

Guest Preacher: Aaron Eime

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[0 : 0 0] Father, we ask that you would gently but deeply pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. We ask, Father, that as we hear your word and we think about your word, that it might enter deeply into our minds, our hearts, our wills, our souls, our bodies, and that, Father, you would grow us into disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel who live for your glory.

And we ask, Father, that you would pour out your Holy Spirit upon us as a church. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and build us into a prayerful church, a Bible-teaching church, a church which has received the gospel, is grounded on the gospel, is shaped by the gospel, and shares the gospel with a heart for the city and a heart for the whole world.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and the only Savior. Amen. Please be seated. Shalom from Jerusalem.

Shalom. Shalom. It's wonderful to be here. And I bring you a blessing and a greeting from your brothers and sisters in the Messiah from Jerusalem. Hopefully, as we go through the text, also some good news from the Middle East.

Not always the bad news. I'd like to start by saying that having studied in Jerusalem and having lived there for 17 years, I understand a little bit about, not to be an expert, but a little bit about the Hebrew mind.

[1 : 2 9] And the Hebrew mind, the Jewish mind, the Middle Eastern mindset, is it loves mystery. It loves mystery. And the Bible is mysterious.

And the Western mind, that is sometimes called the Greek thinking mind, we actually don't like mystery. We like to solve everything.

And so when we watch a murder mystery, we watch a cop show, you have to catch the killer. At the end of the 45 minutes, you better know who done it.

And if you don't, we're going to call the TV company, we're going to complain. We're going to tell them, you did not catch the killer and I can't sleep tonight until I know what's going on. But the Jewish mind can actually dwell on a mystery for thousands of years.

Sometimes they allow the mystery to play out over time. King David says, I meditate on your word day and night. I don't solve it.

[2 : 3 0] Sometimes the mystery unravels thousands of years later. And you can see that in our passage this morning, which is a great passage.

Reverend George mentioned that the gospel writers, they deliberately choose the words that they use and they deliberately put the order of the miracles in a particular order to tell us something.

And you can also see that Jesus indeed starts with a question. That is the way you actually teach in the Middle East. There's a rabbinical proverb that says, you're closer to God when you're asking questions than when you think you have answers.

Because if we answered this book, if we knew everything, what would we do? We'll close it. Put it on the shelf.

I understand the Bible. Great book. Now on to something else. Let's go through the Harry Potter series. But the Bible is mysterious. And I read it.

[3 : 36] And I search it. And I look for the mysteries that are contained inside. And then my son will do the same thing. And his son will, if the Lord parries. And that's why this book is alive.

And it never finishes. And you can see that when Jesus is running around gathering his disciples, as he passes, one of them says, look, the Lamb of God.

And straight away, none of the other disciples go, the Lamb of God? What's that about? The guy said he was a door. He was a shepherd. He's a sheep. Where's this Lamb of God business?

The Lamb of God is a Jewish term. And it's one of those mysteries that they've been pondering ever since the book of Genesis. Because you see, when Isaac and Abraham are going up the mountain, what are they not carrying?

A lamb. And Isaac even turns to his father and says, you know, Dad, I see the knife, and I see the wood, and I see the fire, but I don't see the Lamb.

[4 : 43] Where's the Lamb? And what does his father say? The Lord will provide a lamb. And does God provide a lamb? No. No. No.

He provides a ram. But if you're Jewish, and you know this is the Word of God, this is the Holy Bible, so you read and you said, no, wait a second, Abraham said that God will provide a lamb.

So what are we waiting for? We're waiting for the Lamb of God. So when you see the Messiah, you go, that's the Lamb of God. And it's a code word. It tells you a lot more than just a few words of the Lamb of God.

So when Jesus is calling his disciples, one of my favorite little calls is Nathaniel's.

Because Nathaniel is, what's Nathaniel doing? Sitting under a fig tree, right? And there's Jesus, and he meets Nathaniel, and he says, this is an Israelite in whom there is nothing false.

[5 : 55] That doesn't mean that a guy doesn't tell lies. What that means is this guy is a true Israelite bearing good fruit. He is studying, and his life is mimicking his life.

He's not a false student. He's a real student. Remember, that's actually the mission of Yeshua, Jesus. He says, go into the world and make disciples.

He doesn't say, go out in the world and get them saved. Salvation is actually implied. When you become a student of Jesus, when you study the Gospels themselves, you'll realize what the Gospel is, which is, that the Messiah rose from the dead.

That's the Gospel in one line. The Messiah rose from the dead. Now, when Nathaniel meets him, and he says, well, how do you know me? He says, I saw you while you were under a fig tree.

And then straight away, Nathaniel goes, you are the Son of God. You're the King of Israel. And you go, wow, that's amazing. Because it took Peter three and a half years to get to that conclusion.

[7 : 00] He had to have three and a half years with Jesus. And finally, when he's up in the north of the Galilee, at Caesarea Philippi, and Yeshua asks him, so who do you think I am? And he says, you are the Messiah. You're the Son of the Living God.

You know, Jesus doesn't say, well, man, it took you long enough. Nathaniel died in 10 seconds. And he's like, well, yeah, you didn't tell me where I was sitting. Is this the way that the Messiah reveals himself?

All he has to do is walk up and say, Daniel, I saw you while you were sitting in Starbucks. Joey, I saw you while you were shopping in Walmart. And the guy's going, wow, this guy's good.

He must be God. You know? If that's all the Messiah has to do, if the only thing he has to do is say, where you were, and that makes you believe that he's the Messiah, man, he could have had all of Israel saved, couldn't he?

He just wanders around telling people. But it's more than that. Remember, this book is a Jewish text. And so, it's full of Hebrewisms.

[8 : 04] Has anybody actually been to Bethsaida? It's a little fishing village in the north of the Galilee. It's actually not on the Galilee coast anymore, because the Galilee has actually receded down a bit.

But it used to be a fishing village. And there's one thing it doesn't have in it. It doesn't have any fig trees. Because it's not about Nathaniel sitting under a literal fig tree.

What is the first time in the Bible that we hear of a fig? When's the first time you actually hear of a fig in the Bible?

In Genesis. Yeah, Adam and Eve. And you know the story. Adam bites the fruit. And, you know, it's a little... Oh my gosh!

What's that doing there? I haven't seen that before. And in Jewish tradition, he's actually eating a fig. But then he realizes he's naked.

[9 : 08] He's got to cover himself. He's in shame. So he covers himself using a fig leaf. Little does he know that the sap of a fig is a skin irritant.

Okay? It's going to hurt. And just imagine the Lord coming down and going, Adam, Adam, where are you? Oh man, I bet that's itchy. Let me... Here's some cream.

You know? I'll help you out. I'll get some... You need some real skins. And so the first time you actually see a fig in the Bible, it's to cover. It's to cover your sin.

It's to cover your nakedness. It's to cover your shame. It's to defend yourself from God. From looking bad in the presence of God.

And so the whole... The image of a fig became something that covered you, sheltered you, protected you, and nurtured you, and defended you.

[10 : 07] And what defended the Jewish people? The Torah. The Torah that the... Well, we call the law, but in Hebrew, Torah, laharat, from the verb to teach or to instruct.

The instructions of God. The teaching of God. That is what defended you. If you followed the teachings of the Lord, if you found yourself a good rabbi who would actually teach you the Bible properly, then you would put that Bible into practice and you would produce fruit.

When the Messiah is walking into the temple, on his way into Jerusalem, he encounters a fig tree. and he walks up to it.

And what's he looking for? He's looking for fruit. But does he find any? No, he doesn't. So what does he do? Pow! Right?

Curses the fig tree. And then the thing withers and dies. But the gospel writers are pretty clear to note that they say it was not the season for figs. So what is Jesus not going to find on the tree?

[11 : 18] Fruit. Fruit. So it's not the tree's fault that there's no fruit, is it? I mean, you don't go at the beginning of the season, where are my apples? Oh, there's no apples? Okay, rip everything up.

Start again. It's not about Jesus just deciding he's hungry one day and going, wow, there's no food here. Now I'm really annoyed. You should have known I was hungry.

What he's doing, he's making a statement by saying, I'm walking into the temple. I'm going to be asking questions of the temple teachers. I'm going to be looking at their Torah.

I'm going to be looking at their fruit. What have they produced? They have produced no fruit. And so, bang, it's gone. And so, the Torah was the covering.

So what is Nathaniel doing? He's not sitting under a tree. He's studying the Bible. It says, we have found the one Moses wrote about in the law and about whom the prophets speak.

[12 : 22] So what Nathaniel's doing, he was probably studying the Bible. Which verses is he studying? There are so many to choose from. And in Israel, I've had the privilege of working with the oldest Protestant church in the Middle East.

That's what Christ Church is. It's actually an Anglican mission started by a guy called William Wilberforce. And I lead a small team of Jewish believers in Jesus and we share the gospel with close to 25,000 Israelis every year.

And Israelis would come to church. They come to us. We don't stand on the street corner. They come to us. And then we have the opportunity to share. And there are many scriptures in the Torah with which to search and look for the Messiah.

And often our accusation that they accuse us is they say, but you Christians, you guys worship three gods. I know you do. How many gods do we worship?

We worship one. Yes, it's mysterious. It's a mystery. But that mystery, and I'm so glad Trinity Sunday only comes around once a year.

[13 : 35] Okay? Because you preach on the Trinity for more than five minutes, you're going into heresy by about now. It's a mystery. And we've had to walk this mystery out for 2,000 years now.

But you know what? It's in the text. And Nathaniel would have been searching for it. And Jesus would have been looking straight out of the Bible right back at him. And so we say to these Israelis who come to us, we don't worship three gods.

I know it's a mystery, but allow me to share a passage and we'll see. We'll go on a journey together. So we go to Isaiah and in chapter 48, verse 12, we read, Shema alai Yaakov ve'Yisrael mikrei.

Shema, that's a loaded Hebrew word. Okay? If you hear the word Shema, that's like the oath of allegiance.

Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Echad, hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. So when you hear the word Shema, you sit up, pay attention, because the following sentences are loaded.

[14 : 49] The Hebrew language is an oral language. The Bible was an oral culture. You listened to the stories. Listen to me, Jacob.

And I like the way God announces himself as the God of Jacob. Because it tells you something about your God. Like, what's Jacob's character in the Bible?

What's he like? Jacob is a... He's a deceiver. He's an usurper. He tricks his father.

He tricks his brother out of a birthright. And not only that, he's a coward. Every time you read in the Bible about Jacob, usually the next sentence is, and he was afraid.

He's constantly fearful. So even after he usurps and deceives his family, he then runs. He runs away. And even when he's coming back to make restitution, and he knows he's going to have to meet Esau, this guy is so brave that he sends the women and children in front.

[15 : 54] Okay? This is our hero type. And then God comes along and says, I am the God of Jacob. God, who is so mighty and so powerful, is also still so merciful and so humble himself, even though he himself wraps himself in pride, is to identify himself as the God of Jacob.

And so here, listen to me, Jacob, and Israel, whom I have named. Anihu, Ani Roshonaf, Ani Achoron, I am the first and I am the last.

So who said he was the first and the last? Who did? God. Well, at the moment, the prophet has just said, I am the first and I am the last.

But we don't know who that is yet. So just pretend your Israelis for a second and I ask you, who's the first and the last? I'm not sure. Next sentence, Af Yavdei Aretz V'Yemeni T'Tachash and my hand has laid the foundations of the earth and my right hand has stretched out the heavens or opened them up.

Ani Karei Alehem V'Yachadu Yachadu When I call them, they stand up. So who made the heavens and the earth? God. So you're right. The first and the last is God. Excellent.

[17 : 20] In verse 16, Kiyavu Alai Now come close to me. Shmauzot Now when you have the word Shmau in two very close sentences together, in Hebrew exegesis, you actually link those two verses together.

Okay? That's the way rabbis do it. That's the way Jesus does it in Luke 4. So come close to me and listen to this. Not since the beginning have I spoken in secret.

Now devar, the word to speak, is also the word for word. Devar. It's also the word for thing. So the word is a thing.

Me'et haita shamani Me'et That's a biblical Hebrew time word. You don't use it in modern Hebrew anymore. It literally means since the beginning. Since the beginning of time.

Haita shamani I was there. So somebody was there since the beginning of time. Va'ata Now that's another biblical Hebrew time word which means right now.

[18 : 32] As in right now. Right now and right now. So since the beginning of time until right now. Whoever the first and the last is, whoever made the heavens and the earth, he is timeless.

He is God. But then it says, Adonai Hashem Adonai Yahweh Shalachani Veruach The Lord God God The Lord God The Lord God The Lord God But we just said that the first and the last who made the heavens and the earth who was there in the beginning of the time was God, didn't we?

And now the prophet says, The Lord God sends me with his spirit. So, looking at this text, it's mysterious.

who is the first and the last? Who is this very powerful person who makes the heavens and the earth? And the gospel writer of John, when he starts the gospel, he begins by saying, In the beginning was the word, the davar, which is the word, which is also a thing.

In the beginning was the word, and the word was with God, and the word was God, and nothing was made without the word.

[19 : 56] The gospel of John is just quoting again Isaiah 48. It's playing out the mystery that since the prophet Isaiah, you would read and go, No, I don't get it, but I'm looking for this person.

There's somebody here, and Nathaniel's doing that. Nathaniel is looking for this person, and then what Yeshua says, Jesus, when he sees him, he says, I know you, because I was looking back.

When you were looking for me, I was looking back, and he says, You are the Son of God. You are the King of Israel, and he gets it. He gets it. And then Jesus says, Wow, you believe so fast?

That's great. You're going to see even better things than this. You're going to see even better. In fact, Jesus even tells his disciples that we're going to do better things than Jesus.

We're going to do greater things than Jesus. Did we? Yes. We did, but probably not in the ways we thought.

[21 : 01] You know, Jesus healed people. He did. Everywhere he went, healed people. I don't know how many healed, maybe a couple of thousand. What did the church do?

Built hospitals all over the world. Fought back the plague in multiple countries. Jesus taught people. Jesus taught disciples. Around about 120, when you get to the book of Acts.

What did the church do? It built schools everywhere, and it educated the world. One of the things that the Anglican Mission, Christ Church, did, that I think is the best thing we ever did in our history in Jerusalem, is we built a school for girls.

What's the value of a woman in the Middle East in the 1800s? Not much. Right? In Islam, how many women can I have, guys? Now, four.

Right? And if I don't like one, I'm going to divorce one. I'm going to get another one. Okay? In Judaism, how many wives can I have? That's what everybody says, that actually, there's no number.

[22 : 10] And so, what the rabbis do is they go, wow, why is there no number? This would make it real easy for us. And so, they look through the Bible to see a man after God's own heart. How many wives does King David have?

He has 18. Okay? So, there's your magical number. Not that I'm saying Jews ever had 18 wives. They didn't. Okay? But that was their magical number. And again, it tells you something about God.

Because out of which wife does God bring the Messiah in? The last one. Right? Number 18.

Bathsheba is wife number 18 of David. Now, normally, in my little Western mind, I would say, excuse me, but if we're going to have a Davidic king around here, we need to have the wife number one.

That's the right thing to do. And plus, she's an actual princess. She's actually the daughter of King Saul. So, you know, you want to have a messianic king, let's actually go through the princess. But what God does is he says, actually, the wife that everybody doesn't like, the thing that's all bad, everything that's wrong, the adultery, the murder, the lying, the stealing, everything that's wrong, I can redeem that.

[23 : 28] I can make it better. I can reach down into darkness and turn it into light. It shows you once again what God continues to do. And so, the Messiah comes from her.

In Israel, in the 1800s, women weren't worth much. So, what did the mission do? School for girls. Arabs went, Jews went, Turks went, Egyptians went, Armenians went.

And because the British are so meticulous about record keeping, okay, if you went to the hospital and took a band-aid, they would write that down. Okay, we have these great records in our church library about how many band-aids and yards of linen and drops of iodine we used.

But we also have all the baptismal records as well. And 25% of all the girls that went to that school became believers in Jesus. So, wow, just one little school and all these girls coming to faith as well as getting educated.

But what happened is, there was a reaction. And if, if, if you've got a daughter, you don't want to send her to the mission, she might become a believer in Jesus. That's terrible. So, what do you have to do?

[24 : 38] Build your own school for girls. So, the reaction is, the Arabs built schools for girls, the Jewish people built schools for girls, the Turks built schools for girls. We changed the face of education in the Middle East just by doing that, that little thing.

we have this little impact on, on, on, on the education of, of the Middle East. And people come to hear that story.

So, we have the opportunity to continue to share. But here, Jesus is talking to Nathaniel and he says, listen, greater things you're going to do.

And they did. And plus, you are going to see angels ascending and descending on the Son of Man. So, where do angels start? If, if you see angels ascending and descending, where do they start from?

Here. See, in Jewish tradition, angels are here. They're right here. In fact, in Jewish tradition, every time you go off to synagogue, you actually come home with angels.

[25 : 49] They're everywhere. Even the prophet Elijah had to open up the eyes of one of his servants and say, just have a look at how many are with us than actually against us. They're right here.

We have an incredible army of people surrounding us, defending us, shepherding us, encouraging us. We are most definitely not alone. And also, the text is, Jesus often identifies himself as the Son of Man.

Notice, Nathaniel says, you're the Son of God. And Jesus says, I'm the Son of Man. Why doesn't he use the term Son of God? Where do you get the term Son of God from?

Well, in Jewish tradition, the term Son of God actually just denotes a relationship. And anybody who has a relationship with God is called a Son of God. So, Israel has a relationship with God.

So, it's called a Son of God. Angels have a relationship with God. So, they're called the Son of God. You have a relationship with God. So, you are called Sons and Daughters of God. So, if Jesus just walked up and said, hi, I am the Son of God, then everybody goes, yeah, me too.

[27 : 00] So, Jesus says, I am the Son of Man. Now, that's also a strong biblical, prophetic title. Where do you hear the Son of Man term from?

Which book of the Bible? Daniel? Daniel. Daniel. And it comes from Daniel chapter 7, which is a fantastic passage. It's one of my favorites. We often use it in Israel to show people to read that there's this special person.

In Daniel chapter 7, in verse 9, Daniel looks into heaven and he sees, he says, I looked into heaven and I saw thrones. And the Ancient of Days came and he sat on his throne and his head was like, it was white as wool and his seat was flaming with fire and he's attended by thousands and ten thousands and the books are opened and we're ready to judge the world.

And then this other guy shows up called the Son of Man. And all the world actually worships him. The Son of Man is given authority and a kingdom and a dominion and every tribe and every tribe will worship him.

It's like, wow, who is this very powerful person? And Yeshua, Jesus, comes along and says, I am the Son of Man. I am that person. That's me.

[28 : 19] And even death is not going to hold me still. Remember the gospel. Jesus rose from the dead. He is alive. But most Jewish people can't get past the first sentence.

I looked into heaven and I saw thrones. What's the problem? How many thrones should be in heaven? One. But Daniel says he looked and he saw two.

So who's sitting on the other one? And so for a couple of hundred years before Jesus, there's this big debate going, who is sitting on the other throne? And for Jesus, it's him.

He is the one sitting on the other throne. And in Israel, when we share these passages with people, it's kind of exciting. Sometimes it's a bit too challenging and people run away.

But sometimes they do something like this. One day, we had an orthodox man and his secular friend come in to Christchurch and we began to share the history of the mission.

[29 : 21] We described the building. We described the stained glass windows. We talked about the history of our place and the rise of Messianic Judaism. Because the number of Jews in Israel is increasing.

We've been in Israel for 17 years and in 17 years we've watched the number of Jews who believe in Jesus go from 15,000 to 22,000.

Which, when you do the math, is a 46% increase. Which is just awesome! Because now we're running out of space. So we're talking to these guys and we share about who we are, share a little about the history of Messianic Judaism, share some of these Bible passages and then the conversation finishes.

And everybody's still standing there. No one quite knows how to leave. So we're all looking at each other. It's getting a little awkward now.

And then the secular guy leans in and he says, how do I get saved? We say, the Messiah rose from the dead. Here's a New Testament.

[30 : 34] Start reading. Come and join us. And the Rabbi guy, the Orthodox guy goes, can I get saved too? Yes. Yes, you can. You can search the Scriptures, you can look at those mysteries and you will find out that the Messiah is sitting on the throne.

That the Son of Man is alive and well. And God, in His wisdom, has been reaching out and touching Jewish people and bringing them to Himself. And we have also seen it in the Muslim world.

When you turn the TV on and you look at the Middle East, it looks pretty dark, doesn't it? It looks horrible. There's lots of violence. And all of that is true.

But God is also working. If He is sitting on the throne, if He is in control, if He is alive, then He is working. If He is the King, then He is in control. And at Christchurch, we had a conference where we wanted to hear what God was doing amongst the Arabic peoples.

So we invited Iranians and Iraqis. We invited Jordanians and Syrians and Lebanese. We invited the Turks and the Moroccans and the Egyptians. They all came to Christchurch.

[31 : 46] And they shared, this is what God is doing in our countries. And there was this Kurdish man called Ali Pektash. He doesn't mind us actually using his name at all. And he used to be a very staunch Kurdish Muslim.

He actually used to work for the PKK. You heard of that group? They blow up Turks. Or currently, now the Turks are blowing them up. But as a good Muslim, he needed to go on the Hajj.

So he takes a pilgrimage to Mecca. And while he's in Mecca and he puts on his little white robe and he's going to be walking around the Kaaba, he has a vision of Jesus. The first time he has a vision of Jesus, he's like, wow, I think I haven't had enough water to drink.

I'll just keep going. I'm a good Muslim. But Jesus kept coming back to him. Kept coming back to him. He wouldn't stop. So the third time Jesus shows up, he says, okay, who are you?

And he becomes a follower of the Messiah. And then he goes back to Kurdistan and in Kurdistan they say, hey, Ali, Hajji, good to see you. How is the Hajj? And he goes, oh, it was great.

[32 : 48] I became a Christian. That doesn't normally happen when you're on the Hajj. But now, instead of blowing Turks up, he's working in Turkey planting churches. And that's the type of Middle East that we're actually involved with.

Those are the types of the good stories that we actually hear. God is working. The Son of Man is alive. And he is ruling and reigning. He is changing lives.

He is sitting on the throne. And we're not afraid. Not anymore. And that, I have to say, is good news. Yes? Very good news.

Brothers and sisters, shalom from Jerusalem. Amen. Amen. Maybe just before, we're going to have some intercessions, but before that, let's just stand for a moment.

After the word is open like that, it's really appropriate for us just to pause in prayer. So let's just pause. I'll have a moment or so of silence and I'll pray. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

[33 : 50] Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. sovereign today, that you are sovereign in Canada, that you are sovereign in the Middle East. And we thank you, Father, that when ideologies or cultures keep you out or try to keep you out, that Jesus comes in dreams. Father, we confess before you that we human beings cannot keep you out. We thank you, Father, for the work that you are doing amongst Muslims, bringing them to yourself.

We thank you, Father, for the work in Jerusalem and for bringing people to yourself. We ask your blessing on Aaron and his team and Christ Church Jerusalem and CMJ. Father, may you use it in a mighty and powerful way to share the gospel with many Jewish and others in Jerusalem. May many come to a saving faith in Jesus through that work. And Father, we ask the same thing for ourselves.

[35 : 25] Father, may we be fruitful for your glory. May you so pour out your Holy Spirit upon us and so draw us close to King Jesus that you might use us to share the gospel not only in Ottawa, but beyond Ottawa to the ends of the earth. And all this we ask and thank in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Saviour. Amen.