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Tower of Strength

“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”

—Proverbs 18:10

A Study of the Messiah - The Anointed One -

We call Jesus “the Christ.”

Hopefully, we understand that “Christ” is not His last name. It is His title. Sometimes it comes after His name (Titus 1:1), sometimes it comes before His name (Titus 1:4), sometimes it stands all alone (Matthew 11:2).

From the writing of the New Testament until today, it so aptly summarizes who He is, that it has become synonymous with the person of Jesus.

“Christ” means “anointed one.” It is the same as the word “Messiah.” In Hebrew, the word is *mashiah*; in Greek, the word is *christos*. Both mean “anointed one.”

Some things get anointed without any particular significance—wounds, for example. But in some passages in the Bible, anointing takes on a much weightier meaning. It means to recognize something as set apart for a divine purpose. It shows that a person has been specifically chosen by God for a special job. Prophets (1 Kings 19:16), priests (Exodus 30:30–33, 40:15), and kings were

anointed. But even the furniture of the tabernacle was anointed, to consecrate it for service, and set it apart for that holy purpose (Exodus 30:22–29). An expository Bible dictionary or encyclopedia is a good place to study the appearances of the word throughout the Bible.

One of the best examples is found in 1 Samuel 16:12–13, where God had grown tired of King Saul, and sent the prophet Samuel to anoint a new man, David, as king.

...the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him; for this is he.” Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon David from that day forward.

Even before the people recognized David’s leadership, God had selected him, enabled him, and given him the authority as the king. David was “God’s anointed” because God chose him.

With this meaning in mind, the Bible often speaks of God’s favor upon his “anointed one.” And in some of these passages, it is clear that God is not just talking about an earthly king.

One of these passages where the Messiah begins to take on a lofty significance is Psalm 2.

Why are the nations in an uproar
And the peoples devising a vain thing?
The kings of earth take their stand
And the rulers take counsel together
Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying,
“Let us tear their fetters apart
And cast away their cords from us!”

This refers to no king sitting on the throne in Israel, nor to a priest serving in the tabernacle in Jerusalem. As was apparent to the Jews, and declared by the Apostles (Paul quoted this psalm in Acts 13:33), God was speaking of a coming Messiah who would save His people.

The Jews in the first century BC were in a state of high Messianic expectation. They knew God had promised a savior, and as their political fortunes dwindled under the shadow of Rome, they hoped and desired that the savior would come quickly.

The Jewish scholars knew that there was a time frame involved. Daniel saw in a vision, recorded in Daniel 9,

You are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. Then after the sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary...

Those sixty-nine weeks refer to seven-year periods (around 500 years total) which put the coming of the Messiah somewhere in their days. In fact, in another passage, Daniel specifies that the Lord would exalt His people in the days of the Roman Empire (Dan. 2:40–44).

The inter-testamental literature of the Jewish people shows that they were actively searching for the Christ, and occasionally had their hearts set on particular individuals (even after the resurrection of Jesus, other Jews, such as Simon bar Kochba, claimed to be the Christ). God had revealed to Simeon that “he would not see death until he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Luke 2:26). In Luke 3:15, the Jews “were in a state of expectation and all were wondering in their hearts about John the Baptist, as to whether he was the Christ” (John, of course, deflected the title, and said that another was coming soon to claim it). John himself, after being thrown in prison, queried Jesus in Matthew 11:3, saying, “are You the expected one, or shall we look for someone else?” Jesus answered by pointing to His works, as fulfillments of what the Old Testament prophets predicted.

The “anointed one” of the Old Testament was an “expected one.” The problem was never that the Jews were not expecting the Christ. They certainly were, with great fervency! The problem was that they

expected a military commander, one who would conquer the Romans and free the Jews from political oppression. When Jesus didn't meet their prejudicial expectations, they rejected Him and continued the search elsewhere (something that, incidentally, God forewarned, in Psalm 118:22). But they should have stopped to notice that Jesus was indeed exactly the sort of thing that the Old Testament had described. "He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21).

Even though "Messiah" is not the term that the Old Testament uses most frequently to describe the coming One, it is certainly filled with the most thematic significance. When we speak of Jesus Christ, or Jesus "the Christ," it is good to keep in mind that we are speaking of Jesus, "the anointed one," the chosen One whom God promised to send. Jesus demonstrated that He was and is this chosen individual, and showed the true meaning of the blessings He brought to both the Jewish nation and to all mankind. As the Apostle John declared,

Many other signs Jesus also performed in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book; but these have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing you may have life in His name (John 20:30-31).

For the next several bulletins, we will study the Messiah. We will study how His coming is predicted, and even more importantly, how His character is developed through some of the most important passages of the Old Testament, from the very first book Genesis, to the very last book Malachi. May this study be eye-opening and profitable for our daily faith!

—*John Guzzetta*

Quotes of the Week:

"Have you ever tried to rest when you weren't tired? It's almost impossible! Heaven is described as a place of rest. Therefore I plan to work hard enough to be tired, so that when I get there, I may truly enjoy my eternal rest!"

—*Otis Gatewood*