

Psalm 45 - Who is Jesus?

Sign Title: Who is Jesus?

December 4, 2011

Good morning Faith family. If your family is like mine, this is a busy time of year. The Christmas tree is out, but it has been a week and we haven't found a chance to finish decorating it. Some of you still planned to hang lights on the gutters, after this weekend's snow, you can cross it off your list. Cindy and I are realizing we will do most of our shopping for Christmas online at night. We don't have time to run to Sioux Falls. With the busyness of Christmas, isn't it easy to miss Jesus? When Christmas Eve arrives too soon, we have barely thought of the significance of that day. There is not much time to think on the identity of Christ beyond a baby in the manger. Inherently, we know he is so much more than a baby. Who is Jesus?

A Muslim will say Jesus is more than a baby, he is one of Allah's holiest prophets. A Jehovah's Witness will say Jesus is more than a baby, he is Michael the Archangel. A Mormon will tell you Jesus is more than a baby. He is the elder brother of the fallen angel Lucifer. A Christian Scientist will tell you Jesus was just a baby, but as a man he lived out his divine ideal. We know Jesus was more than just a baby, but what else is he?

How we answer that question matters. Jesus claimed to be God. John 8:24 says that if we don't believe he is who he claimed to be, we will die in our sins. If we don't have the right belief about who Jesus is, we will be separated from God's grace and goodness for an eternity in hell. Those are Jesus' words. He is God with skin on. That is a lot more than just a baby.

Every human being has a choice to make. Is Jesus God in the flesh, or is he a fake? He cannot be a holy prophet like the Muslims say, because he didn't leave us that option. He cannot be Michael the archangel, like the Jehovah's Witnesses believe. Jesus didn't leave us that option. He cannot be the brother of the devil like the Mormons claim. Jesus said he was God. He is not just a human being who reached a divine potential like the Christian Scientists believe. Jesus said he is a man who is fully God. We all have a choice to make about Jesus. He either is who he claimed to be, or he is a liar. According to Jesus, if we don't believe he is who he claims to be, we will die in our sin.

This morning we are going to learn more about Jesus as we answer the question, "Who is Jesus?" Usually when we study Jesus, we go to the gospels: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. But you might be surprised to know Jesus is talked about extensively in the Old Testament, particularly in the Psalms.

Of all the Old Testament books quoted in the New Testament, the most frequently quoted book is the book of Psalms. The Psalms are saturated with Jesus.

Not all Psalms talk about Jesus, but the ones that do we call Messianic Psalms. We are looking at some of them in this Christmas series. We will look at Psalm 2, which talks about Jesus as the king in authority. On Christmas Eve, we will look at Psalm 110, which gives us the rest of the Christmas story we never hear at Christmas time. This morning, we are looking at Psalm 45, which gives us two snapshots. One is a snapshot of who Jesus is and the other is a

snapshot of who we are because of him. Would you turn in your Bible to Psalm 45 and while you are getting there, I want to answer your most pressing question.

How do you find Jesus in the Psalms? The way we find Jesus in a Psalm is when we read the Psalm, we find elements in the Psalm that cannot be true of a normal human being. They are elements that can only be true of a divine human being.

To show you what I mean look at Psalm 45. Put your finger in the text at the heading before the Psalm begins.

Before we look at verse 1, let me explain this heading. It is a Psalm dedicated to an ancient music director called *the choirmaster*. This is an ancient worship pastor. It was to be sung to a tune called “Lilies.” We have no idea what that tune sounded like. It is a piece of music composed by the Sons of Korah. This was a family of outstanding musicians and singers in Israel who passed the office of worship director from one generation to the next in their family line. It was a romantic wedding song originally composed to be sung at a wedding. So the hopeless romantics among us will love this. We are also told it is a *maskil*. That means it is a teaching song. This is interesting. While it was a romantic love song, the writer of the Psalm knew the Holy Spirit inspired this song so God could teach his people something they needed to know through the song. It is more than just a romantic love song. God is teaching us something about himself through it. Now let’s look at the text.

My heart overflows with a pleasing theme; I address my verses to the king; my tongue is like the pen of a ready scribe. Psalm 45:1 (ESV)

Here we learn this romantic love song was written for a king to be sung at his wedding. Who is the king? We do not know for sure but it is a king in the line of David, possibly Solomon. Most Bible scholars believe it is a song written to celebrate Solomon's wedding to an Egyptian princess. That is a marriage we read about in 1 Kings 3. I am going to go out on a limb on this. I don't think that was the marriage this Psalm was written to celebrate. Solomon's marriage in 1 Kings 3 was a political alliance to a foreign wife. This Psalm does not feel like it was written for Solomon marrying a foreign bride who doesn't worship God. I think it was written to be sung at the marriage of Solomon and the Shulamite. That is the marriage we will study in the Song of Solomon in January. I wouldn't die on that one. It is just my gut feeling. Now it starts to get interesting.

The most handsome of men.

Remember that on one level, the writer of the Psalm is writing a romantic song to celebrate a king's wedding, but he also knows the Holy Spirit is inspiring him to teach God's people something they need to know beyond this earthly king's romance. Look how these two levels come as we see the king described.

You are the most handsome of the sons of men; grace is poured upon your lips; therefore God has blessed you forever. Psalm 45:2 (ESV)

I told you we recognize Messianic Psalms because they talk about things that could never be true of a normal human being. This verse ends by describing the king as someone God has blessed forever. How does that happen with an earthly king that dies? Here we see the first hint this Psalm is about more than an earthly king. It is also a hint that it is teaching us about a much greater

wedding. The wedding of Christ and his bride, the church. Remember that Paul talks about this in Ephesians.

“Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.” This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. Ephesians 5:31–32 (ESV)

Paul says that our sexuality and the joy of intimacy in marriage is given to us by God to whet our appetite for a much richer joy and fulfilling intimacy that will be ours when we are finally with Jesus at the wedding supper of the lamb. This Psalm uses the institution of marriage, and a royal wedding, to teach us about Jesus and the joy that will be ours at the wedding supper of the lamb. Let's put our finger back in the text and unpack some more.

The Psalm says, *you are the most handsome of men*. In the earthly sense, if this Psalm was about Solomon he was a handsome man. David is described as being good looking, that was Solomon's father. Solomon's mother was Bathsheba. She was drop dead gorgeous. Solomon's brother, Absalom was described as good looking. I think Solomon was probably a stud. While good looks are true of Solomon, the real king this Psalm is talking about is Jesus.

In the gospels, we have almost no physical description of Jesus. This Psalm gives us a window into his physical appearance. Jesus was a good-looking guy. Sometimes people use Isaiah 52 and 53 to describe Jesus as a rather homely looking character because in those chapters it says he *had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him and nothing in his appearance that we should desire him*. As I read Isaiah 52 and 53 last week, and compared it to this Psalm, I see those descriptions of Jesus in Isaiah as applying to him *after* he was

beaten and before his crucifixion. Read those verses in context and you will see what I mean. That is part of your homework for small group tonight.

Think about this. Would Jesus be good looking? Jesus grew up working construction as a carpenter with his dad. He walked everywhere he went. Jesus was a handsome man. He had a set of pipes for arms. He could have been on one of those magazines we get in mail as a model of men's clothing.

Not only did Jesus look like a stud, the words of his lips were gracious. The Psalmist says this king's lips were anointed with grace. On the earthly level, if this is describing Solomon, how was his speech? First, we know he was the wisest man in the world. 1 Kings 4:32 tells us he composed 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs. Sounds like he is EF Hutton. When he speaks, people listened. But since this Psalm can only be completely fulfilled by Jesus, and we know it is ultimately talking about Jesus, what does this tell us about Jesus' speech? Were his lips speaking words of grace?

In Luke 4, Jesus read part of Isaiah 61 to the synagogue. Luke makes a side comment about people's reaction to Jesus' words.

And all spoke well of him and marveled at the gracious words that were coming from his mouth..." Luke 4:22 (ESV)

Does that remind you of Psalm 45:2? While I was preparing this message, I was also studying Jesus' feeding of the 5,000. The feeding of the 5,000 took place in the wilderness because Jesus was trying to get away from people. The problem with Jesus' deep wilderness hideout is that it didn't work. 5,000 men, plus women and children, a crowd of 20,000 plus people took time off work, walked for miles and didn't even bring enough food so they were collapsing

from hunger and exhaustion, all so they could hear Jesus do what? Teach! They were captivated by the gracious words that came from his mouth. In John 7, when guards were sent to arrest Jesus, they returned empty-handed and what did they say? “No one ever spoke like this man.”

This Psalm says Jesus is the most handsome of men. His lips are anointed with grace. God has blessed him forever. At one level, it sounds like Solomon, but in total, it could only be true of Jesus.

A warrior with unusual weapons.

Gird your sword on your thigh, O mighty one, in your splendor and majesty! In your majesty ride out victoriously for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness; let your right hand teach you awesome deeds! Your arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; the peoples fall under you. Psalm 45:3–5 (ESV)

This Psalm moves from talking about the the king's looks and speech to describing him in battle. We go from the good-looking gracious king to warrior king. In one sense, this talks about Solomon, or another king in the Davidic line. But we just learned, the only one who can completely fulfill this Psalm is Jesus. We could take this apart piece by piece, but this morning to save time I want to show you just one interesting element of these verses.

Some Hebrew scholars have noted this verse could legitimately be translated a little differently from the Hebrew to English. Instead of saying

“In your majesty ride out victoriously *for the cause of truth and meekness and righteousness.*”

A legitimate translation is

“In your majesty ride forth victoriously *[by means of]* truth, meekness and righteousness.”

In other words, this king would be using truth, meekness and righteousness as weapons for battle! That sounds rather strange, unless the battle is not being fought with tanks and bazookas. What if the battle was against deception, sin, wickedness and Satan? What would be the weapons you need for that kind of battle? Look how Jesus used those three weapons.

Who is the truth? Jesus said,

I am the way, the truth and the life. John 14:6 (ESV)

Did Jesus use meekness and humility as a weapon for battle? Philippians 2 tells us the ultimate act of humility in the universe was the means to the ultimate victory in the universe - Christ humbling himself to become a man and die in our place for our sins. Christ's meekness was the weapon he used to conquer sin, Satan and death.

Did Jesus use righteousness as a weapon? Remember Jesus' temptation in the wilderness? Satan desperately tried to get him to sin so he would no longer be righteous and a perfectly-fitting sacrifice for our sin. Jesus didn't sin. He kept his righteousness, and it became the weapon he used to crush Satan on the cross. Jesus used truth, meekness and righteousness to defeat Satan, sin, and death. Do you see how this Psalm is telling us about more than just an earthly king? The Psalm has told us about Jesus' humanity with his looks and his speech. It tells us how Jesus battles and the unique weapons he uses. Now it gives us another piece of his identity.

The man who is God.

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever. The scepter of your kingdom is a scepter of uprightness; you have loved righteousness and hated wickedness.

Therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your companions; Psalm 45:6–7 (ESV)

If you had any doubt this Psalm was referring to Jesus, these verses should remove all doubt. There is no way an earthly king could be God. If you were here for our series in Hebrews, you remember studying Hebrews 1:8-9. In that first chapter of Hebrews, the writer of Hebrews makes the case that Jesus is superior to the angels. In Hebrews 1, he quotes these verses from Psalm 45 and says they refer to Jesus. If there was any question in your mind that this Psalm was about Jesus, the writer of Hebrews removes all doubt by telling us it is about Jesus. Put your finger in your Bible and look at this line by line. In verse 6, the king is addressed as God! So the king is the most excellent of men and he is God. He has a throne. He has a kingdom that lasts forever.

Between verse 6 and 7, how many people are called God? Two. There is the God with the throne and the kingdom in verse 6 and there is another God, who is superior to the former God, who anoints the first God with the oil of gladness beyond his companions. This is a reference to the different persons of the godhead. We see two people of divinity, but one is subordinating himself to the other. This is the son submitting himself to the father's plans.

Now it takes another interesting turn. It is said that this God-man-king combination who has a throne and kingdom that will last forever was anointed by his God. It is God the father anointing God the son. What does anointing mean? Anointing means you are set apart to serve God in a special capacity or role. In the Old Testament the priests were anointed to serve in that capacity. Kings were anointed to serve God in that capacity. On rare occasions, the prophets

were anointed and set apart to serve God. What role does Jesus play? He takes up all three roles and becomes the prophet who gives God's words to the people, the priest who intercedes for the people and make the sacrifice for sin and the king who rules over the people.

Jesus has the ultimate anointing of God in being anointed by God himself, not another human being and to serve in all three roles.

In case there is any doubt about this, let me teach you some Hebrew and Greek. Jesus is called the Messiah and the Christ. Messiah means the anointed one in Hebrew. Christ is not Jesus' last name. Technically Jesus *is* the Christ. Christ means the anointed one in Greek. So every time the Jews said Jesus is the Messiah or the Christ, they were saying Jesus is the one Psalm 45:7 is referring to. He is the one anointed to serve as our prophet, priest and king by God.

The king who came for us.

your robes are all fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia. From ivory palaces stringed instruments make you glad; daughters of kings are among your ladies of honor; at your right hand stands the queen in gold of Ophir. Psalm 45:8–9 (ESV)

At this point, the Psalm is talking about the wedding ceremony. The king is getting decked out for the wedding and is putting on his cologne. What are the three spices he uses to perfume himself? Myrrh, aloes and cassia. Do any of those spices ring a bell? Remember back to Jesus' death. What were the spices the women brought for him in the tomb? Myrrh and aloes. It doesn't say in the New Testament account that they brought cassia, which is a type of cinnamon, it

just says spices, plural, were used. Since this Psalm can only be fulfilled by Jesus, it appears cassia was one of the unnamed spices they brought.

What is this teaching us? While I think this point isn't as strong as others, it is worth mentioning. As we see this from the New Testament perspective, it appears the death of the groom is what makes the wedding possible. Jesus died for us to make the marriage supper of the lamb possible. Let's jump to the last verse.

The groom who gives us a new identity.

We will not have much time to study this properly today. You will study the second part of the Psalm in your small groups this week as you study who the queen becomes because of the king her groom.

I will cause your name to be remembered in all generations; therefore nations will praise you forever and ever. Psalm 45:17 (ESV)

The Psalm closes with another statement that could only be true of a marriage that is more than just an earthly king and his bride. This marriage will be remembered for all generations and nations will praise the king and his bride forever.

When Christ returns and the marriage supper of the lamb takes place, as it is described in Revelation, that will be a magnificent and unrepeatable event that is on par with the crucifixion and resurrection. It is the moment when the victory obtained by the crucifixion and the resurrection are finally applied to us as we can be with Jesus. The blood bought bride, that is us, will be united to Christ, our groom, forever. For all eternity, that moment will be remembered and celebrated. For all of eternity you and I will be honored as the bride of Christ.

Conclusion

This is an amazing psalm. It gives us snapshots of who Christ is and who we are because of him. The question is, what should we do with all of this? When studying the Bible, there are two questions we want to ask when you look at a piece of Scripture. *So what?* and *Now what?* As I thought about those questions, two answers came screaming out of the text.

1. The truth about Jesus matters.

Psalm 45 is clear about the identity of Jesus. He is not just another prophet. He is not the brother of Lucifer. He is not a human being who achieved his potential. According to Psalm 45, he is the most excellent of man and he is God. That is crystal clear in verse 6. Underline it and put a cross next to it in your Bible to remind yourself.

We need to know and believe this truth. That is extremely important. In John 8:24 Jesus said that unless you believe he is who he claimed to be, you will die in your sins. In our culture we believe people don't just have a right to their opinion but that all opinions are equally right. All opinions about Jesus are not equally right. There is only one opinion that is right and one opinion that will save us today and for eternity.

This psalm screams that truth at us. We must believe Jesus is who he claimed to be. Believing anything else about him will do us no good. This morning, if you came in with a distorted picture of Jesus, today is the day to repent of that picture and trust in the real Jesus, the only one who can save.

2. As the bride of Christ, I have a wedding to look forward to.

If you have trusted in Jesus, you are engaged to him right now. We will finally be united with him at the great marriage supper of the lamb. Stop for a moment and ponder what this means. Jesus loves you. Jesus died to have you as his bride. Jesus' plans for you are good.

Christmas is one of the most depressing times of the year. The older we get, the more sadness fills the season. Loved ones are no longer with us. Maybe we celebrate alone. Statistics tell us depression and suicide are at a peak over the holidays. If you are one of those people wrapped in a cloud of darkness because Christmas will never be the same, this Christmas fix your eyes on who you are because of Christ. Jesus has chosen you as his bride. He loves you. He paid the incredible cost of his death for you. Your wedding to him, the most joyful day of your life, is just around the bend.



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