

Systematic Theology for the Local Church
#45—Christology—Part XI¹
The Messiah: Who and for Whom?

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The next study will be on Jesus as the Vine.

‘Messiah’ is a term frequently used of the Lord Jesus Christ in discussing the Bible and Christianity. The term is at the center of much confusion—now and in the past. Here are some of the questions people ask about the Messiah and their relation to him:

- Who is the Messiah?
- An unbelieving Jew might ask, “Has the Messiah come?” Or “Is the Messiah a person?”
- How are Jews and Gentiles related to him?
- Is a saved Gentile or Jew today ‘in the Messiah’? Am I? Are you?
- Is a Jew who has faith in Christ related to the Messiah in any way? Is he or she ‘fulfilled’, as some teach?
- Is Jesus the Messiah for anyone today?

The purpose of this study is to clarify thinking about the Messiah and the relation of individuals to him in this age. So we will answer these six specific questions:

- How is the Messiah spoken of in the Old Testament?
- How is the Messiah presented in the New Testament?
- What Messiah did Jews expect in New Testament times?
- What Messiah do Jews expect today?
- What is our relation to the Messiah today?
- What spiritual lessons should I see with relation to human history and the Messiah of Israel?

Here is a definition of ‘messiah’: A transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning ‘anointed one’; used of the expected national deliverer of Israel; the linguistic equivalent of Greek *christos*, ‘Christ’.

1. How is the Messiah spoken of in the Old Testament?²

a. The term Messiah

The word Messiah in English is a transliteration of a Hebrew word that means ‘anointed’ or ‘smeared.’ Its Greek equivalent is ‘christos.’ Both languages have related verbs that mean ‘to anoint.’ In Jn. 1:41 the writer translates Andrew’s words for us: “The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, “We have found the Messiah” (that is, the Christ).” He does the same thing in 4:25: “The woman said, ‘I know that Messiah’ (called Christ) ‘is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us.’” These examples show that ‘Messiah’ and ‘Christ’ meant the same thing for people in the first century.

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² For their many fine insights into this topic I am indebted to the article “Messiah” by J. A. Motyer (surveying the Old Testament) and R. T. France (surveying the New Testament) in *New Bible Dictionary*, 3rd ed. (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1996), 753-61.

In some occurrences of 'christos' there is good reason to think that the writer is stressing Jesus' messiahship. Here are Peter's words in Acts 2:36: "Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ." We can interpret this as "both Lord and Messiah" (see also 3:20). But Acts 3:6 appears to be using 'Jesus Christ' as a unified name, without particular emphasis on his messiahship: "Then Peter said, 'Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk.'"

b. The concept of anointing

Anointing, or applying grease or oil to the body, was done in Israel to improve physical health or as a ritual that involved pouring oil over the head in order to confer blessing or strength. Prophets, priests and kings were anointed to show their approval by God for the office he wanted them to occupy.

The act of anointing that is most mentioned in the OT involved kings and was part of a ritual of enthronement. Saul, David, Solomon and lesser kings were anointed. Here is the anointing of Saul in 1 Sam. 9:15-16:

¹⁵ Now the day before Saul came, the LORD had revealed this to Samuel: ¹⁶ "About this time tomorrow I will send you a man from the land of Benjamin. Anoint him leader over my people Israel; he will deliver my people from the hand of the Philistines. I have looked upon my people, for their cry has reached me."

Anointing of priests carried the idea of dedicating them to their office. Notice the consecration to God associated with the smearing or anointing of the tabernacle and Aaron and his sons as priests in this passage from Ex. 30:

²² Then the LORD said to Moses, ²³ "Take the following fine spices: 500 shekels of liquid myrrh, half as much (that is, 250 shekels) of fragrant cinnamon, 250 shekels of fragrant cane, ²⁴ 500 shekels of cassia—all according to the sanctuary shekel—and a hin of olive oil. ²⁵ Make these into a sacred anointing oil, a fragrant blend, the work of a perfumer. It will be the sacred anointing oil. ²⁶ Then use it to anoint the Tent of Meeting, the ark of the Testimony, ²⁷ the table and all its articles, the lampstand and its accessories, the altar of incense, ²⁸ the altar of burnt offering and all its utensils, and the basin with its stand. ²⁹ You shall consecrate them so they will be most holy, and whatever touches them will be holy. ³⁰ "Anoint Aaron and his sons and consecrate them so they may serve me as priests. ³¹ Say to the Israelites, 'This is to be my sacred anointing oil for the generations to come. ³² Do not pour it on men's bodies and do not make any oil with the same formula. It is sacred, and you are to consider it sacred. ³³ Whoever makes perfume like it and whoever puts it on anyone other than a priest must be cut off from his people.' "

We see prophetic anointing in Isa. 61:1 (perhaps metaphorical):

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,

c. Messianic figures in the Old Testament

1) Cyrus

Even though he was a gentile king, the description of Cyrus as God's anointed in Isa. 45:1 helps us to understand some of the elements involved with a person who is anointed:

This is what the LORD says to his anointed, to Cyrus, whose right hand I take hold of to subdue nations before him and to strip kings of their armor, to open doors before him so that gates will not be shut:

Cyrus is chosen by God to carry out redemptive acts for God's people, to judge God's enemies and to allow God to act through him. He thus has messianic acts associated with him. Many passages in the OT describe individuals who have some or all of the qualities associated with Cyrus: being chosen by God, saving God's people, judging God's enemies and being a channel for God's actions.

2) Adam

We would not normally think of Adam as a Messianic figure, but we see him described as the first man and the earthly man as opposed to Jesus as the last Adam and the second and heavenly man in 1 Cor. 15. This shows that his role of achieving dominion over the earth—a task that he failed—is finally completed by the Lord Jesus Christ, who will reign over an earth that is renewed and has features like the original Eden (see, for example, Rev. 22).

3) Moses

Moses himself prophesies that God would bring a prophet like himself on the scene. Moses was a prophet associated with the Old Covenant. A prophet was needed who would fulfill that covenant and bring in a new covenant. Here is Dt. 18:15:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him.

It is significant that in Jn. 1:21 the priests and Levites asked John the Baptist if he was “the prophet,” very likely a reference to a first-century expectation of the appearance of one who would fulfill Dt. 18:15.

4) David and other kings

In addition to the great prophecy of Nathan in 2 Sam. 7:12-16 concerning an eternal Davidic king, David is held up as a standard for subsequent kings of Judah. But beyond this, there is a strong association of the king with the futures of the people of Israel. This can be seen particularly in the psalms that center on the king as, among other things, a victor over the nations and world ruler in Zion (e.g. Ps. 2), everlasting (Ps. 21:4), supporter of the righteous (Ps. 72:7), having a name that will last forever (Ps. 72:17), blessed forever (Ps. 45:2), the heir of the covenant given in 2 Sam. 7 and the son of God (Ps. 2), seated at the right hand of God (Ps. 110:1) and divine (Ps. 45:6). In Isa. 7-8 there is a contrast between Ahaz, the disobedient and faithless king of Judah, and Immanuel, who would bring the blessings and fulfillment of hope that Ahaz and kings like him could not bring. So ‘God-with-Us’ is also the deliverer of 9:1-7 and the righteous king of 11:1-16.

5) The Servant

Surely the Servant of Isa. 40-55 is a messianic figure, and, unlike Moses or David, does not exist as a historical figure in the time of the writer, but is actualized in the coming of some future personage.

6) The anointed conqueror

The enemies of Yahweh are subdued in Isa. 56ff., where God himself puts on the garments of salvation

(59:16-20), yet in 61:10-11 a messianic conqueror carries out this role. Yahweh and his anointed conqueror are the same, yet distinct—a veiled reference to the first and second Persons of the Trinity.

7) The Branch

Jeremiah 23:5ff. and 33:14 predict Yahweh's raising a Branch for David, a future righteous king who will rescue Israel. Zechariah 3:8 uses the same figure, speaking of "my servant the Branch," a priest who will bring righteousness to the land. He appears again in Zech. 6:12ff, where he will be both a king and a priest, occupying a two-function office like that predicted in Ps. 110:1 and 4. The Branch appears also in Isa. 4:2-6.

8) The seed of the woman

It is easy to miss the messianic element in Gen. 3:15 (see Mic. 5:3). The prediction of victory over the Satan/serpent who was successful in deceiving the man who was given dominion over the earth comes just after Adam's failure. We should see it as a reversal through someone who can do what Adam didn't do, and this must be a messianic being.

Gen. 3:15: And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.

Mic. 5:3: Therefore Israel will be abandoned until the time when she who is in labor gives birth and the rest of his brothers return to join the Israelites.

9) The Son of Man

The 'one like a son of man' in Dan. 7:13 receives universal and eternal dominion. He is a king in the line of the kings of the previous beast/kings in the vision, coming with the clouds of heaven (a divine prerogative) and rewarded by the Ancient of Days. He is a messianic figure.

10) The anointed ruler

Numerous OT passages indicate that the messianic age will be characterized by righteousness and the removal of sin and guilt. The figure of Dan. 9:24-27 brings these and must be messianic.

²⁴ "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy.

²⁵ "Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. ²⁶ After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed. ²⁷ He will confirm a covenant with many for one 'seven.' In the middle of the 'seven' he will put an end to sacrifice and offering. And on a wing of the temple he will set up an abomination that causes desolation, until the end that is decreed is poured out on him."

d. God's ideal

It appears that the three functions associated with anointing—prophet, priest and king—represented three great needs in the midst of Israel: 1) prophet: the need for information from God, 2) priest: the need for

access to God and 3) king: the need for direction and control of the nation. Individuals occupying each office were specially recognized and set aside for use by God.

There are no examples of an individual in Israel in the OT who fulfilled all three roles. Ezekiel and Jeremiah were prophet-priests, David was a prophet-king, but there is no Israelite who is both king and priest. We do find this, however, in Melchizedek, the Gentile king-priest.

It is significant that in the OT the roles of prophet, priest and king were connected with the responsibilities of individual Israelites before God. I believe that we see in the great prophecy of Joel 2:28 an ideal role for all Israelites living at some future time to be prophets for God, speaking new information from him.

And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions.

Completing the three roles, we find that all Israelites were to be royal (kingly) priests, as seen in Ex. 19:6:

you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.”

Some have noted that in many ways the Mosaic Covenant parallels ancient Near Eastern treaties made by a king with an equal or with a lesser king or a subordinate. In the latter type of agreement, the superior was known as a suzerain. He could make an agreement with a friendly or hostile subordinate. If the agreement was friendly, the relationship was described as that between a father and son. If it was not based on friendship, the relation was described as being between a lord and servant, a king and a vassal or a greater king and a lesser king. These agreements typically involved specific blessings that would follow if certain conditions were met and curses if there were failures.

John Davies has provided an insightful treatment of these roles for Israelites³. He argues that Ex. 19:6 constitutes a blessing for Israel under the Mosaic Covenant, through which individuals comprising the nation would be granted unique privileges of access to God. He also argues that God’s action in granting them this access can be understood against the background of ancient Near Eastern thinking about access to the divine realm⁴:

The covenant which God established with his people, Israel, at Mt. Sinai, according to the book of Exodus, has as one of its central elements a declaration of the honoured standing this people is to have in his sight. In distinction from the nations, Israel as a whole (rather than a subset of Israel) is to be a ‘royal priesthood and a holy nation’, words which spell out the uniquely favoured position Israel occupies as a result of divine grant. Through divine favour, Israel is said to enjoy an affinity, or fitness for access to the divine dwelling place, the presence of God. The words of the declaration denote primarily how the nation is to be related to God, rather than how it is to relate to the other nations as is often supposed, though it is not denied that there may be implications for human relationships of what it means to be the chosen and treasured people of God.

. . . . this royal-priestly designation of Israel draws on a rich world of ideology and symbolism, much of it common to the ancient Near East, where access to the divine realm is the prerogative of kings or their priests who acted as their surrogates.

³ See John Davies, *Royal Priesthood: Literary and Intertextual Perspectives on an Image of Israel in Exodus 19:6* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, Ltd., 2004).

⁴ Davies, 238.

God's ideal for Israel involves a restoration of the conditions in the Garden, where human beings once enjoyed unhindered access to him. In allowing access under the law, God establishes a covenant in a way parallel to the actions of an ancient Near Eastern king who granted rights to a favored subordinate under a suzerainty treaty.

Davies links priests and kings as having a related function. One of the key passages demonstrating this is Zech. 3:

3 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. ²The LORD said to Satan, "The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?"

³Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. ⁴The angel said to those who were standing before him, "Take off his filthy clothes."

Then he said to Joshua, "See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you."

⁵Then I said, "Put a clean turban on his head." So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by.

⁶The angel of the LORD gave this charge to Joshua: ⁷"This is what the LORD Almighty says: 'If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here.'

⁸" 'Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch. ⁹See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.'

¹⁰" 'In that day each of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and fig tree,' declares the LORD Almighty."

Here are Davies comments about this passage⁵:

Priests, by their splendid attire, are a visual representation of regal dignity, and all that is said of them points to their being associated with life and well being.

The Levitical priesthood as portrayed in Exodus is seen not as diminishing or supplanting the collective royal priesthood, but as providing a visual model of that vocation, and secondly as facilitating it. Priests, like angels, their heavenly counterparts, demonstrate what it means to gain access to the presence of God, to worship and service him in an environment where the restrictions to access have been removed. They and the world they frequent are pointers to the potential for the re-creation of the cosmos.

Davies summarizes the importance of Zech. 3 for our understanding of Ex. 19:6⁶:

Zechariah's fourth vision depicts a royal grant in which Joshua (as the representative high priest of the returned exiles) is observed as a participant in the visionary world which lies beyond normal human perception. As with other heavenly visions, there is a degree of reverential reserve in the description. Yhwh is not visually depicted, but is represented by his 'angel', though seemingly is to be closely identified with that angel. There, in the face of potential objection, Joshua is assured, by means of the reclothing scene, of the privilege of access to the divine realm. More than this, the wider community he represents is promised a share in such access through the continued faithful service of

⁵ Ibid, 240.

⁶ Ibid, 238.

their priest. This grant is against the backdrop of the wider context of the restoration of a people to their city and land and their privileged position as Yhwh's chosen ones. This understanding is confirmed by the accompanying oracle which portrays the same notion from a divine point of view. Among other tokens of the divine favour, the servant nation or 'shoot' is invited to enter or is drawn into the divine presence, the paramount priestly prerogative.

There are thus significant points of contact with the promise of a universal priestly access for the people of God in Exod. 19:6 and its context. In both places, the blessing promised is closely related to (and is tantamount to) the condition of continued covenant faithfulness. In both places the privilege is related to the issue of access to God's sanctuary, whether that be conceived of as the heights of Mt Sinai, or the heavenly court. In both cases, the privilege of priestly service takes on regal overtones. In both cases, the wider context links the divine declaration to an ensuing programme of construction of an earthly sanctuary which replicates the heavenly one. Finally, in both cases, the global dimensions of the grant are in view as the nations observe the attitude and actions of Yhwh toward his chosen people.

While God's ideal for Israel was that all individuals would have kingly access to God, it is clear that, except for a relatively few people who genuinely knew God, the nation as a whole failed to achieve the goal. The history of Israel is a continued record of the failure of priests to lead the people in worship (cf. Isa. 28). In fact, the New Testament says clearly that the levitical priests could never take anyone into the presence of God. The kings and priests in Israel were only earthly and physical reflections of a divine spiritual ideal—regal access to the presence of God. Nothing in the Mosaic/levitical system could satisfy the spiritual requirements needed for Israelites to fulfill Ex. 19:6.

2. How is the Messiah presented in the New Testament?

God's ideal for the people of Israel was that they would *as individuals* carry out successfully the roles of prophet, priest and king. It is no accident that each of these key roles is represented at various times in the history of Israel by individuals who were anointed at the start of their service. But no Jew up to the time of Jesus fulfilled all these roles that an individual theoretically could. God's plan was for Jesus as the ideal Jew—the triply anointed one—to fulfill these roles perfectly. Any fulfillment by a Jew of these roles after the Cross is done by individuals who are established on top of the work of Jesus as the ideal Israelite. So the prophesying by the Jews of Joel 2 will be done by people who are saved through the finished work of Jesus on the Cross, and the ideal of Ex. 19:6 will be fulfilled in saved Jews who have access to God as rulers with him.

It is significant that Jesus is presented specifically as fulfilling all three roles of prophet, priest and king. Typifying the presentation of Jesus as the ideal prophet, here are Jn. 7:14 and 40:

¹⁴ After the people saw the miraculous sign that Jesus did, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world."

⁴⁰ On hearing his words, some of the people said, "Surely this man is the Prophet."

His priesthood, encompassing his sacrificial death, resurrection, ascension and current intercession for his subjects is taught in many places in the book of Hebrews. Here is Heb. 4:14:

¹⁴ Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess

Jesus' kingship is taught in many places in the NT. Perhaps the most explicit connections between OT predictions of a messianic king and Jesus' role as king are found in passages where the NT quotes from OT messianic texts, as in Acts 2:36:

²⁹ “Brothers, I can tell you confidently that the patriarch David died and was buried, and his tomb is here to this day. ³⁰ But he was a prophet and knew that God had promised him on oath that he would place one of his descendants on his throne. ³¹ Seeing what was ahead, he spoke of the resurrection of the Christ, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. ³² God has raised this Jesus to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact. ³³ Exalted to the right hand of God, he has received from the Father the promised Holy Spirit and has poured out what you now see and hear. ³⁴ For David did not ascend to heaven, and yet he said,
“ ‘The Lord said to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand ³⁵ until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”
³⁶ “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Here Peter quotes from Ps. 110, which predicts a divine king, and specifically says that Jesus is the Messiah in vv. 31 and 36, where he uses ‘Christ’, the Greek equivalent of the Jewish word for Messiah (see the NIV note). Similar is Acts 13:32-34, where Paul quotes Ps. 2 and Isa. 55:3, both messianic texts, and applies them to Jesus:

³² “We tell you the good news: What God promised our fathers ³³ he has fulfilled for us, their children, by raising up Jesus. As it is written in the second Psalm: “ ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’
³⁴ The fact that God raised him from the dead, never to decay, is stated in these words: “ ‘I will give you the holy and sure blessings promised to David.’”

3. What Messiah did Jews expect in New Testament times?

This is a very important question because it is related to how the NT presents the Messiah and discloses the spiritual state of Israel in the first century. From the passages that Jews took to be messianic, they had the following understanding about the Messiah:

- Things captured: He would be a king, has existed before the world, is superior to Moses and the angels, would suffer and experience a violent death, would redeem Israel and be opposed by Gentiles and would bring in universal blessing and a kingdom.
- Things missing: his priesthood, access to God, dealing with sin, role as a prophet in bringing true revelation from God.

In general Jews in the first century looked for kingship and deliverance, not release from the guilt of sin.

4. What Messiah do Jews expect today?

While this is a generalization, orthodox Jews expect what is described in the previous section. Reformed and nominal Jews only look for a person or an age with Israel blessed in the land.

5. What is our relation to the Messiah in the present Church Age?

There are two crucial and related questions:

- If I am a Gentile, is Jesus my Messiah?
- If I am a Jew, is Jesus my Messiah?

The answer to both is the same: no.

The OT promises of a Messiah are unfolded as God dealt with Israel from Gen. 12 onward. Through Israel all the nations are to be blessed by the Messiah, but he was to be an individual who would succeed where Israel failed. The Messiah is an ideal Israelite. Does this mean that no one outside the nation of Israel receives benefits from him and his work? No, believers in this age are blessed by the work of the Messiah, but secondarily or derivatively. This is what is taught in Rom. 11:17-24:

¹⁷ If some of the branches have been broken off, and you, though a wild olive shoot, have been grafted in among the others and now share in the nourishing sap from the olive root, ¹⁸ do not boast over those branches. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. ¹⁹ You will say then, “Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in.” ²⁰ Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief, and you stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. ²¹ For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.

²² Consider therefore the kindness and sternness of God: sternness to those who fell, but kindness to you, provided that you continue in his kindness. Otherwise, you also will be cut off. ²³ And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ²⁴ After all, if you were cut out of an olive tree that is wild by nature, and contrary to nature were grafted into a cultivated olive tree, how much more readily will these, the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree!

Anyone who has been saved since Pentecost is a member of the Church, the Body of Christ. If I am a Gentile saved since Pentecost, then I am part of the Church. If I am a Jew saved since Pentecost, then I am part of the Church. Jesus is not the Messiah for the Church, but for Israel, because he is the ideal Israelite. The Messiah came to Israel and was rejected. His full office as the perfect prophet-priest-king to bless Israel awaits his return in glory. At that time, after the Church age, he will save the remnant of Israel and they will acknowledge him as their Messiah.

But what about the many uses of ‘christos’ in the epistles, which were written to believers living after Pentecost, the starting point for the Church Age? Doesn’t this demonstrate that Jesus is the Messiah for believers during this age? It is certainly true that ‘christos,’ the Greek equivalent of the Heb. word for ‘anointed,’ was used frequently throughout the NT. But in most of its uses, either alone or in combination with ‘Jesus’ (‘Jesus Christ’ or ‘Christ Jesus’) it was only being employed as a name, without reference to its messianic connotation. This would be similar to our everyday use of ‘Christ’ today to simply denote the one we know as Saviour. It is usually not difficult to tell when an occurrence connotes messiahship. Here are some examples:

Mt. 11:2-3: When John heard in prison what Christ was doing, he sent his disciples ³ to ask him, “Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?”

Mt. 16:16: Simon Peter answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”

Mt. 16:20: Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ.

Notice that in his speech at Pentecost Peter uses ‘christos’ to refer to messiahship and also simply as a name:

Acts 2:36: “Therefore let all Israel be assured of this: God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

Acts 2:38: Peter replied, “Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

It is important to remember that, unless they were previously instructed, no Gentile in the first century who heard ‘christos’ would think anything about the qualities taught in the OT about messiahship.

A very serious error arose in the 20th century in connection with the salvation of Jewish individuals. Some have taught that any Jewish person who is saved becomes ‘completed’ or ‘fulfilled’ in the Messiah. Jesus is thus not only their Savior but also their Messiah, and this cannot be true in the same way for any Gentile. This, along with movements for Jews advocating a ‘return to Messiah,’ creates division in the Body of Christ, violating Eph. 2:14-22 (it is doubtful that Paul is thinking about Jesus’ messianic role here when he uses the word translated ‘Christ’):

¹⁴ For he himself is our peace, who has made the two one and has destroyed the barrier, the dividing wall of hostility, ¹⁵ by abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations. His purpose was to create in himself one new man out of the two, thus making peace, ¹⁶ and in this one body to reconcile both of them to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. ¹⁷ He came and preached peace to you who were far away and peace to those who were near. ¹⁸ For through him we both have access to the Father by one Spirit.

¹⁹ Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God’s people and members of God’s household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit.

Jesus is the Messiah in this age only in the sense that anyone—Jew or Gentile—saved today benefits from the Cross-work of the Lord Jesus Christ. His messianic work is not finished. He has yet to bring to a remnant of Israel the promise of kingly access to God and the ability to speak prophetically for God in fulfillment of Joel 2 and to completely fulfill his role as Messiah. That will only come when a remnant of Israel is saved and the promises of blessing in the land (and beyond) are fulfilled.

6. What spiritual lessons should I see with relation to human history and the Messiah of Israel?

At the heart of the concept of Messiah is God’s gracious dealings with fallen human beings. God reverses the fall through an ideal human being who is his representative on earth. This is the great theme of grace in the Old Testament. Jewish thinking, both now and in the first century when the Messiah was physically present with Israel, is centered on a king Messiah to fulfill national hopes, but not a sin-bearer who will open access to God.

The ultimate lesson, however, is the same for anyone today, Jew or Gentile: everyone is hardened, everyone rejects God’s grace unless he works in the heart to open it to acknowledgment of sinfulness and of God’s provisions.

With regard to Messianic movements today, the requirement to put Scripture before practice is a necessary corrective. Those advocating some kind of return to Messiah and completion in the Messiah need to examine Scripture carefully, seeing exactly what it does say and not adding to it.

Study questions

1. What are the words used in the Bible for anointing? How are they connected?
2. What messianic qualities are found in individuals or in messianic predictions in the OT?
3. What is the relation of believers today to Jesus as Messiah? What evidence is there for the answer?

Running compilation of key definitions

1. Systematic theology: The organized presentation of all that the Bible teaches about God and His works.
2. Exegesis: The actual practice of studying or interpreting a document or other message to determine its meaning.
3. Context: Context in a document or utterance is the surroundings of a portion of a word, a word, or a group of words.
4. Bibliology: The doctrinal study of the nature of the Bible.
5. Biblical authority: The quality inherent in Scripture by virtue of which human beings are completely answerable to its content.
6. Revelation: The information about Himself given by God to human beings.
7. General revelation: God's disclosure of Himself, available directly to everyone, given through means other than dreams, visions, direct words and Christ Himself.
8. Special revelation: The disclosure of information from God that is not available directly to all human beings.
9. Inspiration: A term applied to the Bible denoting that it is the product of God's creative activity, figuratively breathed out from Him (2 Tim. 3:16); applies to the process of recording Scripture, not specifically to the people involved; actually, *expiration* would be a better term to reflect the concept of 2 Tim. 3:16; the result is *inerrancy*.
10. Textual criticism: The science and art of attempting to discover the original text of a literary work for which the original document does not exist. It is especially important for biblical studies, and the foundational endeavor to all subsequent investigation of the Scriptures.
11. Canon: Transliterated from a Greek Word meaning "standard"; as used of the Bible, it refers to books authenticated as possessing divine origin and therefore authoritative; the Jewish canon consists of thirty-nine books, the Protestant of sixty-six and the Catholic of eighty (including apocryphal books).
12. Inerrancy is a term applied to the Bible, although not specifically found in it; it denotes that the Bible, as originally written, possessed no humanly induced deviations from the message God intended to be recorded and that it is true in every respect; 2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Cor. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:19.
13. Infallibility: Although some assert that this term has a different meaning from inerrancy, the two terms are, for purposes of biblical study, synonymous; the Bible is infallible because inerrant, and inerrant because infallible.
14. Illumination is the teaching ministry of the Spirit of God that imparts understanding of the message of Scripture to the believer; not to be confused with inspiration, which in the Bible is used of the work of God in giving Scripture (2 Tim. 3:16); 1 Jn. 2:20; Jn. 16:13.
15. Spirituality: God is not physical, but immaterial, incorporeal, invisible and alive.
16. Self-existence/Aseity: God exists independently of anything else. He is self-existent.
17. Immensity: God is infinite in relation to space.
18. Eternality: God is infinite with regard to time.
19. Simplicity: God is not a plurality and cannot be looked at as divisible into parts.
20. Pure actuality: There is nothing about God that is potential. He is not unfinished in any way.
21. Necessity: God is uncaused and exists because he must exist.
22. Immutability: God is unchanging and unchangeable.
23. Impassibility: God is incapable of being changed or disturbed by what he experiences and is incapable of suffering.
24. Transcendence: God and the world are distinct; he is not part of the world, and the world is not part of him.
25. Immanence: God is present in the world.
26. Infinity: There are no limits to God's person and his perfections.
27. Omnipotence: God can do whatever he wills.
28. Omniscience: God knows everything there is to know.
29. Omnipresence: God is present everywhere in his creation

30. Holiness: God is morally pure and separated from all moral evil and sin.
31. Goodness: A quality that describes or includes his love, benevolence, mercy and grace
32. Truth: God's person, actions, knowledge and revelations correspond to reality
33. Love: God's continual communication of himself to his creatures.
34. Benevolence: God's goodness toward his creatures.
35. Mercy: God's goodness toward those who are helpless.
36. Grace: God's goodness toward sinners.
37. Glory: The greatness of God's perfections.
38. Trinity: There is only one true God, existing as a single Being comprised of three Persons who are equal in every way, yet distinct in their tasks and relations to humanity.
39. God's decree: The decree of God is his plan for the universe that includes all things and is certain to come to pass.
40. Providence: God's care for and upholding of his creation.
41. Sovereignty: God's control over his universe.
42. Christology: The study of the Person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ.
43. Incarnation: The joining of deity and humanity in one person forever. The word is based on the Latin word for flesh: the Lord Jesus Christ is God joined with human flesh.
44. Pre-existence: Used of the Son, it means that he existed before Bethlehem.
45. Theophany: An appearance of God.
46. Christophany: An appearance of Christ.
47. Priesthood: The system that God established to remedy the problem of alienation between a holy God and sinful human beings.
48. Son of God: A name for Jesus that describes his deity and his approval by the Father at the resurrection.
49. Messiah: A transliteration of a Hebrew word meaning 'anointed one'; used of the expected national deliverer of Israel; the linguistic equivalent of Greek *christos*, 'Christ'.