



Conducted by
Alf Marsden

“After reading your answer in the November issue of the S.S., I have another question for you. If Jesus was the long-expected Messiah, why is there so little mention of this fact in the New Testament?”

At the outset, in answer to this question, I might also add that in the so-called Messianic Prophecies in the Old Testament, there is no direct use of the word Messiah. The problem for the people in the days of the ministry of Jesus was the cardinal one of **identification** of the Messiah, and it was in the resolution of this problem that the Jewish leaders and the people got it so hopelessly wrong. Two of the most revealing scriptures are to be found in John 5:39 where Jesus says to the Jews, **“Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me”**; and in Luke 24:25, 26 when Jesus, after His resurrection, spoke with the two on the road to Emmaus and said, **“O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken: Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?”** So Jesus Himself asserted quite forcefully that His identification from the O.T. scriptures was not only possible, but ought actually to have been recognised by anyone who had searched properly. We need to examine this important point in a little more detail.

THE PROBLEM FOR THE JEWS

Students of the behavioural sciences will know that human behaviour is governed to a marked degree by **‘expectation’** and **‘realisation’**. Expectation itself can be either modified or exacerbated by the conditions and circumstances in which one finds oneself; while realisation, if it does not meet expectations, will many times give rise to attitudes which may be unhelpful and unwholesome.

The history of God’s chosen people illustrates the above points quite vividly. The nation had been divided into the Northern and Southern kingdoms. The people had suffered much under their own leaders, and at the hands of the oppressive nations around them. It never seemed to enter their minds that the trials and tribulations were as a result of their own perfidy and lack of allegiance to God. The culmination of all their problems came during the inter-testamental period when Selucid troops under Antiochus Epiphanes (who claimed to be an incarnation of Zeus) suspended the Temple sacrifices, ordered the destruction of the Scriptures, discontinued circumcision, Sabbath observance, and the food laws. Many Jews welcomed death rather than this sort of defilement, and it is probable that the conditions described in Heb. 11 pertain to this period. This led directly to the Wars of the Maccabees, and perhaps the greatest moment for the Jews came under the leadership of Judas Maccabaeus who purified the Temple area and restored the Temple sacrifices and worship. It was in 63 B.C. that the Roman general Pompey entered Jerusalem, and Judas became a Roman protectorate. However, there was always behind the minds of the Jews that the Messiah, the Lord’s Anointed, the Leader Prince, would emerge in due time. But what was their expectation of His leadership, and would the realisation be too bitter to swallow.

THE EXPECTATION

In view of what I have said up to this point, we can well understand how high the expectations of the Jews were that some mighty Messiah would come along and

relieve them of the thralldom of Rome. John seems to bear this out when he recounts the miracle of the feeding of the five thousand; he records the people who saw the miracle as saying, **"This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world"** (John 6:14). The record then goes on, **"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come and take him by force, to make him a king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone"** (v.15). This is probably why Jesus never referred to Himself as the Messiah. We can see, therefore, what the expectations of the people were; the great miracle-worker would surely be able to use His power to restore the destiny of the nation.

Another view of expectation is to be found in the discourse of Jesus with the two on the road to Emmaus. Cleopas and his companion asserted to the culpability of the chief priests and rulers, **"And how the chief priests and rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him"** (Luke 24:20). To show their expectation, they then went on, **"But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel"** (v. 21). They had the Messianic hope alright, but it would seem to me that the redemption which they spoke of was not the redemption associated with the Gospel, i.e., it was not spiritual; they were looking for the redemption of Israel as a nation. That it was non-spiritual seems to be borne out by the discourse Jesus had with Nicodemus. It is patently obvious that Nicodemus did not understand the nature of the new creation in Christ Jesus, **"How can a man be borne when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?"** (John 3:4).

There is also a rather startling aspect of John the Baptist given to us in the Gospel of John. The Baptist, in prison, heard the things that Jesus was teaching and doing, and sent two of his disciples with a message to Jesus, saying, **"Art thou He that should come (the Messiah, presumably), or do we look for another"** (Matt. 11:1-6). Jesus sent them back saying **"Go and shew John those things which ye do hear and see"**. He even added what seemed to be a gentle rebuke to John, **"And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me"**. This illustrates how deep the Messianic expectations were, but the 'yes' answer to the Baptist's question also shows Jesus confessing openly His claims to Messiahship.

THE REALISATION

How many times have you heard people after returning from some event say, "Well, that wasn't a bit like I expected it to be; the realisation had not come up to the expectation. Imagine a man travelling home from work in the evening and expecting a meal of roast beef, roasted potatoes, and all the trimmings, and he finds on the table when he gets home, a pot of jam and some bread; he is likely to feel a little peeved. Consider, then, in the days of Jesus, how the Jews must have felt when the realisation dawned on them that the One whom John the Baptist had marked out for them as from God, was preaching a message of **'love your enemies, do good to them that spitefully use you; if your enemy strike you on one cheek, turn the other also'**. What sort of talk was that, when the nation was a Protectorate of Rome? Can love and peace change the world, or is it those who have **might** on their side who ultimately prevail? The rulers and the people thought they knew the answer to that one, and so they turned on Jesus as an imposter. This man was no Messiah. He was no Anointed Leader from God. Away with Him, and let us see if we can identify the **true** Messiah.

Ah, but they forgot that Jesus was the Christ of God. Many people refer to Jesus Christ today and they think that 'Christ' is the surname of Jesus. The 'Christ' is the Messiah, the Lord's Anointed, and it took a loose Samaritan woman to spell this out when she talked with Jesus. John records that the woman said to Jesus, **"I know that Messias cometh, which is called Christ: when he is come, he will tell us all things"**. Jesus declared Himself again, **"I that speak unto thee am He"** (John 4:25,26). We also read in John 1:40,41 that Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, found Simon and said to

him, **“We have found the Messiah, which is, being interpreted, the Christ”**.

In view of the above, what I have to say to our questioner is that even though the precise word ‘Messiah’ (or Messias) is not often used, there are many prophecies in the O.T. which relate to God’s Anointed coming into the world, and the N.T. identifies Him as Jesus, the Christ of God, and I hardly need add that the N.T. is replete with information and teaching concerning **Him**. Yes, Messiah **has** been manifested, and His manifestation procured salvation for all who will accept and obey Him. Those who look for a future manifestation of the Messiah will, I fear, look in vain. God’s Anointed One has been to this earth. **He will** come again, but the next time He comes it will be in His Glory. Even so, Lord; come quickly.

(All questions, please, to Alf Marsden, 20 Costessy Way,
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