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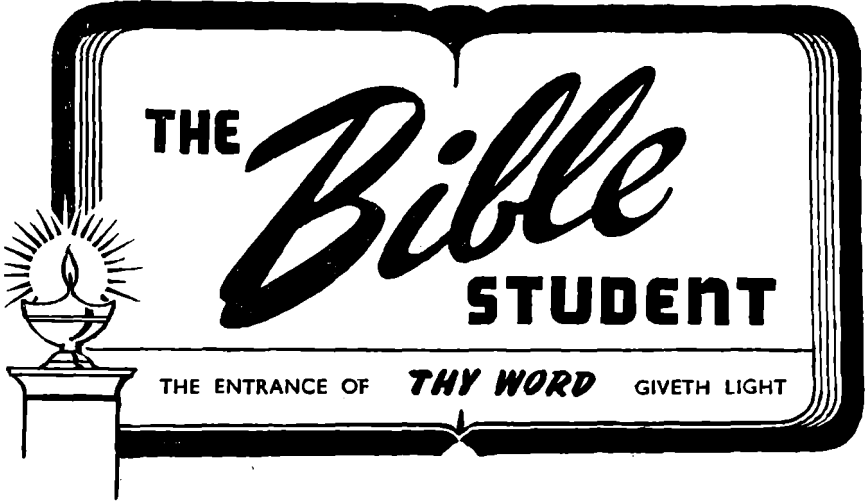
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JESUS IS THE CHRIST

By H. DENNETT (London)

The essential point of some vital statements in the Scriptures may easily be missed if the emphasis of the sentence in which they are found is not rightly understood. In Peter's confession (Matt. 16:16) 'Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God', the natural rhythm of the English sentence tends to place the emphasis upon the final words of each clause 'Christ' and 'God'. In the original language, not only is the emphasis usually at the beginning of a sentence, but here by a special grammatical device still further stress is placed upon the initial word, thus giving the sense '*Thou* (and no other) art the Christ'. Behind this simple change of stress lies not only the true implication of Peter's confession, but a clearer view of many other passages in the New Testament concerning the Lord Jesus. Those who use a 'Newberry' Bible will find that words which are to be read emphatically are printed in Old English type, and this is done with the 'Thou' in Matt. 16:16. It is unfortunate indeed that in neither the Authorized nor the Revised versions is any such indication given.

To appreciate what is involved in Peter's confession it is necessary to study the precise meaning of that wonderful word that is so familiar to us—'Christ'.

'The kings of the earth set themselves . . . against Jehovah, and against His Anointed' (Ps. 2:2).

'I know that Messiah cometh, which is called Christ' (John 4:25).

The original word in Ps. 2:2 is actually 'Messiah', meaning in Hebrew simply 'The Anointed One', hence our A.V. translation. 'Christos', from whence comes our word 'Christ', is a Greek word with precisely the same meaning. There is an important difference in the use of this word 'Christ' in the Gospels and in the Epistles that must be explained. In the Gospels it is nearly always 'the Christ' (as in Matt. 16:16) and is applied to the Lord Jesus as a *title* that is claimed for Him when on earth, rather than as a personal name. In the Epistles, however, the word 'Christ' is generally found without the definite article, for here it has become one of the personal *names* of the Lord. It is interesting to see that exactly the opposite has happened to that greatest of earthly names 'Caesar', once simply the family surname of Julius, but

later transformed into a hereditary title both in Rome and in modern times. Kaiser and Czar are both variants of it.

The next point to consider in our thesis is that *every* Jew, both in New Testament times and in the centuries immediately preceding, was expecting a national deliverer known as the Messiah. The promise has its roots as far back as Gen. 3:15 in the Seed of the Woman, but it took shape for the nation in Deut. 18:15, 18—the Prophet like unto Moses. Though only scattered hints are found in the historical Books, the revelation of the promise gathers momentum as the greater prophets thundered their messages of mingled denunciation and promise. Their many predictions took two distinct lines:

- (a) That the Coming One should suffer as a sacrifice, as in Isa. 53. This doctrine did not suit national pride, and so it was in consequence largely ignored.
- (b) That He would be a mighty Conqueror. This idea buoyed up national hopes of physical deliverance from Gentile powers around, and became the accepted notion of the promised Messiah.

Even the darkness of the Babylonian captivity produced such far-sighted prophets as Daniel and Ezekiel, who looked beyond the existing desolations to the glory of the bright millennial day. The temporary and temporal successes of the Maccabees in their revolt against the Syrian kings may have made some think that the Deliverer was at hand, but the subsequent political chaos and civil strife quickly disillusioned them. It was during the years between the Old and New Testaments that many Books of the Apocrypha were written. These books were not divinely inspired, though some were historically accurate. Others were apocalyptic in character, and sought to stimulate the flagging spirits of the Jewish people by rosy pictures of coming deliverance and prosperity.

Then came the thorough-going Roman occupation of Palestine, and the yoke of the Gentiles was set yet more firmly upon the Jews. So when the due time was fulfilled for the Saviour to be born in Bethlehem, there was an intense state of expectancy throughout Jewry. Many indeed with only a materialistic outlook hoped that the long-promised Messiah would prove a great leader who should drive out the hated Romans. So various false christs arose throughout this period, of which Theudas and Judas were examples

(Acts 5:36-37). Such enlightened folk, on the other hand, as Simeon and Anna (Luke 2) had a truer and more spiritual understanding of the promise. When Herod the King (misnamed the Great), who was not a Jew at all, was disturbed by the enquiries of the Magi 'Where is He that is born King of the Jews', he asked the scribes where *the* Christ (RV) should be born. To such men the question must have appeared almost childish, and their instant and full answer shows how large the question of the Coming One loomed in their minds (Matt. 2:5-6). And when John Baptist made such a stir by his preaching, men queried in their minds if *he* were the Christ (Luke 3:15), but John vigorously repudiated the suggestion: 'I am not the Christ' (John 1:20, see also v. 25).

The key to the whole of this vital subject relating to the Person of the Lord is this: every Jew expected the coming of their Messiah, but what scandalized and stumbled the vast majority was the amazing suggestion that the Son of the Galilean carpenter should claim to be he. The immediate reaction even of a godly and intelligent Jew is seen in John 1:43—

Philip: 'We have found him of whom Moses in the Law, and the prophets did write, Jesus of Nazareth'.

Nathanael: 'Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?'

In the light of this it is noteworthy that it was in distant Galilee that the Lord experienced a temporary acceptance by the populace, who would even try to make Him King by force. Never were such sentiments expressed in the more orthodox and conservative Judaea where everything Galilean was regarded as provincial, and tainted by Gentile associations. The thought of anyone from such a quarter claiming to be the expected Christ was intolerable. From this it seems that not only the common people, but many of the rulers, though startled by the Lord's wonderful works, were ignorant of the fact that He was indeed born at Bethlehem in accordance with prophecy. Some verses in John 7 show how men reasoned on the matter: 'Others said, this is the Christ. But some said, What, doth the Christ come out of Galilee? Hath not the Scripture said that the Christ cometh . . . from Bethlehem, the village where David was?' (v. 42). See also the rejoinder to Nicodemus in v. 52: 'Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and see that out of Galilee ariseth no prophet'. From John 10:33 it is evident that the leaders of Israel were looking for a kind of

super-David in their Messiah, not a divine Person such as the Lord claimed to be: 'For a good work we stone thee not, but for blasphemy, because that thou, being man, makest thyself God.' John 12:34 makes it clear that the multitudes has no conception of a sin-bearing Messiah as predicted in Isaiah 53. 'We have heard out of the Law that the Christ abideth for ever: and how sayest thou, The Son of Man must be lifted up?'

Yet amid all this opposition and unbelief in the pathway of the Lord there were bright gleams of confession and recognition—that of Martha, for instance in John 11:27. Note the double emphasis: 'I have believed that *Thou* art the Christ.' Nor must reference be omitted to that passage in which the Lord so adroitly turns tables upon His questioners in Matt. 22:42, RV. 'What think ye of the Christ? Whose son is he?' asked the Lord. The instant and obvious answer was 'David's'. Then the Lord confronted them with the wonderful statement of Psalm 110 and its logical implications: 'If then David calleth him Lord, how is he his son?' No wonder that henceforth none dared ask Him any more questions!

As the earthly course of the Lord drew to its close, the same questions as to His being the Christ continued to be in the forefront of men's minds. The High Priest at the trial of the Lord, for instance, cries: 'I adjure thee by the Living God, that thou tell us whether *thou* be the Christ'. Even one of the crucified malefactors could find strength for biting sarcasm in 'Art *thou* the Christ? Save thyself and us' (Luke 23:39).

In resurrection, the Lord is graciously pleased to reconcile from Scripture the conflict in the minds of the disciples between the popular idea of a mighty deliverer and the fact of His death upon the Cross: 'Behoved it not the Christ to suffer these things, and to enter into His glory?' (Luke 24:26, see also vv. 44-46). How important was this question of Jesus being the Christ for the early Church is evident from the declared purpose of the fourth Gospel. John, who wrote long after the other Evangelists, partly with the object of correcting erroneous ideas that had already arisen, says in ch. 20:31, 'These things are written that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ: and that believing ye may have life in His name.'

As might be expected when the Gospel horizon broadened out in the Book of Acts, the vital testimony concerning the Lord Jesus

as the Christ must needs to be made to the Jews of the Dispersion. Right from his conversion in Damascus Paul 'confounded the Jews, proving that this One is the Christ'. Later in the synagogue in Thessalonica he 'reasoned from the Scriptures . . . that this Jesus, whom I proclaim unto you, is the Christ' (Acts 17:3, see also ch. 18:5). Even Apollos, who until recently knew nothing more than the baptism of John is found in Ephesus 'confuting the Jews . . . showing from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Christ' (ch. 18:28). The importance to Israel of this great truth that 'Jesus is the Christ' is evident from the above. But what has it to say to us who are of the Gentiles, but who by grace have believed on this same Saviour? Perhaps we, who so readily think of the Lord as Christ, need to be reminded that He was also 'Jesus', the despised and rejected Man of Sorrows. Organized Christianity has become so respectable, so conventional that it is good for us to consider Him, the Jesus of Hebrews 12:2, who endured such contradiction of sinners against Himself.

There is, indeed much profit to be had from a study of the eight passages in the Epistle to the Hebrews in which that simple human name of Jesus occurs, with special attention to the climax in ch. 13:12:

'Wherefore, Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered outside the gate. Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach.'

SEVEN OLD TESTAMENT FEASTS

A TYPOLOGICAL STUDY OF LEVITICUS 23

By THE EDITOR

III. The Subject Considered Synthetically

By synthetic we mean the consideration of the Feasts as *a whole*, and in their *relationship* to each other. For this purpose the reader will find it necessary to keep referring to the Synopsis given on page 81, in the last issue (April), and to note the typical meaning of each Feast as given in the second column. This, of course, rather anticipates what we shall go into more fully when we come to consider each Feast individually, but for the present it is necessary and must suffice.