

Messiah's Advent and the Church

Introduction

Throughout the Tanach or Old Testament, numerous passages foretold the coming of Israel's Messiah who was the key to the nation's future. Through Him, God would fulfill all His covenantal promises to the nation and fulfill all prophecy.

Some Messianic passages spoke of a suffering Messiah. Others spoke of a Messiah who reigned over a magnificent and wondrous kingdom. Still other passages spoke of God's wrath against the earth. What the prophets and later the rabbis did not know, comprehend, or discern was that the advent of the Messiah was separated in time. In other words, the Messiah's coming was not one event but two. One of the reasons the Jews were unable to understand this was that the passages that spoke of His coming were tightly interwoven and hid this fact. The other is that God Himself hid their understanding (cf. Daniel 12.7-9; Luke 18.31-34).

What is missing in the Old Testament program? The Church. The Church program that has existed for almost 2,000 years is missing. The Old Testament provides no mention and no hint that there would be a 2,000 year hiatus between the first and second advents of the Lord. Everything in the Old Testament is focused on Israel and God's covenantal and prophetic plan with them. The Church, the body of Christ, from the Old Testament perspective does not exist.

Summary of God's Plan For Israel

For the Jew in the Old Testament, God's plan was clear in its basic conception. What was understood was the following: 1) the Messiah would come, 2) the Messiah would suffer, 3) God would pour out His wrath upon the earth and judge the nations,

4) and God would establish His kingdom. This kingdom would cover the entire earth and be centered in Jerusalem with the Messiah reigning as King. God would fulfill all His promises to Israel during this kingdom period. Israel would be preeminent among all nations of the world. Gentile nations would look to Israel for guidance about God and be blessed by Israel. No plan of God blessing Gentiles apart from Israel existed, i.e., the Church, the body of Christ. This plan was most succinctly explained in Psalm 2 below.

Psalm 2	Comment
¹ Why are the nations in an uproar and the peoples devising a vain thing? ² The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, ³ "Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!"	vv. 1-3 speak of the advent of the Messiah and His rejection by Gentiles (nations and kings of the earth) and Israel (peoples and rulers).
⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. ⁵ Then He will speak to them in His anger and terrify them in His fury, saying,	vv. 4-5 speak of God's disdain and wrath against those who reject His Messiah (cf. Acts 13.38-41).

<p>⁶ “But as for Me, I have installed My King upon Zion, My holy mountain.”</p> <p>⁷ “I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.</p> <p>⁸ ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, and the very ends of the earth as Your possession.</p> <p>⁹ ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, you shall shatter them like earthenware.’”</p>	<p>vv. 6-9 speak of God’s setting up His Messiah to rule from Jerusalem (Zion), His declaration of the Messiah’s Sonship (resurrection, cf. Acts 13.30-33), and His giving His Son the nations for an inheritance.</p>
<p>¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth.</p> <p>¹¹ Worship the Lord with reverence and rejoice with trembling.</p> <p>¹² Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, for His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!</p>	<p>vv. 10-12 speak of God’s warning to the nations to worship and revere His Son, the Messiah so as not to anger Him. This refers primarily to his 2nd Advent.</p>

Passages Revealing the Messiah’s Advent

The below passages are representative of passages in the Old Testament and illustrate how these passages interwove the message about the coming of the Messiah. As one can see, one phrase will speak of the Messiah’s first advent. The next phrase will speak of His second advent. For example, in the first passage below, Isaiah 9.6-7, the passage declared a “child will be born to us (Jews).” This obviously happened in the incarnation when the angel announced to Mary that she, as a virgin, would have a Son (Luke 1.26-38). The next phrase and the following verses tell of the Messiah’s government, His

reign from David's throne, and that His reign will last forever. Has this happened? No. Jesus is not reigning in Jerusalem on David's throne. The world is not under the rule of the Messiah. If it were, we would have peace instead of war. We would have justice and righteousness instead of corruption and evil.

The second passage below, Isaiah 61.1-3, was quoted by the Lord when He went into the synagogue in Nazareth on the Sabbath and read from the prophet Isaiah (Luke 4.14-17). Jesus read the passage but stopped in mid-sentence. This confused and shocked His audience. You can hear them asking one another, "Why did He stop? Why didn't He finish the verse? Who stops reading in the middle of a verse?" As everyone was looking at Him (Luke 4.20) Jesus responded to their questioning stares by declaring "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." We might ask the same question as those Jews 2,000 years ago. Why didn't Jesus finish the verse? The answer is He knew He had fulfilled the first part of the passage by His ministry to Israel in preaching the "gospel of the kingdom" (Matthew 4.17; 9.35). He also knew the next part of the verse, which spoke of God's wrath, and the verses that followed, which declared God's wrath and His kingdom, would be delayed. For the kingdom to come, the Jews will have to fulfill the prophecy Jesus declared in Matthew 23.39.

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The third passage in the chart above, Joel 2.28-31, is interesting for Peter quoted it on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2.14-21). Joel's prophecy about the pouring out of the Holy Spirit came to pass on that Pentecost day but Peter also expected the rest of the prophecy to be fulfilled. That is why he quoted the entire passage. Unlike the Lord, he did not know that God's wrath and kingdom would be delayed. Peter continued to preach the gospel of the kingdom in which repentance was the central tenant (Acts 2.36-41, 3.12-18). That Peter

expected the Lord to return and establish His kingdom soon is clear from his words to the Jews in Act 3.19-26. He commanded the people to repent and return to God.¹ If they did, what would happen? Peter declared, "so that your sins may be wiped away, in order that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord; and that He may send Jesus, the Christ appointed for you." Had the people obeyed Peter, Jesus would have returned and established His kingdom, i.e., "the times of refreshing." But they didn't. And God knew they wouldn't.

In the fourth passage above, Zechariah 9.9-10, the prophet proclaimed in v. 9 the Lord's advent as the King but His advent is meek and lowly. The Lord's presentation in Jerusalem (what Christians celebrate as Palm Sunday) was triumphal for He was the King and some of the people recognized Him as such. But instead of a glorious, kingly steed, Jesus rode a donkey (Luke 19.28-44).² Verse 10 of Zechariah's prophecy spoke of the Messiah's return in which he would end war and establish peace in His worldwide kingdom. Obviously, this has not yet occurred.

The final example, Luke 1.30-33, is taken from what Christians call the New Testament.³ In this passage, the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary to announce that she was to have a child whom they would name Jesus. This happened. Gabriel continued his declaration and proclaimed that this child would be called the "Son of the Most High," that God would give Him the throne of His father David, that He would rule the house of Jacob forever, and that this kingdom would be forever. Did any of that happen? No. It awaits the Lord's return.

Conclusion

In examining the above passages of prophecy we find that the Messiah's advent(s) were tightly interwoven. It appeared that the prophesied events surrounding the Messiah would be fulfilled within a short period of time. Nearly 2,000 years

have passed. We have no hint from the Old Testament that 2,000 years would pass between the comings of the Lord. We have no hint of a period of time in which God would create the Church. All the prophecies related to Israel, God's wrath, and His kingdom remain unfulfilled. During this time God has set Israel aside (temporarily) as the favored nation (Romans 11.25-26).

Beginning with the Apostle Paul, God created His Church, the body of Christ. The ascended Lord revealed a new plan to Paul (Ephesians 3.1-10). No hint of any of this can be found in the Old Testament. Paul wrote that the Church, the body of Christ, was a secret (μυστήριον). In the Old Testament program, God revealed He would deal with Gentiles *through Israel*. Israel was the channel through which God would bless Gentiles. For this to occur, the nation had to have its Messiah. But that did not happen. They rejected Him. Instead of pouring out His wrath, which was the next event of the prophetic program, God saved His chief enemy, Rabbi Saul, and commissioned him to be "the apostle to the Gentiles" (Romans 11.13; 1 Timothy 2.7). This was a new, unrevealed program God created to bless Gentiles.

Will God return to His plan which He revealed in the Old Testament? Paul gave us the answer: when the fullness of the Gentiles is complete, i.e. when the Body of Christ is complete, all Israel will be saved (Romans 11.25-26). This means that when the Body of Christ is complete, God will return to His program that has been in abeyance for 2,000 years. He will pour out His long delayed wrath upon a Christ rejecting world. He will return as King and establish His glorious kingdom. He will save the entire nation of Israel, which has repented and believed that Jesus is the Messiah, cf. Matthew 23.39 cf. Matthew 24.14, and they will fulfill their divine destiny to be priests of God (Exodus 19.6).

¹ The words "repent" (μετανοήσατε) and "return" (ἐπιστρέψατε)

that Peter used are imperatives (commands).

² When the Lord returns at His second advent He will ride a white horse (Revelation 19.11).

³ The New Testament is the New Covenant. Jesus operated under the Mosaic Law or the Old Covenant throughout His earthly ministry. The New Covenant was not inaugurated until the last supper (Matthew 26.28). Even after this, it did not go into effect fully for the Jews (the Twelve included) still practiced the Mosaic Law. It will be fulfilled in the Messianic kingdom.

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