

## Lesson 14

### The Gospel: Making It Clear Jesus Is the Promised One

In the last thirteen lessons, we've seen God go to great lengths to reveal Himself. Not only has He clearly revealed His attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, sovereignty, love, grace, justice, holiness, etc., but also we have seen many of the characteristics of His heart, like His desire for a relationship and how that leads Him to communicate. We've seen the great "heart" He has for mankind by the way that He is the Initiator. There are many promises and reminders all pointing to Christ—for example, calling into existence the Nation of Israel, the line of Christ.

He proved His faithfulness and trustworthiness over and over. Through the Old Testament, God very faithfully and meticulously built a testimony in which He proved through the things that can be seen, that we can today wholeheartedly trust His promises regarding our spiritual blessings that can't be seen. Once God had all of these things in place, it was then time for Him to bring the long-awaited Promised One on the scene.

Throughout the Old Testament, we saw God so faithfully and so abundantly reveal Himself over and over in order to make it easy for Israel to trust and depend upon Him.

So, now in the life of Jesus, we are seeing God go to great lengths to faithfully and abundantly manifest the fact that Jesus of Nazareth is indeed the Promised One. We will see Him do it with the same undeniable proof and clarity with which He revealed Himself throughout the Old Testament.

There were six main ways that God was revealing Who Jesus really was:

- Through His power to heal sickness, disease, and rise from the dead
- By His authority to forgive sin
- By His power and authority over creation
- By His power and authority over the spirit world
- Through fulfilling prophecy
- By His teaching

During the three-year span that Jesus was carrying out His ministry, the gospels record that He publicly healed someone's sickness or disease eighteen different times. There are four specific times where Jesus proved He was God by publicly forgiving sin. Each time the Pharisees would say something like, "Hey, who does He think He is? Only God can forgive sin." They were right! At least nine different times, He revealed He was God by demonstrating His authority over nature. He calmed storms, walked on water, fed four and five thousand people with just one boy's lunch, miraculous catches of fish, raising the dead, getting a coin from a fish, and sending demons into pigs.

At least six times He proved He was God by revealing His authority over the spirit world by casting out demons. He showed He was God by revealing His authority over death. Not only did He publicly raise three people from the dead, but when He gave up His spirit on the cross, many, many people were raised from the dead.

- **Read Matthew 17:1-5 and Luke 3:22.**

On two specific occasions, God the Father, speaking in an audible voice from heaven, proclaimed Him to be His beloved Son. Jesus revealed He was God by His teaching. On numerous occasions people were amazed by the authority with which He taught. Other ways God proved over and over who Jesus was, was through the fulfillment of all of His promises and prophecy regarding Him. Ultimately, God gave SO many promises and prophecies to be fulfilled by the Deliverer that only HE could orchestrate the fulfillment of every one of them through one man.

“Indeed, it may be possible for someone to fake one or two of the Messianic prophecies, but it would be impossible for any one person to arrange and fulfill all of these prophecies.”

John Ankerberg relates the true story of how governments use prearranged identification signs to identify correct agents: “David Greenglass was a World War II traitor. He gave atomic secrets to the Russians and then fled to Mexico after the war. His

conspirators arranged to help him by planning a meeting with the secretary of the Russian ambassador in Mexico City. Proper identification for both parties became vital. Greenglass was to identify himself with six prearranged signs. These instructions had been given to both the secretary and Greenglass so there would be no possibility of making a mistake. They were (1) once in Mexico City, Greenglass was to write a note to the secretary, signing his name as 'I. JACKSON'; (2) after three days he was to go to the Plaza de Colon in Mexico City and (3) stand before the statue of Columbus, (4) with his middle finger placed in a guide book. In addition, (5) when he was approached, he was to say it was a magnificent statue and that he was from Oklahoma; (6) the secretary was to then give him a passport. These six prearranged signs worked. Why? With six identifying characteristics it was impossible for the secretary not to identify Greenglass as the proper contact.” (John Ankerberg, John Weldon and Walter Kaiser, The Case for Jesus the Messiah, Melbourne: Pacific College Study Series, 1994, 17-18.)

How true, then, it must be that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah if he had 456 identifying characteristics well in advance and fulfilled them all! In fact, what does the science of probability make of this? The science of probability attempts to determine the chance that a given event will occur. The value and accuracy of the science of probability has been well established beyond doubt; for example, insurance rates are fixed according to statistical probabilities.

“Professor Emeritus of Science at Westmont College, Peter Stoner, has calculated the probability of one man fulfilling the major prophecies made concerning the Messiah. The estimates were worked out by twelve different classes representing some 600 university students. The students carefully weighed all the factors, discussed each prophecy at length, and examined the various circumstances which might indicate that men had conspired together to fulfill a particular prophecy. They made their estimates conservative enough so that there was finally unanimous agreement even among the most skeptical students. However, Professor Stoner then took their estimates, and made them even more conservative. He also encouraged other skeptics or scientists to make their own estimates to see if his conclusions were more than fair. Finally, he submitted his figures for review to a committee of the American Scientific Affiliation. Upon examination, they verified that his calculations were dependable and accurate in regard to the scientific material presented. (Peter Stoner, Science Speaks, Chicago: Moody Press, 1969, 4.)

For example, concerning **Micah 5:2**, where it states the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah, Stoner and his students determined the average population of BETHLEHEM from the time of Micah to the present; then they divided it by the average population of the earth during the same period. They concluded that the chance of one man being born in Bethlehem was one in 300,000, (or one in  $2.8 \times 10^5$ -rounded). After examining only eight different

prophecies (Idem 106), they conservatively estimated that the chance of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies was one in  $10^{17}$ . To illustrate how large the number  $10^{17}$  IS (a figure with 17 zeros), Stoner gave this illustration: if you mark one of ten tickets, and place all the tickets in a hat, and thoroughly stir them, and then ask a blindfolded man to draw one, his chance of getting the right ticket is one in ten. Suppose that we take  $10^{17}$  silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They'll cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would've had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote them in their own wisdom (Idem 106-107).

Of course, there are many more than eight prophecies. In another calculation, Stoner used 48 prophecies (Idem 109) (even though he could have used Edersheim's 456), and arrived at the extremely conservative estimate that the probability of 48 prophecies being fulfilled in one person is the incredible number  $10^{157}$ . How large is the number one in  $10^{157}$ ? It contains 157 zeros! Stoner gives an illustration of this number using electrons. Electrons are very small objects. They're smaller than atoms. It would take 2.5 TIMES  $10^{15}$  of them, laid side by

side, to make one inch. Even if we counted 250 of these electrons each minute, and counted day and night, it would still take 19 million years just to count a line of electrons one-inch long (Stoner, op. cit., 109).

With this introduction, let's go back to our chance of one in  $10^{157}$ . Let's suppose that we're taking this number of electrons, marking one, and thoroughly stirring it into the whole mass, then blindfolding a man and letting him try to find the right one. What chance has he of finding the right one? What kind of a pile will this number of electrons make? They make an inconceivably large volume. This is the result from considering a mere 48 prophecies. Obviously, the probability that 456 prophecies would be fulfilled in one man by chance is vastly smaller. According to Emile Borel, once one goes past one chance in  $10^{50}$ , the probabilities are so small that it is impossible to think that they will ever occur (Ankerberg, et. al., op. cit., 21).

As Stoner concludes, "Any man who rejects Christ as the Son of God is rejecting a fact, proved perhaps more absolutely than any other fact in the world (Stoner, op. cit., 112). God so thoroughly vindicated Jesus Christ that even mathematicians and statisticians, who were without faith, had to acknowledge that it is scientifically impossible to deny that Jesus is the Christ."

Obviously, we don't have the time to go through all of these specific accounts through which Jesus

revealed Himself, but I did want to highlight one as proof that Jesus' revelation of Himself was truly clear, obvious, and recognizable, even though there were those who rejected Him.

**Jesus forgave the sins of the paralyzed man and healed him.**

- **Read Mark 2:1-12.**

This passage tells us Jesus was in a house in Capernaum. It says he was teaching. Actually, there was two “tracks” of teaching going on here. First was what Jesus was teaching “didactically.” All we are told about that is in verse 2: “and He preached the word unto them.” No specifics.

The second aspect of His teaching was in terms of what He was revealing and teaching about Himself through His actions. Jesus is doing here exactly what God was doing all through the Old Testament: revealing Who He really is and what He is really like through His interaction with mankind.

With Jesus being the “expressed image” of God (as we are told in Hebrews), we can see Him manifesting both His holiness, righteousness, justice, and His love, grace, and mercy all at the same time, just like we saw God do many times in the Old Testament.

Verse 5 says, “when Jesus saw their FAITH...” The main issue with God is always faith! Do you remember Lesson 26 when Israel refused to believe

God and enter the land of Canaan? Do you remember God's response? He judged their sin of unbelief by not allowing that generation to enter in.

The issue was NOT any sin that these people were committing on a daily basis! Remember, "Every thought and intent of their hearts was only evil from childhood." Therefore, they didn't have the capacity to stop sinning on a daily basis.

But because God had created them and all humans in His image with a mind, will, and emotions, all of mankind has the ability see God's revelation of Himself, learn about Him and His greatness, and believe that He is all that He's revealed Himself to be. Because He had gone to great and extreme lengths to reveal Himself to them, they were left without an excuse for their rejection of that revelation, and that was what God was holding them accountable for (**Romans 1**).

These men in Mark 2, on the other hand, had seen a whole lot less first-hand revelation of God than that generation of Israel had seen, yet we are told they came "in faith." They had obviously seen and heard enough about Jesus that they believed He could and would heal their friend.

Jesus' response to such faith was one of compassion and forgiveness. We know it was one of compassion because He calls him "son." This was a term of affection and should be contrasted with the way in which Jesus addressed the Pharisees at other times

(brood of vipers, white-washed tombs). The difference was faith, not sinfulness. These men were just as sinful as the Pharisees, but the Pharisees rejected Jesus' revelation of Himself and walked in unbelief (even though they looked very spiritual on the outside).

Another aspect to the faith of these men is the indictment that it brings forth on all who refuse to believe or who rejected Christ. When you have testimony of a Pharisee like Nicodemus recognizing Jesus as the Christ and you have men like these who recognize Him and you have demons recognizing Him, it stands to reason that Jesus' revelation of Himself and proof of Who He truly is was clear and leaves all who rejected Him without excuse.

Jesus goes on in verse 5: "Your sins are forgiven." The passage doesn't clarify what sins Jesus was talking about. It could have been sin that led to his paralysis. He could have been sinning in his attitude toward God because of his paralysis. We definitely know that he was born a sinner regardless. It could be that all three were true.

The main issue here isn't in determining what the man's sin was but in the fact that Jesus could forgive it. When the Pharisees accused Him of blaspheming, Jesus' response to them seems to have a sense of expectation with it. Expectation that these Pharisees should have known and believed Who He was, for the fact that these men had come to Jesus in "faith,"

was again proof that His revelation of Himself had been clear and recognizable.

Jesus says, “Which is easier to say to the paralytic, your sins are forgiven? Or rise, take up your bed, and walk”?

Have you ever had a problem with a computer or your car or something that you had no idea how to fix and some computer guru comes in and says, “Oh yeah, here’s the problem, click, click, click, there you go.” And you say, “Wait a minute, what did you do?” That is similar to what Jesus did. He’s teaching in the house, these men lower the paralytic through the roof, He sees their faith and says, “Oh, you can’t walk, okay, your sins are forgiven.” The Pharisees are astonished and demand, “What did you say? Who do you think you are?” Jesus calmly replies, “Well, being that I am God the Son, neither one of these is any harder to do than the other, so, which was easier to say? But so that you will know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sin, ‘Rise, take up your bed, and walk!’” Jesus was demonstrating that not only does He have the power to heal but also the authority to forgive sin!

Notice the responses then in verse 12. The man was healed and got up and walked. The crowd was amazed and glorified God. It doesn’t tell us about the Pharisees, but we know from other accounts that they continued to reject Jesus as the Christ regardless of how He manifested Himself to them.

The fact remains that Jesus' revelation of Himself was indeed clear and recognizable, for there were many who came to believe Who He truly was because of that revelation. This in turn left those who rejected Him without an excuse.

*To go deeper into this topic, read through Lesson 36 in the full Knowing God curriculum.*