

THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH

INTRODUCTION: ADVENT IS THE SEASON WHEN WE TRADITIONALLY THINK ABOUT THE COMING OF JESUS. IT IS A GOOD TIME TO THINK ALSO ABOUT HOW THE JEWS IN OLD TESTAMENT DAYS THOUGHT ABOUT THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH. FROM THIS WE CAN LEARN MUCH ABOUT WHAT THE COMING OF JESUS CHRIST REALLY SHOULD MEAN TO ALL OF US.

I. THE MEANING OF THE TERM "MESSIAH"

A. In the original languages of the Bible the word means "anointed."

--As in "to rub on" ointment & salves.

--The historical roots of the messianic hope. -- Deliverer.

--The term was used of Jesus by his followers and himself. See Lk. 4:18 (Quoting Isa. 61)

--Paul and others used "Christos" simply as a proper noun, although in the Jewish homeland and Jewish Christians everywhere would clearly understand the implication "The coming glorious King of Israel."

B. The purpose of the writing of the Gospel of John was "that you might believe that Jesus is the Christ (Messiah) the Son of God" (20:31).

The other 3 gospels also teach the Messiahship of Jesus, although Jesus did not publicly proclaim it or allow his Apostles to do so until after the Res.

He accepted the title of "Messiah" and would not deny it. (Mk. 14:62; 15:2). He felt his own rule as Messiah was spiritual rather than political and future more than present.

The word "anointed" = "the anointed one," "my anointed," "thy" or "his" anointed" occurs 39 times in O.T. See Ps. 2:2 "his Anointed" and the Christian interp. in acts 4:25-27.

II. THE MESSIANIC KING IN ISAIAH 9:1-7

A. A current historical setting and a future application.

This is the way many scriptures came to us.

It is possible that when Isaiah first wrote this passage he had in mind a certain ~~living monarch~~ or king of Israel.

It may have been written on the occasion of the anointing or anniversary celebration of a ~~new king~~ or of a great king.

But this does not mean that it could not also have been the prophecy of a "far off event" of the coming of the One Great Messiah and Deliverer.

Jesus quotes from this passage as a prophecy of his Galilean ministry.

It is the Old Testament lesson for the Church on Christmas Day, for the messianic hope of Judaism is fulfilled for Christians in Jesus Christ of Nazareth.

Never does Christmas dawn but the words of this beautiful passage are heard wherever Christ's people meet; for to Christian faith the great prophecy of Isaiah had its fulfillment in the birth of Jesus Christ the Prince of Peace.

When the Christian Church reads or sings these words, it is to rejoice in the gift of God's love in Jesus Christ.

It is His song, and we sing it in thanksgiving for the fulfillment of that hope which burned in the weary human heart through centuries of darkness and pain, that God would yet visit and redeem his people.

It is amazing how every detail of the song fits our situation and meets our needs.

It leaps across the centuries; it speaks to our hearts as it did to the despairing hearts of a handful of Jews 2500 years ago; how perfectly it mirrors the hopes of all people around the world!

More than 450 years ago Italy was torn by strife and disunity. The people longed for a New Prince who could unite the country against its enemies. Niccolo Machiavelli came along and wrote about how such a prince should rule. He suggested very questionable moral principles, based on his studies of the ancient rulers and republics, but we cannot help but be moved by the messianic hope which he expressed for sixteenth century Italy:

"Therefore, in order that after so long a time Italy may behold her redeemer, this opportunity must not be allowed to slip by. I cannot express with what love that redeemer would be received in all those regions that have suffered from these inundations of foreign invaders: with what determined loyalty, what devotion, what tears. What doors would be barred to him? What people would withhold their obedience from him? What envy would set itself against him? What Italian would withhold homage from him? May these words from Petrarch come to pass:

And against their furor
Virtu will fight and make the
battle short.

For the ancient valor
Is not yet dead in our Italian heart.

If Machiavelli could feel so strongly about a New Prince of an earthly republic, why cannot Christians feel as much or more loyalty and devotion for the Prince of Peace?

A "Counselor" more wonderful than any sage of the century;

a "Hero" strong with the strength of the Eternal;

a Friend and "Father" with a love for people that neither time nor death could destroy; a "Prince" in whose reign every fair hope of the human heart would have its fulfillment.

The pretentious titles of worldly monarchs are mere empty words, but the names of the Messiah belong to his very nature as one sent by God and standing in a unique relationship to God.

Isaiah makes no mention of enlarged borders, invincible armies, thriving trade, and the like. The glory of the Messiah's reign and the strength of the nation are to be "justice and righteousness."

It may be a far cry from Isaiah's day to ours, but the prophet has identified the unchanging secret of national greatness.

--Justice and righteousness!

Give us these in the personal life, in the social order, and in international relationships,

and the implements of destruction and death will be remembered as creations of a barbaric age, and the problems of the economy, unemployment, poverty, war and oppression, etc., can soon be solved by people of good will.

This whole passage is bound up with faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God.

Phrase by phrase, line by line, all that Isaiah proclaimed about the coming Messiah has been fulfilled in the person and mission of our Lord; and for 2,000 years the Christian church has sung in thanksgiving the good news from God: "Unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given," Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, God's "unspeakable gift."

See Isa. 7:14 - "Immanuel" - God with us

John 1:14 - "The word became flesh and dwelt among us."

B. NOTICE THE NAMES OR TITLES OF THE MESSIAH:
THERE ARE FOUR OF THEM ^{in Isa. 9:6}

1. It is a mistake to put a comma between "Wonderful" and "Counsellor."

It should be translated, "Wonderful Counselor" just as "Mighty God, Everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace."

The first two titles speak of the divine attributes of wisdom and might, while the third and fourth proclaim the nature of his rule.

He is "A Father Forever" one who constantly cares for his people.

He is a "Prince of Peace."

We must remember that the Hebrew word for "peace", "shalom", means not merely the cessation of war, but a condition of rich, harmonious, and positive well-being.

Christians must be active peacemakers in our world.

2. The Jewish people had a faith that refused to surrender the hope of the ideal king who would come at God's command to rule his people.

At every coronation festival it stirred again in loyal hearts.

Is this he, the God-annointed one?

Is this the Messiah?

At the birth of every male baby the Mother would silently ask herself, "Could this possibly be the Messiah?"

Although no prince of the house of Dawid ever fulfilled the messianic hope, and king after king brutally disillusioned the believing people, yet they went on and on hoping, praying, trusting; he WILL come; if not today, then some other day.

That is the courage of faith.

Do WE have that same kind of faith today?

Then one day in the fullness of time the king came, not with pomp and splendor, not with a band and a parade, but "lowly, and riding upon a donkey."

If Isaiah had been there he would have recognized him by his own description: