

The promised Messiah

How did your parents choose your name? If you have children, how did you choose their names? Most likely, you can explain your name. Your surname may reflect your family's history. You probably know the literal meaning of your given name, and perhaps you can identify a person you were named after.

A name with special meaning

The name of Jesus Christ describes his whole mission. It is not a regular name like John Brown or Mary Smith.

"Jesus" means "Savior", or "the Lord saves". The angel, when he announced Jesus' birth to his mother, Mary, stressed the significance of his name:

"You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins."

Matthew 1, verse 21

The name "Christ" is more accurately a title. It is equivalent to the Old Testament "Messiah", a Hebrew word. Jesus clearly stated he was the Messiah. His title "Christ" is used in the New Testament about 350 times; what is meant is the Messiah of the Old Testament.

The Jews expected - and many still expect - a Messiah who will rule the world with Jerusalem as the capital. He will initiate the final era of human history by establishing permanent peace, justice and plenty.

The literal English meaning of both Christ and Messiah is "anointed". Many Bible verses where the word "anointed" appears refer to Jesus Christ.

In ancient Israel, anointing was a ceremony to show that God had chosen an individual for a position of privilege and responsibility usually as king or priest. Oil was poured over the head of the chosen person. For instance, King David was anointed to show he was to be the next king of Israel, a few years before he actually became king.

The name of "Jesus Christ", therefore, describes two distinct aspects of his mission: firstly, his role as Savior; and secondly, his future role as king.

One unified message

The Bible is divided into two parts: the Old Testament (the first 39 books) and the New Testament (the last 27). Most people consider the New Testament more relevant for Christians because it is about Jesus Christ.

However, when you read the New Testament you will notice that it contains many quotations from the Old.

This is because the Old Testament is also about Jesus Christ. It gives the promise of a Messiah to rule in peace and justice.

The New Testament builds on this promise, extending it to apply to all people, not only the Jews.

Jesus himself quoted from the Old Testament, referring to his own work. He referred to a well-known passage from the prophet Isaiah which his Jewish audience understood to speak of the Messiah, or "anointed one".

"The spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor."

Luke 4, verse 18,
quoted from Isaiah 61, verse 1

He made it very clear that he had come to fulfil "the Law and the Prophets" - which are in our Old Testament.

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them."

Matthew 5, verse 17

Jesus believed every word of the Old Testament. Moreover, he knew it foretold his role as Savior and Messiah.

The angel announced to Mary before his birth that she would be the mother of the long-awaited Messiah. His words foretold Jesus' role as future king.

*"The Lord will give him the throne of his father David."**

Luke 1:32

Jesus' family tree

The New Testament traces Jesus' ancestry through David. (His descendants are named in both Matthew 1 and Luke 3.) Numerous times it refers to him as "the son of David".

In the last chapter of the Bible Jesus states:

"I am the Root and the Offspring of David."

Revelation 22, verse 16

Why is it so important that Jesus should be a descendant of an ancient king of Israel?

King David was a man of deep faith and understanding of God's message. The Bible describes him as "a man after God's own heart".

God made a promise to David that He made to no other king, a promise so far-reaching that it is called an "everlasting covenant". One of his descendants was to set up a worldwide kingdom which would last forever:

"When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers I will raise up you offspring to succeed you, one of your own sons, and I will establish his kingdom... I will be his father, and he will be my son... his throne will be established forever."

1 Chronicles 17, verses 11 to 14

To be in this kingdom is the hope of all who accept Christ and his message.

There are numerous reverences throughout the Old Testament to the kingdom. Isaiah describes the world government to be set up by this descendant of David, who is the promised Messiah:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonder Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

"Of the increase of his government

The promised Messiah

and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever."

Isaiah 9, verses 6 and 7

The charges nailed to Jesus' cross showed that both the Jews and the Romans clearly understood Christ's claim to be the promised king:

"Above his head they placed the written charge against him:

THIS IS JESUS

THE KING OF THE JEWS."

Matthew 27, verse 37

The kingdom of God

The gospel message is about Jesus Christ and the kingdom of God. Indeed, this kingdom is referred to over 100 times in the New Testament.

After his resurrection, Jesus spent forty days teaching his disciples about his future kingdom, when he would take the throne of David. Their last recorded question to him showed they understood his kingdom would be based in Israel. It also showed they hoped he would become king during their lifetime:

"Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

Acts 1, verse 6

Soon after this, he ascended to heaven in their sight, and two angels appeared to reinforce the fact that he would return to earth:

"This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven."

Acts 1, verse 11

The disciples gradually realized their Lord's second coming was in the far future. Years later, Peter wrote:

"In the last days scoffers will come... They will say, 'Where is the 'coming' he promised?"

"But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

II Peter 3, verses 3,4,8 and 9

Christ will return - and soon

Jesus taught his disciples to pray, "Your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."**

You have probably repeated these words from the Lord's Prayer. Do you realize that when you say them you are praying for the kingdom which Jesus Christ will establish on earth when he returns?

Bible prophecies describe what the world situation will be like just before his second coming. These descriptions correspond closely to developments over the past few years.

For instance, prophecies point to the reestablishment of a Jewish state in Israel; and serious conflict in the Middle East. The current world situation provides ample reason to believe Jesus could appear at any time.

Jesus Christ will shock the world when he appears. Are you ready to meet him?

Recap

Jesus Christ is the Messiah described in the Old Testament, anointed by God to be King.

His role as King will be fulfilled when he returns to establish God's kingdom on earth.

Recommended Bible Readings

God's promise to David:

I Chronicles 17; Psalm 89

A vision of Christ's Kingdom:

Isaiah 11, verses 1 to 10

Jesus' return:

Acts 1, verses 1 to 11;

II Peter 3

The end of the world:

Revelation 19 to 22

* In Bible idiom, "father" often means "ancestor", and "son" often means "descendant".

** See the Lord's Prayer: Matthew 6, verses 9 to 13.