

Titles of Jesus Christ (#1)

The Messiah

Sermon by Pastor Sylvia Chan

So far we have studied several titles of Christians and several titles of the Church, indeed there are in the Bible many titles of Christians and many titles of the Church. We have studied only the more important titles, but there is a lot more we have not studied yet. From time to time we will go back to studying some meaningful titles of Christians and titles of the Church.

Today we are going to study a new topic: The titles of Jesus Christ. There are more than one hundred titles of Jesus Christ in the Bible. The first title we are going to study is “The Messiah”.

A question from an elderly sister

Many years ago an elderly Christian sister asked me during a Bible study: How come we often say “Jesus Christ” instead of just “Jesus”? What is the meaning of “Christ”? I told her, “Jesus is the Lord’s name, Christ is his title; for example, President Reagan: President is his title, Reagan is his name; or Prime Minister Churchill: Prime Minister is his title, Churchill is his name. Similarly, in the case of Jesus Christ, Jesus is his name, Christ is his title.”

This elderly sister’s question shows that many Christians don’t know the meaning of the word “Christ”; they just follow what their pastors or other Christians say. That’s why I decided to study the title “The Messiah”.

“Messiah” and “Christ” have the same meaning

Let’s look at some Bible passages:

ESV John 1:41 He first found his own brother Simon and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which means Christ). (Joh 1:41 ESV)

Here this passage clearly shows that “Messiah” means “Christ”; in other words Messiah and Christ mean the same thing.

ESV John 4:25 The woman said to him, “I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ). When he comes, he will tell us all things.” (Joh 4:25 ESV)

Here the word “him” refers to the Lord Jesus, so the Samaritan woman was talking to the Lord Jesus. Again this passage shows that Messiah and Christ mean the same thing, they have the same meaning.

- “Christ” is from the Greek word “Χριστός” (Christos);
- “Messiah” is from the Hebrew word “מָשִׁיחַ” (Mashiach)

So what is the meaning of Messiah (or Christ)? According to Hebrew dictionaries and Greek dictionaries, Messiah and Christ both mean “the anointed one”.

“The anointed one”

What is “the anointed one”?

First of all, to anoint means to rub in the consecrated ointment. To anoint someone means to pour the consecrated ointment upon someone’s head and then rub it on his head. And “the anointed one” means someone was anointed with the consecrated ointment.

In the Old Testament three kinds of people would get anointed:

- The prophet
- The priest
- The king

A prophet is anointed by his teacher, a more senior prophet; a priest is anointed by a more senior priest. But a king is not anointed by an older king or his own father; a king has to be anointed by a prophet before he can ascend to the throne to be the ruler of the nation.

Since a prophet, a priest or a king all can be anointed with the ointment, what does the term “the anointed one” refer to? Does the term “the anointed one” refer to a prophet, a priest or a king? It goes back to Psalm 2.

ESV **Psalm 2:1 – 12** Why do the nations rage and the peoples plot in vain?² The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD (Yahweh) and against his Anointed, saying,³ “Let us burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords from us.”⁴ He who sits in the heavens laughs; the Lord holds them in derision.⁵ Then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying,⁶ “As for me, I have set my King on Zion, my holy hill.”⁷ I will tell of the decree: The LORD (Yahweh) said to me, “You are my Son; today I have begotten you.⁸ Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the

ends of the earth your possession.⁹ You shall break them with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel."¹⁰ Now therefore, O kings, be wise; be warned, O rulers of the earth.

¹¹ Serve the LORD (Yahweh) with fear, and rejoice with trembling.¹² Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and you perish in the way, for his wrath is quickly kindled. Blessed are all who take refuge in him. (Psa 2:1-12 ESV)

- Here in verses 1-3 it says that the nations and the peoples didn't want to submit to Yahweh God; they plotted against His rule, they wanted to burst their bonds apart and cast away their cords.
- Verse 6 says that Yahweh God has anointed someone to be His king on Zion, the holy hill; it means that this anointed king would rule the nations on behalf of Yahweh God.
- In verse 7 Yahweh said to His king, "You are my son ..." which shows that this anointed king would be called the Son of Yahweh God.
- In verses 8-9, Yahweh God said that all the nations on earth would be the possession of this king, and that he (this king) would rule the nations with a rod of iron and dash them in pieces.
- In verses 10-12 the psalmist told the nations to serve Yahweh God and His Son; blessed are those who take refuge in Him.

No one knows the author and date of this psalm, but Peter and John ascribed it to David:

ESV Acts 4:25 who through the mouth of our father David, your servant, said by the Holy Spirit,
"Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?" (Act 4:25 ESV)

Please take notice that this verse, "Why did the Gentiles rage, and the peoples plot in vain?" is exactly verse 1 of Psalm 2 which we quoted above. Therefore let's assume that this psalm was written by David, which means that it was written around 1000 BC, around 1000 years before the Lord Jesus Christ.

It means that since 1000 years before Christ it had been circulating among the people of Israel that Yahweh God will anoint someone to be a king of His people, and that this king would be called the Son of Yahweh God (who is referred to in verse 7 of the psalm).

Therefore the term "the anointed one" refers to a king of Israel, and he will be called Christ (the Messiah), the Son of Yahweh God.

Conclusion

The Messiah

Now let's sum up everything:

- Christ is from the Greek word “Christos”, Messiah is from the Hebrew word “Mashiach”.
- Christ and Messiah have the same meaning, they both mean “the anointed one”.
- In the Hebrew Bible, three types of people were anointed: the prophet, the priest and the king.
- Since 1000 BC, a psalm of David has been circulating among the people of Israel which says that Yahweh God would anoint a king over His people, and this king would be called the Son of Yahweh God.
- Therefore the term the Messiah (the anointed one) refers to a king of the people of God, and he is the Son of Yahweh God.