

A Rational Faith – November 25, 2018

This morning I want to talk about my journey of coming into a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ as my Savior, but also about my deepening understanding of Jesus as the Prophet, Priest, and King promised to all of mankind. I was once described by a neighbor as being “old beyond my years.” I think that is because as a little boy I was always faced with the reality that I was a human being and that someday I would die. I was determined to live my life to its fullest and to its best whatever that meant.



I was raised by a mother and a daddy who were always serious about their relationship with God. Dad had been raised by a Roman Catholic father and a Scottish Presbyterian mother. I've told the story of how my grandparents, while in their early 30's, realized that their church traditions would not secure them a place in heaven. My dad and his brother were taken by a neighbor to vacation Bible where they both accepted Jesus as their Savior. They brought that good news home, and both of my grandparents came to understand and believe that Jesus had died for them on the cross, and that without Him they would be eternally separated from

God. The entire family was baptized on the same morning in West University Baptist Church in Houston. Dad taught me about the authority and divine inspiration of the Bible, and he would give me a hunger for the language of God's Word. Dad also gave me a deep understanding of what it means to be the spiritual head of my home and what it means to be a responsible husband, father, and friend.



My mother was raised in the Disciples of Christ and from her early teens, she was a serious follower of Jesus. I spent my early years at my mother's side watching her do her chores, and watching her love me and my sisters unconditionally. She gave me a sense of how God loved me. With her as my guide, my early belief in God came easy. As a rational young child I realized that man made things don't just come into being. I saw that cars, houses, our driveway, shoes, clothing, mother's cooking, etc. were all designed

and made by someone. The logical belief in God was evident when I looked at trees, grass, clouds, the sky, the moon, the sun, mountains, plants, and everything around me. I guess somewhere along the way mother told me God had made all of these things. Mother nurtured my spirit at a young age. She told me over and over, “God has a perfect plan for your life.” Often as a child, I would walk into her room to find her on her knees pouring out her soul to a God who cared, to a God who listened. She invited me to get down on my knees and pray with her, and sometimes I did.

It is illogical even to a small child to think that anything just is because it is. Man made things exist because they are made by men and women. I also easily understood that the weather, the clouds, the ground, the clover, the bees in our yard in Bellaire, and figs growing on a tree, were all produced and made. Even living in the city on a little 50' x 100' lot in a small frame house, I

was surrounded by miracles. God enabled me to see and understand that those miracles were His doing. I still didn't quite understand what this Maker of all must be like, but mother had explained that He made it all. I believed her. God was as real as the house I lived in. I wasn't sure where He lived, but momma talked to Him and I knew that He heard her.



It was in that yard in Bellaire, in the rear window of that 1949 or 1950 Chevrolet sedan that I first heard the name of Jesus. It was late on a warm night that I lay in the back window of that old Chevy. Mother was in the front seat, there in the dark, telling someone about Jesus. She was explaining that we are all sinners and that we don't behave like God wants us to behave. She explained that God came to earth like a man, and He lived here among us. She told the person in the front seat that they needed to accept what Jesus

had done as a free gift from God. I don't remember who the person was, but I do remember that my mother invited her to pray along and say, "Jesus, I have sinned against You. I believe in You, and I want you to fill every corner of my heart. I accept you Jesus as my Lord and as my Savior". Little did mom know, but I was in the back seat praying that prayer right along with that lady.



So, that was my first encounter with Jesus. It really was the first time I remember hearing the name of Jesus. Mother would continue to nurture me spiritually, teach me to pray, and teach me that God was there and I could call out on Him. He was a friend upon whom I could depend. When it was time to move to a larger home, I remember kneeling with my mother and praying. Mother knelt and put an old paper MLS book out in front of us. It had a picture of the house that momma wanted. She told me that the Bible says that, "we can put all of the burdens of our heart in God's hands because He cares for us" (1 Peter 5:7 mom's paraphrase). As we got down on our knees, momma prayed and said, "Lord, we want to be in

your will in this family, and if being in your will includes giving us this colonial house on this page, then Lord please put us in it." Very soon thereafter we packed our bags and moved from Bellaire into that house at 2523 Glenhaven Street, Houston, Texas in Old Braeswood.

Dr. Schachtel, the head rabbi nearby Temple Beth Israel, lived in the house to the right of that house. My father got into discussions with him about Jesus in the Old Testament, and he said he wouldn't really discuss it until dad was able to discuss the original texts in Hebrew. Dad was challenged and ended up learning biblical Hebrew, and by the time he died in 2009 he was a Hebrew scholar. This led dad into deep study of finding Jesus in the Old Testament. Over the years, my dad began steering me into a deeper knowledge of who Jesus was, and how He truly

was the Messiah who had come to save not only the Jewish people, but also the Gentile nations as well. In the end, the study of those many scriptures with the illumination of the Holy Spirit led me to sell my life out to this Jesus, this Yeshua, this Redeemer of the world. Dad used to tell me that he could've found Jesus with only the Book of Isaiah. In time I would find Jesus in the entirety of Hebrew scriptures.



I have already told the story of how I came into a deeper knowledge of Jesus at about the age of 15, but I thought you might enjoy seeing a photo of where it happened. In that late winter morning or early spring morning in 1972, God showed me that I did not love Him with all of my heart, soul, and mind, and that I did not love my neighbor as myself. As the Holy Spirit convicted me that morning, amidst tears, I repented of my selfishness, and I've never been the same. I made my peace with God. I decided at that moment to follow Jesus "come hell or high water," and I've pretty much done that for

the rest of my life by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Over the years, my searching has gone deeper. Each Christmas season I heard the words of the Prophet Isaiah, not realizing that these words were even out of the Bible. In the Book of Isaiah, perhaps more than any other book, God gave mankind clues as to how the Messiah would come and who He would be.

⁶ For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷ Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this. (Isaiah 9:6-7, NKJV).

Isaiah didn't have a clue of whom he wrote, but the Holy Spirit of God showed Isaiah God's plan for history. Messiah would be a son upon whose shoulders the nations of the world would rest. And Isaiah specifically says that this Son, this Child, would be called Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and the *Tsar Shalom* Prince of Peace. He is equal with the Father because He is the Father. Isaiah mysteriously says that God Himself would perform this. And God did. Through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Isaiah described supernatural details concerning the birth of the Child.

"But the LORD will still give you proof. A virgin is pregnant; she will have a son and will name him Immanuel." (Isaiah 7:14, CEV).

He won't just be called "Jesus" (Yahweh Saves), but His name actually describes His role as "God being with us." This Child, this Wonderful Counselor, is God in human form. Isaiah also explained in his prophecy not only Messiah's birth, but the nature of this Messiah's death. Imagine how weird it must have been for these words to come into Isaiah's mind. He had to wonder of whom he wrote when he penned,

“We despised him and rejected him; he endured suffering and pain. No one would even look at him — we ignored him as if he were nothing. “But he endured the suffering that should have been ours, the pain that we should have borne. All the while we thought that his suffering was punishment sent by God. But because of our sins he was wounded, beaten because of the evil we did. We are healed by the punishment he suffered, made whole by the blows he received. (Isaiah 53:3-5, GNT).

Isaiah explained that in some divine exchange which we do not and cannot understand, God arranged to be humbled as a man, and to be despised and rejected. He explained further that God in this flesh form was wounded and beaten for the sins each of us had done. It is a curious thought, and this is where the logic of my belief meshes with the faith part of my belief. What can this possibly mean, and why would it be necessary? The organization **Jews for Jesus** makes an interesting statement.”

“For one who has already made up his or her mind that Jesus is not the Messiah, no amount of evidence will be convincing. But for those who are honest in asking, the evidence speaks for itself.”¹

Jesus is found in the Tanak. He is present in the Torah. He is present in the Navaaim (the Prophets), and He is evident in the Ketuvim (the Writings). These three portions of scripture make up what we call “The Old Testament.”

The idea of a Messiah comes from the Hebrew Bible.

Jews for Jesus states, “Imagine looking up a friend by first locating his country. That would not be enough information, so you would need to ascertain his city, street, and specific street number. It would also help if you had a phone number and when he would be home.

Similarly, the Bible tells us the “ID” of the Messiah. His ethnic background, place of birth, the timeframe of his arrival and other identifying characteristics are given. These “credentials” enable us to identify the Messiah and to recognize imposters.

What are some of the credentials of the Messiah?

Only a few can be listed below; there are many others. Early Rabbis recognized all of these passages as referring to the Messiah.

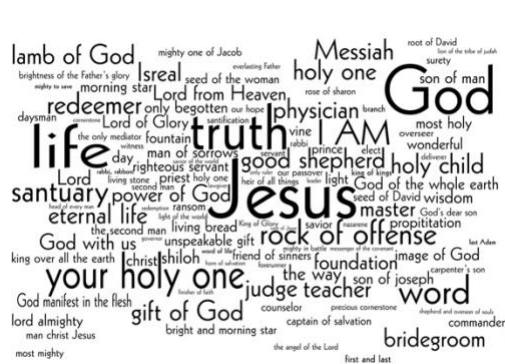
- Messiah was to be born at Bethlehem: [Micah 5:2](#) ([Micah 5:1](#) in Hebrew Bible).
- Messiah would be from the tribe of Judah: [Genesis 49:10](#).
- Messiah would present himself by riding on an ass: [Zechariah 9:9](#).
- Messiah would be tortured to death: [Psalm 22:1-31](#).
- Messiah would arrive before the destruction of the Second Temple: [Daniel 9:24-27](#).
- Messiah’s life would match a particular description, including suffering, silence at his arrest and trial, death and burial in a rich man’s tomb, and resurrection: [Isaiah 52:13-53:12](#)².

¹ <https://jewsforjesus.org/answers/what-proof-do-you-have-that-jesus-is-the-messiah/>

These passages of scripture are the tip of the scriptural iceberg. As I've continued to read them as an adult, I am overwhelmingly convinced that Jesus is not only that Messiah, my Messiah, but He is the LOGOS made flesh. He is the energy of the universe, the divine, the Creator who came temporarily in human form. He was there in the beginning. The Apostle John said,

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. ² He was in the beginning with God. ³ All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. ⁴ In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. ⁵ And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. ¹⁴ And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-5, 14 NKJV).

This Word, this Yeshua, this Messiah, was God. He was not a prophet. He was not just a "good man." Paul the Apostle, who describes himself as a "Jew of all Jews," explains the entire process and the response required by each of us.



He always had the nature of God, but he did not think that by force he should try to remain; or become. equal with God. Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—his death on the cross. For this reason God raised him to the highest place above and gave him the name that is greater than any other name. And so, in honor of the name of Jesus all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below will fall on their knees,

and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (Philippians 2:6-11, GNT).

When asked who He was, Jesus answered, *"I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one goes to the Father except by me. (John 14:6, GNT).* Dr. Luke tells us, *Salvation is to be found through him alone; in all the world there is no one else whom God has given who can save us. (Acts 4:12, GNT).*

My journey with Jesus started in the back of that 1949-1950 Chevy sedan. Where will my journey take me? I do not know. It does not matter. I just want to spend eternity with Him whom my soul loves and He has given me that as a gift. I have received that gift. How about you?

Let us pray.

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