

Christ, the Alpha and Omega: the Beginning and the End

Genesis

Sunday, July 17, 2011

Pastor Alan Morse

First Baptist Church of South Lake Tahoe, CA

People think of Christianity as a new religion that appeared all of a sudden in Jesus Christ of Nazareth, out of nowhere. There are many skeptics that say, "What about the older religions of the world: The Egyptians or the Sumerians and Accadians who lived in Mesopotamia, the Cradle of Civilization?" The One God of monotheism, Yahweh, was worshipped from the beginning of time in the godly lives of Adam and his son, Seth, up to Noah and the time of the flood. Historically the worship of the Living God of the godly has co-existed side-by-side with paganism and the godless.

It can be proven that it was Christ, the eternal Son of God; God the Son - before His first coming - Who actually was there all the time, appearing in His deity and giving divine guidance to His people in His plan of salvation. It was the ungodly line of Cain through the flood and up to the time of Nimrod and the Tower of Babel who rebelled against the One and Only God and began to lead the world in worship of many gods of occultism.

Some people see the Jews and their religion of Old Testament Judaism and the religion of Christianity of the New Testament to be in conflict with each other. It's just another reason why people in their confusion and lack of knowledge want to write off all faith in God, especially the Jewish people.

Christianity is Jesus Christ and salvation in Him at the cross and in His resurrection. It reaches all the way back to the Garden of Eden. Look back to the fall of man in the Garden of Eden and you will see in Genesis 3:15 the first promise of God in sending Christ, the Seed of the woman, into the world to crush the head of the serpent. This was a veiled promise of the Virgin Birth. It is the Seed of the woman without a human father.

Judaism and the Old Testament law given to Israel were rich in a testimony to Christ. In every way it taught about Him and was a revelation of Him to come personally into the world in the flesh in salvation of the human race.

It is critical for the world to see and understand that there is no conflict between Judaism and Christianity. The Jewish religion of the Old Testament and the coming of the

promised Christ naturally flow into New Testament Christianity and Christ having come. When understood there is not division and something new in Christianity but complete harmony, a togetherness and unity. Christ was there all the time from the beginning.

To prove this we need to reach back to the very beginning of creation and the Old Testament and see Christ everywhere in their Bible which is also ours. We believe in their Christ Who was predicted to come to save us all.

The word *theophany* which means “to appear”, and *epiphany* “an appearance of God to someone” are references of Christ in the Old Testament. Before His first coming into the world in the flesh, in a visible, physical body to give us a full revelation of God He was called in the O.T. the Angel of the Lord.

“The Angel of the Lord” Who appears constantly in the Old Testament to man was Christ, the Son of God of the Holy Trinity, Who was God the Son.

1. The first thing we see in Christ of the O.T. is His grace and care toward a friendless and comfortless woman who is in despair. Here we see the Angel of the Lord.

Genesis 16:6 “...and when Sarah had dealt hardly on her (Hagar, the Egyptian handmaid) she fled from her face⁷ and the Angel of the Lord (Christ) found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness...⁸ and He said, Hagar, Sarah’s maid, whence comest thou? And where are you going? And she said ‘I flee from the face of my mistress, Sarah.’⁹ and the Angel of the Lord said unto her, return to thy mistress and submit thyself under her hands...¹³ and she called the name of the Lord (Yahweh) that spake unto her, Thou God Seest Me”. (She recognized the Angel of the Lord to be Lord (Yahweh) and the God Who saw her.)

When this Egyptian slave, a foreigner to the people of God, thought that God was nowhere to be found in her misery and rejection, it was the Angel of the Lord God, Himself, Who let her know He was seeing everything that was going on in her life. It is always the grace of God toward sinners and unwanted people that shows up and gives us His special care.

We see all through the Gospels Christ’s care for those in misery and helplessness.

In time, Hagar bore a son by Abraham and called his name Ishmael. Sarah saw Ishmael making fun of Isaac and had Abraham put Hagar and her son out. In the wilderness Hagar and her son were just about to die of thirst and Hagar withdrew herself so she wouldn’t have to watch her son die.

Genesis 21:17 “And God heard the voice of the lad; and the Angel of God called to Hagar out of Heaven and said unto her; what aileth thee, Hagar? Fear not, for God (the Angel of the Lord) hath heard the voice of the lad where he is...¹⁹ and God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water...²⁰ and God was with the lad...” (God heard [the voice of the lad] and God saw. What grace!)

I wonder: how many times in our lives, when we think all is lost, Christ sees our desperation and opens our eyes to show us a way out? In John 9 it was Christ Who opened the eyes of the man that was born blind. I am sure that he never anticipated being able to see. The religious leaders accused him of having sin in his life and he was getting what he deserved. Not so! Christ would not only open his eyes but show him the way of salvation. Things have not changed. Christ wants to open our eyes today and show us something wonderful that He has for us. To Hagar it was a well of water, to us it is living water. (John 4:13,14)

2. It is the Angel of the Lord (Christ, Himself) Who steps into Abraham’s life at the exact moment when, by faith, he was going to slay Isaac, his son, as God had told him. It was a test of Abraham’s faith and it was Christ Who was there for him at the exact time Abraham needed Him the most.

Genesis 22:10 “And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took a knife to slay his son.¹¹ And the Angel of the Lord called unto him out of Heaven and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here I am.¹² And He said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad ... for now I know that thou fearest God...¹⁵ And the Angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of Heaven the second time¹⁶ and said, By Myself I have sworn, saith the Lord for because thou hast done this thing and hast not withheld thine son, thy only son¹⁷ that in blessing I will bless thee ...¹⁸ and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed...”

This whole test of Abraham’s faith by the Angel of the Lord, Who is Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, is a testimony to how Jesus Christ will be there for us. When we are put to the test after we have fully trusted in Him and lived in obedience He will be there at the very moment we need Him. When God tests our faith to refine us and to learn to trust in Him it is always to the last second before He acts.

When Christ told the disciples to cast their nets on the other side of the ship and they – by faith – obeyed him, immediately their nets were full of fish. It was up to the last

second when the disciples had gathered up their nets into the ship that Christ showed up.

When Christ sees our faith and our willingness to trust Him patiently under pressure He will always step into our lives, engage us at the exact time He knows is best and reward our faith. Faith under trial is learning to wait on God to stay the course, right where He has us, and not to do something stupid.

3. It is the Angel of the Lord (Christ, Himself) Who, in His providence guided the very steps of Abraham's servant to find a wife for Isaac. (Genesis 24:7; 40,48)

Genesis 24:7 "The Lord God of Heaven, which took me (Abraham) from my father's house and from the land of my kindred and which spake unto me and that swore unto me saying, unto thy seed will I give this land, He shall send His Angel (Christ, Himself) before thee and thou shalt take a wife unto my son from there. ...

⁴⁰ And he (Abraham) said unto me (the servant sent to find a wife for Isaac), the Lord before Whom I walk will send His Angel (Christ, Himself) with thee (the servant) and prosper thy way, and thou shalt take a wife for my son of my kindred...

⁴⁸ And I (the servant) bowed down my head and worshipped the Lord and blessed the Lord God of my master, Abraham, which had led me in the right way to take my master's brother's daughter unto his son."

The Angel of the Lord, Christ, had gone before Abraham's servant and had guided him in his journey of faith in the right way to come into the path of Rebecca, the future wife of Isaac. God had heard his prayer of faith and trust and prospered him in God's perfect guidance.

Christ, the Angel of the Lord, led His people in their history in the way He wanted them to take when they would trust Him each step at a time. When the children of Israel were trapped at the Red Sea with Pharaoh in pursuit to slay them, it was God Who told Moses to step forward into the sea. God parted the waters because of the faith of Moses.

It was Jesus Christ Who led Philip to run up to a chariot when a great man of Ethiopia was reading Isaiah 53 and couldn't understand the passage. Philip obeyed and caught up to the chariot and said, "What are you reading?" There Philip explained to the man that the passage was speaking of Christ and His suffering for our sins at the cross so he could be saved. The man went on his way rejoicing in finding Christ as his Savior because Philip allowed Christ to direct his steps.

Jesus Christ doesn't just leave us on our own when we earnestly pray for His guidance in everything for our journey through life. He directs our every step. It is when we present to God our bodies as living sacrifices, holy and acceptable to Him, that we will always find His perfect will for our future. (Romans 12:1-2)

"The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord and he delighteth in His way."
Psalm 37:23

4. It was Christ (the Angel of God) Who was with Jacob through his wandering years, with Whom Jacob would wrestle and become a changed man of God.

Through much of his life Jacob, though he knew God, was an unstable man who struggled to trust God with his life. He would make promises to God in his need not realizing God was going to hold him to them. He was a marked man by God to become Israel, the father of the twelve tribes of the nation. He, by the grace of God, would need to become a godly man before he was fit for such privileges in God's plan to work through him.

Genesis 31:11 "And the Angel of God (Christ) spoke unto me in a dream saying Jacob, and I said, Here am I... ¹³ I am the God of Bethel where you anointed the pillar and where you vowed a vow unto Me (made a promise to Me), now arise, get thee out from this land and return unto the land of thy kindred."

It was God in Christ (the Angel of God) Who was directing Jacob's life to get back where he really belonged, the land of Promise. Jacob, years earlier, had made a commitment to God that if He would care for him, protect him and feed him then he would worship Him as his God. God had been faithful to Jacob in spite of his self-driven life to get what he wanted with indifference to trusting God for it. He had some lessons to learn the hard way and God was going to teach Jacob to trust Him!

Jacob does what God tells him to do and as he is about to enter into the land, Esau, his brother whom Jacob had offended years before, is coming to meet him with 400 men for battle. Jacob is terrified and God has his undivided attention. Through this terrible experience, Jacob is going to genuinely turn his life completely over to the Lord.

Genesis 32:9 “And Jacob said, ‘O God of my father Abraham and God of my father, Isaac, the Lord, which said unto me ‘Return unto thy country and to thy kindred and I will deal well with thee’ (What is Jacob doing here by faith? He is claiming the promises of God.)¹⁰ I am not worthy of the least of thy mercies and of all thy truth which You have shown unto Thy servant, for with my staff I passed over Jordan...¹¹ Deliver me I pray from the hand of my brother...¹³ and he lodged there that night ...²⁴ and Jacob was left alone (this is exactly where God wanted him, alone without anybody’s help but God) and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day (the man is Christ, Himself).

Jacob had wrestled with God all of his life and kept running away from Him. This time he’s going to wrestle with Him and not let go but take hold of God once and for all. He’s not going to wander off anymore and run away.

²⁶ “And he (the man Who is Christ) said ‘Let me go for the day is breaking, and he (Jacob) said, ‘I will not let thee go except you bless me.’²⁷ And he (the man) said, ‘What is thy name?’ And he said ‘Jacob’. And he said²⁸ ‘Thy name shall be no more called Jacob but Israel, for as a prince hast thou power with God, and with man, and you have won.’”

Do we want to win God’s blessing and approval upon our life? Then we must learn to hold on to God and His Word under pressure and not let go of Him.

It is when we fully yield our lives over to Jesus Christ and stop fighting against His will, take hold of Him and not let go that He can change our lives and empower us in service to Him. It is only then that God’s perfect plan for our lives can be accomplished through us, and we find God’s victory for our future.

Genesis 48:16 makes it clear that it was the Angel of the Lord (Christ) Who was the man Jacob had fought with that night and Who had, through his life, delivered him out of evil and all his distress. Jacob said “The Angel which redeemed me from all evil”. Jacob knows it was God, Himself, Who not only redeemed his soul but also saved him out of all the evil that he had been up against all of his life. It is his dying testimony to the faithfulness of God.

Jesus said to Peter when he had acted in the flesh and denied Christ three times, “Peter, do you love me? Then follow me.” Christ not only delivered Peter out of evil but restored him.

Both Jacob and Peter had learned their lesson. In our own lives, Christ has come to us to change us from our old ways and to empower us for His purposes. Jesus said “Follow me”. If we love Christ then we must follow Him to stay out of trouble.

He said, “Come unto Me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.” We need to come to Christ once and for all.

It was the Angel of the Lord Who led Israel through the wilderness into the Promised Land. It is He Who shut the mouths of lions when Daniel was thrown into the den of lions to be devoured. It is He Who took care of Elijah against the threats of wicked Ahab. It was the Angel of the Lord who spoke to Moses out of the burning bush and called him to deliver Israel out of Egypt.

The combined testimony to Christ throughout the Old Testament gives us a portrait of his being active in dealing with sin, providing for those in need, guiding the path of His chosen people, protecting them from their enemies and saving the lost from their sins. What a wonderful Lord and Savior! Just like in the O.T. and the New, it is always God in Christ Who goes before His people and shows us the way.

“Christ, the Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the End”. (Rev. 22:13)

Christ was before all things in eternity, has been throughout the history of the human race from its beginning, and will bring it all to its destined end, and be for eternity with His people.