07

Messiah

God's Answer

Thirteen points every follower of Jesus should know. A study by Pastor Andy Cisneros.

Messiah: *God's Answer*

What does Messiah mean?

Messiah comes from the Hebrew word *mashiach* and means "anointed one" or "chosen one." The Greek equivalent is the word *Christos* or, in English, Christ. The name "Jesus Christ" is the same as "Jesus the Messiah." In biblical times, anointing someone with oil was a sign that God was consecrating or setting apart that person for a particular role. An "anointed one" was someone with a special, God-ordained purpose.

In the Old Testament, people were anointed for the positions of prophet, priest, and king. God told Elijah to anoint Elisha to succeed him as Israel's prophet (1 Kings 19:16). Aaron was anointed as the first high priest of Israel (Leviticus 8:12). Samuel anointed both Saul and David as kings of Israel (1 Samuel 10:1; 16:13). All of these men held "anointed" positions.

Who is the Messiah?

The Old Testament predicted a coming Deliverer, chosen by God to redeem Israel (Isaiah 42:1; 61:1–3). This Deliverer the Jews called the Messiah.

The promise of this redeemer begins very early in the scriptures. In Genesis 3:15 the LORD told the serpent that the seed of the woman would crush his head. While this could be any man, it has been generally understood to refer to the Messiah. Gen. 12:3 explains that a descendent of Abraham would be a blessing for the whole earth. In Gen. 17:18 – 19 we learn that this promised seed would come through Isaac, not Ishmael. (This is an important point in today's world). In chapter 28:13 – 14 the promise continues through Jacob and in chapter 49:10 moves on through the tribe of Judah. In 2 Samuel 7 God promises David that one of his descendants would eventually sit upon his throne as king over an everlasting kingdom. The prophet Isaiah describes his reign in Isaiah 11:1 – 10.

As we consider this promised seed of Abraham, this descendant of David, we must look at some prophecies that are not so pleasant. In Isaiah 53, speaking of this promised servant, the prophet describes him as despised, stricken, pierced and crushed. Psalm 22, though a plea for help by David, is generally seen as a description of a suffering servant, that promised seed. In Zechariah 12:10 - 14 there is a description of the return of that stricken servant and the restoration of Israel. Chapter 14 describes the establishment of the eternal Kingdom of God.

In spite of these prophecies Jesus' followers failed to understand that their Messiah was destined to suffer and die (Luke 18:31 – 34). They were obviously blinded by their hope of a restored Israel and the elimination of the Roman tyranny (Luke 19:11 – 14; cf. Dan. 7:13 - 14). After his resurrection they thought, "Surely now he will make good on God's promise of a restored Israel", but, thanks to the .Holy Spirit, they not only came to understand but became avid messengers of the good news (John 14:25 – 27; Acts 1:6 – 9).

The religious and political leaders of the country, however, worried only about their safety and positions. They feared that this upstart would "rock the boat" and create an uprising, bringing the Roman legions down on their heads (Luke 22:1 – 2). In fact, their failure to recognize Jesus for what he truly was resulted in just that. In 70 A.D. Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed and a few years later the Jews were driven from their land with the threat of death for any that returned.

The Lamb of God

In Revelation 5 the Apostle John relates his vision of a lamb standing at the throne of God. Starting with verse 5 where one of the heavenly elders tells John not to weep for *"The Lion of the tribe of Judah, the root of David, has triumphed."* Then John sees this so called Lion. It was a lamb that appeared to have been slain. He goes on to describe a heavenly chorus singing to that lamb, *"You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals because you were slain and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation"* (v. 9).

The idea of a lamb being slain for the sins of God's people had its beginnings very early in the Old Testament. Abel was approved by God because he gave some of the firstborn of his flocks as an offering to God (Gen. 4). Abraham obviously practiced such offerings because Isaac questioned him when he was about to sacrifice his son saying, *"Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?"* (Gen. 22:6 - 8). The greatest example is found in Exodus 12 where the children of Israel were instructed by God to kill a lamb and paint the doorposts and lintels of their homes with its blood. That night the firstborn of every Egyptian family died, but the death-angel *passed over* the houses that were *under the blood of a lamb.* A short time later when God gave the Law to Moses on Sinai it included a lot of instruction regarding the various required offerings including the sin offering, guilt offering and the burnt offering. All required the killing of a lamb, a goat, or a bull, or for the very poor, a dove. As the writer of Hebrews states, *"The law requires that nearly everything be cleansed with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."* (Heb. 9:22). In chapter 10 he goes on to say that these offerings were just a reminder of sins, *"Because it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin"* (v. 4).

Fortunately God has made a better way for us. *"So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."* (Heb. 9:28). Indeed, he is the Lamb of God.

Is Jesus the Messiah?

Jesus of Nazareth was and is the prophesied Messiah (Luke 4:16–21 & John 4:25–26). Throughout the New Testament we see proof that Jesus is the Chosen One: *"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"* (John 20:31). We also hear testimonies that Jesus is *"the Messiah, the Son of the living God"* (Matthew 16:16). The ultimate evidence that Jesus is indeed the promised Messiah, the Anointed One, is his resurrection from the dead. Acts 10:39–43 is an eyewitness testimony to his resurrection and the fact that *"he is the one whom God appointed as judge of the living and the dead."*

GENEALOGY

In the first verse of chapter one of Matthew's gospel it says, *"A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham:"* This genealogy of the Messiah, the family tree of Jesus, his ancestry, his lineage, was very important because the promised Messiah was to be a descendant of Abraham (Gen. 12:3, cf. Gal. 3:16) and of David (2 Sam. 7:12 – 16). Matthew begins with Abraham through David (v. 6) to Joseph, the legal father of Jesus. Luke also thought it imperative to give a genealogy (Luke 3:23 – 38). He gives it with a great amount of detail listing 77 names in the line of the Messiah. He begins with Joseph then goes back through David and Abraham, then all the way back to Adam. We'll discuss these two genealogies later.

There is today a rising interest in ancestry, in genealogical records, in going back to our roots, looking up the family tree to locate the famous and the infamous in our family history. Genealogies to the Jews were, and still are, extremely important. They were not just curiosities. They were not a form of recreation. They were not just a matter of pride. They were not just for an emotional high or to give one a sense of belonging to something bigger than one's self, something that has significance. To the Jews genealogies were critical. Here are a number of reasons why.

Ancestry determined one's claim on land. This was based on the original tribal allocation of the land of Canaan (Numbers 34). When the children of Israel went in into that "promised land," God divided it up and allocated it according to tribal parcels. Ancestry became very critical in determining anyone's claim on a piece of land for *"No .inheritance shall be transferred from one tribe to another tribe"* (Numbers 36:9).

Ancestry determined claims to the right of inheritance. Should a person come along and claim they had a right to a property or a right to servants or to an estate; if they claimed a right to crops or some other material possessions, the validity of that claim would be determined by their genealogy, a genealogy they

could verify.

In the book of Ruth there is an interesting example of this. Read Ruth 3:9 - 4:12. You might also continue reading verses 16 and 17 of chapter 4 which explain why Ruth, a Moabite woman, holds such high esteem among the Jews.

Ancestry established the basis of taxation. Joseph and Mary traveled to Bethlehem, the city of David, to register because they were of the house and line of David. Bethlehem was the birthplace of that family and that's where their genealogical records were kept. It was on the basis of those records that taxation was assessed (Luke 2:1 – 5).

Beyond that, and, perhaps even more importantly, any claim to the priesthood had to be verified by genealogy. Any time somebody made a claim to a priestly status, it had to be proven that they were in fact of the priestly line, a descendant of Levi. This remains an issue yet today for the Orthodox Jews. They are looking forward to the restoration of the temple and the reestablishing of temple worship. Therefore, they are taking all necessary measures to be ready when it happens.

The book of Ezra records a similar situation. Returning from the Babylonian exile the Jews rebuilt the temple and reestablished their worship system. In chapter 2 there is a list of those men who would serve as priests, singers and other temple servants. In verses 61 and 62 there is a short list of those who thought they could serve, but family records were not found to prove their worthiness. Therefore, they were excluded.

Any claim to royalty, to being king or Messiah, would have to be verified. He would have to have proof that this one claiming to be King had lineage directly from the great king who was David himself. So, if you claimed a royal pedigree, you had to prove it by your genealogy.

Therefore, in the theocracy of Israel (theocracy meaning a kingdom under the rule of God) described by Scripture and led by God-ordained priests and kings, genealogies became critical.

Claiming to be the Messiah; claiming to be the King; claiming to be the Savior of the world is one thing - - proving it is something else. Luke was very good at gathering the historical proof that Jesus was, and is, that Messiah. For example, we go all the way back to chapter 1 of Luke where he relates the story of an angel who comes to Zacharias and tells him that he and his barren wife Elizabeth, who were probably in their seventies or eighties by then and had never been able to have children, were going to have a miracle happen in their lives. They were going to have a son and that child will be named John. He would prepare the people for the coming of the Messiah. So, the first proof then is to have a prophet born miraculously who will tell us who that Messiah is. You know the story, how John pointed to Jesus one day and said, *"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world."* (John 1:29).

Then divine revelation in Luke 1 tells us about the angel Gabriel who came to visit a virgin. Mary was a young girl possibly as young as 13 or 14 years of age. The angel tells her that she, though a virgin, will literally be impregnated by the Holy Spirit. She will conceive miraculously in her womb without a man and

she will give birth to the Messiah, the King, the promised Son of David, who will rule forever and ever. Thus, a divine revelation from God to Zacharias and Elizabeth plus another divine revelation from God to Mary indicated that this child would be Jesus, the Messiah.

These four people give testimony - Zacharias, Elizabeth, Joseph, the earthly and legal father of Jesus, as well as Mary, the mother of Jesus. Mary's testimony has been called her *Magnificat* (Luke 1:46 – 55 NASB). All testify to the supernatural birth of the Savior.

But, that's not all. In addition to the testimonies just mentioned an angel of the Lord appeared to a group of shepherds in a field outside of Bethlehem to give testimony to them of the child that had been born in Bethlehem. Can you imagine the reaction of those men when, not just one angel appears, but the night sky is suddenly ablaze with light and a great company of heavenly host show up praising God. It's as if God Himself appears to attest to this child's status as the promised Messiah (Luke 2:8 – 15).

A little later when Mary and Joseph take the baby Jesus to Jerusalem to be dedicated you have the testimony of two godly saints there in the temple, Simeon and Anna, who identify the baby Jesus as the Messiah (Luke 2:25 – 38).

You also have the testimony of Jesus Himself who, at the age of twelve, was in the temple studying with the priests. When questioned about his reason for being there he answered, "I have to be in My Father's house doing My Father's work" (Luke 2:41 – 50).

`What Luke had been doing was really just amassing all of this evidence as proof that Jesus is indeed the Messiah the Jews longed to see. Luke adds another piece of evidence in chapter 4 in the account of Jesus' defeat of Satan in the temptation following His baptism.

Then you have the testimony of John the Baptist. The baptism of Jesus is recorded In Matthew 3:13 – 17. You should note in verse 17 the appearance of the dove and the voice from heaven declaring Jesus as God's Son. In chapter one of the Gospel of John there is an account of an event that happened sometime later. (Read verses 29 through 34) John the Baptist confidently states, *"This is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,"* and again, *"I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."* John was obviously a witness to the events mentioned in Matthew 3:17.

Why are there Two Genealogies?

Perhaps a better question is, "Why are the two genealogies so different?" These differences have been the source of much criticism. Non-believers especially see them as proof that the Scriptures are not inspired at all, but only the work of men that didn't know what they were talking about. We know differently, of course, but we need to be able to answer these critics.

Both genealogies emphasize the presence of both Abraham and David. Though the names between Abraham and David are identical there are very few other names common to both genealogies. Why is this so? There are a number of answers to that question, but none are absolute. Note the following:

1) Jesus had two parents therefore two genealogies are a reasonable idea. It is generally believed that Matthew's genealogy was Joseph's lineage while Luke records Mary's line. One important factor that might add credence to this idea is the fact that Matthew includes David's son Solomon in the list. Then goes on down through Jeconiah. Jeconiah is also called Coniah. In Jeremiah 22:30 it says of him, *"No man of his descendants will prosper sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah."* Luke's genealogy runs from David through his son Nathan.

2) According to the Mosaic Law when a husband died one of his brothers, or another close kinsman, was responsible for the widow and her offspring. The story of Ruth we looked at earlier was a good example of that. Thus, the name of the actual father of a person may have gotten confused with the name of their legal stepfather. For instance, Joseph might have been the *legal* heir of Heli (Luke), but the real son of Jacob (Matthew).

3) Not every name in the lineage is recorded. They might have jumped from a grandfather to a grandson for the sake of simplicity. The purpose of these genealogies was only to prove Jesus' connection to Abraham and David. All the rest, while pertinent and true, was really insignificant to that purpose.

Let me talk about those two genealogies together for a moment. Luke's is in the third chapter of his gospel. Matthew's is in the first chapter. The reason is Matthew is chronological. He just starts out with a chronological account of the genealogy of Jesus, then Jesus is born and then it goes from there.

Luke puts the genealogy in the third chapter because he sticks it in the credential section. He feels it fits well between the baptism and the temptation as an element of those final credentials of the Messiah. Luke in his genealogy, mark this, goes from the present to the past. He starts with the grandfather of Jesus and goes all the way back to Adam. Matthew does it the other way. He starts with Abraham and comes to the present. So Luke goes from the present to the past. Matthew goes from the past to the present. They are in reverse order. Luke goes all the way back to Adam and then God. Matthew goes only back to Abraham. Matthew traces the line only to Abraham because he is writing primarily to the Jews and he wants to satisfy the legality issue with them. Judaism began with Abraham. He was the father of that nation. All you have to do to prove messianic credentials to the Jew is to go back to Abraham through David, and that's what Matthew does. Luke, however, takes a more universal approach in his gospel. He wants to show how the Messiah links with all of humanity. He goes back through David, back through Abraham, all the way back to Adam, the son of God.

Luke's genealogy has 77 names. There are eleven times seven, i.e. eleven lists of seven names. Matthew has 42 names, three lists of 14. According to Matthew 1:17 it says, *"Fourteen generations...fourteen generations...fourteen generations."* So they had a systematic way to break them down and I believe they

probably did it for the sake of memorizing. They would be able to retain this genealogy more easily if they had eleven times seven, or three times fourteen, names on a list.

Is Jesus Qualified?

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 14:24; and Luke 24:19). The word *prophet* is from the Greek *prophetes* which literally means *one who speaks for* or *who speaks before*. Jesus speaks for God (John 8:28). He was and is God's spokesman (Luke 4:18 – 21). His primary message was about the kingdom of God (Matt. 4:23; Luke 4:43) and how God would have those who would share in that kingdom live their lives of faith (Matt. 5 thru 7 et al). He is a priest, because His death atones for our sins and reconciles us to the Father (see Hebrews 2:17 - 18; 4:14 - 16). As our High Priest he is the mediator between God and ourselves (1 Tim.2:5; Heb. 8:1 – 2, 6). And, he is a king, because after His resurrection God gave all authority to Him (see John 18:36; Ephesians 1:20–23). In Daniel 7:9 – 10 Daniel relates his vision of God on His throne. In verses 13 and 14 he describes the ascension of Jesus into God's presence where he receives the authority to rule as king.

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 said about the Messiah and what he would do (see Luke 24:25–27). 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).

How Did People Know the Messiah was Coming?

Because God is sovereign over the future, He alone is capable of giving prophetic insight into the future. In mercy He did this for His people in the Old Testament. He detailed for them who was coming to save them, how the Messiah would come, where the Messiah would come, when the Messiah would come, and why the Messiah would come, so that they would anticipate Jesus Christ.

Around 4000 BC, after Adam and Eve sinned, God prophesied to them that the Messiah (Jesus) would be born of a woman; he makes no reference to a father, which alludes to the virgin birth. This prophecy was given by God himself and was the first time the gospel was preached*: "I will put enmity between you* (the Serpent) *and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel."*

Around 700 BC Isaiah prophesied exactly how Jesus would come into human history: *"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel."* The promise that Jesus' mother would be a virgin who conceived by a miracle did, in fact, come true. Jesus' mother, Mary, was in fact a godly young woman, a virgin who conceived by the power of God. Jesus, a name that means "he saves his people from their sins," came as *"Immanuel,"* which means, "God is with us." Matthew 1:22–23 reveals that Isaiah's prophecy came true: "All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had spoken by the prophet*: 'Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel' (which means, God with us)."*

Some think that the prophecy in Isaiah does not refer to a virgin. They argue that the Hebrew word *almah* (which is used in Isaiah 7:14) typically means *"young woman,"* not *"virgin,"* whereas the Hebrew word *bethulah* typically means *"virgin."* However, there are many reasons why the verse should be read as referring to a virgin. Even if the word does mean "young woman," that does not mean that she was not a virgin. In that day, young women were virgins, making the terms synonymous for most young Hebrew women. Those unmarried women who were not virgins were subject to possible death under the law. If there was any question about her virginity, a woman was subject to physical inspection, which we see in Deuteronomy 22:14–22. The word *almah* is used elsewhere in the Old Testament to refer specifically to a young virgin woman. One clear example is Rebekah, who is described as *"very attractive in appearance, a maiden [bethulah] whom no man had ever known"* (Gen. 24:16). Further in the chapter we read that Rebekah was a virgin *[almah]*. In verse 43 that word is translated *maiden.* While the two words are virtually synonymous, apparently *bethulah* required a bit more clarification that the woman was a virgin whereas *almah* did not. Furthermore, two centuries before Jesus was born, we find that the Jews understood exactly what *almah* means: the Septuagint, the Jewish translation of the Hebrew Bible into Greek, translates *almah* as *parthenos,* which means *"virgin."*

Another point that needs to be made is that this prophecy, like many others in the Old Testament, has a dual fulfillment. You'll notice in verse 16 that before this promised child is old enough to know right from wrong *"the two kings you dread will be laid waste."* The kings he *dreaded* are named in verse 2, Aram (Damascus) and Ephraim (Samaria), neighbors to the north. The reason for the use of the word *almah* becomes clear in chapter 8 when Isaiah describes the conception and birth of his own son (v. 3). The *"prophetess"* was a young woman, but probably not a virgin. In verse 4 he quotes God's message, *"Before the boy knows how to say 'My father' or 'My mother' the wealth of Damascus and the plunder of Samaria will be carried off by the king of Assyria."* In 720 B.C. the Assyrian army overran those countries and carried off the inhabitants (2 Kings 17). Judah was spared only because God intervened (See 2 Kings 19:32 – 36). Thus Isaiah's prophecy was fulfilled, but a greater fulfillment was yet to come.

In the New Testament, Isaiah 7:14 is clearly interpreted as a prophetic promise about the birth of Jesus to Mary, who was both a young woman and a virgin. Concerning Jesus' birthplace, in roughly 700 B.C. Micah prophesied that Jesus would be born in the town of Bethlehem, saying, *"But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in*

Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days." This prophecy was fulfilled in Luke 2:1–7. Caesar Augustus had called for a census to be taken, which required that every family register in their hometown. Jesus' adoptive father, Joseph, was required to return to Bethlehem because he was a descendant of the family line of David. In God's providence, this census was required right when Mary was pregnant. She journeyed with her husband from their home in Nazareth to Bethlehem so that Jesus was born in Bethlehem in fulfillment of Micah's prophecy.

Malachi prophesied, *"Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me. And the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts"* (Mal. 3:1). The messenger of whom Malachi spoke was John the Baptist, who prepared the way for Jesus' to bring the new covenant, and the Lord he speaks of is the Lord Jesus Christ. Also the temple was destroyed in AD 70 and has not existed since. This means that Jews are still awaiting the coming of their Messiah; they wait in vain because he has already come to the temple and brought the new covenant of salvation. Isaiah prophesies in 700 BC about why we need a Messiah. He is God's arm of salvation reaching down to save sinners. Isaiah also says that the Messiah would come from humble circumstances and suffer great sorrow and grief by men in order to deal with the human sin problem through his death. He died as all men do, but not because of his own sin, but because he took on the sins of all mankind. In 2 Cor. 5:21 it says, *"God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God."* There is an interesting story in Numbers 21:4 – 9. The bronze snake (serpent – NASB, KJV) set up on a pole was a *"type"* of the sacrifice of Christ. The serpent represents sin and Jesus became sin for us. Like the sacrificial lamb the Old Testament has many such "*types",* items and events that symbolize and point forward to the work of Jesus and the kingdom of God. Such stories, while literal records of events, were selected by God to help us understand His work and purpose.

This sacrificial purpose of Jesus was fulfilled when, just as promised, he suffered and died in the place of sinners though he himself was sinless, was buried in a rich man's tomb, and rose from death to make righteous the unrighteous. Further, the Bible reveals the birth of Jesus as the pattern for our new birth (1 Peter 1:3 – 5). Both are miracles of God to be received by faith. Belief in Jesus as Messiah is an essential truth. In summary, people knew of Jesus' in advance because God prophetically revealed to them who would come, where he would come, when he would come, and why he would come. Now we look forward to his return as king over this world. Our hope is to rule with him as he prepares the world for the physical presence of God. (Rev. 20:6; 21:1 – 4).

Was Jesus Human?

The Bible affirms the humanity of Jesus Christ in a variety of ways. Jesus had a human name—Jesus (meaning "Yahweh saves") Christ (meaning "anointed one")—and a human genealogy. He was born of a woman, had brothers and sisters (Matt. 12:46 – 50), and was racially Jewish. Jesus grew physically, spiritually, mentally, and socially (Luke 2:52), experienced fatigue, slept, grew hungry and thirsty, worked

as a carpenter, and had friends he loved, gave encouraging compliments, loved children, celebrated holidays, went to parties, loved his mom, prayed, worshiped, and obeyed God. Jesus was emotional as well, for the Bible notes that Jesus experienced grief, had compassion, was stressed, was astonished, was happy and told jokes, and even wept.

Not only did Jesus have a physical body, but he also suffered and died. Taken together, these are clearly the ways we speak of human beings. They reveal that Jesus was, as Jesus and other Scriptures state, a man. The importance of this fact is found in 1 John 4:2–3, *"By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, and every spirit that does not confess Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you heard was coming and now is in the world already."* Peter writes in his letter, *"Christ therefore suffered in the flesh for our sakes*" (1 Pet. 4:1). So, when it is said that he hungered and thirsted, toiled and was ignorant of some things, that he slept and cried out and made requests and fled and was born and turned away from the cup—in general, he did all of these things which belonged to the flesh "for our sakes in the flesh," for this is precisely the reason the apostle himself said, *"Christ therefore suffered for our sakes in the flesh".* It is because of his humanity that he is the perfect example for us to pattern our lives after.

Empowered by God

The empowerment of Jesus by the Holy Spirit is repeatedly stressed in the Gospel of Luke. There we find that Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and given the title "Christ," which means anointed by the Holy Spirit. Jesus' aunt Elizabeth was "filled with the Holy Spirit" when greeting Jesus' pregnant mother Mary, and his uncle Zechariah went on to prophesy that their son John was appointed by God to prepare the way for Jesus. An angel revealed to Mary that she would give birth to Jesus because "the Holy Spirit will come upon you."

Once born, Jesus was dedicated to the Lord in the temple according to the demands of the law. There was a devout old man named Simeon waiting for them. *"It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Christ."* (Luke 2:26). Simeon was "in the Spirit" when he prophesied about Jesus' ministry to Jews and Gentiles (v. 27 – 35). John prophesied that one day Jesus would baptize people with the Holy Spirit (Luke 3:16; John 1:32 – 34). The Holy Spirit descended upon Jesus at his own baptism. It is curious that while the Gospels give little information about Jesus' childhood, all four include the account of Jesus' baptism. Matthew adds the interesting statement that the Spirit rested on Jesus, as if to suggest that the remainder of his life and ministry on the earth would be done under the anointing and power of the Holy Spirit.

In the remainder of Luke's Gospel, we discover that Jesus *was "full of the Holy Spirit "* (4:1), *"led by the Spirit"* (4:1), and came *"in the power of the Spirit"* (4:14). After reading Isaiah 61:1–2, which begins*, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,"* Jesus declared*, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing"*

(Luke 4:17 – 22). Luke continues by revealing that Jesus also *"rejoiced in the Holy Spirit"* (10:21). Gerald Hawthorne, says, "(Jesus) is the supreme example for them of what is possible in a human life because of his total dependence upon the Spirit of God."

There are two categories of reason why Jesus as our Messiah is a source of great comfort. The first is that Jesus is like us. The second is that Jesus is unlike us.

How Jesus Is Like Us

As the Messiah, Jesus understands our frailty. By enduring temptation, distress, weakness, pain, and sorrow he became the perfect high priest. He is sympathetic to our temptations, weakness, suffering, sickness, disappointment, pain, confusion, loneliness, betrayal, brokenness, mourning, and sadness (Heb. 4:14 – 16; 5:7 – 10). Jesus does not refrain from entering our sick, fallen, and crooked world. He was born into this world to feel what we feel and face what we face while remaining sinless. Subsequently, Jesus can both sympathize with and deliver us. Practically, this means that in our time of need, we can run to Jesus, our sympathetic priest, who lives to serve us and give us grace and mercy for anything that life brings.

In the Old Testament, the priest would humbly stand between God and His people as a mediator of sorts. He would bring the hopes, dreams, fears, and sins of the people before God as their advocate and intercessor. He would hear their confession of sin and pray for them. Furthermore, offering sacrifices was central to his role, to show that sin was very real and deserved death, while asking God for gracious forgiveness (Heb. 5:1 – 6). Then he would speak God's blessing on the people. All the functions of the priest are ultimately fulfilled in Jesus. But, unlike those Old Testament priests, Jesus' sacrifice made it unnecessary to continue offering other sacrifices (Heb. 10:10 – 14).

The book of the Bible that deals most thoroughly with the priestly role of Jesus is Hebrews. In Hebrews, we are told that Jesus is our "high priest." As our priest, Jesus has offered a sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sin. Not only is Jesus a priest superior to the Old Testament priests, but his sacrifice is also superior to theirs—he gave his own life and shed his own blood for our sin.

Hebrews reveals that Jesus' ministry as our high priest did not end with his going to heaven. Rather, Jesus is alive today and ministers to us as our high priest who intercedes for us before God. Practically, this means that Jesus actually knows us, loves us, pays attention to our lives, and cares for us. At this very moment, Jesus is bringing Christians' hurts, suffering, needs, and sins to the Father in a prayerful and loving way as our priest. Jesus' priestly intercession makes both our prayer and worship possible. We pray and worship the Father through Jesus our priest by the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, who has made our bodies the new temple on the earth (1 Cor. 3:16).

When we understand Jesus as our priest, we are able to know that he loves us affectionately, tenderly, and personally. Jesus' desire for us is nothing but good, and his ministry results in nothing less than life-changing intimacy with God. Jesus makes new life and obedience possible by his loving, compassionate, and patient service to us as a faithful priest.

Perhaps the most powerful text of Scripture on the importance of the priestly ministry of Jesus is Hebrews 4:15–16, says: *"For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need."*

How Jesus Is Not Like Us

One primary way in which Jesus is unlike us is that he alone is without sin. The focus on Romans 8:3 (that the Father sent his own Son *"in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin")* and Hebrews 4:15 which says he was one *"who in every respect has been tempted as we are – yet was without sin."* How could this be if Jesus did not have any of the sinful thoughts or desires like the ones we wrestle with all the time? Jesus had a human nature (??), he overcame it and showed us the perfect obedience that we can follow if we choose to live holy lives. Paul writes in 1 Cor. 15:45 that Jesus was "*the last Adam."* As such he was given the ability to choose. In Phil. 2:5 – 8 he explains that, <u>like</u> the first Adam, Jesus was made in the form of God, but, <u>unlike</u> the first Adam, he did not choose to be *"like God."* (see Gen. 3:1 – 5). Thus, the focus in Hebrews 7:26–27: We "*have such a high priest, holy, innocent, unstained, separated from sinners, and exalted above the heavens. He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people."* We see the *"likeness of sinful flesh"* in Romans as a point of similarity rather than a point of character whereby Jesus had a human nature. Subsequently, as the "last Adam" Jesus was like the first Adam prior to the fall—without a sin nature—and therefore had a completely free will to choose obedience out of love for God. Because Jesus is like us in that he was tempted, yet unlike us in that he never did sin, he can help us when we are tempted and show us how to escape sinful situations. Hebrews 2:17–18 says: *"Therefore he had to be made like his brothers in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For because he himself has suffered when tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."*

To redeem man the Messiah had to be perfect. This is precisely what the Bible teaches: *"For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus"* (1 Tim. 2:5). This verse reveals the threefold reasoning as to why Jesus, as our Messiah, is of such great comfort. (1) There is one God for all peoples, times, and places. (2) There is one mediator between sinful humanity and the one sinless God. This mediator remedies the sin problem that divides people and God so that there can be salvation and reconciliation. (3) Christ Jesus alone can mediate between God and man because he alone is perfect.

Jesus Is Our Missional Model

Roughly forty times in John's Gospel Jesus declares that the Father sent him. This is what Jesus meant when he taught that Christians would be sent as missionaries like him into cultures by the power of the Holy Spirit: *"As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you.' And when he had said this, he breathed on them and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'."*

From the missional life of Jesus we learn five great truths for our own life.

First, a missional life is contextual and crosses cultural barriers. Just as Jesus came to serve not to be served so we must do the same. and not merely remain in community with people of our own gender, race, income level, nationality, etc. Despite being contextual, a missional life does not condone or partake in the sinful worldly aspects of a culture, just as Jesus never sinned. Nonetheless, Jesus dressed, spoke, and ate according to Jewish culture, participated in their holidays, and observed their customs, so Jesus' people are also to live as missionaries in whatever culture God has sent them. Thus, in a very real sense, every Christian is a missionary whether they minister across the street or across the globe.

Second, a missional life is evangelistic. Just as Jesus did not merely come only to do good works for needy but primarily to save lost people, Jesus' people are likewise to pursue lost people for evangelistic friendships, to share our message, our hope.

Third, a missional life is humble. A missional life is one not lived solely for personal glory and upward mobility, but rather, values the gospel above all else. Subsequently, a missional approach to life often means that we make less money and live simpler lives than we could because we value gospel ministry above what worldly standards measure as success.

Fourth, a missional life is one devoted to the church. Jesus came to found, build, and head the church, his metaphorical body, to continue his evangelistic plan for the world. Therefore, Jesus' people are to give themselves to the church. This includes service and generosity as Jesus demonstrated so that not only can local churches grow, but more churches can be planted, more people reached, and more nations impacted by the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Fifth, a missional life is global. While Jesus mainly confined his ministry to Israel, he did minister to a Samaritan woman who then evangelized to her people, and the deaf man of Decapolis. Additionally, the announcement of Jesus' birth by both the angels and Simeon was to be good news for all nations. This is because Jesus was begotten to take away the sins of the world and establish the church as a mission center for the nations from which he would send out believers to be the salt and light of the nations. Jesus also prophesied that most of his followers would be from nations other than Israel because his love is for the entire world.

The world is our mission field, and Jesus is our model missionary who went before us and now goes with us as we continue in his work by his Spirit as his church for his glory to our joy.

JOURNAL

Notes & Reflections

What stood out to you in this study? Write down questions, verses to look up, and what God is teaching you.