

Jesus the Christ
SERMON
By
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TEXT: Acts 18:24-28

PROP: The importance of teaching that the Messiah is Jesus lies in the fact that our very salvation is bound up in that fact. He is the one who was foretold to save us from our sins. Therefore we must believe on him unto salvation.

Acts 18:24-28 (ESV)

24 Now a Jew named Apollos, a native of Alexandria, came to Ephesus. He was an eloquent man, competent in the Scriptures. **25** He had been instructed in the way of the Lord. And being fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things concerning Jesus, though he knew only the baptism of John. **26** He began to speak boldly in the synagogue, but when Priscilla and Aquila heard him, they took him and explained to him the way of God more accurately. **27** And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, **28** for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Paul remained for a short while in Athens, two months at the most, during which time he called for Silas and Timothy to join him before he went on to Corinth. There Paul remained for a year and a half teaching the word of God to the Corinthian church. While the results of Paul's teaching at Athens were not immediately realized his work at Corinth was far more successful. As he did for the church in Thessalonica Paul wrote two lengthy epistles to the Corinthian church but the saints in Athens received no such communication. In Corinth, Paul met a Jew named Aquila and his wife Priscilla who were tentmakers as he was, and Paul lived with them and worked at his trade to support himself. On Sabbath days he debated as usual in the Jewish synagogues, and on week days, in addition to the hours spent working the coarse hair cloth of which tents were made, he expounded the gospel to his fellow-workers, or else he meditated upon the trials of his converts in Macedonia, or perhaps, most of all, he spent time in communion with God, and intercession for the church.

Paul's intercessions, as we read of them in his Epistles, were very great indeed. Intercessory prayers for his individual converts are frequently mentioned by him. It would have been impossible for a man so hard pressed with labors of every kind, temporal and spiritual, to pray for his many concerns if Paul had not cultivated the habit

of constant communion with his Father in heaven. He cultivated a deep sense of God's presence and communion with Him. The things of this world and the pressures of making a living often crowd out fellowship with God in our own lives but we all need to develop good and spiritually healthy habits of regular study of the word and fellowship with God in prayer. We may never achieve the deep sense of God's presence that Paul had but he is a model for us to follow.

There was a large Jewish synagogue in Corinth and as usual Paul began there to teach the Jews about Jesus instructing them that the Christ or Messiah was Jesus. And again, as usual, the Jews became very upset and hostile to Paul. So much so that Paul refused to continue a ministry to Jews as we read,

Acts 18:6 (ESV)

6 And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles."

Paul's ministry to the Jews was largely unsuccessful. Not that there were no Jews who believed on Jesus but there were many more among the Gentiles. Indeed the churches that Paul founded on his missionary journeys were mostly Gentiles. Many of the Corinthian Gentiles hearing Paul believed and were baptized but one notable Jew also believed along with his whole family. Crispus was a ruler in the synagogue, obviously a Jew. The Lord told Paul in a vision that he had many people in Corinth who belonged to him and no one would attack him or harm him in any way. Even so Paul was eventually dragged before the Roman proconsul, Gallio where the usual charge was laid against him,

Acts 18:12-13 (ESV)

12 But when Gallio was proconsul of Achaia, the Jews made a united attack on Paul and brought him before the tribunal, **13** saying, "This man is persuading people to worship God contrary to the law."

Gallio refused to hear the case on the grounds that their charges were simply not the concern of the Roman government. The law of the Jews was considered by the Romans to be relatively unimportant. Gallio cared for none of these things, despising the mob, Jew and Gentile alike, and contemptuously pitying them from the height of his philosophic self-contentment. Gallio is usually regarded as the type of urbane man of the world, who, wrapped in material interests, cares for nothing higher or nobler. But in fact as a Stoic philosopher he was not dead to better things. But he was rather the type

of man who, blinded by lower truths and mere intellectual wisdom, becomes careless of his own soul and heedless of his eternal destiny. He had so thoroughly cultivated a philosophic contempt for the outside world and its business, that he lost the opportunity of hearing from the Apostle's lips of a grander philosophy, a deeper contentment, of a truer, more satisfying peace than was ever dreamt of in stoical speculation. And this type of man is with us today. Philosophy, science, art, literature, politics, they are all great endeavors, and all offer significant inducements to fame and fortune. So much so that they may so thoroughly satisfy man's inner being as to render him careless of that life in Christ which alone abides forever. Even beating one of their own Jewish leaders before Gallio failed to elicit any reaction from the proconsul. He remained above all this trivia and foolishness. But in the end Paul was released unharmed.

After his lengthy stay in Corinth Paul set out for home in Syrian Antioch on the way stopping briefly at Ephesus where he left Priscilla and Aquila. Returning to Antioch, his second missionary journey concluded, Paul continued to visit many of the churches in Galatia and Phrygia to teach them and strengthen them. And all of this brings us to our text where we meet Apollos, an eloquent Jew who was competent in the Scriptures and instructed in the way of Jesus the Lord. He was fervent and careful to teach the truth about Jesus but he only knew the baptism of John. Baptism in the name of Jesus Christ was instituted by Peter on the day of Pentecost. Cut to the heart by the realization that they had crucified Jesus the Messiah, the Jews in Peter's hearing asked, "Brothers, what shall we do?"

Acts 2:38 (ESV)

38 And Peter said to them, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Apollos apparently had not heard of such a baptism but Priscilla and Aquila explained the way of God more accurately and no doubt taught Apollos of baptism in the name of Jesus. Apollos went on to preach and teach in Achaia the area south of Corinth on the Grecian peninsula and was of great help to the churches there. We read,

Acts 18:27-28 (ESV)

27 And when he wished to cross to Achaia, the brothers encouraged him and wrote to the disciples to welcome him. When he arrived, he greatly helped those who through grace had believed, **28** for he powerfully refuted the Jews in public, showing by the Scriptures that the Christ was Jesus.

Let us take note of the nature of Apollos' refutation. His competence in the Scriptures enabled him to show that the Christ was Jesus, or to put it in Hebrew terms, the Scriptures enabled him to show that the Messiah was Yeshua. Do you know the scriptures well enough to show this? I have met few young people, in my Hebrew classes at Grove City College, who are able to define the God they profess to believe in, or to support from scripture that he is Triune.

The reading, "that the Christ was Jesus," reflects the word order in the original Greek and put this way it expresses the fact that Jesus is the Messiah. I want to consider the reason for teaching that the Messiah is Jesus and how we must respond to this truth.

The term *Messiah* derives from the Hebrew word *Meshiach* which means "Anointed One." It occurs only twice in the Bible as Messiah but more often in the Old Testament translated as the Anointed One. Of Andrew it is said,

John 1:41 (ESV)

41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ).

And according to the woman at Jacob's well,

John 4:25 (ESV)

25 The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things."

The Old Testament speaks of one who was chosen and anointed by God to come to deliver us from our bondage to sin. He would come to reveal God's truth to us and he would offer himself up as our sacrifice for sin and he would reign over us as our great king. Not only the Jews but the Gentiles were to benefit greatly from the coming of the Messiah. Andrew recognized Jesus as the Messiah and so did Peter in his great confession the Jesus is the Christ the Son of the living God. As Simeon held the baby Jesus he said,

Luke 2:29-32 (ESV)

29 " Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace,
according to your word;

30 for my eyes have seen your salvation

31 that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples,

32 a light for revelation to the Gentiles,
and for glory to your people Israel.”

In Jesus the Messiah is the salvation of all his people and revelation to the Gentiles who to this point had not been given the oracles of God. Having come from Israel in the line of David, Jesus stands out as the glory of Israel. In the Messiah is all the fullness of the Godhead in bodily form. He is the word of God who was made flesh and dwelt among us and we have seen his glory, glory and the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. The great need of Israel was not deliverance from Roman tyranny but deliverance from their sin and this is our great need too. The great reason for teaching that the Messiah is Jesus is so that believing in him we are saved. That he is the Messiah is the bedrock of our faith because God was pleased to wound him for our transgressions and crush him for our iniquities.

Max I. Reich tells of passing a repairing shop in the window of which was a sign reading: “We mend everything except broken hearts.” Brother Reich stepped back and entered the store, and when a beautiful young Jewish woman came forward to serve him he said: “I saw your sign, and want to ask what you do with people who have broken hearts.” “Oh!” she said, “We send them to the hospital.”

“You are Jewish, are you not? Did you ever read Isaiah 57:15?”

Isaiah 57:15 (ESV)

15 For thus says the One who is high and lifted up,
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:
“I dwell in the high and holy place,
and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly,
and to revive the heart of the contrite.”

And,” continued Mr. Reich, “there was also Jesus the Messiah who read Isaiah 61:1 in his hometown synagogue at Nazareth.

Isaiah 61:1 (ESV)

The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me,
because the Lord has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor;
he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,
to proclaim liberty to the captives,
and the opening of the prison to those who are bound;

And,” said Mr. Reich, “the Messiah added, “This day is the Scripture fulfilled in your eyes.””

A great reason for teaching that the Messiah is Jesus is to bring people to Christ who binds up their hearts broken with sin. When Apollos taught that the Messiah is Jesus he greatly helped those who believed. What could be of greater help to sinners than this that Jesus the Messiah died for our sins according to the Scriptures.

In teaching the two disciples on the road to Emmaus shortly after his resurrection Jesus said,

Luke 24:25-27 (ESV)

25 -- “O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Was it not necessary that **the Christ** should suffer these things and enter into his glory?” **27** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Until Jesus opened the eyes of these disciples they could not believe that Jesus was the Messiah who was to redeem Israel. We understand from many texts that conversion is necessary in order for anyone to believe that Jesus is the Redeemer and Savior of his people. According to John,

1 John 5:1 (ESV)

Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ has been born of God, and everyone who loves the Father loves whomever has been born of him.

All who believe that the Messiah is Jesus **have been born** of God The Greek text indicates that the new birth is accomplished in a person **by God** and that it is accomplished in the past before saving faith is possible. We may translate, "Everyone who is believing that Jesus is the Messiah has previously been born (Greek perfect passive) by God." So the great importance of believing that the Messiah is Jesus is seen in the fact that God changes our hearts in order to enable us to believe in Christ the Messiah as our savior. It is so important that God enables us to do it.

Denial that Jesus is the Messiah renders a person antichrist.

1 John 2:21-23 (ESV)

21 I write to you, not because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and because no lie is of the truth. **22** Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is **the**

Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son. **23** No one who denies the Son has the Father. Whoever confesses the Son has the Father also.

Again we see the great importance of confessing that the Messiah is Jesus. To do otherwise commits us to lies and distances us from God the Father. We must come to Christ for grace or we will perish in our sins with the father of lies, the devil, and all of his kingdom.

In an English village in 1792, an illiterate domestic servant named Joanna Southcott became mentally unbalanced and announced that she had become the bride of Christ and was to be the mother of the second Messiah.

Shortly, Joanna was established in London where she became very popular and cultivated 100,000 ignorant and credulous followers called Southcottians, a small sect of which is still in existence.

The woman made a fortune from the sale of her prophecies, incoherent and written in rhyme, and from the sale of certificates guaranteeing salvation to the purchasers. After long evading the question, Joanna finally prophesied the date—October 19, 1814—when she would give birth to the promised Holy Child, but nothing happened and she died of a brain disease ten weeks later.

She left to mankind a mysterious box with the request that it be left sealed until its contents were needed to solve the problems of a great world crisis. When opened in 1928, it was found to contain a dicebox, novel, puzzle, lottery ticket, a lady's nightcap and horse pistol.

Joanna Southcott is not the only one who believed lies concerning Christ. Most of his own people believed that Jesus was of the devil. And in our world today a great many people deny Christ who should know better. The leaders of the large mainline churches in effect deny that the Messiah is Jesus because they deny his deity. In addition many who claim to be Christians deny that Jesus is the Messiah by their actions.

Speaking of Israel, who had not received Jesus as the Messiah, Paul writes,

Romans 9:1-5 (ESV)

I am speaking the truth in Christ—I am not lying; my conscience bears me witness in the Holy Spirit— **2** that I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. **3** For I could wish that I myself were accursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, my kinsmen according to the flesh. **4** They are Israelites, and to them belong

the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises. **5** To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is **the Christ who is God over all, blessed forever**. Amen.

Israel should have known better. They had all the advantage of revelation from God through his prophets, but in denying Christ they denied the Messiah who is God over all, blessed forever. In our recent study of apologetics we saw that the world apart from the saving grace of God will not confess Jesus as Peter did. Every philosophy and religion of mankind that derives from man's autonomy and imagination falls short of confessing that Jesus is the Messiah because to do that one must confess that Jesus is Yahweh God.

Matthew 16:13-18 (ESV)

13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" **14** And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." **15** He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" **16** Simon Peter replied, "You are **the Christ**, the Son of the living God." **17** And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. **18** And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.

This confession of Peter's did not come from his imagination or innate wisdom. Jesus said that Peter made the confession that Jesus is the Messiah because God the Father revealed it him. And we see that this confession is the bedrock of the church. The church of Christ stands upon the validity of the confession that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of the living God. That is to say, to confess that Jesus is Yahweh the Messiah. The importance of teaching and believing that the Messiah is Jesus lies in the fact that our very salvation is bound up that truth. He is the one who was foretold to save us from our sins. Therefore we must believe on him unto salvation. May God grant us the ability to believe on Jesus and be saved. May he cause our hearts to burn within us like the disciples on the road to Emmaus, as our eyes are opened to the Scriptures so that we turn away from our sin and confess with Peter, "You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God.