



The Harvester

*Preparing Souls
To Serve The Lord!*

Volume 43

October 2022

Number 3

Why Was Jesus Called the Christ? Part 2

Brian R. Kenyon

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. In Part 1 of this study, consideration was given to the Old Testament background of the “Messiah” as well as the intertestamental development of the term. In Part 2, the New Testament consideration will be given.

First Century View of “Messiah”

By the time the “silent years” of the intertestamental period were broken by the “voice of one crying in the wilderness,” the Jewish expectation of who the Messiah would be and what He would accomplish was far from God’s intent. The typical Jews of the first century were expecting a mighty warrior-type Messiah with political power who would restore national Israel as the prominent kingdom they thought God intended (cf. Acts 1:6). Instead of a warrior-like restorer, though, Jesus came as a humble redeemer, with no political power. In the first century, “Judaism had become the slave of the letter of the OT law” (Jn. 5:46; Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:6 cf. Mt. 11:10; Mk.

14:27; Lk. 10:27-37), and thus failed to realize that Jesus was the “mighty agent and final revelation of God’s redemptive purpose” (Piper 338).

The Greek word *messias* (μεσσίας), translated “Messiah” occurs only twice in the New Testament. Both references are from John’s Gospel. In both, John immediately attached the translation “Christ” to *Messias*. First, John recorded Andrew saying, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ)” (Jn. 1:41). By the time John’s Gospel was written, “Messiah” was a “Jewish eschatological term applied to the expected deliverer” (Borchert 143). John’s first readers were second generation Christians, mostly Gentiles, who would not be familiar with many Jewish concepts. The term “Christ,” which explained the meaning of “Messiah” without the political baggage, became one of the most familiar terms used of Jesus in the first century Greco-Roman world.

Second, John recorded the Samaritan woman’s response to Jesus, “I know that Messiah is coming” (who is called Christ)” (Jn. 4:25). The Samaritans did not regularly use the term “Messiah.” They preferred the term “Taheb,” which meant “restorer,” or possibly, “he who returns.” The strong political feature that the Jews attached to their “Messiah” seems to be absent from this term “Taheb.” Samaritans pictured this figure as “one who would reveal the truth,

**See Our Spring 2023
Class Schedule on Page 4**
All Classes Available In-Person or Online!

in line with the ultimate prophet [cf. Deut. 18:15-19]" (Carson 226). Thus, the Samaritan woman's statement, "When He comes, He will tell us all things" is consistent with their view. Also of interest in this context, "Jesus said to her, 'I who speak to you am He'" (Jn. 4:26). Usually, Jesus made it a point to keep His Messiahship low key (Lk. 9:20-22), even telling people not to say anything about His messianic doings (Mt. 8:4; 16:20 cf. Jn. 6:15). Yet, to "this obscure woman Jesus reveals point-blank what he had revealed to no one else" (Lenski 327). This was entirely appropriate on this occasion. In the region of Galilee, there were "many would-be Messiahs and a constant unrest based on the messianic hope," which made the claim "Messiah" very dangerous; however, in Samaria, "the concept would probably have been regarded more as religious than political and would have elicited a ready hearing for his teaching rather than a subversive revolt" (Tenney 56).

Jesus as the "Messiah," Which Is Translated "Christ"

Nothing observable about Jesus before He was made known to Israel would clue the average Jew into thinking He was the long awaited Messiah (cf. Isa. 53:2). The birth narratives of Jesus make clear that He was not politically powerful royalty as most Jews would have imagined their Messiah. Rather, the place and circumstance of His birth identified Him with the com-

mon predicament of the populace (cf. Mt. 1:18-25; Lk. 2:1-24). Furthermore, throughout His life, the "Jews were confounded and irritated by Jesus' humility and meekness, which contradicted their idea of a nationalistic liberator who would appear in royal splendor and power" (Piper 334).

However, Messianic-type descriptions of Jesus are found throughout the New Testament. In the Gospels, Matthew especially describes the work of Jesus in terms of the "kingship ideology of the OT" (Mt. 1:1, 6, 17, 20; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30; 21:9, 15) (Piper 335). Jesus was the personification of God's kingdom and the executor of His redemptive will (cf. Mk. 8:38; 9:14-29; Lk. 10:22-24). Thus, Jesus had the right to demand obedience to His will (Mk. 1:16-20; Mt. 19:21). Whatever Jesus had, it came from His Father (Jn. 3:35; 5:22; 17:2). Jesus had authority because He was "sent" by His Father (Jn. 5:23, 30, 36-38; Acts 3:26; Rom. 8:3).

This is why Peter's confession in Matthew 16:16 was so significant. It was a crucial time in Jesus' ministry when He "came into the region of Caesarea Philippi" and asked His disciples, "Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?" (Mt. 16:13). The answer they gave—"John the Baptist ... Elijah ... Jeremiah, or one of the prophets"—was no doubt meant as a compliment, for these were all great servants of God. However, these great servants of God fell far short of the significance Jesus was to God's plan. When Jesus

The Harvester

Published Monthly

Florida School of Preaching
1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, Florida 33803
(863) 683-4043

Editor: Brian R. Kenyon, Director

Board of Directors

Ted Wheeler, Chairman
Brian Kenyon, Vice-Chairman
Tim Simmons, Secretary
Chad Tagtow, Treasurer

Steve Atnip Philip Lancaster
Bruce Daugherty Ben Radford, Sr.
Barry J. Enzor Ulysses Richardson

George K. French

**Training Preachers Since
1969**

Special Thanks To Our Generous Supporters In July 2022

Florida Churches of Christ: Apopka (Tenth Street); Auburndale (Orange Street); Callahan (First Coast); Daytona Beach (Beville Road); Dunnellon; Gainesville (Thirty-Ninth Avenue); Jacksonville (Normandy, Wesconnett); Kissimmee, Lakeland (North Lakeland, South Florida Avenue); New Port Richey (River Road); Plant City (Laura Street); Poinciana; St Petersburg (Northside); St. Augustine; Stuart; Zephyrhills (Southside).

Out of State Churches of Christ: Alabama (Double Springs); Georgia (Cusseta Road; Forrest Park); Illinois (Conninsville); Michigan (Grand Blanc, Wayne Road); Pennsylvania (Lower Bucks); South Carolina (Edgewood); Tennessee (Mt. View); Texas (Kirbyville).

Individuals: M/M Rodrigue Aleandre, M/M Blane Anderson, M/M Eugene C. Barnes, M/M Roy Beasley, M/M Leslie Bitting Jr., bettye bolding, M/M Manuel Brown, M/M Rico Brown, Annie Chambers, M/M Reginald Colton, M/M Carl Cooper, M/M Hollis Cress, Wes and Peggy Crisp, M/M Bruce Daugherty, David M. Deal, Bobbie Dickinson, M/M David Dix, M/M John Donaldson, M/M Wayne Doran, James R. Earnhardt, John Ellwood, Tom Evans, M/M John T. Griffis, J. T. Harrison, M/M Kenneth Harrison, Bryant Johnson Sr., M/M Rick Kenyon, Wadi Khoury, M/M Darnell Kirkland, Clarence Lavender, Alex Lusma, Brenda Mask, Maudeann McKendree, Carol Moore, M/M Vic Pratt, M/M Robert Pratt, Richard Proctor, Katie Randle, Roger Rosie, James W. Shearer, Johnye C. Sims, M/M David Stearsman, Carrie Stickel, Carrie Sturgis, James Landis Suggs, Logan Summers, M/M Jimmy Sweeney, Ralph H Thompson, Ada Walling, M/M Marc Wilkerson, Debbie Milton Winkle, William Wood.

Memorials: Rembert Allen (Gloria Allen); Ray Bradford (Anonymous); Thomas Denn (Anonymous); Jo-ann Morey (Anonymous); Jeri Pohlman (Anonymous); Virginia Walker (M/M Brian R. Kenyon).

Special Contributions: Atlantic Christian Fund, Forest Park Christian Assistance Foundation, Theology Podcast Etc..

*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.

asked the Twelve, “But who do you say that I am?,” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt. 16:15-16). In this answer, the apostle acknowledged the Messianic nature of Jesus. As stated earlier, “Christ” (from *Christos*, Χριστός) is the Greek translation of *messias*, which means “Anointed One,” or “Messiah.” John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, and all the faithful prophets were great servants of God, but they were not the Messiah! The term “Son of the living God” also acknowledged the Messiahship of Jesus. Referring to Jesus as “Son of God” in first century Jewish culture was equivalent to saying He was of the same nature as God. One reason the Jews wanted to kill Jesus was “because He ... said that God was His Father, making Himself equal with God” (Jn. 5:18 cf. Jn. 19:7). Not only did Jesus call Himself the “Son [of God]” (Mt. 11:27; 24:36; Mk. 13:32; Lk. 10:22), He also referred to God as “my Father” (Mt. 7:21; 10:33; Mk. 8:38; Lk. 22:29). For any other man in that culture to make such a claim for himself would have been blasphemy, but Jesus proved throughout His ministry that He was indeed God incarnate (cf. Jn. 3:1).

Because the term “Messiah” had so many worldly and political connotations, other, non-politically-charged terms were used to describe the Anointed One of God. “Son of Man” was the one Jesus used most often for Himself (Mt. 8:20; 9:6; Mk. 2:28; 8:31; Lk. 12:8; 18:8; Jn. 3:14; 13:31). This term expressed lowliness because it simply meant “a man,” or human, yet it represented greatness because it tied into the vision of Daniel 7:13-14. One commentator gives four reasons why Jesus possibly preferred this term: (1) it was a “rare term and one without nationalistic associations,” which would “lead to no politi-

cal complications;” (2) it had “overtones of divinity” (cf. Dan. 7:13-14); (3) its “societary implications” because it implied “the redeemed people of God;” and (4) it had “undertones of humanity,” for Jesus took upon Himself human weakness (Morris 202). When Jesus used “Son of man,” He always used it in the third person, which is indicative of His humility.

Conclusion

Like “Messiah,” there are many biblical terms today that have been so abused and/or misunderstood that it is sometimes not wise to use them (cf. “pastor,” even if the preacher is also an elder). Jesus as “the Christ” conveyed in the first century the meaning that “Messiah” would have had it not been so twisted into human doctrine. Rest assured, however, that Jesus was (and is) that long awaited Messiah. In Part 3, consideration will be given to the meaning and importance of the Messiah to the first century church along with some practical applications.

Works Cited

- Borchert, Gerald L. *John 1–11*. New American Commentary. Vol. 25A. Ed. E. Ray Clendenen. Nashville, TN: Broadman and Holman, 1996.
- Carson, D. A. *The Gospel According to John*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991.
- Lenski, R. C. H. *The Interpretation of St. John's Gospel*. Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1961.
- Morris, Leon. *The Gospel According to Matthew*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992.
- Piper, Otto A. “Messiah.” *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*. Vol. 3. Ed. G. W. Bromiley. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1986. 330-338.
- Tenney, Merrill C. “The Gospel of John.” *Expositor's Bible Commentary*. Vol. 9. Ed. Frank E. Gaebelein. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1981. 1-203.

Homosexuality & Christianity: A Reasoned and Frank Public Debate

Andy Oliver: “Human sexuality is God’s gift and can be used to glorify God and edify the church, no matter the sexual orientation.”

George F. Beals: “All homosexual behavior is immoral (sin).” **Oct. 27, 6:00-9:00 pm**

**Attend 3803 Haines Road North
In Person St. Petersburg, FL 33703
or Watch the Live Stream
@ fsop.net**



FSOP students and staff were among this group blessed to help Ted Wheeler and the Venice church of Christ with hurricane relief. The Venice building was severely damaged and many of the members and neighbors were affected by the storm. This FSOP “field trip” showed that bearing one another’s burden is just as important, and sometimes more pressing, than “classroom” work!

Florida School of Preaching



1807 South Florida Avenue
Lakeland, FL 33803
fsop.net fsop@fsop.net
863-683-4043 or 800-320-9780

Electronic Service Requested



48th Annual Lectureship
Rise of the
Messianic Kingdom
JANUARY 16-19, 2023

Look for the schedule in the next Harvester!

The Harvester

October 2022

Page 4

Spring Registration Opens December 12 at fsop.net

Spring 2023 Semester Begins Jan. 9

Registration opens July 18 online at www.fsop.net. Any of these classes may be taken online for credit or to audit. Contact the office for more details.

Day	Time	Lakeland Classes	Instructor	Credit
Monday	__ 8:30-12:00	General Epistles (249)	Bauer	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Prison Epistles (136)	Cantrell	3
Tuesday	__ 8:30-12:00	Gospel of John (227)	Wheeler	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Minor Prophets (246)	Wheeler	3
Wednesday	__ 8:30-12:00	English Composition (125)	Patterson	3
	__ 8:30-12:00	Greek II (223)	Kenyon	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	First and Second Timothy and Titus (238)	Patterson	3
Thursday	__ 8:30-12:00	Jesus Throughout Scripture (224)	Kemp	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Ethics (285)	Stearnsman	3
Friday	__ 8:30-12:00	Church History: Restoration (282)	Daugherty	3
	__ 1:00-4:15	Wisdom Literature (248)	Antemesaris	3
Extension Classes				
Monday	__ 7:00-9:30	Christians and Culture (165) (Wesconnett church of Christ, Jacksonville)	Kenyon	2.5
Thursday	__ 6:00-8:30	Genesis (101) (Tenth Street church of Christ, Apopka)	Kenyon	2.5

Registered Students Can Take Classes In-Person or Online!