**Seeing Jesus in the OT**

1. On the Road to Emmaus

Jan 4, 2015

**Isa 46:9-11** (New Living Translation)

Remember the things I have done in the past. For I alone am God!

I am God, and there is none like me.

Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish… What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do.

**Luke 24:13-16 (NLT)**

That same day two of Jesus' followers were walking to the village of Emmaus, seven miles from Jerusalem. As they walked along they were talking about everything that had happened.

As they talked and discussed these things, Jesus himself suddenly came and began walking with them. But God kept them from recognizing him.

**Luke 24: 25-27, 44**

Then Jesus said to them, "You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures.

Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?"

Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Then he said, "When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled."

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I don’t know if you’ve noticed, but lately it seems that Hollywood has re-discovered the Old Testament! Earlier this year they released a blockbuster movie about Noah starring Russell Crowe. And just before Christmas, Ridley Scott’s epic about Moses & the Exodus. (and apparently he has another movie in the works for next year on the life of David)

Whether this trend toward Bible-themed films is because Hollywood producers have suddenly seen the light, or more likely because they have come to recognize the box office potential of these stories, there’s no question that the Old Testament has recently come back on the radar in our culture.

Last Sunday we finished our year long WtNT, and so this year I thought it might be good for us to go back and take a closer look at the OT. After all it makes up fully ¾ of our entire Bible, so if we focus only on the NT then we will have missed out on a great deal that God wants to say to us. The fact is you really can’t understand the NT, without connecting it to what goes on in the OT

But I think for most of us, our attempts at reading the OT have sometimes led to a certain amount of frustration and discouragement on our part. And so I think we need to begin by recognizing that there are some pretty daunting challenges, when we grapple with the OT:

1. One of those is the sheer **Size** of the OT. In my Bible, the OT has 847 pages. When was the last time you read a 847 page book?

My New Year’s resolution this year is to try to read through the entire OT in 2015. (I’m using a reading guide from Bible.com, gives you 3 chapters each day)

Often when we decide we are going to read the Bible, we start out with lots of enthusiasm at the beginning of Genesis, but then by the time we get to Leviticus or Numbers or Deut, we throw up our hands in despair of ever making sense of it all and quietly put it back on our bookshelf.

2. Another problem is the **Antiquity** of the OT. Much of it was written over 3000 years ago! Written in a different language, in a very different world than the one we live in today. A lot of it is taken up with genealogies and chronologies that are very difficult for us to make sense of.

3. Then there is its **Structure**. The OT consists of 39 distinct books written in many different literary styles: history, poetry, prophecy. We might concede that the OT is full of lots of fascinating stories that we learned when we were children in Sunday school, like the parting of the Red Sea, or Jonah getting swallowed by a whale, but it’s sometimes hard for us to see how they are connected together in any logical sense, or how they have any real relevance to our lives today

4. Many people have difficulty with what they perceive to be the **Theology** or the picture of God that we see in the OT**.** It sometimes seems as tho the God of the OT is rather cruel and vindictive, in contrast to the loving, merciful God we find in the NT.

Some would say that the OC was intended for the nation of Israel, but as Christians, we are people of the NC, and now that Jesus has come, the OT is no longer applicable to us.

But if we look more carefully, we will begin to see that in fact the OT has a very important role in helping us to understand God’s purposes for our lives. Paul writes that

“*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us what is true and to make us realize what is wrong in our lives. It corrects us when we are wrong and teaches us to do what is right”* (2 Tim 3:16)

But when he wrote that, he was primarily thinking of what was in his day referred to as “the Law and the Prophets”. These were the Scriptures that Paul and Jesus and his disciples had grown up with.

And if the OT scriptures were important for Jesus, then surely we need to pay careful attention to what they are saying to us today as well. And I believe one of the most important keys to unlocking the meaning of the OT is to look at the way Jesus himself understood it. As you listen to Jesus’ teaching in the gospels, it quickly becomes obvious that he had studied the OT scriptures in great depth.

Again and again we see Jesus constantly referring back to the OT writings. Remember at the very beginning of his ministry, when he spends 40 days alone out in the desert, 3 times the devil comes and tempts him, and each time he responds by quoting directly from Deuteronomy: *“It is written: Man shall not live on bread alone... It is written: Worship the Lord your God and serve him only… It is written: Do not put the Lord your God to the test”* (Deut 8:3, 6:13, 6:16)

Then he comes back to him home town of Nazareth, and he stands up in his synagogue to read from the prophet Isaiah:

*"The Spirit of the LORD is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed will be set free,and that the time of the LORD's favor has come."*  (Luke 4:18-19)

And then as he explains the significance of this passage, Jesus makes this astounding statement: *"The Scripture you've just heard has been fulfilled this very day!"* You see Jesus understood that all of the OT prophecies were now being fulfilled in him! He understood that he was the Messiah, whose coming had been foretold hundreds of years earlier by the prophet Isaiah and all the other OT writers who, inspired by the HS, had been able to predict future events that they could not possibly have otherwise known about.

So how did Jesus know he was the Messiah? I believe it was as he studied and meditated on the OT scriptures that he came to understand why he had been sent and what his mission on earth was.

And inevitably this brought him into conflict with the religious leaders of his day. They had 2 main issues with Jesus: They were upset with him because he didn’t follow the Sabbath regulations as they felt he should, and because he was making blasphemous claims about his rel’ship with God.

*“So the Jewish leaders tried all the harder to find a way to kill him. For he not only broke the Sabbath, he called God his Father, thereby making himself equal with God.”* (John 5:18)

The sad part was that the Pharisees and the religious leaders had devoted their lives to studying the OT scriptures as well. They invested hours each day poring over the OT law & the prophets. They would have had much of it commited to memory. But they were so concerned with following the letter of the law, they missed the most important thing. They couldn’t see the forest for the trees.

So what **was** the most important thing? What was the whole point of the OT writings? Jesus explains it to them later in this same chapter of John’s gospel: *“You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But [it is] the Scriptures that point to me!”* (Jn 5:39)

And I believe what Jesus is saying here is the key to understanding the entire OT: that right from the opening verses of Genesis to the final chapter of Malachi, the OT is really all about Him! Just as the NT looks back and recounts the events and meaning of Jesus’ life, death & resurrection, the OT looks forward to the day in the future when God will send the Messiah, the promised redeemer who will save his people, and restore what was damaged in the Fall in the opening pages of Genesis.

In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus explains why he has come :

*"Don't misunderstand why I have come. I did not come to abolish the law of Moses or the writings of the prophets. No, I came to* ***accomplish their purpose****.”* (Matt 5:17 NLT)

And that brings us finally, to the verses we read earlier in our scripture reading from the final chapter of the gospel of Luke. On Easter Sunday, after Jesus has been crucified, 2 of his followers are returning to their home in Emmaus, after being in Jerusalem over the last few agonizing days.

And as they walk along, they are discussing between themselves everything that has happened. Like the other disciples, they were trying to cope with their grief & bewilderment at how things had turned out. *"They had hoped"* Jesus was the Messiah, the one God had promised. But now he has been dead for 2 days, & it's hard for them not to feel disheartened & discouraged.

But then an amazing thing happens: suddenly the risen Jesus is there beside them, altho they don’t recognize him at first. And as they are walking along the road together, he begins to explain to them how everything that had happened had all been predicted in the OT scriptures: that the Messiah, would have to suffer & die, but that then he would be raised back to life.

*“"You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?" Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*  (Luke 24:25- 27,44)

You see, in order for them to understand the significance of what had happened to him, Jesus had to take his followers back to the OT scriptures and explain to them how everything that had been written was intended to prepare for the coming of the Messiah, his suffering and his glory, his death and resurrection. 700 years earlier, God had spoken these words through the prophet Isaiah:

I am God, and there is none like me. Only I can tell you the future before it even happens. Everything I plan will come to pass, for I do whatever I wish… What I have said, that I will bring about; what I have planned, that I will do. (Isaiah 46:9-11)

You see long before Isaiah.. Long before David, and Moses and Abraham, and even before Adam… Even before the creation of the world, God the Father already knew, that one day he would send his only beloved Son into the world, “*not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.”*

On this first Sunday of 2015, as we come once again to the Lord’s table this morning, we have the privilege of living on this side of the cross, of being able to look back and see all that God did through Jesus’ death on the cross.

But everything that he was going to do through his Son, God first of all foretold through his prophets in the OT, hundreds of years before it happened.

And in the coming weeks, we’re going to go back to those OT scriptures and see how God did just that. How right here in the pages of the OT, in words that were written hundreds of years before he was born, they present to us a beautiful, incredible picture of the one who was to come, Jesus of Nazareth.

Let’s pray, as we prepare our hearts for the celebration of the Lord’s supper…

Communion Jan 4, 2015

Luke 22:7 *“Then came the day of Unleavened Bread on which the Passover lamb had to be sacrificed.”*

22:15-16 *And he said to them, "I have eagerly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I tell you, I will not eat it again until it finds fulfillment in the kingdom of God."*

22:19-20 *“And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me."*

*In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you.”*

It was no coincidence of course that Jesus was crucified during the Passover celebration. 1400 years earlier, God had told Moses that every year the people of Israel were to celebrate the Passover as a way of remembering how they had been delivered from slavery in Egypt. But at the same time, through the lamb that was sacrificed during Passover, God points ahead to Calvary, he presents this beautiful picture of the true Passover lamb, who would one day be sacrificed on a wooden cross

And at the last supper, as Jesus celebrated the Passover meal with his friends, he took the elements of that meal, the bread and the wine, and gave them a whole new significance. Here in the bread is the Passover lamb who was be slain for the sins of the whole world. Here in the wine Is his blood shed for us.