

MESSIAH

By

Curtis Dickinson

“Who say ye that I am?” Matthew 16:15

The name “Messiah” is Hebrew, and generally means “The anointed of Jehovah.” In the Greek it is “Messiah” (John 1:41) and is rendered in English as “Christ.”

In the Old Testament “messiah” or “anointed” is occasionally used of different agents of God-of the high priest (Lev.4:3), of prophets (Ps. 105:15), of Cyrus (Isa. 45:1). But it is mostly kept for God’s king — actual or expected (1 Sam. 24:6, Dan 9:25).

So in the theology of Israel it became the technical term for that King and captain of salvation whose coming the prophets had foretold and all devout Israel earnestly expected and hoped for. Even so, while holding fast to the letter of the prophecy of the coming Messiah, there was gross misunderstanding as to the manner of His coming and the way in which He would take the reins of government to rule. The prophet had said, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). Such a ruler, it was thought, must sweep away the enemies with great military power and restore the splendor of national sovereignty as in the days of David and Solomon. While Jesus did not do this, the apostle Matthew affirms that the prophecy was fulfilled (Matt. 2:5-6).

If there is great controversy over the meaning of Christ and His ruler-ship today, imagine what controversy raged over Him when He was on earth. The expectancy of Messiah (Christ) was so fervent that when John Baptist began his preaching, immediately men began to speculate as to whether or not he might be the One. “And as the people were in expectation, and all men reasoned in their hearts concerning John, whether haply he were the Christ” (Luke 3:15).

There is no doubt that John himself knew that Jesus was the Messiah. The holy Spirit in the form of a dove descending upon Jesus at His baptism was the sign (John 1:32-34) and John was convinced. He plainly identified Jesus in person (John 1:29). Even so, further proof of identification was given to John Baptist when he sent his disciples to Christ asking “Art thou he that cometh or look we for another?” Jesus answered, “The blind receive their sight and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, and the dead are raised up, and the poor have good tidings preached unto them” (Matt. 11:3-5). Here was fulfillment of the prophecy in Isa. 35:5 and 61:1. Jesus further stated that “All the prophets and the law prophesied until John. And if you are willing to receive it, this is Elijah that is to come” (Matt. 11:13-14).

From the lips of Jesus came the confirmation that He was the Messiah and that both law and prophecy were now fulfilled in Him, even to the prophecy of the coming of Elijah to precede the Messiah. Here is also proof that the Old Testament prophecy that “Elijah must first come” before the reign of Christ was not to be taken in a natural physical sense, but in a figurative way—John came in the spirit of Elijah, and thus the Old Testament prophecy was fulfilled.

The controversy of the Messiah continued to rage. As Jesus made his claim to have total authority over man’s destiny as the one and only Lord, enemies were stirred to action. “The Jews therefore came round about him and said unto him, ‘How long dost thou hold us in suspense? If thou art the Christ, tell us plainly.’ Jesus answered them, ‘I told you, and you believed not: the works that I do in my Father’s name, these bear witness of me. But you believe not because you are not of my sheep.’” (John 10:24-25). When they asked about the Christ, they had in mind the King that Israel had looked for throughout its entire history. Jesus affirmed that He was this Messiah, adding, “My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me, and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand.” Thus He clarified His Kingship as being totally distinct from the kind of military power which the Jews had expected, but at the same time being one where He was in total power, even to preserving his subjects from perishing in the Day of Judgment and giving them eternal life.

The burning question of the day was the identity of Jesus: was He the Anointed King of whom the prophets spoke? If so, then they must obey Him. They must accept the kind of Kingdom over which He ruled. They must abandon the idea of attaining financial and political power, for the greatest in His Kingdom was to be the one who served. They must cease competition for glory and honor among men, and cease striving for the “chief seats.” Furthermore they must enter His Kingdom by being “born from above” of the “Water and the Spirit,” and no longer rely upon fleshly ties and the faith of their ancestors for evidence of citizenship. Clearly Christ’s claims for a spiritual Kingdom did not suit the majority of religious people then, nor do they suit the religious world today. Paul said that the Jews condemned Jesus because they knew not “the voices of the prophets which are read every Sabbath” (Acts 13:27).

This question of whether or not Jesus was the long promised King followed Him right up to His death. The high priest, the night before the crucifixion, asked Him, “Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” And Jesus said, “I am; and ye shall see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven. And they all condemned him to be worthy of death, and some began to spit on him and to cover his face and buffet him...” (Mark 14:61-65). This prophecy of Christ, concerning his sitting at the right hand of Power, which is simply the throne of power as King, was fulfilled at His ascension. On Pentecost, Peter said that Jesus was the one whom God had put on David’s throne (Acts 2:30-33). But the Jews had refused to believe it, and according to Peter, “...by the hands of lawless men did crucify and slay (the Christ).”

When the question was put to Peter, “But who say ye that I am?” Peter replied, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” It was upon this confession of the truth of Jesus

being Messiah King that Jesus said the Church would be established. This is the question for all men for all time. The apostles went forth preaching that “Jesus is the Christ.” Not that He someday would become the Christ (King of the World) but that He is already crowned King.

From the Pentecost sermon that Jesus sits on David’s throne, Peter went to the temple and again began preaching that Christ fulfilled **ALL THE PROPHECIES** (Acts 3:18). Philip went to Samaria “preaching good tidings concerning the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ.” Saul was converted and “confounded the Jews that dwelt at Damascus, proving that this is the Christ.” This could mean nothing less than the fact that Paul (formerly named Saul) was showing that the prophecies of a coming King had been fulfilled, that Jesus was the Messiah King. To the Ephesians he wrote that God has “made us alive together with Christ (by grace have you been saved) and raised us up with him and made us to sit with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,” that is, in Messiah (King) Jesus (Eph. 2:5-6). The heart of our confession is that we believe that Jesus is The Christ.

The center of controversy of the whole world was then and is now, “Who say ye that I am?” Does He fulfill the prophecies, or do we look for another? Do we recognize the Kingship of Jesus or not? The Psalmist predicted such a controversy. “Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the Lord and against His anointed, saying, Let us break their bonds asunder, and cast away their cords from us. He that sits in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. Yet have I set my King upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree, the Lord hath said unto me, **THOU ART MY SON: THIS DAY HAVE I BEGOTTEN THEE.**” (Psa. 2:1-7).

Hebrews 5:5 quotes this Psalm showing that it has **ALREADY BEEN FULFILLED** in Christ. He already sits as king upon God’s holy hill, the eternal throne, of which the city of Jerusalem on the hill of Zion was only a figure or type.

If ever there was a time when rulers of the world took counsel to break the laws (bonds) of God, and “cast away” the cords of righteous commandments and institutions, (such as family and church and sovereign governments) that day is now. Madelyn Murray O’Hare rages against the reading of the Bible by astronauts in space, and multitudes of atheists infest the government propaganda centers called Public Schools showing films on sex which literally rage against Christian morals, teaching the lies of evolution to undermine faith in God’s revealed word. Others rage against the church, even while claiming to be Christians. Christ-denying statesmen (?) propose fantastic peace deals, and the people imagine vain things such as a brotherhood of all men embracing both Christian and anti-Christian, the elimination of all human needs in this world under the ultimate Utopia of perfection while the earth is still inhabited by sinners.

God laughs. But His laughter ends in wrath and sore displeasure. He has set His King in Zion. “This day have I begotten thee.” Not only is Christ the only-begotten of God, born

of the virgin Mary, but He is also the first born from the dead, and enthroned as King of the Universe.

The entrance of the Christ into the stream of humanity through the virgin Mary was considered by writers of the New Testament as the climax and fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, save for those which speak of final and eternal destiny. But the modern idea of Christmas is embedded in tradition and fantasy to the degree that little is thought of God's design. Instead of seeing Christ as King, men see Jesus as a "Babe of Bethlehem."

The world has traded Christ for Christmas. (Would that men loved Christ the way they love Christmas). The birth of Jesus is accompanied by songs of peace, but that peace, as most people see it, is something for the future, as if the true Christ has not come yet.

"My peace I give unto thee," He said. Why be fooled into thinking that there can be any other kind of peace? In the World there is a warfare between Christians and the spiritual supporters of Satan, a warfare that has no end until Satan and his powers are destroyed by the second coming of Christ. Why waste time and energy supporting schemes and movements where God has no part and which are doomed to failure? "For unto us a child is born... and the government shall be upon his shoulder" (Isa. 9:6). Here is peace: to know that Jesus rules as the Messiah King. To know that He is the Savior, that in His death He met the penalty for sin. To know that "all authority is given unto (Him) in heaven and on earth" so that we do not fear what men may do, since He is over all. To know that when He comes again it will be to judge and destroy all those who in effect said, "We will not that this man reign over us" (Luke 19:14, 27), and that He will raise up and give immortality to all who have confessed Him as Lord.

Thus it is a matter of life and death. The purpose of the Christ becoming flesh and blood was to die a flesh and blood death on the cross meeting the sin penalty, that man himself might not die in the lake of fire. The hope of the Christian (all who truly submit to Christ as King) is life that is immortal, in a glorified body, in the "new heavens and new earth wherein dwells righteousness." If one cannot submit to the King now in this world, he will have no opportunity in the next, for he will be judged and punished by death at the King's return.

All problems turn upon this one pivot: the Messiah King. When men recognize Him as the reigning Monarch, they obey, keep His commandments, do good works and thus establish order and truth in the land. Where His rule is unrecognized men rage against Him, working dishonor and wickedness, vainly seeking to set up their own laws known as humanism and socialism, and bringing nations down into senseless ruin. No better example exists than our own nation which is almost ready to self-destruct with evangelists running all over it announcing that the Kingdom is coming, just around the corner.

When the King returns, He will destroy all those who do not **NOW** recognize His Kingdom, which He said is “righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit” (Rom. 14:17).

To know that Jesus is Messiah King is to understand that “All things work together for good even to them that are called according to His purpose” (Rom. 8:28). He has authority and power to so make things work. His purpose is to make us immortal, in His image, to dwell in His glorious presence forever. This is peace and joy.

Our task at this season, as in all seasons, is to confess Jesus as Messiah King, to show forth the characteristics of His Kingdom in contrast to the kingdoms of the world, to live as those whose “citizenship is in heaven”, whose kingdom is “not of this world.” This means living by His commands and upholding His truth.

When Jesus was presented to the Jews as their King, they cried out, “We have no king but Caesar.” Their cry is still heard in the land. It is up to all who are Christian to cry out to the contrary, that we have a King who is not Caesar, who is called Jesus the Messiah.

“Who say ye that I am?”

.....
Copyright © Curtis Dickinson. Formatted and Posted by Ken Fortier Ministries. Permission is hereby granted by Mrs. Regina Dickinson to reproduce and distribute Curtis’ articles to as many as possible. This statement is to remain attached to this article for permission to be valid. Vol. XIII, Number 12.
.....