

[The Incarnation of God #4 The Testimony of the OT Scriptures

Intro: As we've seen in our past few lessons, Jesus claimed to be the incarnation of God; but He did not ask people to believe in Him based solely on His claims. He offered them legal proof as a basis for their faith, i.e. witnesses who could testify as to who He was. So far we've consider the testimony of two of those witnesses Jesus offered to back up His claims: 1) the testimony of His forerunner John the Baptist; 2) the testimony of His works (or signs) that He performed.

But Jesus insisted that these were not the only witnesses that could testify as to who He was. After speaking of the works the Father gave Him to do, Jesus said:

“And the Father who sent Me, He has borne witness of Me. You have neither heard His voice at any time, nor seen His form. And you do not have His word abiding in you, for you do not believe Him whom He sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is these that bear witness of Me; and you are unwilling to come to Me, that you may have life.” (John 5:37–40)

Note that in this paragraph Jesus appeals to the testimony of the heavenly Father. That testimony came not only through the works that He had given Jesus to perform; but also through the word He had given to Israel to prepare their hearts for His coming. As a result, Jesus appealed to the Scripture as a witness that provided legal proof that He was God in the flesh. But in what way did the OT Scriptures testify of Jesus?

We could here of course embark on a comprehensive study of hundreds of OT texts that speak of the coming Christ and the details of His life. But we'll confine ourselves to the Scriptures that John himself saw to be fulfilled by Jesus. As we look at those passages we will see that the Scriptures testified of Jesus in two distinct ways:

First they gave direct predictions of the Messiah's life.

Second they revealed moral principles concerning the conduct of the righteous in relation to God that the Messiah would fulfill.

So with that in mind, let's survey the Scriptures that John saw fulfilled in Jesus' life and ministry.

First John observed that the Scriptures had testified of:

His zeal for the proper use of God's house

John records, that during the early days of Jesus' ministry, he went into the temple.

And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the moneychangers seated. (John 2:14)

Jesus' reaction was zealous and decisive.

And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the moneychangers, and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, "Take these things away; stop making My Father's house a house of merchandise." (John 2:15-16)

When the disciples saw Jesus' action of divine indignation, they recalled a verse from the Scriptures, from the psalms:

His disciples remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Thy house will consume me." (John 2:17)

Jesus, like the psalmist of Psalm 69, manifested a passionate zeal for the proper use of the house of God. John likewise saw in Jesus' actions a fulfillment of that principle in Jesus. Thus the Scriptures testified of Him! John saw Jesus' fulfillment of the Scriptures in...

His humble and gentle nature

Zechariah had spoken of the coming king of Israel as a humble and gentle king indicated by using a common animal as his mount.:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, Humble, and mounted on a donkey, Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey." (Zechariah 9:9)

The apostle John acknowledged that Jesus' entrance into Jerusalem fulfilled the prediction of Zechariah, though he had not at the time of the action fully comprehended what Jesus was doing.

And Jesus, finding a young donkey, sat on it; as it is written, "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your King is coming, seated on a donkey's colt." These things His disciples did not understand at the first; but when Jesus was glorified, then they remembered that these things were written of Him, and that they had done these things to Him. (John 12:14-16)

By deliberately fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy Jesus clearly identified with the promised King of Israel and His lowly nature. Thus Jesus could say, "The Scriptures testify of me." They were a witness that Jesus was the humble and gentle king of OT prophecy.

But in addition John saw Jesus' fulfillment of the Scriptures in...

His rejection by the Jews

John explains as his discussion of Jesus' ministry draws to a close that Jesus' impressive signs had not resulted in the faith they were intended to produce among the Jews. Instead they had rejected Him as the Messiah. Yet even this was the fulfillment of what the prophets had said about the coming Servant of the Lord. John explains...

But though He had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him; that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed?" (Jn. 12:37-38)

*In the prologue John would write, “he came to his own and his own received him not!” But the Jewish rejection of Jesus enabled Jesus to truly say, “The Scriptures testify of me!”
But in addition John saw Jesus’ fulfillment of the Scriptures in...*

His betrayal by a friend, namely, Judas Iscariot

At the last Supper Jesus was quite aware of the Judas’ plot to betray his whereabouts to the Jews so that they could capture him and kill him. He urged his disciples to continue to obey Him while acknowledging that one of them would do the opposite and in fact betray him.

“If you know these things, you are blessed if you do them. I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, ‘He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me.’ (John 13:17-18)

*Just as David had experienced the disloyalty of a friend who ate bread with him (Ps. 41:9), so the Son of David experienced the same. Judas ate bread with Him as if a friend; yet betrayed Him for thirty pieces of silver. And though such an act of betrayal was reprehensible and painful to Jesus, it enabled Him to truly say, “the Scriptures testify of me!”
But in addition John saw Jesus’ fulfillment of the Scriptures in...*

His unjust condemnation

Later in that same discourse Jesus would urge His disciples to realize that they too would partake of the hostility that He had experienced. And this hatred, in spite of His innocence, was in fact a fulfillment of the Scriptures.

“But they have done this in order that the word may be fulfilled that is written in their Law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’ (John 15:25)

*Again, the reference is to David’s experience recounted in Psalm 69. David’s experiences, as Israel’s king, typified the experience of its future king, the Son of David. And like David before Him, Jesus too was hated without any real justification, hated though innocent of wrong-doing!
And because of this Jesus could truly say, “The Scriptures testify of me.”
But in addition John saw Jesus’ fulfillment of the Scriptures in...*

His cruel mistreatment in crucifixion

As John describes the crucifixion he is keenly aware of OT texts like Psalm 22 that describe the severe mistreatment of the righteous at the hand of their enemies.

The soldiers therefore, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. They said therefore to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be”; that the Scripture might be fulfilled, “They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots.” Therefore the soldiers did these things. (John 19:23-25a)

John is of course referring to two statements the psalm gave in describing his mistreatment by his enemies.

Later John would see another example of this mistreatment in the cruel attempt to satisfy Jesus' thirst with vinegar.

*After this, Jesus, knowing that all things had already been accomplished, in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled, *said, "I am thirsty." A jar full of sour wine was standing there; so they put a sponge full of the sour wine upon a branch of hyssop, and brought it up to His mouth. (John 19:28-30)*

Such experiences by Jesus on the cross literally fulfilled the severe mistreatment of the righteous described figuratively (hyperbolically) in OT passages like Psalm 22. The psalmist had said:

"My strength is dried up like a potsherd, And my tongue cleaves to my jaws; And Thou dost lay me in the dust of death." (Psalm 22:15)

Similarly Jesus fulfilled David's description of his treatment by his enemies in Ps. 69:21.

"They also gave me gall for my food, And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." (Psalm 69:21)

In Jesus' severe treatment by His enemies, John could see that the Scriptures had testified of Jesus.

But in addition John saw Jesus' fulfillment of the Scriptures in...

His piercing on the cross

Zechariah in his prophecies had spoken of a future day when the Jews would deeply regret what they had done to God. He had written:

"And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born. (Zechariah 12:10)

John could see that the Jews were doing to Jesus the very thing that the prophet had said the Jews would do to God.

And again another Scripture says, "They shall look on Him whom they pierced." (John 19:37)

For this reason Jesus could truly say, "The Scripture testify of me!"

But in addition John saw Jesus' fulfillment of the Scriptures in...

His sacrifice as a Passover lamb

John the apostle was quite familiar with the announcement that John the Baptist had made about Jesus—"Behold the lamb of God!" So as he observed Jesus on the cross he noted the significance of the soldiers bypassing the custom of breaking Jesus' legs. And he remembered the instruction about the Passover lamb that no bone of it should be broken (Ex. 12:46). God had said in Exodus 12:46

"It is to be eaten in a single house; you are not to bring forth any of the flesh outside of the house, nor are you to break any bone of it." (Exodus 12:46, NASB)

Was it mere coincidence that the Lord had prohibited the bones of the pascal lamb to be broken, and then for Jesus, as God's pascal lamb to experience the same thing? For John it was another example of how Jesus fulfilled the Scriptures.

For these things came to pass, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, "Not a bone of Him shall be broken." (John 19:36)

What that said to John was that Jesus was the Passover lamb of the new covenant. That is why Jesus could say to the Jews:

"Do not think that I will accuse you before the Father; the one who accuses you is Moses, in whom you have set your hope. "For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me." (John 5:45-46)

But in addition John saw Jesus' fulfillment of the Scriptures in...

His resurrection from the dead

Jesus' actions in cleansing the temple prompted a question about the authority by which He done these things.

The Jews therefore answered and said to Him, "What sign do You show to us, seeing that You do these things?" (John 2:18)

Jesus' answered by prophesying His death and resurrection:

Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." (John 2:19)

The Jews at the moment misunderstood Jesus' intentions:

The Jews therefore said, "It took forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body. (John 2:20-21)

But the disciples having taken note of this expression "in three days I will raise it up" remembered His words after the resurrection. But not only that; they correlated this experience with what the Scriptures had said:

When therefore He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture, and the word which Jesus had spoken. (John 2:22)

John doesn't give us a reference; but the most common verse quoted by the apostles of the resurrection was Psalm 16:10:

For Thou wilt not abandon my soul to Sheol; neither wilt Thou allow Thy Holy One to undergo decay. (Psalm 16:10)

Conclusion: Can it be accidental or coincidence that John observed so many correspondences between Jesus' life and the prophecies of OT Scripture? In the events of His life we can see that direct predictions of the Messiah's conduct were remarkably fulfilled. In addition, we can see that the principles that governed the conduct of the righteous in relation to God and the wicked were also fulfilled by Him.

And all of this, Jesus appealed to as proof that He was God and Christ! Was Jesus wrong when He pointed to the Scriptures as proof of His claims? Who in all of history has more successfully fulfilled the Jewish Scriptures than He?

If these things are true, then He is as John said “the Christ, the Son of God.” Do you believe in Him? Have you come to Him as your Savior?