

# PAUL'S THEOLOGY

## *Lesson 10*

### Jesus the Christ

This morning I woke up with time blocked out to write this lesson. I have spent a good bit of time over the week reading and mulling over the material for the class. For the last month, I have known the point where we would be in this series today, and in my studies on Paul I have categorized and set aside those data points useful for today's class. But beyond this week's readings and this month's categorizing, I have spent years trying to better understand the material we present in this lesson. It is material core to our faith.

Not being a coffee drinker, my morning ritual consists simply of letting Tizzy out and trying to convince her that nature is a better place for her digestive by-products than our home. I am generally 50 percent successful on this chore. This morning we had success (so far). After Tizzy, I am able to sit down at my computer and begin putting this lesson into writing. That is where I am now!

It seems no big deal, really. I just open the computer, turn on some contemplative John Michael Talbot music, and pull up Word. I open a new document and begin typing. Even though the material is new each week, the writing process is old hat.

Had you asked me many years ago, I never would have thought this process would be old hat. Computers were coming into individual use as I was finishing Law school in the early 1980's. I desperately wanted one, yet the price was way too far beyond my budget. When I graduated from law school and moved to Houston in 1984, the firm where I began working had a few computers, but most secretaries were still using IBM typewriters. The computers were gradually being added desk by desk.

For five more years, until 1989, I tried to figure out a way to get a computer. Finally I was able to fit one into the budget. Wow, what a life changer! Not only could you type documents, you could land airplanes, build civilizations, and eventually, replace the U.S. Postal Service!

Today's children in the United States are often referred to as the "screen generation." They have always known computer screens. Heavens, the cellular telephone is technically a computer. My lesson preparation would never have seemed novel or state of the art to those in High School today.

Time breeds familiarity, and with familiarity we begin to take for granted those things that were once fresh and new. I believe that for many of us, that has occurred with the label "Christ."

In the Bible, “Christ” is used as a label for Jesus of Nazareth in 534 verses. Almost 70 percent of the time (372 verses) Paul is the author. “Christ” is used so often in the Bible, the uninitiated might think it the last name of Jesus! Beyond the pages of scripture “Christ” also receives a great deal of usage. On the streets one can hear it as an exclamation of surprise, a word for emphasis, even a word of cursing, this all in addition to the proper use of the term.

As we study Paul, we properly stop and ask what it is about the term that was so important to Paul. Why does Paul repeatedly call Jesus the Christ? Why does the label “Christ” flow so effortlessly from Paul’s lips as he dictated his letters?

To answer these questions, we fairly begin by examining the word “Christ” and asking what the word meant to Paul. Then we are in a position to examine why Paul used that label repeatedly for Jesus.

### **“CHRIST” TO PAUL**

While we know of the usage of the word “Christ” as one given to Jesus<sup>1</sup>, Paul’s knowledge and experience with the word would have predated that. As Paul grew up learning not only the Hebrew scriptures in the Hebrew, but also in the Greek translation of the Hebrew (called the “Septuagint”), Paul would have had familiarity with the term “Christ.”

The Greek for “Christ” is *χριστος* (*christos*). It means “anointed” and was used by the Alexandrian Jews who made the Septuagint translation as the word for the Hebrew *מָשִׁיחַ* (*masiah*) or in English, “messiah.”

So Paul would have studied and known the word “Christ” as used in passages like Leviticus 4:5 where the priests are instructed on the laws for sin offerings.

“And the *anointed* priest shall take some of the blood of the bull and bring it into the tent of meeting.”

The Hebrew “anointed” (*masiah*) is rendered into Greek as “christ” (*christos*). The verb form of “christ” (*chriously*) is used in 2 Samuel 2:4 when we read of the men of Israel anointing David as King. Subsequently we read of King David as *christos* in passages like 2 Samuel 19:21.

In addition to the Old Testament usage of *christos* for priests and kings, it was a term used for prophets, who received anointing for their ministry. In David’s Song of Thanks found in 1 Chronicles 16, we read of David calling the prophets of God “christs.”

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<sup>1</sup> The word is used in 65 verses in the four gospels in reference to Jesus.

“When you were few in number, and of little account... wandering from nation to nation... he allowed no one to oppress them; he rebuked kings on their account, saying, ‘Touch not my anointed (*christon*) ones, do my prophets no harm!’” (16:19-22).

So the word “christ” had a holy and special, yet very recognized and regular meaning in Paul’s studied scriptures as a label for those selected and anointed for special purposes in God’s work among God’s people. Yet beyond that, the term took a greater significance in the Hebrew mind by Paul’s time.

From its inception, the Jewish faith has been a faith of a coming redemption from God. As early as the expulsion from the Garden of Eden, the Jews had been taught that from the seed of woman would come one who would “bruise” the serpent’s head even as the serpent bruised the coming one’s heel (Gen. 3:15).

During the life of Abraham and the Patriarchs, Jews were taught that God had continued his caring promise of a coming redemption. What is more, this redemption was not limited to one for Israel alone. But as Genesis 12:3 recorded, God told Abraham that, “in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”<sup>2</sup> This same promise was passed on through to Isaac (Gen. 26:4 “in your [Isaac’s] offspring all the nations of the earth shall be blessed”) and Jacob (Gen. 28:14 “and in you and your offspring shall all the families of the earth be blessed”).

These promises were reinforced through Moses and his contact with God. God wanted Moses to make it clear that he was the God of promise to the Patriarchs. He told Moses the people needed to understand that he was “LORD, the God of their fathers, the god of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob” (Ex. 4:5).

Moses was the great prophet from God, called from the desert to rescue and save God’s people from bondage. Yet Moses saw another prophet coming that God would anoint for his people and Moses pointed the people to that saying, “the LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your brothers – it is to him you shall listen... And I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. And whoever will not listen to my words that he shall speak in my name, I myself shall require it of him” (Dt. 18:15-19).

God was always to be Israel’s real monarch or king. The people’s plea to Samuel to anoint a king was seen as an affront to God who allowed it, telling Samuel, “they have not rejected you, but they have rejected me from being king over them”

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<sup>2</sup> This promise was repeated in Gen. 18:18; and 22:18.

(1 Sam. 8:7). So Samuel anoints Saul as king, making Saul Israel's *christ*<sup>3</sup>, albeit a very poor one! Israel's great king is David, also anointed, also termed a *christ/masiah*. As such David was seen as the intermediary between God and his people and, to a great degree, the prosperity of the nation was intimately tied to David's faithfulness to God.<sup>4</sup>

But as great a *masiah/christ* as David was, Israel was always told a greater *masiah/christ* king would come. When David was considering building a temple/house for God, Nathan the prophet came to David with a word from the LORD. Nathan told David that, David would **not** make God a house; rather God would make David one! This house of David would be a kingdom that will last forever. This kingdom will be of a son of David who is also a Son of God!<sup>5</sup>

“Thus says the LORD: would you build me a house to dwell in? ... Moreover the LORD declares to you that the LORD will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom... I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be to him a father and he shall be my son” (2 Sam. 7:5-14).

Numerous Psalms are found to speak of God's promise to David. An example is Psalm 18. Verses 49 and 50 recite the Davidic promise tying it to *masiah/christ*.

“For this I will praise you, O LORD, among the nations, and sing to your name. Great salvation he brings to his king, and shows steadfast love to his anointed [*masiah/christ*], to David and his offspring forever.”

Psalm 110 begins with David proclaiming,

“The LORD says to my Lord: ‘Sit at my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool.’”

This Psalm continues with references of kingly and priestly power and function (both anointed roles of the *masiah/christos* even though that term is not used):

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<sup>3</sup> That is the translation given in the Septuagint for David's usage of *masiah* in reference to king Saul. (1 Sam 24:6, etc.).

<sup>4</sup> Consider 2 Samuel 24 and the census David chose to take of the people. God condemned the census as sinful and the penalty was the death of 70,000 Jews.

<sup>5</sup> This passage has application to Solomon, but its application must also be beyond Solomon. For while Solomon built a temple, and Solomon's reign was secure, neither the temple nor the kingdom lasted forever. This passage had an application beyond Solomon, to a coming Son of David who would have an everlasting kingdom.

“The LORD sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. Rule in the midst of your enemies... The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek<sup>6</sup>.’” (Ps. 110:2, 4).

Other Psalms written during times of exile and times of restoration speak of the promise of God for care of his people into the future.<sup>7</sup>

Several hundred years after King David, the prophets were simultaneously confirming the earlier promises about a coming completion of the promise to David while also divulging more about that promise. While Ahaz was Israel’s king, the forces of Damascus and Samaria laid siege to Jerusalem endangering the Davidic dynasty. In the face of this crisis, a prophet named Isaiah, offers a prophesy to the king, “Hear then, O house of David! Is it to little for you to weary men, that you weary my God also? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Behold, the virgin<sup>8</sup> shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Is. 7:13-14). Isaiah followed with another oracle about the coming anointed king recorded in Isaiah 11:1-9. In part, that prophesy said,

“There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse [father of David], and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the Spirit of wisdom and understanding, the Spirit of counsel and might, the Spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD...Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. The wolf shall dwell with the lamb.”

Isaiah describes the coming one as having the wisdom that characterized Solomon, the might of David and the knowledge of Moses.

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<sup>6</sup> Melchizedek was the “priest of God Most High” as well as the king of Salem before whom Abraham (Abram at the time) bowed and paid a tithe recorded in Genesis 14. Since Abraham bowed and served Melchizedek, the priesthood of Melchizedek was deemed superior to Abraham and the children of Abraham’s gene pool (“loins” in Biblical talk). For this reason, Melchizedek’s priesthood was seen as superior to that of Aaron and the priests of Judaism (Heb. 7:10-11). Melchizedek also functioned in the dual role as a king and priest. The kingdom was “Salem” meaning “Peace” in the Hebrew. This is the order of the priesthood of the coming Lord of Psalm 110.

<sup>7</sup> See Psalms 89, 132, 45, 2, 72, and 110 for examples.

<sup>8</sup> We should note that the Hebrew uses the word *alma* referring to a young girl of marriageable age before she has her first child, whether or not she is technically a virgin. Still the Jewish translators of this passage into Greek (before the time of Christ) rendered the passage into Greek as *parthenos* (παρθενος) meaning virgin showing their understanding of the Hebrew prophesy as a virgin birth.

Isaiah spoke also of a coming servant of God who would suffer as he worked to affect the will of God not only among Israel, but also to the ends of the earth. These passages pointed to one of whom God said,

Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations. He will not cry aloud or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a faintly burning wick he will not quench; he will faithfully bring forth justice. He will not grow faint or be discouraged till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law. (Isa. 42:1-4).

Isaiah prophesied further about the coming servant in Isaiah 52:13-53:12,

Who has believed what he has heard from us? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or majesty that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. □ But he was wounded for our transgressions; he was crushed for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that brought us peace, □ and with his stripes we are healed. 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.

He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, □ so he opened not his mouth. □ By oppression and judgment he was taken away; □ and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, □ stricken for the transgression of my people. □ And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, □ and there was no deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was the will of the LORD to crush him; □ he has put him to grief; when his soul makes an offering for guilt, □ he shall see his offspring; he shall prolong his days; the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand. Out of the anguish of his soul he shall see and be satisfied; by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant, make many to be accounted righteous, and he shall bear their iniquities. □ Therefore I will divide him a portion with the many, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong, because he

poured out his soul to death and was numbered with the transgressors; yet he bore the sin of many, and makes intercession for the transgressors.

In a later prophesy, Isaiah even uses the *masiah/christ* term in verb form referring to the coming time writing,

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound (Isa. 61:1).

About the same time Isaiah was prophesying, a man named Micah was as well. After setting out the destruction headed for Israel, Micah spoke of a coming anointed (*masiah/christ*) king under whose reign things would be very different. The entire prophesy in Micah 4:1-5:5 is worthy of consideration, but in the interest of time, we set out only certain portions:

It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and it shall be lifted up above the hills; and peoples shall flow to it, and many nations [not just Israel] shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He shall judge between many peoples, and shall decide for strong nations far away; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore ...

But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose coming forth is from of old, from ancient days. Therefore he shall give them up until the time when she who is in labor has given birth. Then the rest of his brothers shall return to the people of Israel. And he shall stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they shall dwell secure, for now he shall be great to the ends of the earth. And he shall be their peace."

Eventually, the kingship in Israel fell, not restored again even to this day. The prophecies of a coming anointed one continued, however. So once we get to Paul, the term *masiah/christ* was not novel. It was long awaited!

## **PAUL ON JESUS AS CHRIST**

With our history of the word intact, understanding it, at least in part, as Paul likely did, we ask ourselves why Paul so whole-heartedly embraced Jesus as Christ/Messiah (we will begin to use the English spellings at this point.) In asking this question, we need to remember where Paul first landed on this issue!

At the time when Paul was living, the Jewish world was in need of a messiah. Israel was no longer an autonomous nation, and its people were strewn all over the world in what was termed the *diaspora* or, in English, the Dispersion. The last several centuries had seen the prophets dry up, the Temple desecrated, and the Romans set themselves up over the nation and country. Yet within this depressed state, there were glimmers of hope for a national redemption. Judas the Maccabee had valiantly stood up and regained the control of the Temple restoring it the same day it was most severely violated.<sup>9</sup>

The Rabbis of Paul's time taught and wrote of the messiah. "In the rabbis it was a standing principle to refer the predictions of the prophets to the 'days of the Messiah.'"<sup>10</sup> Reading through rabbinic writings of the time and later, we are able to see some of the scriptures the rabbis used in reference to the messiah. Psalm 18:49-50 and Psalm 110 were both seen in the Midrash<sup>11</sup> as messianic.

The Babylonian Talmud, a collection of rabbinic sayings from the Jews left behind in Babylon after the captivity, contains entire sections on the rabbinic teachings about the messiah. In the Sanhedrin section the rabbis discuss when the messiah shall come and what his coming shall be like. Isaiah, the Psalms, the prophets, and even the books of Moses are frequently referenced and understood as applying to the messiah.

Reading through scholastic works on the views of a messiah at the time of Paul one is struck by the variation among Jewish opinions. The Messiah was to some a coming redeemer, to others an earthly king to reestablish Israel as a nation, still to others, a priestly figure. Scholars get information from sources beyond those set out earlier. Mishnah (rabbinic writings from 200 A.D.) as well as from the Dead

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<sup>9</sup> See the lessons on the times between the Old and New Testaments in the Biblical Literacy lessons at [www.Biblical-Literacy.com](http://www.Biblical-Literacy.com) particularly lessons 52-54 in the Old Testament section.

<sup>10</sup> E. Earle Ellis, *Paul's Use of the Old Testament* (London: Oliver and Boyd 1957) at 56-57 citing C. H. Dodd's *The Apostolic Preaching and its Developments*.

<sup>11</sup> The Midrash were a collection of rabbinic commentaries on scripture probably put into written form around the 400's a.d. For a full set of references see Ellis at 57.



Sea Scrolls, Josephus, and other Jewish literary sources of the time all speak of the messiah.<sup>12</sup>

The variation in messianic interpretation at the time of Paul is understandable when we realize that the Old Testament speaks of a coming prophet, priest and king, all as roles of one anointed for God. It is much like the diversity that one might read about in Christian literature today discussing the biblical prophecies of the end times.

So while we do not know for certain *all* that Paul believed about the messiah prior to his conversion, we do know what Paul did **NOT** believe. Paul did not believe that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ, the Messiah. While the church was proclaiming Jesus as Christ, quoting various Old Testament passages in support, Paul was fighting hard to stamp out the view. For Paul, Jesus would have been an anti-messiah, an anti-christ. Paul not only fought against the view of Jesus as Christ, he went to great lengths to stifle any opinion otherwise.<sup>13</sup>

Paul was on his way to Damascus to stamp out the Jesus is Christ Movement when Jesus appeared to him on the road. From the moment of conversion, Paul was truly a changed man. While Paul did not have all the answers, he knew without a doubt that Jesus of Nazareth was “the Son of God” (Acts 9:20).

Consider the consequences in the mind of Paul to seeing Jesus as resurrected and alive on the road to Damascus, first in reference to Stephen. Paul had condoned the stoning of Stephen because of Stephen’s declaration that “Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God” (Acts 8:56). That statement was deemed blasphemy worthy of stoning. Yet just a short while later, Paul saw and spoke with the same resurrected Jesus. Paul knew, and would say over and over, that the fact that God had resurrected Christ affirmed the authentication of Jesus as Christ/Messiah. Here was one who would truly reign forever.

The resurrection forced Paul, however, to reconsider his position on the cross as well. As a Pharisee, Paul found the cross a stumbling block to ever considering Jesus as Messiah.<sup>14</sup> Paul knew his Torah extremely well. Paul knew that the Law

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<sup>12</sup> Consider the references and material in the entry on “Messiah” in Neusner, et al., *The Encyclopedia of Judaism* (The Continuum Publishing Company 1999) at 874ff.

<sup>13</sup> Consider Paul role in the stoning of the first Christian martyr, Stephen set out in Acts 7.

<sup>14</sup> 1 Cor. 1:23, “but we preach Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and folly to Gentiles.”

accorded everyone who hung on a tree as cursed.<sup>15</sup> For Paul, that had always been a “case closed” point. God could not curse the Messiah. By definition, the Messiah was God’s anointed.

Paul learned, however, that the curse, which was on Jesus as he hung on the cross, was not the curse of Jesus, but rather the curse of humanity! Paul wrote this to the Galatians saying, “Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, “**Cursed** is everyone who is hanged on a **tree**” (Gal. 3:13).

Paul saw Jesus as the fulfillment of the prophecies given Abraham and the Patriarchs. Paul wrote the Galatians about “the promises made to Abraham and to his offspring.” The promise, as referenced earlier in the lesson, was that through the offspring of Abraham, the entire world would be blessed. Paul wrote clearly, that this promise was “referring to one ... Christ” (Gal 3:16).

Over the years, Paul grew to understand more and more about Jesus as Messiah. “Christ” became Paul’s term of choice for Jesus. We see in Paul, a clear indication that the promises and the covenants that God had laid down through the prophets were, in fact, revealed in Jesus as Christ.

Consider Paul’s letter to the Romans. In chapter 9 Paul is talking about the great blessings God set forth to his chosen people the Jews. Paul notes that, “To them belong the patriarchs, and from their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ [Messiah] who is God over all, blessed forever. Amen” (Rom. 9:5).

While many of Paul’s contemporaries thought of the Messiah as an earthly ruling king, the Jewish concept of a Messiah who was an earthly political force held no allure to Paul. An earthly kingdom was certainly never God’s point. Paul saw Jesus as the King of all earthly kings (1 Tim 6:15). Paul saw Jesus as Messiah/Christ in the role of a king with an eternal kingdom. Consider Paul writing:

- **Colossians 1:13-14** “He has delivered us from the domain of darkness and transferred us to the *kingdom of his beloved Son*, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins.”
- **2 Timothy 4:1** “I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and *his kingdom*.”

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<sup>15</sup> Deut. 21:23, “a hanged man is **cursed** by God.”

- **2 Timothy 4:18** “The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed and bring me safely into his heavenly kingdom. To him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”
- **Ephesians 5:5** “For you may be sure of this, that everyone who is sexually immoral or impure, or who is covetous (that is, an idolater), has no inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

Paul saw Jesus as anointed King who, after the seed of David, met the promises of God and would not only reign forever, but would reign to the ends of the earth. His kingdom was not limited to the Jewish people. In Jesus as Messiah, the promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were met. Jesus the Christ was the offspring through whom the world was blessed. Paul wrote,

“Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, ‘And to offsprings,’ referring to many, but referring to one, ‘And to your offspring,’ who is Christ [Messiah].” (Gal. 3:16).

Acts give us a number of Paul’s sermons about Jesus. We can read Paul’s explicit teaching of Jesus as the Christ who fulfilled God’s promises about David and his offspring saving Israel. Preaching in Antioch of Pisidia, Paul recounted to the synagogue God’s dealings with David noting,

“Then they asked for a king, and God gave them Saul the son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, for forty years. And when he had removed him, he raised up David to be their king, of whom he testified and said, ‘I have found in David the son of Jesse a man after my heart, who will do all my will.’ Of this man’s offspring God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised.” (Acts 13:21-23).

It was important to Paul that Jesus met the prophecies of the Old Testament. Jesus was,

“*promised beforehand through his prophets* in the holy Scriptures... his Son, who was *descended from David according to the flesh* and was declared to be the Son of God in power according to the *Spirit of holiness* by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus *Christ* our Lord” (Rom. 1:2-4).

This passage itself is laden with references to the promises of God to his people, both through the prophets and through the rest of scripture.

Paul’s use of scripture shows that he took several passages the rabbis applied to the messiah and applied the to the Messiah. For example, in Romans 15:9 Paul quotes Psalm 18:49,

“In order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, ‘Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.’”

Similarly in 2 Corinthians 6:17 (“Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them, says the Lord, and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you”) we have a passage that quotes Isaiah 52, another passage seen as messianic by the rabbis.

Paul refers to Psalm 110 multiple times, in Romans 8:34, 1 Corinthians 15:25, Ephesians 1:20, and Colossians 3:1). This Psalm some rabbis applied to the messiah, while others applied to Abraham. For Paul there was no doubt! Paul saw Jesus “at the right hand of God” (Rom. 8:34; Ps. 110:1). Jesus would “reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet” (1 Cor. 15:25; Ps 110:1).<sup>16</sup>

Paul also wrapped his understanding of Jesus as Christ in the teachings of Isaiah about the Messiah as the servant of God. In Romans 15:8-9 Paul explained the role of Jesus as servant quoting Psalm 18:49 (a messianic psalm according to the rabbis):

For I tell you that Christ became a servant to the circumcised to show God’s truthfulness, in order to confirm the promises given to the patriarchs, and in order that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. As it is written, “Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles, and sing to your name.”

“Servant” is also the term Paul used in the Philippians song about Christ who “made himself nothing, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men” (Phil. 2:7). Paul also references Jesus as God’s servant who suffered on behalf of humanity

Paul saw Jesus as the anointed one of God promised as the intermediary between God and man. Christ served as prophet, priest and king. To use Paul’s words,

“I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ [Messiah] must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles.” (Acts 26:22-23).

This was Jesus, the Messiah, Jesus Christ.

## **POINTS FOR HOME**

### **1. “Jesus Christ”**

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<sup>16</sup> Ellis does a commendable job citing the rabbinic uses of these passages as well as Paul’s endorsement of the messianic applications at pages 56-58.

Why did the Jews need a messiah? What was the problem? Was it simply security of the national borders? Restoration and purity of the Temple? Was the Messiah ever just an answer to issues of national pride? Not according to the scriptures! The anointed one solved issues of a much more significant and greater depth. Mankind was alienated by sin from God Almighty. The anointed one stood between the perfect God and the fallen man. Moses, Aaron, Melchizedek, the prophets, all filled this role, but ultimately only as vague shadows compared to the final Messiah. The Christ became the sacrifice that truly once and for all atoned for the sins of humanity and provided the bridge between the chasm of God and man.

## 2. "Jesus Christ"

The Jewish messiah was never meant simply for the Jews. Yet as God's chosen people, it was the Jewish nation that produced the Messiah. Yet the Christ is for all the nations. As old as Abraham are the prophecies that through his offspring all the nations of the world shall be blessed. That blessing comes through the Messiah as he brings the "righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" (Rom. 3:22-23).

## 3. "Jesus Christ"

The Messiah, the Christ was Jesus of Nazareth. The one Paul persecuted met Paul on a road from Jerusalem to Damascus and turned his life upside down. Paul was never the same. It was Jesus who merited the label of Messiah. Jesus was God's anointed. Returning to Paul's words,

"I stand here testifying both to small and great, saying nothing but what the prophets and Moses said would come to pass: that the Christ [Messiah] must suffer and that, by being the first to rise from the dead, he would proclaim light both to our people and to the Gentiles." (Acts 26:22-23).