

JESUS, ISRAEL & PROPHECY

Week 7 – “In the Beginning was the Word. . . .”

Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John wrote for different audiences.

- Matthew wrote to a Jewish audience. Matthew presents Jesus as the King of the Jews – the King of the Messianic/Millennial Kingdom.
 - Matthew conveys that Jesus came from Abraham through David and demonstrates that He is the Messiah promised in the OT (Matt. 1:1-17).
- Mark wrote to the Romans.
 - Mark conveys that Jesus came from Nazareth, demonstrating that Jesus is a Servant (Mark 1:9).
- Luke addressed the Greeks.
 - Luke conveys that Jesus came from Adam, demonstrating that Jesus is the Perfect Man ([Luke 3:23-38](#)).
- John wrote to MANKIND!
 - John conveys that Jesus came from heaven, demonstrating that Jesus is God. Jesus’ deity is focused upon.

The Gospel of John is the most theological of the four gospels. [John 20:31](#) tells us why the Holy Spirit inspired John to write this gospel – *“These are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ/Messiah, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.”*

The prologue in the Gospel of John introduces us to the eternal Word of God Who is God! Who is this “Word”? JESUS!

Why don’t Jewish people believe in Jesus? Jewish people believe in one God. [Deut. 6:4](#) – *“Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.”* “One” in Deut. 6:4 is the Hebrew word, “echad” which means a composite unity! Jewish people think that Christians believe in three gods! And, if you believe that Jesus is God, you are essentially an idol worshipper. First commandment in the ten commandments: *“I am the Lord thy God; thou shalt have no other gods before me.”*

Isaiah 7:14 - Immanuel – God with us – God in the flesh is a Jewish teaching. The Son of God is a Jewish teaching.

[Matt. 16:16](#) – *“You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.”*

[John 11:27](#) - *“Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God”*

God is above time and space. God is transcendent. God is independent of His creation. Picture an artist painting a canvas. Is the artist part of the canvas? No he/she is separate and apart from his/her work of art. Scripture teaches that God created the world out of nothing (Gen. 1:1 – In the beginning ELOHIM bara [created out of nothing] the heavens and the earth. God is sufficient unto Himself. He does not depend on or “need” anything (Acts 17:25ff; Psa. 50:12-13; Matthew 5:9; Acts 17:28; Col. 1:15-17)

God is transcendent. HOWEVER, God is also NEAR – He is personal. The theological word for a personal God is immanent. Jewish people are more likely to look at God as transcendent – remote – NOT near (not immanent). BUT God tells us in II Chron. 20:7 that Abraham is His friend. God spoke intimately with Moses (Num. 12:8; Deut. 34:10).

How do we envision God in the OT? In the Tanakh, God is pictured as enthroned in heaven (Gen. 19:24; Psalm 2) – yet at the same time He manifested Himself in the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire to guide and direct the children of Israel through the wilderness – and He dwelled between the cherubim over the ark (I Sam. 4:4) and spoke to Moses directly and He put His Spirit on His prophets to empower them for the work which He commissioned them to carry out. We have a personal God!

What is the answer to that truth of God – that He is both transcendent and immanent? That He is above time and space and yet a personal God? The tri-unity of God – the Trinity!

John 1:1 – “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.*” When the beginning began, the Word already existed. John’s theme: Yeshua the Messiah, the Son of God. He is the Word – He is God!

Because John used the Greek term, “logos,” many commentaries on the Gospel of John go into a lengthy dissertation to try to explain what “logos” meant in Greek philosophy. The Greek philosophers saw the *logos* as the power which puts sense into the world, making the world orderly instead of chaotic. The *logos* was the power that set the world in perfect order and kept it going in perfect order. They saw the *logos* as the “Ultimate Reason” that controlled all things. And, within the Greek mindset gnosticism was a prevailing belief – that spirit was good and material was evil – the flesh was evil. CONSIDER: John is presenting to the Greek world, the Gentile world within the Gospel of John that the Word, Who is God, became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14). The *logos* became flesh! Greek philosophy had seeped into the Jewish religious mindset, i.e. man is the center of the universe, not God!!

CONSIDER: John the disciple was not a Greek philosopher. He was a Jewish fisherman! And, John, in his Gospel, was addressing both Gentiles and Jewish people. So, how was the beginning of the Gospel of John relevant to the Jewish culture of the first century? Let’s understand Jewish thought in Jesus’ day. The rabbis of that day had a concept which was referred to as the “memra.” The “memra” is an Aramaic term that means “word”. Many Jewish people spoke Aramaic – the language of the people. Hebrew was spoken in the synagogues.

Jewish rabbis often referred to God, especially in His more personal aspects, in terms of His word. They spoke of God Himself as “the word of God.” For example, ancient Hebrew editions of the Old Testament change Exodus 19:17 (*Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet God*) to “Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet the

word of God." In the mind of the ancient Jews, the phrase "the word of God" could be used to refer to God Himself.

The rabbis of that day taught that the "memra" is the same but distinct from God.

- The memra was sometimes the same as God, but sometimes it was distinct from God.
- How was it possible for the memra on one hand to be the same as God, but on the other hand be distinct from God? The Rabbis simply taught both statements as being true and left it there.

In continuing to look at the verbiage used in Scripture, let's look at the bold assertions regarding Jesus. We are going to look at the claims Jesus made about Himself. Once we begin to hear Jesus' words as the Jewish people heard His words - taking into consideration that there were those within Judaism who "lived in the text" (who were steeped in the Scripture), Jesus' claims become powerful and obvious!

Once we begin to understand the teaching techniques of the Rabbis – those teaching techniques that come through in the Gospels – we can better understand Jesus' words. Rabbis taught in parables. Jesus taught in parables.

A classic rabbinic technique: quoting part of a verse and leaving the rest unsaid. Rabbis would quote part of Scripture and then let their audience fill in the rest. Listen to Jesus' words when we find Him preaching and healing people within the temple grounds. The crowds were cheering for Him, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" The Jewish religious leaders confronted Jesus with, "Do you hear what these children are saying?" Jesus replied, "Have you never read, 'From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise?'" (Matt. 21:16). The leaders, upon hearing Jesus' reply, should have remembered the rest of Psalm 8:2 "From the lips of children and infants you have ordained praise because of your enemies, to silence the foe and the avenger." The Psalmist was relaying that God's glory is so great that even children instinctively worship Him, to the shame of those who hate Him. In the same way, the children who acclaimed Jesus were responding to His ministry the way His interrogators should have, but refused to do.

In Matt. 18:22 Peter asked, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive someone who sins against me? Up to seven times?" Jesus responded with, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times" OR "seventy times seven"

To what was Jesus referring?

Jesus cried from the cross, "My God, my God, why have You forsaken Me?"

To what was Jesus referring?

Another rabbinic teaching technique - "stringing pearls" - bringing together passages from different places in order to explore their great truths. Do we find passages in Scripture that quote other passages?

What did God the Father speak from heaven at Jesus' baptism? *"This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well-pleased."* (NKJV; Matt. 3:17) *"This is my Son, Whom I love; with Him I am well pleased."* (NIV; Matt. 3:17)

- "This is My Son" – from Psalm 2:7. The book of Psalms is from the Writings portion of Scripture.
- "whom I love;" "My beloved" – from Gen. 22:8 – God told Abraham to take his son, his only son, Isaac, whom he loved – to the region of Mt. Moriah and offer Isaac as a sacrifice. This is the Gospel. God was prophesying His gift of His Son Whom He loved. Genesis is found in the Torah/the Law.
- "In Whom I am well-pleased" – from Isaiah 42:1 – God said this of His Servant, Jesus, the Messiah. The Servant Songs are found in Isaiah 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; and 52:13 to 53:12. Isaiah is part of the Prophets.

What are God the Father's words proclaiming?

- Both Psalm 2 and Isaiah 42 were understood as powerful Messianic prophecies. In Psalm 2, God makes a royal declaration announcing His Son, the Messiah, the Anointed One, Who would rule as King of kings over the entire earth.
- In Isaiah 42, God speaks about His "Servant" (also understood to be the Messiah).
 - The Messiah is both a king and a servant.
 - Isaiah 42 also proclaims that God's Spirit is upon His Servant: *"Behold! My Servant whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights! I have put My Spirit upon Him."*
 - How fitting since the Father speaks these words as the Spirit descends on Jesus in the Jordan River.
- "Whom I love" – in Genesis 22 we read of Abraham and Isaac – father and son. Isaac is the son of promise. Jesus is the Promised One – the Messiah. God's sacrifice of His Son, His only Son Whom He loved is foreshadowed in Genesis 22. We see the foreshadowing of Jesus' sacrifice in the proclamation of God the Father at Jesus' baptism.

In God the Father's declaration at Jesus' baptism we understand that God the Son, Jesus, the Messiah is a king, a servant, and the Son Who will become a sacrifice. God links together the words from the three parts of Scripture. He is proclaiming that the ENTIRE Scripture points to Jesus as its fulfillment!

Let's look at Jesus' words about Himself. One of the most fascinating ways Jesus used the Scriptures was to point toward His own identity as the One Who would fulfill the Scriptures. Some of His most powerful claims to be the Messiah were delivered in what we might think of as subtle ways. One of the most popular images of Jesus is as the "Good Shepherd." John 10:14-15 – *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own."*¹⁵ *As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep."*

Of course the Jewish people would immediately think of King David's psalm re: the Lord as his shepherd. When Jesus told the Jewish people that He is the good

shepherd, He was proclaiming that He was their King? Shepherd imagery in the OT was often used to describe kings.

Isaiah 44:28 – King Cyrus of Persia is called a “shepherd.”

In Psalm 78:68-72, King David is pictured “shepherding” his people. Most interestingly, in Ezekiel 34, God expresses His anger at the leaders of His people by describing them as “bad shepherds.” He then promises to save His flock and to send a good shepherd to lead them!

After the wise men inquired of Herod regarding the newborn king of Israel, the scribes quoted the prophecy in Micah 5:2 – *“But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler Who will shepherd My people Israel.”*

When Jesus called Himself a “shepherd” in John 10, He was revealing His identity as the Messianic King!

Matt. 25:31-32 - *“When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. ³² All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.”*

Eze. 34:17 – *“And as for you, O My flock, thus says the Lord GOD: ‘Behold, I shall judge between sheep and sheep, between rams and goats.’”*

In Jesus’ claims as the good shepherd, He is proclaiming His deity!

Jesus’ name for Himself, the “Son of Man,” pointed to His Messianic mission. We find the “Son of Man” in the book of Daniel. Daniel had a vivid dream in which he saw a great, heavenly court in session: *“I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. ¹⁴ Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.”* (Dan. 7:13-14)

The Jewish people knew this passage spoke of the coming Messiah. The book of Daniel prophesied the rise of great kingdoms which would eventually fall to the authority of one supreme King – a King Who would rule forever.

Jesus also spoke about Himself as the Son of Man Who will come in glory on the clouds (Matt. 24:30; Mark 13:26; 14:62; Luke 21:27).

Why is it important to consider the claims Jesus is making about Himself? Skeptics have claimed that it was not Jesus but the Church that exalted Him as the Messiah.

Other titles given to Jesus in Scripture:

- The Lamb of God (Jn. 1:29, 36)
 - Jesus is the perfect Passover Lamb Who would be killed on the Feast of Passover. As the Death Angel passed over the homes with the blood on

the lintel and doorposts and delivers those people who found refuge through those blood soaked doors, God delivers those who trust in Him for salvation through the precious blood of Jesus!

- The Son of God (Jn. 1:34, 49)
 - Jesus is not God's Son in the sense of a human father and a son. God did not get married and have a son. God did not mate with Mary and, together with her, produce a son. Jesus is God's Son in the sense that He is God made manifest in human form ([John 1:1, 14](#)). Jesus is God's Son in that He was conceived in Mary by the Holy Spirit. [Luke 1:35](#) declares, "The angel answered, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the holy one to be born will be called the Son of God.'"
 - Jesus is the Second Person in the Trinity.
 - In the Jewish understanding of the OT, to be "the Son of God" is to be of the same nature as God. It is to be God. (Psalm 2; Matt. 26:63-66; John 19:17)
 - Hebrews 1:3 expresses this clearly, "The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of His being."
- Rabbi (Jn. 1:39, 49)
 - Teacher; master.
- Messiah (Jn. 1:41)
 - Anointed
- King of Israel (Jn. 1:49)
 - Jesus is the Davidic King – He will sit on David's throne in the Millennial Kingdom (II Sam. 7).
 - He will return as a conquering King (Psalm 2).
- Son of Man (Jn. 1:51)
 - Jesus is referred to as the "Son of Man" 88 times in the New Testament. A first meaning of the phrase "Son of Man" is as a reference to the prophecy of [Daniel 7:13-14](#), when the Son of Man approaches the Ancient of Days. As the Son of Man, Jesus was given authority, glory, and sovereign power over all.
 - The description "Son of Man" was a Messianic title.

Questions:

- Any V8 moments?
- What has impacted you most through this lesson about Jesus?
- Has more of the big picture of Scripture come together? In what way?

Suggested Homework:

- Begin to journal Jesus' titles in your Scripture reading. Cross reference passages.
- Write out how you might explain Jesus as the Lamb of God – following the lamb thread/theme throughout Scripture.