

MESSIAH|משיח|CHRIST|ΧΡΙΣΤΟΣ|ANOINTED ONE

5. The Messiah: Risen, Ascended, Glorified

And he said to them, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer these things and enter into his glory?" And beginning with Moses and all the prophets, he interpreted to them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself. (Luke 24:26-27)

Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him. (Hebrews 9:24-28)

For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the scriptures [...] Now if Christ is preached as raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? But if there is no resurrection of the dead, then Christ has not been raised; if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain. We are even found to be misrepresenting God, because we testified of God that he raised Christ, whom he did not raise if it is true that the dead are not raised.

For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ have perished. If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are of all men most to be pitied. But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. (1 Corinthians 15:3-4,12-20)

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate, he suffered death and was buried, and rose again on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures. (Niceno-Constantinopolitan Creed)

Introduction

In the Old Testament, we see various anointings, of people and things. There can be several anointed ones, or even Anointed Ones. "The Lord's Anointed" has been both Saul and David. But Solomon is anointed by a priest and a prophet. We know priests are anointed; we also see prophets are anointed. An anointed one could be a priest, a king, or a prophet. The Anointed One would be all three at once. Moreover, various prophecies come to be understood as pointing to a particular set of events which would be characteristic of the Messiah, and would apply to him: birth to a virgin; the other features (healing the sick, giving sight to the blind, making the lame walk). These come to be seen as *Messianic*. The *death* of the Messiah is sometime regarded as unforeseen, but there are texts which refer to one who suffers in a particular way on behalf of the people. Today, we look at Resurrection.

St Paul's Argument in 1 Corinthians

I told you what I received: Christ died, was buried, and was raised *in accordance with the scriptures*.

If there is no resurrection, Christ has not been raised.

If Christ has not been raised, our faith is futile.

But Christ has been raised.

Note: St Paul does not only argue that Christ has been raised because that is what was delivered to him. He adds that Christ was raised *in accordance with the scriptures*. In other words, *as the scriptures said would happen*. This is also the sense in which this phrase is meant in the Creed. Not that "he was raised, as the Gospels tell us", but "the resurrection about which the Gospels tell us happened as the earlier scriptures said would be the case."

So can we find in the Scriptures a text which says directly: "The Messiah will die. And then he will be raised from the dead"? Not exactly...

Belief(s) in Resurrection

But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, "Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees; with respect to the hope and the resurrection of the dead I am on trial." And when he had said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge them all. (Acts 23:6-8)

What the Sadducees thought may not be 100% clear. Josephus (c.37-100) says they did not believe in the immortality of the soul, and so not in the resurrection. He also adds that they did not believe in an afterlife at all. St Paul characterises their beliefs as relating to "hope and the resurrection of the dead". Other sources say they did believe in Sheol, as the place where the dead go. The Pharisees, by contrast do seem to have believed in an afterlife involving reward and punishment according to behaviour in this life. The teaching of the Pharisees involved received traditions; that of the Sadducees, the written Torah only.

Some important Texts

On this mountain the LORD of hosts will make for all peoples a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined. And he will destroy on this mountain the covering that is cast over all peoples, the veil that is spread over all nations. He will swallow up death for ever, and the Lord GOD will wipe away tears from all faces, and the reproach of his people he will take away from all the earth; for the LORD has spoken. It will be said on that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, that he might save us. This is the LORD; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation. (Isaiah 25:6-9)

God will do this in the future. Death will be "swallowed up for ever." A feast will take place on the mountain of the Lord: this is our salvation, for which we have waited, and in which we will rejoice.

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 bruise him;
he has put him to grief;
when he makes himself an offering for sin,
he shall see his offspring, he shall prolong his days;
the will of the LORD shall prosper in his hand;
he shall see the fruit of the travail of his soul and be satisfied;
by his knowledge shall the righteous one, my servant,
make many to be accounted righteous;
and he shall bear their iniquities. (Isaiah 53:9-11)

The Servant will die – his grave will be with the wicked. But he shall also “see his offspring” and his days will be “prolonged”. The Servant’s death – and resurrection – will make many to be accounted righteous.

“At that time shall arise Michael, the great prince who has charge of your people. And there shall be a time of trouble, such as never has been since there was a nation till that time; but at that time your people shall be delivered, every one whose name shall be found written in the book. And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt. And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the firmament; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever. But you, Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, until the time of the end. Many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” (Daniel 12:1-5)

Those who are “wise” will shine, having awoken to “everlasting life.” As the Servant in Isaiah makes many righteous, so those who “turn many to righteousness” will shine.

I keep the LORD before me always; with him at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
And so, my heart rejoices, my soul is glad; even my flesh shall rest in hope.
For you will not abandon my soul to hell, nor let your holy one see corruption.
You will show me the path of life, the fullness of joy in your presence,
at your right hand, bliss forever. (Psalm 16:8-11)

We could read this as referring to preservation or salvation from mortal peril or other danger. But we can also read it as being about overcoming actual death. There, we see a “path of life” in God’s “presence”, and “bliss for ever.”

Come, let us return to the LORD; for he has torn, that he may heal us; he has stricken, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. (Hosea 6:1-2)

“Us” here is Israel, “dying” in exile. But on the “third day” the people will be raised up. There will have been death, in order for there to be a “revival” or “re-making alive”, as another way of translating the word could suggest.

Matthew 12

These ideas are brought together in Chapter 12 of St Matthew's Gospel. Here, Jesus quotes another of the Servant texts from Isaiah, and then goes on to link the "sign of Jonah" with the "three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" which he himself will experience.

"Behold, my servant whom I have chosen, my beloved with whom my soul is well pleased.

I will put my Spirit upon him, and he shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles.

He will not wrangle or cry aloud, nor will any one hear his voice in the streets;

he will not break a bruised reed or quench a smouldering wick,

till he brings justice to victory; and in his name will the Gentiles hope." (Matthew 12:18-21)

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And the LORD appointed a great fish to swallow up Jonah; and Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights. (Jonah 1:17).	For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the whale, so will the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here. (Matthew 12:40-41)

Neither the New Testament writers nor subsequent authors say that "the scriptures" with which Jesus's resurrection is "in accordance" refers to a specific line or verse. But the *collective witness* of the Prophets and the other Writings does bring us to the point that we can say there is a way of understanding belief a) in what will happen to human beings in general; and b) what will happen to the Messiah in particular, which lead us to "on the third day rose again from the dead in accordance with the scriptures." They are not trying to justify something which they can't point to, hoping no one will notice! They have these themes in mind.

Conclusions

We have seen the idea of anointing as a sign of God's favour, and as a marking-out or setting-aside for a particular role in salvation history, whether in the short term as a prophet, priest, or king at a particular time and in a particular place, or more widely over history. Early on, it becomes possible to see these individual, one-off figures as looking forward to a single, permanent representation of One who is Anointed. And that Anointed One (Messiah, Christ) will not be simply a prophet or priest or king, or even a combination of the three, but will instead give those terms their true meaning, too. He is the prophet who remains silent in the face of his accusers; the priest whose sacrifice is himself; the king whose crown is of thorns. He dies because he lives, and so lives for ever.