

# What is a Messiah and Why do We Need One?

## *Jesus: A Better Prophet than Moses*

Advent Series 2022

### Texts:

**Luke 2:8-14:** *And in the same region there were shepherds out in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night. <sup>9</sup> And an angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were filled with great fear. <sup>10</sup> And the angel said to them, “**Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people. <sup>11</sup> For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.**” <sup>12</sup> And this will be a sign for you: you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling cloths and lying in a manger.” <sup>13</sup> And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying, <sup>14</sup> “Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!”*

**Luke 7:18-23** (Matthew 11.1-6): *The disciples of John reported all these things to him. And John, <sup>19</sup> calling two of his disciples to him, sent them to the Lord, saying, “**Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?**” <sup>20</sup> And when the men had come to him, they said, “John the Baptist has sent us to you, saying, ‘Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?’” <sup>21</sup> In that hour he healed many people of diseases and plagues and evil spirits, and on many who were blind he bestowed sight. <sup>22</sup> And he answered them, “Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: the blind receive their sight, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, the poor have good news preached to them.” <sup>23</sup> And blessed is the one who is not offended by me.”*

**Dt 18:15-19:** *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—**it is to him you shall listen**—” <sup>16</sup> just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’” <sup>17</sup> And the LORD said to me, “They are right in what they have spoken. <sup>18</sup> I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. **And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.**” <sup>19</sup> And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.*

**Dt 34:10-12:** *And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face, <sup>11</sup> none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land, <sup>12</sup> and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.*

Most of us have received a gift we have long anticipated only to open it and wonder, “What in the world is this item we received and more importantly, what exactly are we to do with it now that we own it?”

If the gift was given by someone we know and trust, we instinctively know two important things even if we don’t understand the gift itself. First, we know that the gift was intentional and given with love and thought on the part of the giver. Second, we know that even if we can’t quite see it yet, this gift must have some useful purpose or design that makes sense to the Giver.

*Illustration: My kids gave me a poker as a birthday gift. It did not make sense when I unwrapped it – there was initial confusion and some level of disappointment. But . . . over time, that gift has proven to be very useful once I understood what it was and why I needed it.*

Two thousand years ago, an Angel appeared to a group of humble shepherds standing watch over their flocks by night just outside the city of Bethlehem in the province of Judah. By the end of the evening, that Angelic being was joined by an entire army of angelic beings whose mission was to announce the arrival of a gift from God to the world – a gift He first promised to Adam and Eve in Gen 3:15 and reconfirmed to the Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The kings in the Davidic line looked forward to the arrival of this gift. Priests in the tabernacle and later in the great temple at Jerusalem prayed daily for the arrival of this gift. Every prophet spoke about how life would be different for God’s people when this gift arrived. And now, in this text, God sent an angelic army to announce that the long-anticipated gift had finally arrived. Throughout the universe, all eyes were fixed on this scene; all ears were tuned to hear the voice of the Angel: *“Fear not, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.”*<sup>11</sup> *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord.*

**So what was the gift from God to the world announced by the angel to those shepherds on that first Christmas? It was a Christ.**

This raises an important question that we rarely stop to ask – “What exactly is a Christ?” Contrary to what many have come to think, the term “Christ” is not the surname of Jesus. Nor does it function as a glorified nickname by which he came to be known to His followers.

The term “***Christ***” is actually a biblical title given to a particular individual of immense importance and significance in the unfolding of the massive story God tells in the Scripture.

Throughout biblical times, God’s people would have referred to the individual to whom this title had been given as “The Messiah.”

And so, if we are going to understand the immensity, significance, and intention of the gift God had sent to the world, we need to ask and answer two important questions this morning that are often overlooked when we talk about Jesus the Messiah.

We usually occupy our thinking with questions related to His identity – who exactly is the Messiah? Obviously, the Scriptures clearly identify this person to be Jesus of Nazareth. A fuller examination of the Gospels and the ***NT writers further identifies Jesus as the Son of David, the Son of Man, and ultimately the Son of God.*** Or we occupy our thinking with questions related to his mission as the person who would come to save His people from their sins (Matthew 1:21; Luke 1:68-69).

But if we are going to truly understand and appreciate the gift of Messiah, we are going to have to answer two different questions:

1. What is a Messiah?
2. Why do we need One?

## I. What exactly is a Messiah? (Luke 2:11-14)

### A. A Divine Champion – a “Savior”

- **Savior** = “deliverer.” Jesus is the NT version of the OT name for Joshua which means “YHWH delivers”. This is what Jonah stated in his prayer at the bottom of the sea, “Salvation (deliverance) belongs (comes from) the Lord” (Jonah 2:9).
- God promised to send a powerful deliver – a champion through whom He would rescue His people and fix everything that sin broke.
- Three things would be true about this Champion:

#### 1. He would be **appointed** by God the Father (Lk 2:34-35)

*Genesis 3:15 – I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and her offspring; he shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise his heel.”*

*Luke 2:34–35 – And Simeon blessed them and said to Mary his mother, “Behold, this child is appointed for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign that is opposed”<sup>35</sup> (and a sword will pierce through your own soul also), so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed.”*

#### 2. He would be **anointed** by God’s Spirit (Luke 1:35; Luke 3:21; 4:1,14)

*Isaiah 11:2–4 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 the fear of the LORD.<sup>3</sup> And his delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear,<sup>4</sup> but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked.*

*Luke 3:21–22 Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened,<sup>22</sup> and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”*

*Luke 4:18–19 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed,<sup>19</sup> to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”*

3. He would be **acknowledged** as God's Son. (Lk 1:32, 35; Mt. 27:54)

**Luke 1:32** *He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David,*

**Luke 1:35** *And the angel answered her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be called holy—the Son of God.*

**Matthew 27:54** *When the centurion and those who were with him, keeping watch over Jesus, saw the earthquake and what took place, they were filled with awe and said, "Truly this was the Son of God!"*

**B. With a Cosmic Mission – to bring Shalom (Lk 2:14)**

*"Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace among those with whom he is pleased!"*

1. By reversing an ancient curse
2. By redeeming an ancient people
3. By removing and vanquishing an ancient enemy

*God is on a mission to redeem and restore fallen people to the image of His Son to rule and reign with Him in His kingdom on earth for the praise of His glory!*

And ... God will accomplish this through a Messiah – His anointed, appointed Champion who will save the world!

**C. Accomplished through a Unique Way – for the glory of the Most High God (Luke 1:68-75)**

**Luke 1:68-75** *"Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, for he has visited and redeemed his people<sup>69</sup> and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David,<sup>70</sup> as he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old,<sup>71</sup> that we should be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us;<sup>72</sup> to show the mercy promised to our fathers and to remember his holy covenant,<sup>73</sup> the oath that he swore to our father Abraham, to grant us<sup>74</sup> that we, being delivered from the hand of our enemies, might serve him without fear,<sup>75</sup> in holiness and righteousness before him all our days.*

When this champion arrived, he would redeem his people from the hand of their enemies, grant them the wonderful mercy promised to the Patriarchs, and fulfill all of the terms of the covenant He had made to

Abraham so that His people might serve him without fear, and enter into His presence in holiness and righteousness for all of their days!

**And for centuries . . . God's people anticipated, longed for, and expected the arrival of this promised champion. Throughout their long wait, they had developed**

- **Eager Anticipations for him to fulfill**
- **Deep Longings for him to satisfy**
- **Marvelous Expectations for him to meet**

**So what happens when this champion arrives but does not appear to fulfill our anticipations, satisfy our longings, or meet our expectations?**

**Of what earthly use is a messiah who does not fulfill our anticipations, fulfill our longings, or meet our expectations?**

Before we judge Israel too harshly, we might look at our own expectations, desires, and longings that we expect Jesus to fulfill for us when we decide to embrace Him as our own personal messiah!

If we are honest, we might find ourselves in the very spot that Jesus' very first disciple occupied when he sent messengers to ask Jesus a very probing and penetrating question – *"Are you the one who is to come, or shall we look for another?"* (Lk 7:19)

**Note the context of this question** – for seven chapters we have seen and heard amazing things about Jesus.

- We have been made privy to the supernatural events surrounding his birth (as was John).
- We witnessed the Holy Spirit descending upon him.
- We heard about his victory over Satan at his temptation
- We have seen a listened to his amazing teaching

- We have seen a litany of stunning miracles – the last of which was the raising of a widow’s son from the dead (similar to Elijah raising the widow’s son).
  - So ... in light of all of this, why would John send his friends to ask if Jesus was the one or should they look for another?
1. Herod was still king over Israel and Jesus does not seem at all interested in deposing him.
  2. John is still imprisoned, and Jesus does not seem at all interested in delivering him.
- Since Messiah was supposed to defeat His enemies and rescue his people, John was more than a little confused and discouraged – especially since he was the one who was to go before the Messiah to announce His coming!
  - What kind of Messiah has no apparent interest in opposing and deposing an unjust, unrighteous ruler oppressing His people? What kind of a Messiah fails to deliver His closest and most faithful followers and instead leaves them to languish in Herod’s prison awaiting execution?

### **Why do we need a Messiah like this? Of what use is He?**

Jesus may have been doing some great teaching and performing amazing miracles – but he was not meeting John’s personal or national expectations.

And frankly, often Jesus does not meet our own personal expectations. We hoped he would give us a stronger marriage; a better family; a more complete victory over certain sins; a more secure job; a safer life; a more secure future – after all, isn’t that what a Messiah is supposed to do? And while we may not verbalize the question John the Baptist asked, we have our own version of that question and we eventually seek other “deliverers” to satisfy our anticipations, fulfill our longings, and meet our expectations.

But there are reasons God sent us the kind of Messiah He sent in Jesus – and perhaps that is the most important question we can try to answer in this advent series!

## **II. Why do we need the kind of Messiah God sent us in Jesus?**

God sent us the kind of messiah we experience in Jesus because He knew what we did not know and because He wanted to fulfill our deepest longings and our most important desires – ones we do not always realize or recognize.

And to do this, He would need to send us a Messiah who would function for us in ways that the most significant heroes in Israel's history could not. We need the kind of Messiah who is:

- A better prophet than Moses
- A better priest than Aaron
- A better king than David

And this morning we need to see why we need a better prophet than Moses!

### **A. Reading Moses – who is Moses?**

*Dt 34:10-12: And there has not arisen a prophet since in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face,<sup>11</sup> none like him for all the signs and the wonders that the LORD sent him to do in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land,<sup>12</sup> and for all the mighty power and all the great deeds of terror that Moses did in the sight of all Israel.*

- A great prophet (Dt. 34.10)
- A trusted servant in God's household (Numbers 12:7-8)
- Who delivered God's people (Exodus 1-15)
- With signs and Wonders (Dt. 34:11)
- Who mediated a marvelous covenant (Ex 20:1-21; Dt. 5:1-6:25)
- With gracious words (Dt. 4:1-14)
  
- But who could not make unrighteous people righteous!
- Notice how Moses describes this sad fact:



**Deuteronomy 29:1–4** *These are the words of the covenant that the LORD commanded Moses to make with the people of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant that he had made with them at Horeb.* <sup>2</sup> *And Moses summoned all Israel and said to them: “You have seen all that the LORD did before your eyes in the land of Egypt, to Pharaoh and to all his servants and to all his land,* <sup>3</sup> *the great trials that your eyes saw, the signs, and those great wonders.* <sup>4</sup> ***But to this day the LORD has not given you a heart to understand or eyes to see or ears to hear.***

- Even after the miraculous deliverance from Egypt; after speaking with God face to face; after receiving a gracious covenant for Israel; and after having done miraculous deeds before their eyes – Moses was powerless to bring about their obedience. They needed something he could not give – they need a heart to understand, eyes to see, and ears to hear.
- And for that to happen, they needed a better prophet than him, who could mediate a better covenant, and give his people a new heart with eyes that could truly see and ears that could really hear and respond to God’s voice.
- Moses realized this and prophesied that God would send a better prophet to whom they must listen!

**Dt 18:15-19:** *“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers—**it is to him you shall listen**—”* <sup>16</sup> *just as you desired of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly, when you said, ‘Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God or see this great fire any more, lest I die.’* <sup>17</sup> *And the LORD said to me, ‘They are right in what they have spoken.’* <sup>18</sup> *I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers. **And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.*** <sup>19</sup> *And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him.*

- When this prophet arrived, he would open the eyes of his people so they could see the truth about God; he would unstop their ears so they could hear and obey God; and he would give them a new heart that could truly love and follow God.
- We need a better Prophet
- To mediate a better Covenant
- With the power to make unrighteous people righteous by changing their heart, opening their eyes, and unstopping their ears!

- And when John sent his friends to ask Jesus if He was the one, Jesus answered by pointing to things He was doing that identified Him as the amazing prophet Moses had promised would one day come!

### **B. Seeing Jesus (Luke 7:22-23)**

*And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have **seen** and **heard**: the **blind receive their sight**, the lame walk, lepers are cleansed, and **the deaf hear**, the **dead are raised up**, the poor have good news preached to them.<sup>23</sup> And blessed is the one who is not offended by me."*

- Moses said God needed to open the eyes of His people – Jesus told John, "the blind receive their sight."
- Moses said God needed to unstop the ears of His people – Jesus told John, "the deaf hear."
- Moses said that God needed to grant His people a new heart – Jesus inaugurated a new and better covenant that Jeremiah said would involve God taking away the deceitful and desperately wicked heart (Jer. 17:9) of His people and replacing it with a new heart upon which He would write and implant His words (Jer. 31:31-34; James 1:21).
- He would send His Spirit to dwell in them and empower them to receive, understand, and obey His Word (Ezekiel 36:25-27)
- Jesus is the prophet greater than Moses! Moses was a faithful servant in God's household; Jesus is the faithful Son appointed over God's household (Heb. 3:4-6).
- He mediated a new and better covenant than Moses.
- He brought grace and truth in ways Moses could not.
- And He opened a new and better way to God with a better and more permanent rest for God's people.
- While Moses mediated the old covenant by means of faithful service – Jesus mediated the new covenant by means of His death!

## **Conclusion**

So while John languished in Herod's prison wondering why Jesus did not depose Herod and deliver him from execution – Jesus was busy deposing a much greater enemy than a small, inconsequential territorial ruler named Herod. He was delivering His people from a prison far darker and stronger than the cell John occupied.

And before it was said and done, this Messiah would go to the cross in order to deliver his people from their sins; restore creation to its original glory, and defeat the ancient enemy of our souls.

No wonder Moses said to us, “God will put His words in this Prophet’s mouth – so make sure you listen to Him in ways that you have not listened to me!”