

Messianic Christology

Introduction

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- Messianic Christology is a survey of all the messianic prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures or Old Testament which were fulfilled at the First Coming of Messiah.
- Orthodox Jewish interpretation does not expect Messiah to come twice, but expects two Messiahs each coming once. We will see this later in our section on Isaiah 52:13 – 53:12.
- We will find, however, that these prophecies were fulfilled in Jesus and cannot be fulfilled any other way.
- The Gospels show the apostles were surprised by the death of Jesus. They expected Jesus to overthrow their enemies and establish His Kingdom on earth. See Acts 1:6,7 for example.
- While they were very familiar with prophecies of the Messiah establishing His Kingdom, they didn't seem to grasp the idea that the Messiah had to come twice: first to suffer and then later to come in victory. See Matthew 16:20 – 27.
- The early church always preached the Gospel by referring to the prophecies in the Old Testament. This was all they actually had, as the New Testament had not yet been written. See Acts 2:14 – 40; 3:12 – 26; 4:8 – 12.
- Jewish teachers break up the Old Testament into three sections: The Law, The Prophets, and The Writings. The level of importance to each to the Jew follows the same order. The Law is most important, then The Prophets and finally The Writings. In fact, The Writings are not considered a viable way of convincing others because Jewish leaders consider them to be the words of men whose thinking was guided by God. Jesus used all three however. The Law is considered to be of the highest authority because “it is the very words of God spoken directly to a human scribe.” The Prophets are of a lesser authority, “being God's message spoken through the mouths of men.” The Writings are considered to be of least authority because they are thought to be “the writing of men whose thinking was guided by God.” Jesus used all three, however.
- We will look at 29 separate sections covered in the Old Testament in this study. We will first look at the prophecies contained in The Law, then The Prophets and finally The Writings.
- We will start with four basic rules of interpretation to begin our study.

4 Basic Rules Of Interpretation Concerning The Prophetic Word

1. *The Golden Rule of Interpretation.*

When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning, unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise.

In other words, take the biblical passage being read as meaning exactly what it is saying, unless there is something in the text showing it should be taken some way other than literally.

This rule actually lays the foundation for the other three rules and is the first tenet of fundamentalism.

2. *The Law of Double Reference.*

This law shows the fact that a passage or block of Scripture is speaking of two different persons or two different events separated by a long period of time. In the passage itself they are blended into one picture, and the time gap between the two persons or events is not presented in the text itself. The time gap is known to exist though because of other Scriptures. An example of this is some of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the First and Second Comings of Messiah. Often these two events are blended into one picture with no indication there is a gap of time between the First and Second Comings. Zechariah 9:9-10 is a good example of this law. Verse nine is speaking of the First Coming, but verse ten is speaking of the Second Coming. Another is Isaiah 11:1-5. Verses 1-2 speak of the

First Coming, while verses 3-5 speak of the Second Coming. In both of these examples, two events are presented with no mention of a gap in time between them.

3. *The Law of Recurrence.*

This law explains that in some passages of Scripture there exists the recording of an event followed by a second recording of the same event giving more details to the first. Hence, it often involves two blocks of Scripture. The first block gives a description of an event as it transpires in chronological sequence. This is followed by a second block of Scripture dealing with the same event and the same period of time, but giving further details as to what transpires in the course of the event. An example of this is Ezekiel 38:1 – 39:16. Ezekiel 38:1-23 gives a complete account of the invasion of Israel from the north and the subsequent destruction of the invading army. This is followed by the second block of Scripture, Ezekiel 39:1-16, which repeats some of the account given in the first block and gives some added details regarding the destruction of the invading army. Another example is in Isaiah 30-31. Isaiah 30 gives a complete account of the fall of Judah's alliance with Egypt. Chapter 31 repeats the prophecy, adding more detail.

4. *The Law of the Context.*

A text apart from its context is a pretext. This means that a verse can only mean what it means in its context and must not be taken out of its context. When it is taken out of its context, it is often presented as meaning something that it cannot mean within its context. A good example of this is Zechariah 13:6. This verse is often used as a prophecy

of the Messiah. Pulled out of its context, it does indeed sound like it refers to Jesus. But the context (Zech. 13:2-6) is speaking of false prophets. Verse six cannot be talking about Jesus unless Jesus is to be taken as a false prophet. This is the danger of studying a verse by itself rather than in its context. You'll hear many of us say, Context, context, context!

Use these rules when studying prophecies in the Bible and you will have a good understanding of them as God would have us to have an understanding. Don't use them and you will surely fall into error!