

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Over 2,000 years ago, likely starting in earnest during the reign of Herod the Great<sup>1</sup>, the Jews began looking for the arrival of the Man referred to as The Christ.

NOTE: The etymology of *christ* originates in the Old Testament books as *anointed* or transliterated as *messiah*, which are both from the Hebrew word *mashiyach*. In Greek, *christos* means anointed and, although *messiah* and *christ* are very different English words, they have the same meaning.

The Jews in those days knew that the time was fulfilled for the appearance of The Christ.

NOTE: For consistency and clarity, “The Christ” is often used even when another title is mentioned in the referenced Scripture.

How they knew is interesting. While it is impossible to pin down all that led them to that conclusion today, one factor was covenants. Abraham and King David were prominent men because they both had covenants directly with God. God’s covenant with Abraham<sup>2</sup> was passed along to the entire nation of Israel through his sons Isaac and Jacob<sup>3</sup>, who was renamed Israel<sup>4</sup>. It included the coming of The Prophet<sup>5</sup> (another name for The Christ) but His lineage was not specified until God established the covenant with David that The Christ would be one of his seed<sup>6</sup>:

2 SAMUEL 7:12-14 “**When your [David’s] days are fulfilled [AFTER his death]** and you rest with your fathers, **I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom.** 13 “He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. 14 “I will be His Father, and **He shall be My Son.** ...

Since Solomon was king before David died<sup>7</sup>, this can only refer to The Christ. While genealogies were always significant to God and the Israelites, the ascendancy of The Christ made them all the more so. The Bible dutifully maintains numerous genealogies and their importance cannot be overstated. When God set the bloodline of The Christ, it established an important genealogical sequence of fourteen generations from Abraham to David. It is likely that the Jews understood this was key to the subsequent genealogies and it turned out that there were three divisions of fourteen generations covering the bloodlines of key figures:

MATTHEW 1:17 So all **the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations, from David until the captivity in Babylon are fourteen generations, and from the captivity in Babylon until the Christ are fourteen generations.**

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<sup>1</sup> Matt. 2:3-4.

<sup>2</sup> Gen. 17:1-10.

<sup>3</sup> Exod. 2:24.

<sup>4</sup> Gen. 32:28.

<sup>5</sup> Deut. 18:15, 18.

<sup>6</sup> Also Isa. 9:6-7; Jer. 23:5.

<sup>7</sup> 1 Kgs. 1:28-30.

The importance of genealogies in determining the appearance and identity of The Christ was further highlighted in the days of Isaiah, who lived around the 8th century BC. It was well after the reign of King David but before the captivity of the Jews in Babylon when God told Isaiah to “declare” (*ponder* or *consider*) the generations of The Christ:

ISAIAH 53:8 ... who will **declare His [the LORD’s righteous Servant—v11] generation?**

Still, I doubt that this was sufficient to determine when The Christ would come. The Jews knew that His appearance was subsequent to the generations of Abraham through David. Fourteen generations later, the evil King Jehoiachin (aka, Jeconiah, Coniah) was sitting upon the throne of David when the Jews were taken by the Babylonians into captivity. Jehoiachin was effectively the last king (Zedekiah was the last but he, too, was a prisoner of Babylon) and the throne of David had seemingly ended. Worst of all, The Christ had not yet come. However, by this time a majority of biblical prophecies—especially those of Isaiah—were known that would help identify The Christ.

Partial list of important prophecies of The Christ

He would be the Prophet<sup>8</sup>:

DEUTERONOMY 18:15, 18 “**The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet** like me [*Moses*] from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear, ... 18 ‘**I [the LORD] will raise up for them a Prophet** like you [*Moses*] from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that I command Him.

He would be the Son of David and King of the Jews<sup>9</sup>:

JEREMIAH 23:5 “Behold, the days are coming,” says the LORD, “That **I will raise to David** a Branch of righteousness; **a King** shall reign and prosper, and execute judgment and righteousness in the earth.

He would be the Son of Man:

PSALM 80:17 Let Your [*the LORD’s*] hand be upon **the man of Your right hand**, upon **the Son of Man** whom You made strong for Yourself.

He would be the Son of God:

PSALM 2:7, 12 “I will declare the decree: the LORD has said to Me, ‘**You are My Son**, today I have begotten You. ... 12 Kiss **the Son**, lest He be angry, and you perish *in* the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed *are* all those who put their trust in Him.

PSALMS 89:19, 26-27 Then You [*the LORD*] spoke in a vision to **Your holy one**, and said: “I have given help to *one who is* mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. ... 26 He shall cry to Me, ‘**You are my Father**, My God, and the rock of my salvation.’ 27 Also **I will make him My firstborn, the highest of the kings of the earth.**

He would be the Savior and Redeemer<sup>10</sup>:

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<sup>8</sup> Also John 1:21, 25; 6:14; 7:40.

<sup>9</sup> Also Ps. 89:3-4, 35-36; 132:11; Isa. 11:10; John 7:42.

ISAIAH 19:20 And it will be for a sign and for a witness to the LORD of hosts in the land of Egypt; for they will cry to the LORD because of the oppressors, and He will send them a **Savior** and a Mighty [*or Great*] One, and He will deliver them.

JEREMIAH 14:8 O the Hope of Israel, **His [*the LORD's*]/Savior** in time of trouble, why should You be like a stranger in the land, and like a traveler *who* turns aside to tarry for a night?

ISAIAH 44:6 “Thus says the LORD, the King of Israel, and His **Redeemer**, the LORD of hosts: ‘I *am* the First and I *am* the Last; besides Me *there is* no God.

ISAIAH 59:20 “**The Redeemer** will come to Zion, and to those who turn from transgression in Jacob,” says the LORD.

He would be the Messiah and Anointed One:

PSALM 2:2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD and against **His Anointed [*Heb. mashiyach = Messiah, Anointed One*]**, saying,

HABAKKUK 3:13 You went forth for the salvation of Your people, for salvation with **Your [*the LORD's*]/Anointed**. You struck the head from the house of the wicked, by laying bare from foundation to neck. Selah

He would be eternal:

PSALMS 89:19, 29, 35 Then You spoke in a vision to **Your holy one**, and said: “I have given help to *one who is* mighty; I have exalted one chosen from the people. ... 29 His **seed also I will make to endure forever, and his throne as the days of heaven**. ... 35 Once I have sworn by My holiness; I will not lie to David: 36 **His seed shall endure forever**, and his throne as the sun before Me;

JOHN 12:32-34 “And I [*Jesus Christ*], if **I am lifted up from the earth**, will draw all peoples to Myself.” 33 This He said, signifying by what death He would die. 34 The people answered Him, “We have heard from the law that **the Christ remains forever**; and how can You say, ‘The Son of Man must be lifted up’? Who is this Son of Man?”

He would be born of a virgin:

ISAIAH 7:14 “Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, **the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel [*lit. “God with us”*]**.

NOTE: A virgin birth would be difficult to establish but both Joseph and Mary heard the testimony of the angel Gabriel<sup>11</sup> and both were witnesses who testified of the fulfillment of this prophecy.

He would suffer and die for the sins of the world<sup>12</sup>:

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<sup>10</sup> Also Job 19:25; Ps. 106:21; Isa. 44:6; Jer. 14:8.

<sup>11</sup> Matt. 1:18-23; Luke 1:26-38.

<sup>12</sup> Also Isa. 50:6.

ISAIAH 53:3-12 He is despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, *our* faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. 4 Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him **stricken, smitten** by God, and **afflicted**. 5 But He *was* **wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities**; the chastisement for our peace *was* upon Him, and by His **stripes** we are healed. 6 All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. 7 He was oppressed and He was **afflicted**, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a **lamb to the slaughter**, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth. 8 He was taken from prison and from judgment, and who will declare His generation? For **He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken**. 9 And they **made His grave with the wicked**—but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor *was any* deceit in His mouth. 10 Yet it pleased the LORD to **bruise** Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make **His soul an offering for sin**, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. 11 He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge **My [the LORD] righteous Servant** shall justify many, for **He shall bear their iniquities**. 12 Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because **He poured out His soul unto death**, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and **He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors**.

He would be born in Bethlehem:

MICAH 5:2 “But you, **Bethlehem** Ephrathah [*lit. fruitfulness*], though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet **out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler** in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting.”

MATTHEW 2:4-6 And when he [*Herod*] had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he inquired of them where **the Christ was to be born**. 5 So they said to him, “**In Bethlehem** of Judea, for thus it is written by the prophet: 6 ‘But you, **Bethlehem**, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for **out of you shall come a Ruler** Who will shepherd My people Israel.’ ” [*Micah 5:2*].

Since The Christ had to be born in Bethlehem, He would not return while the Jews were captives in Babylon. The Jews could have simply assumed that The Christ would come at the end of subsequent third division of fourteen generations; however, while in Babylon, the all-important Seventy Weeks prophecy was delivered by God:

DANIEL 9:24-26 “Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. 25 “Know therefore and understand, *that* **from the going forth of the command [by the Persian king] to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks**; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. 26 “And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it *shall be* with a flood, and till the end of the war desolations are determined.

At this point, the Jews knew of a certainty when The Christ would appear, which is why many were actively searching for Him during the apostolic days including John the Baptist; the disciples; the priests and scribes, some Greeks; et al<sup>13</sup>.

The search for The Christ is also an interesting story that begins with John the Baptist, a prophet of God<sup>14</sup>, who had an extremely important role in the months prior to The Christ coming on the scene. His first work was to REVEAL The Christ and identify Him by name:

JOHN 1:29-34 The next day John [*the Baptist*] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The **Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!** 30 “This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.’ 31 “I did not know Him; but **that He [*Jesus Christ*] should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water.**” 32 And John bore witness, saying, “I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and [it] remained upon Him. 33 “I did not know Him, but He [*God the Father*] who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘**Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit.**’ 34 “And I have seen and testified that **this is the Son of God.**”

God told John that The Christ would be REVEALED through water baptism (v. 31). After Jesus’ water baptism, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, descended and REMAINED upon Jesus. Upon witnessing this, John publicly testified that Jesus was The Christ and declared Him to be the “Son of God” (v. 34) and the “Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world”, fulfilling the prophecy in Isaiah 53:8, 10-12.

The other work of John the Baptist fulfilled his role as the second Elijah<sup>15</sup>. Notice the details of that commission:

MALACHI 4:5-6 Behold, I [*the LORD*] **will send you Elijah the prophet** before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. 6 And **he will turn [*Heb. shuwb*] the hearts** of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.”

MATTHEW 11:10 [*Jesus speaking*] “For **this is he [*John the Baptist*]** of whom it is written: ‘Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, **Who will prepare Your way before You.**’

JOHN 1:23 He [*John the Baptist*] said: “I am ‘The **voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Make straight the way of the LORD,”**’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”<sup>16</sup>

LUKE 1:13-17 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name **John**. 14 “And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink [*part of the Nazarite vow*]. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. 16 “And **he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.** 17 “He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, **‘to turn the hearts of the fathers** to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, **to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**”

<sup>13</sup> Matt. 11:2-3; John 1:37-49; Luke 22:66-67; Matt. 26:63; John 12:20-34.

<sup>14</sup> Luke 1:76; 7:28.

<sup>15</sup> Matt. 11:7-15.

<sup>16</sup> Isa. 40:3.

John the Baptist was the second Elijah sent to “**turn** the hearts [and] **make ready** a people prepared for the Lord”. But these are not necessarily two separate works. Turning the hearts of the people was, in fact, making them ready for the arrival of The Christ. The Hebrew word for *turn* is *shuwb* and is the dominant factor in turning the hearts of the people back to God<sup>17</sup>.

How did John accomplish these things? Through preaching the terms of the New Covenant and water baptism! John the Baptist certainly knew that The Christ was to appear because his works were for that very purpose. Part of his commission included preaching repentance as part of the terms of the New Covenant:

MATTHEW 3:1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, “**Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!**”

Repentance of sin is turning one’s heart to God<sup>18</sup> and repentance also requires water baptism. Both were required to prepare a people for The Christ. Water baptism BEFORE Jesus was sacrificed established two things: it was a sign of those who turned their hearts and accepted Jesus as The Christ and it prepared people to be baptized later with the Holy Spirit<sup>19</sup>.

It is important to recognize that water baptism SET APART those who would follow The Christ. This is evident when considering one group of Jews who refused the baptism of John—the scribes and Pharisees, and that had consequences:

JOHN 1:19-21, 24-25 Now this is the testimony of John [*the Baptist*], when the Jews sent **priests and Levites** from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” 20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “**I am not the Christ.**” 21 And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “**Are you The Prophet?**” **And he answered, “No.”** ... 24 Now those who were sent were from the Pharisees. 25 And they asked him [*John the Baptist*], saying, “**Why then do you baptize if you are not the Christ, nor Elijah, nor The Prophet?**”

The scribes and Pharisees seemingly would only submit to baptism by The Christ. Since John denied he was either The Christ or The Prophet, they refused to be baptized at his hand:

LUKE 7:29-30 And when all the people heard *Him [Jesus Christ]*, even the tax collectors **justified God, having been baptized with the baptism of John.** 30 But **the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the will of God for themselves, not having been baptized by him.**

Water baptism was “the will of God”; that is, it was ORDAINED by God. It was an outward sign of those who accepted God’s will and that He had appointed and established the water baptism of John. Refusing the baptism of John that was ordained by God was the moment when the scribes and Pharisees REJECTED Jesus as The Christ! As a consequence, they also rejected John’s message of repentance (so their hearts were NOT “turned”) and his testimony that Jesus was The Christ and the Son of God!

The renown Pharisee Saul also refused to be baptized by John and he, for a time, actively persecuted all those who believed that Jesus was The Christ. However, he was later baptized by Ananias of Damascus<sup>20</sup> whereupon he was given the name Paul and sent unto the Gentiles.

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<sup>17</sup> Joel 2:12-14, 31; 3:4, 7; et al.

<sup>18</sup> Ps. 94:15; Jer. 24:7; et al.

<sup>19</sup> Matt. 3:11.

<sup>20</sup> Acts 22:12-16.

In contrast, Joseph of Arimathea, a member of the Sanhedrin Council, likely was baptized by John because he was a “disciple of Jesus”<sup>21</sup>.

So, the John the Baptist had the critical role of revealing and identifying Jesus as The Christ as well as preparing a people to receive Him. One example of the profound effect of John’s works is evident with two men who would later become disciples of Jesus:

JOHN 1:35-36, 40-41 Again, the next day, John [*the Baptist*] stood with two of his disciples. 36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “**Behold the Lamb of God!**” 37 **The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.** ... 40 One of the two who heard John *speak*, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41 He [*Andrew*] first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “**We have found the Messiah**” (which is translated, **the Christ**).

The works and witness of John the Baptist were so influential that Andrew was easily convinced that Jesus was The Christ. Once Jesus began His ministry, He quickly fulfilled many other prophecies that affirmed Him to be The Christ, and they were witnessed by the people “prepared” by John the Baptist:

LUKE 7:22 Jesus answered and said to them, “Go and tell John the things you have seen and heard: **that the blind see, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have the gospel preached to them.**”

This sample of Jesus’ miracles fulfilled prophecies in Isaiah 29:18; 35:5; and 61:1-3. The works of John the Baptist opened people’s hearts and minds to recognize that Jesus fulfilled all the biblical prophecies. They KNEW He was the Prophet, Son of David, King of the Jews, Son of God, Savior, Redeemer, Messiah, and Anointed One whom God had promised to send so long ago. John the Baptist prepared the hearts of THOUSANDS who believed.

Today, the majority of Jews still reject Jesus as The Christ. They absolutely knew when The Christ was to appear according to the genealogies and the Seventy Weeks prophecy. Sadly, however, their rejection was also prophesied—“**He [the LORD’s Servant—Isa. 52:13] is despised and rejected by men**” (Isa. 53:3). Surely this is a significant concern within modern Judaism. Only Jesus as The Christ fulfilled the biblical prophecies. Claiming the coming of The Christ is still a future event ignores the timing of the three divisions of fourteen generations and the Seventy Weeks prophecies understood so clearly by the Jews in apostolic times. Prophecy also specified that The Christ would be born of a woman and would die for the sins of the people. That means The Christ had to be flesh and blood so the Jews cannot rationally claim that when The Christ returns in Spirit, it fulfills the old prophecies. Above all, failed prophecies would mean that God is a liar. Even though the Jews are blinded<sup>22</sup>, how do they properly explain these things?

One last thought. There is a notion of a third Elijah who will come before the Day of the LORD<sup>23</sup>. John the Baptist certainly fulfilled that role but the manifestation of a third Elijah just prior to that Day is not clear in Scripture. However, the second of the two Beasts in Revelation 13 is prophesied to do signs and wonders that mirror those of the first Elijah. He is referred to as the “Beast Coming Up Out of the Earth” in verse 11.

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<sup>21</sup> John 19:38.

<sup>22</sup> Matt. 15:14; 23:16-26; John 9:40-41; 12:37-40; Rom. 11:7-10, 14-25; 2 Cor. 3:13-16.

<sup>23</sup> Mal. 3:2; 4:6.

REVELATION 13:13-14 **He [the Beast Coming Up Out of the Earth] performs great signs**, so that **he even makes fire come down from heaven** on the earth in the sight of men. 14 And **he deceives those who dwell on the earth** by those signs which he was granted to do in the sight of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who was wounded by the sword and lived.

Calling fire down from heaven obviously mirrors the works of Elijah the Tishbite<sup>24</sup>. The “Beast Coming Up Out of the Earth” performs signs and wonders to deceive the people on the earth into worshipping the Image of the Beast who he then likely REVEALS to be the False Christ. John the Baptist revealed The Christ but he never called fire down from heaven, a notable difference.

Perhaps a third Elijah is not necessary in the scheme of things because John the Baptist already revealed The Christ when He came in the flesh. The next appearance of The Christ will be preceded by the sign of the Son of Man appearing in heaven<sup>25</sup>. After all, there will be no need to reveal Him as when He was flesh<sup>26</sup> since The Christ will come in brightness of Spirit<sup>27</sup> and the whole earth will see Him<sup>28</sup>.

It is important to distinguish the differences of the works of Elijah the Tishbite and John the Baptist since there will be many false prophets who deceive people into following false christs:

MATTHEW 24:4-5, 11, 23-24 And Jesus answered and said to them: “**Take heed that no one deceives you. 5 “For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’** and will deceive many. ... 11 “Then **many false prophets will rise up and deceive many.**” ... 23 “Then if anyone says to you, ‘Look, here *is* the Christ!’ or ‘There!’ do not believe *it*. 24 “For **false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive**, if possible, even the elect.

The purpose of this message was not simply to provide a prophetic and historical perspective on the revealing and identity of Jesus, The Christ. It was not to provoke the Jews out of their state of spiritual blindness. Nor was it to speculate on the end-time prophecies. All of this is intended to draw your attention to how easy it was for so many who failed to believe that Jesus IS the Prophet, Son of David, King of the Jews, Son of God, Savior, Redeemer, Messiah, and Anointed One. As Scripture says:

JOHN 20:30-31 And truly **Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; 31 but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.**

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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<sup>24</sup> 1 Kings 18:36-38; 2 Kings 1:10.

<sup>25</sup> Matt. 24:30.

<sup>26</sup> Isa. 53:2.

<sup>27</sup> Isa. 60:3; Hab. 3:4; 2 Thess. 2:8.

<sup>28</sup> Matt. 24:30; Rev. 1:7.