

The Redemptive Work of Christ

Matthew 12:1-8

Jesus knew exactly who He was. There was no misunderstanding concerning His nature, personality, mission, or purpose in life. In Matthew 12, Jesus spoke of Himself as being "greater than the temple". To the Jews who heard Him this was shocking. There was no more sacred place than the temple. This was where the Jews came to meet God. For Jesus to say that He was greater than the temple would have appeared to them as blasphemous. Yet, Jesus knew exactly who He was and why He was on Earth. He was fully cognizant of His sinlessness (John 8:46) and of His relation with the Father (John 8:29). The titles that were applied to Jesus are very significant. They help illustrate His mission to mankind, the redemption of sinners.

Son of Man

One of the most common titles applied to Christ was Son of Man. This appellation helped denote the reality of His humanity. Jesus was in every way "man". From the scriptures we find that Jesus suffered from hunger (Matthew 4:2) and thirst (John 19:28). He rejoiced (Luke 10:21) and He also sorrowed (John 11:35). While in human form He was limited in knowledge, He did not know when the end of the world would occur (Mark 13:32) and He was also limited in power because of the unbelief of the people He came to (Matthew 13:58). He was tempted in all ways like we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). He recognized God alone as good (Matthew 19:17). He prayed often, signifying His reliance upon God. All of these attributes emphasize the real humanity of Jesus. He was, however, "The" Son of Man, no one else was like Him.

The Messiah

The anointed one, the one who was to come, the deliverer, all of these terms describe the messiah. The Jewish people had been looking for the messiah since at least the time of Abraham. Jesus took this mantle upon Himself while on Earth. In Luke 4:16-21 we find Jesus going into the synagogue on the Sabbath and reading from the scriptures. The passage He chose to read that day came from Isaiah 61:1-2. This passage is rich in messianic language. It speaks of the one who would preach the gospel to the poor, heal the brokenhearted, proclaim liberty to those in captivity, give sight to the blind, set free the oppressed, and usher in the acceptable year of the Lord. Jesus read this passage, closed the book and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue looked upon Him, no doubt wondering why He had chosen this particular passage, also wondering why He read such a short passage since it was considered a great honor to be able to read the scriptures publicly in the synagogue. Jesus answered the unspoken questions with the simple words, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (verse 21).

Jesus knew He was the Messiah, the chosen one of God. When John the Baptist was put in prison he sent some of his disciples to Jesus with the question, "Are you the coming one, or do we look for another?" (Luke 7:20). John the Baptist knew who Jesus was. He had baptized Jesus and heard the voice of God say, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17). John the Baptist had proclaimed, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!" (John 1:29). Certainly John knew who Jesus was, yet in prison he had doubts. This is why he sent some of his disciples to speak with Jesus. In Luke 7:22-23 Jesus gives the following signs for these disciples to report back to John about: the blind see, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed,

the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. All of these signs were prophesied by Isaiah and were in the very passage Jesus chose to read in the synagogue in Nazareth. Jesus knew He was the messiah.

Jesus made claims and demands which could only be justified if He was exactly who He said He was. He claimed to be greater than the temple (Matthew 12:6). He claimed that He was greater than Abraham or Solomon (John 8:58; Matthew 12:42). Jesus demanded that He be the center of our attention. He commanded us to follow Him (Mark 10:21). He demanded greater love for Himself than for even our own family (Luke 14:26). He promised rest to the weary (Matthew 11:28). He said He was the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). He said He was the Bread of Life (John 6:41). He said He was the resurrection and the life (John 11:25). He said all authority had been given to Him (Matthew 28:18). He said He would be the judge of all the Earth (John 5:22). Jesus understood that He was the Messiah.

The Son of God

More important than the fact that Jesus was the Son of Man or the Messiah is the claim that He was the Son of God. This was the accusation of the Jews (John 5:18). The fifth chapter of the gospel of John reveals many facets of Jesus' claim that He was and is the Son of God. In John 5:16-47, Jesus shows that He is one with God in service, power, and honor. He also shows his dependence upon and love of the Father and His desire to do the will of the Father. The Jews did not misunderstand Jesus, they knew exactly who He claimed to be. This is the main reason Jesus was opposed by the majority of the Jews of His time and ultimately put to death upon the cross (John 1:11).

Several aspects of Jesus' claim to be the Son of God are found in His teaching in the gospel of John. He claimed pre-existence with the Father. He stated that He came forth from the Father and would return to Him (John 16:28-33). He prayed to the Father to be glorified again as He had been previous to His incarnation (John 17:5). He claimed to have existed before Abraham (John 8:58). The confession of Thomas in John 20:28 that Jesus was both Lord and God is echoed in the voice of each believer who comes to Jesus in faith and confesses that He is the Son of God (Matthew 10:32-33; Acts 8:35-39).

His redemptive work

Jesus came to the Earth to call people to discipleship. He commanded us to pray in His name (John 14:13). He told His disciples that they would see Him at the right hand of God (Matthew 26:64). This denotes His position as our intercessor. He commanded His disciples to go forth and make other disciples, baptizing them and teaching them what He commanded (Matthew 28:19).

Concerning the salvation that He would bring, Jesus spoke of waters springing up into eternal life (John 4:14). He stated that He would lay down His life and take it up again (John 10:15-18). He is the embodiment of the love of God (John 3:16). And by His redemptive work the New Covenant was brought into existence (Hebrews chapters 9 and 10).

Jesus is the Son of Man, the Messiah, and the Son of God. He came to this Earth with a specific purpose--to save us from our sins. For the Christian there can be no hesitation or vacillation. We must confess that Jesus Christ is the Son of God (Matthew 16:16, Romans 10:9-11). We rest our hope upon the identity of Jesus and His work in our lives.

