

GREAT BIBLE TRUTHS



11. Work of Christ (Part 1)

An Introduction

Previously we learnt about the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. Let's now look at his ministry, before he came to earth, and while he was here on earth.

PRE-INCARNATE MINISTRY

We have already seen that Christ was pre-existent. What was he doing during that time? The Bible teaches us that he was involved in:-

- The eternal council of God: Ephesians 1:3-4
- Creation: John 1:3, Hebrews 1:2
- Providence: Colossians 1:17, Hebrews 1:3 (This means he is involved in caring for and sustaining creation)
- Redemption: Revelation 13:8 (In the Old Testament men and women were forgiven on the basis of what Christ was going to do, and in the New Testament, on the basis of what he has done.)
- Acting on behalf of men, as the Angel of the Lord.

EARTHLY MINISTRY

1. Purpose of Christ's coming – from the Old Testament

God established the Old Testament system to prepare the way for the coming of Jesus.

(a) Priest & sacrificial system - *Spoke to God on behalf of people*

- This consisted of the tabernacle, sacrifices and the priests. The priests were to come before God on behalf of the people, teach, offer sacrifices and lead worship.
- The purpose of this system was to show God's holiness, the sinfulness of man and his need to be restored to God. It provided a means to meet that need and gave him a way to express his penitence and faith, and show his dependency on God's grace.
- However this was limited and temporary. There needed to be someone who could do this perfectly. Hebrews 7:18-19

Failure of system - Fulfilment in Christ

(1) It was external

- It was easier for sinners to offer sacrifices than reform their lives! Isaiah 1:11, Hosea 6:6, Amos 5:21-24
- Cf. Christ is a personal Saviour who dwells within by his Spirit. Acts 2:38, Hebrews 10:16

(2) It was limited

- Sacrifices only covered sins of ignorance and ritual uncleanness, although the Day of Atonement did have a wider application.
- Cf. Christ's sacrifice atones for every sin. Hebrews 10:11-12

(3) It was impersonal

- Sin is a breach in a personal relationship with God, so how could an impersonal sacrifice atone for sin? Psalm 51:16-17
- Cf. Christ was a personal sin bearer. 1 Peter 2:24

(4) It was imperfect

- The mediator-priest was imperfect, and needed atonement like everyone else. They were also subject to death like others.
- Cf. Christ was perfect and immortal. Hebrews 7:23-28

(5) It was temporary

- The sacrifices had to be continually repeated as they were inadequate and forgiveness was temporary.
- Cf. Christ's atoning death was once and for always. Hebrews 10:10-18



In the light of this study, how would you explain to a non-Christian that Christ is still relevant today?

(b) Prophetic Office - Spoke to people on behalf of God

- The prophet's task was to reveal the will of God and his truth, to denounce sin and demand repentance. They spoke the word of God to the people.
- Cf. Christ himself was the Word, so he fulfilled the prophet's role perfectly. John 1:1, Hebrews 1:1

(1) Christ revealed God

- In his person, as the Incarnate Word. John 1:14, 18
- In his words, as the Revelatory Word. Hebrews 1:1-2
The prophets said, 'thus says the Lord', whereas Jesus said 'I say'.
- In his works, as he is the Creative Word. John 1:3, Genesis 1:1-2

(2) Christ is the Saviour of men

- The prophets denounced sin, but Jesus was able to bring forgiveness and eternal life.
- He is the Living Word. 1 Peter 1:23
- He is Word, who men can feed upon and receive life. Deuteronomy 8:3, John 6:48-51



How would you answer a person who says that Jesus was a prophet, but not the Son of God?

(c) Kingly Office - Ruled people on behalf of God

- Human kings failed, as they lacked wisdom, moral and spiritual strength.
- God promised a divine-human king who would reign forever. 2 Samuel 7:12, Psalm 110:1, Isaiah 11:9 cf. Mark 12:35-37
- Cf. Christ came as King of his Kingdom. Matthew 4:17
- The people were expecting a king who would lead them in battle against the Romans, but Christ came as a completely different type of king. His battle was against the evil one and his Kingdom was spiritual, permanent and inward.



Is the Church the Kingdom of God, or is it only a part of it? Matthew 16:19

(d) Promised Messiah, Christ - The Anointed One

- The prophet, priest and king were all anointed for their task, indicating they were set apart for God. God knew their imperfections and promised a perfect anointed one who would be all three. He was called 'the Messiah' or 'the Christ'.
- Some recognised him as a prophet: Mark 6:15
- John the Baptist recognised his priestly office: John 1:29
- Many wanted to make him king: John 6:15

- However none realised what his Messiahship really meant.
- Jesus therefore didn't use the title 'Messiah', as the people had the wrong understanding of who that would be. When some did begin to understand Jesus went on to explain what it really meant – and that was being the 'Suffering Servant'. Matthew 26:63-64, Mark 8:29-31

(e) **Suffering Servant**

- This is prophesied in Isaiah 42:1-4, 49:1-6, 50:4-9
- The Jewish people interpret this as referring to the sufferings of Israel, which will cleanse them from guilt. However this foretells of one who would suffer on behalf of others, die and then rise again. Christ is the perfect fulfilment.



Why do you think the Jewish people didn't like the idea of a suffering Messiah?

What other religions think the same?

Why was it necessary for Jesus to be prophet, priest, king and suffering servant?



The amazing fulfilment of prophecy shows its' divine origin.

How wonderful to have a Saviour who is perfect in every way. He is worthy of our all.