



HOW WOULD YOU RECOGNIZE THE MESSIAH?

David M. Levy*

"How would you recognize the Messiah?" is a question I'm sure has entered your mind at one time or another. Maybe the thought came at Hebrew school, during a Yom Kippur service, possibly in conversation with a rabbi and friends, or in times of reflection as you read the Jewish Scriptures.

Most likely you have not given much thought to the question lately. But in a world of uncertainty, you would like to know if there really is a Messiah who can provide peace and hope in this life as well as the one to come.

For centuries, Jewish people have looked for a Messianic deliverer who would bring peace; but this hope has taken various forms throughout our history. Traditional biblical Judaism has described the Messiah as a descendant of King David (Messiah ben David) who would redeem Israel and rule over her at the end of days. Messiah ben David would do three things: secure the land for Israel, rebuild the Temple on its historical site, and bring peace to Israel and the world. Messiah is viewed as a man who will manifest the qualities of a prophet, priest, and king.

Modern Judaism has reinterpreted the Messianic hope. This position teaches that no personal Messiah will come, but a Messianic Age will eventually emerge through mankind's endeavor to negotiate a world peace. Then, and only then, will Israel enjoy everlasting peace in her land.

In the history of our people, there have been many pseudo-messiahs from Bar Cochba (135) to Jacob Frank (1726-1791). These Jewish leaders envisioned themselves as the true Messiah called to deliver their people from Gentle oppression by force. But most were imprisoned, killed, or converted to

various religions to escape punishment or death.

Maybe you are thinking, *That is my problem. With so many pseudo-messiahs, how could I be certain of the right one even if He came?*

That is a good question and the one every Jewish person needs to ask. In order to recognize someone, you must have information. That information could take the form of a picture, fingerprint, or some recognizable description. The only authoritative source for a description of the Messiah is not a rabbi or the Talmud but the Jewish Scriptures.



Centuries before the Messiah was to come, 25 Jewish writers sketched the details of His life and work. Messiah is the only person in history to have His ancestry, birth, character, teaching, career, reception, rejection, death, burial, and resurrection prewritten at least 500 years before His birth.

Almost 2,000 years ago, a Jewish man by the name of Jesus claimed He fulfilled the descriptions of the Messiah. He said, "These are the words which I spoke to you, ... that all things must be fulfilled which were written

in the *Law of Moses* and the *Prophets* and the *Psalms* concerning Me" (Lk. 24:44) (Italics added for emphasis.)

You are probably thinking, *Wait a minute. Do you expect me to believe that Jesus is the Messiah? I am not going to read such material.*

I am sure you think of yourself as open minded, objective, and interested in other concepts that might not agree with what you have been taught. Before falling back on any preconceived conclusions, I ask only that you take a couple of minutes to finish reading this brochure and consider the scriptural evidence on how to recognize the Messiah.

There are at least 333 Messianic prophecies that paint a portrait of the real Messiah in the Jewish Scriptures. Rather than overwhelm you with so many prophecies, I have chosen only a few, which will provide enough insight to identify the true Messiah. With the portrait of the Messiah as presented in the Jewish Scriptures, are the historical facts of Jesus' life so you can study the evidence for yourself.

Messiah's Virgin Birth

Prophecy:

"Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." (Isa. 7:14).

Fulfillment:

"Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." (Mt 1:23).

The Hebrew word for *virgin* (*Almah*) is used seven times in the Bible (Gen. 24:43; Ex. 2:8; Ps 68:25; Prov. 30:19; Song 1:3; 6:8; Isa.

7:14). In context, these passages refer to young women who are virgins.

In the third century B.C., the Jewish Scriptures were translated into Greek by Hebrew scholars. When the scholars came to the Hebrew word *almah*, they used the Greek word for virgin, *parthenos*. Matthew (1:23), quoting Isaiah 7:14 from the Greek Septuagint translation, used the same word (*parthenos*) for virgin.

Rashi (1040-1150 A.D.), the great medieval Jewish commentator known for his opposition to Christianity, stated, "Behold the 'Almah' shall conceive and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel. This means that our Creator shall be with us. And this is the sign: the one who will conceive is a girl who never in her life has had intercourse with any man. Upon this one shall the Holy Spirit have power."⁽¹⁾

The virgin-born Messiah is called Immanuel, which means "God with us." Here is a clear reference that Messiah was the God-Man dwelling among the Jewish people.

Messiah's Place of Birth

Prophecy:

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." (Mic.5:2).

Fulfillment:

"Now after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea in the days of Herod, the king," (Mt. 2:1; cf Lk.2 4-7).

When Herod heard that Jesus had been born in Bethlehem, he consulted with the chief priests and scribes concerning where the Messiah was to be born. They answered, "In Bethlehem of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet, 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel.'" (Mt. 2:5-6).

Even the common people knew the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem: "Has not the Scripture said that the Christ [Messiah] comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was?" (Jn. 7:42).

Notice Micah said that the Messiah would be a preexisting, eternal person before He came

to earth, "whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting" (Mic. 5:2).

Messiah's Reception

Prophecy:

"He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him." (Isa. 53:3).

Fulfillment:

"He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him." (Jn. 1:11).

"I have come in My Father's name, and you did not receive Me;" (Jn. 5:43).

The Messiah would be *despised* (held in contempt) and *rejected* (shunned by men). The word for *men* refers to men of stature and standing. Loathing to look on Him, they turned the other way when He was in their presence. The word *despised* is repeated twice to emphasize the intense hatred many men had for Him. They *esteemed him not* – thought of Him as a nothing or less than a person when He came to them.

This prophecy indicates that most men would reject the Messiah when He came into the world. This fact was true of Jesus the Messiah.

Messiah's Suffering

Prophecy:

"A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief." (Isa. 53:3).

Fulfillment:

"Then He said to them, "My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death." (Mt. 26:38).



The Messiah was a man full of *sorrows* and *grief*, but not for Himself. He felt the spiritual and physical maladies of His people and was keenly aware of their personal needs.

Prophecy:

"Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows;" (Isa. 53:4).

Fulfillment:

"That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: "He himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses." (Mt. 8:17).

The Messiah felt the weighty *griefs* (infirmities) and *sorrows* (afflictions) of His people so deeply that He reached out in love to heal multitudes, both physically and spiritually.

Prophecy:

"But He was wounded [pierced] for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities;" (Isa. 53:5).

"They pierced My hands and My feet;" (Ps. 22:16).

Fulfillment:

"And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him," (Lk. 23:33)

"But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out." (Jn. 19:34).

The word *wounded* literally means "pierced." Isaiah described the type of death Messiah would experience 700 years before it took place, and David predicted it 1,000 years before it happened (Ps. 22). This piercing speaks of crucifixion, which was the type of death Jesus suffered. Yet crucifixion was unknown among the Jewish people when this prophecy was written. Jesus was pierced in three ways: with thorns (Mt. 27:29), nails, (Jn. 20:25), and a spear (Jn.19:34).

The word *bruised* literally means "crushed" by a heavy load and describes both the emotional and physical suffering associated with this means of death.

Prophecy:

"The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed." (Isa. 53:5)

Fulfillment:

"Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed." (1 Pet. 2:24).

The Messiah took on Himself the *chastisement*, or punishment, that we deserve, to secure peace for all those who would believe in Him. By His *stripes* (vicarious suffering), we may secure peace (*shalom*) and become completely reconciled to God. He brings spiritual healing for all those who accept Him as Messiah.

Prophecy:

“He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.” (Isa. 53:7).

Fulfillment:

“And while He was being accused by the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then Pilate said to Him, “Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?” But He answered him not one word,” (Mt. 27: 12-14; cf. 26:62-63).

Although innocent of false charges levied against Him, the Messiah silently submitted to physical and verbal mistreatment, and even to death. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter; He never spoke out in His own defense or sought revenge.

Messiah's Death

Prophecy:

“For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.” (Isa. 53:8).

“He poured out His soul unto death,” (Isa. 53:12; cf. Dan 9:26).

Fulfillment:

“And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, “Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit”. Having said this, He breathed His last.” (Lk. 23:46).

The words *cut off* indicate that Messiah would die a violent, unnatural, premature death. The words *from the land of the living* leave no doubt that *cut off* refers to Messiah's death. The term *My people* clearly indicates that the Messiah is distinct from Israel and died on behalf of the Jewish people.

Messiah's Burial

Prophecy:

“And they made His grave with the wicked – but with the rich at His death,” (lit., “He was assigned a grave with the wicked, but He was with the rich in His death [Isa. 53:9]).



Fulfillment:

“There came a rich man from Arimathaea, named Joseph, who...asked for the body of Jesus....When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb” (Mt. 27:57-60).

The Messiah's enemies desired that He be buried with those wicked men who were crucified next to Him, but their desire was not fulfilled. Instead, Messiah was buried in a rich man's tomb.

Messiah's Resurrection

Prophecy:

“For You will not leave my soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption.” (Ps. 16:10).

Fulfillment:

“David...is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ [Messiah] to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses.” (Acts 2:29-32).

In Psalm 16:10, David expressed explicit trust in God as the One who would deliver him from death and the grave to resurrected life and eternal bliss. Although David was speaking of his own hope, it is evident that the prophecy was not literally fulfilled in him, for David was not resurrected. His body was in the grave and decayed, a fact evident to the Jewish people (Acts 2:29).

David was really prophesying of the resurrection of the Messiah, whose body did not decay in the grave (Acts 2:31), a prophecy fulfilled in Jesus. Many witnesses

in Jerusalem attested to the fact of Messiah's resurrection (Acts 2:32).

Prophecy:

“When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days,” (Isa. 53:10).

Fulfillment:

“But the angel answered and said to the women, “Do not be afraid, for I know that you seek Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for He is risen, as He said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.” (Mt. 28: 5-6).

After the Messiah offered Himself as a trespass offering, dying for the sins of mankind, He was victorious over death. The words “prolong His days” in Isaiah 53:10 speak of enjoying long life in spite of having died, thus necessitating a bodily resurrection.

Messiah's Divinity and Humanity

Prophecy:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.” (Isa. 9:6).

Fulfillment:

“Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.” (Lk. 1:30-33).

Isaiah presented the Messiah as God-Man – a Messiah was both the Son of David (*Child is born*) and the Son of God (*Son is given*). Here are seen the human and the divine natures of the Messiah in one person.

Four titles, which transcend a mere man and are divine in nature, are given to the Messiah. First, He is called *Wonderful, Counselor* (lit., “a wonderful counselor”). The word *Wonderful* speaks of that which is supernatural; thus the Messiah would possess supernatural counseling ability. Second, He is called *Mighty God*, showing that Messiah is none other than God Himself. Third, He is called *Everlasting Father* (lit., Father of Eternity),

a title that sets forth Messiah's eternal and paternal care for His people. Fourth, He is called *Prince of Peace*. The Messiah is the One who brings peace to the individual who accepts Him now (Jn.14:27) and who will bring peace when He establishes His rule on earth (Isa. 9:7).

It is clear from Luke 1:30-33 that Jesus fulfilled this prophecy as the God-Man who will someday govern the world from David's throne.

After comparing these few Messianic prophecies, it is evident that they are fulfilled in Jesus the Messiah. But some people have been reluctant to believe this fact for two reasons.

First, some say the writers of the New Testament could have written Jesus' life story to correspond with or to make it look like He fulfilled these prophecies. Not so! The facts of His birth, life, death, and resurrection are an accurate record documented by history, not a fabrication of His followers.

Second, some might believe it was a chance happening or coincidence that Jesus' life paralleled these major prophecies. But the science of probability clearly rules out chance and coincidence. According to Professor Peter Stoner, by using the modern science of probability in reference to just eight of these prophecies, "We find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 to 10¹⁷ ... That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000"⁽²⁾

We have seen that sufficiently reliable and historical eyewitnesses gave written evidence concerning Jesus' Messiahship. Such evidence has withstood the test of 2,000 years of intense examination as no other body of literature in the history of mankind; and it has proven to be valid. The evidence "cannot be rationalized away by wishful thinking, philosophical presuppositionalism or literary maneuvering".⁽³⁾

Whenever eyewitness evidence is presented in a court of law, a judge must decide whether to believe it or reject it as untrue. The evidence of Jesus' Messiahship has been presented. You are the judge; you must decide to believe or reject it. You cannot remain neutral, because to do nothing is actually a decision not to believe.

If you reject Jesus, you do so not because the facts are lacking, but out of a choice to reject the valid evidence.

Whether you will admit it or not, Jesus is the Messiah on whom your eternal destiny rests. Now that you know how to recognize the true Messiah, will you personally receive Him as *your* Messiah, the only One who can provide forgiveness for sin and peace with God? The Messiah will bring a peace to your heart and a fulfillment to your life that cannot be found in either the riches or religions of this world.

If you need help verbalizing your decision, the following prayer may serve as a guide to help you express your faith in Jesus the Messiah:

God, I confess I have sinned against You. I believe that Messiah Jesus died for my sin; and by receiving Him now, I have forgiveness of sin through His atoning blood. Thank you for taking away my sin through Messiah's shed blood and for giving me Your peace.

If you have sincerely prayed this prayer, or if you would like to discuss these issues further, (our friends living in the United States of America are invited to) write to The Friends of Israel, P.O. Box 908, Bellmawr, NJ 08099, (and others living in Australia or New Zealand) write to The Friends of Israel, P.O. Box 171, Melrose Park, South Australia, 5039, Australia.

NOTES

- (1) Victor Buksbazen, *Isaiah the Prophet*, 1971, p. 150.
- (2) Josh McDowell, *The New Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, TN, 1999, p. 193.
- (3) John W. Montgomery, *History and Christianity*, Bethany House, Minneapolis, MN, 1986. p. 40.

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'PROPHECY SPECIAL'

Katoomba Baptist Church

Sunday 23rd May

3 SESSIONS

Please refer to insert page for further information.

***Editor's Note:** This article is a reprint of the booklet of the same title by the same author – The Director of International Ministries – and published by The Friends of Israel, Bellmawr, New Jersey, USA in 1991. It is the first of a series of four in *The Australian Shofar* dealing with the Messianic promises in the Jewish Scriptures, and shown to be fulfilled in the Person and Work of Jesus. The New Testament writers – all Jewish with the possible exception of one, Dr. Luke – attest that He is the promised Messiah. As Messiah and King of Israel, this Jesus is also the Saviour of **all** who receive Him by faith, whether Jew or Gentile. The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry (Australia) Inc. hereby acknowledges the source of the following material written by Dr. Levy and expresses its appreciation to the Mission for permission to publish it in this format.



Deane & Margaret Woods
Ministry Representatives

The Friends of Israel Gospel Ministry (Australia) Inc.

PO Box 171 Melrose Park
SA 5039 Australia

Office and Books:

c/o EBC Community Centre
Suite 406 (Upstairs)
Cnr. Rothesay Ave and Dorene St
St Marys SA 5042 AUSTRALIA

Phone/Fax: (+ 618) 08 8276 1333
Email: australianoffice@foi.org