

The Messiah

John 10:22-30

I wonder why these people in our scripture are asking Jesus if he is the Messiah. Was his being the Messiah or not something important to them and should it be important to us who live in the 21st Century? Since I am a modern person I went straight to the Internet to look for answers and even to determine the definition of Messiah or “the anointed one” according to Crosswalk Bible Dictionary. The term "messiah" means to smear or anoint. When objects such as wafers and shields were smeared with grease or oil they were said to be anointed; hence the commonly used term was "anoint" when grease or oil was applied to objects by Israelites and non-Israelites. Persons who were anointed had been elected, designated, appointed, given authority, qualified, and equipped for specific offices and tasks.

The biblical idea of the messiah and his work is divinely revealed; not originating in human thought. God made his intent and the consequences of the anointing act progressively known in the course of his self-revelation to humanity, the BIBLE. Anointing or smearing something with oil (2 Sam 1:21 ;Isa 21:5), prepared and qualified a person or object for effective service. This anointing was not self-appointed like men and women who anointed themselves for cleansing, beautifying, or preparing for participation in worship; which did not make them the anointed one, the Messiah. Although the tabernacle, temple, and sacrifices were anointed...neither were they the messiah.

The anointed person was chosen, designated, qualified, and consecrated by God for the position or tasks to which they were called. Some scholars insist that only an actual reigning king could be considered as the messiah; as the messiah was to

be a royal person. But the biblical messiah also includes the priestly and the prophetic offices. The biblical messiah, was a divine-human being, ordained by God the Father to be the mediator of the covenant and the administrator of the kingdom of God.

The Bible give us the portrait of the messiah in this fashion: Adam and Eve, created in God's image, were placed in a living, loving, lasting relationship, a covenant bond, with the Creator God. These human beings were given authority, ability, and responsibility to mirror, represent, and serve the sovereign Creator and King of the entire created cosmos. Adam and Eve were to believe, obey, and serve God in the living, loving, covenantal relationship. When Adam and Eve's deviated from the will, purposes, and goals of God; God immediately intervened and promised that the covenantal relationship would be restored through the victory that the seed of the woman would have over Satan. God did not remove or permit Adam and Eve to abdicate their creational covenantal position and responsibilities. Rather, God assured Adam and Eve that redemption and restoration would become realities in the lives and history of their seed (Gen 3:14-20). The seed of the woman would restore, continue, and bring to full fruition God's kingdom plans and goals.

Satanic efforts to render the redemptive/restorative covenant ineffective were seen in the murder of Abel (Gen 4:8) and the violence that saturated society before and during the first part of Noah's life (Gen. 4-5; 6:1-8). But God kept covenant with righteous, blameless, obedient, believing, and serving Noah. Noah, late in life, prophesied that Shem would be the messianic seed line bearer (Gen 9:25-27). Abraham, descendant of Shem, was called and appointed to be the covenant agent. He was to leave country, clan, and family to become the channel of messianic blessings to all nations (Gen 12:1-3). God covenanted in a special manner with Abraham, assuring him that via his seed God would carry out his

redemptive/restorative work. That Abraham and his seed would be able to do this was confirmed by God's assuring covenantal affirmation: "I am God Almighty I will make you very fruitful, be your God and of your descendants" (Gen 17:1-7). Two important messianic factors stand out: (1) the covenant Lord would continue the seed line; and (2) Abraham was called to believe, obey, and serve as the father of all believers who would receive the benefits of the Messiah.

The messianic seed line continued through Isaac and Jacob; Jacob prophesied that that line would continue through Judah (Gen 49:8-12); the line continued through Boaz and Ruth (Ruth 4:16-22); and David was told that his son's throne would be established forever (2 Sam 7:11b-16).

The messianic concept was evident in Abraham's life of faith, intercession on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen 18), and offering of the ram substituted for his son Isaac (Gen 22). Abraham's grandson Joseph, serving as a type of the Messiah, performed in a royal capacity but before he was lifted to that capacity he suffered humiliation. Once in a royal position, he became the savior of the seed line by functioning in the creational covenantal setting, collecting, preserving, and distributing food during years of famine.

Moses, another type of the Messiah, functioned in a royal capacity as lawgiver but he also served as a prophet. He was the greatest of the Old Testament prophets and the model of all faithful prophets who spoke God's word. Through Moses, God ordained the priesthood, ordered the building of the tabernacle, and prescribed the sacrifices. These were symbols and types of the messianic task, giving expression to the priestly mediatorial office, the God with you (Immanuel) principle, and the substitutionary death on behalf of sinners.

The prophets wrote of the Messiah. Isaiah said the Messiah be born of a virgin (7:14), be the wise, all-knowing ruling son of David (9:1-6), the fruitful branch who would bring redemption, restoration, and blessings in life (chap. 11). It was

Isaiah who proclaimed that the Messiah was to be the light to the Gentiles (49:6), the suffering, exalted One (52:13-53:12). The Messiah was to be the great comforting preacher of freedom, the healer and bringer of joy (61:1-3). Micah prophesied that the Messiah was to come through the royal Davidic seed line to shepherd his people and bring them security (5:1-4). Amos proclaimed that the Messiah of Davidic lineage would fulfill Yahweh's covenant promises to the nations (9:11-15). Jeremiah prophesied of the Messiah, the one of Davidic lineage who was to be the king of righteousness (23:5-6). Ezekiel called the exiles' attention to the Son of Man, the covenant mediator who would restore and shepherd his people (chaps. 34; 36). Postexilic prophets spoke of the Messiah as the royal, redeeming, restoring One to come (Hag 2:20-22 ; Zech 4:1-14 ; 6:9-15 ;9:9-10), Malachi spoke of the Messiah as a cleansing agent who, as messenger of the covenant, would bring healing in his wings (3:1-4 ; 4:1-3). Gerard Van Groningen¹ These are the things I learned from my Internet search!

The setting of our scripture is in the winter at the time of a Jewish religious festival. They are walking in the portico of Solomon in the temple, at the time of the feast of Dedication—what we know as the celebration of Hanukkah, the feast that recalls and commemorates God's reclaiming of Jerusalem and the rededication of the temple through the heroic faith of the Maccabees in 164 BCE, after its desecration by Antiochus IV, when he erected in the temple an image of Zeus. Celebrated with lighted lamps, the feast is a joyous one for Israel. John implied the people were celebrating God's light in the short days of winter, but Jesus, God's light of the world, was present, so they should have been worshipping Jesus rather than their traditional festivals. If the Messiah had come, then the center of God's activity, God's righteousness, and God's holiness has shifted from the temple and its work to the Messiah and his work.

Jesus' response to the demand by the Jews at the festival to declare if he is the Messiah seems at first to be clear and unequivocal. Even if the sentence "I have told you" points to an exchange in the past, it is nonetheless an affirmation. But then Jesus added, "You do not believe." Then Jesus pointed to his works and his unity with the Father. Jesus pointed to the unity of words and deeds. Jesus says what the Father is saying and does what the Father is doing. For Jesus, his messiahship was about the character of his deeds. "The Father and I are one" (v. 30). This oneness determines the character of both the Father and the Son. To see the deeds of the Son and to hear his words is to see and hear God the Father.

Lewis R. Donelson

Although Jesus was with them, they did not know him. They studied the scriptures to find him, but did not recognize them when he stood in front of them. This brings to mind the Jesuit priest Anthony DeMello who told a parable he entitled "The Explorer," which illustrates our predicament. In it, a person leaves his home village to explore the faraway and exotic Amazon. When he returns to his village, the villagers are captivated as the explorer tries to describe his many experiences, along with the incredible beauty of the place, with its thundering waterfalls, beautiful foliage, and extraordinary wildlife. How can he put into words, though, the feelings that flooded his heart when he heard the night sounds of the forest or sensed the dangers of the rapids? So he tells them they simply must go to the Amazon themselves. To help them with their journey, the explorer draws a map. Immediately the villagers pounce on the map. They copy the map, so that everyone can have his or her own copy. They frame the map for their town hall and their homes. Regularly they study the map and discuss it often, until the villagers consider themselves experts on the Amazon—for do they not know the location of every waterfall and rapids, every turn and bend?

People will often press us to "tell us plainly" about the things of God, and they want us to speak eloquently of our faith and journey. The most important task, however, might be to encourage and support others in making their own personal journeys and experiencing the living Lord themselves. For, as DeMello suggests in his parable, there can be a certain futility about drawing maps—however plain and explicit they might be—for armchair explorers. **Gary D. Jones**

Reflecting on our salvation in Christ this Sunday, the question might be asked, who is Jesus in your life? Is he your messiah? Is he the one who controls your life? Are your words and deeds reflective of that relationship where your life his in line with his covenant relationship? Does your life reflect that you rejoice in this season of Easter because you have confidence that his promises are true? Do you trust in God or in the power of presidents, Wall street advisors or your own bank balance? Jesus desires to be your messiah and wants to you show your willingness to be a part of God's service to others in the world....become the hands and feet of Christ in the world? **Joseph A. Bessler**

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ⁱ Bibliography. C. A. Briggs, *The Messiah of the Gospels*; N. L. Geisler, *To Understand the Bible Look for Jesus*; E. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament and a Commentary on the Messianic Predictions*; J. Jocz, *The Jewish People and Jesus Christ*; H. Lockyer, *All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible*; W. Manson, *Jesus the Messiah*; S. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh*; E. Riehm, *Messianic Prophecy: Its Origin, Historical Growth, and Relation to New Testament Fulfillment*; G. A. Riggan, *Messianic Theology and Christian Faith*; O. P. Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*; G. Stibitz, *Messianic Prophecy*; G. Van Groningen, *Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament*; M. Wyngaarden, *The Future of the Kingdom in Prophecy and Fulfillment*.