

Should We Pray to Jesus?



A Response to Wayne Jackson's Article

"May A Christian Address Christ in Praise or Prayer?"

By Jason Hilburn

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Table of Contents

Foreword.....4

Preface.....5

Review of “May A Christian Address Christ in Praise or Prayer?”.....6

Appendix A — Additional Evidence.....40

Appendix B — Index of Scripture References.....42

Foreword

I have known brother Wayne Jackson and brother Jason Hilburn for many years. Both are capable gospel preachers, and both are Christian gentlemen.

These brethren have shown that even though one may disagree with his brother, the conduct can remain within acceptable Christian bounds. One may disagree without being disagreeable, or ugly. It is not right to turn a disagreement into a personal issue.

Brother Wayne Jackson has a good Bible knowledge, and has done much good through his preaching, teaching, and writing. Jason Hilburn is a younger man, but he also has a good knowledge of the Scriptures. Both of these brethren love the truth, and both are scholarly.

Brother Jackson believes that it is scriptural to pray directly to Jesus. Brother Hilburn does not believe that position. To all who read this discussion, I simply suggest that you read the Scriptures, and rightly divide them (Acts 17:11; 2 Tim. 2:15). Both Christ and Paul have spoken on this subject. Christ said to the apostles, "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (Jno. 16:23). The Lord appeared to Paul on the Damascus road and spoke directly to him. However, that did not convince Paul that he should pray directly to Christ when he prayed. After Paul became a Christian and an apostle he wrote, "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20). Please observe: 1) Christians are to pray unto God; 2) This is to be done in the name, i.e., by the authority of Christ.

Just as the Lord Jesus Christ appeared unto Paul and talked with him, even so he appeared to Stephen. Paul asked the Lord, "What shall I do?" (Acts 22:10); and Stephen asked, "...Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" and "Lord, lay not this sin to their charge" (Acts 7:59, 60). However, these appearances do not put aside what Christ and Paul taught about the requirement that we pray directly to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have heard "Holiness preachers" pray, even in the same service, directly unto God the Father, and then later pray directly to the Lord Jesus Christ, and still later pray directly to the Holy Spirit. They do all of this even in one service!

Sometimes people ask, "Are not God, the Father, the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son, and the Holy Spirit all Deity? The answer is: Certainly, they are all Deity. However, that does not set aside the Bible instruction that we are to pray to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Remember that we are to prove all things and hold fast to that which is good (1 Thess. 5:21). We are to speak as the Oracles of God (1 Pet. 4:11).

Garland Elkins
Dean of Public Relations
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Preface

A few years ago I wrote a bulletin article entitled “We Pray to the Father,” in which I set forth from the Scriptures the fact that Christians only have authority to pray to God the Father. Not long after I had sent this bulletin, I received a message from a brother whom I have known and loved for years. He brought to my attention an online article by brother Wayne Jackson which advocated praying to Jesus. This brother I knew stated that he believed we have authority to pray to Jesus, and he seemed to be persuaded by Jackson’s article. I read brother Jackson’s article, began studying this subject further, and typed up a rebuttal to the article. At the time I was also hosting a weekly Bible study in my home with local brethren, and we began studying this subject. The more we studied, the more convinced we all were that we only have authority to pray to the Father.

After the response to Jackson’s article was complete, I decided that before sending this material to anyone else I would first send the document directly to brother Jackson. I wanted to treat him as I would have him treat me, and give him a chance to read and reply if he chose to do so. The review was emailed to brother Jackson on May 15, 2008. Brother Jackson replied and simply stated that he was willing to allow brethren to lay his article beside my review and see where the evidence lies. That is the purpose of this book. Since 2008 I have learned of more and more brethren who have been influenced by brother Jackson’s article, and several brethren have encouraged me to have my rebuttal printed. I contacted brother Jackson again on February 10, 2010 to let him know that I was planning on printing a review of his article, to which he gave his consent.

Brother Jackson also openly advocates praying to the Holy Spirit, a position of which I was not aware he held when the review was sent to him. At the time this book was printed there was an online article on his web site teaching that position. While the main thrust of this book is to refute the doctrine of praying to Jesus, this book also speaks from the Scriptures against praying to the Holy Spirit. As these doctrines are becoming more and more prevalent among our brethren, I hope this book will be a useful tool in the Lord’s kingdom, and that God will be glorified.

As I told brother Jackson, there is no animosity intended toward him personally, whom I love as my brother.

Jason Hilburn

A REVIEW OF WAYNE JACKSON'S ARTICLE "May a Christian Address Christ in Praise or Prayer?"

Brother Jackson, when a brother and I were discussing whether or not one can pray to Jesus, he told me about an article you wrote entitled "May a Christian Address Christ in Praise or Prayer?". I decided to add my thoughts into this article to help me get this subject straightened out in my mind, and I decided to forward a copy to you, just in case you were interested in reading it. Of course if you have any thoughts in reply to this, I would be absolutely open to reading them and considering them. Although I currently disagree with the view that one can pray to Jesus by the authority of the Scriptures, absolutely no animosity is intended toward you personally, whom I respect and love as a brother in Christ. I have many of your books, and I have great respect for the work you have done in the kingdom. I certainly do not claim to be some great Biblical scholar, but I do feel the need to share my thoughts on this with you.

Jason Hilburn

JACKSON:

May a Christian Address Christ in Praise or Prayer?

<http://www.christiancourier.com/articles/1024-may-a-christian-address-christ-in-praise-or-prayer>

By Wayne Jackson

July 1, 2005

A sincere brother asks: "Is it ever appropriate to pray to Jesus? Did he not teach us to pray, 'Our Father' (Matthew 6:9)? Did he not instruct his disciples that the time would come when nothing would be asked of him (John 16:23)?" Others ask, "Is it appropriate to sing praises wherein Christ is addressed directly?"

There appears to be a sincere, though vocal, minority within the brotherhood of Christ that opposes any form of communication on the part of the Christian with the resurrected and ascended Son of God.

Some allege that no prayer or praise of any sort may be directed to Jesus. Others suggest that while we may not pray to Christ, we are permitted to sing to him. One leading advocate of this theory contends that words may be sung to the Savior, but those identical words become sinful if "spoken" rather than "sung"—even though singing is speaking (Ephesians 5:19). Still others allege that one may "speak" to the Lord (without a melody), but he may not "pray" to him—though the distinction between the two has not been made clear.

In this study, therefore, we propose to address this issue.

HILBURN:

Brother Jackson, you stated that *"There appears to be a sincere, though vocal, minority within the brotherhood of Christ that opposes any form of communication on the part of the Christian with the resurrected and ascended Son of God."* I do not disagree that those who say one can neither sing to Jesus nor pray to Jesus are in the minority; but surely those who teach that one can sing to Jesus, but not pray to Jesus, comprise the majority of our brotherhood. In either case, I'm sure we all agree that taking polls does not determine the truth, but rather searching the Scriptures.

We are commanded to sing to the Lord Jesus (Ephesians 5:19; Colossians 3:16), but not to pray to Jesus, and there is a difference between singing and praying. Brother Jackson, you wrote, *"One leading advocate of this theory contends that words may be sung to the Savior, but those identical words become sinful if "spoken" rather than "sung"—even though singing is speaking (Ephesians 5:19)."* If one examines Ephesians 5:19 closely, he will see that "speaking" in this verse is actually referring to the act of "singing." We are speaking words, but in the format of a song. "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:19 KJV). "Singing" and "making melody" are participles which describe what we are doing when we are "speaking." We are not merely talking to Jesus, as one would in a simple conversation. We are offering Him songs directly from our hearts to exalt Him, just as we have been commanded to do.

Notice the same teaching in Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16 KJV). All the commands in this verse are accomplished by singing.

If there is no difference between singing and merely speaking, then what if we had worship services in which we literally speak the words of all the songs in a monotone voice without song or melody? Would that be obeying the command to "sing and make melody"? Of course not! That is because there is a clear difference between singing and merely speaking! Webster defines the word sing as: "To utter sounds with various inflections of melodious modulations of voice, as fancy may dictate, or according to the notes of a song or tune."

When a person is preaching, he is speaking; when a person is praying, he is speaking; when a person is singing, he is "speaking" (in the format of a song). Even though all three of these acts of worship involve "speaking," they are three totally different acts of worship! Different acts of worship have different purposes, and may be specifically designed for only one member of the Godhead (e.g., the Lord's Supper focuses on Christ; but prayer is directed toward the Father). All of our singing involves "speaking," but not all speaking is singing; therefore to say that there is no difference between speaking and singing is false. We have authority to sing to Jesus, but not to address Jesus in prayer.

Brother Jackson, you referenced Ephesians 5:19 here, but is there a reason why you never mentioned verse 20 in the entire article? Notice the contrast between verses 19 and 20: "19) Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; 20) Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:19, 20 KJV). Verse 19 is a command to sing to the Lord Jesus, but verse 20 is obviously referring to prayer, which is ALWAYS to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ! Note that we do not always sing to Jesus (Acts 16:25 records Christians singing to God), but we do always pray to the Father. Other New Testament Scriptures make a clear distinction between singing and other forms of "speaking," and this will be discussed in more detail later in this article.

I also noticed that Colossians 3:16 was never contrasted with 3:17 (which is a parallel passage to Ephesians 5:19, 20). Why are verses like Ephesians 5:20 and Colossians 3:17 absent from the article? What about other verses like Ephesians 3:14, Philippians 4:6, and Hebrews 4:14-16?

In his book entitled Ascertaining Bible Authority, Roy C. Deaver wrote, "The 'law of rationality' holds that 'we ought to justify our conclusions by adequate evidence'" (p. 29).

In his book entitled When Is An "Example" Binding, brother Thomas B. Warren wrote the following: "It is clear that the basic rule of a sound Biblical heremeneutic [sic] involves both adequate *induction* (the gathering of the needed relevant data or evidence) and correct *deduction* (the drawing only of such conclusions as are warranted by the evidence)" (p.96). On page 103 Warren wrote,

...in order to determine whether a specific passage in the Bible can be used to prove a thing to be binding (obligatory) on men today, correct use of *logic* (the principles of valid reasoning) must be made in connection with *the total context* (the specific statement under consideration, the immediate context, and the remote context) of all needed relevant passages in the totality of the Bible.

JACKSON:

Matthew 6:9

*What about Matthew 6:9? Does it restrict prayer to the Father alone? The fact that Jesus, in Matthew 6:9, was giving the disciples a brief and general outline of prayer, does not mean that such instruction covered **all** aspects of the theme.*

The sketch obviously is abbreviated. For example, there is no mention in this model about praying for the sick. Other biblical texts (e.g., James 5:14), however, allow for such.

*There is an interpretive principle which suggests that in related topical contexts, one passage may **expand** upon another. Compare, for example, Mark 16:16 with Acts 2:38.*

The former text does not mention repentance, but who will deny that such is required for salvation? If, therefore, there is evidence elsewhere in the New Testament that Christ was addressed in prayer—and that without censure—that should bring the issue into balance.

HILBURN:

Brother Jackson, you stated that "*The fact that Jesus, in Matthew 6:9, was giving the disciples a brief and general outline of prayer, does not mean that such instruction covered **all** aspects of the theme.*" Here you seem to imply that maybe we can pray to someone else besides the Father, but the answer to the question "To whom should we pray?" is made clear in both Jesus' teachings and other teachings of the New Testament, and I have seen no clear authority in the New Testament to pray to Jesus. "Pray to thy Father" is a command of Jesus that is surely part of "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you," and this command is reiterated throughout the New Testament by inspired men (Matthew 6:6; 28:20; Ephesians 3:11-14; 5:20; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 3:17; 4:2, 3; James 1:5; Revelation 8:3, 4, etc.).

Prayer is something that we must be "taught" how to do properly: "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples" (Luke 11:1 KJV). With that being said, what do the New Testament Scriptures teach us to do regarding prayer?

Brother Gary Colley noted that at the time Jesus taught His disciples how to pray, the prayer He taught them was "not prayed in the name of Christ (John 14:13-14; 16:23; Col. 3:17)." ("The Great Sermon on the Mount – Part 2," in Matthew, 1995 Denton Lectures, ed. Dub McClish). Before Jesus had ascended, Jesus said, "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name..." (John 16:24). After He ascended, His followers would ask Him nothing, but they would pray to the

Father in His name: "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16:23 KJV). We live in "that day," after His ascension to Heaven.

When we go to the Father "in Christ's name," this basically means that we speak to the Father by the authority of Christ. In his study book on prayer, brother James Meadows wrote: "Prayer in 'Christ's name is a prayer that is in harmony with whatever Christ has revealed concerning himself.' (William Hendrickson) It is by his authority and direction." (A Study of Prayer, p. 13). What did Christ reveal about who we are to address in prayer? If we pray by the authority of Christ, we should ask the question, "What has Christ authorized?"

Jesus taught us to make our requests known to the Father, and the Father is the one who answers our requests and gives us what we need: "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly. But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him" (Matthew 6:6-8 KJV).

Here are more verses from Matthew 6 teaching us that the Father is the one who takes care of our needs: "Our Father which art in Heaven" (Matthew 6:9); "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11); "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?" (Matthew 6:26 KJV); Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:30-32 KJV).

The next chapter records Jesus teaching again that the Father is the one we are to beseech in prayer: "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matthew 7:11).

Of course the ultimate example of the Father taking care of our needs is found in John 3:16: "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16 KJV).

After Jesus had ascended back to the Father, James told us to "ask of God" and that "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:5, 17 KJV). As stated earlier, perhaps that is the main reason we go to the Father in prayer: to make our requests known to Him, the giver of all good gifts, and to thank Him for those gifts! Why did Jesus need to pray to the Father while He was on earth? Obviously the Father has always been the giver of every good and every perfect gift! We should realize this and follow Christ's example by praying to our Father.

The writer of Hebrews told us that we are to approach the throne of God the Father to find grace to help in time of need (Hebrews 4:14-16; 8:1; 12:2). Paul said in everything we let our requests be made known unto God the Father (Philippians 4:6, 7).

It was also taught in Matthew 6 that the Father is the one we are to seek for forgiveness: "Our Father which art in Heaven...forgive us our debts" (Matthew 6:9, 12); "For if ye forgive men their

trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses" (Matthew 6:14, 15).

After Jesus ascended back to the Father, the apostle John wrote that the Father was still the one to whom we should confess our sins and seek for forgiveness: "This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare unto you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1 John 1:5-10 KJV). The pronoun "his" in verse 7 ("his Son") refers to the same "he" of verse 9 ("he is faithful"). This teaches us that the Father is the one to whom we confess our sins, and the one who forgives us (cf. Ephesians 4:32; 1 John 2:1, 12).

Just as Jesus taught His disciples to pray to the Father and ask Him for our various needs and forgiveness, other inspired writers like Luke, Paul, James, and John affirmed that nothing had changed after Jesus' ascension regarding this.

Here is a question to ponder: Knowing that Christians have been told to address the Father when we sin, if a Christian prays to Jesus for forgiveness of sins and confesses his sins to Jesus instead of the Father, will those sins be forgiven? Could the teaching that one may pray to Jesus lead people in that direction? If an alien sinner were to seek forgiveness of sins in a way other than obeying the Gospel, would he be forgiven? The law says that a child of God must address the Father in prayer when he sins, and would not the following proverb still apply? "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Proverbs 28:9 KJV). We are supposed to pray according to God's will to be heard (1 John 5:14), and we know that it is the Father's will for us to go to Him in repentance, confession, and prayer when we seek forgiveness.

JACKSON:

John 16:23

*The context of John 16:23—"you shall ask me nothing"—is not dealing with whether or not one may "address" Jesus in prayer. Rather, the Lord was emphasizing to the disciples that the questions bothering them at the moment (cf. v. 17), later, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, would be perfectly clear to them. Hence, there would be no need for inquiries of the type they were posing. The fact that later on addresses **are made to the Lord** establishes the fact that John 16:23 does not speak to that issue.*

HILBURN:

Yet here again in John 16:23 we read that "in that day" (in the future, after Jesus ascended) they would no longer speak to Jesus, but speak to the Father in the name of Christ: "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you" (John 16:23 KJV). Again Jesus said, "At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God" (John 16:26, 27 KJV). Jesus said that in that day (in the future), He would not pray to the Father for them, because they would pray to the Father themselves, making requests to the Father in the

name of Jesus. Therefore, Jesus taught them that even after He ascended back into Heaven, they would pray to the Father. They were concerned that Jesus would no longer be with them, but Jesus told them that the Holy Spirit would comfort them and guide them into all truth, and they would be able to speak to the Father and make requests of Him in Jesus' name.

This is the same teaching as recorded in the previous chapter: "Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you" (John 15:16 KJV).

Regarding the context of John 16:23: When I look at this text in more detail I believe that Jesus **is** discussing who they would speak to after Jesus' ascension:

(17). Then said some of his disciples among themselves, What is this that he saith unto us, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me: and, Because I go to the Father?

[They were worried that their Savior was going to leave them, and they would no longer see Him, JPH].

(18). They said therefore, What is this that he saith, A little while? we cannot tell what he saith.

(19). Now Jesus knew that they were desirous to ask him, and said unto them, Do ye enquire among yourselves of that I said, A little while, and ye shall not see me: and again, a little while, and ye shall see me?

(20). Verily, verily, I say unto you, That ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy.

(21). A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world.

(22). And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you.

(23). And **in that day ye shall ask me nothing**. Verily, verily, I say unto you, **Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you**.

[Not only would they no longer see Him – they would also no longer be asking Him anything. Obviously this made His disciples sad (v5, 6), so why didn't Jesus say, "but don't worry, you can speak to me anytime you want to in prayer"?

Jesus was teaching them that the Holy Spirit and the Father would have a more direct impact on their daily lives after He was gone back to Heaven. The Holy Spirit would guide them miraculously into "all truth," and they would speak directly to the Father in Christ's name to ask for other things they needed.

Notice the contrast that Jesus makes in John 16:23. The last half of the verse is obviously referring to prayer. Jesus is contrasting how they would communicate with Deity before and after His ascension. When Jesus stated that in that day they would ask him nothing, Jesus is revealing that even though they were then speaking to Jesus, after His ascension they would speak to the Father in Jesus' name. It seems to me that if we ignore the contrast Jesus is making in verse 23, we ignore what Jesus was really teaching].

(24). Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full.

[This is obviously regarding prayer also].

(25). These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father.

(26). At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will **pray** the Father for you:

[Jesus actually uses the word "**pray**" here].

(27). For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God.

[The Father loved them as His children, so they themselves would address Him as their Father in prayer].

(28). I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father.

Brother Jackson, you stated that this text "...is not dealing with whether or not one may "address" Jesus in prayer. Rather, the Lord was emphasizing to the disciples that the questions bothering them at the moment (cf. v. 17), later, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, would be perfectly clear to them. Hence, there would be no need for inquiries of the type they were posing." Although Jesus did mention the Holy Spirit earlier in this chapter, **verses 23-27 clearly reveal that Jesus was teaching them to address the Father in prayer after He was gone!** In John 16:23 Jesus emphasized the fact that they would no longer see or converse with Jesus, but they would be able to pray to the Father in Jesus' name. They would not be praying to Jesus or the Comforter, but only to the Father.

You also stated, "*The fact that later on addresses **are made to the Lord** establishes the fact that John 16:23 does not speak to that issue.*" However, we must take into consideration the fact that "the Lord" can refer to the Father or the Son, depending on the context. If the text merely mentions "the Lord," we should not automatically assume this is referring to Jesus, especially when other texts say that we should pray to the Father.

JACKSON:

The Nature of Deity

If deity is worthy of worship (cf. Psalm 18:3), and if Jesus is deity (John 10:30), then he is worthy of worship. Jesus himself said that the Son should be honored just as the Father is (John 5:23). And yet, if Christ may not be worshipped, either in prayer or in song (as some allege), how is he to be glorified by his disciples?

HILBURN:

Is there a difference in praising Jesus in song and getting down on your knees to pray to Jesus? Yes, and it should also be stated that we have clear Scriptural authority for one, and no clear Scriptural authority for the other.

Here is a question to ponder also, using the same logic mentioned above – The Holy Spirit is also Deity, so should we get down on our knees and pray to Him also? If not, why not? Using this reasoning, we should be praying to the Holy Spirit, as well as Christ and the Father, because they are all Deity. If Christ had used this logic while He was on earth, He would have been praying to the Holy Spirit, as well as the Father! However, He only prayed to the Father, and He only instructed His followers to pray to the Father. Jesus told them before His death, burial, and resurrection that even after He ascended, they were still supposed to pray to the Father (John 16:23).

The Bible says that Christ intercedes for us: "Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us" (Romans 8:34 KJV; cf. Heb. 7:25).

We should not assume that just because Christ is Deity that we should pray to Him. Is it not true that those in the Godhead have different roles? **Where one person of the Godhead is the one to whom we pray, another person of the Godhead is said to be an intercessor for us while we pray.**

JACKSON:

Does it seem reasonable that we may tell others of his greatness, but we may not breathe one word of thanksgiving to him personally?

HILBURN:

What seems reasonable is to reason from the Scriptures to determine the will of God. The Christian is bound to do what he is instructed to do in the Scriptures (John 4:24; Colossians 3:17). If we are instructed by Christ and the Holy Spirit to address the Father when we pray, then that is what we must do.

JACKSON:

Then this point is worthy of serious reflection: if deity is worthy of worship, and if Christ is deity, what position is the Christian in, if he withholds all worship from the Savior, and even opposes such?

HILBURN:

We should not withhold all worship from the Savior, but we pray to the Father.

JACKSON:

One of the characteristics of the "man of sin," as described in Paul's second letter to the church at Thessalonica, is that he "opposes and exalts himself against all that is called God or that is worshipped" (2:4). Christ is designated as "God" (John 1:1; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 1:8), and he accepted worship (Matthew 2:2; 14:33; Hebrews 1:6; Revelation 5:7ff). In whose company does this place those who oppose such today?

*If it was right to worship Jesus while he was on earth, why is it **now** wrong?*

HILBURN:

The question of worshiping Jesus is not being considered, but rather going to Jesus in prayer.

JACKSON:

Did his nature somehow change by virtue of his entrance into heaven, so that now he is less than he was during his earthly ministry?

If one may communicate directly with only the Father, and the Son is thus completely excluded, how does Jesus function in the role of our "mediator" (1 Timothy 2:5)? Does a mediator have any real purpose if he merely stands on the sideline, and is not an active participant in the exchange of the two parties between whom he mediates? If a mediator is functioning on my behalf with another party, may I not communicate with the mediator personally? If not, of what significance is the term "mediator"?

HILBURN:

I do not agree with this reasoning. If one addresses some prayers to the Father, and some prayers to the Son, is the Son no longer the "Mediator" when the prayer is strictly addressed to the Father? Christ is still our Mediator, even if we are not directly addressing Him in prayer; else we would always have to address either Christ alone, or both Christ and the Father in every single prayer!

Brother Jackson, you seem to imply that if we do not pray directly to Christ, He is no longer our Mediator, but it seems to me that just the opposite is true! The very words "mediator" and "intercessor" indicate that there are three parties involved. If we "deal directly" with Christ, then He is no longer a Mediator between two parties. If we pray directly to Christ, then He is no longer an intercessor between two parties. Praying to Christ would seem to take Him out of His Scriptural role.

Brother Gary Workman wrote the following words:

1 Timothy 2:5 has been adduced as an implication that we might pray to Jesus since He is our Mediator "between God and men." But this does not mean that we speak to Jesus and then ask Him to speak to God. Our Mediator, Intercessor, Advocate, and High Priest said, "Pray to thy Father" (Mt. 6:6). And early Christians understood it. They bowed their knees "unto the Father" (Eph. 3:14) and "lifted up their voice to God" (Acts 4:24). The Old Covenant also had a mediator and high priest (Moses and Aaron), but Jews could pray to neither one. We do not have an inherent right to pray to our Mediator any more than they could pray to theirs. One should no more pray to Jesus as Mediator or Intercessor than he should pray to the Holy Spirit who specifically intercedes for us in prayer (Rm. 8:26,27). ("Cults and Worship," in Worship in Spirit and Truth, 1994 Freed Hardeman Lectures, ed. David L. Lipe, p. 481).

Regarding Jesus' role when we pray, brother Wayne Cox wrote:

The idea is not that we speak to Jesus first, and then He takes our requests to God, but that we have direct access to God by the blood of Christ (Heb. 10:19). Jesus, as our High Priest (Heb. 3:1), is the "bridge builder" between God and man, the Mediator we so desperately need (1 Tim. 2:5). Because of His redemptive and mediatorial work, we can come to the throne of grace with boldness (Heb. 4:16). "Boldly" is the same word translated "confidence" (Heb. 3:6) and literally means "freedom of speech, openness." We have open access to God and can approach Him with confidence, not because we are deserving, but because of the sacrifice of Christ. ("Lord, Teach Us How to Pray," in Jesus

Christ, The Gift of God's Grace and the Object of Man's Faith, 1992 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, ed. Curtis A. Cates, p. 470).

Jesus is the "door" to the Father (John 10:9; 14:6) – Why would we pray to the door rather than the person on the other side of the door (the Father)? Jesus is the access giver (Ephesians 3:12). Should we "bow our knees" in prayer to the access giver, or should we bow to the one to whom He has given us access? (Ephesians 3:14).

If we had to directly address Christ to get our message to the Father, then we would be directly addressing Christ in every single prayer! For example, if we were praying merely to Christ, we would be directly addressing Christ, and if we needed to get a message to the Father, we would be directly addressing Christ to get our message to the Father! **This would mean that we would NEVER be addressing the Father in prayer!** This is not how Jesus taught us to pray. Neither is this the way the inspired writers of the New Testament taught us to pray.

The truth is that every time we pray to the Father in the name of Christ, Jesus is not "*completely excluded*," but rather He is an "*active participant*!" If Jesus were not our Mediator, we would not even be able to approach the throne of God as a child of God (John 14:6; Ephesians 3:11-14). Jesus also intercedes to the Father on our behalf (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1).

There is a difference between a mediator and an intercessor, and maybe those two roles are being misunderstood here. Brother Jackson, you mentioned that a mediator should be "*an active participant in the exchange of the two parties between whom he mediates*." This definition sounds more like the role of intercessor than mediator. The role of Mediator carries the idea of RECONCILIATION, and the role of Intercessor involves COMMUNICATION.

A **mediator** can be defined as "one who intervenes between two, either in order to make or restore peace and friendship, or form a compact, or for ratifying a covenant" (Thayer). **There is only one Mediator:** "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1 Timothy 2:5 KJV); "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:6 KJV). Christ is our only Mediator in the sense that He is the only one who paid our debt to God the Father, reconciling us to Him. Our sins separated us from the Father (Isaiah 59:1, 2), and Christ became flesh to give His blood as payment for our sins and establish a better Covenant with God (Matthew 26:28). After Christ did this for us, God the Father was satisfied: "He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isaiah 53:11 KJV). Christ is the Mediator who established the New Covenant between us and the Father: "But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises" (Hebrews 8:6 KJV). Our Mediator is the one who gives us "access" to the Father (Ephesians 3:11-14); that is why we pray to the Father "in His name" (John 16:23; Ephesians 5:20). Knowing this, could we pray to Jesus in the Father's name? Of course not! We cannot "mix and match" members of the Godhead! They have different roles.

Paul wrote of this boldness and access to the Father through Christ in his letter to the Ephesians: "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:11-14 KJV).

An **intercessor** is someone who pleads someone else's case before another party. Wordweb dictionary says an intercessor is "A negotiator who acts as a link between parties." **There can be many intercessors** who plead one's case before the Father. Some Biblical examples of

intercessors include: Abraham (Genesis 18:22-33); Moses (Exodus 32:30-32); Samuel (1 Samuel 7:5); The Holy Spirit when we pray (Romans 8:26, 27); Jesus when we pray (Romans 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 2:1); brothers and sisters in Christ (1 Timothy 2:1; James 5:16).

Even if we do not pray directly to Christ, Christ is still our Mediator when we pray to the Father "in the name of Christ"; and when we pray to the Father, Christ actively intercedes (pleads our case) to the Father. Again, the role of Mediator carries the idea of RECONCILIATION, and the role of Intercessor involves COMMUNICATION. Brother Jackson, when you state that a mediator should be "*an active participant in the exchange of the two parties between whom he mediates*," it seems as if you may be confusing reconciliation with communication.

We need to understand that just because Christ is Deity, that does not mean He serves the same role as God the Father, or the Holy Spirit! Christ's role involves Him being our only Mediator (1 Timothy 2:5), and He is also an intercessor between us and the Father (Romans 8:34; 1 John 2:1). The Holy Spirit is Deity, and an intercessor (Romans 8:26, 27), but He is not our Mediator. God the Father is NEITHER a mediator nor an intercessor, so His role is different! The Father's role has been described in the Scriptures in such ways as: the one to whom we pray; the one to whom we make requests; the one who gives every good and perfect gift; the one we always thank in prayer for all things (Matthew 6:9; John 16:23; James 1:17; Ephesians 5:20, etc.). **Just because we pray to the Father, this does not automatically mean we should pray to Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, who perform different functions in the Godhead.**

Notice also that God the Father is still the head of Christ, His Son, even though Jesus has gone back to Heaven: "But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God" (1 Corinthians 11:3 KJV); "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (1 Corinthians 15:26-28 KJV).

Just as Christ is called the Son of God, we through adoption are also called the sons of God, and are joint-heirs with Christ (Romans 8:14-17 KJV; cf. Galatians 3:26-29). Jesus' followers are called His brothers and sisters: "...go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God" (John 20:17 KJV; cf. Matthew 12:48-50; Romans 8:29; Galatians 4:4-7; Hebrews 2:11, 12, 17).

Just as Jesus the Son prayed to His Father, he taught the other "children of God" to pray to their Father also. Looking at Jesus as a brother, should one brother pray to another brother, or should we pray to our Father (as Jesus did, and as He commanded us to do)? Eddie Whitten noted that "Some have the mistaken notion that we are to pray to Jesus, as our elder brother" ("Has the New Testament Church Been Restored?," in Heaven's Imperatives, or Man's Innovations: Shall We Restructure the Church of Christ?, 1995 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, ed. Curtis A. Cates, p. 20).

If we can pray to Jesus (Son of God, our brother), then can we pray to other sons of God, who are our brethren? Surely we can see the difference between a brother and the Father. The Father is different from the Son, and He is the head of the Son, so what applies to one does not necessarily apply to the other.

JACKSON:

New Testament Precedent

Aside from the scriptural/logical points listed above, there is ample New Testament precedent for communication with Christ. Note the following:

*(1) In John 14:14, Christ, speaking in anticipation of his ascension back to the Father, promised the disciples: "If you ask me anything in my name, I will do it" (ESV). The pronoun "me" is omitted in some Greek texts, but, as Bruce Metzger has noted, "The word **me** is adequately supported." He cites some of the oldest and best manuscript witnesses, and adds that "**me** seems to be appropriate in view of its correlation with ego ["I"] later in the verse" (A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament, London: United Bible Societies, 1971, p. 244). For further discussion see: Hovey, Robertson, Lenski, Hendriksen, Morris, etc.*

HILBURN:

Does it not seem strange or redundant for Jesus to say, "whatever you ask me in my name?" Brother Workman stated that "the inclusion of the word ["me," JPH] results in the absurdity of praying to Jesus in Jesus' name" ("Cults and Worship," in Worship in Spirit and Truth, 1994 Freed Hardman Lectures, ed. David L. Lipe, p. 479).

It is much more logical to approach the throne of the Father by the authority of Jesus than it is to approach Jesus by His own authority. This especially seems so when we are told to pray to the Father in Jesus' name in other texts. It also makes more sense when noting the fact that Jesus is described as Mediator, Advocate, High Priest, and Intercessor (between us and the Father). Why would we pray to our Mediator by the authority of our Mediator?

Apparently the scholars who worked on translations like the KJV, ASV, and NKJV did not see the "me" as being appropriate, because the "me" is not found in those translations: "And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If ye shall ask anything in my name, that will I do" (John 14:13, 14 ASV). Brother Jackson, you did not mention verse 13. Verse 13 mentions that the Father is a part of this. An example of asking something of the Father and then having Jesus do something is when Christians pray to the Father for the forgiveness of sins. 1 John 1:5-10 and 2:1 teaches us that even though we are praying to the Father, Jesus is interceding for us (advocating), and it is His blood that cleanses us from our sins.

Brother Jerry Moffitt mentioned John 14:13 when he was writing about Providence:

the Bible...speaks of God the Father, and even of Jesus as being active in Providence. Notice what Jesus says, And whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do (John 14:13). One needs only to turn to the first three chapters of Revelation to see how active Jesus is in the affairs of the church and of the world. And though the Bible teaches that, it still does not teach that we should pray to Jesus. ("The Meaning of Providence in Contrast to Anti-Providence Views," in The Providence of God, 1989 Power Lectures, ed. Thomas B. Warren and Garland Elkins, p. 70).

Adding the "me" in John 14:14 would seem to contradict John 16:23 and 24, which is in the context of prayer: "And in that day ye shall ask me no question. Verily, verily, I say unto you, if ye shall ask anything of the Father, he will give it you in my name." Hitherto have ye asked

nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be made full" (John 16:23, 24 ASV).

Adding the "me" to John 14:14 seems presumptuous when one closely considers a) the context and meaning of the verse; b) John 16:23 says that they would ask Jesus nothing after His resurrection; c) Jesus' role as set forth in the Scriptures; d) the fact that it is not found in translations such as the KJV, ASV, or NKJV; and e) Why would we pray to our Mediator by the authority of our Mediator?

JACKSON:

(2) After the ascension of Christ, Peter guided the brethren toward the selection of a new apostle to replace Judas, who had committed suicide. Certain qualifications were imposed, and two names were set forth as candidates, Barsabbas and Matthias. But which one of these was best suited? The disciples sought divine counsel. Luke writes: "And they prayed, and said, You, Lord, who knows the hearts of all men, show of these two the one whom you have chosen" (Acts 1:24).

The crucial question is this: who is the "Lord" to whom the petition is addressed? The most reasonable answer is that the term refers to Jesus. He is the one who had "chosen" the apostles originally (cf. 1:2, where the same word is used). He is most often ascribed the term "Lord" in the New Testament (unless a text is being taken from the Old Testament), and, in fact, Jesus is so designated in the immediately preceding context (vv. 6,21). A great host of respectable scholars (my survey revealed an overwhelming majority) contend that Christ is the object of this prayer in Acts 1:24 (see Alexander, Barnes, Bloomfield, Bengal, Bruce, Kistemaker, Larkin, Knowling, Williams, Zahn, etc.).

HILBURN:

Brother Jackson, with all due respect, in this article you repeatedly appeal to "scholars" who do not even understand or teach the truth regarding matters as simple as the Gospel Plan of Salvation! Here you mentioned a "survey" of scholars performed to see what they believe. While these scholars may be Scriptural and very knowledgeable in some areas, if we always followed the majority in matters of religion, we would all be lost. As you stated, the word "Lord" can refer to the Father or the Son. As a matter of fact, just three chapters following Acts chapter one, there is a prayer recorded in which the Father was called "Lord" three times by the apostles and those with them: "And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, thou art God, which hast made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of thy servant David hast said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel determined before to be done. And now, Lord, behold their threatenings: and grant unto thy servants, that with all boldness they may speak thy word, By stretching forth thine hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done by the name of thy holy child Jesus" (Acts 4:24-30 KJV).

If a text merely mentions "the Lord," we should not automatically assume this is referring to Jesus, especially when other texts say that we should pray to the Father.

Acts 1:24 could very well refer to the Father – the one Jesus said they would address after His ascension: "And in that day ye shall ask me nothing. Verily, verily, I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall ask the Father in my name, he will give it you. Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full. These things have I spoken unto you in proverbs: but the time cometh, when I shall no more speak unto you in proverbs, but I shall shew you plainly of the Father. At that day ye shall ask in my name: and I say not unto you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loveth you, because ye have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God" (John 16:23-27 KJV).

Acts 1:24 could refer to the Father – the one Jesus consulted in prayer before the original disciples were chosen! Notice the following:

...before selecting the original apostles, Jesus prayed to the Father (Lk. 6:13,14). Also, both Ananias and Paul said that "God" appointed Paul to his apostleship (Acts 22:14; Eph. 1:1; Tit. 1:3). The word "Lord" often refers to Jesus, but it is also used of the Father—such as in the prayer of Acts 4. Therefore, this passage does not prove praying to Jesus (Gary Workman, "Cults and Worship," in Worship in Spirit and Truth, 1994 Freed Hardeman Lectures, ed. David L. Lipe, p. 479).

In Galatians 1:15 and 16 Paul said that it was God who chose Him for his task: "But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by his grace, To reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood."

JACKSON:

*(3) Stephen's prayer to the Lord is presented unambiguously in Acts 7:59-60, with the obvious endorsement of Jesus himself (as evidenced by the vision). Attempts to nullify this example (by suggesting that the case is miraculous, or that Stephen is merely "speaking with" the Lord, not "praying") are unconvincing. Is one permitted to do that which intrinsically is **wrong**—just because the circumstances associated with the event are miraculous? And how can Stephen's **requests** be considered a mere conversation, rather than elements of prayer? Guy N. Woods characterized the "view that a person cannot address a petition of any kind to Christ" as "absurd," and as a reflection of "nit-picking." He cited the example of Stephen's prayer as contrary evidence (see Harrell Davidson, *Over the Vast Horizon—Authorized Biography of Guy N. Woods*, Obion, TN: Harrell Davidson Publishing, 2003, p. 272). Nigel Turner, one of Great Britain's most respected Greek scholars, contends that this case is a powerful argument for the deity of Christ. He notes: "A pious Hellenistic Jew would not pray to one less than God" (*Grammatical Insights Into The New Testament*, Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1965, p. 14).*

HILBURN:

If a person literally saw Jesus today, he would probably speak to Jesus also! Could this be merely an account of action, and not necessarily an example for us to follow today? It is safe to say that this type of event is not going to happen to any of us. In his book entitled When Is An "Example" Binding?, brother Thomas B. Warren wrote, "...accounts of action may or may not be 'examples.' That must be determined according to the detail set out in the basic thesis of this book (correct logic must be used in connection with *the total* context of a specific account of action)" (p. 165). Warren also wrote that one type of action found in the Scriptures is action that was *optional* and *temporary*: "*Action which was optional and temporary.* This classification refers to action which was optional (that is, they could—with God's approval—do the actions

thus classified) for New Testament characters, but which is not optional for men now living" (p. 134).

Brother Workman wrote:

Acts 7:59 and Revelation 22:20 have Stephen saying, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit" and John exclaiming, "Come, Lord Jesus." If these requests authorize us to pray to Jesus, do requests made to heavenly elders and angels in Revelation (7:13,14; 10:8-9) authorize us to pray to them? Let us remember that both Stephen and John were inspired men who were caught up in heavenly visions in which Jesus was personally manifested. Therefore, their statements can in no way serve as a pattern for our practice today ("Cults and Worship," in Worship in Spirit and Truth, 1994 Freed Hardeman Lectures, ed. David L. Lipe, p. 480).

Brother Eddie Whitten stated that "...this was a special, miraculous event. Today, the heavens do not open, and we do not see Jesus standing on the right hand of God. To take this event out of its context to substantiate the practice of praying to Jesus is a misapplication of Biblical hermeneutics" ("The Prayer in Christ's Name," in Living in Trust: A Study in the Bible Doctrine of Prayer, 1993 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, ed. Curtis A. Cates, p. 167).

Brother Denny London wrote the following regarding this account: "So here we have an inspired man witnessing an inspired scene in heaven, not an ordinary event in the life of Christians now living" ("Misconceptions: Praying to Jesus, Holy Spirit; Invocation of Saints," in Living in Trust: A Study in the Bible Doctrine of Prayer, 1993 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, ed. Curtis A. Cates, p. 471).

It is said that Roy Lanier, Sr., once told a student who addressed Jesus in prayer and cited Stephen's example, "If you are ever being stoned, and if you see Jesus standing at the right hand of God, you may do that; but until then I suggest that you pray to the Father through Jesus" ("Prayer: To Whom and Through Whom?," in *Perspective*).

Regarding brother Woods' statement: With all due respect to brother Woods, if refusing to do something for which I have no clear Biblical authority is being "nit-picky," then call me nit-picky (Colossians 3:17). So far I have not found clear Biblical authority for praying to Jesus.

JACKSON:

(4) Paul concludes his first Corinthian epistle with this word: "Marana-tha." The term is Aramaic, and can be rendered (depending upon how it is divided) as either "our Lord came," or "O Lord, come!" Most Greek scholars (cf. Balz & Schneider, Danker), and the best English translations, believe the latter is preferable. See Revelation 22:20, which definitely reflects the latter sense.

HILBURN:

Is this really a prayer? Workman wrote:

Historically it was never considered to be a prayer to Jesus. Early Greek and Latin expositors said that it was a statement in the past tense: "Our Lord has come" (see also Young's Concordance and Lamsa's translation from the Aramaic). One should not base his religious practice on precarious speculation that it is a prayer ("Cults and Worship," in Worship in Spirit and Truth, 1994 Freed Hardeman Lectures, ed. David L. Lipe, p. 479).

Regarding Revelation 22:20, brother Eddie Whitten wrote: "This was uttered by an apostle who has just received The Revelation from the mouth of Jesus. This does not happen today...Those who apply this verse to justify that practice [praying to Jesus, JPH] also misuse the rules of Biblical interpretation" ("The Prayer in Christ's Name," in Living in Trust: A Study in the Bible Doctrine of Prayer, 1993 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, ed. Curtis A. Cates, pp. 168).

See also Gary Workman's comments on Revelation 22:20 above.

JACKSON:

(5) In 2 Corinthians 12, Paul recounts being afflicted with that mysterious "thorn in the flesh," because of the glorious revelation he had experienced 14 years earlier. He states that on three occasions he had begged "the Lord" to remove it (v. 8). Who was the Lord? Let the context speak. The response to Paul's prayers had been a firm "no" (implied)—with the extension, "My grace is sufficient for you." The apostle then gloried in the fact that the "power of Christ" would be sufficient for him (v. 9).

HILBURN:

The text actually does not say that "the power of Christ" would be sufficient for him: "And by reason of the exceeding greatness of the revelations, that I should not be exalted overmuch, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, that I should not be exalted overmuch. Concerning this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for *my* power is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:7-10 ASV). Notice that the word "my" is in italics, because it was not in the original text. Brother Workman wrote:

...checking the literal (Greek) reading of this passage, one finds that the Lord did say "my" grace but did not say "my" power. He said "the power is perfected in weakness," which Paul identified as "the power of Christ." Therefore, it is probable that in verse 8 it was the Father speaking to Paul, promising Christ's power. However, it really makes no difference, for God's power and Christ's may be mentioned interchangeably because of being the same in essence. Paul spoke here of the power of Christ but later said that we shall live with Christ "through the power of God" (13:4). Divine comfort in the face of affliction is literally "by God" and "through Christ" (1:4). So the power is from both. No, this passage does not demonstrate a prayer to Jesus. And in the next chapter Paul said, "We pray to God" (13:7). ("Jesus and Prayer," in The Person And Life Of Christ, Bedford, TX: Christian Supply Center, 1983, p. 116).

Could it not be said that "the power of Christ" is what gives us access to the grace of the Father? Since that is the case, Paul could have been praying to the Father. The following are some verses which state that we have access to the grace of the Father by Christ: Romans 5:15; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Galatians 2:21; Hebrews 4:14-16.

Paul very well could have been "bowing his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" in this case (Ephesians 3:14). The Father of mercies' (2 Corinthians 1:3) grace was sufficient for him to make it through the sufferings of this earth, and the power and glory of Christ would be manifested in him. Notice what Paul had written about the Father in the first chapter of this same epistle: "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies,

and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ" (2 Corinthians 1:3-5 KJV).

In regards to finding grace through prayer in difficult times, the writer of Hebrews explained that we can boldly approach God's throne of grace because Jesus is our High Priest interceding between us and the Father: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16 KJV). With Christ as Paul's High Priest, he could go to the throne of the Father to find grace to help in his time of need. The writer of Hebrews tells us that God the Father is the one who is on the throne of grace (Hebrews 8:1; 12:2).

Before concluding that Paul prayed to Jesus, one should take note of what Paul taught about prayer in other passages: Paul is the one who told us that Christ is an intercessor between us and the Father (Romans 8:34); Regarding the Jews, Paul wrote, "my prayer to God" (Romans 10:1), and in 2 Corinthians 13:7 Paul wrote "I pray to God." Paul said we have boldness and access by Christ, but he said he prayed to the Father: "According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 3:11-14 KJV); Paul is the one who told us not to be anxious about anything when we are troubled, but to pray to the Father: "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:6, 7 NKJV); Paul is the one who wrote that we should give thanks to the Father always for all things in the name of Christ: "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:20 KJV; cf. Colossians 3:17); Paul is the one who told the Colossians to pray to God the Father in Colossians 4: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds" (Colossians 4:2, 3 KJV).

It is obvious that Paul prayed to the Father, and that he only commanded others to pray to the Father, just as Jesus commanded. It is interesting that in the same verse Paul taught us that we should seek authority from God in all that we do, he also taught us to pray to the Father "by" Christ: "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17).

Regarding what Paul commanded about prayer, if we are to give thanks in prayer "always" to God the Father, how much time is left over for prayer to Jesus? (Ephesians 5:20). If we are to thank God the Father for "all things" in prayer, how many things are left over for us to thank Jesus for in prayer? (Ephesians 5:20). If "in everything" we let our requests be made known unto God in prayer, how many things are left over for us to pray to Jesus about? (Philippians 4:6). Verses like these are comprehensive and specific. If we can pray to Jesus sometimes regarding some things, then the Bible must contradict itself!

Neither Paul, nor John, nor any other inspired writer of the New Testament ever commanded us to pray to Christ.

Even after all this evidence, if someone were still to conclude that Paul was speaking with Jesus, let him note what brother Eddie Whitten wrote:

...this event has taken place in the context of Paul being caught up into the "third heaven" (II Cor. 12:2). It is implied that an exchange took place between Paul and the one to whom He was pleading. He said he "besought the Lord thrice." The answer he received was, "My grace is sufficient for thee.. ." (v. 9). Once more, we appeal to the time and circumstance. This was a very special, miraculous event involving an apostle. God, or Jesus, as the case may be, does not converse with us and give us verbal answers to our pleas. To use this passage as authority to pray to Jesus is again a misapplication of the rules of Biblical interpretation. ("The Prayer in Christ's Name," in Living in Trust: A Study in the Bible Doctrine of Prayer, 1993 Memphis School of Preaching Lectures, ed. Curtis A. Cates, pp. 167, 168).

When we pray today do we get verbal answers to our requests? In Paul's case, clearly two-way communication was going on! That does not happen with us today, and this account is not an example that would apply to us today.

JACKSON:

(6) In his first letter to the brethren at Thessalonica, one of Paul's prayers is recorded: "Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way unto you" (3:11). The subject of the sentence is compound, "Father" and "Jesus," yet the verb, "direct," is singular. W.E. Vine notes that "this prayer is addressed to the Lord Jesus conjointly with the Father" (1 & 2 Thessalonians, Nashville: Nelson, 1997, p. 78). Other commentators, drawing the same conclusion, are far too numerous to mention.

HILBURN:

Is this really a prayer? Who is Paul addressing? Is he directly addressing the Father and Christ? Do not the pronouns "our" and "you" tell us who he is addressing? (the Thessalonians). Notice what brother Workman wrote:

Further, worship has always been an overt act...The TDNT says that "proskune (worship)...remains limited to a single act..."It requires specific action. It has a starting place and a stopping place...Nearing Mt. Moriah, Abraham told his servants to remain behind while he and Isaac "go yonder and worship" (Gen. 22:5). ("Cults and Worship," in Worship in Spirit and Truth, 1994 Freed Hardeman Lectures, ed. David L. Lipe, p. 476).

JACKSON:

*(7) There is a similar prayer recorded in the second letter to the same church. "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" (2 Thessalonians 2:16-17). Again, the subject is compound, yet both verbs ("comfort" and "establish") are singular. Scholars are virtually unanimous in the view that the apostle's prayer is **jointly** addressed to both the Father and the Son—and what is most unusual in this case is the fact that Jesus is placed first.*

HILBURN:

With all due respect to you, brother Jackson, the words of these scholars are irrelevant to me, and are they even true children of God? I personally find it difficult to put much trust in men who either do not understand or do not teach the Gospel Plan of Salvation in its purity.

Is this really a prayer, or would this be better described as Paul merely "wishing them well" through God's blessings? Notice the pronouns used in the verse, and see that these words are not addressed to the Father or the Son – "our" Lord; "our" Father; loved "us"; gave "us"; comfort "your" hearts.

JACKSON:

*(8) In his first epistle to Timothy, Paul uttered these words: "I thank him who has given me strength, Christ Jesus our Lord, because he judged me faithful, appointing me to his service, though formerly I was a blasphemer, persecutor, and insolent opponent" (1 Timothy 1:12-13 ESV). The words "I thank" represent the combination of a noun and verb. The noun is charis, "gratitude" or "thanks." The verb is echo, in the present tense, which can represent either a sustained state or an intermittent activity. The Greek pronoun to is rendered "to him," a dative case form that has Christ as the indirect object. Robertson translates it: "I have gratitude to" (Word Pictures, Nashville: Broadman, 1931, IV, p. 563). D. Edmond Hiebert notes that Paul's gratitude "is directed toward" Christ (First Timothy, Chicago: Moody Press, 1957, p. 39). This is not merely a statement **about** the apostle's gratitude to the Lord, but an expression of thanksgiving **to** the Savior. How do you suppose this thanksgiving was conveyed **to the Lord**? Gordon Fee has observed that while it usually is the case that Paul directs his prayers to God, here his gratitude is directed to Christ (1, 2 Timothy, Titus—New International Biblical Commentary, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1988, p. 50; see also Ralph Earle, 1 Timothy—The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978, p. 354).*

HILBURN:

I have gratitude toward Christ also, but that does not mean I address him directly in prayer, because He told me to pray to the Father. I thank Christ in song, as the Bible commands me to. Notice the following:

1 Timothy 1:12 has been used to support praying to Jesus since Paul said (in the KJV), "I thank Christ Jesus our Lord." However, this is not a literal rendering but rather, "I have thanks." The expression speaks of Paul's thankful heart, his feeling of gratitude, rather than the overt action of prayer. Even the KJV rendered the identical expression in Hebrews 12:28 as "having grace," meaning "be thankful." (Gary Workman, "Cults and Worship," in Worship in Spirit and Truth, 1994 Freed Hardeman Lectures, ed. David L. Lipe, p. 481).

I also have gratitude toward the Holy Spirit, but that does not mean I go to Him in prayer.

JACKSON:

(9) In Revelation chapter 5—the entire section of which is designed to exalt the glorified Christ—John records that the "twenty-four elders" fell down "before the Lamb." They each had "golden bowls" which, symbolically, contained "incense." John informs the reader that this incense represented the "prayers of the saints" (5:8). Clearly, these prayers were ascending to Christ. Furthermore, in a song of worship, the Lord Jesus was directly addressed, "Worthy are you" (v. 9). In verse 13, the entire creation offers praise to the Father and Son equally.

HILBURN:

It is not clear to me that these prayers had been directly addressed to Christ. The context of Revelation 5 takes place in the presence of the throne. The Lamb was next to the throne, and there was someone next to Him, sitting on the throne: God 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 honor, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever" (Revelation 5:13 KJV). In the previous chapter, these same elders who were holding the harps and incense were worshiping God the Father, the one who sat on the throne: "The four and twenty elders fall down before him that sat on the throne, and worship him that liveth for ever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne..." (Revelation 4:10 KJV).

Could these prayers of chapter 5 have been prayers to the Father on the throne, perhaps in thanksgiving for all the spiritual blessings found in Christ? When we pray to the Father thanking Him for all the spiritual blessings in Christ, is that not also a sweet smelling aroma to Christ, even though the prayer is directly addressed to the Father? After all, Jesus is "between" us and God, and is aware of our prayers, being our Mediator, Advocate, High Priest, and Intercessor. It can also be said that these prayers are going up by faith in Christ, and in His name.

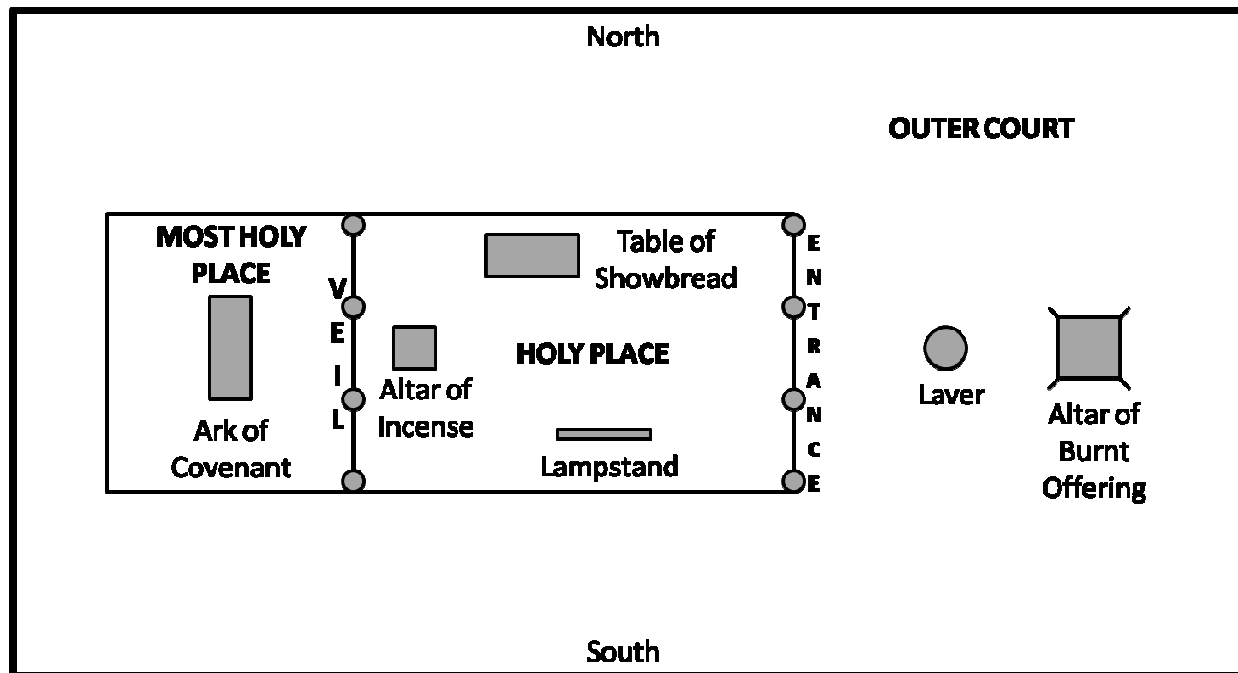
Here is another point of interest -- Revelation chapter 7 indicates that the Lamb was still by God the Father's throne, yet the opening verses of chapter 8 record the prayers of all saints being officially offered on an altar to God the Father: "And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given unto him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God out of the angel's hand" (Revelation 8:2-4 KJV).

It appears as if in chapter 5 they were merely holding these vials, and not officially offering them up on the altar. The elders of chapter 5 were described as "**having**...golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of the saints," but here in chapter 8, the prayers of all saints are **actually offered on the golden altar before the throne, ascending up to God the Father**. **Notice that it does not say that some prayers of the saints went up before Christ, and some prayers of the saints went up before God. The prayers of ALL SAINTS ascended up before God.** Isn't that the same teaching we have received from the writer of Hebrews? He taught us to boldly approach God's throne in prayer because Christ is our High Priest (Hebrews 4:14-16; 7:25, 26; 8:1; 12:2).

Chapter 5 does not say that the elders officially offered up the incense on the altar to the Lamb, but it does say they sang to the Lamb. Let us sing to the Lamb, and let our prayers rise up as sweet smelling incense to God the Father.

The reference to a censer and burning incense is obviously related to the worship of the tabernacle and temple of the Old Covenant. The tabernacle was a pattern of things which would come in the future, with practically every part having a spiritual meaning for the future (Hebrews 8; 9). As mentioned here in Revelation, the altar of burnt incense represented the prayers of the saints. The veil represented the body of Christ (Hebrews 10:19, 20; Matthew 27:51). The presence of God was in the Most Holy Place (Exodus 25:21, 22). The writer of Hebrews implied that the altar of burnt incense was a "part" of the Most Holy Place, even though it was actually just outside of the Most Holy Place (Hebrews 9:3, 4). What does all of this have to do with this discussion? Could the placement of these parts of the tabernacle be symbolic of the fact that

the prayers of the saints (altar of incense) go through Christ (the veil) into the presence of God the Father (the Most Holy Place)? If the prayers stopped at the point of the veil, they would never arrive in the presence of God the Father. See figure below:



JACKSON:

(10) In the first chapter of the book of Hebrews, the sacred writer argues for the superiority of Christ over the angels (in pursuing his case that the New Covenant is superior to the Mosaic Covenant). In presenting his cause, he quotes from several different psalms (songs) from the Old Testament. In some of these psalms, the author, by **divine inspiration**, directly addresses the Messiah in praise. See Psalms 2:9; 45:6ff; 102:25ff.

In Psalm 2, David praises the Anointed One with these words: "You shall break them [Jehovah's enemies] with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (v. 9; cf. Revelation 2:27; 19:15). In Psalm 45:6ff, the singer extols: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; and the scepter of uprightness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated iniquity. Therefore, God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness above your fellows." Psalm 102, which is both a "prayer" (v. 1) and a song, the lyrics are: "You, Lord [Christ], in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of your hands" (vv. 25ff). Incidentally, this demonstrates that one can **sing a prayer** (cf. Acts 16:25 Greek text).

Now here is the intriguing question. Since the design of Hebrews, chapter 1, is to establish the deity of Christ, would the inspired writer have employed arguments that involved inspired men singing praises to Christ, if he knew that, in point of fact, **Christians are not permitted to praise the Lord in song? Or speak to him in prayer?** Such would have undermined the writer's entire case. Clearly he took for granted the fact that praise to the Lord Jesus was an integral part of Christian worship.

HILBURN:

Here are some objections to point (10):

1. Can we rightfully discard everything the New Testament teaches about singing to Christ and praying to the Father because of this reference to a small part of an Old Testament psalm? Just because the writer of Hebrews quoted a part of Psalm 102, this does not mean that we can pray to Jesus. Jesus Himself taught us to pray to the Father!
2. I do not see how it could be proven that people in the Old Testament intentionally and specifically addressed prayers to the second person of the Godhead. Is it not possible that the "prayer" of Psalm 102 could have been originally been directed towards "God in general," but later the writer of Hebrews sheds light on this by showing that verses 25-27 can be applied to Christ? Both God the Father and Jesus are given the credit for creation. As a matter of fact, in Hebrews 1 (the very chapter under discussion), it says that God made the worlds by Christ (Hebrews 1:2). In Hebrews 3:4 the same writer wrote, "he who built all things is God." We should also note that the New Testament tells us that the inspired writers of the Old Testament did not always understand the full meaning or implications of everything God inspired them to write:

Concerning this salvation, the prophets who prophesied about the grace that was to be yours searched and inquired carefully, **inquiring what person** or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look" (1 Peter 1:10-12 ESV, emphasis mine, JPH).

3. Of course the people who lived under the Old Covenant had access to this psalm, and I am sure they did not infer from this psalm that they should pray directly to the second person of the Godhead. We know they were not asking "in Jesus' name" back then as we do today. There is a difference in the way people prayed in the Old Testament versus how we pray in the New Testament. In Jesus' teachings there is a clear distinction between the way people prayed before and after Jesus' ascension. Compare "the model prayer" with the way Jesus said His followers would pray after His ascension (Matthew 6:9ff; John 16:23-27). Regarding the time after Jesus' ascension, He said "in that day" His followers would ask Him nothing, but they would pray to the Father in His name. We live in "that day."
4. Psalm 102 addresses "the LORD," and in the psalm following Psalm 102, "the LORD" clearly refers to God the Father: "Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him" (Psalm 103:13 KJV).
5. In Hebrews 1, the writer of Hebrews was merely quoting an Old Testament passage to show Christ's Deity and superiority over the angels. To take this text and teach that people today should pray to Jesus would be stretching the Scriptures too far. In D. R. Dungan's book, Hermeneutics, he wrote the following in regards to the interpretation of Scripture:

Rule 1. Always interpret according to the known purpose of the author...It would be as well to take a description of some part of Asia and apply it to the United States, as to employ the language of any of the writers of the Scriptures to a subject other than that which was in his mind at the time

when the words and sentences under consideration were employed. We would, in that way, compel the writer to say just the things which he did not intend to say. The work of the exegete is to bring out the meaning of the writing, which must be the meaning the author intended to put into it... Hence, the greatest possible care should be taken that every writer in the book divine should be made to mean just what he wished to be understood to say. It is not what we can compel the Bible to say, that we are to seek, but what it was employed to say, what the writer meant when he said what he did... [There should be, JPH] nothing that causes the mind to part company with the author. (pp. 172-174, 176).

6. Read Hebrews 1 and see that the subject of praying to Jesus is not mentioned. Read the whole book of Hebrews and see that there is no mention of praying to Jesus. The writer of Hebrews is not teaching us to pray to Jesus!
7. If someone wants to know what the writer of Hebrews taught regarding prayer, he should go to Hebrews chapters 4 and 7, where that subject is specifically addressed! The writer of Hebrews teaches that Christ is our High Priest who gives us access to the throne of God: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:14-16 KJV); "Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them. For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (Hebrews 7:25, 26 KJV). **The writer of Hebrews did NOT teach us to pray to Jesus!** He taught us that Jesus is our Intercessor when we approach the throne. God the Father is on the throne, with Christ on His right hand (Hebrews 8:1; 12:2).
8. If quoting an Old Testament Psalm like Psalm 102 proves that we can sing and pray to Jesus, does it also prove that we can use mechanical instruments, as people like David and other psalm writers did? There is an old saying that "What proves too much proves nothing," and if we try to make Hebrews 1 prove that prayer to Jesus is authorized, then I believe we have tried to prove too much.
9. Brother Jackson, you cited Acts 16:25 in the Greek as an example of singing and praying at the same time, but in our most reliable translations (including the ESV), it is not translated as if those two acts were combined into one act: "About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them" (Acts 16:25 ESV). Even if singing and praying were happening at the same time, is it not possible that Paul could have been praying while Silas was singing, or vice versa? It is very easy to imagine two men in prison, one of them singing praises to God, and the other one being in fervent prayer. Brother Dan Cates, instructor of the Greek class at the Memphis School of Preaching, wrote the following about Acts 16:25:

There is nothing in the text or context that speaks regarding the difficulty. However, glancing at a couple of literal versions on e-Sword, we see the following: ALT-"But about midnight Paul and Silas praying, were singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them." LITV-"And having

prayed, toward midnight Paul and Silas praised God in a hymn. And the prisoners listened to them." YLT-"And at midnight Paul and Silas praying, were singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were hearing them," Notice that there are two entirely different translations: "praying, were singing" (both being done at the same time) or "having prayed, . . . praised [sang]" (singing after praying). So, for the scholars who translated this text literally, there were two opposing views that could be argued from the same text. Let us look at the words in question, noticing KJV+TVM: "prayed" (προσευχόμενοι) is Present, Middle or Passive Deponent, Participle (5740) while "sang praises" (ᾠμουν) is Imperfect, Active, Indicative (5707). This means that "prayed" should be translated "praying for themselves" as opposed to having someone else do their praying for them (middle), taking into account the deponent aspect of the verb--active in meaning though in the middle voice, and the participial aspect of the verb--"the participle has no imperfect, the present is used in its place with past tense verbs" (Hadjiantoniou). We can eliminate the passive which would mean "are being prayed" (passive). Also, this means that "sang praises" should be translated "were singing praises." Taking these things into consideration, this could be translated, "And at midnight Paul and Silas (are) praying for themselves [as opposed to having someone else do their praying for them], were singing praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them." I would interpret the verse this way: Could this not mean that each was offering his own prayers, but they were (at the same time, i.e., while in bonds on this night prior to the earthquake) singing songs of praise which were being heard by the other prisoners?

In any case, their prayers were directed to God.

10. There are clear distinctions made between the acts of singing and praying in the New Testament (Matthew 26:30-41; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Colossians 3:16, 17; Ephesians 5:19, 20; James 5:13). See further discussion on this below:

Singing a song in a worship service is different from praying, is it not? Do we not rightfully make a distinction between the two acts?

In his article entitled "Singing to Jesus," brother Darrell Broking wrote:

New Testament worship is comprised of five acts, distinct from each other... While certain acts of worship share similarities, each act is separate and distinct from all other acts of worship...When the preacher reads the words Jesus uttered in prayer (Luke 22:42), the preacher is not praying, nor is the congregation praying. Singing the words Jesus prayed to the Father (e.g., "A Beautiful Prayer") does not turn the hymn into a prayer, any more than reading or quoting the words does. Because a song expresses praise, attributes honor, or pledges commitment to the Christ, does not mean that it thereby constitutes praying to Jesus. Such a song might even address the Lord "directly" and not be a prayer ("Jesus, greatest, highest, I will come to Thee"). ("Singing to Jesus," in *The Gospel Journal*, January, 2002, p. 18).

Does not the New Testament make a clear distinction between singing and praying? Notice the contrast in James words: "Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms" (James 5:13 KJV). Obviously singing and praying are two totally different acts.

Did not Paul make a distinction between singing to the Lord Jesus and giving thanks to God the Father in prayer? Notice closely what he wrote: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord. And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:16-17 KJV). Paul also made this distinction in Ephesians 5:19, 20: "Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord; Giving thanks **always for all things unto God** and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Ephesians 5:19, 20 KJV). Paul differentiated the two acts of worship again in a letter to the Corinthians: "What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1 Corinthians 14:15 KJV).

Notice the distinction between singing and praying in Matthew 26. After Jesus had instituted the Lord's Supper, they sang a hymn: "And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives" (Matthew 26:30 KJV). Then something totally different took place – prayer: "Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder" (Matthew 26:36 KJV). In Jesus' prayer, He let His requests be made known to His Father: "And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt" (Matthew 26:39 KJV). Jesus also instructed His disciples to pray: "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Matthew 26:41 KJV). Taking the Lord's Supper, singing, and praying are clearly shown to be three separate acts in this text.

As already stated, one apparent difference between singing and prayer is that prayer seems to be predominately designed for making requests to God the Father, the giver of "every good gift and every perfect gift," and thanking Him for those gifts (James 1:17; cf. James 1:5; Matthew 6; Ephesians 3:14, 5:20; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 3:17, 4:2; Revelation 8:3, 4, etc.),

JACKSON:

*(11) To the saints in Ephesus Paul penned these words. "And be not drunken with wine, wherein is riot, but be filled with the Spirit; speaking one to another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody with your heart to the Lord" (5:18-19). To whom does the term "Lord" refer in this passage? While a few writers assign it to God, the Father, by far the most contend (on the basis of the most common use of "Lord" in the New Testament, and the context) that the allusion is to Christ. H. Balz & G. Schneider catalog 26 cases in Ephesians where kurios is used of Christ. In no instance, they contend, is kurios used of Yahweh (Jehovah) in this epistle (Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991, Vol. 2, pp. 329-330). Since verses 18-19 are in the form of a command, this would suggest that not only is singing to Christ permissible, it is absolutely **required**! It is no compelling rebuttal that in a parallel passage (Colossians 3:16) the singing is directed to "God." Passages that are substantially parallel may vary in particulars and thus supplement one another. These two texts, in concert, simply show that the worship that is directed to the Father is likewise appropriate for the Son (cf. Revelation 5:13b). In the Ephesian text "Christ moves more into the foreground of worship" (Balz, et al., Vol. 3, p. 393).*

HILBURN:

Brother Jackson, you stated that *"These two texts, in concert, simply show that the worship that is directed to the Father is likewise appropriate for the Son,"* as if you are implying that all worship is the same. Does it not depend on what act of worship is being discussed? It would be a mistake to assume that all forms of worship are appropriate for both the Father and the Son, especially when the Bible tells us otherwise. For example, the Scriptures tell us that the Lord's Supper is focused on Christ, and prayer focuses on the Father. As already stated, singing praise to Christ is clearly authorized in the New Testament, but praying to Christ is not!

JACKSON:

(12) In Paul's epistle, commonly known as 1 Corinthians, he 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" (1:2). Of special significance is the phrase "call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ." The term "call" translates the Greek epikaloumeno, a present tense, middle voice participle. The root form is epikaleo, which signifies "to invoke, adore, worship" (J.H. Thayer, Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament, Edinburgh: T.&T. Clark, 1958, p. 239).

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 New Testament, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994, Vol. 2, p. 350). The present tense form suggests an ongoing action, and the middle voice underscores the strong individual interest of each person who reveres the Savior. To suggest that one may not literally "call" upon the name of the Lord Jesus, in light of this passage, seems quite inconsistent with the text.

HILBURN:

Notice the verse: "Unto the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all that in every place call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours" (1 Corinthians 1:2 KJV).

Those who are sanctified in Christ and called to be saints are equivalent to those who call upon the name of the Lord. Paul says that He is "our" Lord, implying that all who call (or are calling) on the name of the Lord Jesus are saved. One becomes a saint by calling on the name of the Lord (Acts 2:21; Romans 10:13); but what does it mean to call on the name of the Lord?

Brother Jackson, when you quoted the words "worship" and "implore," it seems as if you are implying that this phrase must mean worshipping Christ and praying to Christ; but what are the ramifications if this phrase "call upon the name of Jesus Christ our Lord" must mean worshipping and/or praying to Jesus? Based on passages like Acts 2:21 and Romans 10:13, this would mean that God has commanded prayer as the means of salvation in the New Testament! Is there another plausible explanation for this phrase?

On the day of Pentecost, Peter said, "And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Acts 2:21 KJV). Peter followed these words up with a further explanation of calling on the name of the Lord to be saved when he said, "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:38 KJV). Peter did not tell them to worship or pray, because that is not what it means to call on the name of the Lord to be saved.

The word "name" can mean "authority," according to Strong's Greek Lexicon. Calling on the name (authority) of the Lord to be saved involves being baptized in the name of (by the authority of) the Lord. We call on the authority of the Lord to be saved when we do what the Author of our salvation authorized us to do to be saved (Hebrews 5:9).

After Paul wrote Romans 10:13 he wrote Romans 10:16, which mentions obeying the Gospel (being baptized into the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ, Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4). Paul told us in this same chapter that he prayed to God, not Jesus (Romans 10:1). Did not Paul himself call on the name of the Lord to be saved? How did Paul call on the name of the Lord? (Acts 22:16). Verses like Acts 22:16 make it clear that calling on the name of the Lord does not necessarily mean worshiping and/or praying: "And now why tarriest thou? arise, and be baptized, and wash away thy sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16 KJV). The phrase "calling on the name of the Lord" is a participial phrase describing what Paul did when he was baptized to wash away his sins. This of course is the same as being baptized in the name of the Lord, at which point we "*invoke*" the authority of the Lord to be saved. Much more could be said about this subject, but for a brother in Christ to conclude that this must mean worshiping and/or praying to Jesus seems strange, to say the least!

I would say let us follow the Scriptures – not denominational scholars. Many of these scholars being quoted as "authorities" in this document are likely those who tell people to pray to Jesus for the forgiveness of their sins, e.g., "the Sinner's Prayer;" and one should remember that **it is in the best interest of their cause to promote praying to Jesus**. What would Billy Graham do if everybody in the stadium came forward to be baptized at once? What about all those watching him on TV? What about all the TV viewers, radio listeners, etc. who provide all that money to all these false teachers in the media? It is much more advantageous for these preachers to tell their viewers/listeners to pray the "Sinner's Prayer;" so of course these types of "scholars" will push praying to Jesus. They will also teach that "calling on the name of the Lord" always means to worship or pray.

JACKSON:

"About" or "To"

*Finally, there is this matter. Is there validity for the position that the Christian may utter praise sentiments **about** the Lord, but not **to** the Savior, as some allege? This view does not appear to have the support of Scripture. First, we have demonstrated already that there is ample authority for praising Christ directly—both in prayer and song. Secondly, the scriptures do not make this fine distinction between "about Christ" and "to Christ" that some have suggested. Let us illustrate this in two ways.*

(1) In writing to the Romans, Paul makes it clear that his preaching ministry to the Gentiles has been an act of worship. This is suggested by the use of certain Old Testament sacrificial metaphors employed to emphasize his "ministering" (see Romans 15:16; cf. ASVfn) on behalf of the non-Jewish nations. When one preaches about Christ, extolling the Redeemer, he is worshipping him.

*(2) Consider also the great song that Moses and the Israelites sang after Jehovah's conquest over Pharaoh's army (Exodus 15:1ff). In the opening portion of the song, the Lord is referenced in the third person (i.e., he is being spoken **about**; such terms as "he," "him," and "his" are employed). However, beginning at verse 6, Jehovah is addressed in the second person—"your right hand," "your Excellency," etc. The Lord is being addressed personally. Then the psalm concludes with a third person usage again (v. 18). It becomes clear that there is no **qualitative***

difference between speaking **about** the Lord in praise, and speaking **to** him. Take a look at the well-known Psalm 23 in this light.

If, therefore, all songs that speak to Christ are to be expunged from our hymnals, as some are attempting to do, if consistent we must likewise remove those that speak about the Savior. And thus we shall be totally silent with reference to the Son of God.

HILBURN:

I do not believe that the songs that "speak" to Christ in the format of a song are a problem (Ephesians 5:19), but rather songs which teach us to go to Jesus in prayer if there is no clear Biblical authority for such (Ephesians 5:20; Colossians 3:17).

As already stated, we are commanded to sing songs to the Lord Jesus, but we are commanded to pray to the Father. We already noticed the distinction between singing and praying.

JACKSON:

The Church Fathers

The most learned scholar ever produced in the Church of England was Joseph Bingham (1668-1723). His classic work, Dictionary of Christian Antiquities, has never been surpassed, according to McClintock & Strong (Cyclopedia, Grand Rapids: Baker, 1968, Vol. I, p. 814). In this famous historical work, Bingham introduces passage after passage from the early "church fathers" which demonstrate that the primitive church unhesitatingly offered worship to Christ, in both hymns and prayers (Antiquities, London: Henry Bohn, 1865, Vol. I, pp. 576ff).

For example, at the conclusion of his work called Paedagogus, Clement of Alexandria (c. A.D. 150-213) offered a prayer to "Son and Father, both in One, O Lord" (III.XII). He also has a "Hymn to Christ the Saviour," which contains these sentiments:

"Your simple children bring,

In one, that they may sing;

In solemn lays, Their hymns of praise,

With guileless lips to Christ their King."

Eusebius of Caesarea (c. 263-339), known as the "father of ecclesiastical history," tells of the martyrdom of a Christian whose name was Porphyry, who was burned alive for the Cause. With his final words, as he approached the flames, he was "calling upon Christ the Son of God, his helper" (Ecclesiastical History, "Martyrs," XI).

HILBURN:

With all due respect to you, brother Jackson, this material is insignificant to me. All that matters is what the Scriptures teach us. Many people wearing the name of Christ were in all kinds of error early on, even when some of the earliest New Testament Scriptures were written in the first century A.D. To cite uninspired recordings of early "Christian" behavior should not cause us to mimic them, unless there is solid Scriptural support for their actions.

JACKSON:

An Historical Source

It is well-known also that one of the charges of the pagan writers against the early Christians was their worship of Christ. Pliny (c. A.D. 62-113) wrote a letter to the Roman emperor Trajan, inquiring as to what should be done with the "Christians" in Bithynia. He stated that these people were "accustomed to meet before daybreak, and to recite a hymn antiphonally to Christ, as to a god" (Epistle X, 96).

Conclusion

In this writer's judgment, the allegation that it is inappropriate to speak to Christ by means of song and/or prayer is a position that cannot be sustained in light of the available evidence.

HILBURN:

Some objections to this article:

1. While Christ was on earth, he taught His disciples to pray to the Father (Matthew 6:9). Christ also taught that on "that day" after He would be gone back to Heaven, His disciples would need to beseech the Father in prayer (John 16:23-27). We live in "that day."
2. Prayer is something that we must be "taught" how to do properly (Luke 11:1). To whom have we been taught to pray? To whom did Jesus teach us to pray? If we pray by the *authority* of Christ, we should ask the question, "What has Christ *authorized*?"
3. Does Jesus want us to pray to Him? How do we know?
4. Part of the Great Commission that Jesus gave is "teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:20). If we teach Christians to "pray to thy Father," we are teaching them to observe what Christ commanded (Matthew 6:6, 9, etc.).
5. In both Christ's teachings and later teachings of the New Testament Scriptures, God the Father was said to be the one we address when we need something (forgiveness, daily necessities, open doors for opportunities to spread the Gospel, etc.).
6. We should not automatically assume that the word "Lord" refers to Christ. "Lord" can often refer to God the Father, as in the prayer recorded in Acts 4.
7. After Jesus' ascension, the book of Acts records the saints praying to "God" (Acts 4:24-30; 12:5; 16:25; 27:35). The distinction between God (the Father) and Jesus is clearly made in the prayer of Acts 4.
8. Why is there no command in the Scriptures to pray to Jesus, yet there are numerous commands to pray to the Father? Inspired writers like Paul, James and John commanded people to pray to the Father, but never to Jesus.
9. The adding of the word "me" in John 14:14 does not seem to make sense; it does not match up with other Scriptures such as John 16:23; and it is not consistent with Jesus' role as set forth in the Scriptures. It is also not found in translations such as the KJV, ASV, or NKJV; and why would we pray to our Mediator by the authority of our Mediator?

10. Should one brother pray to another brother, or should we all pray to our Father? Jesus called us His brethren, and we all share the same Father, to whom we are commanded to pray (John 20:17; Matthew 6:9, etc.).
11. Although Jesus Christ is worthy of praise and worship, I do not believe that the Biblical examples cited in this article prove that we should "bow our knees" to Jesus Christ in prayer. When interpreting Scriptures, a wise person once said that we should let the clear passage determine the meaning of the ambiguous one, and ambiguous passages should not be made the basis of doctrine. Surely this is an important part of "rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). There are many clear passages that teach us to pray to the Father, but not one clear passage that unequivocally teaches us to pray to Christ.
12. There is a difference between praising Christ in song and bowing our knees in prayer to Christ. The propriety of singing to Jesus is not being questioned by me, but rather going to Jesus in prayer. In the New Testament Scriptures, a song is not a prayer, and a prayer is not a song. There are clear distinctions made between singing and praying (Matthew 26:30-41; 1 Corinthians 14:15; Ephesians 5:19, 20; Colossians 3:16, 17; James 5:13).
13. Not all worship is the same, is it? The Lord's Supper focuses on Christ – not the Holy Spirit, or even the Father, but Christ. Different acts of worship may "focus" on a different person of the Godhead, and prayer focuses on the Father.
14. Most of the "scholarly references" used in the article seem to be from people who do not even understand or teach the Gospel Plan of Salvation. Leaning on men such as these can be dangerous if we are not careful. Men such as these may be the very ones telling us to pray to Jesus to receive forgiveness of sins, e.g., "the Sinner's Prayer." One should remember that it is in the best interest of their cause to promote praying to Jesus.
15. Knowing that Christians have been told to address the Father when we sin, if a Christian prays to Jesus for forgiveness of sins and confesses his sins to Jesus instead of the Father, will those sins be forgiven? Could the teaching that one may pray to Jesus lead people in that direction? If an alien sinner were to seek forgiveness of sins in a way other than obeying the Gospel, would he be forgiven? The law says that a child of God must address the Father in prayer when he sins, and would not the following proverb still apply? "He that turneth away his ear from hearing the law, even his prayer shall be abomination" (Proverbs 28:9 KJV). We are supposed to pray according to God's will to be heard (1 John 5:14), and we know that it is the Father's will for us to go to Him in repentance, confession, and prayer when we seek forgiveness.
16. The historical references from the "church fathers" are unconvincing and not authoritative. Just because Clement of Alexandria may have prayed to Jesus in the second or third century A.D., that certainly does not give me the authority to do such.
17. Can we pray to Jesus in the Father's name? Just because we pray to the Father, this does not automatically mean we should pray to Jesus, or the Holy Spirit, who perform different functions in the Godhead. God the Father is neither Mediator nor an intercessor, and He is said to be the Head of Christ, who is His Son and our Brother (1 Corinthians 11:3; 15:27; John 20:17).

18. The pattern of the tabernacle may have been typical of the fact that our prayers go through Christ to God the Father.
19. Brother Jackson, you implied that if we don't pray directly to Christ, then Christ as a Mediator does not *"have any real purpose,"* or *"stands on the sideline, and is not an active participant in the exchange of the two parties between whom he mediates."* This statement seems to be confusing reconciliation with communication (the role of Mediator vs. Intercessor). If we "deal directly" with Christ, then He is no longer a Mediator between two parties. If we pray directly to Christ, then He is no longer an intercessor between two parties. Praying to Christ would seem to take Him out of His Scriptural role. Jesus is the "door" to the Father (John 10:9; 14:6) – Why would we pray to the door rather than the person on the other side of the door (the Father)? Jesus is the access giver (Ephesians 3:12). Should we "bow our knees" in prayer to the access giver, or the one to whom He has given us access? (Ephesians 3:14). Our Mediator, Intercessor, High Priest, and Advocate told us to pray to the Father. There is a difference between a mediator and an intercessor. Whether we are praying directly to Christ or not, Christ is still our Mediator; and when we pray to the Father, Christ intercedes (pleads our case) to the Father.
20. If we had to directly address our Mediator to get our message to the Father, then we would be directly addressing Christ in every single prayer! For example, if we were praying a prayer to Christ, we would be directly addressing Christ, and if we needed to speak to the Father, we would be directly addressing Christ to get our message to the Father! This would mean that we would NEVER be addressing the Father in prayer! This is not how the Bible teaches us to pray.
21. The Holy Spirit is also Deity, so why not pray to Him?
22. If we can pray to Christ simply because He is Deity, why didn't Jesus pray to the Holy Spirit while He was on Earth?
23. It is interesting that in the same verse we often use to teach that we should seek authority from God in all that we do, it is also taught that we pray to the Father "by Christ:" "And whatsoever ye do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God and the Father by him" (Colossians 3:17).
24. If we are to give thanks in prayer "always" to God the Father, how much time is left over for prayer to Jesus? (Ephesians 5:20). If we are to thank God the Father for "all things" in prayer, how many things are left over for us to thank Jesus for in prayer? (Ephesians 5:20). If "in everything" we let our requests be made known unto God the Father in prayer, how many things are left over for us to pray to Jesus about? (Philippians 4:6). Verses like these are comprehensive and specific. If we can pray to Jesus sometimes regarding some things, then the Bible must contradict itself!
25. Brother Jackson, with all due respect, you failed to mention that Paul "bowed his knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and commanded us to give thanks **"always"** to God the Father for **"all things"** in prayer (Ephesians 3:14; 5:20). You failed to compare/contrast Ephesians 5:19 with 5:20, and Colossians 3:16 with 3:17. You also did not discuss verses like Hebrews 4:14-16, and Revelation 8:2-4. You never mentioned this verse: "...in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God" (Philippians 4:6 KJV). The article would have been much longer if more evidence on this subject had been adduced for readers to impartially

examine. I am sure you would agree that if one wants to learn the truth about what the Bible teaches about any given subject, he should examine all the Scriptures on that subject. If one wants to learn what the Bible teaches about prayer, he should examine all the evidence before deducing that one can pray to Jesus. This is essential to make sure that one is rightly dividing the Word of truth and making a correct decision.

26. I would have preferred to read an article which merely deals with the subject of praying to Jesus. The discussion of the argument that one may neither sing to nor pray to Jesus can get a little confusing throughout the article. If one does not remember to differentiate between singing and praying while reading this article, he may find himself agreeing that one can both sing and pray to Jesus, even if the only point that had been made was that Jesus is worthy of worship.

I firmly believe that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit want us to pray to the Father, and to Him alone.

Jason Hilburn

[Upon receiving my review on May 15, 2008, brother Jackson replied and stated that he was willing for brethren to lay his article beside my review and see where the evidence lies.]

The following information was added to brother Jackson's online article after the initial review was sent to him. It will also be taken into consideration.

JACKSON:

"Let us thank our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ for the love which He manifested in teaching us how to pray. ... O, Jesus, Thou Lamb of God—how deeply grateful we are for Thy love which resulted in the gift of Thy life for us! Help us, we pray to 'see' every day Jesus, the Lamb who is the Lion. Help us to pray as Thou hast taught us to pray!" (Thomas B. Warren. 1988. Jesus – the Lamb Who is a Lion. Jonesboro, AR: National Christian Press, pp 201-202)

HILBURN:

Please notice the phrase *"as Thou hast taught us to pray."* How did Jesus teach us to pray? "And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said unto him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said unto them, When ye pray, say, Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name..." (Luke 11:1, 2; cf. Matt. 6:6-9, John 15:16, 16:23-28). Jesus did not teach us to pray to Him or the Holy Spirit; He said, "pray to thy Father" (Matt. 6:6). Did He not also command us to teach what He taught? (Matt. 28:20).

JACKSON:

Can you pray to Jesus?

"Let me tell you something about that, brethren: you be very careful about the position you espouse on that, and I'm going to tell you why. We've got brethren that do nothing but hear a few speeches on the lecture program, and then they start to go out and mouth it. We need to be careful about that. Primarily, our prayers are to God in the name of Christ. But when brethren become so adamant that they say that we cannot pray to Jesus, we need to be careful. Jesus is

deity. If we're not careful, we can take some absurd position over here and even reflect on his deity. I don't have much sympathy for that kind of business.

"I'm going to tell you something that's a little personal, but I think is illustrative. Can't we thank Jesus during the Lord's Supper? When I get through with my primary Lord's Supper meditation, I conclude with a prayer, and here's my prayer: "Father, I thank thee for thine unspeakable gift; and Jesus, I thank thee for being willing to die for me." Is there anything wrong with that? Tell me something is wrong with that...."

"So I just beg of you good brethren, I beg of you, before you take a position, you better study it through—you could get in some difficulty. And I've said it time and time again: What about Stephen when he said, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit"? Brethren have tried to explain that every way in the world, saying that wasn't a prayer. If that wasn't a prayer, I don't understand prayer."

"I'm going to tell you something: when I die, I hope I'm conscious enough to where I can say something like that. I'm going to tell you something: I'm going to be in a prayerful mood, I guarantee you that. I just want you to know that we need to be careful. I'm not asking you if you agree with me; I'm asking do you understand my point? Be careful."

[Question from audience: "What about songs that speak to the Holy Spirit—that maybe even pray to the Holy Spirit?"]

"I don't know that I would take an adamant stand on that for this reason: you've got to take the whole picture into consideration. Romans 8 says the Holy Spirit intercedes for us. I'm going to tell you frankly: in my periods of illness, I've got to the point that I don't know what to say. I've been so deeply distressed and deeply disturbed. But I know the Holy Spirit was pleading in my interest. Would I have sinned against God if I had said to the Holy Spirit: "Intercede for me, please"? Do you think I've sinned if I made that statement? But I made the petition to [the Holy Spirit]. Don't tell me I've sinned. But if we carry this thing so far as some are carrying it today, we can't even do that."

Wendell Winkler
Polishing the Pulpit
September 27, 2004

[Wayne Jackson's article is copyright protected by Christian Courier Publications; used with permission.]

HILBURN:

I have benefited from both brother Warren's and brother Winkler's writings on many occasions, but I disagree with the conclusions drawn here, and I believe the Bible does as well. Although I do not mean any disrespect, most of these arguments are more of an appeal to emotions than a "thus saith the Lord." Please consider the following questions, which appeal to the emotions:

- 1) Are you telling me that because my grandmother was not baptized, she is not going to Heaven?
- 2) Are you telling me that I cannot even use this little harmonica to worship God?

Now consider a similar question: Are you telling me that I cannot pray to my Lord Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

Do not all three examples lack something? They lack Scriptural support for the point the person is trying to make! Such emotionally arousing, denominational sounding arguments appeal to people's emotions, but they are not founded upon the authority of God's Word. May we never forget that we must have Scriptural authority for everything we do in word or deed (Col. 3:17). If the Scriptural support is not there, the authority is not there, and no appeal to the emotions will justify what God has not authorized.

The statement was made that prayer to Jesus should not be forbidden because Jesus is Deity. It is true that Jesus is Deity. Knowing that He is Deity with all authority in Heaven and on earth, will we obey His commands regarding prayer? (Matt. 6:6-9, Luke 11:1-2, John 15:16, etc.). When Jesus was teaching the disciples that He was going to be leaving them, why did he repeatedly mention praying to the Father, and never mention anything about praying to Him or the Holy Spirit? (John 16:23-28). If we should pray to any member of the Godhead because He is Deity, why did Jesus never pray to the Holy Spirit? Perhaps it is because that is not the will of God! The Bible teaches us that each member of the Godhead has a different role when it comes to prayer, and we cannot "mix and match" them simply because our emotions tell us to do so.

Regarding the propriety of directly addressing Christ in a prayer of thanks during the observance of the Lord's Supper, the question was asked, "*Is there anything wrong with that?*," but instead we should ask, "Is there any authority for that?" Are we willing to let Paul tell us how to give thanks in prayer? "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20).

Of course Stephen has already been discussed, and if one appeals to the actions of Stephen as authorization for praying to Christ, he might as well appeal to the thief on the cross, Ananias, or Saul of Tarsus as authority for praying to Christ, as many denominational scholars would. However, to do such is to ignore the context of such passages, and this would not be rightly dividing the Word. Even though Paul spoke to Jesus on the road to Damascus, Paul prayed to God the Father, "always in every prayer" (Phil. 1:3-4; cf. 4:6).

We must have Scriptural authority for everything we do in word or deed, and the Scriptures do not teach us to directly petition the Holy Spirit to intercede for us. With all due respect, instead of speaking to the Holy Spirit, maybe we should listen to what He has said! The Holy Spirit teaches us that "in every thing" our requests in prayer are to be addressed to God the Father (Phil. 4:6; cf. 1:3-4, Rom. 1:8-10). The Bible also says that Christ makes intercession for us (Rom. 8:34), so should we also directly petition Him to intercede when we pray? That is not how we have been taught to pray; and Christ instructs us to ask Him "nothing" in prayer (John 16:23).

The reader is asked to thoughtfully consider this: Instead of getting wrapped up in what we want to do in prayer, perhaps we should step back and see what God wants. Both Christ and the Holy Spirit have spoken with "great plainness of speech" regarding who should be addressed in our prayers.

I stand by the words of my Lord regarding how we should pray. I remain steadfast in my conviction that the Scriptures plainly teach us to pray only to God the Father.

Appendix A – Additional Evidence

Since the initial correspondence with brother Jackson took place, more evidence in defense of praying only to the Father has come to my attention through further study of God's Word. Let us briefly notice some of this evidence.

Although many such as brother Jackson use the so-called "benedictions" of Paul as authority to pray to Jesus and the Holy Spirit, it is clear that Paul did not consider such to be prayers. In his article which teaches we may pray to the Holy Spirit, brother Jackson cited Second Corinthians 13:14 as evidence for his position. Paul concluded the epistle with these words: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost, be with you all. Amen" (2 Cor. 13:14). It should first be stated that just because this verse ends with the word "Amen," that does not mean these words comprise a prayer. This is simply the concluding word of the epistle, similar to the Gospel according to John: "And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written. Amen" (John 21:25). The pronoun "you" in Second Corinthians 13:14 reveals that it is the Corinthians who are being addressed—not the Father, Son, or Holy Spirit. When one considers other verses in the same chapter, he will discover that when it came to an actual prayer, Paul approached the throne of God the Father: "Now I pray to God that ye do no evil..." (2 Cor. 13:7). Second Corinthians 13:14 is recognized as one of the few verses in which all three members of the Godhead are mentioned; but please notice another: "Now I beseech you, brethren, for the Lord Jesus Christ's sake, and for the love of the Spirit, that ye strive together with me in your prayers to God for me" (Rom. 15:30). Even though all three Persons of the Godhead are mentioned, Paul knew that both he and the Christians in Rome only prayed to God the Father!

Further evidence that Paul did not consider these "well wishes" to be prayers can be seen in other epistles Paul wrote, such as his letter to the Philippians: "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:2). Many would say this verse includes a prayer to Jesus, but notice the verses which immediately follow this: "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy" (Phil. 1:3-4). Paul said he thanked God the Father always in every prayer! The reader will remember that this is the same epistle containing the words "Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:6-7).

What about Paul's epistle to the Romans? "...Grace to you and peace from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers; Making request, if by any means now at length I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you" (Rom. 1:7-10; cf. 7:25, 10:1, 14:6, 15:30). What about First Corinthians? "Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God always on your behalf, for the grace of God which is given you by Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:3-4; cf. 1:14, 11:13, 14:18, 15:57; 2 Cor. 1:9-12, 2:14, 4:15, 8:16, 9:8-15, 13:7). What about the epistle to the Ephesians? "Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ...Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers; That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him" (Eph. 1:2, 16-17; cf. 3:14,

5:20). What about the epistle to the Colossians? "...Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God and the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you" (Col. 1:2-3; cf. 1:12, 3:17, 4:2-3). What about the first epistle to the Thessalonians? "...Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers" (1 Thess. 1:1-2; cf. 2:13, 3:9-10). What about the second epistle to the Thessalonians? "Grace unto you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren...Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of this calling..." (2 Thess. 1:2-3, 11; cf. 2:13). What about Paul's second epistle to Timothy? "To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day" (2 Tim. 1:2-3; cf. 1 Tim. 5:5). What about Paul's epistle to Philemon? "Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God, making mention of thee always in my prayers" (Phm. 3-4).

The absolutely overwhelming conclusion is that while Paul wished his brethren well, and hoped they would continually receive blessings from God, he always prayed to God the Father! Brother Jackson also cites a "benediction" from Revelation 1:4 as authority for prayer to the Holy Spirit, but the same principle applies there as well. Revelation 8:3-4 makes it clear that the "prayers of all saints" ascend to God the Father.

God's instructions for prayer are so simple; there is no need to complicate the Truth. Let us pray to the Father, "always in every prayer"!

JPH

Appendix B – Index of Scripture References

<u>Genesis</u>		6:13-14	p. 19
18:22-23	p. 16	11:1	pp. 8, 34, 37
<u>Exodus</u>		11:1-2	p. 37, 39
15:1-18	p. 32	22:42	p. 29
25:21-22	p. 25	<u>John</u>	
32:30-32	p. 16	1:1	p. 13
<u>1 Samuel</u>		3:16	p. 9
7:5	p. 16	4:24	p. 13
<u>Psalms</u>		5:23	p. 12
2:9	p. 26	10:9	pp. 15, 36
18:3	p. 12	10:30	p. 12
45:6ff	p. 26	14:6	pp. 15, 36
102:1	p. 26	14:13-14	pp. 8, 17
102:25-27	pp. 26, 27, 28	14:14	pp. 17, 18, 34
103:13	p. 27	15:16	pp. 11, 37, 39
<u>Proverbs</u>		16:5-6	p. 11
28:9	pp. 10, 35	16:17	pp. 10, 11, 12
<u>Isaiah</u>		16:17-23	p. 11
53:11	p. 15	16:23	pp. 4, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 15, 16, 39
59:1-2	p. 15	16:23-24	pp. 8, 11, 12, 17, 18
<u>Matthew</u>		16:23-27	pp. 27, 34
2:2	p. 13	16:23-28	pp. 12, 19, 37, 39
6:6	pp. 8, 14, 34, 37	16:26-27	pp. 10, 12
6:6-9	p. 9, 37, 39	20:17	pp. 16, 35
6:6-33	p. 30	21:25	p. 40
6:9	pp. 6, 8, 16, 27, 34, 35	<u>Acts</u>	
6:11	p. 9	1:2, 6, 21	p. 18
6:12	p. 9	1:24	pp. 18, 19
6:14-15	p. 10	2:21	p. 31
6:26	p. 9	2:38	pp. 8, 31
6:30-32	p. 9	4:24	p. 14
7:11	p. 9	4:24-30	pp. 18, 34
12:48-50	p. 16	7:59	p. 20
14:33	p. 13	7:59-60	pp. 4, 19
26:28	p. 15	12:5	p. 34
26:30-41	pp. 29, 30, 35	16:25	pp. 7, 26, 28, 34
27:51	p. 25	17:11	p. 4
28:20	pp. 8, 34, 37	20:28	p. 13
<u>Mark</u>		22:10	p. 4
16:16	p. 8	22:14	p. 19
<u>Luke</u>			

22:16	p. 32
27:35	p. 34
<u>Romans</u>	
1:7-10	p. 40
1:8-10	p. 39
5:15	p. 21
6:3-5	p. 32
7:25	p. 40
8:14-17	p. 16
8:26-27	pp. 14, 16, 38
8:29	p. 16
8:34	pp. 13, 15, 16, 22, 39
10:1	pp. 22, 32, 40
10:13, 16	pp. 31, 32
14:6	p. 40
15:16	p. 32
15:30	p. 40
<u>1 Corinthians</u>	
1:2	p. 31
1:3-4	p. 40
1:4	pp. 21, 40
1:14	p. 40
11:3	pp. 16, 35
11:13	p. 40
14:15	pp. 29, 30, 35
14:18	p. 40
15:1-4	p. 32
15:26-28	p. 16
15:27	p. 35
15:57	p. 40
16:22	p. 20
<u>2 Corinthians</u>	
1:3	p. 21
1:3-5	p. 22
1:9-12	p. 40
2:14	p. 40
4:15	p. 40
8:16	p. 40
9:8-15	p. 40
12:2	p. 23
12:7-10	p. 21
12:9	p. 23
13:4	p. 21
13:7	pp. 21, 22, 40
13:14	p. 40

<u>Galatians</u>	
1:15-16	p. 19
2:21	p. 21
3:26-29	p. 16
4:4-7	p. 16
<u>Ephesians</u>	
1:1	p. 19
1:2	p. 40
1:16-17	p. 40
3:11-14	pp. 8, 15, 22
3:12, 14	p. 36
3:14	pp. 7, 14, 21, 30, 40
4:32	p. 10
5:18-19	p. 30
5:19	pp. 6, 7
5:19-20	pp. 7, 29, 30, 33, 35, 36
5:20	pp. 4, 7, 8, 15, 16, 22, 39, 40
<u>Philippians</u>	
1:2-4	p. 40
1:3-4	p. 39
4:6	pp. 7, 8, 36, 39
4:6-7	pp. 9, 22, 40
<u>Colossians</u>	
1:2-3	p. 41
1:12	p. 41
3:16-17	pp. 7, 29, 30, 35
3:17	pp. 7, 8, 13, 20, 22, 33, 36, 39, 41
4:2	pp. 8, 22, 31, 41
4:2-3	pp. 8, 22, 41
<u>1 Thessalonians</u>	
1:1-2	p. 41
2:13	p. 41
3:9-10	p. 41
3:11	p. 23
5:21	p. 4
<u>2 Thessalonians</u>	
1:2-3	p. 41
1:11	p. 41
2:4	p. 13
2:13	p. 41
2:16-17	p. 23
<u>1 Timothy</u>	
1:12-13	p. 24
2:1	p. 16

2:5	pp. 14, 15, 16	2:1	pp. 10, 15, 16, 17
5:5	p. 41	2:12	p. 10
<u>2 Timothy</u>		5:14	pp. 10, 35
1:2-3	p. 41	<u>Revelation</u>	
2:15	pp. 4, 35	1:4	p. 41
<u>Titus</u>		2:27	p. 26
1:3	p. 19	4:10	p. 25
<u>Philemon</u>		5:7ff	p. 13
3-4	p. 41	5:8-13	p. 24
<u>Hebrews</u>		5:13	p. 25
1:1-14	pp. 26, 28	7:9, 17	p. 25
1:2	p. 27	7:13-14	p. 20
1:6	p. 13	8:2-4	pp. 25, 36
1:8	p. 13	8:3-4	pp. 8, 30, 41
2:11-12	p. 16	10:8-9	p. 20
2:17	p. 16	19:15	p. 26
3:1	p. 14	22:20	pp. 20, 21
3:4	p. 27		
3:6	p. 14		
4:14-16	pp. 7, 8, 21, 22, 25, 28, 36		
4:16	p. 14		
5:9	p. 32		
7:25	pp. 13, 15, 16		
7:25-26	pp. 25, 28		
8:1	pp. 9, 22, 25, 28		
8:1-5	p. 25		
8:6	p. 15		
9:1-28	p. 25		
9:3-4	p. 25		
10:19	p. 14		
10:19-20	p. 25		
12:2	pp. 9, 22, 25, 28		
12:28	p. 24		
<u>James</u>			
1:5	pp. 8, 9, 30		
1:17	pp. 9, 16, 30		
5:13	pp. 29, 30, 35		
5:14	p. 8		
5:16	p. 16		
<u>1 Peter</u>			
1:10-12	p. 27		
4:11	p. 4		
<u>1 John</u>			
1:5-10	pp. 10, 17		