

Messiah Has Come

What the Rabbis, the Hebrew Prophets and the New Covenant say.

Chapters:

1. **Two comings of the Messiah.**
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Chapter 1. Two comings of the Messiah.

According to many Jewish teachers, Jesus cannot be the Messiah because He did not fulfil the prophecies of the Messiah bringing peace to the world, regathering the Jewish people to Israel and rebuilding the Temple in Jerusalem. Asher Norman, who wrote the book '26 Reasons why Jews should not believe in Jesus' says these are the tasks that the Messiah has to accomplish:

1. **Be anointed King of Israel.**
2. **Return the Jewish people to Israel.**
3. **Rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem.**
4. **Bring peace to the world and end all war.**
5. **Bring knowledge of God to the world.**

He says that anyone who has not done these things cannot be the Messiah. Jesus did not do this when he came. Therefore Jesus is not the Messiah. He says that we will know when the Messiah has come when someone has succeeded in doing all of this. This view overlooks another view of the Messiah which is present in the Hebrew Scriptures and in a number of Jewish interpretations of the scriptures. This view is of the Suffering Servant Messiah of whom Isaiah prophesied when he wrote: 'The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.' Isaiah 53.6.

We agree that the prophets do tell us that the Messiah will reign with power on the earth and bring about the redemption of Israel, the end of war and universal knowledge of God (Isaiah 2:1-4, Isaiah 11:1-9, Ezekiel 40-48, Daniel 2:44, Zechariah 14). However there is another set of prophecies which speak of the Messiah suffering as atonement for sin (Psalm 22, Isaiah 52:13-53.12, Daniel 9:25-26, Zechariah 12:10). Early Rabbinic writings speak of two Messiahs, one known as Messiah ben Joseph who fulfils the prophecies of the Suffering Servant and the other known as Messiah ben David who fulfils the prophecies of the Reigning King. The alternative view is to see these two roles of Messiah fulfilled in two appearances of Jesus the Messiah. Firstly He came as the Suffering Servant who died as a sacrifice for the sin of the world, rose again and ascended to heaven. Secondly He will return in power and glory from heaven, judge the world in righteousness and reign as the King Messiah after His Second Coming.

In this article we will look at ways in which Messiah fulfilled prophecies of the Suffering Servant at His first coming. In our following article we look at the

prophecies of His second coming and see how they are being fulfilled by today's world events.

Chapter 2. Messiah to be born in Bethlehem.

Bethlehem's claim to fame in the Hebrew Bible is that it was the location for the story of Ruth, the ancestress of King David. It was also the place where David was born and lived as a youth. According to the prophecy of Micah 5.2 (5.1 in the Jewish Bible) something special was to happen at a future time in Bethlehem.

'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.'

This prophecy is linked to the Messiah in the ancient Targum of Micah 5.1-3 (the Targum is an ancient paraphrase of the scripture). This reads: *'And you, O Bethlehem Ephrath, you who were too small to be numbered among the thousands of the house of Judah, from you shall come forth before Me the Messiah, to exercise dominion over Israel, he whose name was mentioned from before, from the days of creation.'* This is significant because it means that ancient rabbis considered this verse to be about the birth of the Messiah.

The Jewish commentator Rashi agreed that Micah 5 is about the origin of the Messiah. In his commentary on this verse he wrote: *'And you Bethlehem Ephrathah whence David emanated ... You should have been the lowest of the clans of Judah because of the stigma of Ruth the Moabitess. From you shall emerge for Me the Messiah, son of David ... and his origin is of old.'*

The verse uses an unusual phrase for the origins of this one prophesied here. The Hebrew phrase for this is מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם 'me yemei olam' which means 'from ancient times' or 'from eternity'. In Psalm 90.2 God's existence is described as being 'me olam ve ad olam' מֵעוֹלָם עַד עוֹלָם – from eternity to eternity. The prophecy of Micah implies that the one to be born in Bethlehem would have his origins in eternity. Only God has His origins in eternity so this prophecy points to the divine nature of the one to be born in Bethlehem.

The Gospels show that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Matthew records that He was to be given the name Yeshua יְשׁוּעָה which means salvation. The Angel announced 'You shall call his name Yeshua יְשׁוּעָה for He will save His people from their sins.' Matthew 1.21. The Hebrew Yeshua became Jesus in Greek which is why He is known by this name not the Hebrew name which He would have answered to. Matthew and Luke locate the place of His birth as Bethlehem. Matthew records the visit of the Magi from the east, who came seeking the 'King of the Jews.' Arriving in Jerusalem they enquire where such an event should take place. Herod interprets this as a sign of the coming Messiah (which troubles him!) and gathers together the chief priests and scribes to 'inquire of them where the Messiah was to be born.' Matthew 2.3-4. The response is *'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.'* Matthew 2.6.

Matthew goes on to say that the one to be born will be 'Immanuel' Hebrew for God with us עִמָּנוּ אֵל. So He will be more than just a mortal human baby, He will be God with us.

Luke's Gospel chapter 2 shows us how God overruled events through the Roman census to bring Joseph and Miriam (Mary) down from Nazareth to Bethlehem in order for Yeshua to be born in Bethlehem in fulfilment of the prophecy of Micah 5. Today Bethlehem is an Arab town in the Palestinian Authority area. It is unlikely that the Jewish Messiah could be born in Bethlehem today!

Chapter 3. The time of Messiah coming.

'The world will exist 6000 years. 2000 years of desolation, 2000 years of the Torah, and 2000 years of the Messianic era.' Sanhedrin 97a-b.

This is a passage from the Talmud which says that we should now be in the '2000 years of the Messianic era.' The 2000 years of Torah are generally held to date from Abraham, not Moses, so according to this Midrash the Messianic era was supposed to begin around 2000 years ago. So the Messiah should have come.

The Medieval Jewish commentator, Rashi, gives an explanation for the non appearance of Messiah by saying: *'After 2000 years of Torah it was God's decree that the Messiah would come and the wicked generation would come to an end and the subjugation of Israel would be destroyed. But because our iniquities were many, all this has been lost.'* So according to Rashi, Messiah did not come because of Israel's sins.

Daniel 9.26. According to the prophecy of Daniel, Messiah should have come 'seven weeks and sixty two weeks' after the command to restore and build Jerusalem and before the destruction of the Second Temple.

'Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after 62 weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.' Daniel 9.26. The 'week' here is the Hebrew word 'shavua' which can mean a period of 7 days or 7 years. So we are talking about a period of 7 + 62 sevens which equals 483 years. At the end of this period of time לֹא יִכָּרֵת מִשִּׁיָּהּ וְאֵין לוֹ 'Messiah shall be cut off but not for Himself'. The Hebrew uses the word for Messiah and says that He will be cut off (die a violent death) but not for Himself (not for His own sins, but for the sins of others).

This event was to happen between the command to rebuild Jerusalem and the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. There are two possibilities for the start point (the command to rebuild Jerusalem), either the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1.1-4) or the decree of Artaxerxes (Nehemiah 2). In his book, 'The Coming Prince', Sir Robert Anderson uses the latter date. He fixed this date as March 14, 445 BC and calculated the date from there to 'Messiah the Prince' as $7+62 \times 7 \times 360 = 173,880$ days. He worked out the date of the birth of Jesus as the autumn of 4BC. Based on Luke 3, which tells us that Jesus began His ministry in 15th year of Tiberius Caesar when He was 'about 30 years old', he calculates the beginning of Jesus' ministry to be August in 28 CE and fixes 32 CE as the year of the crucifixion.

The end point of Daniel's prophecy has to be the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple to the Romans in 70CE. Whatever conclusion we come to about the start point, this prophecy in Daniel indicates that the Messiah should have come before the destruction of the Temple.

There is a passage in the Talmud which agrees with this conclusion (Midrash Bereshith p. 243 Warsaw edition): '*Messiah was to exit in 33 C.E.*' (See also - YALKUT, Vol. II (p. 79 dahlet) & NAZIR (32 beht).

Commenting on this Maimonides said: '*Daniel has made known to us the knowledge of the end times. However, since they are secret, the wise rabbis have barred the calculation of the days of Messiah's coming so that the untutored populace will not be led astray when they see that the End Times have already come but there is no sign of the Messiah*' (Igeret Teiman, Chapter 3 p.24.).

From this statement it appears that Maimonides believed that Daniel had knowledge of the time of the coming of the Messiah and that that time has now passed. Because of this rabbis should not teach about Daniel 9 in case their congregations are troubled by the fact that these events have happened and the Messiah did not appear.

This is what Rachmiel Frydland discovered as a student at a yeshiva in Poland before the war: '*I knew that the secrets of Israel's redemption and the Messianic Days lay hidden in the book of Daniel. I also knew that some of the great Talmudic and post-Talmudic Rabbis had plunged into the study of this book and even plummeted the hidden secrets of its symbolic signs and ciphers. The Talmud and Midrash, discussing Israel's redemption, often refer to the book of Daniel as the revealer of the secret time of Messiah's coming. However at the yeshiva I was ominously reminded of a warning and a curse pronounced against those who try to figure out the end. The Talmud says: 'May they drop who try to figure out the end; for they say, 'Since the time of his (Messiah's) coming has already arrived, yet he did not come. Therefore he will not come at all'. (Sanhedrin 97b). The study of our greatest sages brought them to the conclusion that if the dates in the Scriptures are correct, the Messiah should have come in the first century of our era, or thereabouts. In a Talmudic portion it is written concerning the timing of the Messianic Age: 'The school of Elijah taught: The world is to be for six thousand years; two thousand years without Torah; two thousand years with Torah and two thousand years Messianic times (Midrash Rabba Gen.98.3).*' (What the Rabbis know about the Messiah by Rachmiel Frydland).

Genesis 49.10. Another indication that the Messiah should have come is found in the ancient prophecy in Genesis in which Jacob blesses his sons and gives the most significant word not to his oldest son, Reuben, nor to his favourite son, Joseph, but to his fourth son, Judah: 1. '*The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.*' Genesis 49.10.

In this prophecy Jacob is saying that Judah would have rulership as happened through the line of kings descended from his descendant, David. He also prophesied that through his line 'Shiloh' would come. There are Jewish writings, which teach that 'Shiloh' שִׁלּוֹה is a term for the Messiah, for example this one from 'Yalkut', a collection of rabbinic explanations of the Bible: '*Until Shiloh shall come; He is called by the name of Shiloh because all the nations are destined to bring gifts to*

Israel and to King Messiah, as it is written, 'In that day shall the present be brought to the Lord of hosts.' Yalkut 160.

The sceptre in this verse is the Hebrew word 'shebet' שבט, the tribal staff which belonged to each tribe as an ensign of their authority. Thus the tribal identity of Judah would not pass away, as happened to other tribes, until Shiloh or Messiah comes. It was from the tribe of Judah that the line of kings descended from King David came. Even after the Babylonian captivity, Judah continued to have lawgivers (see Ezra 1.5 - 8).

In the early years of the Roman occupation of Judea, the Jewish people still had a king in their own land. Moreover they were to a large extent governed by their own laws, and the Sanhedrin exercised its authority. But in the span of a few years in around 11 CE, Archelaus, the king of the Jews was dethroned and banished. Coponius was appointed Roman Procurator, and the kingdom of Judea, the last remnant of the former nation of Israel, was formally debased into a province of Syria (see Josephus' Antiquities 17, chapter 13.1-5).

At this time the Sanhedrin lost its power of passing the death sentence (see John 18.31). According to the Talmud this was considered an ominous development because the 'sceptre had departed from Judah and the Messiah had not come: *'When the members of the Sanhedrin found themselves deprived of their right over life and death, a general consternation took hold of them; they covered their heads and their bodies with sackcloth, exclaiming, 'Woe unto us, for the sceptre has departed from Judah and the Messiah has not come.'*' (Talmud, Bab., Sanhedrim, Chapter 4, fol. 37, recto). This would have been about the time that Jesus appeared in the Temple as a 12 year old boy (Luke 2.41-50). The Messiah had come!

For another half century the Jewish people retained the semblance of a provincial government structure, but in 70 AD all semblance of Jewish national sovereignty disappeared when Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed by the armies of the Roman General Titus.

If Jesus is the Messiah, then the prophecy of Jacob way back in Genesis was fulfilled in a remarkable way. The Messiah came before Judah lost its national identity, just as Jacob foretold. He completed His mission 40 years before the destruction of the Second Temple, even giving a prophetic warning of that coming event in Luke 19.41-44.

In conclusion, according to the Jewish writings quoted above, the Messiah should have already come.

So if Jesus is not the Messiah this raises a problem. If He is the Messiah then He came at the right time, around 2000 years ago. He came before the destruction of the Second Temple, to be cut off (die a violent death), not for Himself (not for his own sins), but for the sins of others. In doing this He fulfilled the prophecies of Messiah suffering as an atoning sacrifice for our sins as we have read about in Isaiah 53.

For all this to happen He had to come at the right time. At the beginning of this chapter we quoted Rashi who said the Messianic Age had not come 'because our iniquities were many'. Shaul (Paul) tells us that was why Messiah did come! To save us from our sins and make the way for God to forgive us and give us eternal life: *'You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Messiah died for the*

ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Messiah died for us. Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through Him! For if, while we were God's enemies, we were reconciled to Him through the death of His Son, how much more, having been reconciled, shall we be saved through His life! Not only is this so, but we also boast in God through our Lord Yeshua (Jesus) the Messiah, through whom we have now received reconciliation.' Romans 5.6-11.

Chapter 4. Messiah to perform signs and wonders.

According to the Gospels Jesus performed miracles of healing, deliverance from evil spirits, raised the dead, calmed the storm, walked on water, turned water into wine, fed 5000 with supernatural food, as well as rising from the dead after He had been crucified. The New Testament teaches that these miracles were the sign of His divine nature (i.e. He was the Son of God).

The Gospels record great multitudes coming to Jesus to be healed as a result of which His fame spread throughout the whole region. Matthew 4.23-25 *'And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then His fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to Him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and He healed them. Great multitudes followed Him—from Galilee, and from Decapolis, Jerusalem, Judea, and beyond the Jordan.'* See also Matthew 8.16-17, 9.35-38, 15.29-31, Mark 1.32-45, 3.7-11, Luke 7. The news of the miracles caused great crowds of people to come to Jesus to be healed.

The miracles are seen as a fulfilment of the prophecies of the Bible. In Matthew 8.16 the miracles of Jesus are seen as a fulfilment of Isaiah 53.4 *'When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying: 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses.'*

In Luke 4.16-21 Jesus quotes Isaiah 61.1-2 *'The Spirit of the LORD is upon Me because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, To proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD.'* He then applies this prophecy to Himself and to His miracles.

The Gospels also show that the miracles Jesus testify to His divine nature. In the Gospel of Mark 2.3-12 we read how He healed the paralysed man. *'Then they came to Him, bringing a paralytic who was carried by four men. And when they could not come near Him because of the crowd, they uncovered the roof where He was. So when they had broken through, they let down the bed on which the paralytic was lying. When Jesus saw their faith, He said to the paralytic, 'Son, your sins are forgiven you.'* And some of the scribes were sitting there and reasoning in their hearts, *'Why does this Man speak blasphemies like this? Who can forgive sins but God alone?'* But immediately, when Jesus perceived in His spirit that they reasoned thus within themselves, He said to them, *'Why do you reason about these things in your hearts? Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or*

to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins'—He said to the paralytic, 'I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house.' Immediately he arose, took up the bed, and went out in the presence of them all, so that all were amazed and glorified God, saying, 'We never saw anything like this!'

Jesus is faced with the accusation that He was speaking blasphemy by saying 'Your sins are forgiven you,' because only God can forgive sins. Jesus' response is a test question – 'Which is easier, to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Arise, take up your bed and walk'? Actually the harder thing to **say** is: 'Take up your bed and walk'. Jesus can say 'Your sins are forgiven you' and nothing visible will happen to show whether or not that has actually happened. But if Jesus says 'Take up your bed and walk' and nothing happens it is obvious that His claim is false on both counts – being able to heal the sick and to forgive sins. By demonstrating that He can deliver on this humanly impossible thing and cause the lame man to walk, Jesus shows that He also has the power to forgive sins and is therefore a divine person.

In Jesus' day the Pharisees attributed His miracles to the power of evil. In Matthew 12.4 we read *'This fellow does not cast out demons except by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons.'* Matthew 12.24. It is interesting that this concept has remained in Jewish writings opposing Yeshua as the Messiah. For example in the Talmud (Sanhedrin 43a) we read: *'It was taught On the Eve of the Passover Yeshu was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place a herald went forth and cried, 'He is going forth to be stoned because he has **practised sorcery** and enticed Israel to apostasy.'* In the Middle Ages 'Toledoth Yeshu' was written. This is a mixture of all kinds of hostile material to Jesus. What is interesting is that it does contain the same accusation that Jesus did miracles by sorcery, claiming that 'Yeshu' caused a lame man to walk after pronouncing over him 'the ineffable name' which he had stolen from the foundation stone of the temple. These miracle caused people to *'worship him as the Messiah, Son of the Highest. Then the Sanhedrin was desirous of Yeshu's apprehension.'*

Asher Norman in his book '26 Reasons why Jews should not believe in Jesus' says that *'The Jewish Bible warned against Jesus. 'The Torah specifically warns that God will test the Jewish people by sending a prophet or a 'dreamer of dreams' who will produce a 'sign or a wonder' which he will use to turn the Jewish people to 'gods you do not know. This prophet or 'dreamer' will be subject to the death penalty.*

Problematically the Gospels assert that Jesus was a prophet who performed signs, wonders and miracles.' By saying this he is acknowledging the miracles of Jesus, but saying that they were done in order to lead Israel astray.

These hostile sources in a reverse way actually testify to the fact that Jesus did perform miracles. They were not done by any evil power, but by the power of God to testify to the fact that Jesus is more than a man, but is the Messiah, God with us, who demonstrated His power over sickness, death, demons and over the world which He had created, by His miracles.

The Biblical prophecies indicate that Messiah will come again, not as a Suffering Servant, but as a reigning King with all the power of His divine nature manifested. At His return He will rule the earth from Jerusalem and His miracle working power will be manifested in the restoration of the earth and the healing of the sick as described in a number of biblical prophecies in particular Isaiah 35.1-6:

'The wilderness and the wasteland shall be glad for them, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose; It shall blossom abundantly and rejoice, even with joy and singing. The glory of Lebanon shall be given to it, the excellence of Carmel and Sharon. They shall see the glory of the LORD, the excellency of our God. Strengthen the weak hands, and make firm the feeble knees. Say to those who are fearful-hearted, 'Be strong, do not fear! Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God; He will come and save you.' Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then the lame shall leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb sing. For waters shall burst forth in the wilderness, and streams in the desert.'

The miracles of the Messiah at His first coming will be repeated on a world wide scale at His second coming as the earth is filled with the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea!

For more on this subject go to our article: Did Jesus perform signs and wonders?
<http://messiahfactor.com/page62.html>

Chapter 5. Messiah to bring salvation from sin and death.

The Seed of the Woman.

The earliest Messianic prophecy in the Bible is found in Genesis 3. The first three chapters of Genesis tell us about the creation of the universe, the first disobedience of humankind to God's commandments (the Fall), resulting in the curse of sin and death coming into the world. Many people today treat these chapters as mythological and not literal and say they have been disproved by science and the theory of evolution. In fact there are good reasons to believe that account of the Creation, the Fall and the Flood in Genesis were literal events which took place. There are also good reasons to disbelieve the evolutionary hypothesis, which is taught as a fact in our schools, media and museums today. For further information on this subject we recommend Answers in Genesis website: <http://www.answersingenesis.org/>

The prophecy in Genesis 3.14-15 reads: *'So the LORD God said to the serpent: 'Because you have done this, You are cursed more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you shall go; and you shall eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.'*

This prophecy of redemption was given after Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The cause of this disobedience was the Tempter who promised them *'You shall be like God'* if they ate of this fruit. The Tempter appears as the Serpent in Genesis 3 and is identified with Satan who misled humanity and caused separation from God, sin and death to enter the world.

'The Seed of the Woman' here is seen as one who will bruise the head of the Serpent and in the process the Serpent will *'bruise His heel.'* This means that the promised Seed will inflict a fatal wound on the Serpent / Satan (bruise his head), while receiving a non-fatal wound himself. Jewish sources give this scripture a Messianic significance. The Aramaic paraphrase of the Hebrew Scriptures, Targum Jonathan, relates this to the Messiah appearing: *'But they will be healed in the footsteps in the days of King Messiah.'*

Rabbi David Kimchi gave support to this scripture as a prophecy of Messiah's redemption of mankind. He recognized that salvation is by the hand of the Messiah *'who would wound Satan, the head, the king and prince of the house of the wicked.'*

There is evidence in Genesis that Eve understood this prophecy to be about a child who would be born to a woman who would bring deliverance when she said concerning her first son, Cain, *'I have gotten a man from the Lord.'* (Genesis 4.1). In fact the Hebrew here does not contain the word 'from' so it literally reads, 'I have gotten a man, the Lord' קניתי איש את יי. The Targum of Palestine elaborates on this verse: *'And Adam knew his wife and she conceived and brought forth Cain, and she said; 'I have obtained the man, the Angel of the Lord.'* She was to be disappointed in this because Cain turned out to be of the Evil One and killed his brother Abel.

However when she then gave birth to Seth, she said, *'God has appointed another seed to me'* (Genesis 4.25). Midrash Rabba Genesis 23.5 comments on this, *'She (Eve) hinted at that seed which would arise from another source ... the king Messiah.'*

From this point onwards the line of the Seed is traced through the Tenach. It goes from the godly line of Seth through to Noah and his son Shem, then on to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, through Judah to David and his descendants. Through this 'Seed of the Woman' God would bring blessing and redemption to all who receive the salvation He is offering. In Genesis 22.18 we read of God's promise to Abraham concerning his seed: *'In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.'*

In normal sexual reproduction it is the man who provides the seed for the baby to be conceived in the womb of the woman. There is a possible hint at something out of the ordinary in the reference to the seed of the woman in Genesis 3.15. In the prophecy of Isaiah 7.14 we read: *'Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.'* (For answers to the objection that this prophecy is not about a virgin birth go to our article <http://messiahfactor.com/page30.html>).

The one to be born will be 'Immanuel' – God with us. He will come by a miracle (a sign) which will be the conception of the son to a woman who is still a virgin.

Just a little later in his prophecy Isaiah gives more information about this one to be born: *'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. Of the increase of His government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.'* Isaiah 9.6-7.

This one will be born as a Son, but at the same time His nature will be that of a 'Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.' Two of those phrases אל גבור 'el gibbor / Mighty God' and אבי עולם avi olam / Everlasting Father contain the concept of divinity in them so this one to be born is more than a human king reigning, He is divine in nature, Immanuel / God with us עמנו אל.

The Suffering Servant.

The fulfilment of this promise of the Seed of the woman is Yeshua, Jesus, of the line of David, who came in the fullness of time, to be born to a virgin in Bethlehem and to

fulfil the prophecy of the Suffering Servant Messiah by dying as a sacrifice for the sins of the world.

The main passage which speaks of this is to be found in Isaiah 53, where we read about the servant of the Lord of whom it is written: *'Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'* Isaiah 53.5-6

'For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.' Isaiah 53.8

Who is this prophet speaking about?

According to Rashi, writing in about 1050, the answer is clear. The prophet is talking about Israel suffering for the Gentiles. Today the almost universal view taken by Rabbis is that this is the Jewish interpretation of Isaiah 53. However before Rashi put forward this view the majority rabbinic view was that this passage describes the Messiah. Rashi's view provoked a fierce debate among his contemporaries and was rejected by Rambam (Maimonides) who said that Rashi was completely wrong and going against the traditional Jewish viewpoint.

One example of an ancient view of Isaiah 53 is found in the Targum of Jonathan ben Uzziel written in the first century. The Targums are paraphrases of the scriptures into Aramaic. His Targums were often quoted by early Rabbis and he was considered an authority on the Jewish view of the Bible. His Targum of Isaiah 52.13 clearly connects this passage to the Messiah, saying, *'Behold my Servant Messiah shall prosper ...'*

Alshech the Chief Rabbi of Safed, Upper Galilee, in the 16th century said of Isaiah 53, *'Our Rabbis with one voice accept and affirm the opinion that the prophet is speaking of the king Messiah, and we shall ourselves also adhere to the same view.'*

Rabbi Eliyyah de Vidas wrote in about 1575 that not only is Isaiah 53 about the Messiah, but those who refuse to believe this must suffer for their sins themselves: *'But He was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities, the meaning of which is that since the Messiah bears our iniquities which produce the effect of his being bruised, it follows that whoso will not admit that the Messiah thus suffers for our iniquities must endure and suffer for them himself.'*

These Rabbis are not saying that this Messiah is Jesus but they are acknowledging that Isaiah 53 is about Messiah suffering for sin. Generally those who take this line believe that there are two Messiahs, one called Messiah ben Joseph who suffers and dies, and one called Messiah ben David, who rules and reigns.

This comes out in this quotation from Rabbi Alshech. Commenting on Zechariah 12:10, where the prophet says Israel will *'look upon me whom they have pierced'*, he writes: *'For they shall lift up their eyes unto me in perfect repentance when they see him whom they have pierced, that is **Messiah, the Son of Joseph**. For our rabbis of blessed memory have said that he will take upon himself all the guilt of Israel, and then shall be slain in the war to make an atonement, in such a manner, that it shall be*

accounted as if Israel had pierced him, for on account of their sin he has died, and therefore in order that it may be reckoned to them as a perfect atonement, they will repent, and look to the Blessed One, saying that there is none beside him to forgive those that mourn on account of him who died for their sin; this is the meaning of 'They shall look upon me.'

Rabbi Alshech's mention of '**Messiah, the Son of Joseph**' is a reference to the view held within Judaism that there are two Messiahs, one called Messiah son of Joseph who suffers and dies and one called Messiah son of David, who rules and reigns. On this subject David Baron writes: *'The doctrine or theory of two Messiahs – a Messiah ben Joseph who should suffer and die and a Messiah ben David who shall reign in power – can be traced back to the third or fourth century and very probably originated in the perplexity of the Talmudists at the apparently irreconcilable pictures of a suffering and yet a glorious Messiah, which they found in the scriptures. Instead of finding a solution in two advents of the one person they explained the scriptures as referring to two different persons.'* The suffering Messiah is given the name 'Son of Joseph' because he suffers rejection and humiliation like Joseph in Egypt (Genesis 37-41). The reigning Messiah is given the name 'Son of David' because he reigns in triumph like King David.

Another interesting quotation is to be found in the Talmud where we read: *'Rabbi Yehoshua ben Levi noted the apparent contradiction in the following two verses. It is written: '...and behold one like a son of man (Moshiach / Messiah) comes with the clouds of heaven' (Daniel 7.13). But it also says: 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem. Behold, your king shall come to you, righteous and saviour is he, a pauper and riding on an ass' (Zechariah 9.9). The verses may be reconciled: If they are worthy, Moshiach will appear with the clouds. If not, he will be a pauper and ride on an ass.'*

In other words whether the Messiah appears in glory or in humiliation depends on the spiritual condition of the generation when He comes. Again this contradicts the view we are presenting, but it does point to the fact that Rabbinic Judaism has to try to explain the reason for two quite different portraits of the Messiah, one as a Suffering Servant and one as a Conquering King.

The alternative to the two Messiahs view is the one we hold, that there is one Messiah, who comes on two different occasions, firstly as a Suffering Servant to die an atoning death for the sins of the world and to rise again from the dead, and secondly as a Reigning King, to judge the world in righteousness and to rule and reign over a restored earth during the Messianic Kingdom or Millennium. At the present time we are in the period between these two comings of the Messiah who is Yeshua or Jesus.

In the New Testament Yeshua explained to His disciples that He would go to Jerusalem and suffer and die as a sacrifice for the sins of the world, then rise again from the dead. See for example Matthew 16.21 *'From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.'*

Jesus' sufferings on the cross are the fulfilment of Isaiah 53. Does this interpretation make sense of the text? We invite you to study this text and look up the references given in the New Testament.

Isaiah 52.13-15.

'Behold, My Servant shall prosper; He shall be exalted and extolled and be very high. Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men; so shall He sprinkle many nations. Kings shall shut their mouths at Him; for what had not been told them they shall see, and what they had not heard they shall consider.'

These verses introduce the Servant who is described in detail in the verses that follow.

The servant will be exalted very high. Prior to His exaltation He was to be humiliated and physically abused to the point where He became almost unrecognisable. As a result He would 'sprinkle many nations' and kings would be silent before Him.

The crucifixion account describes Jesus' physical suffering at the hands of the Romans. He was scourged, had a crown of thorns placed upon Him before being taken away to be crucified.

Anyone going through this level of physical abuse and humiliation would become almost unrecognisable as Isaiah prophesied. Yet despite this humiliation He was to be raised to life again and ascend to the highest place, just as Isaiah said He would be.

Peter explains this in his speech on the Day of Pentecost where he describes the resurrected Lord Jesus *'whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.'* ... *'This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. Therefore being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear. For David did not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: 'The Lord said to my Lord, 'Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies your footstool.'* (Psalm 110.1)

Isaiah 52.15 also speaks about the Servant 'sprinkling' many nations. According to the New Testament the blood of Jesus replaces the blood of the animal sacrifices as the means whereby God can forgive our sins:

'But Messiah came as High Priest of the good things to come ... For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.' Hebrews 9.11-15.

'The blood of Jesus the Messiah, His Son cleanses us from all sin.' 1 John 1.5-7.

Isaiah 53.1-3.

Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him. 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.

These verses speak of the rejection which would accompany the ministry of this Servant. His message would not be believed. His origin and appearance would not meet the expectations of the people and therefore they would reject Him. This rejection would cause Him grief.

The New Testament records the rejection of Jesus throughout the time of His public ministry, for precisely these reasons. He was rejected by those who thought He was born in Nazareth not in Bethlehem the place prophesied for the coming Messiah (Micah 5.1, John 1.46, John 7.40-44, John 9.29, John 12.37-41). He was rejected by His own family and the people He had grown up with who said of Him 'Is not this the carpenter's son?' (See Matthew 13.55, Luke 4.16-30). He was rejected by the religious leaders who objected to the miracles He did on the Sabbath (John 9.16), His association with people they considered to be sinners (Matthew 9.11, Luke 15), and above all because of His claim to be equal with God (Matthew 26.65, Mark 2.7, John 8.58, John 10.30). He was even rejected at His hour of need by the disciples who could not stay awake to pray with Him at the time of His arrest (Matthew 26.36-46), who ran away and left Him and denied even knowing Him (Mark 14.27-72).

In all of this Jesus experienced grief just as Isaiah said the Servant would: *'And He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is extremely sorrowful even unto death.'* Matthew 26.37-8.

Isaiah 53.4-6.

Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.

These verses take the sufferings of the Servant further and describe the purpose of His suffering. His death would be misinterpreted by those who said He was stricken by God and afflicted (in other words He was suffering for His own sins). In fact the whole meaning of His sufferings was to atone for the sins of others. Because He experienced the worst sorrows life can throw at any one, He can sympathise and carry the griefs of those who are going through suffering now.

The Lord has placed on Him the iniquity of us all so that we can be forgiven. In 2 Corinthians 5.21 Paul writes of the Messiah: *'We implore you on Messiah's behalf, be reconciled to God. For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.'* Jesus who was without sin, became the sin offering for us all, in order that we might be made righteous with God. This is exactly what Isaiah prophesies when he says that all of us have gone astray (sinned), but the Lord has laid on Him, the Messiah, the iniquity of us all.

Every person who turns to Jesus in sincerity discovers that He is able to forgive their sins and give them eternal life.

Isaiah 53.7-9.

He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not

His mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of my people He was stricken. And they made His grave with the wicked, but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth.

These verses tell us about the sufferings of the Messiah from a human point of view.

He would be brought to trial and willingly accept the death sentence handed down to Him, despite its injustice. He would be literally put to death (cut off from the land of the living) and once again it is stated that His death would be for the sins of ‘my people’. His death would be an atoning death for sin. As far as His body was concerned He would be expected to be put in a grave with the executed criminals (they made His grave with the wicked). However there would be an intervention of ‘the rich’ at the point of His death.

Jesus’ trials before Caiaphas and Pontius Pilate were both unfair and contrary to both Jewish and Roman law (for more on this see our article on the trial of Jesus <http://messiahfactor.com/page44.html>). *‘Now the chief priests, the elders and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none.’*

Matthew 26.59. Jesus did not try to defend Himself, knowing that it was necessary for Him to go to the cross in order to redeem the world. *‘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, so that the governor marvelled greatly.’* Matthew 27.12-14.

The Roman soldiers who had witnessed countless similar executions were in no doubt that Jesus was dead before He was taken down from the cross (John 19.32-35). What happened next is very interesting in the light of Isaiah’s prophecy. The usual practice was for crucifixion victims to stay on the cross as a warning to others not to go against the power of the occupying Romans, or for their bodies to be taken down and thrown into a common grave in the Valley of Hinnom outside Jerusalem. If either had happened to Jesus the next event, the resurrection, would have lost its force.

Isaiah says He would be with the rich at His death. In the Gospel we read how a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea to intervene and ask Pontius Pilate for the body of Jesus so he could bury Him in His own tomb (Matthew 27.57-60). Pilate agreed to this and the body of Jesus was placed in a sealed tomb with a stone rolled across it. As a result when the resurrection happened it was much easier to verify or discredit the story than it would have been if the body had been thrown into a common grave. This intervention was vital to what was to happen next – the resurrection – as it meant that the body of Jesus was placed in a special tomb, not a common pit, with a stone rolled across it, so that it would be clearly a miracle when Jesus rose from the dead on the third day, as the Gospels record.

The reason given for this in Isaiah *‘because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth’* again testifies to the fact that Jesus was without sin and therefore able to be the sin offering for the world at the crucifixion.

Isaiah 53.10-12.

Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When you make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labour of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge my righteous servant shall justify many, for He

shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.’ Isaiah 52.13-53.12.

These verses tell us the purpose of the Servant’s death and speak of His resurrection from the dead. He would be satisfied by seeing His ‘seed’ and bring justification to many by bearing their iniquities. God would highly exalt Him because He was willing to be considered a transgressor and die. He would make intercession for transgressors.

The ultimate responsibility for the death of Jesus is with God. Isaiah 53.10 tells us that *‘it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief’*. The New Testament agrees entirely with this and places responsibility for Jesus’ death on the sins of the world and the will of God (Acts 4.25-28). His death was to be literal, as Jesus’ death was, and yet He would *‘see His seed and be satisfied.’* How can it be possible for someone who has died to see anything? What does Isaiah mean by ‘His seed’?

The only answer to this is to be found in one who rises from the dead and, as a result of His death and resurrection, He will justify many by bearing their iniquities as Isaiah says. Those who experience this will be the ‘seed’, those who believe in Jesus and are reborn to eternal life through faith in Him. Because of this He would be satisfied, as Isaiah prophesies, seeing that all the pain of the cross was worthwhile because it would bring multitudes of people all over the world into the kingdom of God:

‘Then He said to them, ‘These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me. And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures.’

‘Then He said to them, ‘Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. And you are witnesses of these things. Behold, I send the promise of my Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.’ Luke 24.44-49.

The Book of Acts records the spread of the Gospel beginning in Jerusalem and then going out to ‘Judea and Samaria’ and to the ends of the earth. In this way multitudes of people would be justified, put right with God:

‘But now in Messiah Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah. For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.’
Ephesians 2.13-18.

Finally to remind us that the idea that He wanted His followers to avenge His death was the very furthest thing from His mind, we read in Isaiah that He ‘made intercession for sinners’. Jesus’ words from the cross were ‘*Father forgive them for they know not what they do.*’ Luke 23.34.

For more on this go to our article **The Suffering Servant. Who is this prophet talking about?** <http://messiahfactor.com/page31.html>

Chapter 6. Messiah to rise from the dead.

In John’s account of the empty tomb, John reflects that they did not believe in Jesus’ resurrection until finding the tomb empty, save for the abandoned grave clothes, because ‘*as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise from the dead*’ (John 20.9).

There is a difficulty in this scripture, which Asher Norman in his critique of Christianity uses, when he says ‘They did not know the scripture, because it does not exist.’ We do have to acknowledge that direct prophecies of the Messiah being resurrected in the Tenach are difficult to find.

Actually there is not a great deal in the whole of the Jewish Bible about the subject of resurrection, with nothing directly to be found in the Torah. Such verses as can be found are in the prophets. For example: ‘*Your dead shall live; together with my dead body they shall arise. Awake and sing, you who dwell in dust; for your dew is like the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.*’ Isaiah 26.19. ‘*And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, some to shame and everlasting contempt.*’ Daniel 12.2. Ezekiel’s vision of the dry bones coming to life is also seen as a prophecy of the resurrection of the dead: ‘*Prophecy to these bones, and say to them, ‘O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord God to these bones: “Surely I will cause breath to enter into you, and you shall live. I will put sinews on you and bring flesh upon you, cover you with skin and put breath in you; and you shall live. Then you shall know that I am the Lord.*’ Ezekiel 37.4-6.

So are there verses in the Tenach, which point to the resurrection of the Messiah?

In the prophecy of Isaiah 53, the Servant / Messiah, is said at least three times to be put to death. Verse 8 tells us he is to be ‘cut off from the land of the living’ (i.e. dead). In Verse 10 we read ‘*Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand*’. The offering for sin was His death on the cross. If He is then to see His seed (those who would believe on Him) and prolong His days, He must be resurrected from the dead.

On the road to Jerusalem Jesus told His disciples about His coming crucifixion and resurrection: ‘*From that time Jesus began to show to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, and suffer many things from the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised the third day.*’ Matthew 16.21.

He had previously spoken of the ‘sign of Jonah’ in a dispute with the scribes and Pharisees: ‘*An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and*

three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'

The story of Jonah can be seen as a type of death and resurrection. In Jonah 2 the prophet cries to the Lord 'Out of the belly of Sheol' (the place of the dead). He says, *'The earth with its bars closed behind me forever; Yet You have brought up my life from the pit, O Lord, my God.'* Jonah 2.6. He then says *'I will sacrifice to You with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay what I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.'* The only way he can sacrifice to the Lord with the voice of thanksgiving is if he is miraculously delivered from the belly of the fish, which is a type of Sheol, the place of the dead, which is what happens in the next verse. Therefore the 'sign of Jonah' can be seen as the sign of death and resurrection.

Job speaks of his hope of resurrection, referring to 'My Redeemer', whom he says will at last stand on the earth: *'For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; And after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!'* Job 19.25-27. This verse can be seen as a prophecy of the Redeemer / Messiah who will 'stand on the earth' at His Second Coming, after He has completed the task of bringing salvation through His death and resurrection.

Speaking about the resurrection of Jesus on the day of Pentecost (Shavuoth) Peter said, *'God raised Him up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades (Greek form of the Hebrew Sheol, the place of the dead), nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.'* 'Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he 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 Messiah to sit on his throne, he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Messiah, 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 2.24-32.

Peter quotes from the Psalm of David concerning the Holy One, the Messiah who will not remain in Sheol, the place of the dead. He says it is not possible that death could hold Him (verse 24). It is not possible because He is the Holy One, the Son of God, who has come to earth to redeem us. Being God He cannot die. In fact the last words of Jesus from the cross are 'Father into your hands I commit my spirit.' Luke 23.46. His body was placed in the grave, but His spirit returned to the Father. On the third day, as He had foretold, His spirit returned into His body. He was supernaturally raised from the dead, and He appeared to the disciples, convincing them that He was alive and had conquered sin and death and hell.

It is a generally accepted view of Judaism that in the days of the Messiah, the dead will be resurrected. The Gospels all describe the resurrection of Jesus from the dead as an event which has already taken place and which also points forward to the general day of the resurrection of the dead and the day of judgement. Jesus describes the general resurrection of all of the dead and says that He will be the one who will

exercise judgement on that day: *'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live. For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself, and has given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of Man. Do not marvel at this; for the hour is coming in which all who are in the graves will hear His voice and come forth—those who have done good, to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil, to the resurrection of condemnation. I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own will but the will of the Father who sent Me.'* John 5.24-30.

From the point of view of the believer in Yeshua as the Messiah, He has come from 'olam ha ba' the world to come, the eternal realm, to the earth. Therefore it is natural that He should have revelation to give us concerning life in the world to come (i.e. the resurrection of the dead.). Jesus actually claims, *'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die.'* John 11.25-6.

He asks us to believe in Him as the Messiah who has died for our sins and risen from the dead. According to the New Testament, the disciples witnessed Him risen from the dead, appearing to them over a period of forty days before being taken up into heaven. *'He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.'* Acts 1.3.

The resurrection of Jesus became the central message of the disciples to be taken into all the world as a witness to the risen Messiah. *'For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Messiah / Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He rose again the third day according to the Scriptures, and that He was seen by Cephas, (Peter) then by the twelve. After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. After that He was seen by James, then by all the apostles. Then last of all He was seen by me also, as by one born out of due time.'* 1 Corinthians 15.3-7.

In Luke's account of the resurrection, Jesus explained to them what had happened according to Luke 24.44-47: *'These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me.'* And He opened their understanding, that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Then He said to them, *'Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Messiah to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.'*

For more on this subject go to our article on the resurrection accounts.
<http://messiahfactor.com/page65a.html>

Chapter 7. Messiah to be a light to the nations.

The Lord told Abraham *'In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.'* Genesis 22.18. So a descendant of Abraham

would bring blessing to all nations.

In Isaiah 49.5-6, one of the Servant songs of Isaiah, we read, *'And now the Lord says, Who formed Me from the womb to be His Servant, to bring Jacob back to Him, so that Israel is gathered to Him (For I shall be glorious in the eyes of the Lord, and My God shall be My strength). Indeed He says, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also give You as a light to the Gentiles, that You should be My salvation to the ends of the earth.'* In this passage the Hebrew for 'My salvation' is my Yeshua, the Hebrew name of Jesus, which means salvation. This passage shows that the work of the Messiah is to reach to the ends of the earth with the message of salvation.

Isaiah 45 also speaks of the universal mission of the Lord to bring the message of God as Creator and Saviour to all nations. *'For thus says the Lord, Who created the heavens, Who is God, Who formed the earth and made it, Who has established it, Who did not create it in vain, Who formed it to be inhabited: 'I am the Lord, and there is no other. I have not spoken in secret, In a dark place of the earth; I did not say to the seed of Jacob, 'Seek Me in vain'; I, the Lord, speak righteousness, I declare things that are right. 'Assemble yourselves and come; draw near together, you who have escaped from the nations. They have no knowledge, who carry the wood of their carved image, and pray to a god that cannot save. Tell and bring forth your case; Yes, let them take counsel together. Who has declared this from ancient time? Who has told it from that time? Have not I, the Lord? And there is no other God besides Me, a just God and a Saviour; There is none besides Me. 'Look to Me, and be saved, all you ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself; the word has gone out of My mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, that to Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall take an oath. He shall say, 'Surely in the Lord I have righteousness and strength. To Him men shall come, and all shall be ashamed who are incensed against Him. In the Lord all the descendants of Israel shall be justified, and shall glory.'* Isaiah 45.18-25.

These words mean that God is Creator and Saviour, that He is in contrast to the vain gods of the Gentiles, that He cannot be mingled with these idols, and that He is offering justification to Israel and the way of salvation to all nations.

This is what God is offering in the New Testament, through Yeshua, Jesus the Messiah. The last words of the Lord Jesus to His disciples before He ascended into heaven were: *'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.'* Matthew 28.18-20. In Acts 1.8 He says *'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'* Here He tells them that their mission is a worldwide one, to teach all nations about His kingdom. He promises them that they will receive the Holy Spirit in order to accomplish this mission and that He will be with them always, even to the end of the age.

Rachmiel Frydland, a Messianic Jewish writer, draws attention to a rabbinic story which also contains an idea of the Messiah going into all the world. *'The study of our greatest sages brought them to the conclusion that if the dates in the Scriptures are correct, then Messiah should have come in the first century of our era, or thereabouts.'*

The many Messiahs who flourished during that period claiming to be redeemers, were all great disappointments. Finally, Simon Bar Kozibah, whom R. Akiba called "Bar Kokhba" (The Star), came. Though he was active in the first half of the second century, R. Akiba adjusted him to the Messianic claim by making reference to Haggai 2:6. For the majority of the Jewish people Bar Kozibah was a tragedy and a disappointment. Apart from the loss of tens of thousands of Jews at his defeat in Betar A.D. 135, his activities resulted in untold sufferings for the surviving Jews.

*In an 11th century rabbinic portion we read, 'Woe for the salvation of Israel has perished! But a voice came from heaven saying, 'Elijah, it is not as you think, but He will be 400 years in the Great Sea (Mediterranean), and eighty years with the Sons of Korah where the smoke ascends, and eighty years at Rome's gate, and **the rest of the years He will travel about the great Cities until the end.**' (Bereshit Rabbati p 130-131)*

*In another rabbinic portion, based in part upon a scripture in the book of Lamentations, 'she has none to comfort (which connects to the name 'Menachem') of all her friends, the name of the Messiah is identified as Menachem Ben Amiel. (Messiah Texts at 26-27, 122-123). Messiah then is clearly 'alive and well' for the last nineteen hundred years, according to these rabbinic writings. His name is Menachem (the Comforter) ben Amiel (God is with his people). **He started to work around the great Mediterranean Sea, went to Samaria (Korah), then Rome and the ends of the world.** 'What the Rabbis know about the Messiah' by Rachmiel Frydland, p 74-5.*

Of course there is no historical person who can be identified as 'Menachem' and this is no more than a comforting story, but it does indicate some idea that the Messiah should go to the 'great cities' of the world (i.e. the ends of the earth). In reality the message of the Messiah has gone to the ends of the earth. Where the message of the Gospel has gone, Jesus has gone, for He says, 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst.' (Matthew 18.20) And 'Lo I am with you even to the end of the age.' (Matthew 28.20).

The fact that the message of the Gospel was to go to all nations did not mean that Yeshua meant His followers to turn away from or against the Jewish people. In Acts 1 He told the disciples, 'But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.' Their mission was to begin in Jerusalem amongst the Jewish people and spread out through Judea and Samaria to the ends of the earth. Paul wrote that the Gospel / good news is the power of God unto salvation 'to the Jew first and also to the Greek (Gentile)' Romans 1.16. God's purpose was to bring Jew and Gentile together in worship of His name, through Yeshua the Messiah and to bring the light of His truth to the ends of the earth. Paul writes how those Gentiles who come to faith in the Messiah should pray for the salvation of Israel and love the Jewish people from whom the Messiah came. (Romans 9-11).

Sadly many Jewish people have experienced the opposite of love and salvation at the hands of so called Christians. A corrupted church arose in the form of the Roman Catholic and Orthodox Churches, which became a curse, not a blessing to Israel, as it made the accusation that the Jews killed Jesus and persecuted the Jewish people. For more on this go to our article 'Who killed Jesus?'

<http://messiahfactor.com/page26.html>. The false church was prophesied in the New Testament, seen as the 'Whore of Babylon' in Revelation 17. This church oppressed the people and suppressed the true message of the Gospel. In the Middle Ages when

Rome had power over Europe, those who sought to teach people the true message of salvation faced persecution and those who sought to translate the Bible into the common language of the people were often put to death by the church (as was William Tyndale).

Through the Reformation and following events much of the original message of the Gospel was recovered and the Gospel was preached to the ends of the earth. Now there are those who have received salvation and have come to know God and to read His Word all over the world. Much of the professing church may have misrepresented their Saviour, but true believers in Jesus have gone into all the world to bring blessing to the nations. It was Christian missionaries to India, led by William Carey, who campaigned against the horrible practice of 'sati' whereby the widow of a Hindu man who died was burned alive on His funeral pyre. It was Bible believing Christians like William Wilberforce and John Newton who fought for the abolition of slavery in the 19th century. Christian missionaries like David Livingston brought medicine and education to African tribes and sought to free them from bondage to witch doctors and superstition.

The whole of the Bible has been translated into 405 languages, all the major languages of the world, the New Testament into 1034 languages, and portions of the Bible into a further 864 languages. As a result there are people all over the world who look to the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for salvation, which they have received through the Messiah to whom the Prophets bore witness before He came in the flesh. This has happened because of the faithful witness of the first Jewish disciples in Jesus who obeyed His command to '*Go into the world and preach the Gospel.*' Matthew 28:18-20.

The Messiah came the first time to bear the sins of the world and offer Himself as the atoning sacrifice for all mankind. Through Him both Jews and Gentiles may partake of the promises given by God to Israel and be reconciled to God (Ephesians 2:11-18) and join the believing church. In the original Greek of the New Testament the word for church, 'ekklesia', means 'the called out ones', in other words people who have been called out of the world to believe in Jesus as Messiah. It never means a building or a religious organisation. It always means a group of people. The purpose of the true church in this age is to take the Gospel to the ends of the earth as Jesus told them to.

This does not mean that all will receive it. Jesus taught that this message will bring division between those who accept it and those who reject it:

'And this is the judgement that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one who does evil hates the light, and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But he who does what is true comes to the light that it may clearly be seen that his deeds have been wrought in God.' John 3:19-21.

Those who do accept the Lord through coming to the point of genuine repentance and faith in Him experience the 'new birth' which Jesus spoke about to Nicodemus:

'Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.' John 3:3.

As a result of this new birth the believer receives the Holy Spirit who begins the process of sanctification which aims at reproducing in us the character of the Lord:

'The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.' Galatians 5:22.

Since the whole process is voluntary the extent to which we show the character of the Holy Spirit depends on the extent to which we submit our lives to Him. It also needs to be pointed out that there are multitudes who profess to be Christians who have never experienced this 'new birth' and are therefore not Christians at all in the true sense and do not represent the Messiah Yeshua.

This age will come to an end at the second coming of Jesus when He will judge mankind on the basis of how we have responded to His offer of salvation. This offer has first to be given to all nations which is now being done by the evangelistic work of the believing church. The rejection of this offer by the majority will lead to days of tribulation which will bring this age to a close as Jesus told the disciples when they asked Him, *'What will be the sign of your coming and the close of the age?'* His answer told of wars, famines, earthquakes, plagues, persecutions and deception and said that the age would end with *'great tribulation such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be.'* Matthew 24:21. This is in harmony with the words of the Prophets who also taught that there will be tribulation in the end of times:

'At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was seen there was a nation, even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, every one who is found written in the book.' Daniel 12:1. See also Isaiah 24, Jeremiah 30, Ezekiel 38-39, Zechariah 12-14.

Despite the continuing unfaithfulness of much of the visible church, the message of the Gospel is going out into all the earth. The effect of world evangelism is the only division which has eternal significance - not the division of Jew and Gentile, black and white, male and female, rich and poor - but the division of lost and saved:

God's purpose in the last days of this age which are coming upon us as we see in current events is to restore Israel to Himself through faith in the Messiah Yeshua, who has come and who is coming again soon to judge the world in righteousness. For more on this subject go to the following articles 'Messiah is coming' and 'Messiah will reign.'