

Christ: The Key to the Written Scriptures

by Keith Malcomson

Christ is the central subject of both the Old and New Testaments, and He is the key to understanding and interpreting the written Scriptures.

Scripture: Psalm 40:7, Luke 2:42, Luke 24:27, Revelation 1:1

Topics: "Christology", "Biblical Interpretation"

Description

Keith Malcomson preaches about the central role of Christ as the key to understanding the Scriptures, emphasizing that without Christ, the Bible loses its purpose and unity. Christ's life was a fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies and teachings, showing that the Scriptures are all about Him. He expounded on the Old Testament Scriptures to reveal Himself to His disciples, highlighting the importance of understanding Christ in every book. Christ's deep respect for the Scriptures, His literal interpretation of them, and His unity with them serve as a vital example for believers in handling and interpreting the Word of God.

Transcript

Part I.

Ps.40:7-8, "Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart."

A Key by its very function and purpose is something which unlocks what is closed. Opens what is hidden. Reveals what is obscured. A key is the means to possessing what was previously out of the reach of possession.

There is only one key to the written Scriptures and that is Christ. There is only one means of opening every book of the Bible, every story and every verse and that is Christ. Without Christ there is no unity in Scripture. Without Him it loses its purpose. Without Him there would be no life and Spirit in it.

"I come in the volume of the book." This verse in the Psalms is repeated in Hebrews 10:7 and is clearly speaking of Christ. When He came in His conception, birth, life, ministry, death, burial, resurrection and ascension it was "in the volume of the book." He came to fulfil every prophesy, typology and shadow revealed in the Old Testament. When Christ came we hear from His own lips constantly such statements as this: "...that the scriptures might be fulfilled...as the scriptures have said...it is written..." All of this reveals that His whole life was conducted in line with the written word of the Old Testament.

We are told: "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him:" (Mt.26:24). And again He Himself states: "For I say unto you, that this that is written must yet be accomplished in me" (Lk.22:37). His whole life was tied up with the written Word of God. It is impossible to mock, belittle or de-emphasize the place of the written Word in a Believers life without devaluing Christ Himself. To think we are more free from the written Scriptures than Christ is pride.

"...in the volume of the book it is written of me." The volume of the book, the full teaching of the written Scriptures in the Old Testament are all about Christ. It is written about Him. He is the subject, He is the substance, He is the lesson.

When Christ speaks of the "volume of the book" He is specifically talking about the Old Testament scriptures. The Old Testament is all about Christ - every part of it. I was once asked why I preached from the Old Testament. I answered 'Because Christ did, the apostles did, the early churches did and great men and woman of God from every age have done the same.'

"I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." Two things here. First, Christ delighted "to do" the will of God. What was the will of God? It was clearly revealed in the written Scripture. He delighted, enjoyed and rejoiced to do, obey, fulfil and align His whole life with what was written in Scripture. Secondly, the law of God, the Word of God was in His heart. When the Word of God abides, dwells and is written on the heart as well as hidden in the heart it produces a joy in obedience. The true believer is being conformed to Christ and so delights to follow His example, attitude and joy towards the written Scripture. Anyone who speaks lightly of the written Word knows little of Christ and knows little about the key to understanding the written Scriptures.

Part II.

Lk.24:27, 32, 44, "And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself...And he said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me."

Jesus constantly quoted scripture. He delighted to draw forth simple inspired lines from the Old Testament books and to quote them in every and all situations. The Old Testament was His Bible. It was His only book. It not only filled His heart but it filled His mouth. No sermon was preached without reference to the written Scriptures. He frequently built His sermons on a text of Scripture.

In our text above Christ reveals that during His earthly ministry He constantly taught His disciples that His whole life was caught up in the fulfilment of the Old Testament writings. Now in His risen state He continues to bear testimony to the written Word. As He walks with two disciples on the road to Emmaus He 'expounds' or opens up revelations and teachings concerning Himself from the Old Testament Scriptures. As He does this their hearts burn within them.

He could have just revealed Himself or granted a revelation by the Holy Spirit or granted them a mystical experience. But no instead He takes the Old Testament written Scriptures, He opens them up, explains them, and spends time in them. Finally He opens the eyes and understanding of His disciples concerning these things written.

This was no short message but a thorough exposition of Christ in every book. Christ calls the whole Old Testament by three names: Moses (law of), the prophets, and the Psalms. This covers every book from Genesis to Malachi. Leviticus reveals Christ, so does Deuteronomy, so does Amos and so does Song of Songs. Every lamb that was sacrificed pointed to Christ, the Ark of the Covenant was Christ, the temple was Christ, the High Priest was Christ. We could easily fill a volume with such truths.

All of the apostles preached Christ from Moses and the Prophets. The Old Testament Scriptures were used by the early Church to reveal Christ to a lost and dying world. These books have not been made redundant by time or by superior revelations. They are however only made of non-affect by the traditions of men who ignore Christ in them. The disciple Philip used the Old Testament Scriptures to point to Christ. He said: "We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write." So also did Philip the evangelist. He preached Christ to the Ethiopian Eunuch from Isaiah 53.

The New Testament Gospels and Epistles were firmly rooted, founded and grounded upon the Old Testament Scriptures. The Old flows in and through the New. The Old Testament Scriptures are found in the substance of all New Testament preaching. These Old Testament Scriptures were read in the church gathering. The New Testament is a divine commentary on the Old. Christ is the central subject of both. He is the marrow of both. He is the ultimate fulfilment and reason for both. Those who neglect the Old and honour the New dishonour Christ. Those who can't see Christ throughout the Old do not yet understand the New.

Christ and the Scriptures are one. Christ bears witness to the Scriptures and the Scriptures bear witness to Him. There is no separation. No contradiction. Only a perfect unity and complementation. One is the written Word, the other is the living Word. Both are divine, both came from Heaven and both were given in and through the Jewish culture. Without Christ the Scriptures are dead. But when allowed the Scriptures reveal Christ alive in all His glory, majesty and power.

Those who exalt the written Scriptures but who miss Christ are wrong. But so also are those who say they make Christ central and who profess to exalt His person yet make little of the written Scriptures. Those who mock genuine Bible believers as worshipping the Bible and of Bibliolatry know nothing. Such accusations reveal a subtle disregard for the written Word. Christ never did such.

There is a beautiful unity between the Old and New Testaments in revealing the person of Christ. They speak with one voice. Jn.5:46-47, "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me. But if ye believe not his writings, how shall ye believe my words?" If you cannot accept the Old Testament writings as inspired and valuable as a revelation of Christ then you will miss Christ in the New.

Part III.

Lk.2:42, 46-47, "And when he was twelve years old, they went up to Jerusalem...And it came to pass, that after three days they found him in the temple, sitting in the midst of the doctors, both hearing them, and asking them questions. And all that heard him were astonished at his understanding and answers."

We have already seen that Christ is the central subject of the written Scriptures. But let's go a stage further. How did Christ understand the Scriptures? How did He interpret them? Did He believe that they were perfect, reliable, authoritative and inspired? Did He take them literally?

At the age of twelve we see Him in the temple with the most learned of men discussing the written Word. From a child Christ was taught the Word and grew in His knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures. His young Mother was a woman filled with the Word of God who understood it, believed it, hid it in her heart and who certainly sang it (Lk.1:46-55; 2:40). No doubt this was one of the reasons she was chosen of God for such a task.

The fact that Christ during His ministry quoted from 24 different Old Testament books reveals His regard and respect for the written Word. Throughout His teaching ministry we see an acceptance of the literal history and reliability of the text of the Scriptures. Never once does He point out a mistake. Not once.

He accepts and preaches that the creation of all things had a beginning (Mk.13:19; 10:6) and that Adam and Eve were made at this beginning point as the first man and woman (Mt.19:4-6; Mk.10:6-8). He speaks of the murder of righteous Abel (Mt.23:35) the days of Noah (Mt.24:37; Lk.17:27) and of the destruction of Sodom (Lk.17:29; Mt.10:15; 11:23).

He speaks of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Mat 8:11; 22:32; Jn.8:56, 58) and even instructs the people that Abraham was alive in paradise, conscious and able to speak (Lk.16:25). He taught that in the days of Moses the Lord did indeed speak out of a burning bush (Mk.12:26) and dropped manna in the wilderness for the people to eat (Jn.6:49), that David did reign and prophesy (Mat 12:3 Mat 22:43) and that the kingdom of Solomon was glorious (Mat 6:29 12:42).

He taught that Jonah was swallowed by a whale who then preached to Nineveh (Mt.12:39-40, 41; Lk.11:30). He taught that Elijah did indeed shut the windows of Heaven by prayer stopping the rain for three and a half years and that He was then fed by a widow (Lk.4:25-26). He also taught that Naaman was healed from leprosy through the ministry of Elisha (4:27). Every miracle and supernatural incident revealed in the Scriptures was accepted and preached by Christ.

Christ's simple acceptance of the literal text of Scripture as dependable, literal and perfect is beyond doubt. He even revealed that when such men as Moses, David, Jeremiah, Isaiah and others spoke and wrote that is was the LORD speaking. Christ was in perfect agreement and unity with the written Scriptures. When teaching on the resurrection of the dead He referred to the written Scriptures (Mt.22:31-32).

When we come to the prophecies of Daniel we see that Christ believed that they were indeed prophecies given before time to be fulfilled and that they were to still be fulfilled in His day. He accepted a literal interpretation of such prophecies. He never tried to explain them away or spiritualise them. He just simply said 'when you see it come to pass.' There was no doubt cast on the fact that it would happen literally and visibly as written (Mt.4:15; Mk.13:14).

This is a vital key to interpreting, understanding and expounding the Scriptures. We follow the example of Christ. Christ is the key to Scripture. Handle them as He did. Trust them as He did. Rely upon their infallibility as He did. Quote them simply, without excuse or change as He did. Believe the text literally as He did. Those who teach or who do otherwise are proud and know nothing. Such men reject Christ as the key to Scripture thinking they know better than Him.

Part IV.

Rev.1:1, "The Revelation of Jesus Christ,"

Those who truly love Christ will also love the written Word of God as He did. We have already seen Christ as the subject of each Old Testament book. We have seen the thought, manner and teaching of Christ concerning the written scriptures and His example in handling them. But now let's look at Christ as the key to the New Testament scriptures.

When the apostles preached Christ, the gospel, the new birth and the new covenant of grace they preached from the Old Testament. Their gospel of Christ was founded on the written scriptures as a divine revelation. The very same Holy Spirit who inspired the Old also inspired the New. The same Holy Spirit who breathed on the prophets of Old as they spoke and wrote also breathed on the apostles of the New as they preached and wrote. In this we see that the same inspiration was given by the same person to different penmen in different dispensations.

The Christ spoken of in the Old Testament is the very same Christ spoken of in the New Testament. The Christ of the gospels is the fulfilment of more than 1500 years of writings in the Old. Matthew opens with a genealogy stretching back to Abraham and David and goes on to quote more than 40 references from the Old Testament in connection with Christ. In his gospel Christ is revealed as King. In Mark Christ is revealed as the Servant. In Luke Christ is revealed in His humanity as the Son of Man and in John He is revealed in His divinity as the Son of God. These four gospels reveal Christ in His birth, life, ministry, death, burial and resurrection. They reveal Christ as the Saviour, Deliverer and Healer.

When we come to Acts He is revealed still further as the Baptizer in the Holy Ghost as well as the soon coming King. As Luke opens his early history of the Church he reminds us that his Gospel was concerning "all that Jesus began both to do and teach" and it is evident that in Acts he tells us of all that Christ continued to do and teach. This is a living Christ vitally, presently and manifestly working in His Church. The bridge between the Gospels and the Epistles is the testimony of a powerful Christ alive and working on, in and through His Church.

The Book of Romans reveals Christ as the Justifier of Sinners. Corinthians reveals Him as the Sanctifier. Galatians reveals the full power of His work on the Cross. Ephesians and Colossians reveal His centrality in all things. In Philippians He is our joy. In Thessalonians He is our hope. In Timothy and Titus Christ is the embodiment of sound doctrine. In Philemon we are His willing prisoners. In Hebrews He is our Great High Priest. In James He is the Christ who rejects dead faith. In Peter we see the sufferings of Christ. In Jude we see the contending of Christ against apostasy. In Revelation we see the judgements of Christ against those not washed in the Blood of the Lamb. And so much more.

All of these New Testament books reveal Christ. All of these 27 books are united as one in Christ. Christ connects and unites them. Together they have one centre, one common denominator and one subject - the person of CHRIST.

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