

PRAYING TO JESUS, (Part One)

Jesus taught that **we** are to abide by **His** “sayings” in the gospel age (Matt. 7:24-28). His sayings include the manner of prayer, which is to be directed to the “Father” in heaven (Matt. 6:9). This is confirmed by apostolic declaration, that in doing all things by His authority (Col. 3:17), we are to give thanks “*unto God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (Eph. 5:20). It was Jesus who compels us to pray in His “name” (John 14:13, 14). In fact, Jesus said in the day He goes back to the Father, we are not to ask Him **anything**, but to “*ask the Father in my name*” (John 16:23). We have long observed that denominations most often address their prayers to “Jesus”, and close them with something like, “we pray in thy name”, or, “in the name of Jesus”. Imagine, praying **to** Jesus in the **name** of Jesus. The so-called “sinners' prayer” in the Baptist Church usually includes the address and closing in this manner. Now, we are hearing more and more about it being scriptural and right for **us** to pray to Jesus, as well as to the Father. This has been a hot topic in Freed-Hardeman lectureships in recent years.

We have observed that the basic “arguments” from the scripture, most always involve taking events that dealt with the miraculous, or “vision” episodes of the New Testament to “justify” such.

The *first* and foremost “proof-text” is always Acts 7, where, following Stephen's sermon and stoning, heaven is opened and Stephen sees Jesus standing at God's right hand, and Stephen addresses Jesus. Stephen makes 2 statements to the Lord; (1) Receive my spirit, and (2) Lay not this sin to their charge (Acts 7:59, 60). We might observe a few things before applying this to our prayers today. We first should note that Stephen was “full of the Holy Ghost” (v. 55). We next note that Stephen “recognized” Jesus, suggesting he possibly *knew* Jesus from the events of Acts 1. We also note that Jesus was “standing”, and not seated at God's right hand in His role of authority. We also note that there is no reference to “Jesus' name” whatsoever, as we are careful to do in our prayers today. If one were to preach an inspired sermon, being full of the Holy Ghost, and sees heaven opened, and Jesus standing at God's right hand **today**, he might well be justified in saying something **to** Jesus, but it would not be classified as a “prayer”.

The *second* “proof-text” offered by some today is that of the eleven apostles asking the Lord, as they “prayed”, to let it be known who was chosen by Him to take the place of Judas. True, it was a prayer, but was it to **Jesus**? In Acts 4:26-30, the “Lord” there clearly refers to the Father, and not Jesus, for it is to the Lord and “his Christ”, who was the Father of the “holy child Jesus”. So, the “Lord” could have been the Father in Acts 1. At any rate, we are in the midst of a miraculous situation, and it was **before** the gospel age, in which (“in that day”) prayer was not to be to Jesus, but to the Father (John 16:23). Also, this “prayer” was before the gospel age even began, so **how** is it an example for us in the gospel age?

The *third* “proof-text” to be examined is that of 2 Cor. 12:1-9, where it said that Paul besought the “Lord” three times that his thorn might be removed. Just because the word “Christ” is mentioned twice in the text is not proof that the petition was to **Jesus**. Paul speaks of the Lord's “grace”, which is usually associated with God (Tit. 2:11), but sometimes is associated with both God and Jesus in the same verse (2 Cor. 1:2). But, whether it refers to God or Jesus is not that significant. Bear in mind that Paul, when on the road to Damascus, was already acquainted with Jesus, as they had a “conversation” together (Acts 9:1-6). At this time, Paul speaks of “visions and revelations”, and his having been caught into heaven, and “heard” unspeakable words which he was not permitted to utter (2 Cor. 12:1-4). We are not told just when the thorn was given to Paul, but it Paul considered it a messenger from Satan. Just how he “besought” the Lord is not stated, but he does get a verbal response from the Lord, explaining that His “grace”

was sufficient for him. *Would this time of "visions and revelations" be the time Paul received the revelation of the gospel?* (Gal. 1:12; Eph. 3:3) If so, the Lord could well be Jesus at this point. However, bear in mind that this was a miraculous situation, as they could well be conversant together, as they had been in Acts 9. At any rate, it was a **direct** interchange between the Lord, and a special, inspired servant, and it was **not** a normal "prayer situation". If anytime one "speaks" to Jesus, it is a "prayer", we might add here that Saul "spoke" to Jesus on that road to Damascus—prior to his even being baptized. Does this mean alien sinners have access to the Lord in prayer? For the 3rd time now, we are dealing with events in a miraculous context. Can we honestly say that those who argue that the Lord speaks to them directly from heaven, really have an example in the experience of Paul?? The honest student of scripture should recognize the problem one would face if such is true.

The *fourth* "proof-text" offered by proponents of "praying to Jesus" is that of Rev. 22:20, where Jesus had just stated to John, "*Surely I come quickly*", and John responded, "*Even so, come Lord Jesus*". Again, we are in a context of miraculous inspiration, and the Revelation message is given to John to write. He was "in the Spirit", just as Stephen was "full of the Holy Spirit" in Acts 7. Just because John spoke to the Lord does not make it an "example prayer" for Christians today, unless we are in a literal conversation with the Lord, while receiving a divine revelation. It would not have been appropriate for John to have begun or ended this statement with a reference to it being a "prayer, in the name of Jesus", but it was a special conversation. Also, just because John did something does not mean it is an approved example for us to attempt or follow. What about John's two attempts to worship angels who brought a message to him?

If we look to miraculous situations for justifying something special for our time, we might well conclude that "baptism in the Holy Spirit" could apply today, for such did occur in Acts 2, and Acts 10. We might also claim that angels can speak to us today, as they spoke to Cornelius and Peter in Acts 10 and 11. Since Saul talked with the Lord, maybe the Lord speaks to some day!! We really "open a can of worms" when we take the truth of God out of context, and make unjustifiable applications from it. So, as the old saying goes, "what proves too much proves nothing".

More to follow.

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