

## [IN GOD'S IMAGE 31 – CHRIST'S OFFICIAL MINISTRY]

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***When we finished last time we saw Jesus in a weakened and frail state confront the temptations of the devil.***

- ◆ Despite the devil's best attempts to lure Jesus into temptation, Jesus held firm through the ordeal putting His complete trust in His heavenly Father.
- ◆ Right from the start of His official ministry signified by His baptism by John the Baptist we see Jesus raising to the tasks set before Him.
- ◆ He is baptised to identify with us as sinners; He assumes and begins the task of overcoming our fallen human nature; He lives the perfect life we fail to live; and He confronts and overcomes the devil in the wilderness.
- ◆ But there is much more Jesus needs to accomplish during his earthly sojourn.
- ◆ As we follow the account in Matthew, we see Jesus engaging in a number of other important aspects of His ministry.
- ◆ All of these aspects, beginning with his baptism, point to the beginning of a new age, a new creation or the establishment of the kingdom of God on this earth.
- ◆ As Jesus goes about establishing the kingdom of God, we see Him assuming roles foreshadowed in the Old Testament of prophet, priest and king.
- ◆ The difference being that these three roles that were filled by three different individuals in the Old Testament are now combined in the person of Jesus.
- ◆ Moses and later the prophets were appointed to fulfil the role of "Prophet" or the "Word," Aaron and his descendants were appointed to fulfil the role of "Priest," and David and the kings of Israel to fulfil the role of "King."
- ◆ As we examine Jesus' ministry we see Him fulfilling these three roles.

***The first is the embryonic formation of the church (Matthew 4:18-22).***

- ◆ Here we see Jesus acting in His capacity as High Priest as He begins to establish the "priesthood of all believers" (1 Peter 2:5), those who would be a reflection of the true High Priest, Jesus Christ to the world.
- ◆ Jesus chooses twelve disciples or students who will follow his every move for the next three and a half years of His ministry.
- ◆ Jesus knew His time on earth was limited and so began the important education of those who would continue His work of building His kingdom after His departure.
- ◆ It's also interesting that he doesn't go to the temple in Jerusalem to choose his disciples; instead He chooses smelly fishermen and low-life tax collectors.
- ◆ There is something unique about these chosen twelve and later the apostle Paul that distinguishes them from all other Christians.
- ◆ All had direct communion with the Word of God. Daily they were walking and talking with the Word who became flesh (John 1:14).
- ◆ Jesus as the head of the church (Colossians 1:18) was emulating for His students what it was like to live entirely in God's will.
- ◆ He was preparing them for the important role they would later play in laying the foundation of the church (Acts 2, Ephesians 2:19-21).
- ◆ No human being before or since has had such an opportunity with the exception of the apostle Paul (Galatians 1:11-13), and as such their witness to the words and works of Jesus play a key role in the development of Christ's message.
- ◆ As such the title "apostle" should be restricted to those who had direct contact with Jesus Christ Himself.
- ◆ Later, with the coming of the promised Holy Spirit, the disciples had a double relation to Christ, an *historical* one to Jesus Himself, and a *supernatural* connection through the Spirit.
- ◆ They were also the ones under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, who recorded and communicated the words and deeds of Jesus and ultimately their writings were included in the canon of Holy Scripture.
- ◆ It is to these writings, "the faith once delivered" (Jude 1:3) that the church, as it expanded and grew in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ through the centuries, would weigh its faith and practice on the foundation laid at that time.

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- ◆ ***Ephesians 2:19-20* Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and strangers, but fellow citizens with God's people and also members of his household,<sup>20</sup> built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone.**
- ◆ The foundations of the church are built on an unrepeatable foundation, Jesus Christ and the twelve apostles.
- ◆ Like the twelve sons of Jacob who were responsible for the development of the kingdom of Israel, now we see twelve men chosen for the development of spiritual Israel, the church.
- ◆ Another one of those archetypes we spoke about earlier.
- ◆ We will have much more to say about Jesus' role as our High Priest when we come to His priestly and sacrificial role in the events surrounding the cross.
- ◆ But in His ministry Jesus foreshadows what is about to happen as He goes around forgiving sins, and releasing sinners from their guilt.

### ***Another aspect Matthew identifies of Jesus' ministry is "He heals the sick" (Matthew 4:23-25)***

- ◆ Jesus is here acting in His capacity as King
- ◆ His title of kingship was revealed to Mary prior to His birth when the angel Gabriel appeared to her.
- ◆ ***Luke 1:30-33* But the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary; you have found favor with God.<sup>31</sup> You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus.<sup>32</sup> He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David,<sup>33</sup> and he will reign over Jacob's descendants forever; his kingdom will never end."**
- ◆ Healing the sick is Jesus' outward sign to a sceptical world that the kingdom of God had arrived (Luke 16:16).
- ◆ It is very difficult to explain away a miracle and scripture tells us there were thousands of them (John 21:25).
- ◆ He knew people were much more interested in visible signs and wonders than the healing of the human heart which is where Jesus performs His greatest miracle.
- ◆ Even today this preoccupation in outward physical healing seems to take precedent over the inward healing of the human heart.
- ◆ The real miracle needs to happen at the heart level and this is what the kingdom of God is all about, a new creation, with a new heart.
- ◆ These miracles of Jesus are another proof the new age had arrived, the Age of Redemption (Romans 8:21-23)
- ◆ The chaos of the fallen world both physical and spiritual is about to be redeemed and Jesus demonstrates this by His ability to heal sickness, calm the elements, cast out demons, raise the dead and forgive sin.
- ◆ Again in an act of pure grace, Jesus takes on Himself the burdens of the world, not only to heal the physically sick but also the spiritually sick.
- ◆ Each time Jesus performed a miracle there was a personal price to be paid. This is recorded for us in John.
- ◆ ***John 11: 32 (KJV) Then, when Mary came where Jesus was, and saw Him, she fell down at His feet, saying to Him, "Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died."<sup>33</sup> Therefore, when Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her weeping, He groaned in the spirit and was troubled.***
- ◆ Jesus was transferring the burdens of the world onto himself and in the process redeeming the world.
- ◆ The King of this new kingdom had arrived and the process of redeeming the world was taking place.
- ◆ This aspect of redemption and healing will reach its glorious climax at Christ's return when the whole cosmos will be redeemed (Romans 8:20-22, Revelation 22:2).

### ***Another aspect Matthew identifies as part of Jesus' ministry is He begins to preach the values and principles of the Kingdom of God (Matthew 4:17).***

- ◆ Jesus is now acting in His capacity as the Word.
- ◆ No longer was there a need for prophets to speak on behalf of Jesus, as "the Word" is here to speak for Himself.
- ◆ ***Hebrews 1:1-2* In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various ways,<sup>2</sup> but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom also he made the universe.**
- ◆ And to reinforce who has the final word, the Father from heaven at the event of the transfiguration, has this to say.
- ◆ ***Mark 9:7* Then a cloud appeared and covered them, and a voice came from the cloud: "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him!"**

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- ◆ It is significant that standing with Jesus in a glorified state are Moses and Elijah, signifying their roles in speaking on behalf of the Law (Moses) and Prophets (Elijah) under the Old Covenant.
- ◆ Now with the coming of the kingdom of God and the introduction of the New Covenant, God the Father identifies Jesus as the spokesman or Word we should listen to under this new arrangement.
- ◆ Immediately after Jesus' confrontation with the devil it is no accident that in the next chapter of the book of Matthew, Jesus as prophet, priest and king outlines the constitution of the kingdom of God with what has become known as the "beatitudes."
- ◆ Each of these principles flies in the face of how the rulers of the kingdoms of this world administer power.
- ◆ When was the last time we heard politicians act and speak about policies that involve, humility, meekness, empathy, righteousness, mercy, peacemakers, suffering injustice quietly, loving your enemies (Matthew 5:1-48).
- ◆ It's a total contrast to the world we live in today where power is used to humiliate, to subjugate and an excuse to line one's own pockets.
- ◆ It's the dawning of a new age where the principles of godly love outlined by Jesus in chapters 5 and 6 of Matthew will reign.

***Following His baptism by John, Jesus embarks on His ministry adopting the three roles of Prophet, Priest and King laying the foundation of the kingdom of God in the present world.***

- ◆ From this point onwards, there would be two kingdoms at work on this earth, the kingdom of the present age and the kingdom of the future age
- ◆ One would diminish and the other would increase.