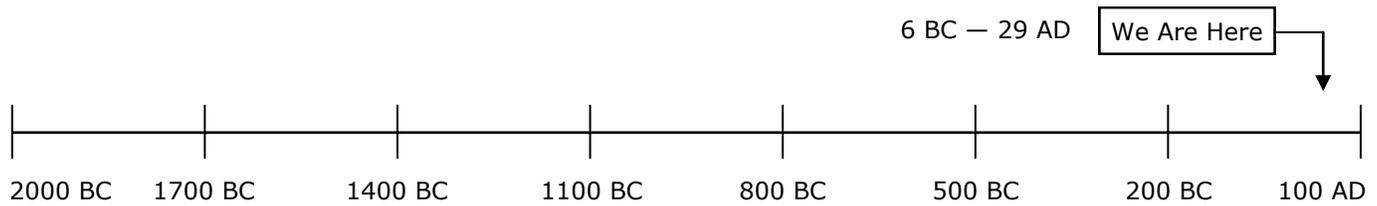


The Case for Christ

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Week 39: September 24-30 — *The Gospels*

74.5% Complete — 92 Days to Go



Helpful Resources

Map of Palestine in the Time of Christ (p.119)

Making Sense of It All

- The Big Picture

More than 400 years have passed since the Old Testament closed with *Nehemiah*. The silence of God was finally broken, as the New Testament opens with the births of both Jesus and John the Baptist. God spoke loudly through these two men, one introducing the other, and made it very clear that the time of the promised Messiah had come. In fact, herein lies the purpose of the Gospel writers — to prove without a doubt that Jesus was (and is) the Messiah that was foretold by the prophets (see *Luke 4:16-30* in relation to *Isaiah 61:1, 2*). Therefore, the purpose of this review is similar to those authors, that is, *to build a case for Christ*.

- The Case for Christ

1. **He was born of a virgin** (*Matt. 1:18, 20*): In order for Jesus to fulfill His role as mediator between God and man, He needed to be both fully God and fully man. To achieve this, Jesus had to have a divine conception (which He did by the Holy Spirit) and yet be born to a human mother; thus, He could embody the divine nature of His heavenly Father and, yet, relate to people born in the flesh. If Jesus were only divine, then He could not have related to human nature; however, if Jesus were only human, He could not have related to God as divine. He had to be born in the manner that He was in order to fit the part. Also, the virgin birth ensured that Jesus did not inherit the corruption of sin by human bloodlines; as the Spirit conceived Him in the womb, He was unstained by sin (*Luke 1:35*).
2. **He was introduced by John the Baptist** (*Luke 1:67-80*): The ministry of John was key in declaring Jesus' identity; John was that Elijah-type person who was to come and announce the arrival of the Messiah (*Mal 3:1; 4:5, 6; John 3:23-36*). John announced Jesus as "the Lamb of God, who would take away the sins of the world" (*John 1:36*); Christ's mediatory mission was proclaimed from the beginning. Thus, Jesus' baptism was symbolic. Though He had no sins of His own of which to repent, He identified His earthly purpose by connecting Himself with sinners through baptism (*2 Cor. 5:21*).
3. **He was tempted, yet without sin** (*2 Cor. 5:21; Heb. 4:15*): For the Lord to accept Christ on our behalf, He had to be perfect, without sin. If Jesus would have sinned, then His sacrifice would have been in vain, for He would have been no better than if one of us died on the cross. His life was holy; thus, His death was sufficient to make us holy.

4. **He proved His divinity through miracles and prophecy:** If Jesus were truly God in the flesh (*John 1:1, 14*), then He would be able to exhibit supernatural abilities. During His ministry, He proved through miracles that He had authority over four areas: human deficiencies, nature, the forces of evil, and death. On top of His supernatural actions were His supernatural words; not only was His teaching unprecedented, His messages were completely contrary to human nature and thinking. As God, He knew the thoughts of others, their past and their future; and, He often prophesied of things to come.
 5. **He had the authority to forgive sins** (*Mark 2:5, 6, 13-17*): The claim to forgive sins perplexed the religious leaders. What man had the right or power to remove sins? The problem was that they did not see Jesus for who He was, which was God incarnate; He was fully eligible and capable of forgiving sins. However, to remove sins in the Jewish culture required some prerequisites. Jesus had to be of priestly lineage, 30 years or older, dedicated with water, purified with blood of a pure sacrifice. Jesus was born from the priestly order of Melchizedek (supersedes Aaron), He started His ministry at age 30, He was dedicated with baptism, and He will give His own life as a pure sacrifice.
- Prophetic Passages
 1. **Simeon's Prophecy** (*Luke 2:34, 35*): This man predicted that Jesus' tasks would be difficult for both Him and for Mary, who would certainly bear the brunt of watching her son's rejection and crucifixion.
 2. **Crucifixion** (*John 3:14*): Making reference to Moses' gold serpent, which he raised up to save Israel in the desert, Jesus predicts His own "raising up" on the cross.
 3. **Resurrection** (*John 2:19*): Jesus described His own death and resurrection in an illustration of destroying the temple and rebuilding it in three days (He meant His body).
 - Personal Application, *John 3:28-36*

Take a minute to read this passage slowly. May John's words resonate in your heart. John the Baptist's disciples came to him and said, "Teacher, the man you met on the other side of the Jordan, the one you said was the Messiah, is also baptizing people. Everybody is going over there instead of coming here to us." John replied, "He has come from above and is greater than anyone else. I am of the earth, and my understanding is limited to the things of earth, but He has come from heaven. He tells what He has seen and heard... Those who believe Him discover that God is true, for He is sent by God. He speaks God's words, for God's Spirit is upon Him without measure or limit... All who believe in God's Son have eternal life. Those who don't obey the Son will never experience eternal life, but the wrath of God remains upon them... You yourselves know how plainly I told you that I am not the Messiah. I am here to prepare the way for Him, that is all... A bridegroom's friend rejoices with him. I am the Bridegroom's friend, and I am filled with joy at His success. He must become greater and greater, and I must become less and less."

The Bottom Line

We are to *make much of Christ*, but oftentimes we get in the way and *make much of ourselves*.

Questions to Consider

1. Which aspect of Christ's ministry convinces you that He was whom He said He was?
2. Is Christ becoming more evident in your life? Is your selfish nature shrinking away?