the words—even the common words—sometimes have been given meanings that go beyond the text.

28 continued) *... and that I do nothing of Myself; but as My Father taught Me, I speak these things.* (NKJV)

So let’s just think about that. I’ll explain it in detail a little later.

Is Jesus Christ God’s spokesman? No. Is He God’s messenger? Yes. Is there a difference? There is a huge difference. First of all, *logos* doesn’t even mean “spokesman”—that’s not the point—and *logos* is used overwhelmingly, *not* in reference to Jesus Christ. We’ve explained that in other sermons, but regardless, that’s a separate issue. “Messenger” means when you are told something, you are given a message and you deliver the message. If you are a “spokesman”, you get up and answer the questions, and you give your understanding of the circumstances; you’re speaking under authority but you yourself are speaking. A “messenger” doesn’t do that; a “messenger” delivers the message. That’s going to be important and significant when we look at other scriptures going forward.

In John 8:54, we go into a passage that I’m not going to spend time explaining, but I’ll just read it since we’re there. Again, this has been addressed; Mark Sappington gave an entire sermon, “Who Is the I AM?” [on January 25, 2020], and it’s based on what comes here in John 8:58.

John 8:54 *Jesus answered, “If I honor Myself, My honor is nothing. It is My Father who honors Me, of whom you say that He is your God.*

Excuse me?—*of whom you say that He (God the Father) is your God.* That’s what it says. Jesus Christ wasn’t their God, God the Father was their God. It’s just what it says.

55) *Yet you have not known Him, but I know Him. And if I say, ‘I do not know Him,’ I shall be a liar like you; but I do know Him and keep His word.*

56) *Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad.”*

57) *Then the Jews said to Him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?”*

58) *Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.”* (NKJV)

In the Greek, it’s the same *I am* as all those other *I am*’s, back in the earlier part of the chapter, and they’re not a reference to Exodus 3. That’s just not the way it is. Again,

Mark Sappington addressed that subject in a sermon, on the website—I'll refer that to you—and his translation of the Greek phrase (in John 8:58) is “*before Abraham was, I have been*”, and he explained why, and that's a technical argument that goes beyond my ability to explain, but here's what I did. I went through the references I could find in scripture to that translation just to show that there are other translators who have considered this problem and wanted to find a clearer way to translate that passage. James Moffat: *I have existed before Abraham was born*. George Lamsa, whose translation is in Aramaic: *Before Abraham was born, I was*. The CEV, which is the Contemporary English Version: *Before Abraham was, I was, and I am*. The New Living Translation, or NLT, which is more modern, more recent, translates it as, *before Abraham was even born, I AM*, and then there's an asterisk leading to a footnote, and when you go down to the bottom of the page in the NLT, it says, *Or before Abraham was even born, I have always been alive*. So even the NLT recognizes that with the translation of this verse, there are options. So this isn't just somebody's one opinion saying these things are so; I found five places where there are translators who understand the text, and they are trying to find a way to clarify it as well.

So, in John 17, going forward, John includes the majority of the specific references where Christ spoke about Himself in a way that said, I pre-existed. Excuse me? I pre-existed. Did you hear that? John 1, John 3, John 8, John 17—John does this, and he's doing it on purpose. John 17, verses 1 through 5:

John 17:1 *Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said:*
“Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,
2) as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life
to as many as You have given Him.
3) And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God,

The only true God is the God—we've addressed that, and I won't go through that again, because I'd never get to the end of the sermon. I did have a good friend here who saw the handout and asked me, “Are you really going to review all these scriptures today?” Well, I don't know... ((laughs)), but the clock is generous today, so we'll see how that goes.

3 repeated) And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God,
and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.
4) I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have
given Me to do.
5) And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had
with You before the world was. (NKJV)

Wow! That's as obvious as a train rolling right down through the station. It's just there.

Well, here's the problem. Most of us, if we're older, grew up believing in the trinity. I was born a Catholic, I was raised a Protestant, and then God called me. We all come from some background, somewhere, but, generally speaking, if we're older and came

out of a mainstream church, we know something of the trinity. So if you came out of the mainstream, into the church of God, and someone would mention the trinity, it was something to make you recoil or flinch—oh no, you've got to run, you've got to get away from that. So it was a bad word, the trinity—oh man, that pagan doctrine. Thus, we moved to two-in-one, from three-in-one, and we would have never called it that—I recognize that—but the fact is, if you've got one thing and it has two parts, at some point in time, somebody is going to say, well, excuse me, that really is a binity, and another will reply, no—no, it's not! I'll leave it at that. I was on both sides of that argument, no question, so I own up to it too.

Here is my concern: We walked away from the trinity, saying, horrors, horrors! There were people a long time ago in our church of God association who recognized that the two-in-one concept of God wasn't correct either, and they saw it before I saw it, before many of us saw it. They recoiled from it the same way they had recoiled from the three-in-one concept. So you recoil from three-in-one, then you recoil from two-in-one, then what is there left to go to? Just one. So they went to one.

Now, this is how I see it. I've actually had this discussion with some friends, who are of this persuasion, and frankly, I recently even said to one of them, now look, I'll warn you—don't imagine that you called me and I wrote a sermon to address what you called me about—I wrote this sermon six weeks ago, I just haven't been able to finish it. ((laughs)) I said, it seems to me like you recoil from three-in-one, then you recoil from two-in-one, and you get to one, but you get to one before you've actually proved it—you just knew that the others weren't true, so this was the last option. Well, it isn't the last option.

I actually believe that a number of people move to “God is one” in a singular sense and then set a bar trying to prove how that fits all of those exceptional verses in scripture. So now you have to explain John 1:1, then you've got to explain John 3, and then John 8, and then John 17; all of a sudden it becomes a very technical exercise to find, well, what could that have been?—because you already have the answer. You don't start with the answer, you start like the Bereans, studying the scriptures, and it then has to harmonize, and if you end up in the Bible and part of the Bible says, there's only one God, one true God, and the rest of the Bible says, well, actually, there were two Beings there, then at some point maybe we don't have the answer right. But you don't start with the one and then explain away the other.

That's what I've been trying to do as I study, finding that if you've got ten things, and nine of them agree, you've got the answer. You may not know the answer to the other one; you might never know, or, you might learn later. But, no, you don't go with the one statement that is an exception and then you make everything else fit—that's not how this goes. I don't mean to impute any insincerity; I find those people who went to one God are in many ways more sincere than those who didn't. My concern is that people arrived there before they proved it, got the answer from a body of scripture, and then began to go through and show how these other scriptures don't really mean what they say. And some *don't* mean what they say, but that's where study comes in. I think

John 17 is clear. So John 17:24—that's my dissertation this week, the one I had this week over the phone. In John 17:24, Jesus says,

John 17:24 *“Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.*

He wasn't just a nice thought in God's mind. That is not the record of scripture. He had glory with the Father in antiquity and eternity, frankly.

25) O righteous Father! The world has not known You, but I have known You; and these have known that You sent Me.

They didn't know God the Father in the sense of personally understanding Him and His nature, but they certainly knew He existed.

26) And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them.” (NKJV)

Now as I said, when you put together an offering, and you put together the fact that Christ was the sacrifice, then the fact is His pre-existence is tied to that, and they're wed, and you do not take them apart. It says in 2 Corinthians 5 that an offering for sin had to be perfect. This is an incredibly important point, not just because, in some way, it would be a violation if it wasn't, but because of what it then represents.

2 Corinthians 5:20 *Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ's behalf, be reconciled to God [the Father].*

21) For He [the Father] made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us,

In that sense, Christ didn't become sin, He became a sin offering for us. Christ never, ever was sin.

21 continued) that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. (NKJV)

Let's go to Hebrews 7, verse 26. Christ was perfect, without sin, and there was never any risk, at all, that Christ would sin. Never. And I'll explain that; I'll come back to that.

Hebrews 7:26 *For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; 27) who does not need daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself.*

So He offered up Himself willingly, even though God the Father is the one who offered Him as a sacrifice; there's no conflict in that. It then says,

28) *For the law appoints as high priests men who have weakness, but the word of the oath, which came after the law, appoints the Son who has been perfected forever.*

I've heard the word *perfected* argued in this way—well, if He was perfected, then that was a process, so He couldn't have been perfect from the beginning. Excuse me, if He was imperfect then He couldn't have been the sin offering, He couldn't have been prophesied as the sin offering. He was perfect—*perfected* has to be understood in a context of what He learned. He *learned*. Do you think God doesn't learn? Every week He learns that He has to be patient with me. He learns! When we make our choice, that choice did not exist before we made it. When we made it, God says, now I know.

So perfection and learning must be understood in the context that if God the Father learns, then, obviously, He's perfect as well, so those terms can't be taken and separated in some other manner. And I just want to say this: Prophecy is not like Ivory soap, alright? Ivory soap, as the older generation remembers from its advertising, is 99 and 44/100 percent pure. That's not like prophecy. Prophecy isn't *almost* always, it *is* always. Now if God prophesies, and it's conditional, and you repent, and He pulls it back, then He's made that choice and changed it.

Prophecy is not about God being a really good guesser. No. If God the Father could have created a being who absolutely never, ever, would sin, then why did He create mankind? The losses to humanity, in destruction—broad is the way, and many there are who find it (destruction), and narrow is the gate, and hard is the way that leads to life, and few there are who find it—there are going to be a lot of people who lose out on salvation because they will not put God first in their life. They won't—they won't do it, and they're going to end up in the lake of fire. That's the record of scripture. Now, why did God create a bunch of humanity? So that He could burn them up when it's over? Is it because He has no choice? Why did He even create the angels? Because He could have just created Christs—if Christ was created. He could have just made a billion, or ten billion, or a hundred billion, or as many as He wanted. And He would have never had that mess, nor the problems—none of the wars, nor the sin, the destruction, the torture, the deprivation.

Excuse me, it doesn't fit. Prophecy is absolute: Jesus Christ was the Lamb of God, prophesied from the foundation of this world. The answer is, He would be that Lamb, He would never sin, He would be perfect, and the only way that was known is because He was known. He existed—He was there with God. You can't create a being, give him free moral agency, and then be absolutely guaranteed that he'll never make a mistake. It doesn't work and God shows it in His plan. The very fact that Christ is a sacrifice for sin proves that He pre-existed, in fact, that He would never sin. It wasn't a risk.

That doesn't mean it wasn't hard. It's hard in this flesh to suffer, but when you suffer and do the right thing, no matter what, that's what Christ did.

1 Peter 1:17 *And if you call on the Father, who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves throughout the time of your stay here in fear;*

18) *knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, like silver or gold, from your aimless conduct received by tradition from your fathers,*

19) *but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot.*

20) *He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest [made known, became obvious] in these last times for you*

21) *who through Him believe in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God. (NKJV)*

I want to continue on a little bit in Philippians. In chapter 2 is a reference, again, that is another scripture where it is hard to deny what it actually states.

Philippians 2:5 *Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,*

6) *who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God,*

7) *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant,*

He took the form of a bondservant, which means He existed before He became a bondservant—that's the sense of the passage.

7 repeated) *but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men.*

8) *And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.*

9) *Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name,*

10) *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, and of those on earth, and of those under the earth,*

11) *and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (NKJV)*

But here is my notice: The Pacific Church of God, collectively, as we vet each other and teach together, does not believe that Jesus Christ is a created being. We don't believe that He was created at some point in time. We don't believe that He came into existence. We don't believe that he proceeded in some way from the Father's mind. We don't teach that, and we don't personally believe it's even biblical. So what can I say? For anyone out there, stop it! There you go. ((laughs)) That wasn't in my notes. It's in my heart. If it comes out of your heart, your mouth speaks, right?

So there have been some conversations that have taken place, and these have been actual conversations that I've documented to explain Philippians, that Jesus Christ was the same as God in existence, that He was uncreated, but He was not the same in authority—He was not the Most High. I think that's the sense of Philippians 2. Now, the

conversations—these have been real conversations that have taken place. Here is one: Was God the Father an Elohim? Yes. Was Jesus Christ an Elohim? Yes. How many Elohim were there then? Two. How many Gods are there? One. (That reply was from a real conversation.) Excuse me? This is the issue I addressed in the sermon I gave at the Feast of Tabernacles a year and a half ago.

Here's another conversation—a real one, a conversation I documented for posterity. Is the Father God? Yes. Is Jesus Christ God. Yes. Are they the same God? No. So how many Gods are there? One. Excuse me, God the Father is God, Jesus Christ is God. Are they the same God. No, they're not same God. So how many Gods are there. Just one. I'm sorry, that doesn't compute, but that's the process of the people I'm having these conversations with. The mind does that, the mind will do that, so we need to be careful. 1 Peter 1, verse 3.

1 Peter 1:3 *Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead ...*

Go down now to verse 10.

10) *Of this salvation the prophets have inquired and searched carefully, who prophesied of the grace that would come to you,*
11) *searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ who was in them [in the prophets] was indicating when He testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. (NKJV)*

The point is this: The Spirit of Christ was in the prophets. Again, let's not just take that and kind of explain it away, let's take a look at how that could have existed, since He was there. There are places in the Bible where the prophet is recording the record of prophecy, but it's in Christ's own words, and in some cases, Christ Himself repeated the exact words in the New Testament. So if it says, the Spirit of Christ was in them, and they testified beforehand of the sufferings of Christ, just think of it this way: Psalm 22—*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?* Who is inspiring David here to write this? It would appear to be Jesus Christ, in the Old Testament, in the same way Christ said it in the New Testament. Now you wouldn't learn that from the psalm, you would learn that from the other end, in the New Testament. Verse 14 of Psalm 22,

Psalm 22:14 *I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me.*

15) *My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.*

16) *For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;*

17) *I can count all My bones. They look and stare at Me.*

18) *They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.*

(NKJV)

There it says the Spirit of Christ was in the prophets and they testified beforehand of His sufferings. I believe that's what this is. I believe that's what it means. It means He was there; there are places where God had Christ directly work to inspire—it's the exception to the rule, but it's not against the rule—because the Bible says that's what took place.

Look at Isaiah 61; this is in a different form, but it's the same thing. I don't know what the limits of this are; I've not tried to figure that out, but with some of these it would appear that it's Christ speaking, in the Old Testament, and that would agree perfectly with 1 Peter 1. That's what it says. Isaiah 61, verse 1; Christ got up and actually spoke these words:

Isaiah 61:1 *"The Spirit of the LORD God [Yehovah] is upon Me, because [Yehovah] the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;
2) To proclaim the acceptable year of [Yehovah] the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; (NKJV)*

(The very last line He didn't actually quote, when He was speaking in the synagogue.) That confirms what 1 Peter 1 says. As I said, the proof of the pre-existence of Jesus Christ is in the New Testament, the record of it is in the Old Testament, and the explanation of it is in the New Testament. Now an issue comes up in 1 Corinthians 10:4, *that Rock was Christ*. That's important. That's a big reference, and it's a reference that quite frankly has been dramatically abused. You take a word in the New Testament that begins with an "R" in English, and you take a word in the Old Testament that begins with an "R" in English, and therefore these must refer to the same person, right? No. That's not theology, that's a level of argument that quite frankly cannot be sustained.

1 Corinthians 10:1 *Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea,
2) all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea,
3) all ate the same spiritual food,
4) and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.
5) But with most of them God [God the Father] was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. (NKJV)*

An article recently was published—four pages long—explaining that this first Rock was Christ, which is correct, but then it mentions Deuteronomy 32, and it includes four verses from Deuteronomy 32, and then it makes a list of twenty-four more verses from the rest of the Old Testament, showing that this is where Christ was back there, and unfortunately, not a single one of those scriptures is a reference to Jesus Christ. Not one. I'm going to show you some of them, because, again, our understanding of scripture is going to have to rise to a little bit above, well, is it the same word?—and, if it is, therefore that's the definition. Or, are we going to look at the context? If we do, then we'll see what it is that is being portrayed.

Deuteronomy 32 is the Song of Moses, and it's the story of Yehovah, the Most High, taking Israel as His sons and daughters. That's Deuteronomy 32. Jesus Christ is not the Most High—that should be easy to argue, you would think—and Jesus Christ is not portrayed as having sons and daughters. He has brethren. God the Father has sons and daughters. So in Deuteronomy 32, I want to go back to a portion of that, found in verse 13, in the middle of this passage.

Deuteronomy 32:13 *“He made him ride in the heights of the earth ...*

God the Father made Israel—Jacob—to ride in the heights of the earth.

13 continued) *that he might eat the produce of the fields; He made him draw honey from the rock, and oil from the flinty rock;*

14) *Curds from the cattle, and milk of the flock, with fat of lambs; and rams of the breed of Bashan, and goats, with the choicest wheat; and you drank wine, the blood of the grapes.*

15) *“But Jeshurun [a poetic name for Israel] grew fat and kicked; you grew fat, you grew thick, you are obese! Then he forsook God who made him, and scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.*

16) *They provoked Him to jealousy with foreign gods; with abominations they provoked Him to anger.*

17) *They sacrificed to demons, not to God, to gods they did not know, to new gods, new arrivals that your fathers did not fear.*

18) *Of the Rock who begot you ...*

Jesus Christ did not beget Israel,

18 continued) *you are unmindful, and have forgotten the God who fathered you.*

Well, it just told us who that is. It is the God who fathered them.

19) *“And when the LORD saw it, He spurned them, because of the provocation of His sons and His daughters.*

20) *And He said: ‘I will hide My face from them, I will see what their end will be, for they are a perverse generation, children in whom is no faith. (NKJV)*

Now those are actually references to God, the God of the Old Testament, who is God the Father, and He is the one who took Israel to be His children—not in a spiritual sense, of salvation, but in a physical sense, of His people. Now, you then begin to go through some of the other references, and I want to point a few of those out. I think it's very unfortunate that arguments are being made of things, that, quite frankly, don't agree with what the record itself would show. I want to give this to you. So this is where you go down through some of the references here.

2 Samuel 23:1 *Now these are the last words of David. Thus says David the son of Jesse; thus says the man raised up on high, the anointed of the God of Jacob,*

Jacob's name was changed to Israel; the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, in the Bible, is God the Father—always, every single time; no one else is referred to in that way, okay? One can try to erase that but it's not going to go away.

2) *"The Spirit of the LORD [Yehovah] spoke by me, and His word was on my tongue.*

3) *The God of Israel [God the Father] said, The Rock of Israel spoke to me:*

It is the God of Jacob, the God of Israel, the Rock of Israel—there's no difference. We know who that is. There's no way out of that.

3 continued) *'He who rules over men must be just, ruling in the fear of God.*

4) *And he shall be like the light of the morning when the sun rises, a morning without clouds, like the tender grass springing out of the earth, by clear shining after rain.'* (NKJV)

Let's look at the psalms. I picked the ones that had more specific markers in them, to be able to illustrate this. Again, four scriptures in Deuteronomy 32, twenty-four scriptures from the rest of the Bible, and not a single one of them is a reference to Jesus Christ. You know what? They could have saved some ink and paper, honestly, in terms of expense. Psalm 42, verse 9.

Psalm 42:9 *I will say to God my Rock, "Why have You forgotten me? Why do I go mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?"*

Who is *God my Rock*? Who is this talking about? Let's go back to verse 1.

Psalm 42:1 *As the deer pants for the water brooks, so pants my soul for You, O God.*

2) *My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.*

It's speaking about the living God. Who is the living God? Well, Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God. Okay, so that doesn't work very well to support their argument. Let's go to Psalm 78.

Psalm 78:35 *Then they remembered that God was their rock, and the Most High God their Redeemer.*

You shouldn't even have to leave the verse. The rock that is God is *the Most High God their Redeemer*. Christ is the Redemption, actually; God the Father is the Redeemer. You can go forward, in the same psalm, to verse 56, and it repeats itself:

Psalm 78:56 *Yet they tested and provoked the Most High God, and did not keep His testimonies,*

You know it's the law of God, not the law of Jesus Christ. Let's go to Psalm 89.

Psalm 89:26 *He shall cry to Me, 'You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.'*

27) *Also I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.*

If you read the whole psalm, it's talking here about David, that he's going to be the firstborn of the rock of his salvation: *You are my Father*—how can you attribute “My Father” to Jesus Christ? How can you argue that? It's not what the Bible says. Again, some of this is just so obvious and clear that it's almost distressing to me, and yet I admit I did not know any better myself. But when I did know better, I changed. I moved.

Now in 1 Corinthians 10:4, the word “Rock”—that Rock was Christ—is the Greek word *petra*, and it is a large mass of rock, not a stone, not a small rock, it's a cliff, or a large ledge. Think of Petra in Jordan—it's a mass of rock, Petra. It is figurative; that means it's a portrayal of Christ that is figurative, quite frankly, in the same way *logos* is used for Christ—it is figurative. I said to myself, I've studied and looked—I'm going to find where Christ is the Word in the Old Testament.

I looked, and I looked, and I looked, and I never, ever found Christ being the Word in the Old Testament. I'd look at *word of the LORD*, and I'd say, okay, that could be it, then I'd look at the reference and the way it was stated, and think, well, that's not it. The fact that Christ, sometimes, in the New Testament, is referred to as *the Word*, is figurative; He is not referred to as *the Word* in the Old Testament. Rock is figurative, just like *logos* is figurative. You go back to the Old Testament and Christ is not the Rock—*petra*, in that sense. Jesus Christ in the Old Testament is not referred to as the Rock, my Rock, or their Rock, in the way that God the Father is.

Jesus Christ is prophetically portrayed as the stone which became the chief cornerstone—that's prophetic—and He became the chief cornerstone in the New Testament, right? He is portrayed as a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense, prophetically, and He wasn't a rock of offense in the Old Testament, He was a rock of offense in the New Testament. Those are prophetic terms, and they're used in a specific way; the usage is not the same when you go back to the Old Testament, and find the word “Rock”—it's not Jesus Christ. That's just not how that's written.

Now fortunately (or unfortunately), I have sermons on the web going back to 1997. I've never counted them up, but people have, and have sent me copies of them on thumb drives and as audio files, and Allen has maintained them over the years in a file so that they're out there; there are six hundred or more—all different sermons—but you know what? If you want to know what I used to believe, it's out there, from 2005, from 2010, and 2015; and some of the things I put in those sermons are not what I believe today. I'm not going back and removing all my sermons. I've removed a few; I've pulled sermons I could maybe count on the fingers of one hand, thinking, that one just really shouldn't stay. The rest of them I just simply consider to be historical.

I used to believe there were two YHVHs; I now use a different pronunciation, but I don't think that's a critical breakthrough, it's simply where I went. You can find a sermon of mine, not in the distant past, where I still preached the remnant of what I used to believe. I used to believe there were various titles that were shared by both God and Christ; God had some titles by Himself, Christ had some titles by Himself—God is the Ancient of Days, Christ is the Lamb of God; They don't share those—but then there was a variety of titles They both used. I'm getting to the point now where I almost don't even believe that, as I study and go forward. I'm down to the point where I say, yes, They share the reference to God (They both are God), They are both Savior—that's there—but there are textual issues and there are errors in some of the documentation of the way the interpretation of scripture has been made. And the more I study, the less I believe those titles are shared. I used to believe "Rock" was shared—it's not. It's used in a way in that shows Christ as being figuratively and prophetically portrayed.

So, 1 Corinthians 10:4—that Rock was Christ. Considering that the reference to Christ as the Rock is figurative, and recognizing that in 1 Corinthians 10 the point is being made that Christ did accompany Israel, then how was Christ referred to back in Exodus (in the original account) that we can authenticate without too much interpretation? Because as I've said before, with regard to Angel of the LORD—yes, I believe that's Christ, at times, and I don't believe it's Christ, at times. I've gotten e-mails that have said, Mark, you know that's just an interpretation; but listen, just because the translator capitalizes a word doesn't mean that's the answer. We've actually lived at that level of theology, at times. Angel of Yehovah, at times, I believe—and I've said it that way—is Jesus Christ, based on the context of the reference. I believe the Commander of the army of the LORD, in Joshua 5, is Jesus Christ, because, as He says to Joshua, the ground on which you stand is holy ground.

So there are very unique and specific references, where we recognize, that's not an angel, that's a messenger. But you see, that's the problem: angels *are* messengers—that's what the word means. We think of them as created spirit beings who serve God and enact His will toward mankind; the Greek looks at it slightly differently, and the honest answer is, the word just means messenger. Malachi was a messenger, and the prophets were messengers, and Jesus Christ was a messenger, and the angels are messengers. So the problem is, we've allowed for the terminology to sometimes mask what the meaning of the passage is. So I said, what term can I find in scripture that reduces the interpretation down to the minimum?

Let's go to Exodus 23, where I'll give you a term that is used for Jesus Christ that has a very minimal amount of interpretation attached to it.

Exodus 23:20 *"Behold, I send an Angel [a Malak—a Messenger] before you to keep you in the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. 21) Beware of Him and obey His voice; do not provoke Him, for He will not pardon your transgressions; for My name is in Him. (NKJV)*

It's not even saying that He would forgive sins or not forgive sins, because Israel's sins weren't being forgiven anyway, right? They were not being forgiven anyway; there was a restoration based on blessings and curses, and they would repent, or turn, or offer a sacrifice, and God would bring them back into relationship and bless them again. So, let's keep reading; this is the one I believe is Jesus Christ, but that's not the exact reference yet.

22) *But if you indeed obey His voice and do all that I speak, then I will be an enemy to your enemies and an adversary to your adversaries.*

23) *For My Angel ...*

My Angel is now a very specific reference. "My" is a pronoun that refers to God the Father, so this is His Angel. Well, you know what? There are millions of angels, and there are all different levels and types of angels, with differing responsibilities—some are at His throne, some of them go to and fro on the earth—but *My Angel* is a very specific reference.

23 repeated) *For My Angel will go before you and bring you in to the Amorites and the Hittites and the Perizzites and the Canaanites and the Hivites and the Jebusites; and I will cut them off. (NKJV)*

So He says, *My Angel*. This two-word phrase is the one Hebrew word *Malaki*—it's the two words combined, as they do in Hebrew—"I will send Malaki", and it means, "I will send My Messenger"—a very specific reference. I don't believe (and I think I can show you) that it ever refers to anything other than Jesus Christ. The Rock spoken of in 1 Corinthians 10:4 was Christ, in the book of Exodus, in a very specific, provable way: *My Messenger—Malaki*. So it's not just one reference. Let's see more in Exodus 32.

Exodus 32:30 *Now it came to pass [this is after the Golden Calf incident] on the next day that Moses said to the people, "You have committed a great sin. So now I will go up to [Yehovah] the LORD; perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."*

31) *Then Moses returned to [Yehovah] the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold!*

32) *Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book which You have written."*

33) *And [Yehovah] the LORD said to Moses, "Whoever has sinned against Me, I will blot him out of My book. (NKJV)*

The Tree of Life is the offer of salvation, the Book of Life is the record of salvation, and that is a different set of sermons as well.

34) *Now therefore, go, lead the people to the place of which I have spoken to you. Behold, My Angel shall go before you. Nevertheless, in the day when I visit for punishment, I will visit punishment upon them for their sin."*

35) *So [Yehovah] the LORD plagued the people because of what they did with the calf which Aaron made.*

That Rock which followed them is that Rock which accompanied them, actually, and this is *My Angel* which *shall go before you*, in verse 34 above. It's the same reference, but it's *Malaki*, as it would be in the Hebrew text. Now, let's go to the book of Malachi. Malachi 3:1—there are many, many legs to this verse, and I'll only go out to one of them, because you could spend time on each. But I'll just read you Malachi 3, verse 1.

Malachi 3:1 *“Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me.*

Who is the *Me*? The LORD of hosts, Yehovah of hosts, is what it says at the end of the verse:

1 continued) *And the Lord* [notice “Lord” is not in all capital letters], *whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming,”* says [Yehovah] *the LORD of hosts.* (NKJV)

So in Malachi 3:1, you have *My messenger (malaki)*, you have *the Messenger of the covenant*, and you have *Yehovah of hosts*—you have three individuals who are referenced in this one verse. My messenger, in the New Testament, is John the Baptist, repeatedly. So *My messenger*—the Hebrew *malaki*—in this reference, is John the Baptist, prophetically, and *Me*—Yehovah of hosts—is God the Father. Well then, who is the Messenger of the covenant? There's only one individual remaining, and I think it's easy enough to show that He is Jesus Christ. In Jeremiah 31, Yehovah talks about His covenant. It's not Jesus Christ's covenant—it was Yehovah who spoke to Israel from Mount Sinai; Israel made covenant with Yehovah, not with Jesus Christ, who was the mediator of that covenant. The covenant was God the Father's covenant. So who is the Messenger of the covenant that God made with Israel? In Jeremiah 31, where it's talking about the new covenant, who is the Messenger of that new covenant? It is Jesus Christ.

The point is, Malachi 3 is not the same as Exodus 23 or Exodus 32, because *My messenger* here is John the Baptist. That's not my point; my point is, Christ here is also referenced again as God's Messenger—the Messenger of His covenant. Now, did Jesus Christ then ever confirm that he was the *Malak* of the Father in the New Testament? Did He ever confirm that He was the Messenger of Yehovah in the New Testament? Did Christ ever point out that He was that Messenger? I believe He did.

John, chapter 12. I've tried to remove from this sermon the theoretical arguments, I've tried to get down to the minimum amount of, well, here is what we need to consider, I've tried to get away from the interpretation as much as I could. This is a key point that I believe is being made from scripture, considering the fact that John 1:1 has been addressed, and the “I AM” has been addressed—those are separate bodies of material, so I didn't want to go there again—but John 12, verse 44, I think is fascinating. Was Jesus Christ God's Messenger, and did He express that He was? Let's find out. Verse 44.

John 12:44 *Then Jesus cried out and said, "He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me.*

45) And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me.

46) I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness.

Going on down to verse 49,

49) For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak.

50) And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak."

Jesus Christ was not the Father's spokesman, He was the Father's Messenger, and He said so: My Father told Me what to say, and I have said it. Whatever I speak, it's just as He told Me, and that is what I say.

He was His Father's Messenger, and He spoke God's words. He was *Malaki*; He was *My Angel—My Messenger*—in the Old Testament, and He was His Father's Messenger, speaking His Father's words, in the New Testament.

Now the only way that God the Father, going back, could offer Jesus Christ as a sacrifice for our sins, was because Jesus Christ absolutely was going to fulfill that role—He would be the Lamb of God. There was no risk. But with a created being, and with free will, there is always risk. Jesus Christ was not created.