

Question: Can you explain the importance of believing that Jesus was born to be the Messiah and the reasons for believing it? (Part 1 of 2)

“Messiah” is a Hebrew word that translates into the Greek language as “Christ” and into English as “Anointed One.” In the Old Testament, three groups are called God’s “Anointed Ones”: prophets, priests and kings. However, most of the emphasis is upon the anointed kings. But, the anointed kings of both Israel and Judah failed to live up to the life and purpose God had for them. Thus, the Old Testament prophets spoke of one who was to come and fulfill the role of God’s true Anointed One: the God-man who would rule with justice over God’s people forever.

The New Testament opens with the announcement of the birth of Jesus as the “Christ” (Messiah) (Matthew 1:18), the “Son of God” (Luke 1:31-33). The gospel writers demonstrated that Jesus fulfilled prophecy after prophecy of the coming Messiah from his birth to his death. In fact, Henry Liddon, a nineteenth century professor at Oxford University in England, found 332 distinct predictions literally fulfilled by Jesus. For example, Daniel 9 indicated that the Messiah had to come before the second temple was destroyed. This temple was destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. Micah 5:2 spoke of Bethlehem, the town where Jesus was born, as the Messiah’s birthplace. Isaiah 7:14 predicted a virgin birth for one who would be called “Immanuel” which means “God with us” (Matthew 1:22-23). Prophecies of his ministry, his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, his rejection, betrayal, crucifixion between two thieves and his words upon the cross are cited by the gospel writers. The detailed prophecies of Isaiah 53 alone provide amazing corroboration that Jesus was indeed the Messiah/Christ who came to save the world from sin through his own death.

The importance of Jesus’ birth as Christ/Messiah cannot be overstated. The Gospel of John begins by telling us that “the Word” was not only “in the beginning with God” but that he “was God” (John 1:1). A few verses later John explains that this one who is called “the Word” became “flesh and lived for a while among us” (John 1:14). This one who “was God” took on flesh like us by means of the virgin birth. Being born of the

virgin Mary (a human) and conceived by the Holy Spirit from God (Matthew 1:18, 20), he became “Immanuel” (God with us), the God-Man.

For those who came to believe in the child who was born in Bethlehem, he became the source of new life and light in a dark world. As our Messiah, he has delivered his people from the from sin’s guilt and power through his death. This means believers have forgiveness, salvation and eternal hope. As the one who was born “prince of peace,” he has brought to believers a peace that passes understanding even though they may live in a world at constant war. As our Messiah-King, he has established his kingdom. He will reign until every enemy is placed under his feet. At that time he will reign completely. However, each of us must decide if we will allow him to reign in our own hearts and lives. He will not force himself upon us.

Please read next week’s article for more evidence that Jesus literally fulfilled the many Old Testament prophecies of the coming Messiah.

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