

MAY WE PRAY TO JESUS?

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. A subject of some controversy among brethren in Christ.
2. A subject about which there has been doubt on the part of many, including me. Yes, I, myself!
3. What is the truth about the subject? How do we learn that? Of course, from the scriptures rightly divided.
4. Is the following that truth rightly divided? I'm asking in all sincerity.

II. DISCUSSION

A. DEITY IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP, Psa.18:3.

1. If Jesus is deity, which he is (Mt.1:23; Jno.1:1-3; 10:30-33); then he is worthy of worship?
2. Jesus himself said the Son should be honored just as the Father should be honored, Jno.5:23.
3. He was worshipped and so honored then; if then, why not now?
4. If we are to honor, praise, worship, glorify and be thankful to him today as disciples were then, how do we do it?
 - a. If we can't do it either by prayer, or thanksgiving, or in song "to" him. How do we do it?
 - b. How do we do it with reference to the Father?
 - c. Do we do it "to" or simply "about" in either case?
5. Jesus Christ is designated as "God" (Jno.1:1; Ac.20:28; Heb.1:8), and he accepted worship (Mt.2:2; 14:33; Heb.1:6; Rev.5:14); if then, why not now? But how?

B. JESUS IS OUR MEDIATOR TODAY, 1Tim.2:5, et al.

1. If one may communicate *directly with only the Father*, and the Son is then completely excluded, how does Jesus *function* in the role of our "Mediator"?
2. Have we no direct interaction whatsoever with him in his mediatorship with us? What exactly is his role as our mediator, and our interaction with him as our mediator?
3. If he functions on our behalf as a mediator with another party (the Father), may we not in some way communicate directly with him as our mediator personally?
4. Doesn't a mediator always function directly with both parties he represents as a mediator? Why then isn't the same true in the case of Jesus as our mediator?

C. JNO.14:14, SPEAKING TO HIS APOSTLES, PROMISED THAT IN PRAYER TO HIM THEY COULD ASK OF HIM.

1. "If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it." (ESV)
2. If the apostles could go to him directly in prayer and "ask" of him in prayer *in his name*, i.e. "by my authority", why not we?

3. There is nothing at all absurd about the Lord asking them then to pray consistent with his authority when approaching him directly in prayer and asking something of him praying consistently with his authority.
 - a. If so in their case, what about us today?
- D. SOME CLAIM WE MAY OR MUST “PRAY THROUGH JESUS CHRIST,” NOT “TO HIM.”
1. In doing so perhaps they have not studied and fully understood the meaning of the phrase “through Christ.”
 2. It is a common phrase that merely acknowledge the role of Jesus in Heaven’s redemptive plan.
 3. It was through “the agency of Christ” that the way to God was achieved.” (Danker, et. al. Greek-English Lexicon.).
 4. It acknowledges the “kindness of Christ” in making prayer possible according to Thayer, p.133: “Of one who is the author of the action as well as its instrument, or of the efficient cause...Col.3:17 – *because the possibility both of glorifying God and of giving thanks to him is due to the kindness of Christ.*” (emphasis mine, ejd)
 5. Would “praising” and “glorifying” God by or “through Jesus Christ” (Heb.13:15; 1Pet.4:11) imply that we must never praise or glorify the Lord Jesus himself? Think! Heb: “...that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.” 1Pet: “...that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.”
- E. NOTE VARIOUS PASSAGES WHERE DISCIPLES PRAYED “**TO**” JESUS.
1. In Ac.1:24 Jesus accepted of his disciples. Of him his disciples sought divine counsel by means of prayer to him: “And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen.”
 - a. Obviously, the “Lord” is Jesus. Cf. 1:1,2,6,21.
 2. 2Cor.12:8: “For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me.”
 - a. This states that on three different occasions he had “besought” or begged “the Lord” to remove his affliction with that mysterious “thorn in the flesh” because of the glorious revelation he had experienced fourteen years earlier.
 - b. The context shows “the Lord” addressed in this prayer to be “Jesus Christ.” Cf. V.19.
 3. In Ch.3:11 of his first letter to the brethren at Thessalonica, one of Paul’s prayers is recorded, wherein he prays: “Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus direct our way unto you.”
 - a. The subject of the sentence is compound, “Father” and “Lord Jesus”.
 - b. Yet the verb, “direct” is singular (W.E. Vine, 1&2Th.78).
 - c. Thus this prayer is addressed to the Lord Jesus conjointly with the Father.
 - d. What it asks of the one it asks of the other at the same time.

4. Again, in 2Th.2:16,17, there is a similar prayer recorded to the same brethren: “Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.”
 - a. Again, the subject is compound, “Lord Jesus Christ himself” and “God our Father,” yet both verbs (“comfort” and “establish”) are singular.
 - b. The apostle’s prayer is jointly addressed to both the Son and the Father – except in this case, the Son is placed first.
5. 2Th.3:5: “And the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patient waiting for Christ.”
 - a. “Lord” is generally viewed as a reference to a prayer to Christ. (Leon Morris, 1&2Th., Revised,250)
6. 1Tim.1:12,13: “And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry (“appointing me to his service,” ESV); who was before a blasphemer...”
 - a. Paul’s “gratitude” or “thanks” is “directed toward Christ Jesus.”
 - b. This is not merely a statement about the apostle’s gratitude to the Lord, but an expression of thanks – given to the Savior.
 - c. Gordon Fee (1&2Tim, Tit., New International Biblical Com.; Hendrickson,50), has observed that while it usually is the case that Paul directs his prayers to God, here his gratitude is directed to Christ.
7. In Rev.5 the entire section of which is designed to exalt the glorified Christ, John records that the “twenty four elders” fell down “before the Lord,” each of which had “golden bowls” which, symbolically, contained “incense,” which incense represented the “prayers of the saints,” v.8.
 - a. Clearly, these prayers were ascending to Christ, Vv.8,9.
 - b. In V.13, the entire creation offers praise to the Father and Son equally.
8. Eph.5:19: “...singing and making melody in (with) your heart to the Lord.”
 - a. To whom does the term “Lord” refer in this passage?
 - b. By far most scholars contend that it refers to Christ (on the basis of the most common use of “Lord” in the N.T., and this context).
 - c. Since Vv.18,19 are in the form of a command, this would suggest that not only is singing to Christ permissible, it is absolutely required.
9. Col.3:16 does not negate the teaching of the parallel passage of Eph.5:19, with the singing in the one directed to Jesus and the other to God, the Father; that is, if it is indeed addressed to God and some claim.
 - a. Passages that are substantially parallel, as these two are, may vary in particulars and thus supplement one another.
 - b. These two texts in concert simply show that the worship that is directed to the Father is likewise appropriate for the Son. Cf. Rev.5:13b.

10. 1Cor.1:2, here Paul directed his message to “the church of God which is at Corinth” and also to “all that call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place.
 - a. Of special significance is the phrase, “call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”
 - b. The term “call” is from the Greek root form *epikaleo*, which signifies “to invoke, adore, worship.” (Thayer, 239)
 - c. One authority says that to “call upon” the name of Christ is to “worship his divine majesty and implore his sovereign protection” (Ceslas Spicq, Theological Lexicon of the N.T., Peabody, MA.)
 - d. To suggest that one may not literally “call” upon the name of the Lord Jesus, in the light of this passage, is seriously inconsistent with this text.
- F. THE WORSHIP OF JESUS IN ANY FORMAT IS DENIED BY SOME (PROBABLY A FEW)
1. This is usually done on the basis of Mt.4:10: “Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.”
 2. Their reasoning is: Jesus said the one to be worshipped is “the Lord thy God.”
 3. “God” in this passage is the Father; thus only he may be worshipped according to Jesus is their argument.
 4. The argument is flawed in several ways.
 - a. First, it ignores the fact that during the Lord’s earthly ministry, frequently he WAS “worshipped” (Mt.8:2; 9:18; 14:23; Lk.24:52; Jno.20:28).
 - (1) Jesus never once resisted or rebuked those acts of reverence paid to him.
 - (2) If the Lord so often accepted worship in his earthly – pre-glorified state, does he reject it now in his heavenly glorified status? (See LK.24:52).
 - b. Second, if the “him only” phrase of Mt.4:10 excludes Jesus from worship, it likewise must exclude him from being served; for the passage also says: “him (God) only shalt thou serve.”
 - c. Third, this exclusion of Jesus Christ from worship reflects negatively upon his nature as deity.
 - (1) Neither good men, such as Peter in Ac.10:25,26, accepted worship, nor did holy angels, in Rev.22:8,9 accept worship.
 - (2) They were told to worship God, neither men nor angels were to be worshipped.
 - (3) If Jesus accepted worship as revealed in the passages cited in Mt.; Lk.; and Jno.; et. al., yet is not worthy of such, he acted on a level beneath that of Paul, and the angels of John’s vision.

(a) That, of course, is not the case!

G. AC.7:59,60 AND SPEPHEN'S FINAL PRAYER.

1. Luke says that Stephen was "full of the Holy Spirit," V.55a.
2. He was permitted to look into the heaven where he saw a manifestation of divine glory, and Jesus "standing nearby at God's right hand," V.55. (Cf. Ac.2:34,35; Heb.1:3).
3. Seeing this, he boldly proclaimed, "Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God," V.56.
4. V.59 says, "And they stoned Stephen calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."
5. Then V.60 says, "and he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord lay not his sin to their charge..."
6. Luke says in V.59 that Stephen was "calling upon" the Lord (*epikaleo*, present tense).
 - a. The term means to make a request; the context must determine its specific disposition.
 - b. The present tense suggests the petition was repeated.
 - c. Several recent translations render the expression, "he was praying." (Cf. NIV; Williams; Goodspeed; Weymouth, McCord).
 - d. A. Campbell also represented Stephen as "invoking" or "calling on" the Lord Jesus, not God (as in the KJV). Acts of The Apostles, 51)
7. In Ac.7:59,60, Stephen's prayer to Jesus Christ is presented unambiguously, with the obvious endorsement of Jesus himself (as evidenced by the vision).
 - a. The miraculousness of the case does not nullify the rightness of the fact of Stephen praying to the Lord.
 - b. If Stephen, a brother in Christ, could do that then, what is wrong with our doing it now?
 - c. What made it right then, but makes it wrong now?

III. CONCLUSION

1. Surely, in light of all this there is scriptural validity for the position that the Christian may utter praise sentiment "**to**" Jesus and not simply "**about**" Jesus as the author says.
2. I say: If not, where did the author of these arguments, from whom I have gleaned this material, miss the truth or fail to rightly divide the Scriptures?
3. I'm still not 100 per cent converted. But I'm close. I'm thinking. I'm studying. I'm asking for help!! I, as always, have an open mind!

(These notes were gleaned from The Christian Courier, Special Issue, Aug.2010; Article: May We Pray To Jesus? The Biblical Perspective; The Praying Controversy; by Wayne Jackson, pp.4-14,20,30,31)

(In addition to this, in a much briefer form, I'm going to add another article by Jackson for what it is worth on this subject of praying "**to**" and not simply "**about**" Jesus. It will be titled: "Jesus Christ in the Book of Revelation," Christian Courier, April, 2010, Vol.45, No.12).