

JESUS THE PROMISED MESSIAH

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 **FAITH MAKES SENSE**

DEFINING THE TERM: MESSIAH

The term “Messiah” comes from the Hebrew term ‘mashiach’ meaning “appointed, set apart, or anointed one.” This term has three distinct elements within it. Israel’s Messiah is a prophet, a priest, and a king. There are many characters in the Old Testament who serve as foreshadowed examples or types of these roles and functions. While there are great examples in the Old Testament of prophets, priests, and kings, there is only one true Messiah who fulfills all the roles completely, and that is Jesus Himself.

PROPHET

A prophet is someone who speaks for God. While this is primarily speaking to God’s people, it doesn’t always mean that. Abraham is called a prophet in Genesis 20:7. The main example or standard of a prophet in the Old Testament is Moses. A clear description of the prophetic role is found in Exodus 7:1-2. Moses is described as speaking for God and his brother Aaron served as his prophet speaking to Pharaoh. This pattern is seen again in Deuteronomy 18:18 when God promises to raise up another prophet who will speak His words.

PRIEST

A priest is someone who mediates between God and His people. This mediation generally goes in both directions. Priests represent the people before God and also mediate God’s blessings to His people. The first priest mentioned in Scripture is Melchizedek. Years later, the Levitical priesthood is established in the Law of Moses to serve God among His people by offering sacrifices and mediating blessings. Only males specifically from the tribe of Levi can serve as priests before God.

KING

A king is someone who rules, reigns, or governs over people and territory. There are a plethora of good and bad kings in the Bible. The first king mentioned in the Bible is Melchizedek. The first king of the united monarchy of Israel is Saul. However, in 2 Samuel 7:16, it is David who receives a promise from God that one of his descendants would inherit his throne and rule over an everlasting kingdom. Earthly kings wield an authority given them by God for the purpose of leading their people to worship and obey God.

UNDERSTANDING ANOINTED ONE

In the Old Testament, the meaning of ‘mish-ha’ (anointed) overlaps with understanding of ‘qo-desh’ (holy). We see the terms working together in Exodus 40:9 when the items for the tabernacle are anointed and set apart for God’s house as holy. It is this joint relationship of anointing which sets apart that underlies the concept of the messiah in the Bible. The One true Messiah is chosen by God and anointed and set apart as the one true prophet, priest, and king to serve as the full and final mediator between God and His creation.

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THE ABC'S OF MESSIANIC PROPHECY

There are many different prophecies about Jesus in the Old Testament. More than we could review in this simple handout. We will narrow our focus to four key details about the life of Jesus: ancestry, birth, conception, and death. Together, these four categories make a powerful cumulative argument confirming Jesus as the promised Messiah of the Old Testament.

ANCESTRY

Several promises in the Old Testament tell us the lineage or family to look for to identify the true Messiah. The Messiah must be a descendant of Eve (Genesis 3:15), Abraham (Genesis 12:1-3), Isaac (Genesis 17:21), Jacob (Genesis 28:14), and David (2 Samuel 7:16, Psalm 89:3-4, Psalm 132:10-11, Isaiah 9:6-7). This is a detail no one can manufacture for themselves because no one can choose the parents, family, and/or lineage they are born into.

BIRTH

Another key detail of the Messianic identity is the place of his birth. About 700 years earlier, the prophet Micah prophesied the Promised Messiah would be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah (Micah 5:2). This is not the city of Bethlehem in the territory of Zebulun (Joshua 19:15). This is the city where Boaz, Jesse, and David lived (Ruth 1:1, 1 Samuel 17:12). This is another detail no one can manufacture for themselves as you can't control where you are born.

CONCEPTION

Another key detail of the Messianic identity is the conception of the Messiah Himself. Approximately 700 years before Jesus' birth, the prophet Isaiah writes the Messiah will be born from the miraculous circumstance of a virgin giving birth to a child (Isaiah 7:14). This makes the coming of the Messiah a truly supernatural act of God and not simply a happy coincidence of family lineage and geographic location.

DEATH

Details about the Messiah's death are also recorded in Scripture. The Old Testament tells us the Messiah will be betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9), have hands and feet pierced (Psalm 22:16), have his clothing gambled for (Psalm 22:18), his bones would not be broken (Psalm 34:20), brutally suffer (Isaiah 52:13-53:12), and will resurrect from death (Psalm 16:10). Resurrection is the miracle which identifies Jesus alone as the Promised Messiah and Savior King of Israel.

THE MESSIANIC MYSTERY

The most compelling thing about messianic prophecy is not any single detail. It is what happens when independent lines of evidence are traced back to their source and followed forward to their fulfillment. The ancestry, the birthplace, the timing, the manner of death, the decisions of Roman soldiers who had never read a Hebrew scroll — none of these were arranged by Jesus and none of the people involved were coordinating with each other. They simply converge. For the full investigation, see our companion handout: Messianic Mystery.

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