

January 21, 2007

## He Said So

Today is the third Sunday in Epiphany and as I mentioned last week we are going to be looking at the manifestation of Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ being made known as the Messiah. Last week we saw Jesus perform His first miracle in the city of Capernaum he changed the water into wine. He defied all the laws of nature that he had created at the beginning of time but he changed water into wine and thus showed that he is the Messiah. As I said last week today we're going to look at Christ's claims. There are many people that will say that Jesus never said that He was the Messiah that He never claimed to be the Son of God he never claimed to be God. Is that true? Nothing could be farther from the truth.

Our Gospel this morning John 4:18-21 has Jesus claiming to be the Messiah. Now we have to understand how this all comes about. In John 4 verses 1-13 Jesus is tempted by Satan following His baptism. After that Jesus goes about His ministry this is where He goes and changes the water into wine, does some other healings and then after about a year he returns home to Galilee and what does He do? Well, tremendous lesson for all of us He goes to the synagogue on the Sabbath. This is what Jesus does He obeys God's command to remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Something that I thinking America especially we need to remember. Yes you do need to be in God's house, yes you do need to worship God, and yes you do need to get those spiritual batteries re-charged.

He didn't go to the temple. The temple is where you went for the major feasts and sacrifices such as Passover and the Day of Atonement but on a weekly basis you go to the synagogue, which is like the local church. It met the spiritual needs of the local people. When a person went to the synagogue on the Sabbath there was an order of worship that was followed much like we have an order of worship. It began with a reading from the scroll of Deuteronomy 6:4 called the Shema where God says, "hero Israel the Lord our God the Lord is One". Then they would have a prayer, then an attendant in the synagogue would read from the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses. After the reading there would be a praise of the Lord followed by prayer and then they would thank God for the Pentateuch. After that one of the synagogue attendants would

ask an older man or a visitor to read from the prophets this individual would do and when the person finished reading from the prophets that person would then comment on it. If you look at it this was where we get the idea of sermons. Where a person comments on scripture. Once that person had finished the comments there would be a praise for the prophet's words, there would be prayer and then they would have lunch.

And so it is that in our scripture today Jesus is the visitor who is invited to read. He's the hometown boy who has returned and undoubtedly people have heard a few things about Him. He gets up and he begins to read. He says, "The spirit of the Lord is on me because He has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of the sight of the blind. To release the oppressed to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor". He was reading from Isaiah 61:1-2.

What does that say? Well, it begins with a very bold statement, "the spirit of the Lord is on me because He has anointed me". Normally the priest, normally the king is anointed with oil but to be anointed by the spirit that's only the Messiah who is anointed by the spirit. And what has he been anointed to do? To preach. To preach good news to the poor. To proclaim freedom for the prisoners. Who are these prisoners? People who are bound by sin people like you and me. Why are they poor? Because they don't have the hope of the Gospel but they are about to inherit the riches of heaven.

What else is He anointed to do? To bring recovery of sight to the blind and to release the oppressed. This is exactly what Jesus would do. He would give the blind sight and again He would release those who are oppressed by sin. He's come to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. The year of the Lord's favor? Its an Old Testament term the year of jubilee or also the year of salvation. Every 50 years there would be the year of the Lord's favor and in that 50<sup>th</sup> year the slaves were freed and debt was cancelled, property was returned to ancestral family. Jesus Christ is the Messiah He is going to free people from sin, the debt is cancelled and heaven is our home.

Jesus rolls up the scroll gave it back to the attendant and sat down. Everybody in the synagogue was looking at Him. Luke writes, "The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on Him". They were intently looking wondering what is He is going to say. This is the scripture about the Messiah and they were all looking forward to the Messiah. There was a Messianic fever at the time. Daniel had

prophesied the Messiah would come and he had prophesized by using a series of weeks and those weeks represented years and at the time of Jesus that was exactly at the time that Daniel said the Messiah would come. So here Jesus is the hometown boy He's back people have probably heard some good things about Him and he's now speaking about the Messiah maybe he has some information. What does He say? "Today the scripture is fulfilled and you're hearing". Jesus is flat out saying I am the Messiah.

There's been many a movie based on an individual being misidentified as someone great because of his look, the timing or the circumstances but this is far different. The people simply ask the hometown boy to speak and He claims to be the fulfillment of the prophecy. Christ the manifest Himself. This is His own Epiphany. As I said earlier there are those who say Christ never did this, sorry its right here but this isn't it. Christ's own Epiphany is consistent throughout scripture. So lets get going and lets take a look at what Jesus said.

First of all in the book of John those of you who have been in Lifelight or in Sunday morning Bible study probably know what is coming. It's the great "I am's". In the Old Testament God's name was I Am. "I am who I am I am the God of Abraham, I am the God of Isaac, I am the God of Jacob". In the book of John there's a series of I am's where Jesus begins by saying "I am" and each time that He does He's invoking that name of God. Who does He say I am? John 6:35, "I am the bread of life. He who comes to me will never go hungry and he who believes in me will never ever be thirsty". Is He really claiming to be the Messiah here? Go three verses later, "For I have come down from heaven". That sounds like a claim to be Messiah. "I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of Him who sent me". Yep, when He says I am the bread of life He is saying I am God I've come down from heaven and I'm here to God the Father's will.

John 8:12 Jesus spoke and said, "I am the light of the world whoever follows me will never walk in darkness but will have the light of life". Is he claiming to be the Messiah when He says I am the light of the world? In John 8:56 right after He had said this he says, "your father Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing my day he saw it and was glad. The people who were there said you are not yet fifty years old and you have seen Abraham? Jesus' answer, "I tell you the truth before Abraham was born I am" He's claiming to be the

Messiah, He's claiming to have seen Abraham, He's claiming that He was born before Abraham; He's saying I am God.

John 10:7 He says, "I tell you I am the gate for the sheep". Is that really claiming to be the Messiah? I am the gate whoever enters through me will be saved. He will come in and go out and find pasture. Whoever enters through me will be saved? Well, that would sound like a Messiah. He's saying there's only one way to be saved and its through me. And that would be the roll of the Messiah.

In John 10:11&14 Jesus says, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. I am the good shepherd I know my sheep and my sheep know me." Is that really a claim to be the Messiah? Go three verses later, "the reason my father loves me is that I lay down my life only to take it up again. No one takes it from me but I lay it down of my own accord I have authority to lay it down and authority to take it up again. This command I receive from my father. What is He talking about? He's going to lay down His life and die on the cross but its not stopping there He has the authority to take it up. He's going to rise from the dead and who's going to enable this? This command I receive from my father God the Father almighty. It sounds to me he's really claiming to be the Messiah.

John 11:25 Jesus is speaking to Martha at the tomb of Lazarus, "I am the resurrection and the life he who believes in me will live even though he dies". Really a claim to be the Messiah? Sometimes actions speak louder than words. Eighteen verses later, "when He had said this Jesus called in a loud voice Lazarus come out. And Lazarus came walking out of the tomb. I'd say that's messianic.

John 14:6, "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." Really? Is he again claiming to be the Messiah? Look at the very next verse, "If you really knew me you would know my father as well". Phillip then says, "Lord show us the Father and that will be enough for us". Jesus answered, "Don't you know me Phillip? Even after I have been among you for such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father how can you say show us the Father?" Jesus is claiming to be God.

And finally John 15:1, "I am the true vine and my Father is the gardener. I am the vine you are the branches if a man remains in me

and I in him he will bear much fruit apart from me he can do nothing". Is it really a claim to be the Messiah? "My command is this love each other as I have loved you. Greater love is no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends". Jesus is saying I am the Messiah and I'm going to lay down my life. That's the greatest act of love.

In Our Savior's name, Amen