

## Lesson 3

# The Coming Messiah

## Introduction

I have never liked being on low ground, especially down inside a deep valley. A few years ago, I was blessed with the incredible and exhilarating experience of hiking in the Rocky Mountains outside of Calgary, Alberta. For this particular mountain, the trailhead begins in a valley where viewpoints are limited. There is less light. It is often hard to get a true sense of direction.

But, as you begin to climb out of the valley, reaching new heights at different points on the trail, perspectives begin to change, and things become brighter as you step out into full view of the sun. At one stop, you may begin to see through the trees and see the valley below. Higher still, you find yourself at the tree line with an incredible and uninterrupted view of the expanse behind. Finally, you reach the top of the ridge, with an unlimited, 360° view of the world below, seeing clearly what you could not see before. Now you have a full view of the trail that got you there, with an understanding of how it led you to the position you now occupy.

As I thought about this again, it reminds me of the progression we find inside Scripture in regard to the coming Messiah.

It could be said that on its most basic level, the Bible could be divided into three sections. The first section covers the creation accounts in Genesis 1-2 and the part of the narrative contained in Genesis 3.1-6. The second section begins in Genesis 3.7 and continues through the end of Revelation 20. It describes God's relentless work to bring us a Savior. The last section begins with Revelation 21 and ends with the picture of our eternal existence in heaven with God forever and ever without the presence of sin. Looking at the Bible in this way, you can summarize it as *our world before sin*, *our world with sin*, and *our world after sin*. It is, in that second section, where we find the gradual revealing of God's plan to bring Jesus into our world. God devised this from before the foundation of the world, Ephesians 1.4; 2 Timothy 1.9.

In this lesson, we will define and explore the progression of the term *Messiah* in the Old Testament. As time marches forward, the way the Jews used the term began to take on a specific meaning that looked forward to a coming King. By the time of Jesus' arrival, the entire Jewish nation was desperate for a national leader who would unite them and return them to their former prominence.

The Messiah's coming was clearly foretold. How?

## A Gradual Unveiling

At the instant Adam and Eve sinned, our great God and eternal Father began to execute the greatest rescue plan ever devised. The first hint is seen in Genesis 3.15 with the curse on the serpent. God promised to *put enmity between (Satan) and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he*

***shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.*** This prophecy had its ultimate fulfillment in Jesus' victory over Satan and death on the cross. From this point forward, we find references in almost every book of the Old Testament referring to the coming Christ. How much did the early characters of the Bible understand about a coming Messiah?

It's hard to say. But it is clear to say that the prophecies regarding the Messiah become more definite as the ages went by. The expectation grows in each successive generation, especially after the establishment of the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7. Yearnings for a deliverer soar during the time of the major and minor prophets. Brighter and brighter the light becomes as time progresses.

## **What is a *Messiah*?**

**Messiah** comes from the Hebrew word *mashiach*, which means "anointed one." Its Greek equivalent is *christos*. It refers to an act of consecration whereby an individual is set apart to serve. The word has several applications in the Old Testament. All of them have to do with installing a person into an office in a way that will be regarded as having been sanctioned by God. The word originally referred to a *physical anointing*, but over time, the word took on a **metaphorical significance** as *one chosen and appointed by God to be His instrument*.

The term is applied generally to:

- **priests**, Leviticus 4.3, 5
- **patriarchs**, 1 Chronicles 16.17-22
- **prophets**, 1 Kings 19.16

There is an interesting list of *anointed* individuals inside the Old Testament. Here are few examples:

- **Cyrus**, Isaiah 45.1 - *anointed* to execute the divinely appointed task of *subduing nations, loosing the belt of kings, and open doors before him*. Cyrus was God's agent for delivering Israel from Babylonian captivity.
- **Elisha**, 1 Kings 19.16.
- The **nation of Israel**, Habakkuk 3.13.
- **Saul**, 1 Samuel 9-10.
- **David**, 1 Samuel 16.6, 13; 2 Samuel 2.4; 5.3.
- **Solomon**, 1 Kings 1.39.
- The **royal lineage of David** was known as *anointed ones*. See Psalm 2.2; 20.6; 28.8. The Jews regarded their king as a sacred person to whom loyalty and respect were to be accorded. Consider David's respect for the position Saul held, 1 Samuel 24.6, 10; 2 Samuel 1.14. The kings were viewed as God's representative before the people. They were viewed as "the Lord's anointed," and never in the absolute, "the anointed one."

The only Old Testament usage of the term in reference to a coming Messiah appears in Daniel 9.25-26 where a figurative 70-week period is used to describe the time between the rebuilding of the temple and the appearance of a "messiah, a prince."

## How *Messiah* Became Connected with Jesus

The expectation for an eternal king from David's line who would reign over Israel in justice and righteousness, began to take shape with David and the establishment of the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7.5-16. We find an interesting play of words in 7.11b. Instead of David building a house for God, *God would build a house for David.*

**Read 2 Samuel 7.11-16 and Psalm 85.4-5, 20-37.** When we take these two Scripture references together, we observe promises of:

- **Continuity of David's seed** - Psalm 89.5, 30, 37; 2 Samuel 7.12.
- **God's continual faithfulness and mercy** - Psalm 89.5, 25, 29; 2 Samuel 7.15.
- **A unique Father/son relationship** - Psalm 89.27-28; 2 Samuel 7.14.
- **Solomon's building of the temple** - 2 Samuel 7.13.
- **Peace and security in the land** - 2 Samuel 7.10-11; Psalm 89.22-26.

Thus, the Davidic covenant becomes a living symbol of God's covenant relationship with the nation as a whole. With its establishment, the idea of a future time with an ideal kingship begins to develop.

Here are a few key passages that refer to the Davidic Covenant. As you read, identify the words and phrases that could point to Jesus.

### ***Psalm 132.10-18***

Beginning in verse 10, this psalm uses *Messiah* to describe an "anointed one" who would come at a future time. Zion is His dwelling place, 132.13-14. There God would make *a horn to sprout for David.* (See Luke 1.69 where Zechariah prophesies about the coming of Jesus.) In 132.17b, God has set up *a lamp for my anointed.* In their immediate context, both of these metaphors most likely point to the perpetuity of the Davidic Dynasty. However, as time progressed, they would begin to be understood with a Messianic application.

### ***Psalm 2***

This is thought to be an "enthronement psalm." When other nations who were under the rule of Israel plotted against Yahweh and His anointed, God *holds them in derision* and *terrifies them in his fury*, 2.4b, 5b, and repeats *the decree*, 2.7. What is *the decree*? It is thought that it is a reference to the promise of the Davidic covenant in 2 Samuel 7.5-16. A reference is made to the Sonship of the Anointed one and in the next verse, worldwide dominion comes into view, 2.8-9.

### ***Psalm 110***

This psalm is closely connected to Psalm 2. Both psalms include statements of Yahweh to the king. He is again promised victory over his enemies by God's power and intervention, 110.1-2, 5-7. Notice how this psalm begins with a statement from Yahweh to "my Lord." He is told that he will sit at the right hand of God until his enemies are made his footstool. He is also told that he will *rule in the midst of his enemies*. The unique position and power offered this person is also seen here through a priestly role, 110.4b.

## How Early Christians Viewed These Texts

While the view of a Messiah may have been cloudy for those living during David's time, after the period of the exile and into the days leading up to Jesus, the Jews had a common understanding that God was going to raise up a deliverer for His people. By the time of Jesus, the majority of Jews associated the *Messiah* with the geo-political situation of the day and envisioned a time when their nation would once again be independent and a dominant player on the world scene. This view seems to have been held by the apostles, even up to the time just before the giving of the Spirit in Acts 2. On the day of His ascension, the apostles asked, *Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?* See Acts 1.6.

It was through the giving of the Spirit and the subsequent teaching of the Apostles that the church began to understand the spiritual nature of the work of the Messiah. The passages previous mentioned are viewed as essential Scriptures in understanding the authority and role of Jesus in accomplishing God's plan for mankind. Let's review these and examine how the early Christians viewed them.

### ***Psalm 2.7-9***

These verses were seen by early Christians as a promise for Jesus' vindication over His enemies, Acts 4.25-26, His victory over death, Acts 13.33; Hebrews 1.5; 5.5, and His eternal reign, Revelation 227.

### ***Psalm 110***

This psalm affirmed Jesus' priestly as well as royal role. Early Christians viewed these passages as affirming Jesus' resurrection and exaltation to the right hand of God. See Matthew 22.44; Mark 12.36; Luke 20.42-43; Acts 2.34-35; 1 Corinthians 15.25; and Hebrews 1.13. One can also tie in Hebrews 5.6, 10 which speaks of Jesus' status as the high priest of the new covenant.

## Conclusion

We are indeed blessed. God has given us the completed message of His word. It was delivered through inspired prophets, apostles, and writers. Peter says the message was:

searched and inquired carefully by the prophets, inquiring what person or time the Spirit of Christ in them was indicating when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glories. It was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preached the good news to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven, things into which angels long to look.

– 1 Peter 1.10-12

This finished message gives us all we need to know to receive forgiveness of sin and have a relationship with God. Praise God for His willingness to send us a Messiah to save us from eternal destruction!

## For Thought and Reflection

1. What passage contains the first hint of the greatest rescue plan ever devised?
2. What does *Messiah* mean in Hebrew? Greek?
3. To what three things is the term generally applied to in the Old Testament?
4. Of the list of *anointed ones* in the Old Testament, which one(s) stand out to you the most? Why?
5. What is the only Old Testament passage that refers to a coming Messiah?
6. Summarize the importance of the Davidic Covenant.
7. Research the term *horn* as used in Psalm 132.17. What is the meaning of this metaphor? How is it applied in the New Testament?
8. What are the key points in Psalm 2 that refer to Jesus?
9. What are the key points in Psalm 110 that refer to Jesus?

10. What do passages like Genesis 49.10 and Numbers 24.9, 17 tell us about the authority and place Jesus would occupy?
  
11. Explain the early Christian viewpoint of Psalm 2.7-9.
  
12. Explain the early Christian viewpoint of Psalm 110.
  
13. How has this lesson helped you in your understanding of the Messiah?