

I Am the Christ

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Introduction.

- A. In our study of the Bible, we often take a very practical approach. We come to the word asking the question, "What do I need to do to please God," and as we examine it, we learn what we need to do to become righteous, holy people. We treat the Bible like the instruction manual for mankind, which, of course, it is.
- B. We should focus on the practical aspects of Bible study, because that's what will save our souls, but in addition to the whats of Scripture, we also need to pay attention to the whys. Some whys are obvious. It's obvious that we should be Christians because we want to go to heaven and avoid hell, but some whys aren't so obvious. One of the most important of these less-obvious whys is that being a Christian is the only way to understand and develop a relationship with Jesus Christ. This is something that we want to do because, to say the least, Jesus is an extraordinary person. Not only is He the greatest human being ever to walk the earth, but He is also God Himself revealed to us in a way that we can understand. He epitomizes everything that is noble and righteous and good. All the time we spend getting to know Jesus is time well spent.
- C. Of course, whole books of God's word are dedicated to explaining Jesus, but one of the easiest ways for us to get to know Him is by looking at some of the ways He explains Himself, particularly in the book of John. One of the things that makes John unique is that its narrative is framed partially in terms of "I am" statements, moments where Jesus defines Himself by saying "I am" something, for instance, "I am the bread that came down out of heaven." As we understand these "I am" statements, we come to understand a lot of who Jesus really is. Jesus makes the first of these "I am" statements during His conversation with the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4:25-26. Describing Jesus as the Christ is perhaps the most familiar way we hear our Lord identified, but I daresay that 95% of those who claim to be disciples of Jesus have absolutely no idea what this means. Let's learn for ourselves, then, what Jesus means when He says, "I am the Christ."

I. Anointing.

- A. It is probably true that to most people in the US today, "Christ" is nothing more than just a last name. Just like you might say Bob Jones or Fred Smith, you say Jesus Christ. Indeed, sometimes we hear people who use the Lord's name to blaspheme inserting a middle initial into the blasphemy. The thing is, though, "Christ" is not a last name at all. It is a title. It signifies the rank that Jesus holds, and it means "Anointed One."
- B. This identification, though, doesn't really mean more to us than "Christ" did, so to figure out what's going on, we need to learn about anointing itself. We see the process of anointing described in Psalm 133:1-2. Basically, anointing is the process of pouring oil upon someone's head, sometimes in such great quantities that it ran down onto their clothes as well. Now, to some of us, at least, this just sounds gross. We wash our hair regularly precisely so that it DOESN'T get oily, because we know that if we let it go, we'll be getting phone calls from Exxon Mobil wanting to buy the mineral rights to our scalp.
- C. Things were different for the Israelites. Because they lived in such a dry climate, they had to anoint themselves to keep their skin from drying out and cracking, and anointing oil was a precious and valued commodity. Indeed, it had such everyday significance that God chose to give it religious significance as well. In Exodus 30, there's actually a recipe for God's holy anointing oil, and people who were chosen by God to assume some important position in Israel were anointed to signify their assumption of the office.
- D. The first of these anointed officials were, as we can gather from Psalm 133, the priests. We see God's instructions concerning the anointing of priests in Exodus 30:30. This was the way that the lineage of Aaron was consecrated, made ritually holy so that they could take part in the worship of the temple service.
- E. However, priests, as important as they were, were not the only leaders of the Israelites who were to be anointed. There are two more kinds of leaders, and we see them both described in 1 Kings 19:16. In addition to priests, kings and prophets were also anointed. For kings, this was a sign of divine favor, something that demonstrated that God wished them to be king. David, for example, was anointed as king long before his predecessor Saul was dead. Nor was this limited to the Israelites. Sometimes, even foreigners were anointed by God to be kings in their own nations. Similarly, prophets were anointed, in Elisha's case, at least, by his predecessor Elijah, as a sign that they had received the spirit of prophecy and were to be listened to and obeyed. Everyone who was ritually anointed in Israel was either a prophet, a priest, or a king.

II. Its Importance.

- A. Now, when we start talking about Jesus being anointed just like the Old Testament prophets and priests and kings were, it starts making a little more sense, doesn't it? However, the Old Testament actually has a lot more to say about the importance of this anointing. First of all, God's prophets clearly spoke of One who would come who would also be anointed. There are prophecies about a coming King, prophecies about a

coming high priest, but we're just going to look at the prophecy about a coming prophet. Consider Deuteronomy 18:17-19. This is Moses speaking to the children of Israel, and he tells them that in years to come, there will be a prophet like him, someone who will give God's law to the people just like he himself did.

- B. This passage actually sheds a whole lot of light on the conversation that Jesus has with the Samaritan woman back in John 4. You see, when the woman asks Him if He is the Christ, she isn't pulling that idea out of thin air. As part of the Samaritan religion, the Samaritans accepted Moses as a prophet and followed the first five books of the Law, although they rejected the rest. When the woman asks this question, about the Messiah who will declare all things, she's actually referring back to Deuteronomy 18 and the Anointed One that her own religious tradition told her to expect. This connection is why many Samaritans did come to the Lord.
- C. However, once we delve into the full Old Testament, we see even more reason why the idea of the Anointed One is important. Under the Old Law, although a priest like Samuel could be a prophet, and a king like David could also be a prophet, there was no such thing as a priest who could also be king. Priests were of the tribe of Levi of the descendants of Aaron, but kings were of the tribe of Judah of the descendants of David.
- D. However, the anointed priest to come and the anointed king to come were not going to be two separate people. Instead, these two offices were going to be held by the same man. Consider the word of Zechariah in Zechariah 6:12-13. In days to come, a high priest would also sit atop the throne of the king. Thus, the Anointed One could and would be a prophet, a priest, and a king, all at the same time.
- E. In defining the reign of the Anointed One, though the Bible goes even farther than that. Although the Christ to come would be a man, the Bible clearly prophesied that He would also be God. Consider the provocative language of Psalm 45:6-7. Catch that, folks? This portion of the psalm is a direct address to God. It talks about how God has an eternal throne, a righteous scepter, a love of righteousness, and a hatred of wickedness. That's fairly typical language for the Psalms; there are three dozen Psalms that talk about basically the same thing. The next sentence, though, is anything BUT typical. Still in the same mode of direct address, it talks about how the God of God is going to anoint Him with the oil of gladness. The Anointed One is God, anointed by God. I can't imagine for the life of me what the Jews must have made out of this passage in the centuries before the coming of Jesus, but it makes perfect sense to us now, doesn't it? When we put all of this together, here's what we come up with from these prophecies. The Anointed One is going to come, He is going to fill the offices of prophet, priest, and king simultaneously, and He is going to be divine. When Jesus tells the woman at the well that He is the Christ, He is claiming all of that for Himself in just one word.

III. Its Meaning to Us.

- A. This is a truly massive claim that Jesus makes here about Himself, and it has all sorts of meaning for us today. First, if we understand just what it means that Jesus is the Christ, it gives us a powerful reason to believe in Him through the record of the Old Testament. Look at what Jesus says in John 5:39 as He rebukes the Pharisees. And indeed, from beginning to end, that's what the Old Testament does. It testifies of Jesus.
- B. The idea that Jesus is the Anointed One is just one strand of this complex web of prophecy, but it's an important strand. It shows us that all of the claims that Jesus made about Himself—that He was the King of the Jews, that He was God Himself—that all of those claims weren't just things that Jesus made up out of thin air. Instead, He was claiming to be the fulfillment of thousands of years of prophecy. The fact that these prophecies exist alone makes the claims of Jesus more credible, the way He fulfilled these prophecies makes them even more credible, and the miracles that confirmed His claims make them certain. It's impossible for Jesus to have done these things as a mere human being. The prophecies help establish that He is God.
- C. Second, when we understand what it means that Jesus is the Christ, it helps us to understand His eminence. It's impressive enough for a man to be a prophet of God, a priest of God, or a divinely anointed king. When we see that Jesus has attained to all of these things at once, and through them can claim the title of Christ, that is extremely impressive and intimidating. It is impossible to be higher than the Christ. See what Peter says about this in Acts 2:33, 36. The resurrection of Jesus from the dead, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the apostles on the day of Pentecost, were significant precisely because they proved that He was both Lord and Christ. That explains the reaction of the Jews a verse later. They're terrified because they see that they have crucified the guy who's now running the universe. It is a big deal to call Jesus Christ.

Conclusion.

- A. Folks, once we see these things, once we recognize that the Old Testament shows that Jesus is the Christ, and once we recognize just how important Jesus is because He's the Christ, there's something we need to do about it. We need to obey Him. See what Philippians 2:9-11 says about it. Jesus has been given the name above every name; that is to say, He has been given the authority of the Christ.
- B. This is not an authority we can brush off the way that we might ignore the speeding laws when there isn't a cop in sight. This is an authority to which, sooner or later, we will submit. Every knee WILL bow. It's just a question of when. We owe Jesus our allegiance. He has the right to demand to rule our lives, and if we ignore Him, He has the right to punish us as He sees fit. Let's do what's right. Let's submit our hearts and our lives to Jesus, the Christ, the Anointed One of God.