

Jesus the Messiah

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Introduction

The word *Messiah* is from the Hebrew word for “anointed” and appears 39 times in the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) and numerous times in its Greek equivalent for *Christ* in the New Testament. The word was used for three purposes: (1) anointing for hygienic purposes; (2) anointing for medicinal or healing purposes; and (3) anointing to the office of prophets, priests, and kings.

The Hebrew Scriptures contain numerous prophecies about a coming Messiah, who would be (1) a male descendant of King David (from the tribe of Judah) and (2) a king who would restore the Davidic kingdom, defeat Israel’s enemies, and bring great glory to the nation. At the same time, the Messiah would also suffer and die as an innocent man and then be resurrected.

Christians were initially Jews who believed Jesus of Nazareth, a first-century A.D. Palestinian Jew, was the promised Messiah of the Hebrew Scriptures. But when the Jewish nation as a whole rejected Jesus as the Messiah, Christianity eventually became a distinct and separate religion from Judaism. If Christianity is the true religion of the monotheistic God, there should be evidence that Jesus was indeed the Jewish Messiah. The purpose of this essay is to demonstrate just that.

Messiah in the Hebrew Scriptures

The number of Hebrew Scriptural passages that refer to the Messiah is difficult to calculate. It has been conservatively estimated to be as few as about 30 and more liberally estimated to be more than 300. The large gap between these estimates is due to how to interpret many passages of Scripture because they often do not actually use the name *Messiah*. We will identify about 40 Messianic prophecies, making certain to include only those we are quite certain about.

A Male from the Tribe of Judah

The first identifying mark of the Messiah is that he would be a male descendant of Judah, great-grandson of Abraham, which means he would be from the tribe of Judah. That is the name for which the nation of Judah or Judea gets its name.

The first text that tells us the Messiah will be a descendant of Judah is Genesis 49:10, which reads, “The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh comes...” The word *Shiloh* is from a Hebrew word that means “He whose it is” or “that which belongs to him.” The Jewish Talmud says that Shiloh is a reference to the Messiah (Sanhedrin 98b, London: The Soncino Press, 1935, Vol. 2, p. 667 quoted in Samuel Srolovic Jacobson, *The Quest of a Jew*, Washington, D.C.: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1973, p. 15.).

A Royal Male Descendant of King David

Not only would the Messiah come from the tribe of Judah, but he would specifically be a male descendant of King David. In II Samuel 7:16-17 the prophet Nathan told King David that his “kingdom shall be established forever...Your throne shall be established forever.” Psalm 89 repeatedly states that the royal dynasty of David would last forever. In verse 4 the Lord says that David’s “seed I will establish forever, And build up your throne to all generations.” Verses 27-29 state that God will make David “My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth” and “will make to endure forever.” Finally, verses 36-27 tell us that David’s “seed shall endure forever, And his throne...shall be established forever.”

Another remarkable prophecy of the Messiah is found in Isaiah 11:1-10. That passage says that he will be a descendant of Jesse (David’s father) and “shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked” (v. 4). Then it describes supernatural conditions in his kingdom, which is the entire earth (vv. 6-9).

Isaiah 11:1-10 is understood to represent the Messiah because it strongly suggests that a Davidic king would supernaturally slay the wicked, which would result in supernatural conditions in his kingdom. And because this passage speaks of this king being a descendant of King David, the passages in II Samuel 7:16-17 and Psalm 89 are also understood to imply a Messianic significance.

In Amos 9:11-12, the “tabernacle of David” is a reference to the dynasty of David that will be restored because David did not build the Temple (or tabernacle). The restoration of the Davidic dynasty will encompass “all the Gentiles who are called by My name” (v. 12). [Note: Amos was written in the middle of the eighth century B.C. shortly before the northern kingdom of Israel’s extinction in 722 B.C. by the Assyrians. So this prophecy was based on the fact that the kingdom of Judah would lose its independence before the final restoration, which it did to the Babylonians in 586 B.C.]

Many other Biblical passages speak of the Messiah as a king. For example, Genesis 49:10, which we already looked at, uses the word for “scepter,” which is a symbol of royal authority. Numbers 24:17 also refers to a “scepter” that would arise from Jacob/Israel and destroy the wicked.

Psalm 2 speaks about the Lord and His “Anointed” (v. 2, Messiah). The Messiah is the Lord’s “King” and “Son” (vv. 6-7) in whom all are blessed “who put their trust in Him” (v. 12). There are two beings called “Lord” in Psalm 110:1-4. Although it is a psalm of David, he is not one of them because the second “Lord” is called “my Lord” in contrast to “The Lord.” This second Lord will “Rule,” signifying a king.

Jeremiah 23:5-6 is identified as a Messianic prophecy in the Jewish Talmud (Jacobson, p. 20). This text refers to a Davidic king who will save Judah: “Behold, the days are coming,’ says the Lord, ‘That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; A King shall reign and prosper, And execute judgment and righteousness in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, And Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.’”

Daniel 9:25-26 refers to “Messiah the Prince” and “Messiah.” A “Prince” is a royal personage, which makes the Messiah royalty.

Micah 5:2 says that a “Ruler in Israel” will come out of Bethlehem, which is the city of David. The word “Ruler” denotes a king.

Mal. 3:1 speaks about two messengers. The first one “will prepare the way before Me...Even the Messenger of the covenant.” In ancient times, because the roads were so bad, an entire entourage of workers would go before a traveling king and smooth out the road for him. In this way, we know that the second Messenger in this verse is a king. In the next several verses, this king will realize God’s covenant to cleanse His people from all their sins. This king can only be the Messiah; so this is a Messianic prophecy.

The Messiah Will be Born in Bethlehem

We just saw above that Micah 5:2 says that a “Ruler in Israel” will come out of Bethlehem, which is the city of David. Note that the word “Ruler” indicates that he is a king. This king will reunite the “remnant...of Israel” (v. 3) and “shall be great To the ends of the earth” (v. 4). This therefore must be the Messiah. Thus the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem.

The Messiah will Appear in A.D. 27

According to the 70 Weeks Prophecy of Daniel 9:24-27, the Messiah will appear after 69 weeks. A few translations place some kind of punctuation mark—a semicolon, colon, or period—after 7 weeks, so that it makes it read that the Messiah will come after a period of 7 weeks (e.g., RSV, NRSV, ESV). However, the pattern of alternating between Jerusalem and the Messiah means the

punctuation mark should be placed after 62 weeks instead, as per most English translations (e.g., KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV, WEB, CEV, HCSB, NLT):

- A Jerusalem (v. 25)
- B Messiah (v. 25)
- A¹ Jerusalem (7 weeks, v. 25)
- B¹ Messiah (62 weeks, v. 25)
- A² Jerusalem (the street and the wall, v. 25)
- B² Messiah (after 62 weeks, v. 26)
- A³ Jerusalem (destroyed, v. 26)

Of course, the 62 weeks comes after the 7 weeks so that Messiah will appear at the end of 69 weeks.

These weeks originate from “the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem” (v. 25). There were three Persian kings who issued four different commands or instructions allowing the Jews to return to Jerusalem. They were as follows:

Cyrus the Great (538/537 B.C.)—a decree to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem (Ezra 1:1-4) under the leadership of Zerubbabel (Ezra 2:2).

Darius I (520/519 B.C.)—a statement to confirm Cyrus’ decree after the Samaritan trouble (Ezra 6:1-12).

Artaxerxes I (458/457 B.C.)—a decree to allow the Jews to return in greater numbers and to appoint judges for both religious and political cases under the leadership of Ezra (Ezra 7:11-26).

Artaxerxes I (445/444 B.C.)—a statement giving permission to Nehemiah to return and supervise a rebuilding in confirmation of his earlier decree (Nehemiah 2:1-18).

It should be acknowledged that none of the decrees specifically mention the physical rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem itself. However, neither the decree of Cyrus nor Darius concerned the city itself but only the Temple. Moreover, Ezra seems to have understood that it was implied in Artaxerxes’ first decree, for Jerusalem was reestablished as the Jewish capital, and the Jewish nation was given a fair amount of autonomy, subject to ultimate Persian oversight of course, as a result of this decree.

Ezra 7 discusses this decree and tells us that Ezra traveled from Babylon to Jerusalem with the king’s decree from the first to the fifth months in the seventh year of Artaxerxes’ reign (vv. 8-9). We now know that Artaxerxes’ seventh year as king of Persia extended on the fall-to-fall reckoning

used by the Jews from the fall of 458 to the fall of 457 B.C. Since Ezra's journey occurred from the first to the fifth months of that year, it would place it in 457 B.C. (not 458). Therefore the going forth of Artaxerxes' decree was in the year 457 B.C.

The testimony of Ezra 6:14 confirms this conclusion by referring to the three decrees of all three kings as one decree: "And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia." That means that not until the decree of Artaxerxes could the command to restore and build Jerusalem be said to go forth. Since the second statement by Artaxerxes was a confirmation of his earlier decree, then we can safely infer that the command to restore and build Jerusalem was the one given by Artaxerxes in 457 B.C., as Ezra so interpreted by his actions.

It is universally agreed by all who understand this prophecy to be speaking about the Messiah of the Jewish Scriptures that a period of 70 literal weeks could not possibly allow for all that had to be done to be accomplished—including the rebuilding of the entire city of Jerusalem. Since Daniel says he had been contemplating the 70 years' prophecy of Jeremiah about the return from Babylon to Jerusalem, conservative scholars agree that the 70 weeks refers to 70 weeks of years, or 490 years. When moving from a B.C. date to an A.D. date, subtract the smaller number from the larger number and add 1 since there was no year zero: $69 \text{ weeks of years} = 69 \times 7 = 483 \text{ years}$. $483 - 457 = 26 + 1 = \text{A.D. } 27$. Thus the Messiah would appear in the year A.D. 27. This could either refer to his birth or to the beginning of his ministry. [Note: As it turns out, Jesus was "anointed" at His baptism in A.D. 27, thus making His appearance as the Messiah right on time.]

[Note: Most conservative scholars date the beginning of this 483 years to Artaxerxes' second command in either 445 or 444 B.C. However, (1) it was only a confirmation of his earlier decree rather than a new command, and (2) the result was that Nehemiah was sent to Jerusalem and undertook only the repairing of the city wall, which only took 52 days (Nehemiah 1-6; 6:15). By using the 445 or 444 B.C. date, these scholars know that it is too late to fit the New Testament gospels' chronology for Jesus. So they reinterpret the years as so-called prophetic years of 360-days only. But even then, there are problems with the chronology that have not been resolved to everyone's satisfaction in that school of thought. On the other hand, no problems exist if you start with Artaxerxes' first decree and take the 69 weeks of years as a period of 483 literal solar years.]

The Messiah's Spiritual Significance

Will be a Prophet

According to Deuteronomy 18:15-18, God will raise up a prophet like Moses; in other words, he will not be an *ordinary* prophet. His prophetic ministry is described in Isaiah 61:1-3, where an individual is said to be "anointed" (v. 1), which of course is the word for "Messiah." Scholars

recognize that Isaiah 40-66—the book ends at the end of chapter 66—is a large section of the book that concerns the restoration of Judah. The word “servant” is used in Isaiah 42 to refer to an individual; note the pronouns “Him” and “He” in verses 1-9. This individual, also called God’s “Elect” (v. 1), “will bring forth justice to the Gentiles” (v. 1), “justice in the earth” (v. 4), and will be a “covenant [promise] to the people, As a light to the Gentiles, To open blind eyes, To bring out prisoners from the prison house” (vv. 6-7). [Note: In other parts of this section of Isaiah, God’s “servant” is the entire nation of Judah (Isaiah 43:10; note the plural “witnesses” is equated with the singular “servant.”] In Isaiah 61:1-3 the “anointed” individual (singular “Me” in v. 1) is also to open the “prison to those who are bound” (v. 1). This person is therefore the same as the “servant” in chapter 42, and both are the Messiah, for no one else in the Hebrew Scriptures could do what he will do.

According to these two passages in Isaiah, the Messiah’s prophetic ministry is summed up in 61:2: “To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.” This language speaks of the jubilee in ancient Israel. Leviticus 25:8-55 is the major passage that outlines what was to happen in that year. The Year of Jubilee would be every 50th year in Israel and would begin on the Day of Atonement (in the fall) on that year (vv. 8-10). In that year the land would not be cultivated, but people will eat from whatever grows naturally in the fields (vv. 11-12). All property, which may have been lost due to indebtedness, was to be restored to its original family owners, and all slaves would be set free (vv. 10, 13, 23-24, 39-41). Since the Year of Jubilee occurred *every* 50th year in ancient Israel, the Jubilee proclaimed by the Messiah would be a spiritual Jubilee—release from captivity to sin, to open the spiritually blinds’ eyes, and to “preach good tidings to the poor.” In other words, the Messiah’s prophetic mission will be to proclaim God’s salvation to those who are eager to receive it.

Will be a Priest after a Different Order

In Psalm 110:1-4 there are two “Lord”s. David is not one of them because, although it is a psalm of David, the second “Lord” is called “my Lord” (in contrast to “The Lord”). This second Lord will “Rule” and also be “a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.” This is not the Levitical priesthood, but is the order of Melchizedek, whose genealogy is unknown. The only other reference in the Hebrew Scriptures to Melchizedek is in Genesis 14:18-24, where he is called both “the priest of God” (v. 18) and the “king of Salem” (v. 18). Salem was the early name for what later became known as Jerusalem. After Abram’s rescue of Lot (his nephew) and the resulting defeat of Chedorlaomer and the other kings east of Sodom, Abram met Melchizedek. The priest-king gave Abram bread and wine and blessed him. In return Abram gave him a tithe (one-tenth) of all that he had (Genesis 14:18-20).

The fact that the second “Lord” will “Rule” and is also greater than David means that this must be the Messiah. Therefore, we have learned that the Messiah will be a king and priest like

Melchizedek and a prophet like Moses. But since the Messiah would be a priest after the order of Melchizedek, He would not function as a priest in the Jerusalem Temple. So how will He function as a priest? The clue is found in Isaiah 53, which speaks of the Messiah as both the sacrificial lamb (vv. 5-7, 10-11) and one who will make “intercession for the transgressors” (v. 12). It is a priest who particularly mediates or intercedes on the sinner’s behalf before God. Since this intercession will undoubtedly occur after the Messiah has become the sin offering, the sanctuary in which the Messiah acts as a priest must be the heavenly sanctuary after his resurrection. [Note: See below for an examination of the evidence that Isaiah 53 refers to the Messiah.]

Messiah is a God-Man

The first promise in Scripture that God would deal with Satan and the sin problem is in Genesis 3:15 immediately after Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden. The curse of sin involved a promise in that the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent (Satan, Rev. 12:9) would be at war against each other. Obviously, these two sets of seeds are spiritual (not physical) descendants—the woman representing God’s people and the serpent’s seed representing the devil’s followers. Suddenly the text shifts to first person singular pronouns: “He shall bruise your head, And you shall bruise His heel.” This is the first promise of a male spiritual leader who would crush Satan fatally (in the head) even though Satan would strike a blow on His heel. Therefore, this is the first mention, albeit oblique, to the Messiah. Moreover, since only a Divine Being could fatally wound Satan, the Messiah will be both God and a man.

Psalm 2:2 mentions the Lord and His Anointed (Messiah). The Messiah is the Lord’s “King” and “Son” (vv. 6-7) in whom all are blessed “who put their trust in Him” (v. 12). If people can put their trust in the Messiah, then the Messiah must also be God because the Hebrew Scriptures explicitly declares not to put our trust in human princes (Psalm 118:9).

There are two beings called “Lord” in Psalm 110:1-4. Although it is a psalm of David, he is not one of them because the second “Lord” is called “my Lord” in contrast to “The Lord.” This second Lord will “Rule,” signifying a king. The only “Lord” who could possibly be higher than King David would be a Divine Messiah.

We just saw above that Micah 5:2 says that a “Ruler in Israel” will come out of Bethlehem, which is the city of David. Note that the word “Ruler” indicates that he is a king. This king will reunite the “remnant...of Israel” (v. 3) and “shall be great To the ends of the earth” (v. 4). This therefore must be the Messiah. The end of that verse declares that this “Ruler” is “from of old, From everlasting.” Only God is from everlasting.

The Jewish Targum on Isaiah identifies Isaiah 9:6-7 as a prophecy of the Messiah (<http://targum.info/targumic-texts>, “Targumic Texts,” “Targum Isaiah.”). And the text clearly

calls Him “Mighty God” and “Everlasting Father.” Any attempt to say these terms were borrowed by the inspired writer from the Egyptian practice of calling their rulers gods without actually meaning that the Messiah is God is simply dishonest. The Scripture is too plain for that.

We showed above that Isaiah 11:1-10 is a Messianic prophecy. The Messiah’s supernatural ability to destroy enemies (v. 4) and the supernatural conditions in His kingdom (vv. 6-9) make Him a Divine Messiah.

We saw earlier that Jeremiah 23:5-6 is a Messianic prophecy. In verse 6 the Messiah is called “THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.” Plainly He is a Divine Being as well as a human being.

In Zechariah 12:10 the “house of David” (his dynasty) “will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son...” (v. 10). It is evident that the pronouns “Me” and “Him” both refer to the one who will be “pierced.” And in the context this is the Lord Himself. This mourning is a great sorrow for sin that caused Him to be pierced, implying that He will be pierced for all their sins. When compared to Isaiah 53, we learn that this is the Messiah (see below), meaning that the Messiah is a Divine as well as a human being (because only a human being could be “pierced”).

We noted earlier that Malachi 3:1’s second Messenger is the Messiah. The same verse identifies Him as “the Lord, whom you seek, Will suddenly come to His temple, Even the Messenger of the covenant.” Therefore, this Messianic prophecy is teaching that the Messiah will be a Divine Being as well as a human being.

An Implied Virgin Birth

One of the corollaries of the Messiah being both Divine and human is that He must be born to a virgin mother. In order to be born a human being He must have a human mother. At the same time, if He is also Divine, then his “father” must be God who supernaturally (not physically, of course) impregnates a human woman who gives birth to Him. Therefore, the virgin birth of the Messiah is implied.

It is also taught indirectly by Isaiah 7:14, which declares that a son would be born to a “virgin.” The Hebrew word for *virgin* in Isaiah 7:14 means a *young woman* who may or not be married; the Hebrew had a word that specifically meant a *virgin*, but that is not used in that prophecy. A later inspired writer must agree with earlier inspired writers (Isaiah 8:20), which means the earlier prophecies must either require or at least allow for the newer fulfillment. When you examine Isaiah 7’s prophecy in context, the emphasis is not on the *nature* of the birth of that son but on his *name* and the *time* of his birth. Judah was facing an invasion from Samaria and Syria, and the Lord told Judah’s King Ahaz through the prophet Isaiah that He will save Judah from this threat.

A sign of that future salvation was a son named Immanuel in 7:14 and named Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz in 8:3. The name Immanuel means *God with Us*, and the name *Maher-Shalal-Hash-Baz* means *Speed the Spoil, Hasten the Booty*.

Apparently, the two names refer to one son, and the first name (Immanuel) could not be used because Ahaz did not respond positively to the promised son's name and thus Judah could not be spared the wrath (which later came from Assyria itself). This fact at least allows for a later Immanuel to fulfill the prophecy in a typological manner when God's people need to be saved. And a type does not have to embody *all* aspects of its antitype. Matthew 1:22-23 applies that later Immanuel to Jesus, whose name we already noted means *Savior*. This means that the emphasis is on the names *Immanuel* and *Jesus* rather than on His virgin birth. The virgin birth is required by the nature of the Savior as the God-Man, but that virgin birth is not actually the emphasis of Isaiah 7:14's prophecy, although the Hebrew word in Isaiah 7 *can* refer to a virgin.

This is confirmed by the prophecy of another *son* in Isaiah 9:6-7, which is still in the context of Assyria's invasion of Israel (see Isaiah 8). This son is clearly a Divine Being since He is called "Mighty God" and "Everlasting Father" whose kingdom "will be no end" (9:6-7) on "the throne of David" (9:7). This is strong evidence that the Messiah will be a God-man. And since the birth of a son implicitly means He will have a human mother, then His "father" must be God Himself. Thus, the prophecy in Isaiah 7:14 is a dual prophecy, and the use of the generic Hebrew word to describe the mother enables it to apply both to Isaiah's wife and to the Virgin Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Important Events in the Messiah's Life

Isaiah 52:13-53:12

This is the last in a series of four songs in Isaiah concerning the "Servant" (52:13-15, spoken of with singular pronouns "He" and "Him) who will restore Israel: (1) 42:1-9; (2) 49:1-13; (3) 50:4-11; and (4) 52:13-53:12. This is clearly the Messiah because (1) "He will bring forth justice to the Gentiles" and "in the earth" (42:1, 4) and be a "light to the Gentiles" (42:6); (2) He will "restore the preserved ones of Israel," be a "light to the Gentiles," "be My salvation to the ends of the earth" (49:6), and will "restore the earth" (49:8); and (3) He is God's "Servant" who "was not rebellious" when the rest of Israel was.

[A Jewish prayer book acknowledges this to be a Messianic prophecy (*Services for the Day of Atonement*, trans. by S. G., New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, 1928, p. 288 as quoted in Jacobson, p. 25.)]

- In the end this Servant “shall be exalted and extolled and be very high” so that He will astonish and startle the nations and kings (52:13-15).
- He would be “despised and rejected by men” and a “Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief” (53:3).
- He will have “borne our griefs And carried our sorrows,” “wounded for our transgressions” (not His), “bruised for our iniquities” (not His), “by His stripes we are healed,” and “the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all” (53:4-6).
- In His suffering He will be like a sacrificial “lamb” without protesting (53:7).
- He will be “cut off” [executed] “For the transgressions of My people” (53:8).
- He will be buried as a wicked person although He would be innocent (53:9).
- The Lord caused Him to become an “offering for sin.” Yet “He shall prolong His days.” That is, He will be resurrected (53:10).
- He will “justify many For He shall bear their iniquities” (53:11).
- Because “He bore the sin of many,” He will “make intercession for the transgressors.” Again, resurrection is implied in order for Him to become the intercessor for sinners (53:12).

Psalm 22

This psalm was originally applied to David because it was one of his psalms. But (1) the literal Hebrew of Daniel 9:26 is “none [nothing] to [help] him,” making Ps. 22:11’s “none to help” a reference to the prophecy in Daniel 9 about the Messiah (that and Daniel 11:45’s “no one will help him” are only other times such an expression occurs in the Hebrew of the Jewish Scriptures); and (2) the literal Hebrew of the Masoretic Text’s verse 16 reads “Like a lion [they surround] My hands and My feet.” This describes far more than what happened to David, giving evidence of a later more complete fulfillment. [Note: Some ancient Hebrew manuscripts and the Septuagint, Syriac, Arabic, Ethiopian, and Latin Vulgate all translate it as “They pierced My hands and My feet.” The only difference between the Hebrew words for “lion” and “pierced” is just one tiny vowel stroke, so one was evidently miscopied from the other. Since the older manuscripts and translations read “pierced,” it is far more likely that the mistake was made by the copyists of the 3rd and 4th century, whose Hebrew manuscripts formed the basis for the Masoretic Text of later centuries. Moreover, the Dead Sea Scrolls of Psalm 22 also reads “pierced,” and they date to the

first and second centuries B.C. This seems confirmed by the fact that Isaiah 53:5 and Zechariah 12:10 both used the word for “pierced” for the Messiah.]

This psalm then even predicts the method of execution (crucifixion) of a future Davidic king (Messiah). David lived ca. 1000 B.C. If the Assyrians or Babylonians invented crucifixion, as some historians believe, it could have predated David. However, all agree that it was the Persians who first made extensive use of it as a method of execution (dating it in the known world to about 539 B.C., well after David). These two texts therefore demonstrate that this psalm goes far beyond its application to David and finds its complete fulfillment in the Messiah.

Concerning the treatment of the Messiah, at least four things are prophesied in Psalm 22:

- “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?” (v. 1).
- He would be ridiculed (vv. 7-8).
- “They pierced My hands and My feet” (v. 16).
- “They divide My garments among them, And for My clothing they cast lots” (v. 18).

Zechariah

- Jerusalem’s “king is coming to you” who is “just” and brings “salvation” (Zechariah 9:9). Thus, this is the Messiah. Note that He will come humbly on a donkey, unlike other ancient kings who usually ride on great stallions.
- In the context of the Divine-human Messiah being “pierced” (Zechariah 12:10), the Lord says He will “cause the prophets...to depart from the land” (13:2). The parents of anyone who claims to be a prophet “shall thrust him through” (13:3). When a former prophet is asked about wounds on his hands, he will say that “Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends” (13:6). Since such a prophet would have been “thrust through” rather than being wounded on his hands, this text is actually depicting a true prophet who is considered to be a false prophet. It is therefore the equivalent of the Messiah who will be “pierced” (cf. Zechariah 12:10). Thus, this is a Messianic prophecy. And the point is that the Messiah will be executed by those who should have been His friends.
- Zechariah 11:12 is part of an allegorical prophecy of the three shepherds (11:4-17), who represent bad leaders in Judah, and the flock represents the people of Judah. After being mistreated by their leaders, the flock also rejects the good shepherd. They paid the good shepherd 30 pieces of silver for his wages—the price of a slave. Eventually, a very bad, or “foolish shepherd” (v. 15, leader), will be allowed to lead them.

This allegory obviously has an element of historical analysis because verse 14 refers to the breaking of the “brotherhood between Judah and Israel” that was broken. Zechariah ministered during the time right after the return to Jerusalem under the Persian King Cyrus the Great in the sixth century B.C., and the break between Judah and Israel had already occurred in 722 B.C. when the Assyrians conquered and dispersed the people of the northern kingdom of Israel. At the same time, when Zechariah plays the role of the good shepherd in the vision (who fed the flock, as it turns out, for the slaughter, vv. 4-7), such a leader must be the Messiah. The import of this future element is that the Messiah would spiritually feed the nation of Judah but without avail, for they would reject Him, resulting in the really “foolish shepherd” (v. 15, also called the “worthless shepherd,” v. 17) who leaves Judah completely unprotected (vv. 16-17).

- Zechariah 11:13 is a continuation of the prophecy of the three shepherds (11:4-17) described in the previous bulleted item. After being mistreated by their leaders, the flock also rejects the good shepherd. Then after receiving 30 pieces of silver for his wages, the good shepherd sarcastically declares it to be “that princely price” and “threw them [the 30 pieces of silver] into the house of the Lord for the potter.”

How Jesus Fulfilled the Messianic Prophecies

In evaluating whether or not Jesus fulfilled the Messianic prophecies, we will only select those prophetic features that can be tested objectively rather than including things like whether He was a prophet or a different kind of priest or a Divine Being, which would depend upon what someone thought about Jesus and cannot be tested empirically. Whether or not Jesus is God can be tested by historical means and logic, but that is beyond the scope of this essay, and we have already done this in chapters 4-9 in our book *Jesus and His Teachings*.

1. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah—Genesis 49:10 and Matthew 1:2-17.
2. Jesus was a male descendant of King David—II Samuel 7:16-17; Psalms 89:3-4, 27-29, 35-37; and Matthew 1:6-17.
3. Jesus was born in Bethlehem—Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:1; and Luke 2:4-7.
4. Jesus began His public ministry in A.D. 27 when He was about 30 years old, the age most commonly associated with the beginning of an “anointed” office (priest, prophet, king)—Daniel 9:25-26 and Luke 3:1, 23.
5. Jesus was eventually and generally “despised and rejected by men”—Isaiah 53:3; Matthew 26:3-5, 47-27:50; Mark 14:1-2, 43-15:37; Luke 22:1-6, 47-23:46; and John 18:1-19:30.

6. Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey when the people proclaimed Him king—Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:1-11; Mark 11:1-11; and Luke 19:28-48.
7. Jesus' life ministry was worth 30 pieces of shekel according to the Jewish leaders—Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:14-16; and Mark 14:10-11 (cf. Luke 22:3-6).
8. 30 pieces of shekel were thrown down in the “house of the Lord for the potter”—Zechariah 11:13; and Matthew 27:3-10.
9. Jesus went to His execution without protest—Isaiah 53:7; Matthew 26:50-56; Mark 14:43-50; Luke 22:47-53; and John 18:1-11.
10. Jesus' hands and feet were pierced in crucifixion—Psalm 22:16; Matthew 27:31-50; Mark 15:15-37; Luke 23:26-47; and John 19:16-30.
11. Jesus was pierced in His hands by those who knew Him—Zechariah 12:10; 13:6; Matthew 27:31-50; Mark 15:15-37; Luke 23:26-47; and John 19:16-30.
12. Jesus' robe was gambled for among the soldiers who crucified Him—Psalm 22:18; Matthew 27:35; Mark 15:24; Luke 23:34; and John 19:23-24.
13. On the cross Jesus cried out, “My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?”—Psalm 22:1; Matthew 27:46; and Mark 15:34.
14. Jesus was “cut off” (executed)—Isaiah 53:8; Matthew 27: 31-50; Mark 15:15-37; Luke 23:26-47; and John 19:16-30.
15. Jesus was resurrected—Implied in Isaiah 53:10; Matthew 28:1-20; Mark 16:1-18; Luke 24:1-48; and John 20:1-21:14.

Why the Jewish Nation Rejected Jesus

Although the first followers of Jesus were Jews, like Jesus Himself, the Jewish nation as a whole rejected Jesus as their promised Messiah. There are two fundamental reasons for their rejection of Jesus. First, their firm conviction that God is an absolute monotheistic Being did not allow them to accept a Divine-human Messiah. Second, their long history of being dominated by foreign powers led them to focus exclusively on those Messianic prophecies that spoke about a king who would defeat their foreign enemies. Since Jesus (1) claimed to be God and (2) did not lead an army against the Roman oppressors, the Jewish nation rejected Him.

Even today devout non-Christian Jews pray the *Shema*, the Hebrew word for “Hear,” recorded in Deuteronomy 6:4: “Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God the Lord is one!” In fact, this is the cardinal doctrine of rabbinical Judaism and reflects their view that God is an absolute monotheistic Being. However, the Hebrew word for “one” in that verse refers to a “composite unity” rather than a “single unity.” It is the same word used in Genesis 2:24 that describes that “a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.” Note that the “one flesh” consists of two distinct persons. It may be surprising to know that the Jewish spiritual leaders did not recognize this fact about their own language. However, they were constantly in trouble with God over their following the pagan nations around them that worshiped many gods. Before Jesus’ day, the Jews had learned their lesson so well that they denied the implications of their own language and insisted that God is one individual Being. See chapter 15 in our book *Jesus and His Teachings* for a more thorough examination of the doctrine of the Trinity.

The nation of Judah had been dominated by foreign nations since the first siege of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 605 B.C. under King Nebuchadnezzar. After the Babylonians came the Persians, although they did allow Jews who wanted to return to Jerusalem to do so under the auspices of their empire. Then came the Greeks and the descendants of one of Alexander the Great’s generals. Finally, not long before Jesus’ birth the Romans added Palestine to their conquests. This had apparently so fixated the Jewish people that they ignored the Messianic prophecies that spoke about the spiritual mission of the Messiah. But as we have seen, many Messianic prophecies do indeed speak about the Messiah becoming a king and defeating Israel’s enemies. Therefore, the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah is a classic example of being right on what they affirmed but wrong in what they denied.

In Moses’ farewell address to the Hebrew nation, he made it very clear to them that their covenant relationship with God was a two-way covenant. This means that all the promises made to literal Israel were conditional upon their positive response to God. Deuteronomy 28 contains the blessings of the covenant for obedience to God and the curses of the covenant for disobedience to God. Perhaps the Lord was trying to tell His people something when He inspired Moses to spend only 14 verses (28:1-14) on the blessings of the covenant and 54 verses (28:15-68) on the curses of the covenant.

This conditional aspect of God’s covenant with Israel is extended to all nations in Jeremiah 18:1-11, so that He would not deliver His promises of glory to any nation that turned against Him and He would not deliver His judgments of doom to any nation that turned toward Him.

There were hints of the Jewish nation’s rejection of Jesus as the Messiah in Isaiah 53 and Zechariah 11-13. And of course, the 70 Weeks Prophecy of Daniel 9 predicts that the Jewish nation would reject the Messiah: (1) verse 26’s literal Hebrew of “none to (or for) Him” and (2) the mention of Jerusalem’s destruction in verse 26 immediately following reference to the death of the Messiah.

Here is the point: If the Jewish nation as a whole had accepted Jesus as their promised Messiah, He could have established His literal kingdom in Jerusalem and fulfilled the promises of glory to literal Israel. But when they rejected His *spiritual* kingdom and mission, He must allow them to suffer the curses of the covenant and could not therefore restore Israel to its literal, political glory. It is just that simple. Just think about this for a moment. If the Jewish people as a whole had accepted Jesus as their Messiah, the entire eschatology (end-time events scenario) of the New Testament would have been entirely different. The book of Revelation, for example, could not have been written as it was.

The Christian Church Making the Same Mistake Today

The most popular end-time perspective among Christians today, especially among most Protestants, is reflecting the same mistake that the Jews made in the first century A.D. In focusing so much on the promises of Israel's restoration in the Old Testament, these dispensational futurists ignore the conditional aspect of the covenant between God and ancient Israel. The result is to insist on "seeing" the secret Rapture of the Church in Scripture when it is not there. Our own perspective explained above about the conditional aspects of the covenant with Israel was the predominant view for the vast majority of the Christian Era and for Protestant Christianity's first 300 years. Not until John Nelson Darby, leader of the Brethren movement in Britain, began preaching dispensational futurism in the 1830s, was the traditional Christian perspective challenged successfully among so many Christians.

This popular view also insists that while the Church Age has interrupted Israel's Davidic kingdom, it will resume after the Rapture for a short period of time before the visible, audible, glorious Second Coming of Jesus. In so doing, they ignore the fact that all promises in the Old Testament are fulfilled in Jesus (II Corinthians 1:20) and that all who belong to Jesus are the Jews that count with God, according to Romans 2:28-29; 9:6-8; and Galatians 3:29. And there is nothing in the language of those passages that makes that Christian status temporary.

As a result of these errors, the advocates of the popular view focus on *old* Jerusalem rather than the New Jerusalem, on a supposed rebuilt *Jerusalem* Temple rather than on the Heavenly Sanctuary, and on *politics* in the Middle East rather than on the spiritual issues that actually make up the Battle of Armageddon.

Dr. Peter Stoner's Statistical Analysis

In 1958 Dr. Peter Stoner, Professor Emeritus of Mathematics and Astronomy and Science, wrote a book entitled *Science Speaks*, which estimated the mathematical probability for numerous scientific and historical facts being true. [See Peter Stoner and Robert C. Newman. *Science Speaks*. Online Ed. 2002, Revised by Don Stoner 2005. Chicago: Moody Press, 1958] In the

Foreword, Dr. H. Harold Hartzler, of the American Scientific Affiliation, wrote that both a committee and the Executive Council of the American Scientific Affiliation reviewed the manuscript and found it to “be dependable and accurate in regard to the scientific material presented. The mathematical analysis included is based upon principles of probability which are thoroughly sound and Professor Stoner has applied these principles in a proper and convincing way.” In the book itself Dr. Stoner kept repeating that he intentionally made his estimates of probability in a very conservative way.

Stoner took the following eight of the specific Old Testament prophecies that we examined with which to do his statistical analysis: (1) Micah 5:2; (2) Malachi 3:1; (3) Zechariah 9:9; (4) Zechariah 13:6; (5) Zechariah 11:12; (6) Zechariah 11:13; (7) Isaiah 53:7; and (8) Psalm 22:16.

Micah 5:2

This prophecy states that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem. Stoner asked the question: “One man in how many, the world over, has been born in Bethlehem?” He estimated the average population of Bethlehem from Micah’s day to Stoner’s day in 1958 and divided it by the average population of the world during the same period of time. Having arrived at the number of the average population of Bethlehem as a little less than 7,150, he answered his own question by concluding that “one man in 2.8×10^5 was born in Bethlehem.”

Malachi 3:1

This prophecy states that a messenger prepared the way for the Messiah. Stoner asked the question: “Of the men who have been born in Bethlehem, one man in how many has had a forerunner to prepare his way?” He adopted an arbitrarily very small number of one in 1,000, or 1 in 10^3 .

Zechariah 9:9

This is the prophecy that the Messiah would ride into Jerusalem on a donkey. Stoner asked the question: “One man in how many, who was born in Bethlehem and had a forerunner, did enter Jerusalem as a king riding on a colt the foal of an ass?” He concluded that almost certainly no one else but Jesus did that. Moreover, any other kings would have used a more sophisticated means of transportation. Again, he arbitrarily chose a very conservative number of 1 in 10^2 .

Zechariah 13:6

This is the prophecy that the Messiah would be betrayed by a friend. So Stoner asked the question: “One man in how many, the world over, has been betrayed by a friend, and that betrayal has

resulted in his being wounded in his hands?” That would indeed be very rare, especially when including the fact that the wound would be in his hands. Stoner then chose 1 in 10^3 .

Zechariah 11:12

This prophecy gives the price of the Messiah’s betrayal as 30 pieces of silver. Stoner asked the question: “Of the people who have been betrayed, one in how many has been betrayed for exactly thirty pieces of silver?” Not knowing of any, but realizing it would be very rare, Stoner settled on the number of 1 in 10^3 .

Zechariah 11:13

This prophecy depicts the casting down the 30 pieces of silver in the previous verse “in the house of the Lord.” Stoner asked the question: “One man in how many, after receiving a bribe for the betrayal of a friend, had returned the money, had it refused, had it thrown on the floor in the house of the Lord, and then had it used to purchase a field from the potter?” There probably was never such a scenario except once in the case of Judas who betrayed Jesus. But again, Stoner was very conservative in estimating 1 in 10^5 .

Isaiah 53:7

This prophecy declares that the Messiah would be led to the slaughter but would not protest. Stoner asked the question: “One man in how many, after fulfilling the above prophecies, when he is oppressed and afflicted and is on trial for his life, though innocent, will make no defense for himself?” Not knowing about any such case except for Jesus, Stoner estimated on the conservative side that 1 in 10^3 .

Psalms 22:16

This prophecy predicts the crucifixion of the Messiah. So Stoner asked the question: “One man in how many, from the time of David on, has been crucified?” From his historical investigation, Stoner concluded that there was 1 in 10^{28} probability of a man being crucified.

All Eight Prophecies

After calculating the probabilities for each of the eight prophecies, Stoner then proceeded to determine the odds that anyone could fulfill all eight of them. Including his present day (1958), he estimated the total number of those who have lived since the times of these prophecies to be 8.8×10^{10} . He then reduced that number to 10^{11} . Then he divided 10^{28} by 10^{11} and calculated that

there is 1 in 10^{17} chance of one man fulfilling all eight prophecies. That is the number 1 followed by 17 zeroes.

Stoner illustrated just how low the probability of that occurring really is. In his own words, he said the following:

If you mark one of ten tickets, and place all of the tickets in a hat, and thoroughly stir them, and then ask a blindfolded man to draw one, his chance of getting the right ticket is one in ten. Suppose that we take 10^{17} silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. What chance would he have of getting the right one? Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time, providing they wrote using their own wisdom.

What Stoner's statistical analysis means is that the prophets who wrote those eight prophecies were supernaturally inspired to a degree of one chance in 10^{17} of absolute certainty. And remember that he consistently used very conservative estimates, which means that the degree of certainty of the prophets' supernatural inspiration is even greater than Stoner's estimate. This is just one more body of evidence that the Holy Scriptures are from God beyond all reasonable doubt.

Summary and Conclusion

Summary

Our *major* conclusions about the Messiah obtained only from the Jewish Scriptures (Old Testament) themselves is summarized in ten points below:

- He will be a male from the tribe of Judah.
- He will be a male descendant of King David.
- He will be both God and man.
- He will be born to a virgin mother.
- He will be a king.
- He will be born in Bethlehem.
- He will make His appearance in A.D. 27.
- He will proclaim the spiritual Jubilee of salvation.

- He will be sacrificed by those who should have been His friends for His people’s sins as the sin-bearer even though He was innocent—the One to whom all the animal sacrifices under Israel’s sanctuary system had pointed to.
- He will be resurrected.

Conclusion

One of the consequences of the Jewish rejection of Jesus as the Messiah has been an unfortunate hostile relationship between Jews and Christians throughout Christian history. Sadly, Christians have often behaved in an un-Christlike manner toward the Jews, although Jews for their part have not always been charitable to Christians either. Resenting the Christian influence that spread rapidly among both Gentiles and Jews in the first centuries after Jesus, the Jews first expelled Christians from their synagogues. In turn, this sped up the process of Jewish Christians eventually being forced to consider themselves part of a distinct, separate religion from Judaism.

This split into two different world religions—Judaism and Christianity—was also reflected in the Church’s gradual (except in Rome and Alexandria, Egypt) abandonment of the seventh-day Sabbath, which became known as the “Jewish Sabbath,” in favor of Sunday observance. While early Christians continued to observe the annual Passover each spring, the Church eventually moved to replace it with Easter Sunday. Jews became known as “Christ-killers” by most Christians, and discrimination and organized persecution (pogroms) have been common. In other words, anti-Semitism has raised its ugly head.

Even when not actually anti-Semitic, Christians by and large have forgotten their Jewish roots. We need to remember a few basic facts. First, Jesus was a Jew. Second, the first Christians were all Jews who did not think of themselves as belonging to a distinct, separate religion until the Jews expelled them from the synagogues later in the first century A.D. Third, the Jewish Scriptures was the first Bible of Christians before the New Testament was accepted as a canon of Scripture along with it. Unfortunately, this ignoring of our Jewish roots has caused many Christians to discount the actual teachings of the Old Testament to the point that some churches officially teach that it is only useful for inspirational and historical purposes. In any case, the typical Christian does not believe something unless it is explicitly taught in the New Testament.

Romans 11

In Romans 11 the apostle Paul uses the metaphor of an olive tree to represent God’s followers of Jesus. Although he says that the Jews are the natural branches of that olive tree, they must be grafted in just like the Gentiles (vv. 21-24) if they believe in Jesus. In verses 25-26 he declares that “blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. And so all Israel will be saved.” However, note two significant points. First, it was common in Jewish

literature to speak of “all Israel” being saved but then listing all of the exceptions to that. In other words, Paul does not here mean that every single Jew will be saved at the last hour of human history, although apparently he does mean that the large majority of Jews will accept Jesus at the last hour of history. Second, he says nothing about this constituting a final dispensation of the Jews (with the Church having been raptured just prior to this). Both Jews and Gentiles are grafted onto the same olive tree. Do not miss that point! Jewish and Gentile believers in Jesus belong to the same organized people of God (the same olive tree), not to separate organizations, to say nothing of living in separate dispensations.

Ephesians 2

In Ephesians 2 the apostle Paul discusses the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. He refers to the metaphor of the Court of the Gentiles, a real court in the Jerusalem Temple beyond which Gentiles could not go on pain of death. In Ephesians 2:14-15 he declares that in His death Jesus “has broken down the middle wall of separation,” also called “the law of commandments contained in ordinances,” in order “to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace.” The point is that one of the purposes of the Church is to unite Jews and Gentiles in one organized temple of the Church (vv. 19-22). How ironic and sad that the Church has been used to exclude Jews just as the Jerusalem Temple once excluded Gentiles from the same access to God! Anti-Semitism has absolutely no place among Christians!

Final Comments

It is past time that Christians need to acknowledge our Jewish roots and to rethink some of our theology based on our abandonment of those roots. We can begin by studying the Old Testament and becoming familiar with how to demonstrate from its pages that Jesus is indeed the Messiah of those Scriptures.