

Who Do You Say I Am? Part 3

Today is Veteran's Day in America. 100 years ago today, at the 11th hour of the 11th day of the 11th month of 1918 the Armistice with Germany went into effect, signaling the end of WWI, the first war to end all wars. Fourteen million people died in WWI, including 9 million soldiers, sailors and airmen from 28 countries. Sadly, the peace that was won in 1918 would not prove to be a lasting peace and just a little more than 20 years later we would find ourselves once again sending young men and women off to fight and die on foreign battlefields in WWII.

Originally known as Armistice Day, it was officially changed to Veterans Day in 1954, set aside as a day to recognize and honor the sacrifice of all those who served in the armed forces of the United States. We live in a free society today. We just had a free election where the voices of the people were heard. You probably got just as sick and tired of the negative campaign ads that were running, but that's free speech. Thank God and thank a veteran for that right and privilege to speak your mind. To all of you who have served our nation in the armed forces, we honor you and thank you for your service!

Today we continue our sermon series answering Jesus' question to the disciples, "Who do you say I am?" In previous weeks we've said he is the Son of the Living God and he is the Savior of the world. This morning we are going to focus on **Jesus the Messiah**.

What does it mean when we say Jesus is the Messiah? The Hebrew word for Messiah means "anointed one." It refers to one who is anointed with oil, essentially indicating they have been chosen for a special purpose. In the Old Testament it was kings, high priests and some prophets who were anointed. (Notice Jesus is all those things – he is our king, our high priest and a prophet like no other.) The word "Christ" is the Greek translation of the word Messiah, so when we speak of Jesus Christ, we are saying Jesus, Messiah, Jesus the anointed one. The Jewish people believed the Messiah to be the anointed deliverer, the one who would come to lead the people out of bondage, into a new age of peace and self-governance and spiritual renewal and righteousness. The Jews are still waiting for the arrival of the Messiah. We believe Jesus was and is the Messiah, fulfilling all of the Old Testament predictions and prophecies concerning the Messiah. D. James Kennedy in his book *Why I Believe* says there are 333 O.T. prophecies delineating 456 specific details of his life and Jesus satisfies them all. In order to understand the idea of Jesus the Messiah, let's look back at Israel's history. A quick Old Testament survey.

God creates the heavens and the earth and places Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden where he has a relationship with them. God fellowships with them in the garden, walking with them in the cool of the day but, they sin and their sin separates them from their relationship with God and they are banished from the garden paradise. The descendants of Adam and Eve build cities and civilizations but follow their own heart rather than following God and things spiral downward, pulling men and women further away from any knowledge of or relationship with God. Fast forward, past the great flood, to the time of Abraham. He is living in Iraq when God calls him to go to a land that God will show him, a land God will give to him and to his descendants. God enters into a covenant with Abraham and tells him all the nations of the earth will be blessed through him. Now through Abraham and his descendants, God's plan is to undo the mess the world is in because of sin and get people back on track, living according to God's order and design and back in relationship with him.

Abraham obeys, God gives him a son and heir and he blesses him for his faithfulness. Fast forward four generations and a famine drives Abraham's descendants (the Israelites) into Egypt where they live first as refugees and finally as slaves for 400 years. God remembers his covenant with Abraham, sends them a deliverer, a messiah of sorts in the person of Moses, one of their own, who leads the Israelites out of Egypt and out of slavery and towards the land God had promised to Abraham all those years before. The land of Israel.

Once they are free of Egypt God tells Moses he plans to travel with them on this journey. God will be with them! He gives them the law, outlining how they are to treat one another and how they are to worship and serve God. He also gives instructions for building a tabernacle, the holy tent of meeting where God will meet with Moses and where mercy will be shown to the people. God is literally going to "tabernacle with them." While he is giving these instructions to Moses, the people persuade Moses' brother Aaron to make an idol in the image of a golden calf so they can pretend the calf is the god that led them out of Egypt. God tells Moses in response to the rebellion that he won't go with the people. "They're too stubborn. You're on your own." Moses appeals to God and God decides to go with them on the journey. In a scene of pure grace, God's presence fills the traveling tabernacle they build and he goes with them on their way to possess the land, the new Eden.

This picture, this story is essentially repeated over and over in the Old Testament. God plans to dwell with his people but the people sin and rebel and in some sense God "leaves" them

and then they repent and in mercy he returns to forgive and bless them again. The children of Israel, the descendants of Abraham settle the land. Fast forward a few generations and King David comes on the scene. David unites the twelve tribes into one strong nation. His son Solomon succeeds him as king, expands the territory and builds a great temple for the Lord and the glory of God fills that temple. It's like God is finally at home in Jerusalem in the temple, although Solomon acknowledges that God doesn't dwell in houses made of hands, but his presence is graciously there. But then the people sin and rebel again. The ten northern tribes of Israel are carried off into exile by the Assyrians and finally, the Babylonians destroy Jerusalem, they destroy Solomon's temple and the people are exiled. It seems as though God has abandoned his people, at least that's the way they felt.

Seventy years go by, the Persians have conquered the Babylonians and Cyrus the Persian king allows the Jews to return to their home. They begin rebuilding Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple, but it seemed God was still absent. They were longing for a day when God's presence and glory would fill the temple as he did at the dedication of Solomon's temple. They returned, but soon after began living in rebellion and sin again. God seemed absent, but the prophets had said he would return. **“See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come, says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears?” Malachi 3:1-2**

Malachi is the last book of the Old Testament. He says the Lord is coming back, but then his words are followed by 400 years of silence. The people believe Israel will one day be a self-governing people again, that God's glory will again fill his temple, his presence will visit them and be with them again, but no one knows exactly how that is going to happen or what that will look like. In the meantime, the Israelites lose and regain and lose control of their land. By the time of Jesus, the Romans are in power and control the land and the people of Israel. Herod is made a client king under the control and authority of the Romans. He builds a temple that is one of the wonders of the world, but the priesthood is corrupt (a political appointment), the Romans defile the land and to the righteous it appears God is still absent from Israel. The temple is magnificent, but it is empty. The ark of the covenant is missing. There is no prophet, no word from God. Where is God? The prophets said he was coming to us, but when? Will he send us a deliverer, the messiah, the anointed one, and how will we know when he arrives?

With that background the gospel writer Mark opens with this, **“This is where the good news starts – the good news of Jesus the Messiah, God’s son. Isaiah the prophet put it like this, ‘Look! I am sending my messenger ahead of me; he will clear the way for you! A shout goes up in the desert: make way for the Lord. Make a straight path for him.’”** Mark 1:1-3

Guess who’s coming? God is coming back, in a way that no one expected. God is coming back in Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of the Living God and Savior of the world. The gospels tell of Jesus being baptized by John the Baptist and the Spirit descending on him like a dove, showing Jesus being anointed and the voice from heaven declaring him to be the Son whom God loved and with whom he is well pleased. In a totally unexpected way God has come back to Israel, back to Jerusalem, but the people don’t recognize him or acknowledge him. It’s not what they expected. During his final entry into Jerusalem Jesus wept over the city because **“they did not recognize the time of God’s coming to you.”** Luke 19:44 Jesus is still coming to people in unexpected ways, at unusual times. Have you recognized him?

God had come to Israel. This time not in a pillar of smoke or fire, not in a tent of meeting in the wilderness, but in Jesus the Son. The Messiah, a deliverer like Moses, but greater than Moses. Look at this. In John 6 Jesus fed the 5,000. Afterwards the people began to wonder if he could be the Messiah. They want more proof. **“What miraculous sign will you give that we may see it and believe you? What will you do? Our forefathers ate the manna in the desert; as it is written, ‘He gave them bread from heaven to eat.’”** John 6:30-31 They’re thinking, **“Jesus gave us bread and fish and fed us and it was a miracle. Maybe he is the Messiah we’ve been expecting since Moses gave our forefathers bread in the wilderness to feed them.”** They were expecting a Messiah, a deliverer like Moses.

“Jesus said to them, ‘I tell you the truth, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven. For the bread of God is he who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world.’

‘Sir,’ they said, ‘from now on give us this bread.’

Then Jesus declared, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry.’” John 6:32-35 Jesus is a greater deliverer than Moses who gave them bread in the desert because he is the true bread of heaven. He is the bread of life and if you know him, if you receive him, you will never hunger again. Only Jesus can satisfy the deepest hunger of the heart.

In John 7 Jesus says, **“If anyone is thirsty, let him come to me and drink. Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, streams of living water will flow from within him.” John 7:37-38** The Old Testament tells of Moses who struck the rock in the desert and gave them water to drink, but Jesus is a greater deliverer than Moses. He offers them living water that if they drink from him they will never thirst again. He is offering them the water of life, the Holy, life giving Spirit of God. Upon hearing this the people said, **“Surely this man is the Prophet!” “He’s the Messiah!”** said some others. **But some of them replied, “The Messiah doesn’t come from Galilee, does he? Doesn’t the Bible say that the Messiah is descended from David, and comes from Bethlehem, the city where David was?” John 7:40-42** Jesus is greater than Moses and greater than David. Of course we know Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that he was a descendant of David. They were right. He is the Messiah!

The people in Jesus day were expecting a Messiah like David. A descendant of David and a conquering warrior and king. Peter in his sermon on the day of Pentecost quoted King David who said, **“Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will live in hope, because you will not abandon me to the grave nor will you let your Holy One see decay.” Acts 2:26-27** Then Peter says, **“Brothers I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ [the Messiah], that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Jesus to life and we are all witnesses of the fact.” Acts 2:26-32**

Peter tells them that David wasn’t speaking of himself, but was speaking prophetically of the Messiah. The people were expecting a Messiah like David, a warrior/king. Jesus didn’t come to conquer nations or enemies, he came to conquer sin and by doing so at the cross, Jesus the warrior king conquered the greatest enemy of all. He died and rose triumphantly, conquering death and the grave! David couldn’t do that. David’s earthly rule and reign came to an end but the prophet Isaiah said of the Messiah’s kingdom, **“Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever.” Isaiah 9:7** Jesus, the Messiah, greater than Moses and greater than David. Peter said,

“Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah.” Acts 2:36

Jesus the Messiah, exceeds every expectation. Mark’s gospel tells of Jesus calming the storm on the sea of Galilee. Mark records the boat filling with water. Fearing it will capsize the disciples cry out **“Teacher, don’t you care if we drown?” Jesus got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, ‘Quiet! Be still!’ Then the wind died down and it was completely calm. The disciples were terrified and asked each other, ‘Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!’” Mark 4:39-41**

The disciples are wondering, “Who calms the wind and the waves? Who has power over nature?” The Psalmist said of God, **“You silence the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves...” Psalm 65:7 “Then they cried to the Lord in their trouble and he brought them out of their distress. He stilled the storm to a whisper; the waves of the sea were hushed.” Psalm 107:28-29**

Who is this? Hmmm...could it be that Jesus is the Messiah? Could it be that after this long absence, God has not just sent a deliverer, but God has come back to us in Jesus? Is it possible that God is bringing his glory back, this time not to a temple made of hands like Herod’s temple, but we will see his glory revealed in this temple made by God himself, in Jesus? Remember when they asked Jesus what he thought about Herod’s temple? Jesus said, **“Destroy this temple and I will raise it again in three days.” “The Jews replied, “It has taken forty-six years to build this temple and you are going to raise it in three days?” But the temple he had spoken of was his body. After he was raised from the dead, his disciples recalled what he had said. They then believed the Scripture and the words that Jesus had spoken.” John 2:19-22** Jesus was the new temple, a better temple. And the glory that had filled Solomon’s temple, the glory missing from Herod’s temple, it is seen in the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. God’s glory is seen in the risen Savior and Messiah and Lord.

This is what it looks like for God to come back to Jerusalem and back to Israel to rescue and redeem his people. This is what the inauguration of a new kingdom looks like. In the minds of the people, God had been absent. Even though they were living in Israel, it still felt like they were exiled, abandoned. But now Jesus has come. The angel announced to Joseph that Mary would have a child, conceived of the Holy Spirit and they were to call his name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins. And Matthew records, **“All this took place to fulfill**

what the Lord had said through the prophet: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel which means, ‘God with us.’” Matthew 22-23 God with us! Matthew’s gospel begins with this story, with this announcement. The long absence and silence is over. God is with us in the person of Jesus the long awaited Messiah! And his gospel ends with this promise from Jesus. **“And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” Matthew 28:20**

Jesus the Messiah has come and this good news is not just for the Jews, and not just for those living in Israel in the first century. It is good news for all of us! Jesus has come and he has promised to never leave us or forsake us.

I don’t have time to tell you this morning about those 333 prophecies in the Old Testament that refer to the Messiah and how Jesus fulfills and satisfies each and every one. I don’t have time to tell you about how he opened the eyes of the blind, healed the lame, cast out demons, raised the dead, preached freedom to the prisoners and hope to the hopeless and oppressed. I don’t have time to tell you about how his death on the cross provided the atonement for our sins, how his death conquered death, how his resurrection means the beginning of a new life for all who believe in him. If I had time I would tell you about his conversation after his resurrection with two men who were walking to Emmaus. Luke tells us in his gospel that **“Beginning with Moses and all the Prophets Jesus explained to them what was said in all the Scriptures concerning himself.” Luke 24:27** He explained to them that “..the Christ had to suffer these things and then enter his glory.” Jesus is Messiah, Savior, and Lord of all!

Good news. Jesus the Messiah, the miracle worker, the deliverer like no other, the Savior like no other, the conquering King like no other has come! He has come to deliver and transform and heal and set free. He has come to offer us life. Living water. Bread of heaven. The Messiah has come and that means there is hope. You don’t have to live in darkness, in fear, in sin, in bondage. Jesus, the anointed deliverer has come. Jesus, Messiah, Immanuel is here!