

New Testament prophetic imagery concerning Jesus/Yeshua

I have already in one of my articles touched on Rev. 2.16: "Repent therefore! Otherwise, I will soon come to you and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth."

Now, who was talking here (in Rev. 2.16)? Who was the One who appeared to the apostle John on Patmos Island? Surely, we know it was Jesus/Yeshua the RISEN Son of God! Paul profoundly draws our attention to Jesus/Yeshua as the resurrected "Son of God" and this is then His true identity.

[Note that "fight against" has the connotation of a soldier in combat and this imagery therefore ties in with Jesus/Yeshua's pre-existent image as warrior or captain of the armies of the LORD (Josh. 5.13-15; ref. also Ex. 23.20+). Jesus/Yeshua then applied the imagery of a battlefield in prophecy, the place where the enemy is fought face to face, this way drawing the attention of the believers worshiping in Pergamum to the dangers of apostasies spread by certain evil teachers and who were then doing their utmost to pull the believers away from truth and faith in Him. By applying this strong metaphor (a sword coming from his mouth) Jesus made His intention known to Pergamum, i.e. that He was going to use the true(!) prophetic word against them, uncovering their wickedness, this way fiercely fighting the apostates and their apostasies which by then had already taken root - Jesus was then, through the metaphorical sword, making His intentions known, i.e. that He would act like a true warrior would and so that the wicked could be silenced and their evil works destroyed].

Paul, the Jew, was of course always deeply involved with the teaching of apostolic Truth and he therefore confirmed in his letter that Jesus/Yeshua was raised in power (=the power of God's Spirit, see Acts 1.18) as SON OF GOD!

Now, although we know that Jesus was also the Son of Man (He was born the usual way, yet not conceived the usual way for Joseph was not his biological father. The former was/is a stance that is sometimes propagated by some Christian Jews, although we know that Jesus/Yeshua was generally portrayed the (illegitimate) son of Joseph but I am not going to deal with this issue here. Those interested can read my article "The Divinity of Jesus" on this website : Go to Documents/Spiritual Enrichment Program and then go to the article if you want to get to know my stance on the incarnation.

Now we can mainly rely on the Biblical text yet of course also making use of early documents at our disposal but the New Testament text (the diversity of translations we have available to us and drawing then of course comparisons) remains the most trustworthy as it contains the first-century apostolic message.

There were then also the two "Enoch" versions* in circulation, i.e. in the first-century and we can then accept that the majority of early Christians were acquainted with these apocryphal books. And this is also then clearly the reason why the Apostle Jude had pulled some of its jargon into his brief letter, i.e. with reference to his statement on Michael and Satan (see Dan. 12 on this Prince of Israel).

We can then indeed infer that those who stuck to the revelations of Enoch (the apocalyptic Book of Enoch), must then have come from a certain sectarian pool of thought connected with the Ebionites or the Nazarenes (=the "Hebrews", Acts 6.1).

So what we can then gather is that there were those believers among the apostles of Jesus' assemblies who regarded this source as trustworthy, however, if we read this book properly we will detect anomalies - that is in comparison with the first-century apostolic faith.

But let me deal with Michael that One whose name is interpreted as "being like God/being equal to God", something correlating well with Paul's Col. 1.15 statement. It seems Paul had, for definite reasons then, used this type of phraseology in his Letter to the Colossians.

Fact is, the One with the drawn sword (i.e. in the Old Testament) is none other than this Prince of Israel (Michael/Mikhael, and whose place-of-honour in the Old Testament theocratic society I have often discussed. I will therefore not embroider again on that very One who was carrying the drawn sword - the token of special authority resting then upon Him alone and just as we see Him exercising it when addressing David's trespass, i.e. at Aruna.

This was then proof of the sword of "judgment" for we don't see this Prince of Israel constantly with the sword. What we therefore can accept is that the sword He carried was the sword of sovereignty, also meaning that the power of life and death was resting upon his shoulders (which also implies the two-edged sword for a sword always has two sharp edges (like a blade) cutting then both ways, however, "two-edged" in New Testament imagery is indeed applied just as Paul presents it to us in Heb. 4.12: "For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (exactly what Jesus/Yeshua conveyed in his letter to the Laodiceans, Rev. 3.15 also to Pergamum, Rev. 2.13).

Paul wrote to the Ephesians in similar tone: (Eph. 6.17) : "Take the helmet of salvation (=imagery) and the sword of the Spirit (=imagery) which is the word of God.." Paul is clearly not here trying to explain the Spirit of God, but he is directing our attention to something connected with the Spirit of God, and that is meaning the imagery of the sword and therefore connected to Jesus/Yeshua, comparing the sword with the Word of God (see Jn 1.1).

Let's consider the Spirit of God connecting it once again, i.e. in accordance with Pauline thought and directive, to the Spirit resting on, and associated closely with, Jesus/Yeshua: 2 Cor. 3.17: "Now the Lord (Jesus/Yeshua) is that Spirit"

The Spirit of God" is declared in Strong's* (#4151) as "pneuma", or "a current of air, (breath) blast or a breeze....." or in relation to super-humans, "...an angel, daemon, or (divine) God [or] Christ's spirit, the Holy Spirit....."

So what we can infer from Paul's somewhat enigmatic statement is that the Spirit (the Holy Spirit in New Testament terminology) is indeed the "Spirit of Jesus/Yeshua" but then we must make a sound inference, namely that the POWER of the Holy Spirit (the divine supernatural manifestation of the Spirit of God, the Father) was indeed intrinsically linked to Jesus/Yeshua the RISEN Son of God. The Apostle Paul therefore states in his Letter to the Corinthians, that "Christ is the Wisdom and the Power of God", a statement that ties in one hundred per cent with 2. Cor. 3.17; see also Acts 2.33.

We cannot then speak of the RISEN Son of God any longer as "Son of Man" for this was Jesus/Yeshua in the flesh, and clearly pointing to his humanity. Yes, He was clothed with flesh, He was also walking in human form among His people (Phil. 2) but He was raised in a glorified body which had not seen corruption (decay) in the grave (Peter in Acts 2.31).

Where the Son of Man (yet also the "Son of God" who was sent to represent God His Father leading His People (!) back to true worship, Jn 1, 1 Jn 4, Phil. 2, Jn 17, Gal. 4) had been subjected to ridicule, also pain and suffering up to that point where He was hung on the Cross, He rose from the grave by the Power of God's Spirit as the vindicated "Son of God" (His resurrection was proof of His vindication by God His Father), He was therefore, after his resurrection, only named the "Son of God" by all His apostles.

However, His body did not disappear for it was resurrected wholly and in perfect condition (This is why we can indeed speak of His "glorified" body). And He could then again appear and disappear before the eyes of His disciples because He had then regained that erstwhile position He had in His pre-existence with His Father on High (Jn 17) : "Father glorify me with the glory I had with You before the world was..."

Therefore we especially see the Apostle John referring to the Sonship of Jesus/Yeshua in his pastoral letters, making of course a very salient point to us, namely that the Son of God ascended on high and the Son of God

was also crowned as Head of the assemblies (Heb. 3). And this is the very important right-hand position the Son still holds at the side of God His Father in the heavens. This briefly as I cannot deal with everything here.

Now, linking the Spirit of God then to Jesus/Yeshua, we will be able to understand that the sharp two-edged sword, depicted for us metaphorically in Rev. 2.16, indeed belongs to the Son of God made flesh. Therefore Jesus/Yeshua could so very boldly admit before the Jews (Gospel of John) that He proceeded from the Father. Those who still want to deny this very special "filial" bond between God the Father and His Son, are rationalizing Scripture in order to suit their own devised doctrine and dogma.

There was therefore just One specific angelic messenger - this is how He is presented to us in the Old Testament text - carrying the sword of authority. He was that "Angel of God's Presence" as the prophet Isaiah rightly states in 63.9 (his Shekhina Glory which is nothing but the manifestation of the Spirit of God, i.e. the Divine Presence of God).

Objectifying Scripture (Old and New Testaments) this way, brings us then to the special nugget of Scriptural truth that is conveyed to us in Rev. 2.16 by the apostle John: "In his mouth was the double-edged sword".

Even though reference to the one carrying the sword (Michael) then appears in the Book of Enoch, it still remains a Biblical truth for the Old Testament indeed speaks of this Prince of Israel. We call Him "Prince" as "Prince" is heir to God's Throne and He was then the only One who could rightly lay claim to the title "Heir" to the Throne of God. He is of course and also was the King of Israel of old (read the history of Samuel).

The Spirit of God is then intimately linked to the Angel of Presence and the sword, and the "sword" again to the "mouth" of Jesus/Yeshua the One who was even greater than Moses (Deut. 18; Heb. 3). He was then the greatest Prophet Israel ever had for He came to announce the New and Better Covenant.

See for example the way Jesus/Yeshua addressed the money-exchangers in the Temple - just as the prophets of old would have done (Isa. 58.1) - boldly reprimanding them for their sinful conduct and considering His predicament, He was indeed very courageous, however, the Spirit of God was upon Him!

His "mouth" (with reference to Rev. 2.16) is then the prophetic mouth indeed and therefore the Spirit of God connected in imagery to the "sword of his mouth". Judgments from His mouth was therefore as the word of the prophets of old indeed was, bringing forth the message of God placed in their mouths (on their tongues). Study the old Testament prophets and especially those relating to the "Servant" of God substantiating what I have stated here (Isa 58.1).

Jesus/Yeshua is then indeed the "Word of God", therefore this kind of imagery found in Rev. 2.16. He was and is the "Word of God" made flesh, having had a pre-existence with His Father (Jn 17). The all-powerful word spoken by God was then driven through Him, also after His resurrection and therefore we also find the judgments of God (=pointing to the authoritative sword) in the resurrected Jesus/Yeshua's mouth and when He spoke via John's letters to the seven assemblies in Asia Minor (located in the Roman Province)

I think it is wrong to always and continually refer to Jesus/Yeshua as "Son of Man" (man of dust, prophet, born the usual way, mortal man - see God's conversation with Ezekiel - mere man, etcetera). Jesus/Yeshua was indeed, as Luke's Gospel depicts His conception and birth to us, the Son of God. This is where we must be able to see beyond the veil of the flesh, for Jesus/Yeshua left His heavenly glory to dwell among His own (Jn 1) living as a holy, separated-unto-God vessel to the glory of His God and Father - He was indeed made flesh to accomplish God's purpose namely to bring full redemption for us (see Phil. 2).

It was for this purpose that God had to do something unique, i.e. preparing in a very special way a body for His Son in the Virgin Mary. And this message was distorted in order to accommodate pagan Jewish thought.

Therefore the assembly of Pergamum was admonished by the "sword of Jesus/Yeshua's mouth" (Acts 10.42 :

God the Father appointed Him as Judge; Rev. 19.10 : the Spirit of Jesus/Yeshua is the Spirit of prophecy; Acts 2 : the tongues of fire depicting the active manifestation of God's Spirit and this Holy Spirit Power was on Jesus/Yeshua's tongue and when He addressed (making a division), like the prophets of old, God's desire for His people over against Satan's.

The divine, heavenly tongue is closely linked with fire, symbolic of the Spirit of God (Deut. 4.33 ; Acts 2; Deut. 4.36; Deut. 5.24; Judg. 1.8; Ex. 3.2 - the One who appeared in the bramble bush; 2 Sam. 22.9; 1 Ki 18.24; 1 Ki 19.12; Ps 104.4; Pro 16.27; Isa 5.24 - the mouth devours; Isa 30.27 - His tongue is like a devouring fire; God is Spirit and Spirit is linked to fire : Jn 4.24; Deut. 4.24; Heb. 12.29).

Considering what I have conveyed here then objectively, surely, we will see that the One who had the metaphorically speaking sword in his mouth, is indeed the RISEN Son of God who, already in Old Testament times, was appointed by God the Father as His Son, His King (Ps 2). And it is this Jesus/Yeshua the Apostle John had encounters with on Patmos Island.

Thompson's Chain Reference Bible, NIV, 1990.

On Enoch and his two versions : Everyman's Encyclopaedia, Fourth Ed. Vol. 12 : 49.

*Not to be dealt with in this article - the one the Apostle Jude would have been acquainted with would then seemingly have been the Ethiopian Enoch dating 200-1 comprising of six sections

There is, however, something we can and must take note of and this is that there are only two Biblical texts mentioning the archangel (chief angel) "Michael", one in Dan. 12, the other in Jude's epistle. And it is also in the Book of Daniel that God's angel is referred to by Nebuchadnezzar as "son of the gods" (Deut. 3.25). For this Gentile king who was acquainted with pagan mythology and the mysteries, it must then indeed have been a supernatural, mighty saviour like "Michael" (the "Angel of the Lord") indeed was for ancient Israel and especially the prophets, and who had come to rescue Daniel's three friends from the fiery furnace.

Note added on 2015/02/12 : Jesus was raised in His glorified body, and He could then once again (!) appear and disappear before the eyes of his apostles - e.g. when visiting Manoah and announcing the birth of Samson - however, although He regained His pre-existent status after his resurrection, i.e. in accordance with his prayer in Gethsemane (Jn 17), His putting on flesh in order to work salvation on the Cross for man (the body God had prepared for His Son), of course pertains to the NT era.

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