

## THE GREATEST SERMON EVER PREACHED

### Introduction

1. Several months ago in a conversation with the deacons and elders, I mentioned that I wondered what Jesus said to the two disciples (only one of them is named – Cleopas) traveling on the road to Emmaus just after Jesus rose from the dead. Luke records the account in chapter 24. Sometime later I asked the deacons and elders if there was a particular subject or book of the Bible that they would like for me to explore on Sunday mornings during our worship time together. Tom Hanson asked if I might consider the theme “Christ in the OT”, specifically referencing this Luke 24 passage.
2. This is fairly new territory for me and I have no idea how long we will plow through the OT looking for Jesus, but I suspect that this could be a wonderful time of discovery for all of us. Sometimes we forget that the OT is a Christian book (We may think of it as just Jewish). It can be studied expositively, and when it is, we will see Christ. We will see God’s plan of redemption; we will see the character of God; we will see grace – all of that in the Old Testament. Here is the text I want to unpack today to get us started thinking correctly concerning Christ and the OT.
3. (Luke 24:25-27) ***And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.***
4. The Scriptures Jesus had were the OT Scriptures. What passages did He use to show these two men Himself? When He finished “preaching” and then disappeared from them, the two dumbfounded men said to each other, “***Did not our hearts burn within us while he talked to us on the road, while he opened to us the Scriptures?***” I take it by their comments that after Jesus finished showing them, they saw Him in the OT text and they now understood what had happened and why! (Can you imagine – the Word incarnate explaining the Word written!) And so they turned around in the dark and headed back to Jerusalem to tell of their incredible experience to those who were gathered in the Upper Room! From this text I draw the following facts:

### I. THE MAIN CHARACTER OF THE OT IS CHRIST (24:27) ***And beginning with Moses and all the***

**Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself. (What follows are mere samples of hundreds of illustrations)**

A. The book of beginnings is about Christ

1. As we read the creation account in Genesis 1-2, we see God creating all things. Centuries later, Paul writes to the Colossians speaking of Jesus, **He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities--all things were created through him and for him. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.** (The author of Hebrews makes the same declaration). Christ is central to the creation account!
2. Immediately after sin enters the human race, God makes a promise to send one who would be of the seed of the woman who would crush the head of the serpent. In Colossians, Paul tells us that Christ put the devil to open shame. John reminds us that Christ destroyed the works of the devil. The author of Hebrews writes, **Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same things, that through death he might destroy the one who has the power of death, that is, the devil.**
3. The ark that safely protected Noah and his family from the global judgment of the flood was a picture of Christ. Peter, albeit enigmatically, makes the point in chapter 3 of his first letter. There were many dynamics in the story of Noah, but primarily it was about God's grace in salvation and ultimately that grace would be seen in Christ!
4. The account of Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah is a vivid picture of the Father giving His Son as a sacrifice. God would provide the lamb and that lamb would be Jesus! "Behold the lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!"
5. The account of Joseph hated by his brothers, sold for silver, enduring harsh treatment, but becoming the savior for his people could hardly be more clear as a picture of Jesus! (And the list continues with Jacob wrestling with God and the visitors coming to see Abraham and the covenants, etc., all speak of Christ – and that is just Genesis!)

B. The Exodus, the giving of the law and wilderness wanderings, all are about Christ

1. The exile in Egypt and the miracles that demonstrated the power of God and the

Passover and the deliverance from Pharaoh, all speak of Christ. In fact, Jesus takes the Passover feast and opens the eyes of His disciples as He declares that He Himself is the lamb and it is His blood, not the blood of an animal that will result in their deliverance.

2. Throughout the wilderness wandering, there was daily manna and water from unlikely sources like rocks! There was a guiding presence in a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. Paul makes this point in **1 Corinthians 10:1-13**. Christ was with the Israelites through the wilderness wanderings. The rock was Christ!
3. Most of us are somewhat familiar with John 3, the story of Jesus and Nicodemus, especially John 3:16. What we may have missed is what Jesus says in verses 14-15 (***And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life***). This historical account to which Jesus referred was recorded in Numbers 21. The people began to rebel against God, so God sent fiery serpents to bite the people, resulting in many deaths. Moses was instructed to fashion a fiery serpent and put it on a pole and hold it up before the people. If those who had been bitten just looked to that, they would live. Jesus was saying in effect, "I was that fiery serpent on a pole, prefiguring the day when I will be placed on a cross for you. But if you look to me you will not die, but live!"

C. The experiences and prophetic utterances of the prophets are about Christ (There are dozens. I will mention two).

1. Most evangelicals are familiar with Isaiah's vision of the holiness of God as recorded in chapter 6. ***In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up; and the train of his robe filled the temple. Above him stood the seraphim. Each had six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" And the foundations of the thresholds shook at the voice of him who called, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!*** In John 12, John records the unbelief of the people before whom the Lord Jesus taught and performed miracles. John then

quotes from Isaiah 6, and clearly speaking of Jesus, he writes, "Isaiah said these things because he saw his glory and spoke of him." Isaiah had seen Jesus!

2. Isaiah 53 is another familiar passage to the evangelical – "He was despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows...he was wounded for our transgressions...All we like sheep have gone astray...the Lord laid on him the iniquity of us all..." There are dozens of places where these verses are cited in the NT. Clearly this is about Jesus Christ. If there was any doubt, we are told that the Ethiopian (Acts 8) was reading an Isaiah scroll (53:7-8) and Philip came along side him and explained that what he was reading was about Jesus! (***Then Philip opened his mouth, and beginning with this Scripture he told him the good news about Jesus***).

D. The appearances of the "Angel of the Lord" are about Christ

1. Talk to Abraham or Hagar or Eliezer or Jacob or Moses or Gideon or Sampson's parents or David to discover the identity of this interesting figure. The angel of the Lord was none other than a pre-incarnate appearance of the second person of the Triune God, Himself.
2. Jesus met with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and Moses and David and others. Perhaps these were among the experiences Jesus shared with the Emmaus disciples. The point is that the main character of the OT is not Abraham or Joseph or Moses or Isaiah or Jeremiah or Ezekiel – the main character is the Lord Jesus Christ! If we are looking we will find Him.

## **II. THE MAIN STORY OF THE OT IS REDEMPTION (24:36)**

A. As captured in the blood sacrifices and the sacrificial system

1. Perhaps no clearer presentation is made than that found in the epistle to the Hebrews regarding the purpose and meaning of the endless sacrifices of the OT.
2. They all pictured and pointed to the once and forever, perfect, complete sacrifice of Jesus. (See **Hebrews 9:24-28**).
3. The story of redemption began with the animal skin coverings for Adam and Eve. God's people reinforced their understanding of the penalty of sin and the concept of substitution through the continuous sacrifices of bulls and goats and lambs. Without blood, without death, there was no satisfaction for sin. Sin brought death for death was the punishment, the judgment for sin. And all of that pointed forward to the day when a perfect, final, sacrifice would be made to truly atone for sin. The

main character of the OT is Christ and the main story is redemption.

- B. As captured in the experiences of the patriarchs, the poets and the prophets
1. Job longed for an arbitrator who could take up his case (9:32-35). Though he loathed his life and could not fathom why he was suffering so, still he declared, ***Oh that my words were written! Oh that they were inscribed in a book! Oh that with an iron pen and lead they were engraved in the rock forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last he will stand upon the earth. And after my skin has been thus destroyed, yet in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another.***
  2. The Psalmist spoke of Jesus as a Shepherd (Psa 23), as crying out on the cross, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” (Psa. 22). There was a prophecy of no bones being broken (Psa. 34). The birthplace was announced (Micah 5); the crucifixion and death and burial were depicted (Isa. 53); the resurrection was prophesied (Psa. 118). His return was predicted (Psalm 2 and 24 and Daniel 7). And all of this spoke about the plan of God for redeeming a people from every tribe and tongue and nation to the praise of His glorious grace (Psa 66-67)! My friends, the main character of the OT is Jesus Christ and the main story is one of the unfolding drama of redemption – and the main theme of the OT is a theme of God's grace – again all found in the person and work of Jesus Christ!

### III. THE MAIN THEME OF THE OT IS GRACE (24:44-49)

#### A. As depicted in God's acts of judgment and deliverance

1. Adam and Eve sinned against God – a God they knew face to face from their beginning! This God could have destroyed them and had every reason to destroy them, but He clothed their nakedness, kept them from being forever condemned in their sin by removing the possibility of eating from the tree of life and He promised to send a Redeemer.
2. The people of the earth grew increasingly evil and deserved all of God's judgment, but God chose one man and his family and spared them from His global judgment. God's grace was in the scattering of the people and the confusion of the languages. His grace was in the covenant with Abraham. His grace was in the deliverance from Egypt and the provisions in the wilderness. His grace was in the promise of a land of rest. His grace was in the establishment of a nation, in the provision and protection of that nation. His grace was in the sacrificial system and in the judges' leadership and in the monarchy and in the prophets and even in the defeats and the captivities and hardships – all designed for them to see God and to trust Him! His grace is on every page of the OT.

#### B. As depicted in God's promises to Israel and the nations

1. There was the promise of rest and the promise of forgiveness and the promise of restoration – all of these promises paint a clear picture of God's grace to His people.
2. There was the promise of a king to occupy the throne forever – a Davidic king – and that king would be Jesus. 2 Samuel 7 would be worthy of our study if we only had the time! Hopefully we will get back to that.
3. Isaiah spoke eloquently of the times of millennial blessing, of new heavens and a new earth in chapters 60-66. All of this was completely and wholly an act of God's grace. The Hebrew word "chesed", variously translated, "love", "loving-kindness", "kindness", "favor", "mercy", etc., appears again and again in the OT. Perhaps no better word captures the essence of the definition than does the word grace.
4. When Paul wanted to teach the Romans a lesson in grace and justification by faith, he turned to Abraham! To the Galatians, he used Sarah and Hagar. The main character of the OT is Christ; the main story is redemption; the main theme is grace

– all of which is designed and intended to proclaim the glory of God in the person of Christ!

## **Conclusion**

1. The NT writers used the OT to teach the character and work of God. Jacob and Esau became the illustration of the sovereignty of God in salvation (Romans 9). Adam identified the necessity of Christ for our salvation, as Paul drew the contrast between the first Adam and the second Adam in Romans 5. The creation account was Paul's way of teaching the authority and wisdom and supremacy of Christ (Col.1). The account of Abraham and Isaac was the illustration for the Father's love for the Son and the Son's willingness to be offered as the sacrifice! The wilderness experiences were given as examples and warnings of God's provision and protection and judgment for disobedience (1 Corinthians 10). Isaiah 6 becomes the basis for our understanding of the holiness of God and the majesty of Christ. Isaiah 53 establishes the basis for understanding the passion of Christ. Hosea shows us the grace and mercy of Christ as Hosea exposes his life experiences with his prostitute wife.
2. The OT was sufficient for the rich man's brothers to be saved from the wrath of God (Luke 16). The OT was sufficient to prove the deity of Christ and His redemptive work for us. That is what Luke declared as he recorded the efforts of Paul as he entered the synagogues proving that Jesus was the Christ. Here the OT was sufficient to open the eyes of these two disciples so that they might finally see that Jesus was more than a prophet or some redeemer of Israel, but the Lord Christ!
3. O that our hearts might be opened that we might recognize Him! And may our response be to proclaim to the nations that Christ did indeed suffer and die and rise again on the third day in order that repentance and forgiveness of sins might be effective that we might belong to Christ to the praise and glory of His wonderful grace! The men on the Emmaus road were kept from recognizing Jesus, probably so that they would base their conclusion on the compelling testimony of the Word rather than the experience of being with Jesus. Their belief in the resurrection of Christ rested on the Scripture before they "saw" Jesus.
4. We do not have the actual manuscript of Jesus' sermon to the Emmaus disciples but we have the source of His message – these wonderful words of the OT Scriptures whose message and theme and main character are the grace of our Lord Jesus who

has chosen to redeem us from our sin and grant to us eternal life to the praise of His glory! May we be prompted this week to open the OT and look for Jesus! It would be a worthy and blessed pursuit.

5. I leave you with this quotation from R. Kent Hughes (Luke, Vol. 2, pp. 411-412). *This very moment Christ knows where we are. He knows the geography of our lives inside and out. He knows the temperature of our souls. He knows whether there is ice or fire. Whatever our state, his method is the same – to meet us where we are with his own person framed in the beautiful context of his Word. The life-giving, energizing truth is that Christ suffered and died for our sins “according to the Scriptures.” And then, on the third day, he rose from the dead “according to the Scriptures” (1 Corinthians 15:3,4). He is the Savior prophesied on Mt. Moriah, the atoning Lamb of the Passover, our tabernacle and temple (for he is our sacrifice and our priest), our manna/bread of heaven, the Suffering Servant who was “numbered with the transgressors,” the Son who suffered separation from the Father for us when he bore our sins. He delights to bring fire to cold hearts. We do not need more light – we need heat.*
6. May our God bring the heat that we too may say about His Word, “Did not our hearts burn within us...while He opened to us the Scriptures?” Glory to Christ! It's about Christ! Let's pray!