

Jesus in the OT

Wilbur N. Pickering, ThM PhD

Since the name 'Jesus' does not occur in the OT, the question must be elucidated using references in the NT. I will base my discussion on eight references. What is the importance of this study? As you may be aware, the so-called Jehovah's Witnesses and the Mormons, among others, deny that Jesus is the Jehovah of the OT. They do this because they also deny the Trinity, and for them Jesus is not eternal God.

1) John 12:41—"Isaiah said these things when¹ he saw His glory and spoke concerning Him."

Wait just a minute! Whom did Isaiah see? From verses 36 and 37 it is clear that John was speaking of Jesus; so when did Isaiah see Jesus? In verse 40 John quotes Isaiah 6:10. The quoted words were spoken by Jehovah, verse 8, the One who sat on the throne, verse 1. In verse 5 Isaiah says of Him, "My eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." So then, John declares that the One seated on the throne was Jehovah the Son,² Jesus!

Here is Isaiah 6:1-3, 5, 8-10 (NKJV): "In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up, and the train of His *robe* filled the temple. Above it stood seraphim; each one had six wings: with two he covered his face, with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one cried to another and said: 'Holy, holy, holy is the LORD [Jehovah] of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!' So I said: 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.' And I heard the voice of the Lord, saying: 'Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?' Then I said, 'Here am I! Send me.' And He said, 'Go, and tell this people: "Keep on hearing, but do not understand; keep on seeing, but do not perceive." Make the heart of this people dull, and their ears

1 Less than 2% of the Greek manuscripts, of inferior quality, have 'because' instead of 'when' (as in most modern versions). The difference in meaning is significant.

2 If the phrase 'Jehovah the Son' is new to any reader/hearer, I explain it as follows: God is one Essence subsisting in three Persons. If the Name, Jehovah, represents the aggregate, the Trinity, then there are Jehovah the Father, Jehovah the Son, and Jehovah the Holy Spirit. I think that the academic world generally rejects 'Jehovah' as a representation of the Name. However, a writer in Egypt in the first century A.D. (I forget the name) said that the Name was pronounced with four vowels, but he didn't say what they were. However, when the first half of the Name is used as a prefix in a proper name, like Jehoshaphat, the first two vowels are always 'e' and 'o'. When the second half of the Name is used as a suffix in a proper name, such as Netenyahu, the last two vowels are always 'a' and 'u'. So, written out in full, the Name would be Yehovahu. By suppressing the last vowel, and 'Anglicizing' the rest, we have 'Jehovah'. Should anyone ask why the Name, Jehovah, does not appear in the NT, it is because from the first verses of the four Gospels the Son was already in the body of Jesus. Now His name is 'the Lord Jesus Christ'.

heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and return and be healed.”

2) John 8:56—“Your father Abraham was overjoyed to see my day; yes, he saw it and rejoiced.” Jesus was conversing with the Pharisees.

What ‘day’ was that? I suppose He was referring to the time when He, Jehovah the Son, paid a visit to Abraham, accompanied by two angels (Genesis 18:1-33).¹ From the Record it is clear that Abraham knew very well that he was talking to Jehovah, and in verse 25 he calls Him "the Judge of all the earth". That brings us to John 5:22, where Jesus declared—“In fact the Father does not judge anyone but has committed all judging to the Son.”² So then, at that time Jesus was exercising His office as judge, decreeing judgment against Sodom. Don’t you know that was the high point in Abraham's life! Note that Jesus Himself declares that He was with Abraham.

3) Hebrews 4:8—“Because if Jesus had given them rest, He would not have spoken afterward of another day.” Beginning in chapter three, the author has been commenting on Psalm 95:6-11.

Without any doubt, the Greek Text reads 'Jesus', but most versions put 'Joshua'. I suppose the translators judged 'Jesus' to be an anachronism, preferring 'Joshua'. In fact, the Septuagint as we know it (based on inferior Alexandrian manuscripts from centuries after Christ) always writes 'Joshua' as Ἰησοῦς (Jesus). (As a linguist, PhD, I cannot understand how translators could transliterate 'Yehoshua', Joshua’s name in Hebrew, as 'Iesus'—something strange happened.) Perhaps as a consequence, in Acts 7:45 Luke refers to Joshua as 'Iesus'. It was not his purpose to correct the LXX at that time, for Stephen was speaking Hebrew. Normally, going from one language to another, proper names are transliterated, and once a certain transliteration reaches the status of a 'norm', there would usually be no reason to change it, since the meaning does not change.

However, looking at the context in Psalm 95:6-11, Joshua does not fit. Here it is (NKJV): “Oh come, let us worship and bow down; let us kneel before the LORD our Maker. For He is our God, and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand. Today, if you will hear His voice: ‘Do not harden your hearts, as in the rebellion, as in the day of trial in the wilderness, when your fathers tested Me; they tried me, though they saw My work. For forty years I was grieved with that generation, and said, “It is a people who go astray in their hearts and they do not know My ways.” So I swore in My wrath, “They shall not enter My rest”.’”

¹ If Melchizedek was indeed a theophany, being Jehovah the Son, he could be a candidate, but I don't see how to know for sure whether or not he was a theophany. Even so, I think the visit to Abraham wins.

² I take this to mean that the Son will be seated on the 'great white throne' (Revelation 20:11).

It is presumably Jehovah the Son who was speaking ("Jehovah our Maker", verse 6; "I swore in My wrath", verse 11), and since the reference is to those who fell in the wilderness during the forty years, Joshua is out of the question. Furthermore, I invite attention to Joshua 21:43-45 and 23:1, where the Text states that Joshua did indeed give them rest. Putting 'Joshua' in Hebrews has the effect of making Hebrews contradict Joshua (the books), a procedure to which the Holy Spirit will not take kindly. It was precisely Jesus, Jehovah the Son, who did not allow that generation to enter into 'rest'.

4) 1 Corinthians 10:1-4—"Now I do not want you to be ignorant, brothers, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea 2—all were baptized into Moses by the cloud and by the sea—3 and all ate the same spiritual food 4 and drank the same spiritual drink; because they kept drinking from a spiritual rock that accompanied them, and that Rock was the Christ." Christ was with Israel in the desert.

I would say that each time Jehovah appeared in the OT it was Jehovah the Son, who became the Christ at His incarnation. He was sometimes called 'the Angel of Jehovah'; in several contexts the 'Angel' is stated to be Jehovah Himself. But in what sense were they "drinking from a spiritual Rock that accompanied them"? The physical rock (which Moses struck) did not move, presumably, but the "spiritual rock" did. Actually, what kept moving was the pillar of cloud and fire, which represented the presence of Jehovah the Son with them.

5) Hebrews 11:24-26—"By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter,¹ 25 choosing rather to be maltreated along with God's people than to have the temporary pleasure of sin, 26 considering the reproach for the Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; because he was looking ahead to the reward."

This statement intrigues me. What did Moses know about the Christ (when he left Egypt), and from whom did he learn it? And how did he know about the reward? Well, I think it quite possible that he made a point of finding out who his parents were, and talked at length with them about their history. In any case, this text also places Christ in the OT.

6) Philippians 2:8-11—"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient to the point of death²—even death on a cross! 9 Indeed, that is why God highly exalted Him and gave Him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of **Jesus** every knee will bow—of those in

¹ This may explain Exodus 2:15. If Moses had rejected a proposal from Pharaoh, based on his adoption, then Pharaoh would be angry and would gladly be given a pretext to kill Moses.

² Hebrews 5:8 says that Jehovah the Son "learned obedience by the things he suffered." He had never been through anything like this before. So what will happen to us if we have the same way of thinking?

heaven,¹ those on earth² and those under the earth³—11 and every tongue will acknowledge⁴ that Jesus Christ is Sovereign, to the glory of God the Father.”

This brings us back to Isaiah 45:23, where Jehovah the Son was speaking—“I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath.” Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, applied the text directly to Jesus.

Please note that it is at the name of Jesus, not Christ or even Jehovah, that every knee will bow. ‘Jesus’ is his name as a human being—recall that in Revelation (5:6, 12; 7:14; 12:11) the slain Lamb receives glory and praise along with the Father. It is not possible to kill God, so the Lamb is Jesus. Although at the moment I see no way to 'close the question' (as we say here in Brazil), I verily suspect that the correct transliteration of 'Jesus' into Hebrew will turn out to be יֵשׁוּס (Yesus) and not יֵשׁוּעַ (Yeshua). [I wonder who invented the idea that ‘Yeshua’ could be Jesus’ name in Hebrew.]

7) Colossians 1:16—“Because by Him all things were created—those in the heavens and those on the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities⁵—all things have been created through Him and for Him”.⁶

Although the entire Trinity participated in the creation, this verse clearly says that the Son was the primary agent (see also Hebrews 1:10 and John 1:10). This brings us back to Isaiah 45:12, where Jehovah the Son was speaking—“I have made the earth, and created man on it. I—My hands—stretched out the heavens.” So then, not only was Jesus in the OT, He created the world in which the OT took place.

8) 1 Peter 1:17-20 – “Also, since you invoke as Father⁷ the One who without partiality judges according to each one's work, conduct yourselves during the time

¹ This presumably includes the angels, whether or not they have literal 'knees'.

² It will be those who are actually alive on the earth at the time the decree is imposed; I suppose it will be during the millennial Messianic Kingdom.

³ Since Hades is inside the earth (Matthew 12:40, Ephesians 4:9, 1 Samuel 28:13), this will presumably include the wicked dead, as well as the demons in the Abyss (at least). Just suppose that God decided to confine evil to this planet; the logical place for a 'prison' would be beneath its crust.

⁴ The verbs 'bow' and 'acknowledge' are in the subjunctive mood in the Text, so many versions render 'should bow' rather than 'will bow'. However, the mood of the verbs is governed by the conjunction *hina*, that normally takes the subjunctive; but in the context the author evidently does not intend to leave any doubt about the extent of the recognition – it will be every knee and every tongue.

⁵ "Those in the heavens" would include angelic beings, including high-ranking ones—all owe their existence to the Son.

⁶ Most of the inhabitants of planet Earth do not understand that God created them for Himself, so they live out their existence here without knowing why they are here. That is why Sovereign Jesus commanded that the Gospel should be proclaimed to everyone.

⁷ To “invoke as Father” is to place yourself under His authority and protection; but also of His evaluation!

of your sojourn here **in fear**,¹ 18 knowing that it was not with perishable things (silver or gold) that you were redeemed from the futile way of life handed down by your forefathers,² 19 but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a faultless and pure lamb; 20 who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was revealed in these last times for your sake.”

Revelation 13:8 goes in the same direction. The Text states that the Lamb, with blood already shed, was so known before the creation of our race and planet. Now then, you cannot have blood without a body, and the body was the body of Jesus. So, Jesus was there even before the OT!

Now let us stop and think for a moment: the Text makes it clear that the Creator knew, before creating, what was going to happen and the terrible price of redemption that He Himself would have to pay, yet He went ahead anyway! If I am not mistaken, the very creation of our race was due to the Son's desire for a Bride. That He agreed to pay the terrible price allows us to glimpse the importance He places on her.

Conclusion: To an eternal Being time is irrelevant (time and space may be limited to our solar system) so God knew the history of our world before it happened. Hebrews 13:8: “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever.” God’s character does not change; the God of the OT is the same as the God of the NT. The way He administers the human race may change, from time to time, but His nature, His moral character does not change.

¹ “In fear” is emphasized in the Text. We tend to forget just who and what God is, and so we get complacent, which is not a good idea, according to Peter.

² All ways of life that are not biblical are futile. We should not be apologetic about challenging people’s belief systems or presuppositions, provided we are in a position to present the biblical worldview.