

Son of Jesus or Son of the Devil?

Joe Slater

On Paul’s first missionary journey the proconsul (governor) of Cyprus, Sergius Paulus, summoned him and Barnabas *“and sought to hear the word of God”* (Acts 13:7). One of his advisors, a sorcerer and false Jewish prophet named Bar-Jesus, did his best to resist them and *“turn the proconsul away from the faith”* (v. 8). “Bar” means “son of,” but it is highly unlikely that Bar-Jesus had been named in honor of our Lord. Jesus (“Yahweh is salvation”) was a very common name among first-century Jews. His name did, however, turn out to be rather ironic.

He was commonly known as Elymas, the Arabic form of “magi” which means wise man. That, too, was ironic. Aside from being a false prophet and practicing sorcery, resisting God’s message and His messengers wasn’t among the wisest things Elymas ever did!

Paul would tolerate none of it. He *“looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, you son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord is upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time.’ And immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand”* (vv. 9-11).

Elymas was anything but “son of Jesus.” He was a son of the devil! (diabolos = slanderer).

Are you living up to your God-given name, “Christian” (Acts 11:26)? Just wearing it doesn’t make you a true follower of the Anointed One. You confessed Him as Lord. “But why do you call Me “Lord, Lord,” and do not the things which I say?” (Luke 6:46).

Be truly wise! Be a son of Jesus!

Things That Shine

Once as a young child, I traveled with my grandfather on a work trip to the Cumberland River Ferry at Turkey Neck Bend, KY. Along the way, he gave me a shiny quarter. That quarter gave me much enjoyment until I accidentally dropped it into the river. I could see the coin sparkling on the bottom, forever out of reach of a heartbroken four year old.

For some, the "sparkling thing out of reach" mirrors the disillusionments of life. Some unknowingly place themselves into this situation by establishing goals far beyond realistic expectations. For others, the shiny quarter on the river bed represents the individual who reaches a crossroads and regrets choices made in earlier life. In such circumstances, the phrase "life is just what you make it" rings true.

While life may bring some disappointment, it doesn’t have to mean ultimate defeat. In fact, it's just the opposite. The apostle Paul reminds the believer that *"godliness with contentment is great gain"* (1 Timothy 6:6). The satisfaction found in living the Christian life is unparalleled to anything worldly. What Lord Jesus offers will always be within reach!

(In case you are wondering . . . my grandfather gave me another quarter.)

--Kenny Westmorland (Celina, TN)

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“We need to learn to celebrate when we win over Satan. A soul-winner has a heart of joy” (Randall Caselman, via *Voice of Truth International*)

The Ikea Effect

A recent BBC article spoke of “the Ikea effect.” To sum the article up, people value things more if they put some effort into the items. In fact, research seems to indicate that many people will pay more for furniture they must assemble than for a similar item already assembled. That into which we put little or no effort will normally be dissatisfying to us. That into which we have put significant effort, we will value.

It is also true that, when we put significant effort into something, other people are more interested in it. Last Thursday a man named Dean Oliver came by my office. I had not seen Dean in forty-four years. As we talked, the clock on my desk chimed the hour, which led to a question and to a walk across to the house so that Dean could see the first clock that I ever built. He was not interested in seeing a clock purchased at Walmart, but something I had worked on with my own hands interested him.

How valuable is the church to you? How interested are your friends in knowing about the church? There may not be a simple and direct correlation, but the answer to those two questions will relate closely to the question of how much effort we put into the church.

Araunah the Jebusite offered to give King David a piece of land, and some animals for sacrifice, but David replied, *“I will not offer burnt offerings to the LORD my God that cost me nothing”* (2 Samuel 24:24).

What are we offering to the Lord? Do we have any “sweat equity” in the church? If we are not satisfied with the church, could it be because we have put little effort into it?

--Thayer Salisbury (Toledo, OH)