

Coach House Church

BEACONS

A COMPLETE STORY

30TH NOVEMBER 2020

One thing is for sure on a cold December morning and that is that summer holidays seem an awfully long way away. We were fortunate enough to be able to go to the seaside this summer, it wasn't that warm whilst we were there but we did get to go to a couple of beaches. Perhaps you are already thinking of where you might like to go next year but right now that might be a difficult choice. No-one really knows whether we will be able to go abroad so maybe we will all have to find places in Britain to go to next year. Now when we go away we all like to bring something back for friends or relatives, and one of the things that we sometimes buy is sticks of rock. Quite why we buy these incredibly unhealthy sticks of pure sugar is beyond me but there is, however, something interesting about a stick of rock that reminds me of the Bible. You see the most noticeable feature of stick of rock is that they all have something written in them. You can see the word on both ends, and if you break the stick of rock you will find the same word written all the way through it. Whether that is "Blackpool" or "Brighton" or "Barnsley" it is clear all the way through and it tells you exactly where the sugary treat came from. Hmm, OK, maybe not Barnsley, but you get the idea.

Now if you have a Bible you will know that it is composed of a varied collection of historical accounts, poetry, prophecies, and letters; all written over a very long period of time. These books were written in different languages and have been copied and translated many times. Most people consider the different books to be nice moral stories but don't believe that the words originate from God. Sadly, there are some Christians who say that parts of the Bible are just pictures, but aren't actual history. There are also some people who don't realise that the entire Bible is held together by a single thread. Like a stick of rock there is one word that is written right through the entire Bible, one name that is above all others, someone who links the entire story from start to end. If you have a bag of broken lumps of sugar, you can tell which pieces are from a stick of rock and which ones aren't because the pieces from the stick of rock have one word written all the way through them.

We have a word in our language that means "the account of all that has gone before us" and that word is "History". Can you see that this word is made up of two other words; "His" and "Story". So who's story is it; who is the person who's name is written in the Bible from start to finish? This person is, of course, Jesus Christ. He appears in every book of the Bible, all of Scripture points towards Jesus, and all of recorded history is His Story. Like a stick of rock His name is written throughout the whole Bible and in the rest of history as well. Don't be fooled into thinking that history is about battles and rulers or dynasties and empires. All of history bears the marks of Jesus, both in His provision and in His intervention.

So how can we see this in the Bible? Lets look at a few examples.

Right at the very beginning of the Bible, in the book of Genesis, God says "Let Us make man in our image" You will notice that this is pleural, there is more than one person in the conversation. This is because God is three in one, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This means that Jesus is present at the time of creation, in fact later, in the book of Revelation, the angel speaking to the church at Laodicea, describes Jesus as the "Chief of the creation of God", meaning that it was Jesus who was in charge of the physical work of creation. It was Jesus who took Gods ideas and turned them into the world we see today. It was Jesus who walked with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Later, Adam and Eve sinned. They were deceived by Satan posing as a snake. In judging this situation God said that there would be enmity between the woman and Satan and between her offspring and his. Her offspring would crush Satan's head, but Satan would strike her offspring's heel. In saying this God was stating, right from the very beginning, that Satan would kill one of these descendants, but that person would have the final victory over Satan. We now know of course, that this descendant was Jesus himself. In fact this story goes a bit further because we later read that God made clothes for the man and woman from animal skins. To have made the clothes from animal skin, clearly an animal must have had to die. God was pointing out here that forgiveness for sins cannot take place without the shedding of blood. This was pointing to the later sacrifices at the temple and the ultimate sacrifice of Jesus himself. Adam and Eve's attempt to rescue the situation by making clothes from fig leaves had failed and God showed them, and us, that no matter what we do we cannot fix the problem of sin by ourselves. We must have God's help.

In the book of Job, Job is in trouble. He knows that the situation he finds himself in is not his fault but he also knows that he cannot fix the situation, he must have God's help. He says "Even now my witness is in heaven, my advocate is on high. My intercessor is my friend as my eyes pour out tears to God; on behalf of a man he pleads with God as a man pleads for his friend" From this we can see that this "witness in heaven" is not God the Father. It is God the Father to whom the petition is being made. Job knew that he needed a saviour, someone who could enter the presence of God, something that is only possible if you are

without sin, to make a case for him. The only thing Job didn't know was the name of this saviour. We though, do know his name, Jesus Christ.

There are many other people and events in the Old Testament that point to Jesus. People who have characteristics of Jesus or who showed us, in advance, what Jesus was going to be like. People like Samson with his strength, Noah acting as a rescuer, Gideon defeating enemies, Elijah and Elisha working miracles and raising people from the dead, Solomon who was the wisest man ever and many more. But what about actual appearances of Jesus?

Well in the book of Daniel we find a story about three of Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego. They had made the king unhappy by refusing to bow down to statue of the king. The king ordered them to be thrown into a furnace, one so hot that it burned up the soldiers who threw them in. Before going into the furnace they told the king that "the God we serve is able to save us from it" and that "we will not worship your gods or worship the image of gold you have set up" This made the king really angry and he ordered the furnace to be heated seven times hotter than usual. Well once the three friends had been thrown in the king looked into the furnace and got a shock. He said "Look! I see four men walking around in the fire, and the fourth looks like the son of a god" Of course this fourth person was Jesus. The reason the fourth man looked like a son of a god was precisely because he Was the Son of God.

Jesus also appeared directly to Abraham. Abraham was very old at the time and had not had a son to carry on the family line. This was despite the fact that God had promised that he would be a father of many nations. Genesis chapter 18 tells us that "The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre" In fact three men appeared that day, Jesus and two angels. The important message they brought was exactly the same message that the angel Gabriel gave to Mary. That was that within a year she would have a son. Now I know that you might ask "How do we know that this man was Jesus?" Well the passage describes the man as "The Lord" but how do we know that this wasn't God the Father? One of Jesus disciples wrote "No-one has ever seen God" yet he also testified that Jesus was God which means he must be saying that "no-one has ever seen God the Father" and that would include Abraham. So the Lord Abraham saw was God the Son, or Jesus.

The last appearance of Jesus in the Old Testament I want to mention was when He appeared to Joshua, shortly after Joshua had brought the people of Israel into the promised land. "Joshua looked up and saw a man standing in front of him with a drawn sword. Joshua went up to him and asked `are you for us or for our enemies?`

`Neither` He replied `for I am prince of Jehovah's host`" So we can see that this is fairly explicit. The man Joshua has met is Jesus. It is worth noting here that Joshua and Jesus are actually the same name. In both cases the Jewish version is Yeshua. Changing these names into Greek then Latin then English has led to

us using two different names, but it is important that we know that the two names are the same as it tells us something about the difference between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Moses was the recipient of the Old Covenant and yet he did not enter the promised land. That privilege fell to one who came after him, Joshua, who also led took many others in with him. This was pointing to Jesus, the man with the same name. Only those who accompanied Joshua entered the promised land and so it will be that only those who accompany Jesus will enter eternal life.

If you want to look for more examples you will find the book of Psalms is full of references to Jesus life, His deeds, His attributes, His Grace and Mercy, and His love for us. Jesus is the unbroken cord that binds the bible together, that binds all of history, His Story, together, for all time.

Throughout the entire Old Testament we can see that God was preparing us for Jesus time here on earth. He was telling us the story in advance because by doing so He would make it easier for us to recognise Jesus when He came. He was telling us because it is important to know why we need Jesus. If you don't know why you need Jesus you risk being like Adam, trying to sort things himself with just a few fig leaves. God demonstrated to Adam that only a blood sacrifice would suffice. Like Job you need to know that you need someone to represent you, like Abraham you need to know that God always keeps His promises, like Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego you need to trust God completely, and like the people travelling with Joshua you need to stick close to Jesus all the way into the promised land.

Hopefully I will see you when we all get there, in the meantime I trust you will enjoy looking for references to Jesus in the Old Testament. Like a stick of rock there is only one name written throughout the whole book and that is the name of Jesus.

Amen



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