

# As it had been Told Them

## Tuesday Bible Study Group

### Session 2: *Why?*

#### The Messiah would be called a Nazarene

<https://jewsforjesus.org/jewish-resources/messianic-prophecy/the-messiah-would-be-called-a-nazarene/>

**References:** Isaiah 11:1; Isaiah 53:3; Zechariah (various portions); Psalm 22

**Fulfillment:** Matthew 2:23

Matthew's Gospel cites many Old Testament prophets about the Messiah, but only in **2:23** does he use the plural "prophets" as opposed to a particular prophet: *"And he went and lived in a city called Nazareth, so that what was spoken by the prophets might be fulfilled, that he would be called a Nazarene."* Moreover, whereas in other citations he uses the word "saying" (Greek, *legontos*), here he uses the word "that" (Greek, *hoti*), suggesting that it is not a direct quote. Rather, it represents a summary of what several prophets have said. What did they say then?

The words of Nathanael in John 1:46 shed light: *"Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?' Philip said to him, 'Come and see.'" People from Nazareth were not held in high esteem; they were considered backward and, we might say, "trashy."* In fact, Galilee as a whole did not have a sterling reputation. When the Pharisee Nicodemus defended Jesus in front of his fellow Pharisees, they replied, *"Are you from Galilee too? Search and see that no prophet arises from Galilee"* (John 7:52).

Various prophets and other Old Testament writers wrote that the Messiah would be **despised and considered of low esteem**. For example, Isaiah 53:3 says that, *"He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not."*

Zechariah is another likely one of the "plural prophets" who spoke about the lowliness of the Messiah. Zechariah 9:9-10, in

the midst of a section of "messianic portraits" (in the words of commentator R. T. France), depicts **a savior who is riding a donkey**, in lowly fashion.

Zechariah 11:4-14 speaks of a shepherd who is not recognized by his own sheep, **who is pierced by the Jerusalemites** in **12:10**, and was even struck down by God's sword (**13:7**). As France summarizes, the words of this verse in Matthew *"represent the prophetic expectation that the Messiah would appear from nowhere and would as a result meet with incomprehension and rejection."*<sup>1</sup>

Similarly, Psalm 22 says in verse 6 (Hebrew, verse 7), *"But I am a worm and not a man, scorned by mankind and despised by the people."* David said this of himself as a righteous sufferer, but when Jesus quoted this Psalm on the cross, the implication was that he was the ultimate example of such a suffering individual. Note that in Acts 2:30-31, David is called a prophet, though he is not normally included in the writing prophets of the Old Testament: *"Being therefore a prophet... he foresaw and spoke about the resurrection of the Messiah."* Similarly, Acts 4:24 speaks of God *"who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit," followed by a quotation from Psalm 2. So David could also be included among Matthew's "prophets."*

Less likely is the idea that this is a wordplay on *netzer*, Hebrew for *branch*, in Isaiah 11:1. The wordplay only works in Hebrew, not in Greek (the language of Matthew). And it is not the case that multiple prophets spoke of the Messiah as a branch, nor that they stated that he "would be called" by that name. The explanation that it refers to the Messiah's lowliness and status as a despised person fits Matthew's usage perfectly.

**End Notes:** 1. R. T. France, *The Gospel of Matthew (New International Commentary on the New Testament)*, (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 95.

# Jesus in the Old Testament

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<https://www.gordonconwell.edu/blog/jesus-in-the-old-testament/>

There is no finer teacher on whether Jesus is to be found in the pages of the Old Testament than the teaching of our Lord Jesus himself.

He it was who said in John 5:39, "You [Jewish people] diligently study the Scriptures [which at that time were the 39 books of the *Tanak*/Old Testament].... These are the Scriptures that testify about me." That should settle the question.

But even more famously, Jesus rebuked Cleopas, and that other unnamed disciple, as they walked along the road to Emmaus on that first Easter Sunday, "How foolish you are, and how slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Did not Christ have to suffer these things and then enter his glory? And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, [Jesus] explained to them what was said in all the [Old Testament] Scriptures concerning himself" (Luke 24:25-27).

Even King David predicted the resurrection of Jesus back in 1000 B.C. as he, too, saw what was ahead, namely, that Jesus would not be "abandon[ed] ... to the grave, nor [would he] let his Holy One see decay" (Ps 16:8-11; Acts 2:30-31). Therefore, it is not unexpected that we, too, should find Jesus present in the events and the predictions found in the Old Testament.

It is only right that we should find that Jesus was both actually present in the Old Testament and accurately predicted, and that he would come first as our Savior, and then in a later second coming, would appear as the King supreme over all the earth. Such an unusual state of affairs is possible because he was, he is and he is the One to come. But sad to say, all too many miss both his real presence in the Old Testament narrative and the numerous predictions of both his first and second advents/comings. To remedy this, let us turn first to those places where he appeared in a Christophany in the Old

Testament times. Then we will sample some of the numerous predictions of his comings.

## Old Testament Appearances of Christ

Jesus is first seen in the Old Testament as the person who appeared as "the Angel of the Lord" in his sudden confrontation with Sarah's maidservant, Hagar (Gen 16:7). Thereafter, he continued to appear intermittently throughout the earlier books of the Old Testament. These real occurrences, initiated by God, were characterized by the fact that they were convincing revelations of his person and work, as much as they were also transitory, fleeting, but audible and clearly visible appearances. He came temporally in the form of a human, much before his final incarnation as a babe in Bethlehem, yet this same "Angel of the LORD" is called and is addressed often as "the LORD/*Yahweh*" himself (Gen 12:7; 17:1; 19:1; etc.).

This "Angel of the LORD" was a title that stood for his office, but it did not describe his nature. The Hebrew word for "angel" (*mal'ak*) had the basic idea of one who was "sent," a "messenger." Of the 214 usages of the Hebrew term used for "angel," about one-third of them refer to what is labeled by theologians as a "Christophany," a temporary appearance of Christ in the Old Testament. It is certain, however, that this special angel of the Lord is divine, for Hagar "...gave this name to the LORD, who spoke with her [as the Angel of the LORD]: 'You are the God who sees me,' as she observed, 'I have now seen the One who sees me'" (Gen 16:13).

Other instances of Jesus' appearances in the Old Testament can be seen representatively in Genesis 22:11, 15, where it was the Angel of *Yahweh* who spoke from heaven to Abraham when Abraham was about to sacrifice Isaac, and stopped him from proceeding. Again, it was the Angel of *Yahweh* who appeared to Moses in the flame of fire in Exodus 3:2. Throughout the dialogue at that burning bush, it was also declared that he was no one less than "*Yahweh*," who spoke at that time, causing Moses to hide his face from him (Ex 3:6).

Later, it was the same Angel of the Lord who appeared to the wife of Manoah (Judges 13:2-25), mother of Samson, whom she reported to her husband was indeed a “man of God” that had appeared to her. When Manoah asked for the “Angel of the LORD” to also appear to him as he had appeared to his wife, the Angel repeated the appearances and his conversations to him, after which he ascended in the flame of the altar (Judg 13:20), implying the sacrifice was in worship of the Lord himself! Moreover, this “Angel” is regarded as a “Redeemer,” who saves Israel from evil (Isa 63:9).

How can readers of the Old Testament doubt that these sample instances, along with a host of other such descriptions in the earlier Scriptures, were anything less than preincarnate appearances of our Lord Jesus in real flesh, even if it was in those days only a temporary infleshment/incarnation for the immediate needs of the people until he would come and take on flesh permanently? Oftentimes Jesus came to earth to help his people in their distress and their need for direction. The only examples of the Angel of *Yahweh* turning against Israel occur in 2 Samuel 24 and 1 Chronicles 21, where the Angel is the agent of God’s punishment of David, because he disobeyed God and conducted a national census.

### **Old Testament Predictions of the Coming Messiah**

In addition to the real presence of Jesus as the Angel of the Lord/God, J. Barton Payne listed some 574 verses in the Old Testament that had direct personal messianic foretellings. Payne found 127 personal messianic predictions involving some 348 verses that had any or all types of real and typological prophecies of Jesus’ first or second coming. This number was exceeded only by Alfred Edersheim, who noted that in some 558 rabbinic writings in pre-Christian times, there were some 456 separate Old Testament/Tanak passages used to refer to the Messiah or to messianic times!

In my own book, *The Messiah in the Old Testament*, I was able to identify 65 direct predictions of Jesus’ comings in the Old Testament. Few will dispute that there are at least six direct

Messianic predictions in the Pentateuch: Genesis 3:15; 9:27; 12:2-3; 49:8-12; Numbers 24:15-19; and Deuteronomy 18:15-18.

Eve was promised in Genesis 3:15 that a male descendant from her line would crush the head of the serpent, i.e., the Devil himself, and win completely over evil, as the prince of evil, Satan, would be finally vanquished. Then in Genesis 9:27, God would come and live/dwell in the tents of Shem, the Semitic peoples. But which one of the Semites did God intend: the Arabs or the Jewish people? Abraham settled that question, for God called him to go from Ur of Mesopotamia to Israel, and he was to be a blessing for all the nations on earth in Genesis 12:3.

This promise could be narrowed down even further for the tribe of Judah. Son number four of Jacob would be the one God would invest with the scepter of ruling and the one from whom the line of Messiah would descend (Gen 49:8-12). In fact, this coming one from Judah would be “A star [that would] come out of Jacob, a scepter [that would] rise out of Israel” (Num 24:17). Moreover, the Messiah who would come would also be a “prophet” (Deut 18:15) as well as a “king” (Ps 72).

If the book of Job is to be placed in the period of the patriarchs (c. 2100 - 1800), as we believe he is to be placed, then there are four texts in Job that should be added to the six in the Pentateuch. There Messiah is called an “angel” and a “Mediator” (Job 33:23-28).

Add to these 10 direct Messianic prophecies another five from the times both prior to and during the Davidic period. He is seen as the “Anointed” one in 1 Samuel 2:1-10 and the “faithful Priest” in 1 Samuel 2:35-36. But the most outstanding text by far is the Davidic Covenant text found in 2 Samuel 7 (repeated in 1 Chron 17) and elaborated on in Psalm 132, which pointed to the dynasty/house of David as the place where God would originate his throne, dynasty and kingdom forever. The promise given to King David was so astounding that David cried out in 2 Samuel 7:19c that “This is the law/charter for [all] humanity.” In other words, God had just now conferred on David an

enlargement of the promise he had originally made with the patriarchs.<sup>5</sup>

There is not enough space to relate how 11 Psalms celebrate the person and work of the coming Messiah, but even though he would be rejected (Ps 118), and betrayed (Pss 69, 109), die and be resurrected (Pss 22, 16), he would come as Conqueror and Enthroned Ruler (Pss 2, 110), as Planner and Groom (Pss 40, 45), and as Triumphant King (Pss 68, 72). In addition to the previous 15 direct references to the coming Messiah, there are some 39 predictions of the Messiah in the Old Testament prophets. A sample of these announcements before they happened would include these facts. First, it was predicted that Messiah would be born of a virgin (Isa 7:14; cf. Mt 1:33). His birthplace would be Bethlehem (Mic 5:2; cf. Mt 2:1, 6), and John the Baptist would be his forerunner (Isa 40:3-5; Mal 3:1; cf. Mt 3:3, Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4-6).

It was further announced ahead of time that Messiah would enter Jerusalem [what turned out to be Palm Sunday] in Triumph as the crowd shouted "Hosanna" (Zech 9:9-10; Ps 118:25-26; cf. Mt 21:9; Mk 11:9; Lk 19:38; Jh 12:13). But in less than a week, he would be betrayed [by one of his own disciples, Judas, as it turned out] (Ps 69:25; cf. Acts 1:20).

Messiah's side would be pierced (Zech 12:10; cf. Jh 19:37), and he would suffer vicariously for the sins of the world (Isa 53:6, 9, 12; cf. I Pt 2:21-25; Rom 4:25). Even more dramatically accurate was the fact that Jesus would be killed with the "wicked" ones (Isa 53:9a, note the plural noun in Hebrew) [as he hung between two thieves], yet he would be buried with the rich one (Isa 53:9b, note its singular form in the Hebrew).

But that was not the end of the matter for the predictions about Jesus in the Old Testament, for Messiah would return to earth a second time (Daniel 7:13; cf. Mk 13:26; Lk 21:27), and he would one day rule in the city of Jerusalem as King of kings, as the nations would go up to that city to be taught in his ways, never more to "train for war anymore" (Isa 2:3-4).

As far as the case for the Messiah in the Old Testament is concerned, the relationship between the Old and New Testaments is one of strong continuity and a progressive revelation. The seminal seeds of the doctrine of the person and work of Jesus bloom and blossom in the New Testament even though the Old Testament often carried in seminal seed form much that eventually developed out of the Old. What a gracious, revealing God, and what a wonderful gift of a Savior who has come to earth once, but who is due to return once more in all his fullness and glory!

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## What is messianic expectation in the Old Testament?

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<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2020-12/messianic-expectation-old-testament.html>

*Every year, the time of Advent - the time of waiting par excellence - allows us to prepare ourselves for the birth of Christ-Emmanuel, the Son of God made flesh in the womb of the Virgin Mary, the Saviour "announced by the prophets". But what precisely do the Holy Scriptures tell us about this "messiah" of God who will restore justice and peace to Israel? What do they reveal to us about His mission? Here is the analysis of Father David Neuhaus.*

### What is the origin of the word "Messiah"? When did it first appear in Scripture and in what context?

The word "messiah" is derived from the Hebrew word "mashiah". In Greek, the word is translated in the ancient translation of the Old Testament as "Christos". It means "the anointed one". Christians are often shocked to learn that this word appears only about fifty times in the entire Old Testament and almost never refers to a saviour or redeemer.

"Messiah" in the Old Testament refers rather to three different figures in the life of the people of Israel. The first time the word is encountered in the Old Testament is in the Book of Leviticus, in

chapter 4, where the “messiah” is the priest (Leviticus 4:3.5.16.17). In that chapter, the role of the priest in offering the sacrifices for sin is described. In the Historical Books, the “messiah”, the anointed one, is the king. In the Book of Psalms where the word “messiah” appears a number of times, it refers almost always to a king. Many of the royal psalms long for a righteous king, who will rule according to God’s will and thus bring justice and peace.

Both priests and kings were anointed with oil when they were consecrated and they became instituted leaders, the priest in the Temple and the king in the kingdom. There is a third figure also referred to as messiah but who received a different kind of anointing, an anointing by God not with oil but rather with the Holy Spirit, and that is the prophet. However, there is one prophet who was anointed with oil, Elisha (1 Kings 19:16).

It is only in the later books of the Old Testament, especially in the book of Daniel, that we begin to find the word messiah referring to an end of time saviour (cf. Daniel 9:25-26). This book was written at a time of deep crisis as the Hellenistic rulers of Palestine imposed policies that sought to impose Greek culture; and some Jews saw this as an attempt to wipe out Jewish specificity. Jews who opposed the Hellenization policies were persecuted. This gave rise to a new type of religious thinking in Judaism, the apocalyptic, and it saw that the only way to escape the catastrophic circumstances of the period was through direct divine intervention, the sending of a messiah, who would save humanity from a world gone bad.

### **Is messianism, the expectation of a providential man who will bring peace and happiness, peculiar to Judaism?**

The figure of the messiah as an end-of-time saviour who brings peace and happiness is indeed a late development in Judaism, and marginal even in ancient Jewish literature not included in the Catholic canon of the Old Testament. It is only in the middle of the 2nd century BC that this figure begins to take on a fuller profile as a figure signaling the end of time, the Day of Judgement and the inauguration of the Kingdom of God.

Recent studies continue to insist that waiting for a messiah was not nearly as central to Judaism at the time of Jesus as is generally believed. What is widespread, though, is the belief that God would eventually win victory against the forces of darkness and evil that have troubled the world since the expulsion from Eden. Prophets called the people to return to God, abandoning the evil ways that inevitably led to doom and destruction. The prophets warn the people that devastation is coming, but they also console the people, recalling that God is faithful and that God will restore kingship (primarily God as king), and this will re-establish harmony. The expectation then was more of a “messianic” time than of a “messiah”, although many Biblical authors attached the coming of this kingdom to the coming of a Davidic king.

### **On the basis of what the prophets and the psalms say, what portrait can be drawn of this "Envoy of God"? What are the related symbols?**

It is important to point out that in the prophetic writings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and the twelve minor prophets there is no talk of the messiah. In fact, the word is only used twice in Hebrew in the prophetic books (excluding Daniel), one in Isaiah (45:1), when the word is a reference to King Cyrus of Persia, who allowed the exiles in Babylon to return to Jerusalem, and one in Habakkuk (3:13), when the word refers either to a Davidic king or the people itself. In this literature, there is certainly the dream of restoring the world by means of returning back to God. In the last part of prophetic writing, the twelve books referred to as the Minor Prophets, the theme is “the Day of the Lord”. The expectation is that God will come to rule the earth at the end of time.

For the prophets, part of their end-vision was focused on a king who conformed to God’s will, a new David who would shepherd the people in the return to the straight and narrow path. However, what is described in greater detail than the person of the anointed king (messiah) is what we might call a “messianic” time, a time of peace and justice, a time of restoring creational harmony. This is also true of the psalms that describe the kingdom that will come.

**Two currents emerge: royal messianism (son of David) and priestly messianism (son of Aaron). Does this mean that two messiahs are expected?**

In fact, the priest and the king are the two anointed figures in the Old Testament. However, when one analyses the Bible historically, one understands that until 587, the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple there, the preeminent figure was the king because the people had a degree of sovereignty. The dominant archetypes for the king were David and Solomon (both referred to as the anointed ones). However, after the Return from Exile in the Persian period (540-333), monarchy was not restored. Public space was under Persian rule but a large degree of religious autonomy was granted to the Jews and the space of that autonomy was in the Temple, where the priest presided. This gave rise to talk about the two messiahs, a Davidic (kingly) and an Aaronite (priestly) messiah. The first intimations of this might be discerned in the book of Ecclesiasticus [Sirach] (dating from the first part of the second century BC and written by the great wise man, Sirach). Much later, Jewish Rabbinic thinking then developed this into a vision of two different Messiahs, but it is not a clear vision in the writings that preceded the birth of Jesus.

**In what way did Jesus correspond to messianic expectations? Can we say that He fulfilled and transcended them at the same time?**

Jesus in the New Testament corresponds to the hope for a Davidic king, an anointed one, who brings about the long-awaited kingdom, but he is a shocking surprise that his throne is the cross and his crown is of thorns. He corresponds to the hope of an efficacious priest, who makes a sin offering, but he is a shocking surprise in that his sacrifice is not an animal and its blood, but rather his own self and his life blood. He corresponds to the hope for a new prophet like Moses and the prophets of old, however he is a shocking surprise when his listeners realize that he is not only the prophesy but is united with the one who inspires prophesy, God the Father.

Christians recognize in Jesus the messiah because he brings all this together in his person and incarnates the fidelity of God to His promises. Jesus will be written about in the very language of these promises, and so it is no wonder that we are able to identify him between the lines of the Old Testament and in the lines of the New.

**What is, for you, the Old Testament figure(s) that prefigures Jesus in a particularly significant way?**

The careful Christian reader is called to reflect on four great figures in the life of the people of Israel as represented in the Old Testament, the priest, the king, the wise man and the prophet. It is significant that the Christian form of the Old Testament is indeed divided into four parts, each part focusing on one of these figures. In the five books of the Law, the central figure is the priest (seeking to make real the central commandment "Be holy as I am holy" from Leviticus 19:2). In the Historical Books, the central figure is the king, who is supposed to represent the rule of the one and only king of Israel, God, by studying the Law day and night and ruling by it. In the Wisdom Books, the central figure is the sage, who reflects on creation and through it is able to contemplate God and God's kingdom in the ordinariness of daily life (as Jesus does in the parables). Finally, in the Prophetic Books, the prophet recalls the primordial vocation to be a child of a Father who seeks to gather the children and bring them home, pointing to how we obstruct this desire of God and how God nonetheless remains faithful. These four figures have become collectively what many Christians mean when they say Messiah.

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**More websites about the Prophecies of Jesus:**

**55 Old Testament Prophecies about Jesus**

<https://www.jesusfilm.org/blog-and-stories/old-testament-prophecies.html>

<https://bibleproject.com/blog/isaiah-messianic-king/>

<https://parish.rcdow.org.uk/swisscottage/wp-content/uploads/sites/52/2014/11/44-Prophecies-Jesus-Christ-Fulfilled.pdf>

**OTHER BIBLE COMMENTARIES**

<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/psalms/2-7.htm>

<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/isaiah/7-14.htm>

<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/isaiah/9-6.htm>

<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/isaiah/40-11.htm>

<https://biblehub.com/commentaries/isaiah/42-1.htm>