Jesus – the Messiah/Christ

1. Introduction

John 1:35-42 *[35] The next day again John was standing with two of his disciples, [36] and he looked at Jesus as he walked by and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" [37] The two disciples heard him say this, and they followed Jesus. …….. [40] One of the two who heard John speak and followed Jesus was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. [41] He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which means Christ). [42] He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "So you are Simon the son of John? You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).*

a. As we mentioned last time when John declared Jesus to be the Lamb of God two of his disciples followed Jesus. One of these disciples was Andrew who, having been introduced to Jesus, goes to tell his brother, Simon, that they have found "the Messiah".

b. Clearly the title Messiah was enough for both Andrew and Simon Peter to leave behind their nets and follow Jesus. The following day Philip and Nathaniel are also called to follow Jesus and make their own statements about who Jesus is.

John 1:43- 51 *The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." **44** Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. **45** Philip found Nathanael and said to him, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." **46** Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." **47** Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" **48** Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." **49** Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" **50** Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree', do you believe? You will see greater things than these." **51** And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you,[i] you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."*

c. The witness continued to spread through the most normal lines of communication, namely, friend to friend, as it still does. As Philip is called to follow Jesus so he goes and finds his friend Nathaniel and they too are convinced that this man is the Messiah. They identify him as the one of whom the prophets spoke, the Son of God and the King of Israel.

d. Clearly these men had revelation from their scriptures which they saw being manifested in this Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. It's important to understand what the word "Messiah" means, and how Jesus fits the biblical narrative and predictions for the promised Messiah which include his divinity as the Son of God and his position as the King of Israel.

2. Son of God, King of Israel

a. So how do the statements by Nathaniel of *Son of God* and *King of Israel* link to the title of Messiah? Jesus tells Nathanael where he was and what was in his heart without having been there, and Nathanael bursts out in verse 49, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" Now what Nathanael meant by that was great, but probably not as great as what the words will come to mean in the ministry of Jesus and the Gospel of John.

b. Both the term *Son of God* and *King of Israel* were references for the Messiah so what Nathanael is doing is using the familiar descriptions of the Messiah without understanding the fullness of those titles. Nathaniel is declaring that Jesus is the Messiah, the long-expected Jewish ruler that will bring deliverance for Israel and establish God's rule over the nations.

c. *Son of God* and *King of Israel* were linked in the Old Testament as twin titles for the Messiah. We can see this in Psalm 2.

Psalm 2:2-7 *The kings of the earth set themselves and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against his Anointed, saying, **3** "Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us." **4** He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision. **5** Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, **6** "As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill." **7** I will tell of the decree:The Lord said to me, "You are my Son; today I have begotten you.*

d. Here we see *Messiah, King, and Son* all referring to the same person. That's the background for Nathanael's statement. He is declaring Jesus to be the one expected in Psalm 2; the Messiah. He believed the time of fulfilment had come for The Kingdom of God to be established on earth and the enemies of God's people to be defeated.

3. What does Messiah mean?

a. The word "Messiah" comes from the Hebrew/Aramaic word *mashiach*, meaning "anointed one" or "chosen one." John explains the meaning of the word (John 1:41 and 4:25) by translating it as *christos*—the Greek term for "one who has been anointed." Since *mashiach* would have been meaningless to non-Aramaic speakers the word is rarely used in the Greek New Testament; but in marked contrast, *christos* comes almost 530 times, with most of these uses referring directly to Jesus of Nazareth.

b. The word Christos comes from a verb that means "to anoint", and it's related to a Latin term, "Caesar." Like the words "Kaiser" or "Czar," the concept being an appointed or anointed leader. When translated into English it becomes the word *Christ*. The name "Jesus Christ" is the same as "Jesus the Messiah." When we use the title Jesus Christ we are recognising that the man Jesus is the anointed one by God.

c. In biblical times, anointing someone with oil was a sign that God was consecrating or setting apart that person for a particular role. Thus, an "anointed one" was someone with a special, God-ordained purpose such as a king or a priest or a prophet.

d. The earliest prophecy about the Messiah is Genesis 3:15.

Gen.3:15 *I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel*

e. From the very beginning God had a plan to restore the relationship between himself and man. That plan was the Messiah, the chosen and anointed one, the one who would crush the serpent's (Satan's) head. The Jews knew God would bring a Deliverer to His people, chosen to redeem Israel. He was expected to deliver Israel by overthrowing Roman rule and restore the kingdom to Israel. This deliverer would be the Son of God and King of Israel.

4. Jesus the Messiah

a. Jesus of Nazareth was and is the prophesied Messiah (Luke 4:17–21; John 4:25–26). Throughout the New Testament, we see proof that Jesus is the Chosen One. As we have seen, the purpose of John's gospel was to demonstrate that Jesus was the Messiah and the Son of God.

John 20:31 *"These [miracles] are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name".*

b. The ultimate evidence that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah, the Anointed One, is His resurrection from the dead.

Acts 10:39–43 *And we are witnesses of all that he did both in the country of the Jews and in Jerusalem. They put him to death by hanging him on a tree, **40** but God raised him on the third day and caused him to appear, **41** not to all the people but to us who had been chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with him after he rose from the dead. **42** And he commanded us to preach to the people and to testify that he is the one appointed by God to be judge of the living and the dead. **43** To him all the prophets bear witness that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name."*

c. Jesus fulfills the role of Prophet, Priest, and King, which is further evidence to His being the Messiah. He is a prophet, because He embodied and preached the Word of God (see John 1:1–18; 14:24; and Luke 24:19); a priest, because His death atones for our sins and reconciles us to the Father (see Hebrews 2:17; 4:14); and a king, because after His resurrection God gave all authority to Him (see John 18:36; Ephesians 1:20–23; and Revelation 19:16).

d. The Jews of Jesus' day expected the Messiah to redeem Israel by overthrowing the rule of the Romans and establishing an earthly kingdom (see Acts 1:6). It wasn't until after Jesus' resurrection that His disciples finally began to understand what the prophecies in the Old Testament really meant the Messiah would do.

Luke 24:25–27 *And he said to them, "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! **26** Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" **27** And beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, he interpreted to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.*

e. The Messiah was "anointed" first to deliver His people spiritually; that is, to redeem them from sin (John 8:31–36). He accomplished this salvation through His death and resurrection (John 12:32; John 3:16). Later, Jesus the Messiah will deliver His people from their physical enemies, when He sets up His Kingdom on the earth (see Isaiah 9:1–7).

5. The Jewish Messiah

a. As we have seen Jesus did not measure up to the expectations of the Jewish leaders' picture of Messiah. This man died – he didn't restore the nation of Israel and overthrow all her enemies. The Jews were expecting a different *kind* of Messiah, so for the most part, they didn't recognize the Messiah when He came.

b. But some did. Anna and Simeon recognized Him (Luke 2:22-38); and Simon Peter acknowledged Him. Though they had the scriptures that described a suffering Messiah who would be wounded and even killed, the Jews' focus was on the prophecies that presented the Messiah as a victorious ruler.

c. Isaiah, Jesus, and Paul referenced the spiritual blindness and "hardening" of Israel. Even Jesus' miracles did not help them understand and repent (Matthew 11:20). During this time of "hardening," Gentiles who accept Jesus as Lord and Saviour are being saved.

d. The Jews, like most Gentiles, struggled with Jesus' resurrection. People have tried to explain it away as not historical or not supernatural, but nothing can explain the disillusioned disciples being willing to face persecution and death to proclaim, "He is risen." And besides, how can 500 people be fooled at one time?

e. Many Jews who identify as Jewish today are secular with no ties to Jewish biblical roots or the concept of the Messiah in Hebrew scriptures. Many have also suffered at the hands of "Christians," making it harder for them to consider the Gospel message. Also, some rabbis interpret Isaiah 53 as referring to the suffering Jewish people, not a Saviour's suffering. But God

is still calling Jews to Himself, and many have become part of Messianic Judaism. John Piper wrote, *"My prayer is that the good news of Jesus, the crucified and risen Messiah, would flood Jewish communities around the world, that the veil would be lifted, and that we would see a massive turning of Israel to the Lord Jesus."*

6. Jesus the Christian Messiah

a. As Christians we believe that Jesus was the Messiah whom the Jews had been waiting for. This is why, In the original Greek translation of the New Testament, the word Messiah is written as 'Christ'. So when Christians talk about Jesus Christ, they are not giving Jesus a surname. It is a title, a statement that he is indeed the Anointed One promised by the prophets, come to lead his people and bring them back to God. He is the anointed One, an anointed King and an anointed priest.

b. **A King.** The Messiah is a **kingly figure**, closely connected to King David. The nativity story makes it clear that Joseph and Mary were both descended from King David, and Jesus was born in Bethlehem, King David's hometown (think of the carol, 'Once in Royal David's City').

c. In the New Testament stories of Jesus' ministry, he often talks about 'God's kingdom'. In the Old Testament, this kingdom is a physical place on earth for the people of Israel. But the early Christians understood this kingdom as going beyond one place or people. This is part of the importance of Pentecost, where the unschooled disciples were given a supernatural ability to speak in different languages. Suddenly, people from across the known world could hear this message about God's love and forgiveness in their own tongue.

d. Christians share this belief today. God's kingdom, which Jesus 'Christ' came to establish and which Jesus himself is now king of, is made up of people from across the world who choose to follow Jesus. They serve him by obeying all he taught. Ultimately this Kingdom will be established on the earth at the second coming of Jesus as he establishes his rule from Jerusalem.

e. **A priest**. The Messiah is a **priestly figure**. Again the nativity story hints at Jesus' priestly role when he is brought presents of frankincense and myrrh. These precious spices were used by priests in the temple as an offering to God. The presents suggest that Jesus will be a kind of priest, leading people to God.

f. Priests were incredibly important in Jewish community life. They were the ones who could make sacrifices on behalf of the people, to deal with their sin and make them 'right' with God. Christians believe that Jesus made the ultimate sacrifice by atoning for our sin when he died on the cross.

g. There is also another aspect of Messiah that Jesus fulfils. When Jesus started his ministry, he went to the synagogue, opened up a scroll and read words from the prophet Isaiah:

Luke 4:18-19 *"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,* ***19*** *to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour."*

h. And then Jesus concludes by saying, *'Today, these Scriptures are fulfilled in your hearing.'* As we saw when we looked at Isaiah he prophesied at great length about the coming Messiah who would bring an age of peace, prosperity, and healing. This passage is a Messianic prophecy. That Jesus reads this, and points to himself at the end, shows he makes a connection between himself and the Messiah figure.

i. The gospels go on to show how Jesus brought life to people whom he touched. He physically healed people. He told people about God's love and forgiveness, available for all. And Christians believe that this love and healing is still available to all, through God's Holy Spirit. Now that sin is no longer a powerful problem, we have been set free to live God's way, as God's friends. And with the help of God's Holy Spirit, who because of Jesus' death lives with us and in us, we can join with God in bringing peace and justice (as Jesus did) to the wider world.

7. Two Messiahs

a. However, we could be left thinking that the Jews had just got it all wrong. That their view of a Messiah who would rule from Jerusalem, bringing peace and security to Israel was wrong. Jesus clearly didn't bring this peace to Israel so therefore He cannot be the Jewish Messiah. Actually, the religious Jews are, to this day, still waiting for their Messiah to come.

b. So are they right? Are there two Messiahs?! Well, concerning what characterises the coming of the Messiah they are of course half right! The Bible presents two pictures of what the coming of the Messiah would be like. One, a conquering King; the other, a suffering servant.

c. Jewish rabbis of old even recognised this and said that the Messiah would come in the character of two prominent Old Testament characters - David and Joseph. They are known as Ha Moshiach Ben David (Messiah the Son of David) and Ha Moshiach Ben Yoseph (Messiah the Son of Joseph). Some Rabbis even said that there would be two Messiahs, which they saw as necessary to fulfil the contradictory pictures presented in the two characters mentioned.

d. So which Messiah were the disciples expecting when they declared he was the promised anointed king.

Matthew 16:21-23 *From that time Jesus began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.* ***22*** *And Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him, saying, "Far be it from you, Lord![e] This shall never happen to you."* ***23*** *But he turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a hindrance to me. For you are not setting your mind on the things of God, but on the things of man."*

e. It is pretty obvious that Peter (who always had a habit of speaking out what the others were thinking!) didn't know very much about the Messiah having to die. Peter wanted Messiah Ben David! Peter wanted a conquering King not a rejected servant. (Of course Peter understood things better by the time of his first sermon in the book of Acts (Acts 2:14-36).

f. John the Baptist was the same. After recognising Jesus and rightly calling Him the 'lamb that takes away the sin of the world' (in other words, John recognised that Jesus would be a sacrifice for sins), later on in his life, as John sat in a lonely prison wondering what Jesus was going to do, we read of the doubts that came into John's mind. Finally he sends his disciples to ask Jesus 'are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else? (Matthew 11:2) Jesus just wasn't acting like John thought the Messiah would act!

g. Even in the book of Acts, after Jesus has spoken to the disciples for 40 days concerning the kingdom of God and the coming baptism of the Spirit, their only question to Jesus is 'Lord, is it at this time you are going to restore the Kingdom to Israel?' (Acts 1:3-6). In other words, 'when is the Davidic Kingdom? When will you rule and reign like the prophecies foretold???' Note also Jesus' answer in verse 8. Jesus says that it will happen but it is not for them to know what time His Father has fixed for such things.

h. The answer, of course, is not that there are two Messiah's but two comings. Although both are evident in the Old Testament, as we have seen, they are prophesied as one event. However, when Jesus stood up in the synagogue and quoted that scroll of Isaiah he knew exactly what part of the verse related to His first coming, and what part related to His second. And so we read in Luke 4:18-20 that He read from the scroll, but stopped mid sentence after saying that He was proclaiming the year of the Lord's favour. The 'year of the Lord's favour' related to Jesus' first coming. Jesus didn't read the last part of this same verse in Isaiah 61 because the 'day of vengeance of our God' relates to His second coming.

8. Conclusion

a. The time of the Lord's second coming is rapidly approaching us. Just as accurately as Jesus fulfilled the prophecies at His first coming, so will the prophecies of His second coming be fulfilled. History records that the Messiah has come as Ha Moshiach Ben Yoseph (Messiah the Son of Joseph). He died and suffered at the hands of His own brothers so that we may go free. Soon the world will see Ha Moshiach Ben David (Messiah the Son of David). The judgement of God will come upon this world, and Jesus will take this world by force! His kingdom will be established and His reign shall be glorious!

b. On that glorious day, from our perspective, both Jews and gentile believers will see their Messiah. For those who have recognised his first coming and put their trust in the redeeming power of his death and resurrection, this will be a day of glory as we are transformed into our eternal existence.

c. For those Jews who have awaited their conquering Messiah they will see him and as Zechariah tells us:

Zech.12:10 *"And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn.*

d. They will recognise that the man they crucified was their and is their Messiah and will mourn bitterly and on that day "all Israel will be saved" as they repent and the grace of God is poured out upon them as it has been upon us.

e. When the first disciples proclaimed that this man was the Messiah they may have followed him with false expectations. However, as they journeyed with him, witnessed his death and resurrection and were empowered by Holy Spirit they were the ones to proclaim the fullness of all that his coming accomplished.

Titus 2:11-14 *For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, **12** training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, **13** waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ, **14** who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.*

f. Let us live in the freedom from sin that allows us to live by grace as we await the day of our blessed hope.