

I am at times asked about the significance of Jesus Christ, what made Him different and why has He, changed humanity's relationships with God, one another and the world He created.



(SPAC, 2016)

As Apostolic Christians, we hold dear our belief that Jesus is the Messiah, the Christ, sent by God, as promised in the Scriptures and as foretold by the prophets, for the salvation of the world. The word Christ, is not simply another name for Jesus, but identifies Jesus as the "Christ", which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word *Messiah*, meaning "the anointed."

Our Lord and Saviour was born in 1st century Judaism as a Jew. The time of his birth is placed at 4 BC (Matthew 2:1, Luke 2:4, Micah 5:2, 1 Samuel 17:12) near the end of the reign of King Herod the Great of the Jews from 37BC to 4BC. He was called Jesus, which means "God Saves" (Mathew 1: 21). He spoke Aramaic and taught with parables, mighty deeds and miracles about the coming of the reign of God.

The expectation of the Jews of a coming Messiah was against the backdrop of

- God's covenant with David (2 Samuel 7:1-17);
- The exile in Babylonia (Jeremiah 29:1-14);
- The invading empires that have oppressed Israel throughout the Old Testament. They were the:
 1. Egyptians (\pm 1250 BC);
 2. Canaanites (\pm 1050 BC);
 3. Assyrians (\pm 722 BC);
 4. Babylonians (\pm 587-537 BC)
 5. Persians (\pm 537);
 6. Greeks (\pm 322BC)
 7. Ptolemies (Egyptians) (\pm 285 BC) Palestine is ruled by the Ptolemies, descendants of one of Alexander's generals who has been given the position of the rulers of Egypt.
 8. Seleucids (Syrians) (\pm 175-167BC) Palestine is ruled by Seleucids, descendants of one of Alexander's generals and who had acquired rule over Syria.
 9. *Independent Hasmonian Kingdom* (\pm 167 BC – 60BC). *The Jewish revolt under Judas Maccabeus re-establishes Jewish independence and Palestine is ruled by Judas' family and descendants, known as the Hasmoneans. The Jews obtain independence under the rule of the Hasmoneans and the Temple in Jerusalem rededicated.*
 10. Romans (\pm 63BC) who through Pompey captures Jerusalem and Palestine become part of the Roman Empire.

The Jewish expectations were that the Messiah would, like the warrior King David of old:

- gather the tribes of Israel together (Isaiah 9:5-7);
- purify the temple (Mal 3);
- overcome the enemies of Israel and reign as Lord of lords and King of kings (Psalm 110:1; Isaiah 9:5-7; Revelation 19:1).

Some examples of Old Testament (Old Covenant) prophecies regarding the Messiah and its fulfilment through Jesus Christ in the New Testament (New Covenant) are (NCRS; 2016):

He shall descend from the line of David (Isaiah 9:6 fulfilled in Matthew 1:6)

He shall be born of virgin and called Emanuel (Genesis 3: 15; Isaiah 7:14 fulfilled in Luke 1:34-35)

He shall be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2 fulfilled in Matthew 2:1)

He shall come out of Egypt (Hosea 11: 1 fulfilled in Matthew 2:14-15)

He shall be a Galilean (Isaiah 9:1-2 fulfilled in John 7:40-42)

A messenger will prepare the way (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1 fulfilled in Matthew 3:3)

He shall teach using parables (Psalm 78:2 fulfilled in Matthew 13:10-11)

He shall preach the reign of God as a Vineyard taken from Israel (Isaiah 5:1-7 fulfilled in Matthew 21:33-46)

He shall be rejected as a stone by the boulders (Psalm 118:22 fulfilled in Matthew 21: 42)

He shall be a suffering servant bearing our infirmities (Isaiah 53: 4 fulfilled in Mark 9 :12)

However, Jesus' willingness to **suffer and die** stands in marked contrast to the widespread expectation of a coming Messiah who would defeat His enemies. The fact that He did not attempt to overthrow the Roman occupiers and reclaim Israel's throne may explain in part why He was widely rejected by the Jewish authorities. They wished for Him to pursue military goals and free them from the oppression of Roman rule, but He came instead to make known that the Kingdom of God is at hand.

Another text in Isaiah 11: 1-4m tells of the coming Messiah in very clear terms. *And there shall come forth a **rod out of the stem of Jesse**, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots: And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord; And shall make him of quick understanding in the fear of the Lord: and he shall not judge after the sight of his eyes, neither reprove after the hearing of his ears: But with righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and he shall smite the earth: with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked.*

Some extra information that testified about the birth of our Lord Jesus, outside of the Holy Bible, can be found in the writings of **Josephus Flavius**, a Jewish historian who died about 101 (AC) (Hoerber, 1910; see also NCRS 2016). He wrote about Jesus saying:

“About this time lived Jesus, a man full of wisdom, if indeed one may call Him a man. For He was the doer of incredible things, and the teacher of such as gladly received the truth. He thus attracted to Himself many Jews and many of the Gentiles. He was the Christ. On the accusation of the leading men of our people, Pilate condemned Him to death upon the cross; nevertheless those who had previously loved Him still remained faithful to Him. For on the third day He again appeared to them living, just as, in addition to a thousand other marvellous things, prophets sent by God had foretold. And to the present day the race of those who call themselves Christians after Him has not ceased.”

However, Jesus' willingness to suffer and die was not inline with the Jews's expectation of the coming Messiah. They wanted Him, to, like King David, defeat His enemies, rid them from Roman rule and herald a return to the Golden era of the reigns of kings David and Soloman (Evans, 2012). By not doing this, it can be surmised that this would add to the reason as to why He was ultimately rejected by Jewish authorities. His minstry and teaching of peace, love and forgiveness, values so absent in 2016 amongst many, did not agree with the Jewish expectation of a military overthrow of the Roman forces.

As for Jesus' fulfillment of the Bible's messianic expectations, one must bear in mind that as part of God's plan of salvation, He came, born of the Virgin Mary (Luke 2:1-20 the First Advent; see Flor, 2013), first to suffer and die on behalf of sinners (Read the Suffering Servant in Is 52:13-53:12), and will come again as the conquering King (Rev 19; 1 Th 5: 2; 2Th 1:7-10; Hbr 9:28; Mt 24; Ph 3:20-21 the Second Advent; see also Flor, 2013).

As we move into the time of celebrating the birth of Jesus, our Lord and Saviour, let us rejoyce in the fulfilment of Isaiah's prohesy (9:6):

For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

Hope this helps.



God bless

Nag Ou Grote

Fluit-Fluit, my storie is uit.

Br Theo PhD

References

- Evans, C.A. (2012). *A Closer Look: Messianic Expectations*. Retrieved from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/edstetzer/2012/march/closer-look-messianic-expectations.html>
- Flor, C. (Apostle). (2013). *Understanding of our Faith and Beliefs*. The Apostolic Church of Queensland: McKay.
- Hoeber, K. (1910). *Flavius Josephus*. In The Catholic Encyclopedia. New York: Robert Appleton Company. Retrieved December 5, 2016 from New Advent: <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/08522a.htm>
- Saint Peter's Anglican Church. (2016). *Following Jesus*. Retrieved from <http://stpetersbhm.org/following-jesus/>
- National Centre for Religious Studies (NCRS). (2016). *On the Threshold*. Wellington: Author.