



# The Harvester

*Preparing Souls  
To Serve The Lord!*

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## Why Was Jesus Called the Christ? Part 1

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With the overall theme of our 48th annual lectureship being “Rise of the Messianic Kingdom,” the question in the title of this article is very relevant. The short answer to the question is two-fold: (1) because Jesus was truly the Messiah, the God-chosen “anointed one,” which is what the Koine Greek term translated “Christ” means; and (2) because the term “Messiah” was so politically and militarily charged in the first century, to have called Jesus “Messiah” would have left the wrong impression upon most Jews and would have prematurely stirred up unnecessary worldly strife. As usual with short answers, a deeper understanding will bring better appreciation to the subject at hand. With that in mind, the remainder of this study will give a more detailed examination of why Jesus was called Christ.

Jesus was known by many descriptions, but “the Christ” was among the most common and significant (Mt. 16:16, 20). Judaism was rich in the expectation of a messiah who would come and set matters straight for the Jewish people, at least in their nationalistic minds. This expectation is seen throughout the New Testament. When John the Baptist came on the scene, those who heard him “reasoned in their hearts ... whether he was the Christ or not” (Lk. 3:15). When priests and Levites were sent from Jerusalem to check out this rugged preacher with a distinct message, they asked, “Who are you?,” to which John confessed, “I am not the Christ” (Jn. 1:19-20). Later, when there arose a question among the Jews and John’s disciples about purification, John reminded them, “You yourselves bear me witness, that I said, ‘I am not the Christ,’ but, ‘I have been sent before Him

... He must increase, but I must decrease” (Jn. 3:28-30). After her encounter with Jesus, the Samaritan woman told her people, “Come, see a Man who told me all things that I ever did. Could this be the Christ?” (Jn. 4:29). After her people went out to hear Jesus, they told the woman, “Now we believe, not because of what you said, for we ourselves have heard Him and we know that this is indeed the Christ, the Savior of the world” (Jn. 4:42). Even toward the end of Jesus’ earthly life, during His mockery of a trial, the high priest stood and asked Him, “Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?” (Mk. 14:61).

The word “Christ” is from the Greek word *christos* (χριστός), which is a translation of a Hebrew and Aramaic word that is transliterated in Greek as *messias* (μεσσίας). *Messias* meant to “touch lightly” or “rub with oil,” and thus “anoint.” The designation “anointed” was a description of honor given to the high priest (Ex. 30:30) and kings. This kingly aspect is brought out particularly in the Psalms (2:2; 18:50; 20:6; 28:8; 45:7; 84:9; 105:15). The term “anointed” (*messias*) was also occasionally used to refer to the patriarchs (Ps. 105:15), to a prophet (1 Kgs. 19:5), to a Servant of the Lord (Isa. 61:1), or to the cherub on the holy mountain appointed for protecting God’s people (Ezk. 28:14). To better appreciate the word “Christ” as it applied to Jesus, a background study of messias and its various connotations is necessary.

**48th Annual Lectureship**  
**Rise of the Messianic Kingdom**  
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## Old Testament Background of “Messiah”

As mentioned above, the two primary Old Testament functions, or offices, that were associated with being anointed were that of priest and king. Later, the prophetic office sometimes involved anointing (1 Kgs. 19:16 cf. 1 Chr. 16:22; Ps. 105:15). Concerning the priests, upon inauguration of the Levitical system, both the high priest and the lesser priests were anointed (Ex. 40:15; Num. 3:3). Afterward, anointing seemed to be only for the high priest (Ex. 29:29; Lev. 16:32 cf. Lev. 4:3). Concerning kings, anointing was the primary and God-ordained ceremony instituting Jewish kings (1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1; 1 Kgs. 1:34, 39). The reason for the priests and kings being paired together with anointing is that:

[I]n both cases the anointing, corresponding to its character as a legal act, is as essential for the conferring of the authority connected with the office as it is for the resulting responsibility before God as the God of Israel. (Rengstorf 335)

Although Jesus would later serve as prophet, priest, and king, during this Old Testament period, only the role of king began to be associated with the idea of a Messiah. The connection was easily made due to the nature of the position of king as sovereign of his kingdom. God’s people would look for one to come who would exercise the “sovereign

kingly rule of God on the basis of the OT revealed faith” (Rengstorf 335).

As Old Testament history unfolded, the “political institution of kingship” came to be understood as the “foretaste of the rule of a perfect king by whom peace and justice would be realized forever” (Piper 331). Until the time of Isaiah, “Israel’s hope was confined to the restoration of the splendor of David’s kingdom, whose glory increased in proportion to the deterioration of Israel’s political and social conditions” (Piper 331). Isaiah showed that God as creator of all was concerned for all mankind, not just His covenant people, Israel (Isa. 2:2-3; 27:13). Thus, the belief and expectation arose that a divinely appointed Messiah-Savior would come in the future. This Messiah would provide a sense of security and adequate power to protect, while at the same time, save God’s people from impending doom and disaster (Mic. 5:3 cf. Ezk. 21:27).

God has always worked through agents, and the coming of His Messiah-Savior would be no different. God’s anointed was identified through a prophet as one who would “preach good tidings” (Isa. 61:1-3) and as a special Servant (Isa. 42:1-7; 49:1-9; 50:4-9; 52:12-53:12). Perhaps the most significant Old Testament passage bringing to light the coming Messianic agent is given by the prophet Daniel:

I was watching in the night visions, And behold,  
One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of

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\*Our final deposit for the month is usually made on the last Wednesday of the month. All contributions received after that time are reported on the next month’s financial statement.

heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, And they brought Him near before Him. 14 Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, That all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, Which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed. (Dan. 7:13-14)

In this passage, the agent of God's authority is described as "one like the Son of man." This reveals that He is human, but as the context reveals, He is more than a mere man. His humanity contrasts with the beasts designating the previous empires and the turmoil with which they were associated (Dan. 7:3-28). His coming with "the clouds of heaven" indicates His divinity. Clouds in the Old Testament were often associated with the presence of deity, such as when the glory of the Lord appeared in a cloud (Ex. 16:10), and in the inauguration of the Mosaic covenant (Ex. 19:9). In connection with Daniel 7:13, "the coming with clouds is an exclusively divine attribute" (Sabourin 304). This human figure came to the "Ancient of Days" and was given a universal kingdom, in which "all people, nations, and languages, should serve him." This was also an eternal kingdom, in contrast to the worldly kingdoms Daniel just described that would be destroyed. Thus, this "one like the Son of man" would be "the heavenly Sovereign incarnate" (Archer 90). Daniel saw this vision on the brink of the post-exilic period (Dan. 7:1, "the first year of Belshazzar" was about 552 BC). Through the post-exilic times and into the intertestamental period, expectations of this Messianic Sovereign's character and work would evolve.

## Intertestamental Background of "Messiah"

As the post-exilic period gave way to the intertestamental period, "anointing" began to designate a "status directly below God rather than a specific function" (Piper 333). For example, in the uninspired book, Psalm of Solomon, all the kings who were allied with Israel would be anointed (17:21-40). In other uninspired literature (some falsely ascribed), there was the coexistence of two Messiahs: one from the House of David and one from the House of Aaron, or Levi (*Testament of Judah* [T. Jud.] 21:2-5:24; *Testament of Levi* [T. Levi] 18; *Jubilees* [Jub.] 31:12-20; *Serek Hayahad* [1QS] 9:11; *Cairo Genizah* copy of the *Damascus Document* [CD] 12:23; 14:19; 19:10;

20:1). This idea of dual Messiahs probably goes back to the words of the angel who told Zechariah concerning the meaning of the vision of the lampstand and the two olive trees: "These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth" (Zec. 4:14). Whether it was two or one Messiah, intertestamental expectation was of a "ruler who would be thoroughly familiar with the law and whose faithful observance of it would set an example to the whole nation" (Piper 333).

It was not clear in intertestamental literature, however, whether the Messiah was to establish God's kingdom or only to prepare for its coming (*2 Esdras* [2 Esd.] 7:28; 12:34; *2 Baruch* [2 Bar.] 40:3). As a general rule, the literature of this time "considers God rather than the Messiah the one who ushers in the cosmic transformation and salvation" (*1 Enoch* [1 En.] 90:37f; *2 Esdras* [2 Esd.] 7:28f; *2 Baruch* [2 Bar.] 72:1-5) (Piper 333). The "saving agent" of God in the literature of this time had many titles, and "Messiah" is "by far the least frequent one" (Piper 333). All the different titles for this "saving agent" had specific meanings and expectations associated with them. During this time:

[The] whole Jewish literature agrees on only one feature of the Messiah: he will be a political ruler and national hero ... to deliver Israel from its oppressors and restore the authority of the law. (Piper 333)

In the Maccabean age of the intertestamental period, a Jewish nationalism began to grow. The idea of a warrior and conqueror transferred from Yahweh to the Messiah (*Sibylline Oracles* [Sib. Or.] 5:108f, 414-431; *2 Baruch* [2 Bar.] 70:9, 73; *1 Enoch* [1 En.] 38:2f; 90:38; *Jubilees* [Jub.] 23:30; *2 Esdras* [2 Esd.] 13:10f). Thus, the expectation of the Messiah became that of "rebel and political leader" (Piper 333). None of the literature depicts this Messiah as one who will suffer, not even the writings of Qumran (i.e., the Dead Sea Scrolls). Furthermore, the coming of the Messiah would be the sign that the final period of human history had begun (Piper 333).

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## Rise of the Messianic Kingdom — Schedule for January 16-19, 2023

### Monday, January 16

- 9:00 Overview of the Messianic Kingdom in Luke's Gospel  
(Bruce Daugherty)  
9:40 John the Baptizer's Preparation for the Kingdom (Phil Sanders)  
10:50 Isaiah 2 & Daniel 2 Fulfilled in Acts 2 (Emmanuel Daugherty)  
**Forum: Kingdom Concepts**  
1:25 Terms of Entrance into the Kingdom (Forest Antemesaris)  
2:00 Blessings of the Kingdom (Joshua Cantrell)  
2:30 Representatives of the Kingdom (Hiram Kemp)  
3:30-4:30 LADIES: Priscilla: Strengthening the Kingdom  
(Susan Stearsman)  
3:30—**Forum Questions**  
7:00 Kingdom Additions: Athenians (Jonathan Singh)  
7:40 Inauguration of Kingdom to the Jews (Acts 2) (Jeff A. Jenkins)

### Tuesday, January 17

- 9:00 Overview of the Spirit's Work in Acts (Stephen Atnip)  
9:40 The Prophecy About the Messiah as Prophet (Jeff A. Jenkins)  
10:50 Forgiveness as Fulfillment to the Promise to Abraham  
(Phil Sanders)  
**Forum: Kingdom Challenges**  
1:25 From the Inside: Unfaithful Members (Robert Lupo)  
2:00 From the Outside: Jew & Gentile Persecution (Rico Brown)  
2:30 Overcome: Paul's Shipwreck (Christian Torres)  
3:30 — **Forum Questions/Answers**  
4:30 — FSOP Appreciation Dinner  
7:00 Kingdom Additions: Philippian Jailor (Al Woodard)  
7:40 Inauguration of Kingdom to the Gentiles (Acts 10) (J. Clark)

### Wednesday, January 18

- 9:00 The Gift of the Holy Spirit (Stephen Atnip)  
9:40 Enthronement of the Messiah King (Vince Daugherty)  
10:50 Harmony of Paul's Conversion Accounts (Jimmy Clark)  
**Forum: Holy Spirit's Involvement**  
1:25 Miraculous Spiritual Gifts (David Stearsman)  
2:00 The Miraculous within Providence: the Eunuch's Conversion  
(Steven Lloyd)  
2:30 Aiding and Determining the Kingdom's Spread  
(David Stearsman)  
3:30-4:30 LADIES: Lydia: Kingdom Is for Women (D. Parramore)  
3:30—**Forum Questions**  
7:00 Kingdom Additions: Samaritans (Forest Antemesaris)  
7:40 The "Voice of the Prophets" (Acts 13) (Hiram Kemp)

### Thursday, January 19

- 9:00 The Jerusalem Meeting in Acts 15 (John Allan)  
9:40 Kingdom Faithfulness ... To the Point of Death (Will Vann)  
10:50 Three Baptisms Mentioned in Acts (Brian Kenyon)  
**Forum: Kingdom Outreach**  
1:25 Benevolence: Local Church and Abroad (Charles Broyles)  
2:00 Adjusting the Evangelistic Approach (Nate Miller)  
2:30 Churches Planted by Paul (Casey Paulin)  
3:30-4:30 LADIES: Euodia and Syntyche (Stephanie Kenyon)  
3:30—**Forum Questions**  
7:00 Finishing What Jesus Began (Hiram Kemp)  
7:40 Urgency of Kingdom Loyalty (Melvin Otey)

**\* Lunch will be provided each day by a local congregation**