

What should go into a Gospel Message? What is Saving Faith?

Day 1. Read John 20.30-31. What did John emphasize in his gospel? In other words, what did John want his readers to know and believe so they could be saved? John said that Jesus is the Christ and Son of God, and if you believe this you can have life by him. Thus, the identity of Jesus as the Christ and the Son of God is integral to the gospel. But understanding what that identity means implies understanding what these terms meant in John's day!

Please note that Messiah and Christ are the same thing. The term Christ comes from the Greek word, Χριστός; the term Messiah comes from the Hebrew word מָשִׁיחַ. Christ and Messiah both refer to the same person, the terms both mean "the anointed one." But who is this Christ-Messiah? What did the Old Testament say about him?

- † **Deliverer from Satan:** Read Genesis 3.15. It is hard to see from this one verse, but later revelation made clear that God was promising a savior who would reverse the curse on the earth and deliver mankind from the domination of Satan, sin, death, and evil.
- † **Savior from Sin and Atoning Sacrifice:** Read Isaiah 53.5-6. Later, Isaiah gave a prophecy about this Messiah being a savior from sin, who would reconcile us with God the Father. This connects back to the Genesis 3 passage. Isaiah also reveals that the Messiah would die to pay the penalty for our sins!

Reflect on Jesus being the only one who can deliver us from the curse, sin, death, and evil. How does this aspect of his identity affect how you think or feel about Jesus?

Day 2. Let's take a look at another aspect of Jesus' identity.

- † **Prophet and Deliverer Greater than Moses:** Read Deuteronomy 18.18-19; Acts 3.19-23. God had Moses prophesy in Deuteronomy 18 about an important greater prophet who would come to speak for God, and then God had Peter interpret that this prophet was the Messiah, and the Messiah was Jesus.
- † **God's Son and Anointed King:** Read Psalm 2.1-12. God gave a prophecy through King David about the Messiah being both God's Son and God's Anointed King. The Messiah is God's anointed one who is called a son, God's chosen king, and a refuge for all who turn to him.
- † **Priest and King:** Read Zechariah 6.13. To the prophet Zechariah, God revealed that the Messiah king would also be a priest. God also revealed that the Messiah is God's Eternal High Priest and King in Psalm 110.

Reflect on Jesus being the greatest prophet, the "greater Moses" who speaks for God. Reflect on Jesus being God's chosen king and eternal high priest. What thoughts or feelings do these aspects of Jesus' identity inspire in you?

Day 3. Today, let's consider Jesus' eternal nature.

- † **Divine and Human:** Read Isaiah 7.14. To the prophet Isaiah, God revealed a very interesting characteristic of this Messiah savior: he would be both divine and human! Immanuel means "God with us." Matthew 1.23 tells us that this referred to the birth of Jesus.
- † **Divine and Human, Eternal King:** Read Isaiah 9.6-7. Isaiah tells us that this baby Jesus would be God's king as heir to the throne of David, and that he will be divine and human.
- † **Divine and Human, King and Deliverer of Israel:** Read Jeremiah 23.5-6. Jeremiah says the Messiah will be a descendent of David who will inherit David's throne and be a righteous king, who will deliver all Israel from oppression. Most interesting is what he will be called: Yahweh our righteousness! Yahweh is the name God

reserved for himself, but here God himself says through Jeremiah that the human descendant of David who will be the Messiah will be known as Yahweh our righteousness, thus making him both divine and human. [If you didn't know, Yahweh is the name God gave to himself, but English Bibles tend to represent this name as LORD, all in capital letters.]

Reflect on Jesus being the divine Son of God! Do you believe in the triune God of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit? Do you believe the Son came to be born as the human Jesus? What does this mean to you personally?

Day 4. We have reviewed some of the hints the Old Testament gives us about the Messiah, known in the New Testament as Christ. John showed his readers signs that Jesus gave that prove his identity as revealed through these prophecies. John also elaborated on the identity of Jesus himself.

- † **Jesus was both divine and human:** Read John 1.1-17. John says this Word, the full revelation of God, has always existed, and he has always existed as a fully divine entity. This would have shocked the Jews who emphasized the singularity of the true God. They would be surprised to learn the triune nature of God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. But John also says that this divine Word became flesh, and John identifies this Word as Jesus Christ, Jesus the true Messiah from God. This would have shocked Gentiles who ascribed to Greek philosophy that viewed flesh negatively. They would be surprised to learn that the Son of God would choose to become flesh.
- † **Jesus had to be crucified so that our faith could lead to eternal life:** Read John 3.14-18. Like Isaiah, John revealed that Jesus had to be crucified so that our faith could lead to eternal life.

In summary, Jesus is the one the Old Testament scriptures promised would come as a deliverer of people from Satan and sin, deliverer of Israel from oppression, God's greatest prophet, God's eternally anointed king and priest, God's own Son who is both divine and human, who was crucified so that our faith in his identity and deliverance could bring us eternal life. Note this implies a need for deliverance on our part. Reflect on this information.

Day 5. Paul emphasized similar content for his gospel. Read 1 Corinthians 15.1-8; Romans 3.21-24; 6.23; 10.9, 13 [v.13 is a quote of Joel 2.32, so Paul is equating Yahweh with Jesus]; Ephesians 2.8-9; Titus 3.3-7.

In summary, Jesus was both God and man, who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies about paying the penalty for our sins on the cross, being buried, and being resurrected on the third day, and then appearing to hundreds of people; we have sinned and deserve eternal death, but God is willing to extend grace through our faith in Christ's deliverance, which is administered by the Holy Spirit and which will redeem us from sin and death and bring us to eternal life.

A list of what John and Paul might think important for the gospel would include the following: mankind's sinfulness; the penalty for sin being eternal death [physical and spiritual] and our inability to mitigate this; Jesus' divinity; Jesus' humanity; Jesus' identity as the Messiah/Christ promised in the Old Testament, the deliverer of individuals from Satan and sin and of Israel from oppression; Christ's role as prophet, priest, king, and judge; Christ's death on the cross, burial, and resurrection as prophesied in the Old Testament, and appearances; Christ's accomplishment on the cross of paying the penalty for our sins as prophesied in the Old Testament, making possible deliverance through reconciliation with God, redemption from sin, eternal life, and imputed righteousness [Christ's righteousness being accounted to us by God]; the Holy Spirit's work of administering this grace to us; and our need to appropriate these grace blessings by faith in Christ's identity and deliverance.

What does this study imply to you about what you should believe to be saved? What does it imply to you about what you should try to explain to others about the gospel? A full gospel presentation would include all of these issues, but we need not share a full gospel presentation every time we share our faith with someone else. Sometimes it is enough to encourage a person to take one more step toward faith in Christ. Still, every believer should be prepared to share a full gospel presentation if God provides the opportunity. How can you be prepared?