

Jesus, King of the Jews

The Christian Bible consists of an Old Testament and a New Testament. The Old is about Moses and the Hebrew people. The New is about Jesus and Christian people.

The Hebrew literature was The Bible used by Jesus, and His Apostles in the first century. It consisted of Moses, some Prophets and writings that had been put together by a remnant of the Tribe of Judah whose kingdom had fallen to the Babylonians in 587 B.C.

That Bible was in scroll form with many scrolls written and collected over a period of about 1,000 years by the Jews who returned from captivity to restore worship in Jerusalem. It was translated into Greek about 300 years before the time of Jesus because so many Jews spoke Greek at the time.

The Jewish people never spoke of their Bible as the Old Testament. Such designation would not exist until Christians used the Jewish scrolls to support the Messianic epistles. And that was in the 4th Century in a Codex Bible.

The Christian Epistles were written by Jesus' Apostles using their Jewish scrolls to support their interpretation of The Messiah to be Jesus of Nazareth. They claimed Jesus to be The Messiah, mediating a New Covenant. This made the covenant mediated by Moses for Israel, to be an Old Covenant.

This naturally offended the Hebrew people who continued in their Messianic hope, based on their interpretation of the scrolls, since they did not agree with the Apostles of Jesus. All the while, the Apostles of Jesus were teaching that Jesus was the Jewish Messiah through the Christian Epistles.

During the first century days of Jesus, the Jews were in tribute to the Romans. So was most of the known World. Some Jews were content with this and believed subjection to the Romans to be the best policy. Others wanted freedom from the Romans to live in Palestine under a theocratic state as their ancestors did long ago.

The Jews were a unique group of people in the Greco-Roman world. They had the written records of their Hebrew history that included a covenant with their God, the creator of all things, with promises from Him to the future generations. Those promises included a Messiah who would come at a specified time to restore the Rule of God over His people, the Jews.

In 721 B.C. Israel fell to the Assyrians. In 587 B.C. Judah fell to the Babylonians. As a result, this left those generations without the inheritance of the Mosaic Covenant; still, their scrolls provided hope for their children in future generations. This hope was to be

fulfilled by a Messiah who (in Greek) is a Christ.

The birth of Jesus ushered in the Messianic Age with the Christian claims of a Jew named Judas. This was during the time of taxation and the slaughter of children by Herod in his effort to keep a Christ off of his throne.

The ministry of Jesus, some 30 years later, revived The Messianic hope among some Jews while others, like Thadus, revived The Hope among other Jews. And Zeolots began a Messianic Revolution in 66 A.D. that resulted in millions of deaths and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.

The final Messianic attempt to restore the Holy City to the Jewish people was made by Simon Bar Kockba in 132 B.C. It would be 1500 years later before another Jewish Messiah would attempt to save Jerusalem for the Jews.

The Old Testament literature of the Jewish Bible does not tell us anything about the many Christs' of the first century, except in prophetic terms (because the cannon of scripture was closed some 300 years earlier).

The Christian literature, through the Epistles from 50 to 70 A.D. and the Gospels, from 70 to 90 A.D., provided the largest volume of material about Messianic activity during the first century.

This literature speaks of many Christs'. It is biased because it is based on the conviction that Jesus, the Rabbi from Galilee, is the Christ of God promised by The Bible of the Jews. The Christian literature is written by Jews that presented Jesus as the long awaited Messiah while other literature of the period, such as Philo and Josephus, was written by Jews who were not Disciples of Jesus.

Messianic Hope

The hope of Messiah was common among Jewish people but the expectations varied by how the scholars interpreted the Messianic text.

The Messiah was "The Anointed One" and was interpreted as One person anointed by God as a Prophet, like Moses and a King like David. But, how God would fulfill His promise in Messiah was a debatable and controversial issue among the remnant of the First Century.

Some thought that it would be a passive event for the Jews with God in control, having the power to destroy the Romans. Others thought that Jews must act in Faith to seek their own salvation, trusting God to respond on their behalf. This was the prevailing hope in all the Messianic activity of the Christian era.

This hope is also well grounded in the Jewish Bible where acts of faith must precede the acts of God, such as David accepting the challenge of Goliath.

Even a modern cliché says that *We will never see the supernatural things only God can do until we do the*

simple things that we must do; and that God helps those who help themselves.

The King Messiahs, such as Judas, Thedos and others, were militants with swords looking for others to follow them in faith to prove to God that they believed His promise enough to put their lives on the line. The Jewish war was a revolution of Zealots without a Messianic King to lead them.

Regardless of the Jew's viewpoint, they could not avoid a clash with Rome. The driving force behind this war was the Jew's belief that God would see their faith and come to their rescue.

This war resulted in the destruction of the Temple, along with the Holy City. Sixty years later a King of the Jews was able to rally the largest of all the King movements, based on the idea 'God helps faith'.

In 130 A.D., Simon the (son of Kokba) King of the Jews had one thing going for him that the revolution (and other Kings of the Jews) did not have. He had the benefit of "a shadow of things to come" from the original 70 years captivity following the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 587 B.C.

Since it was approaching 70 years since the Romans destroyed the Temple, this helped Simon recruit followers by the assurance that God would come to their rescue this time. God would be with them in this effort as He had been with their fathers in returning them under Ezra and Nehemiah.

Christian Hope

Jesus' claim to be The Christ resulted in a complete change of Jewish hope. It created a new religion that soon surpassed the religion of the Jews, the name *Christian* was given to this new hope.

In today's world a billion people call themselves Christians and Followers of Jesus The Christ while only a few millions continue in the Jews Religion.

Jesus not only changed Messianic Hope to Christian Hope, He completely changed The Hope. What the Jews had always expected of a Messiah must now be reconciled with a different Hope by Jesus.

Every Messianic movement has the same objective. That is, to remove the Gentiles from Palestine and rule over the Holy City. Jesus set forth a new objective that did not involve Palestine, Jewish rule, or the Holy City.

When Jesus came on the scene, Jerusalem had been trodden down by the Babylonians, the Persians, the Greeks, and now the Romans.

The prevailing questions during this time were: When is enough, enough? When is God going to remember the Messianic promises and visit his people? How long must we pray for the peace of Jerusalem? How long before we can sit under our own vines and eat our own grapes? How long before the lamb and lion can dwell in peace and safety? How long must the sound of

weeping be heard in Jerusalem? How long before righteousness and judgement reign in the Holy City?

These were the questions, prayers and hopes that had motivated every Messianic movement...including Jesus'. In spite of all the efforts of Jesus to redefine the Jewish Hope with a new and different objective, His disciples continued in the traditional Messianic hope!

Jesus' followers were disappointed when He did not fulfill their Jewish Hope or justify them in following Him. Jesus was the only Messiah to change the things which a Messiah must do. All the other Christs' were doing the things expected by the Jews until the Romans killed them.

We can see why the *militant* Christ appealed to the Jewish people; but not to the Romans' or anyone else who stood to lose by the reign of a Messiah. So how did the *pacifist* Jesus with His message of peace on earth (not just in Jerusalem) manage to obtain a larger following than the militants?

The answer to this mystery is that Jesus had power to do signs and wonders. The other's power was in their sword and the swords of the movement. The miracles of Jesus continued to recruit followers until the rulers of the Jews became concerned that Rome might crush the movement, as they had done with the other Messiahs.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem to celebrate Passover, the city was filled with Jews from all over the diaspora. They had heard of His power and gave Him a Messiah's welcome with fanatic zeal. This, indeed, was reason for concern. No other Christ had gotten this far with such a large following. They all had been killed before they could launch a campaign to save Jerusalem.

The rulers of the Jews had no love for Jesus because He had attacked them viciously, calling them all kinds of bad names; even embarrassing them in public before the people. The rulers of the Jews were divided on their hope for a Christ to reign. They owed patronage to Rome and feared The Christ would remove Roman rule which would ill effect the Jewish rulers.

None of the militant Christs' had confronted or threatened the rulers of the Jews; they only opposed the Romans.

If any of the Jewish rulers favored a Christ, it would not be Jesus they favored, because they knew Jesus would remove them from power. So the Jewish rulers under Caesar favored no Christ at all because it would cost them their Magisterial office.

The Romans were against any Christs, while the Jews were only against Jesus. Any King of the Jews was a threat to Roman rule over the province and that's why the Romans killed all those they believed to be a King of the Jews.

The Jewish rulers did not believe Jesus was their King and His popularity was a threat to peace with Rome. They decided that it would be best for Jesus to die rather than risk war with Rome. His death also would remove a

threat to their religious respect among the people which had diminished greatly. In fact, the more followers that Jesus had, the fewer the Jewish rulers had.

They were able to try Jesus on a charge of heresy, and win; but they were afraid to stone Him publicly because it may excite His followers more. So they sent Jesus to Pilate.

The Jewish rulers also knew that Pilate's court would not try Jesus on a heresy charge, so they sent Him as a King and a threat to Rome. This would also confirm them as loyal subjects to Caesar since they had never betrayed a Christ before now.

The King of the Jews

A Son of David may claim to be The Christ; but until He actually reigns on the throne of His father David, in the Holy City, it remains just a claim.

Recruiting disciples before The Kingdom comes is a matter of faith for any Christ. If He fails to bring in His Kingdom, it proves Him a false Messiah. And, a false Messiah destroys all the faith of those who follow Him, leaving them disappointed and angry.

It is difficult to know the heart of a false Messiah. Does He Himself really believe that He is The Messiah; or does He covet the power given to a King by His subjects?

When Jesus claimed to be a true Christ to the Jewish people, they had already seen many false Christs' fail in the Messianic task. Many were gathered in the Holy City to celebrate Passover when Jesus arrived on a donkey, as the scripture had stated.

Some of the people had seen and heard Jesus as He taught and performed Miracles among them. Others came from all over the Roman world of Diaspora Hebrews to keep the Feast of Passover and Pentecost. As they arrived, the locals excitedly provided them with the latest news of the miracle working Messiah from Nazareth.

There was nothing in the teaching of Jesus to give Him credibility as a Christ but His Miracles demanded belief in His claim to be a man like Moses sent to save God's people.

The recent resurrection of Lazarus had made Jesus front page news. Many of His followers were spreading the Good News that Jesus was The Christ even though He told them not to tell anyone that He was The Christ.

The popularity of Jesus had nothing to do with His teaching. It was all about His miracle working power. None of the preceding Christs' had ever come close to the popularity of Jesus who had produced an uproar in the Holy City.

The rulers feared that the Romans might become concerned over the political impact of such an uproar among multitudes of Jews welcoming a Christ into the Holy City.

Hundreds of lives had been lost when Rome stopped the *militant* Christ. Thousands of lives would be at stake (even the nation) if Rome believed Jesus to be The Christ. The Jewish rulers had a special session to decide what should be done to avoid such a calamity. The decision was to try to stop the movement; and that resulted in the trial and crucifixion of Jesus.

Jesus is the only Christ ever to be rejected by the Jews - the only people whose faith and hope depended upon a Messiah. All the other Messianic movements were stopped by the Gentiles who ruled the Holy City at the time. Now Jesus is stopped by Jews who ruled the Temple.

Pilate tried Jesus as a Jewish King, and found Him innocent. When he tried to set Jesus free, the mob would not permit it. Therefore, Pilate gave consent for soldiers to carry out the crucifixion.

Why had the same people who welcomed Jesus as The Christ, a few days earlier, suddenly demand His death? Nothing like that had ever occurred in the history of the Jews, or in the history of the world.

On Palm Sunday the people were fanatical in their belief that they were seeing the triumphant entry of The Messiah to liberate the Holy City from the Gentiles and restore peace.

When they saw their King fail they were not only disappointed they were mad. This was natural and to be expected because when you have given people a reason to rejoice and celebrate - then let them down - they will be angry with you.

Pilate realized the Jews had sent Jesus to him because of a religions strife among themselves; not because they believed Him to be a King and a threat to Caesar. When Pilate discovered Jesus was a Galilean, he sent Jesus to Herod, who understood Jewish politics. This was to endear Pilate to Herod (same reason the Jewish rulers sent Jesus to Pilate).

Herod could not try Jesus because He would not speak, in spite of being slapped, mocked, and ridiculed. Jesus was sent back to Pilate who tried to release Him as a gesture of Caesar to the Jews (this type of gesture was a tradition to the Passover Jews).

The rulers of the Jews had voices in the crowd demanding crucifixion instead of release. This provoked the pro-Jesus people to join in. Some have suggested this was a gathering of the all-night street people, not good citizens who were home in bed. How-ever, the crowd consisted of people who stayed through Jesus' trial all night to see how it would end.

When Pilate realized he could not keep the peace in the Holy City with the release of Jesus, he ordered his soldiers to do the will of the people and crucify an innocent man. He publicly denounced such a travesty of Justice, and washed his hands of any part in the matter.

The Holy City, as host to the throne of David and His sons had never seen anything like this in its long history. Some were removed from the throne such as Jehoikem and Zedeikia. Even David himself was driven out by his own son seeking the throne. But this was a son of David who was rejected, publicly shamed, and crucified by His own people.

Why The King died

Why Jesus Died has been debated for some 2,000 years, and the answer still depends on who you ask. The fact that He died is also a debatable issue. Some say that he was in a coma when He was taken down from the cross; then revived to live incognito while His disciples continued His ministry. Some say He was God and did not die; rather, He went back to heaven.

Mohammed did not believe Jesus died on the cross and this is the position of Muslims today. Jews believed He died on the cross but not that He arose, and this is the position of Rabbinical Judaism today. Jesus' disciples believed He died on the cross, but they also believed he arose. And, this is the belief of Christianity today.

The fact that Jesus died is accepted by everyone... except those who believe that Jesus was God. That concept did not exist until the church made Jesus to be God (in the fourth century). However, everyone who believes that Jesus was God, does not conclude that He never died.

We can see how the different opinions about *when*, *how*, *why*, and *if* Jesus died, make up the controversy that continues to this day.

From the literary records of the life and times of Jesus, as well as the early centuries of Apostolic Christianity, people agree on the fact that Jesus died. The records provide us with evidence of the continued controversy over *how*, *when*, and *why* He died.

Those who do not believe that Jesus died will not be interested in why, when, or how. In fact, they cannot accept anything regarding Jesus' death because they do not believe that He died.

Those who believed He was resuscitated from the crucifixion trauma, do not believe He died on the cross or, necessarily, because of the cross. Those who fixed His body for burial and put Him in the Tomb knew that He was dead and were surprised when the body was not where they left it. They could only assume that someone had removed it. They had no doubt about His death on the cross whatsoever. But they were puzzled about what had happened to His body.

One hundred and twenty of Jesus' followers testified that they actually saw and handled the risen Jesus that night; later, over 500 people said the same. Seven weeks later, 3,000 people claimed to have witnessed the spirit of God coming upon them as a result of believing in the risen Christ. They did not see Him personally, but had

the witness of God to confirm the fact. Most of them left their vocations and possessions to live in a commune life waiting for Jesus to return. This was the beginning and origin of the new religion soon to be called Christianity.

We do not have a coroner's report to establish the death or the cause of death; but Christian literature, which is all that we know about it, has Jesus dead on the cross, as well as alive three days later.

The Messianic movement that began with John the Baptist and a coming Messiah, ended with the death of The Messiah on the cross. The resurrection revived the hope of Jesus' followers. In fact, the resurrection surprised them. Neither the crucifixion or the resurrection was expected by the disciples of Jesus.

Jesus was the only Christ of the Jews to predict His own death. He even predicted His resurrection. His disciples could not accept those predictions because their faith was so strong in Him as The Christ. To them, it meant He must destroy the Roman's and not be destroyed by them.

All the remnant of Jews believed in the Messiah. Many false Christ's succeeded in attracting a following through faith. Jesus was no different, except in popularity. Whether a Christ is "true or false" is not determined by the faith of His followers, but by the throne of His Kingdom.

Jesus' disciples had far more faith in Jesus than other disciples had in their Messiah. They had seen Jesus escape those who sought to stone Him. They had been given the power that Jesus had to do signs and wonders. They, themselves, had cast out demons and healed the sick. They had good reason to believe in the power of God.

Death was proof of a failed Messiah and therefore, a false Messiah. Jesus' disciples were convinced that He was indeed The Christ despite His refusal to be crowned.

Other followers fled as soon as their Messiah was captured or killed. They knew immediately that they were wrong about their Christ. Jesus' disciples, however, had seen the power of Jesus and had to hang around to see what the end would be.

The disciples were surprised that the Temple guards could arrest Jesus. They had to follow to see Him resist. They were surprised that He didn't resist. Their faith was shaken by these events but they still had hope up to and until His death on the cross.

When Judas, His disciple, saw that Jesus would not resist arrest and trial, He then knew that Jesus was not The Christ. Judas had followed Jesus for three years. He had witnessed The power of God over nature and devils. He fully expected Jesus to use this power to fulfill His Messianic calling.

Judas, like many of the zealots, believed in the faith principle, that God would restore the throne of David through faith; that we must put our lives on the line,

showing our works of faith and trusting God for His work of power.

Judas had believed Jesus to be The Christ along with all the disciples. But when Jesus would not prove it He realized that Jesus was not The Christ and therefore, innocent of the claim.

Pilate seems to be the only person convinced that Jesus was not a king of anything. He did not expect Jesus to escape death unless He would set Him free. Although Jesus reminded Pilate that God was in control and death was the assignment for The Messiah (not release). He further reminded Pilate that if His throne was of this natural world then His disciples would fight for it.

Some conclusions

To find the Biblical cause of Jesus' death, we must discover death in the Biblical Messiah. No one had ever discovered death in The Anointed One; therefore, death was never expected for a Messiah.

Any true Christ would, of necessity, have to die to fulfill the things spoken concerning The Christ, since death was required throughout the scriptures. This means that Jesus' death was proof that The Christ was of God - not that He was a false or failed Christ.

Jesus was the only Christ with this concept. In fact, Jesus was the only person to know this about Messiah until The Resurrection. His Apostles began to teach it to everyone to explain how He could be The Christ and, at the same time, be overcome by death from the Romans.

The Jewish Christians continued for years with this consolation about Messianic Death. This was the only reason that they could provide for the death of Jesus.

The Apostle Paul arrived on the scene with another cause which was far more than a consolation for Messianic Jews. It was, and is, the foundation of faith for all who believe, whether Jew or Gentile. The cross was, and is, a Gospel for all to believe because Jesus, the Second Adam, gave His life to ransom the world from death in the First Adam.

This is how Paul's Gospel makes good news out of Messianic death, removing forever the stigma of disappointment and crushed hope related to the crucifixion.

Paul makes the cross to be the testimony and proof of God's love to all (not just the Jew). He makes the bad news of Messiah's death to be the Good News of His unique Gospel. The Jews were the first people to receive The Kingdom, not the only people. Now, all who believe receive The Gift of Life,

The Pentecostal Apostles had discovered a prediction of death for Messiah in the Scripture of the Prophets, but the only cause they found was the rejection by His people.

This unbelief was the sin that killed The Messiah. Jesus had died because of the sins of His own people.

Death had crushed the hope of the Disciples; now resurrection revives a hope for the Apostles.

Paul was not a Pentecostal Apostle. He never knew Jesus in the flesh. He never expected Jesus to save Jerusalem. He was never disappointed by the Crucifixion. Therefore, the Resurrection could not revive his faith.

Paul found a reason to believe in Genesis long before Moses and the Jewish prophets. Paul's gospel is Good News in the death of Christ because The Messiah is The Son of Adam as well as The Son of David. Jesus had already given this cause to explain His death but His disciples never understood.

Paul cleared up the Mystery of Christ by putting death on the agenda for Messiah when Adam fell into death. This gave new significance to the resurrection because The Messiah was also to be a life giving Adam.

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