**“The Divinity of Christ” Bible Echo and Signs of the Times 4, 19.**

E. J. Waggoner

**HIS PRE-EXISTENCE, AND EQUALITY WITH THE FATHER**

The fact that Jesus is spoken of as the only begotten Son of God should be sufficient to establish a belief in his divinity. As Son of God, he must partake of the nature of God. “As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself.” John 5:26. Life and immortality are imparted to the faithful followers of God, but Christ alone shares with the Father the power to impart life. He has “life in himself,” that is, he is able to perpetuate his own existence. This is shown by his own words when, showing the voluntary nature of his sacrifice for man, he said: “I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again.” John 10:17, 18. {BEST October 1, 1889, p. 297.1}

That Christ is divine is shown by the fact that he receives worship. Angels have always refused to receive worship and adoration. But we read of the Father, that “when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.” Hebrews 1:6. If he is to receive worship from angels, it follows as a matter of course that he should receive worship from men; and we find that even while here on earth, in the likeness of man, he received worship as God. The prophet John thus records the adoration which Christ will finally receive equally with the Father: “And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever.” Revelation 5:13. {BEST October 1, 1889, p. 297.2}

If Christ were not God, this would be idolatry. The great indictment against the heathen is that they “changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator.” Romans 1:25. It matters not what the position of a creature may be, whether a beast, a man, or an angel, worship of it is strictly forbidden. Only God may be worshiped, and since Christ may be worshiped, Christ is God. So say the Scriptures of truth. {BEST October 1, 1889, p. 297.3}

It is hardly necessary, with all this army of testimony, to speak of the pre-existence of Christ. One of the strangest things in the world is that men professing to believe and reverence the Bible, will claim that Christ had no existence prior to his birth of the Virgin Mary. Three texts only will be quoted here to disprove this theory, but texts which will be quoted later, on another point, will just as fully prove the pre-existence of Christ. The first text is in the prayer of Jesus, on the night of his betrayal. He said: “And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.” John 17:5. We don’t know what could be plainer, unless it is the statement that he made the world. John says that “all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made.” John 1:3. {BEST October 1, 1889, p. 297.4}

But stronger still are the words of the prophet, who foretold the place of the birth of the Messiah, in these words: “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, *from the days* *of eternity*.” Micah 5:2, margin. He who would dispute the pre-existence of Christ, in the face of these texts, would deny that the sun shines at midday, if it suited his notion to do so. {BEST October 1, 1889, p. 298.1}

In arguing the perfect equality of the Father and the Son, and the fact that Christ is in very nature God, we do not design to be understood as teaching that the Father was not before the Son. It should not be necessary to guard this point, lest some should think that the Son existed as soon as the Father, yet some go to that extreme, which adds nothing to the dignity of Christ, but rather detracts from the honor due him, since many throw the whole thing away rather than accept a theory so obviously out of harmony with the language of Scripture, that Jesus is the *only begotten Son* of God. He was begotten, not created. He is of the substance of the Father, so that in his very nature he is God; and since that is so “it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell.” Colossians 1:19. Or, as the apostle states in Colossians 2:9, “For in him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.” It would be difficult to frame language more expressive of the divine nature. {BEST October 1, 1889, p. 298.2}

Some have difficulty in reconciling Christ’s statement in John 14:28, “My Father is greater than I,” with the idea that he is God, and is entitled to worship. Some, indeed, dwell upon that text alone as sufficient to overthrow the idea of Christ’s divinity; but if that were allowed, it would only prove a contradiction in the Bible, and even in Christ’s own speech, for it is most positively declared, as we have seen, that he is divine. There are two facts which are amply sufficient to account for Christ’s statement recorded in John 14:28. One is that Christ is the Son of God. While both are of the same nature, the Father is first in point of time. He is also greater in that he had no beginning, while Christ’s personality had a beginning. Then, too, the statement is emphatically true in view of the position which Christ had assumed. He “emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men.” Philippians 2:7, Revised Version. He was “made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death.” Hebrews 2:9. In order to redeem men, he had to come where they were. He did not lay aside his divinity, but he laid aside his glory, and veiled his divinity with humanity. So his statement, “My Father is greater than I,” is perfectly consistent with the claim, made by himself as well as by all who wrote of him, that he was and is God. {BEST October 1, 1889, p. 298.3}

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**CHRIST AS LAWGIVER**

Since all must honor the Son even as they honor the Father, they must honor him not only as Creator, but as Lawgiver. Says Isaiah: “The Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, the Lord is our king, he will save us.” Isaiah 33:22. The statement of Christ, that “the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father” (John 5:22, 23), is in itself evidence that Christ is lawgiver. Only the power that makes the laws can provide for their execution. We shall now proceed to give proof that the law was given by Christ, even as it is his righteousness. {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 313.1}

Christ was the leader of the children of Israel from Egypt to Canaan. Perhaps there is no one who does not believe this in a general way; but it is susceptible of very clear proof. We quote first 1 Corinthians 10:4, which says that the fathers “did all drink the same spiritual drink; for they drank of that spiritual Rock that went with them [margin]; and that Rock was Christ.” This of itself is sufficient to settle the matter. Christ is the Rock upon which the church of God is built, and the Rock that shall grind the enemies of God to powder. Matthew 16:18; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Peter 2:4-8; Luke 20:17, 18. He is the Rock upon which those who are lifted from the horrible pit of sin have their goings established. Psalm 40:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 3:11. It was he whom Israel rejected when he “lightly esteemed the Rock of his salvation.” Deuteronomy 32:15. {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 313.2}

This is still more clearly shown by a comparison of Numbers 21:5, 6 and 1 Corinthians 10:10. The first text tells that “the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died.” Here we see that the people spoke not only against Moses, their visible leader, but also against God, their invisible leader. Now in 1 Corinthians 10:9 Paul tells plainly against whom they were murmuring. He says: “Neither let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents.” So it was Christ who, with the name of God, was leading Israel, and it was against him that they murmured. {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 313.3}

Hebrews 3:5-11 also teaches the same thing very plainly. One has only to read it with care to see that Christ is the one whose voice the Holy Ghost warns us not to reject as did the fathers who tempted him forty years in the wilderness. We quote:- {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 313.4}

“And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end. Wherefore as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.” {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 313.5}

Since Christ was the leader of ancient Israel from Egypt to Canaan, it follows that Christ was the Angel of the Lord who appeared to Moses in the burning bush, and said:- {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 313.6}

“I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob. And Moses hid his face; for he was afraid to look upon God. And the Lord said, I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt, and have heard their cry by reason of their taskmasters; for I know their sorrows; and I am come down to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land unto a good land and a large, unto a land flowing with milk and honey.” Exodus 3:6-8. {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 313.7}

If any should object to this most natural conclusion, on the ground that the one here speaking calls himself “I AM THAT I AM,” the self-existent One-Jehovah-we have only to remind him that the Father hath given to the Son to have life in himself (John 5:26), that Christ asserted the same thing of himself when he said, “Before Abraham was, I am” (John 8:5, 6); for which supposed blasphemy the Jews attempted to stone him; and that by the prophet he is most plainly called Jehovah, in the following passage:- {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.1}

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS;” literally, “Jehovah our righteousness.” Jeremiah 23:5, 6. {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.2}

But to return to the main point, which is that Jesus was the leader of Israel from Egypt, the Redeemer of his people from bondage, as shown by the texts cited. Now connect the introductory words of the Decalogue: “And God spake all these words, saying, I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.” Exodus 20:1-3. This scripture positively identifies the leader of the children of Israel from Egypt, as the giver of the law from Sinai. If it is said that in the transaction we cannot separate the Father and the Son, we reply that that is just the point we are making. The Father and the Son cannot be separated in any transaction, for they are one. But just as the Son was the one by whom all things were created, so was he the one who declared to the people the law of Jehovah. Thus he is the divine Word. The Son declares the will of the Father, which is also his own will. {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.3}

The fact that it was the voice of Christ that declared the law from Sinai, may be demonstrated in another way, as follows: “After speaking of the giving of the law, in Hebrews 12:18-21, the apostle says: “See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven; whose voice then shook the earth; but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.” Hebrews 12:25, 26. {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.4}

This tells us that the same voice which shook the earth at the giving of the law from Sinai will once again shake the earth, and the heavens also. Now note the following texts, which show what takes place in connection with the second advent:- {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.5}

1 Thessalonians 4:16: “For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God; and the dead in Christ shall rise first.” {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.6}

That it is Christ’s voice that is then heard is shown by John 5:26-29:- {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.7}

“For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man. Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.” {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.8}

So it is the voice of the Son of God that opens the graves. Now we will compare a few more scriptures. In Psalm 2:6-8 we learn that Christ is to rule the heathen with a rod of iron, and to dash them in pieces like a potter’s vessel. Isaiah says that “he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.” Isaiah 11:4. {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.9}

In Revelation 19:11-21 we have a description of the going forth of Christ with the armies of Heaven to contend with and destroy the wicked nations of earth; and in Jeremiah 25:30, 31 this battle is thus described:- {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.10}

“The Lord shall roar from on high, and utter his voice from his holy habitation; he shall mightily roar upon his habitation; he shall give a shout, as they that tread the grapes, against all the inhabitants of the earth. A noise shall come even to the ends of the earth; for the Lord hath a controversy with the nations, he will plead with all flesh; he will give them that are wicked to the sword.” {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.11}

Compare with this Revelation 19:15 and Isaiah 63:1-6, and read Joel 3:16: “The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake; but the Lord will be the hope of his people, and the strength of the children of Israel.” These texts are sufficient to show that the shaking of the heavens and the earth is done by the voice of the One who has the controversy with the nations, and who is to destroy them and deliver his people. We have already seen that the voice that is to shake the heavens and the earth is the same voice that shook the earth at the giving of the law. But it is Christ who is to dash the nations in pieces, and so it is his voice that will shake the earth and also heaven. Therefore it was the voice of Jesus that spoke the ten commandments from the top of Sinai. The law is the truth (Psalm 119:142), and Christ says, “I am the way, the truth, and the life.” John 14:6. The ten commandments are God’s righteousness (Isaiah 51:4-7), and his will (Romans 2:17, 18); but they represent the righteous will of Christ as much as they do that of the Father; for he and the Father are one. {BEST October 15, 1889, p. 314.12}