

John 20.30-31: the Content of the Gospel / COB / 12.08.13

Introduction

- † **[Slide 1: temple steps]** I have a Christmas CD by Toby Mac. It contains a rendition of “The First Noel.” It is an interesting rendition, I like it, but in the middle, for just a few seconds, he breaks out into rap. I have to admit that right into Thursday, I was thinking about playing this song for you right after the video we just watched, and at about the 2.17 mark, I was going to pick up a microphone and lip-synch the rap part. Alas, I came to my senses.

- † In two weeks, I will not be rapping for our two Christmas programs. I hope we will be hosting many guests for both the variety show on Sunday morning the 22nd and our carol sing-along on Tuesday evening the 24th. Please take the beautiful invitations Alison Balch designed for us, and invite your neighbors, relatives, and friends. We want to fill this room!
 - My related hope is that we can spark some interest in our guests to come back, to hear about Jesus as described in the Gospel of John.

- † This is a picture of the southern steps of the temple mount. This wall in the upper right is the southern wall of the temple; the wall extending south was not there in Jesus’ day, but these steps were. Jesus would have walked up the hill, out of the city of David, and then up these same steps, on these same stones, to go to the temple, through gates that existed in this southern wall.

- † The apostle John was a witness to Jesus’ ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension.
 - **[Slide 2: John 20.30-31]** As he was completing his account of what he had seen, John wrote in 20.30-31 NET, “Now Jesus performed many other miraculous signs in the presence of the disciples, which are not recorded in this book. But these are recorded so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name.”
 - This statement might be the key to understanding this whole gospel, but what do all the various ideas in this statement mean? Starting January 5, we will be carefully exploring the early chapters of John’s gospel, verse by verse. I urge you, and I hope to urge your guests, to come and learn what it means that Jesus gave signs, that he is the Christ and Son of God, that he calls you to believe, and that he offers you true life in his name.
 - Today, I want to explore these ideas as a preview to our study, in hopes that we can understand what John thought the gospel really was. First, let’s pray...

The Old Testament Prophecies

- † To John, the key to salvation was understanding and believing that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God. But what do these terms mean? What is the Christ? What is the Son of God? Those of you who have been in a good teaching church for years might be able to answer these questions, but many people, even church people, only have a vague sense at best as to what these terms mean.
 - No, Christ was not Jesus’ last name; yes, Christ was the Son of God long before he was born.
 - Today, I want to look at some Old Testament passages that inform us as to what John meant by these terms, because John is going to tell us about signs Jesus gave as to his identity, but these signs are meaningless unless we understand how they connect to biblical history.

- † **[Slide 3: Greek and Hebrew]** First, let me clarify some terminology. 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.”
- † So let’s stroll through a history of Old Testament prophecy. How many of you like reading the Old Testament prophets? Some of you, as I would expect in a Bible church.
- How many of you do not like reading the prophets or have never read them all? Be honest now.
 - I confess that as a young man, I struggled with the prophets. I kept trying to read the Bible from start to finish, which is not the best method. One time I stalled in Isaiah. Another time, I got through Isaiah, and even pushed through Jeremiah, but then gave up in Lamentations, because it was all so depressing. Yet another time I made it all the way to Ezekiel, but that really freaked me out; I couldn’t understand anything in Ezekiel! So I never did read the shorter prophets until in my thirties I had a mentor who insisted I read the whole Bible at least once.
 - In seminary, I learned how to study biblical prophecy and I learned a lot more about what the prophets were saying, but this still is some of the most challenging material in the Bible. So if you have been discouraged reading the prophets, don’t feel bad about yourself. They are challenging. Today, we will look at some key prophetic verses, and I think we will find them revealing, instead of confusing.
- † **[Slide 4: Genesis 3.15]** We begin at the beginning, in Genesis. Right after the fall, God promised a Messiah deliverer...
- In Genesis 3.15, God was speaking to Satan as represented by the serpent [NASB]: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; [then God specified a particular seed, a particular descendent, and said...] He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel.”
 - 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.
- † **[Slide 5: Acts 3.19-23]** In Acts 3, we learn that God revealed to Moses that the Messiah would be a prophet and deliverer greater than Moses himself.
- Acts 3.19-23 NIV: [Peter is speaking to Jews who had rejected the Messiah; he said...] “Repent, then [ie. turn back to faith], and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that he may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you-- even Jesus [ie. specifically Jesus]. Heaven must receive him [this is after the ascension] until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. For Moses said [and here Peter begins quoting from Deuteronomy 18], ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from their people.’”
 - God had Moses prophesy in Deuteronomy 18 about a 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.

- † **[Slide 6: Psalm 2]** In Psalm 2, God gave a prophecy through King David about the Messiah being both God’s Son and God’s Anointed King:
- Psalm 2.1-12 NLT: “Why are the nations so angry? Why do they waste their time with futile plans? The kings of the earth prepare for battle; the rulers plot together against the LORD and against his anointed one [in Hebrew, against his Messiah!]. ‘Let us break their chains,’ they cry, ‘and free ourselves from slavery to God.’ But the one who rules in heaven laughs. The Lord scoffs at them. Then in anger he rebukes them, terrifying them with his fierce fury. For the Lord declares, ‘I have placed my chosen king on the throne in Jerusalem, on my holy mountain.’ The king proclaims the LORD’s decree: ‘The LORD said to me, “You are my son. Today I have become your Father. Only ask, and I will give you the nations as your inheritance, the whole earth as your possession. You will break them with an iron rod and smash them like clay pots.”’ Now then, you kings, act wisely! Be warned, you rulers of the earth! Serve the LORD with reverent fear, and rejoice with trembling. Submit to God’s royal son, or he will become angry, and you will be destroyed in the midst of all your activities-- for his anger flares up in an instant. But what joy for all who take refuge in him!”
 - This is a complicated passage. I did my best to explain it verse by verse back in September. If you would like a devotion, the sermon notes, or the sermon audio for this passage, just let me know or go to the Old Testament Wisdom page of my website [groben.com].
 - But for today, what we can see is the revelation that 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.
- † **[Slide 7: Isaiah 7.14]** To the prophet Isaiah, God revealed a very interesting characteristic of this Messiah savior: he would be both divine and human!
- Isaiah 7.14 NASB: “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel.”
 - Immanuel means “God with us.” Matthew 1.23 tells us that this referred to the birth of Jesus.
- † **[Slide 8: Isaiah 9.6-7]** Isaiah elaborated further in a later prophecy.
- Isaiah 9.6-7 NASB: “For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. There will be no end to the increase of *His* government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.”
 - This makes me want to sing Handel’s Messiah: “For Unto Us a Child is Born.” I probably could lip-synch and direct that without upsetting anyone.
 - Isaiah tells us that this baby Jesus would be God’s king as heir to the throne of David. He also would be called “Mighty God!” which signifies that he would be both divine and human.
- † **[Slide 9: 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 with which we began.
- Isaiah 53.5-6 NASB: “But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being *fell* upon Him, And by His scourging we are healed.

⁶ All of us like sheep have gone astray, Each of us has turned to his own way; But the LORD has caused the iniquity of us all To fall on Him.”

- This passage also reveals that the Messiah would die to pay the penalty for our sins!

† **[Slide 10: Jeremiah 23.5-6]** God also spoke about the Messiah through the prophet Jeremiah:

- Jeremiah 23.5-6 NASB: “Behold, *the* days are coming,’ declares the LORD, ‘When I will raise up for David a righteous Branch [ie, a descendent for David]; And He will reign as king and act wisely And do justice and righteousness in the land. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell securely; And this is His name by which He will be called, “The LORD our righteousness.””
- 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. This will occur when Jesus returns.
- Most interesting is what he will be called. When you see LORD all in capitals in the Old Testament, that refers to God’s name, Yahweh. Here we see the Messiah is to 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 revealing him to be both divine and human.

† **[Slide 11: Zechariah 6.13]** To the prophet Zechariah, God revealed that the Messiah king would also be a priest.

- Zechariah 6.13 NASB: “Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”
- God also revealed that the Messiah is God’s Eternal High Priest and King in Psalm 110.

† These are some of the hints the Old Testament gives us about the Messiah, known in the New Testament as Christ. In his gospel book, John is going to show us signs that Jesus gave which prove his identity as revealed through these prophecies.

The New Testament explanation

† **[Slide 12: John 1.1, 14]** John also will try to make things clearer. He was not shy about it: in the very opening passage of his gospel, he would have shocked both Jews and Gentiles of his day.

- John 1.1, 14 NET: “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was fully God... ¹⁴ Now the Word became flesh and took up residence among us. We saw his glory– the glory of the one and only, full of grace and truth, who came from the Father.”
- John says this Word, the full revelation of God, has always existed, and 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.
- John also says that this divine Word became flesh, and John went on in v.17 to identify this Word as Jesus Christ, Jesus the true Messiah from God. This would have shocked the Gentiles who ascribed to Greek philosophy and viewed flesh negatively. They would be surprised to learn that God would choose to become flesh.

- † **[Slide 13: John 3.14-18]** John revealed that within the one triune God, it was the Son who came, and, like Isaiah, John revealed that Jesus had to be crucified so that our faith could lead to eternal life.
- John 3.14-18 NET: [again we have Jesus teaching] “Just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life.” [“Son of Man” was a title Jesus took for himself, identifying himself with a prophecy by Daniel.]
 - After quoting Jesus, John elaborated: “For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world should be saved through him. The one who believes in him is not condemned. The one who does not believe has been condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the one and only Son of God.”

Summary of what John Emphasized

- † **[Slide 14: Summary]** So John emphasized knowing that Jesus was the Christ and Son of God. We see that this requires understanding several things prophesied in the Old Testament hundreds of years before Jesus was born and then elaborated upon by John some years after Jesus ascended into Heaven.
- First, Jesus is fully divine and fully human: he is the eternal Son of God, but now he also is fully the human who was born as a baby, grew to be a man, and lived and ministered here on Earth as a human being for thirty something years.
 - Second, Jesus is God’s anointed – God’s chosen one – who would be a greater prophet than Moses, the permanent high priest connecting God and mankind, and the permanent heir to David’s throne in Israel who would deliver Israel from oppression.
 - Third, Jesus is God’s anointed Savior, who can reverse the curse, deliver us from sin, evil, and death, and reconcile us with God the Father through his death on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins.
- † To realize Christ as Savior, of course, we need to recognize our need for him.
- The apostle John told of John the Baptist identifying Jesus as the Messiah by saying in 1.29, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!”
 - We saw in Isaiah 53 that Jesus was killed because we had gone astray from God and turned our own way... so that now we could be healed and reconciled with God.
 - We need to admit we are corrupted in nature and prone to act waywardly, contrary to the will of God for absolute purity and righteousness, and thus we need this savior.
- † And then what does John want us to do? At the end of the gospel, in the verse with which we began today, John said we needed to believe in Jesus as the Christ and Son of God. This implies both believing in Jesus’ identity and in the work he fulfilled on our behalf as the Christ and Son of God. Here are some things John says about belief:
- **[Slide 15: John 1.12-13]** John 1.12-13 NET “But to all who have received him– those who believe in his name– he has given the right to become God’s children – children not born by human parents or by human desire or a husband’s decision, but by God.”

- John 3.16 NET: “For this is the way God loved the world: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”
- **[Slide 16: John 3.36]** John 3.36 NET: “The one who believes in the Son has eternal life. The one who rejects the Son will not see life, but God's wrath remains on him.”
- John 6.40 NET [Jesus speaking]: “For this is the will of my Father— for everyone who looks on the Son and believes in him to have eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day.”

Giving the gospel

- † **[Slide 18: temple steps]** One application of today’s sermon is to believe in these things yourself. To believe that Jesus is the one the Old Testament scriptures promised would come as a deliverer of people from Satan and sin, a 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 much needed deliverance could bring us eternal life.
- † Another application is to learn how to share these truths with others. John thought these truths were important, they are what comprised the heart of his gospel message.
 - In your bulletin, we have included a sample gospel presentation, using the popular Bridge diagram, which I think Billy Graham’s ministry developed. This is one way to give the gospel, incorporating all these truths we discussed today.
 - There are other ways to give the gospel, I am not saying this is the only right way! But you need to think how you would share these truths.
- † Sometimes, we do not have an opportunity to share the full gospel, just one aspect of it. That’s ok: share the needed truth, and pray for God to work that truth into the mind of the individual.
 - But over time you might have the opportunity to share more truth, and sometimes people want to hear what you believe, so you need to know what you should be trying to share!
 - I encourage you to think through this list and to read through this sample gospel message, and then develop your own style in sharing such truth.
- † One reason I am sharing this is there often is confusion about what is the gospel. While in seminary, I surveyed eighteen books by various biblical scholars, to see what they said was the content of the gospel. Half of them included Christ’s divinity; only 28% included Jesus’ identity as the promised Messiah. Yet these are the two concepts which John thought were the heart of the gospel!
 - So please give this some thought. The Christmas season is the time of year that people are most willing to accept an invitation to come to church. Many in our area would respond if someone lovingly invited them. Let’s work together to share the truth about Jesus.
 - Handout invitations and pray...