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## MESSIAH

The study of the rise and development of the figure of the Messiah is primarily historical, and then theological. Confusion arises when specifically Christian ideas about the Messiah invade the OT data. Jesus' concept of his messianic mission did not accord with contemporary popular Jewish expectation.

In the OT, "Messiah" is the ηελλενιζεδ transliteration of the Αραμαιχ μεσιηαδ. The underlying Hebrew word μασιαη is derived from μασσαη, √το ανοιντ, σμεαρ ωιτη οιλ.√ This title was used sometimes of non-Israelites - sometimes of the prophet as in I Kings 19:16. But most frequently it referred to the king of Israel as in I Samuel 26:11 and Psalm 89:20. It is noteworthy that the word √μεσσιαη√ does not appear at all in the Old Testament.

The primary sense of the title is "king," as the anointed man of God, but it also suggests election, i.e., the king was chosen, elect, and therefore honored. It could scarcely be otherwise than that it referred to a political leader, for in its early stages Israel sought only a ruler, visible and powerful, who would reign here and now. But the entire evidence of later Judaism points to a Messiah not only as king but as eschatological king, a ruler who would appear at the end time.

David was the ideal king of Israel, and as such he had a "sacral" character, and this sacral characteristic came to be applied to the eschatological king who was to be like David.

How did the national Messiah come to be a future ideal king? After the death of David, Israel began to hope for another like him who would maintain the power and prestige of the country. But Israel came into hard times with the rupture of the kingdom, and with this event there arose a disillusionment concerning the hope for a king like David. Gradually the hope was projected into the future, and eventually into the very remote future, so that the Messiah was expected at the end of the age. This is the mood of the messianic expectations in the latter part of the OT. It looks forward to the birth of the Davidic king in Bethlehem; and Zechariah 9 and 12 describe the character of the messianic kingdom and reign.

The Son of man figure in Daniel is not to be identified with the Messiah; it is later in the history of Judaism that the two figures were seen to be one. The suffering servant of Isaiah by reason of his role is yet another figure. So the Messiah, or future ideal king of Israel, the Son of man, and the suffering servant were three distinct representations in the OT.

. As in the OT the formal use of "Messiah" is rare. It is well to remember that in this literature there is a distinction between Messiah and messianic; a book may have a messianic theme but lack a Messiah.

The book of Enoch is best known for its doctrine of the Son of man, which has many messianic overtones. Yet he is not the Messiah, but a person much like Daniel's Son of man. It remained to the Psalms of Solomon (48 B.C.) to provide the one confirmed and repeated evidence of the technical use of the term in the inter-τεσταμενταλ λιτερατυρε.

Out of the welter of messianic hopes in this period there emerges a pattern: two kinds of Messiah came to be expected. On one hand, there arose an expectation of a purely national Messiah, one who would appear as a man and assume the kingship over Judah to deliver it from its oppressors.

On the other hand, there was a hope for a transcendent Messiah from heaven, a Person with two natures: a perfect God and a perfect Man who would establish the kingdom of God on earth.

To the popular Jewish mind of the first two centuries before and after Christ these two concepts were not mutually hostile, but tended rather to modify each other. It has been argued by some scholars that the conflation of the concepts of Messiah and suffering servant took place in hypostatic union.

It remained for Jesus to fuse the three great eschatological representations of the OT, Messiah, suffering servant, and Son of man, into one messianic person. Apart from this truth there is no explanation for the confusion of the disciples when he told them He must suffer and die (Matthew 16:21). That Christ knew Himself to be the Messiah is seen best in His use of the title Son of man; in Mark 14:61-62 he equates the Christ and the Son of man.

"Christ" is simply the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew "messiah." John 1:41 and 4:25 preserve the Semitic idea by transliterating the word "messiah." Jesus willingly accepted the appellation Son of David, a distinct messianic title, on several occasions, the cry of blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:47), the children in the temple (Matthew 21:15), and the triumphal entry (Matthew 21:9), to name but a few. It has long been wondered why Jesus did not appropriate the title Messiah to Himself instead of the less clear title of Son of man.

The former was probably avoided out of political considerations, for if Jesus had publicly used "Messiah" of Himself it would have ignited political aspirations in his hearers to appoint Him as king, principally a nationalistic figure, and to seek to drive out the Roman occupiers. This is precisely the import of the Jews' action at the triumphal entry. Jesus seized on the title Son of man to veil to his hearers his messianic mission but to reveal that mission to his disciples.

The first generation of the church did not hesitate to refer to Jesus as the Christ, and thereby designate Him as the greater Son of David, the King. The word was used first as a title of Jesus (Matthew 16:16) and later as part of the personal name (Ephesians 1:1).

Peter's sermon at Pentecost acknowledged Jesus not only as the Christ, but also as Lord, and so the fulfillment of the messianic office is integrally linked to the essential deity of Jesus. Acts 2:36 affirm that Jesus was "made" Christ, the sense of the verb being that by the resurrection Jesus was confirmed as the Christ, the Messiah of God. Romans 1:4 and Philippians 2:9-11 contain the same thought. Other messianic titles attributed to Jesus include Servant, Lord, Son of God, the King, the Holy One, the Righteous One, and the Judge.

The doctrine of the hypostatic union, first set forth officially in the definition of faith), concerns the union of the two natures (δύο πρῶσεσ) of deity and humanity in the one hypostasis or person of Jesus Christ. It can be stated as follows: In the incarnation of the Son of God, a human nature was inseparably united forever with the divine nature in the one person of Jesus Christ, yet with the two natures remaining distinct, whole, and unchanged, without mixture or confusion so that the one person, Jesus Christ, is truly God and truly man.

Jesus Christ is truly, perfectly, and wholly God, and He is truly, perfectly, and wholly man.

Admittedly, this doctrine leaves many metaphysical questions unanswered. However, it should be noted that this doctrine was not produced as the fruit of philosophic speculation on the possible  $\sigma\iota\gamma\gamma\lambda\alpha\rho\psi\ \chi\omicron\sigma\upsilon\beta\sigma\iota\sigma\tau\epsilon\nu\chi\epsilon$  of the finite and the infinite. Rather it was offered as a precise description of the incarnation recorded in Scripture, drawn from the greatest extent of biblical data and making use of whatever language that might help in that descriptive task (such as the introduction of a technical distinction between thesis,  $\pi\eta\psi\sigma\iota\sigma$  and hypostasis).