

Simply Christ
Gospel Newsletter
Sharing the simplicity that is in Christ

July 25, 2001

The Message of Christ

The message of the early apostles and the early church can be summed up in the words *“Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God!”* As simple as this message is, there seemed to be an order the Apostles took in preaching this gospel. Before they preached *“Jesus,”* they would first preach the message of *“Christ”* using the words of the Old Testament prophets. These prophecies went into great detail about *“Christ,”* but they never mentioned Jesus by name. After these early believers shared what the scripture said about *“Christ,”* they would follow up with the proclamation that Jesus of Nazareth is in fact *“The Christ”* whom the Law and the prophets had spoken of.

On the day of Pentecost, as Peter was speaking, he reminded the Jews of God’s promise to David that *“...of his loins, according to the flesh, he would **raise up Christ** to sit on his throne.”* Acts 2:30. He also showed them by the scripture that Christ would in fact be raised from the dead. Acts 2:31. Peter then followed this message of *“Christ”* with the shocking proclamation that God had raised Jesus from the dead and *“...made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.”* Acts 2:36.

The Bible also gives us insight as to how Philip preached the gospel. It says, "*Philip went down to the city of Samaria, and **preached Christ unto them.***" Acts 8:5. This message would have begun with the prophecies of Christ from the scripture, showing the things Christ would accomplish when he came. After he had preached "*Christ,*" he would then prove to them that "*Jesus is the Christ.*" This manner of preaching the gospel seems to be revealed in the words "*...they believed Philip preaching **the things concerning the kingdom of God, AND the name of Jesus Christ...***" Acts 8:12.

Even Saul of Tarsus (the Apostle Paul) began with the message of "*Christ*" as he preached in synagogues of Damascus after his conversion. The Bible records that "*...straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God.*" Acts 9:20. This he showed from the words of the prophets. Yet, before he was finished, he presented Jesus to them "*...proving that this is very Christ.*" Acts 9:22.

In his later years, the Apostle Paul continued to preach the gospel in this manner. The Bible says, "*And Paul, as his manner was, went in unto them, ...Opening and alleging, that Christ must needs have suffered, and risen again from the dead; AND that **this Jesus, whom I preach unto you, is Christ.***" Acts 17:2-3. First, he would preach "*Christ*" from the prophecies of the scripture. Then he would continue on to prove that "*Jesus is the Christ.*"

To understand the message of "*Christ*," you have to go back to the Old Testament prophecies themselves, of which there are many. Yet, it was the angel Gabriel who delivered the clearest prophecy of Christ ever given to man. This prophecy of Gabriel told us exactly what "*Christ*," "*the Messiah the Prince*," would accomplish when he came. His mission would be "*to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness...*" Daniel 9:24. We know this prophecy was the basis for what the early believers preached about Christ because we have their words. What passage other than this promise that Messiah would "*make an end of sins*" could be the basis for the following declarations? "*Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.*" John 1:29. "*We know he was manifested to take away our sin.*" 1 John 3: 5. "*...now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself.*" Hebrews 9:26.

The modern church has selectively chosen to believe some prophecies concerning Christ and ignore others which do not fit their particular view. Consider that many teachers are quick to tell us that Christ died to reconcile us to God, but are equally as quick to deny that he made "*an end of sins*" upon the cross. Yet, both of these prophetic statements are found in the same sentence of Gabriel's prophecy. Still they choose one and reject the other.

If the work of Christ as revealed by the prophets is selectively rejected so that its fullness is

stripped from our understanding, the message that *“Jesus is the Christ”* becomes an empty message. It is like an ocean without water, a forest without trees, and a breath without oxygen. It becomes a gospel with no power deliver those who believe it.