

January 31, 2021
4th Sunday after Epiphany

“Come and See: The Truth-Part II”

Grace, mercy, and peace be to you from God our Father, and from our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, Amen. In our Epiphany journey this year, we have been looking at those who were faithful. They were faithful and obedient to God. It begins with Mary and Joseph who were faithful and came together and went to Bethlehem where Jesus was born. Then we began to look at the Epiphany message of: “Come and See.” The shepherds faithfully went to go and see the Christ child. Simeon and Anna faithfully waited and then came to the temple and saw Jesus. Last week we took a look at Daniel, who was faithful. He didn't take a political position, but he did take the position of being the Chief Wiseman or the Prefect over the wise men, who taught them. And it was the result of his prophecy that the wise men, about 450 years later, came to see Jesus. Why did they come? They knew the truth. Truth is that which can't be contested and that which doesn't change over time. It's what makes a firm foundation.

And again, it's because they knew prophecy, they had seen it fulfilled. But it wasn't just the prophecy that Daniel had revealed about the statue made of four different metals to King Nebuchadnezzar and that it represented four different empires. No, they understood much more because Daniel had taught them about Balaam, the one who we heard about in our Old Testament reading this morning.

We heard his fourth Oracle or the messianic prophecy. But what led to this? The children of Israel had left Egypt and it was the 40th year of their time in the wilderness, so they were now heading towards the Promised Land. They were about 90 miles away from Jericho, a straight route from the West where they were, to the East. But Moses took them according to God's word on the long route. Yes, indeed they did head East. But then they headed South and went all the way down to the tip of the Red Sea before then traveling North-East and traveling up the side of what was known as Eden and Moab and up into the areas of the northeastern Jordan River Valley where they did battle with two

different nations and overcame them. But then they began to head back South. South towards where they would be directly across from Jericho.

As the King of Moab first of all, saw them skirting by his country to the East, and then heading North about 2 million or more people; he had heard about the battles to the North where they utterly destroyed the two kingdoms up there. And they now start heading South. He was certain that they're coming to do battle with him. So, what happened in all of this? First the children of Israel grumbled against God. They were complaining that they had to go the long route. They complained against God and Moses saying, "why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water and we loathe this worthless food." Now you might have right away caught a little bit of a contradiction there. "There's no food, but we loathe this worthless food." They are speaking about the manna and the quail that God brought every night and every morning. So, what happened as they complained? God sent fiery serpents and if they bit the people, the people died. God had Moses make a bronze snake and lift it up on a pole; just as the Messiah would one day be lifted up on a cross. If the people looked to that bronze serpent, just as we look to the Jesus on the cross; they were saved. They were healed and they would live. That little exercise, shall we say, in discipline is what led them to continue on that journey and go up and take on the Amorites, and take on the country of Bashan and destroy them. And they are without kind of filled with zeal, they had disciplined, and they got the message.

This is when the King of Moab sees them, and he calls on Balaam who was described as a seer. A seer was someone who could see the future; usually connected with spiritual connotations or occultic connotations. But what we know about Balaam is that he had a reputation of cursing or blessing. Those he cursed were cursed, and those he blessed were blessed. So, the King of Moab asked him to come and curse the children of Israel. He tells the King of Moab, "I'm sorry I can't do that. They are God's people and God has revealed to me that I am not to curse them." but Balak, the King of Moab would not be turned away. He came to him a second time and said, 'Balaam, look I need you to curse them, and if you do, I will pay you handsomely.' What did Balaam do? Balaam said, "well the Lord told me I can't go, but why don't we wait and

see if maybe he changes his mind. And that night, in a dream God came to Balaam and said go. 'Go with Balak but do whatever I tell you.'

What happened? Well, he went with Balak, and we read that the Lord was angry with him. Why? His mind evidently was on the money he could make. The Lord stopped him, and he did so in a rather unique way. As Balaam was going on his donkey, God sent an Angel, and that Angel came before Balaam. But Balaam couldn't see it. His donkey could. The donkey turns away. Balaam beats the donkey and says, 'come on, let's go!' And he turns it back. And as he's going along, he is going down a road and there's a there's a wall on the side; he's going through vineyards. And the Angel stands off to the side of the other side of the road and the donkey leans up against the wall on the opposite side from the Angel and crushes Balaam's leg between the donkey and the wall. Again, Balaam begins to yell and starts beating on the donkey. The donkey, then continues on where it comes to the gate to the road between the two vineyards. Now the Angel is standing there with his sword drawn in the middle of the road. The donkey just boom, goes down on the ground and Balaam starts kicking the donkey. 'Get up, get going' and everything and the donkey turns to Balaam and talks to him empowered by God. It says, "have I not been a faithful donkey to you all these years? Why are you beating me these three times? And it's at that time the Lord opens the eyes of Balaam to see the Angel of the Lord standing there with a sword ready to take him out. And it is one of those things, you know that the comics would talk about; where Balaam's now like, 'just you and me Lord, right? The way it's been all along, just you and me. I'm just going and I'm going to do exactly what you tell me to do. You and me Lord. So he goes and now the King of Moab, Balak takes him to the hills, we can see all of the children of Israel there, this huge army is cursing. And what's Balaam do? He blesses them. The King's a little upset about that; hey I'm hiring you to curse them. I can't curse them, God told me not to curse all the people of Israel. So Balak picks up on that and says well let's go over here and let's just see this small group of them. There, you won't be cursing them all, just a part of them. There it won't be cursing about just curse this part and again Balaam blesses them. It happens a third time. The king is now just steaming mad. You're not going to get paid.

And that leads us to the 4th Oracle that we have this morning. A final blessing and prophecy where he speaks of the coming Messiah. When he says, "I see him, but not now, I behold him, but not near." This is about 1400 years before the Messiah give or take. "A star shall come out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel. I see him, a person, a star to announce he's born, a scepter the King of kings."

This is what the wise men understood. A King, a Messiah, would be born who would rule over all; bring peace to all; coming from Judah, one of the tribes of Israel. But their question was, where? Where in Judah? That's why they go to Herod the King who is in Jerusalem; which is the capital of Judah. They ask where is he who has been born? Notice its not 'supposed to be,' they're full of confidence this has happened. Where is he who has been born King of the Jews? We have seen His star when it rose and have come to worship Him. And just as Simeon had said, Jesus and everything about Him including the star, would be a sign that is opposed.

Herod was the first opposition. He called the priests and the scribes and asked where the Messiah was to be born. They told him Micah 5:2, in Bethlehem. And so, he said, now you guys go you find him, come right on back tell me where He is so that I may worship him; with the idea that he would go and kill this Messiah, oppose him. The wise men they came, they saw, and they gave gifts; kingly gifts of gold, frankincense, and myrrh. But more than that, they gave themselves as they bowed down and worshiped him. They saw this baby as their King and they were his subjects. And then we read that God warned them in a dream, 'don't go back to Herod, he means harm to the child. And so, they went home by another way.

Which now brings us to how we started last week. There was the idea that if I can only prove that Jesus was the Christ, it would be so much easier to evangelize, to witness, to share with others why I have this faith in him. And the wise men they had faith. For them it was proven that this Messiah would be born, because they had heard a prophecy from Daniel; and they had seen just what Daniel saw that there were four empires: Babylonian, Persian, Greek, Roman. They saw them come and go just as Daniel said. And based on that, they knew what he

said was from God. They put their trust in that God and obviously he had also taught them about Balaam. There's going to be a star in Judah, a King in Israel who is the for all people.

But beginning with the wise men and their leaving; a whole new set of prophecies is fulfilled. And so like the wisemen, let us learn those prophecies. When someone asks us why do you believe what you believe? Tell them, it's faith based in fact, in fulfillment. For instance, because Herod was coming Mary and Joseph took the baby Jesus to Egypt just as was foretold in Hosea 1:1 and is fulfilled in Matthew 2:15; where Matthew even quotes Hosea saying to fulfill with the Prophet had said.

We continue on and we see; and we're going to go through a whole mess of these really quick; that in Jeremiah 31:15 Herod's killing of the babies in Bethlehem was foretold; and in Matthew 2:16-18 Matthew quotes Jeremiah saying, "see the prophecies right again. And when Mary and Joseph came back, they went to Nazareth and Jesus was called a Nazarene which was again told in Isaiah 53:2-3 and again Matthew quotes that in Matthew 2:23 to show the prophecies been fulfilled. When it comes to his ministry, again we are told in Isaiah 40:3 that he would be preceded by a Messenger. And again, in Matthew 3:1-2 Matthew quotes Isaiah to point out John the Baptist is the fulfillment of this 750-year-old prophecy. We were told in Isaiah 9:1 that the messiah's ministry would begin in Galilee and that's exactly where it began. Again, we look to Matthew in Matthew 4:15 where he again quotes the Prophet Isaiah. What kind of ministry was it? It was a ministry full of miracles which is what was told in Isaiah 35:5-6 and again is pointed out in Matthew 9:35. His teaching would be in parables as we see from Psalm 78:2; and again that is quoted in Matthew 13:34-35. He would enter into Jerusalem on the donkey according to Zechariah 9:9 and we go to Matthew 21:5 and by golly's; now Matthew is quoting Zechariah. And you're seeing a lot of quoting here by Matthew because he wrote his gospel to the Hebrew people and he wanted to show them the validity of the Old Testament scriptures and the validity of the claim of Jesus being the Christ. So, he constantly says, thus fulfills the words of Isaiah, thus fulfills the words of the Prophet, thus fulfills the words of Zechariah.

But all of that leads us to some of the most phenomenal things, the things we call the “one day prophecies” that happened right before Jesus was crucified. We are told in Psalm 41:9 that he would be betrayed by a friend. John 13:21 quotes that one pointing out this is Judas. That he would be sold for 30 pieces of silver; and Zechariah 11:12 confirmed it in Matthew 26:15. That money would then be thrown on the floor in the temple; Zechariah 11:13 and found in Matthew 27:5. That that money would then be taken to use in purchasing a Potters field; Zechariah 11:13 again and Matthew 27:7 confirms it. That he would be forsaken by his disciples. They would all run away. Zechariah 13:7. And Mark 14:27 conveniently points that out and quotes Zechariah 13:7. That Jesus would be silent before those who were accusing him. And we see in Matthew 27:12 that that is exactly what happened. That he would be scourged, by his stripes we would be healed Isaiah 53:5; It's what we read in Matthew 27:26. That he would be struck on the head and spit upon Isaiah 50:6 and Matthew 26:67. That he would be mocked by those around him Psalm 22:7-8, we find that right there in Matthew 27:29. That he would be crucified, his hands would be pierced, his feet would be pierced Psalm 22:16, one of the two big messianic psalms and again we find that in Luke 23:33. That he would be crucified with thieves Isaiah 53:12 and verified in Matthew 27:38. That while on the cross he would intercede for those who were killing him; and that's what's said in Isaiah 53:12. We hear Jesus saying “Father forgive them for they know not what they do” in Luke 23:34. That he would be rejected by his own people Isaiah 53:3 and obviously fulfilled in all the gospels but we will just go to John 7:5 and 48 which makes this point. He was hated without a cause, he had healed people, what wrong had he done? And he was hated without cause Isaiah 49:7 verified John 15:25 that is friends would stand at a distance. We see at the cross the Mary and John standing at a distance Luke 23:49. Meanwhile those who were coming by the cross seen Jesus there would shake their heads and stare at him Psalm 22:7. And we see that Matthew 27 and Luke 23. That his garments would not be torn, and that lots would be cast for them. Psalm 22:18 and John 19:23-24. That he would suffer thirst and be given vinegar to drink Psalm 69:21 John 19:28. That he'd be offered gall to numb the pain Psalm 69 again the second big messianic Psalm and that's confirmed in Matthew 27:34 that he would not take the gall. Again the my God my God why have you forsaken me Psalm 22:1 Jesus quoted Matthew 27:46.

That his bones would not be broken and instead they pierced his side Psalm 34:20 and John 19:33. That his heart would be broken or pierced Psalm 22:14, John 19:34. They used the spear to stab him in the heart. That his side would be pierced again Zechariah 12:10. A second thing here on that John 19:34 again that darkness would cover the face of the earth when he's on the cross Amos 8:9, confirmed in Matthew 27. And that he would be buried in a rich man's tomb, Isaiah 53:9, Matthew 27.

I have copies of this list for you. But I want you to just think about that. You might say Pastor, 'you are just rambling away like crazy.' No, I just was listing prophecy and fulfillment, one after another. Those prophecies again going all the way back to the time the children of Israel were in the wilderness, over 1000 years in advance. All of these things laid out over the next 600 to 1000 years; and Jesus fulfills them all. In fact, I'd like for you to think just how important this sermon today, looking at these Old Testament prophecies, how important this is. Not because I'm giving it, but because you know what; it is what Jesus gave.

When he rose from the dead on that Easter morning, he was on the road to Emmaus and those two disciples were downcast. Jesus asked them why and they said, 'because Jesus the Christ, we thought he was the Christ; and he was crucified and now there's those who say he is risen, and oh, it's a terrible thing.' And then we read, 'and beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. He went through this list. Don't you know the Prophet says? Jesus did. The prophets said, Jesus did. This must have been impressed upon Saint Paul because we read that's exactly what he did in acts 9:22; that as he increased all the more in strength, he confounded the Jews who lived in Damascus by proving that Jesus was the Christ. He used scripture.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, do you have doubt that Jesus is real? Have you heard from a family member, a friend, "I can't believe that, there's just no facts; or science has proved it's all wrong. All that really? Ask them for that evidence, and then while they are really struggling to find it because there isn't any; say, 'while you're thinking about that, let me just share a couple things with you from the Bible.' Did you know... and start going on, you know in in the Bible there's a

whole series of prophecies about Jesus? In fact, let's just focus on the couple of prophecies about 20 or 30; that applied to just one day of his life. And he fulfilled each one of these. Take them back to Christmas. Give them what the Wisemen knew.

You see, what we need to be is the wisemen of today. For generations, the Wisemen passed the prophecies on because it was the prophecies that revealed Jesus. What do you think those wise men would do if they had this list today? I contend they would have it memorized and they would use it to show that Jesus is the Christ the son of the living God.

In His name, Amen.