

God's Eternal Plan

Lesson 3: The Messiah

As we continue exploring the story of the Bible and God's eternal plan, we must recognize the significance of the Messiah (the Promised One, the Christ). Remember that sin separates people from God (Isaiah 59:1-2). Since God is a holy and righteous God, He demands life as a payment for sin (Hebrews 9:22). However, the animal sacrifices required under the Law of Moses were not sufficient (Hebrews 10:4). So, God sent His only Son as the sacrificial Lamb to provide the opportunity of salvation from sin for everyone (John 1:29; 3:16)!

1) The Messiah in Old Testament prophecy. There are over 300 Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah. We have already considered Genesis 3:15; 12:3; 49:10 that are all fulfilled in Jesus. Consider some additional prophecies as a sample. Isaiah 7:13-14 prophesies the Messiah would be born of a virgin and that His name would be "Immanuel." Micah 5:2 prophesies the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem and rule over Israel. Isaiah 9:6-7 prophesies the Messiah would come through David's lineage and reign over an everlasting kingdom, who would be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace. Isaiah 53 prophesies what the Messiah would endure to provide victory over Satan and establish His everlasting kingdom. Namely, He would willingly offer Himself as a sacrifice for sins – so that we could be healed through Him! While this is just a sample of the Old Testament prophecies about the Messiah, every one of them is fulfilled in Jesus (who proved Himself to be the Messiah; John 1:41-42; 4:25-26)!

2) The Messiah comes to earth. Many years passed from the time God first promised to destroy the works of Satan (Genesis 3:15) to the birth of Jesus. Yet, God never forgot His plan or His promises and waited for the right time to bring Jesus into the

world (Galatians 4:4-5; Matthew 1:20-21). He was born in Bethlehem (Luke 2:7; Micah 5:2) and came through the prophesied lineage (Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38). There was something special about Jesus, besides the fact He fulfilled prophecies. Particularly, Jesus was God living on this earth (Matthew 1:23; John 1:1-3; Colossians 2:9), both the Son of Man (emphasizing His humanity, John 5:27) and the Son of God (emphasizing His Deity, John 1:49). He willingly left Heaven to come to earth and fulfill God's plan – even to suffer and die (Philippians 2:5-11; 2 Corinthians 8:9). Then, just prior to Jesus's birth, John was born to Zechariah and Elizabeth (Luke 1). This one was chosen by God to be sent before Jesus and prepare people for Jesus's ministry (Matthew 3:3). John later declared Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:29) and baptized Jesus in the Jordan River (Matthew 3:16-17).

3) The Messiah's life. Jesus was the Master Teacher throughout His earthly ministry, focusing on saving the lost and teaching about His kingdom (Luke 19:10; Matthew 13:34-35). As He taught, He established the foundation for His new law, as the old law was being fulfilled (Matthew 5:17-18). Another key to Jesus's ministry was the many miracles He did (walking on water, cleansing lepers, healing the paralyzed, raising the dead, etc.). These supernatural events demonstrated that Jesus really was the Messiah and Son of God (John 20:30-31; Matthew 8:14-17). Then, while Jesus did possess the nature of being God, He was also fully human and experienced temptation (Matthew 4:1-11). Yet, He never sinned (Hebrews 4:15) and so was able to provide Himself as the perfect sacrifice to take away sin! Furthermore, Jesus did many other things during His life in addition to the things recorded about His life in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John (John 21:25). The things that have been written, however, were written to lead us to fully

believe in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Son of God (John 20:30-31)!

4) The Messiah's death, burial, and resurrection. Jesus knew He was going to die and how He would die (Matthew 16:21-23); yet He came anyways and went through it all! Even though He did not want to suffer, He was devoted to accomplishing His Father's will (Luke 22:42-44). So, He was betrayed, denied, and abandoned by His apostles and then arrested. After His arrest, He was unfairly tried by the Jewish Sanhedrin and Governor Pilate. He endured false accusations, was sentenced to death by crucifixion, and was severely flogged (Matthew 27:27-31). After all this, Jesus was crucified by being fastened to the cross with nails through His hands and feet (Matthew 27:32-56). In His last breaths, He declared that He had finished the plan God had sent Him to accomplish (John 19:30)! After He died, His body was taken off the cross and put into the tomb. Yet, while some may have thought Jesus had been defeated, remember God's promise to Satan in Genesis 3:15. On the first day of the week (the third day), Jesus rose from the dead just as He said He would (Matthew 28:1-10)! Then, He even appeared to many to prove His resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-8). After 40 days on earth speaking about the kingdom of God (Acts 1:3), He ascended to Heaven, with a promise to come again (Acts 1:9-11).

Through what Jesus accomplished, God has made salvation available to every person (Romans 5:6-11). Jesus fulfilled all the prophecies and accomplished the mission God had given Him. But, now that Jesus has made the perfect sacrifice at the right time, how would people come to believe in and obey Him for the salvation He offers and be part of His kingdom? We will watch God answer these questions over the next two lessons (in Acts through Revelation).

Thought Questions

(2 Timothy 3:16-17)

Teaching: What did you learn from this lesson?

Rebuking: What are some ways this lesson challenges you to live differently?

Correcting: How does this lesson help you make positive changes for Christ?

Training & Equipping: How can you apply this lesson to be trained and equipped in God's service?