



Gutenberg College

Oktoberfuss 2011 • How Jewish Was Jesus?

Notes for Talk 4:

What Is The Role of The Messiah According to the Old Testament?

by Earle Craig

I. Introduction

- A. We are answering the question, “How Jewish was Jesus?”
- B. My job in this session – to describe, according to the Old Testament, the role of the person known as the Messiah

II. Definition of “Messiah”

- A. The word comes from the Hebrew *mashiach*, meaning anointed one, i.e., someone who has had olive oil poured over his head.
 - 1. This was a ritual in ancient times that identified someone as being set apart for one of three roles within Israel –
 - a. priest (Exodus 28:41 – anointing of Aaron and his sons to “serve [God] as priests”)
 - b. king (1 Samuel 9:16;10:1 – Samuel anoints Saul as king of Israel)
 - c. prophet (1 Kings 19:16 – God commands Elijah to anoint Elisha as prophet in his place)
- B. An important question – “Is THE Messiah supposed to exercise all three roles of priest, king, and prophet, or only one, or a completely different role?”
 - 1. My answer and definition of the role of the Messiah according to the Old Testament — According to the Old Testament, the Messiah is a descendant of Abraham and David, who leads the Jews in their pursuit of biblical Judaism and exercises all three roles of prophet, priest, and king as 1) the one who presents God’s final and most complete message to the Jews and the rest of humanity regarding God’s eternal plans and purposes, and as 2) the one who offers himself as a sin offering in order to intercede on behalf of those who properly embrace him as their intercessor, with the result that 3) he rules over them, whether temporarily in the Kingdom of Israel in the last days of the existence of the present realm or permanently in the Kingdom of God in the eternal, final realm, or both.



III. Prophet– like Moses

A. Deuteronomy 18:17-22 –

[Deut. 18:18](#) ‘I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him.

[Deut. 18:19](#) ‘It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him.

[Deut. 18:20](#) ‘But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’ [NAS95]

1. God declares that he will speak to the nation of Israel through “a prophet,” and that they should be on the lookout for false prophets.
 - a. Both Peter in Acts 3:11-26 and Stephen in Acts 7:2-53 quote Deuteronomy 18:18 to the effect that Jesus is THE prophet who speaks to the nation of Israel as both “ruler and deliverer” (Acts 7:35), i.e., the final prophet, not only who presents God’s final and most complete message regarding God’s eternal plans and purposes, but also who acts as Messiah and priest (cf. Hebrews).
2. Therefore, while God was referring in Deuteronomy 18 to many prophets who would follow Moses as his spokesmen, the most important spokesman for God is the Messiah and, according to the New Testament, is Jesus of Nazareth.

IV. King – the Son of God and the Son of Man

A. 2 Samuel 7:1-17 (Davidic Covenant) –

[2Sam. 7:10](#) “I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly,

[2Sam. 7:11](#) even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you [David] rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you.

[2Sam. 7:12](#) “When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom.

[2Sam. 7:13](#) “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

[2Sam. 7:14](#) “I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men,

[2Sam. 7:15](#) but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

[2Sam. 7:16](#) “Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.” [NAS95]



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1. God declares to David that he will establish his people in the land of Israel and cause David's kingdom to exist "forever" (*ad-olam* = into perpetuity) with David's descendants ruling over the kingdom, so that, beginning with David's son, Solomon, they will be God's Son and he will be their Father.
2. An important question is, "What does it mean to be the Son of God with God as one's Father, especially for a sinful man such as Solomon to be the Son of God? In other words, why does God use this particular terminology?"

B. Psalm 8 (a psalm of David (cf. 2 Samuel 7:18-29)) –

[Psa. 8:4](#) What is man that You take thought of him, And the Son of Man that You care for him?

[Psa. 8:5](#) Yet You have made him a little lower than God, And You crown him with glory and majesty!

[Psa. 8:6](#) You make him to rule over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, [NAS95]

1. While, in 2 Samuel 7, God speaks of Solomon as his "Son," David realizes that he, too, by virtue of his ruling over Israel, is God's Son, thereby granting him the responsibility that comes with this title.
2. David calls himself the "Son of Man," i.e., the Son of God who comes from mankind, indeed who is a sinful human being and lowly creature in comparison to the transcendent, creator God.
3. David humbly expresses his respect for God and his wonder and awe in the light of the responsibility that God has given him as his Son, that of ruling over the creation. Therefore, not only is Solomon God's Son, but so also is David by virtue of the responsibility of ruling over the creation that God has given to him as the king of Israel.
4. Thus, the Son of God, i.e., God the Father's Son who is king of Israel and either David or a descendant of David (e.g., Solomon, Rehoboam, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, et al.) and the Son of Man, i.e., God the Father's Son who is the Davidic king of Israel and comes from mankind, is God's proxy and representative on earth who is granted the same authority as God to rule over his creation.¹
 - a. This idea of the king's being God's proxy is one that God, the author of reality, wrote into his story in the Ancient Near East and then borrowed for his own purposes within ancient Israel.

C. Psalm 2 (according to the apostles in Acts 4:25, a psalm of David) –

[Psa. 2:6](#) "But as for Me [God], I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain."

[Psa. 2:7](#) "I will surely tell of the decree of the LORD [Yahweh]: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You.

[Psa. 2:8](#) 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession.

¹See, for example, the article labeled "King and Kingship" in the *Anchor Bible Dictionary* as well as the books *King and Messiah as Son of God* (2008) by Adela Yarbro Collins and John J. Collins and *The Symbolism of the Biblical World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (1997) by Othmar Keel.



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[Psa. 2:9](#) ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’”
[NAS95]

1. David writes this Psalm to celebrate Solomon’s coronation as the king of Israel according to the Davidic Covenant, and, therefore, as the Son of God, the Anointed One (Messiah, Christ) (v. 2), whom God has “begotten” (given birth to, so to speak) by placing him on David’s throne, and to whom he will give the nations (*goyeem*) as an inheritance after he destroys his enemies, confirming the important, regal/military role of the descendant of David, who, as the king of Israel, inherits the whole earth (indeed, according to Psalm 8, the whole creation) as his kingdom.

D. Psalm 89 (a song of Ethan the Ezrahite, one of Solomon’s counselors (cf. 1 Kings 4:31)) –

[Psa. 89:3](#) “I have made a covenant with My chosen; I have sworn to David My servant,

[Psa. 89:4](#) I will establish your seed forever And build up your throne to all generations...”

[Psa. 89:19](#) Once You spoke in vision to Your godly ones, And said, “I have given help to one who is mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people.

[Psa. 89:20](#) “I have found David My servant; With My holy oil I have anointed (*mashiached*, *messiahed*, *christed*) him,

[Psa. 89:21](#) With whom My hand will be established; My arm also will strengthen him.

[Psa. 89:22](#) “The enemy will not deceive him, Nor the son of wickedness afflict him.

[Psa. 89:23](#) “But I shall crush his adversaries before him, And strike those who hate him...”

[Psa. 89:26](#) “He will cry to Me, ‘You are my Father, My God, and the rock of my salvation.’”

[Psa. 89:27](#) “I also shall make him My firstborn, The highest of the kings of the earth.

[Psa. 89:28](#) “My lovingkindness I will keep for him forever, And My covenant shall be confirmed to him.

[Psa. 89:29](#) “So I will establish his descendants forever And his throne as the days of heaven...”

[Psa. 89:34](#) “My covenant I will not violate, Nor will I alter the utterance of My lips.

[Psa. 89:35](#) “Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David.

[Psa. 89:36](#) “His descendants shall endure forever And his throne as the sun before Me.

[Psa. 89:37](#) “It shall be established forever like the moon, And the witness in the sky is faithful...”

[NAS95]

1. The psalmist extols God for his covenant with David, his Son, whose kingdom he will cause to exist “forever” (*ad-olam* = into perpetuity), which confirms that the title Son of God refers to the human king of Israel who, as God’s firstborn and, therefore, the heir of God’s property, the creation, acts as God’s representative with the responsibility to rule over the entire creation.

E. Psalm 45 (a song of the sons of Korah, who served in the temple as musicians (1 Chronicles 6:16ff.) under king David and were descendants of Kohath, a descendant of Levi) –

[Psa. 45:6](#) Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.

[Psa. 45:7](#) You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed (*mashiached*, *messiahed*, *christed*) You With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

[NAS95]

1. The psalmists call David, who is the king of Israel, “God” and say that his God, the transcendent, creator God of Israel, has anointed him and made him king, which also



confirms that David, as the king of Israel and an ordinary, sinful human being, rules with the same purpose as God of leading others into morality and with the same authority as God since he can be called “God.” Therefore, David is God’s proxy on earth, worthy of the same level of respect and obedience as God himself.

F. Additional note – In the Old Testament, there are at least six Hebrew words (other than the ones for king and son) that get translated as judges, officers, elders, heads, leaders, and princes. A study of these words has led me to conclude that all the leaders of Israel had, to some extent, the responsibility to guide the people in obeying God properly in the light of all his promises to Abraham and according to the commandments in the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, according to the Old Testament, this, too, was part of the role of the Messiah. For example, Moses says around 1500 B.C. –

[Deut. 17:14](#) “When you [the Israelites] enter the land which the LORD [Yahweh] your God gives you, and you possess it and live in it, and you say, ‘I will set a king over me like all the nations who are around me,’

[Deut. 17:15](#) you shall surely set a king over you whom the LORD your God chooses, one from among your countrymen you shall set as king over yourselves; you may not put a foreigner over yourselves who is not your countryman...

[Deut. 17:18](#) “Now it shall come about when he sits on the throne of his kingdom, he shall write for himself a copy of this law on a scroll in the presence of the Levitical priests.

[Deut. 17:19](#) “It shall be with him and he shall read it all the days of his life, that he may learn to fear the LORD his God, by carefully observing all the words of this law and these statutes,

[Deut. 17:20](#) that his heart may not be lifted up above his countrymen and that he may not turn aside from the commandment, to the right or the left, so that he and his sons may continue long in his kingdom in the midst of Israel.[NAS95]

And, through Jeremiah, God says a thousand years later around 500 B.C. at the time of the Babylonian captivity –

[Jer. 11:1](#) The word which came to Jeremiah from the LORD [Yahweh], saying,

[Jer. 11:2](#) “Hear the words of this covenant, and speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem;

[Jer. 11:3](#) and say to them, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, “Cursed is the man who does not heed the words of this covenant

[Jer. 11:4](#) which I commanded your forefathers in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, from the iron furnace, saying, ‘Listen to My voice, and do according to all which I command you; so you shall be My people, and I will be your God,’

[Jer. 11:5](#) in order to confirm the oath which I swore to your forefathers, to give them a land flowing with milk and honey, as it is this day.’” Then I said, “Amen, O LORD.”

[Jer. 11:6](#) And the LORD said to me, “Proclaim all these words in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Hear the words of this covenant and do them.

[Jer. 11:7](#) ‘For I solemnly warned your fathers in the day that I brought them up from the land of Egypt, even to this day, warning persistently, saying, “Listen to My voice.”

[Jer. 11:8](#) ‘Yet they did not obey or incline their ear, but walked, each one, in the stubbornness of his evil heart; therefore I brought on them all the words of this covenant, which I commanded them to do, but they did not.’” (NAS95)



And, through Ezekiel, God says during the same time as Jeremiah –

[Ezek. 37:21](#) “Say to them [the Israelites], ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “Behold, I will take the sons of Israel from among the nations where they have gone, and I will gather them from every side and bring them into their own land;

[Ezek. 37:22](#) and I will make them one nation in the land, on the mountains of Israel; and one king will be king for all of them; and they will no longer be two nations and no longer be divided into two kingdoms.

[Ezek. 37:23](#) “They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions; but I will deliver them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God.

[Ezek. 37:24](#) “My servant David will be king over them, and they will all have one shepherd; and they will walk in My ordinances and keep My statutes and observe them.

[Ezek. 37:25](#) “They will live on the land that I gave to Jacob My servant, in which your fathers lived; and they will live on it, they, and their sons and their sons’ sons, forever; and David My servant will be their prince forever (*l^e-olam* = into perpetuity).

[Ezek. 37:26](#) “I will make a covenant of peace with them; it will be an everlasting covenant with them. And I will place them and multiply them, and will set My sanctuary in their midst forever (*l^e-olam* = into perpetuity).

[Ezek. 37:27](#) “My dwelling place also will be with them; and I will be their God, and they will be My people.

[Ezek. 37:28](#) “And the nations will know that I am the LORD who sanctifies Israel, when My sanctuary is in their midst forever (*l^e-olam* = into perpetuity).”” [NAS95]

In addition, God declares through Isaiah one hundred years before Jeremiah and Ezekiel –

[Is. 65:17](#) “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. [NAS95]

1. Thus, the Messiah will be the king of the temporal Kingdom of Israel in the last days of the existence of the present realm and the king of the new heavens and the new earth, the eternal Kingdom of God in the final realm, leading the Jews in the first kingdom to obey God according to the Mosaic Covenant and leading both Jews and gentiles in the second kingdom to obey God according to the universal definition of morality.

V. Priest – according to the order of Melchizedek

A. Psalm 110 –

[Psa. 110:1](#) The LORD [Yahweh] says to my Lord [Adonee]: “Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet.”

[Psa. 110:2](#) The LORD will stretch forth Your strong scepter from Zion, saying, “Rule in the midst of Your enemies.”

[Psa. 110:3](#) Your people will volunteer freely in the day of Your power; In holy array, from the womb of the dawn, Your youth are to You as the dew.

[Psa. 110:4](#) The LORD has sworn and will not change His mind, “You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.” [NAS95]



1. David identifies his “Lord,” first, as the final king and Messiah of Israel ruling as God’s proxy after God has destroyed his enemies, and, second, as the one who will act as an eternal priest interceding for him before God.

B. Isaiah 53–

[Is. 53:10](#) But the LORD [Yahweh] was pleased To crush Him, putting Him to grief; If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, And the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand.

[Is. 53:11](#) As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, As He will bear their iniquities.

[Is. 53:12](#) Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great, And He will divide the booty with the strong; Because He poured out Himself to death, And was numbered with the transgressors; Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, And interceded for the transgressors. [NAS95]

1. Isaiah confirms the priestly role of the Messiah who offers himself to God and thereby qualifies to “justify the many” and intercede on their behalf. The New Testament makes it clear that the Messiah will exercise his intercessory role at the judgment (cf. John 5).

VI. Final question

- A. “Does the Old Testament state clearly that the Messiah will be God incarnate?”

[Is. 9:6](#) For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

[Is. 9:7](#) There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, On the throne of David and over his kingdom, To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness From then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this. [NAS95]

VII. Conclusion

- A. According to the Old Testament, the Messiah is a descendant of Abraham and David, who leads the Jews in their pursuit of biblical Judaism and exercises all three roles of prophet, priest, and king as 1) the one who presents God’s final and most complete message to the Jews and the rest of humanity regarding God’s eternal plans and purposes, and as 2) the one who offers himself as a sin offering in order to intercede on behalf of those who properly embrace him as their intercessor, with the result that 3) he rules over them, whether temporarily in the Kingdom of Israel in the last days of the existence of the present realm or permanently in the Kingdom of God in the eternal, final realm, or both.
- B. Biblical definition of a Jew (other than Jesus) – A physical descendant of Abraham through Isaac who believes in and follows the one, true God by obeying the Bible as the sole source of inerrant truth, and specifically the Mosaic Covenant with proper inwardness and awaits God’s fulfillment of all his promises to Abraham and David, including the temporal, earthly Kingdom of Israel and the eternal, heavenly Kingdom of God, and including granting him, the Jew, eternal life in the Kingdom of God through the final Mosaic prophet, Davidic king, and Melchizedekic priest, i.e., the Messiah, whom the New Testament identifies as Jesus of Nazareth.