

Messiah will reign

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Chapter 1. Two Messiahs or one Messiah coming twice?

‘Where do you get this idea of a ‘second coming’ from? Was it because Jesus did not succeed the first time that he’s got to have another go? It doesn’t say anything in the Bible about the Messiah coming twice.’ This was the response of a Jewish man I was speaking to when I said that there would be no peace in the world until Jesus comes back again.

Maybe he had been reading a book by Rabbi Kaplan, ‘The Real Messiah?’ which states: *‘The main task of the Messiah was to bring the world back to God and to abolish all war, suffering and injustice from the world. Clearly, Jesus did not accomplish this. In order to get around this failure on the part of Jesus, Christians invented the doctrine of the ‘Second Coming’. All the prophecies that Jesus did not fulfil the first time are supposed to be taken care of the second time around. However the Jewish Bible offers absolutely no evidence to support the Christian doctrine of a ‘Second Coming.’*

Actually the Jewish Bible (Tenach / Old Testament) does support the idea of two comings of the Messiah. This is reflected in rabbinic writings which speak of Messiah ben (son of) Joseph who suffers and is humiliated as Joseph was at the hands of his brothers and Messiah ben David who reigns and is exalted as King David was. In his book ‘The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah’ David Baron, an Orthodox Jew who came to believe that Jesus is the Messiah, wrote: *‘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 AD 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 comings of the one person they explained the scriptures as referring to two different persons.’*

The prophecies in the Tenach concerning the Messiah and the end of days do appear to be saying contradictory things. For example the Prophet Isaiah alone presents the following difficulties. Chapter 2 speaks of Messiah reigning with power from Jerusalem, all nations going to hear the word of the Lord and as a result living in peace together. Chapter 53 speaks of Messiah being despised and rejected of men, having our iniquities laid on him, when he is cut off from the land of the living, executed with transgressors, buried and yet living to see the ‘travail of his soul.’ Chapter 11 speaks of the future condition on the earth associated with the end of days when the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea, returning to conditions of paradise with even the animals being vegetarian and not devouring each other. Chapter 24 speaks of the future condition also associated with the end of days in which the earth is devastated, cities are destroyed and people scorched with few survivors.

A similar pattern can be found in other prophecies of the Messiah. In rabbinic writings we find another attempt to explain the apparent contradiction between verses which speak of the Messiah coming in glory or in humiliation: *'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.'* (Talmud – Sukkoth 52a). In other words how the Messiah appears depends on the spiritual condition of the generation when he comes.

A better explanation of this contradiction is to recognise that these verses do not speak of two different Messiahs, but of one Messiah who comes on two different occasions with two different purposes. This points to Jesus as the Messiah who has already come to fulfil the prophecy of the Suffering Servant (Isaiah 53) and who will come again to fulfil the prophecy of the Reigning King (Isaiah 2.1-4).

Chapter 2 Biblical prophecies of the Second Coming.

Far from failing when He came the first time, Jesus succeeded 100% in fulfilling the clear and specific prophecies of the Suffering Servant Messiah. He came by virgin birth (prophesied by Isaiah 7.14, fulfilled in Matthew 1.18-25) to be born in Bethlehem (prophesied by Micah 5.2, fulfilled in Matthew 2.1-12). He performed miracles (prophesied in Isaiah 61.1, fulfilled in Matthew 9.35) and taught in parables (prophesied in Psalm 78.2, fulfilled in Matthew 13.34). He was put to death by crucifixion (prophesied in Psalm 22.16 and Zechariah 12.10, fulfilled in Luke 23.33), buried in a rich man's tomb (prophesied in Isaiah 53.9 fulfilled in Matthew 27.57-60) and rose again from the dead (prophesied in Psalm 16.10-11, fulfilled in Luke 24.5-6). He died as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world (Isaiah 53.6, 1 Corinthians 15.3-5). The message of the Gospel has been preached to people all over the world (Isaiah 45.22-23, Matthew 28.18-20). His sacrificial death for the sins of the world took place before the Second Temple was destroyed by the Romans in AD 70 (Daniel 9.26, Luke 19.41-44).

The prophecies which are unfulfilled now will be fulfilled at the second coming of Jesus as the New Testament makes clear. It is logical to believe that Jesus will succeed 100% in accomplishing all of the following events which will take place at His second coming. Before this event there will be the time of unique trouble on the earth which the prophets spoke about happening in the last days. After this event there will be the time of great blessing and renewal on the earth which the prophets also spoke about. Both parts of the Bible, Old and New Testaments, point to the same event. Below are examples of this:

1. This event will be preceded by a time of unparalleled trouble.

'At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation even to that time.' Daniel 12.1.

New Testament parallel:

'For then there will be great tribulation such as has never been since the beginning of the world until this time, no nor ever shall be.' Matthew 24.21

2. The focal point of this time of trouble will be Jerusalem.

'And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.' Zechariah 12.3.

New Testament parallel:

'But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies then know that its desolation is near. ... Jerusalem will be trodden down of the Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled.' Luke 21.20-24

3. The world will come under the power of the beast / antichrist (corresponding to Armilus in Jewish writings) in the last days.

'The fourth beast shall be a fourth kingdom on earth which shall be different from all other kingdoms, and shall devour the whole earth, trample it and break it in pieces ... He shall speak pompous words against the Most High, shall persecute the saints of the Most High, and shall intend to change times and law; Then the saints shall be given into his hand for a time and times and half a time.' Daniel 7.23-25.

New Testament parallel.

'And I saw a beast rising up out of the sea having seven heads and ten horns and on his horns ten crowns and on his head a blasphemous name ... And all the world marvelled and worshipped the beast ... And he was given a mouth speaking great things and blasphemies and he was given authority to continue for forty two months ... And it was granted him to make war with the saints and to overcome them. And authority was given him over every tribe, tongue and nation.' Revelation 13.

4. All nations will be gathered for the final battle.

'Assemble and come all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause your mighty ones to come down there, O Lord. Let the nations be wakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat' (Hebrew word means 'The Lord judges'). Joel 3.11-16.

New Testament parallel: *'For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to battle of that great day of God Almighty. ... And they gathered them together in the place called in Hebrew Armageddon.'* Revelation 16.14-16.

5. Messiah will come in the clouds of heaven.

'I was watching in the night visions, and behold one like the Son of Man coming with the clouds of heaven!' Daniel 7.13.

New Testament parallel: *'Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.'* Matthew 24.30

6. Messiah will be visible as one who has been pierced.

'And I will pour on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on me whom they pierced and mourn for him as one mourns for his only son and grieve for him as one grieves for a first born.' Zechariah 12.10.

New Testament parallel: *'Behold he is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him, even they who pierced him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of him.'* Revelation 1.7

7. Messiah will come to the Mount of Olives.

'Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations as he fights in the day of battle. And his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives which faces Jerusalem on the east.' Zechariah 14.2-3.

New Testament parallel: *"Men of Galilee why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will so come in like manner as you saw him go into heaven." Then they returned to Jerusalem from the Mount called Olivet.'* Acts 1.11-12

8. Messiah will come with the saints.

'Thus the Lord my God will come and all the saints with you.' Zechariah 14.5.

New Testament parallel: *'Behold the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints.'* Jude 14. ('Saints' here means all who are saved believers in the Lord).

9. The wicked will flee from the coming of the Lord.

'In that day a man will cast away his idols ... to go into the clefts of the rocks and into the crags of the rugged rocks from the terror of the Lord and the glory of his majesty, when he arises to shake the earth mightily.' Isaiah 2.20-21.

New Testament parallel: *'And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains and said to the mountains and rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb."'* Revelation 6.15-6

10. The Lord will establish righteousness and peace on the earth.

'Now it shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the Lord's house shall

be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come and say, "Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; he will teach us his ways, and we shall walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He shall judge between the nations, and rebuke many people. They shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore (Isaiah 2.2-4).'

New Testament parallel: *'Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. He laid hold of the dragon, that serpent of old, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years ... so that he should deceive the nations no more ... Blessed and holy is he who has part in the first resurrection. Over such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Messiah and shall reign with him a thousand years.'* Revelation 20.1-6 (extracts)

11. Israel will be saved and blessed of the Lord in the midst of the nations.

'In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth, whom the Lord of hosts shall bless saying, "Blessed is Egypt my people and Assyria the work of my hands and Israel my inheritance.' Isaiah 19.24-25.

New Testament parallel: *'And so all Israel will be saved as it is written: 'The deliverer will come out of Zion and he will turn away ungodliness from Jacob; for this is my covenant with them when I take away their sins.'* Romans 11.26-7.

12. Following the Millennial reign of Messiah on earth, God will create new heavens and a new earth.

'For as the new heavens and the new earth which I will make shall remain before me,' says the Lord so shall your descendants and your name remain.' Isaiah 66.22.

New Testament parallel: *'Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. ... And I heard a voice from heaven saying, "Behold the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people. God himself will be with them and be their God.'"'* Revelation 21.1-4 (extracts).

Chapter 3. Life in the Messianic Kingdom.

At His first coming Jesus submitted to the unjust rule of wicked men who put Him to death by crucifixion. At His second coming the wicked will submit to His judgement (Revelation 6.15-16). He will make war with the armies gathered by the beast (antichrist) and false prophet in the final battle and defeat them, throwing the beast and the false prophet straight into hell (Revelation 19.19-21). The survivors of the tribulation period will be gathered before Him for judgement. The wicked will be cast off the earth into the place of punishment and the righteous will enter into the kingdom (Matthew 25.31-46). The devil will be bound *'for a thousand years, and he will cast him into the bottomless pit and shut him up and set a seal on him so that he should deceive the nations no more until the thousand years were finished.'* (Revelation 20.3-4).

When Jesus returns the saints will be with Him (in New Testament terms 'saints' simply means those who have saving faith in the Lord). In Zechariah 14.5 we read, *'Thus the Lord my God will come and all the saints with you.'* Jude 14 says, *'Behold the Lord comes with ten thousands of his saints to execute judgement on all.'* In Revelation 19 John sees Jesus coming as *'KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS'*. *'And the armies in heaven clothed in fine linen white and clean followed him.'* Revelation 19.14. Those clothed in fine linen white and clean have already been identified in the chapter as 'saints' (Revelation 19.8).

So those who have been redeemed through the blood of Jesus in the present age will come back with the Lord in glorified bodies and reign with Him in the renewed earth of the Millennial period. The people who will take part in this glorious event are those who have been previously taken to be with the Lord at the Rapture of the Church: *'For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.'* 1 Thessalonians 4.16-17. They will have new eternal bodies (1 Corinthians 15.53-54) not subject to death or decay.

He will also resurrect those who were martyred for their faith during the tribulation period. *'Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. ... They shall be priests of God and of Christ and shall reign with him a thousand years.'* Revelation 20.4-6.

The redeemed of Israel who lived before the coming of Jesus will also be resurrected: *'At that time Michael shall stand up, the great prince who stands watch over the sons of your people; and there shall be a time of trouble such as never was since there was a nation even to that time. And at that time your people shall be delivered, everyone who is found written in the book. 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 12.1-2.

Following the return of the Messiah and the judgement of the wicked the Lord will reign over the earth bringing a period of universal peace and prosperity. The Bible says that at this time the nations will go up to hear the word of the Lord in Zion, streaming to the Lord's temple rebuilt on Mount Zion which will be lifted up above the other hills around Jerusalem.

They will seek the Lord and walk in His ways. This implies a total change from the present world situation in which the overwhelming majority scoff and reject God's word and walk in their own ways to destruction. Instead of war and hostility there will be a peace settlement between all nations – including the currently intractable Middle East situation – and an end to all weapons production and military training. All this will happen because the word of the Lord will go out from Zion.

The Lord Himself will be there to judge between the nations and settle their disputes.

Psalm 2.9, Isaiah 11.4 and Revelation 19.15 say that He will rule the nations with a 'rod of iron' – in other words they won't be able to vote him out of power, or start making weapons of war or doing drugs or pornography or anything else that is evil in the eyes of the Lord. This will be a benevolent rule which will be for the welfare and provision of all the peoples on the earth.

The redeemed of Israel will be gathered to the land of Israel and dwell there in safety. *'He will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.'* Isaiah 11.11. There will be peace and blessing on Israel and the neighbouring lands. *'In that day there will be a highway from Egypt to Assyria ... In that day Israel will be one of three with Egypt and Assyria - a blessing in the midst of the land.'* Isaiah 19.23-24.

The Lord will bring about change in the natural world as the desert blossoms (Isaiah 35) and the waters of the Dead Sea are healed and become fresh, teeming with fish (Ezekiel 47). Even the animal kingdom will change as *'The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, the calf and the young lion and the fatling together and a little child shall lead them.'* (Isaiah 11.6). There will be abundant provision for all: *'But everyone shall sit under his fig tree and none shall make them afraid.'* Micah 4.4.

Such miraculous changes can only come about through the power of God. No great man can accomplish these things, so the Messiah who will do them must be more than a great man. He must be Immanuel / God with us. Rabbi Kaplan who I quoted earlier in this article said, *'The main task of the Messiah was to bring the world back to God and to abolish all war, suffering and injustice from the world.'* He also says that the Messiah is a great man, not a divine figure: *'Along with this he (Messiah) will bring eternal peace, love, prosperity, and moral perfection to the entire world. The Jewish Messiah is truly human in origin. He is born of ordinary human parents, and is of flesh and blood like all mortals.'* ('The Real Messiah' by Rabbi Kaplan)

If we look at the Messianic programme described in the Prophets, we can see that the task of bringing all this to pass is beyond the ability of any human. The one who causes all these things to happen must Himself be a divine person. In fact a number of prophecies in the Hebrew Bible do speak of the reigning King Messiah in these terms.

The prophecy of Zechariah 14 speaks of the time of the Messianic kingdom / Millennium and shows that the One who will reign is the LORD (Adonai / Yahweh). It says *'The LORD will go forth and fight against those nations as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives which faces Jerusalem on the east. ... And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be – 'The LORD is one and His name one.'* Zechariah 14.3-9. The word used for LORD here is the Hebrew term Yahweh which only is used of God. So the LORD will stand with feet on the Mount of Olives (and the rest of a body!) and be king over all the earth.

A number of other prophets speak of the Lord being present in the midst of His people. *'Behold, the days are coming,'* says the Lord, *"That I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness; a King shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness*

in the earth. In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell safely; Now this is His name by which He will be called: THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.’ Jeremiah 23.5-6. This King who brings His righteous rule to Israel and the earth is identified as the LORD with the divine name for God, Yahweh, being used about Him.

‘In that day it shall be said to Jerusalem: ‘Do not fear Zion, let not your hands be weak, The LORD your God in your midst, the Mighty One will save, He will rejoice over you with gladness.’ Zephaniah 3.16-17. ‘Cry out and shout O inhabitant of Zion, for great is the Holy One of Israel in your midst.’ Isaiah 12.6.

During this reign of the Messiah all idols will be abolished (Isaiah 2.17) and there will only be one LORD and one way to worship Him (and one universal language!) *‘For then I will restore to the peoples a pure language that they all may call on the name of the LORD to serve Him with one accord.’ Zephaniah 3.9.* As people praise and walk in the ways of the God who made them they will know peace and harmony and the *‘earth will be filled with the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea.’ Isaiah 11.9.* There will be a good one world government and one world faith in one God revealed through Yeshua, Jesus the Messiah.

During this time children will be born in the normal way to the survivors of the tribulation who go into the Millennium. Long life will be the norm but sin and death will still be a possibility (though not for those who have previously been resurrected and come back with the Lord in glorified bodies): *‘No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days, for the child shall die one hundred years old but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.’ Isaiah 65.20.*

Because Satan is bound and unable to deceive the nations during the 1000 years and the Lord Jesus is ruling the nations, the ability to sin will be very limited. But at the end of the 1000 year period *‘Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations which are in the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them together to battle, whose number is as the sand of the sea. They went up on the breadth of the earth and surrounded the camp of the saints and the beloved city. And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them. The devil who deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone where the beast and the false prophet are. And they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.’ Revelation 20.7-10.*

Those who have been born in the normal way during the Millennium and in their hearts are rebelling against the reign of the Messiah will join Satan in his final rebellion against the LORD at the end of this period. This futile rebellion will end in complete defeat for Satan and all who join with him.

This will be the end of the world as this earth is burned up and God creates a new heaven and new earth in which there will be righteousness and to which Satan and sinners will have no access. This will lead to the eternal state for believers and unbelievers alike – with only two possible destinies – heaven and hell. Now is the day of salvation. We need to accept Messiah as Saviour now so that we will have a part to play in His glorious coming Kingdom.