

Jesus Juva

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CHRISTOLOGICAL TITLES

LESSON SEVEN

MESSIAH

"It's Friday, but Sunday's Comin'! <<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/13295a.htm>>"

Painted on the president's chair at the Constitutional Convention, assembled at the Pennsylvania State House in Philadelphia, was a brilliantly engraved sun. Though George Washington distinguished the seat by his presence, directing the representatives that would incorporate a new nation, one delegate's attention was often affixed not on the face of the presiding officer but on the painting adorning his throne. During dull moments of the legislative process he would debate if the sun was rising or setting, for the orange cast lent itself to either persuasion. The discussion on the disposition of the sun ceased on the day the document was signed, September 17, 1787, when Benjamin Franklin declared, "I have often and often in the course of the session, and the vicissitudes of my hope and fears as to its issue, looked at that sun behind the President without being able to tell whether it was rising or setting: But now at length I have the happiness to know that it is rising and

not a setting sun." A morning sun for Franklin was assured that with Constitution in hand the future of the nation and the ideals on which it predicated itself would come to fruition.

Converts who believe that Jesus is the Messiah dwell in the Messianic Age. A time in which one will always live beneath the serenity of the morning sun, for despite the abrasions of daily existence the future can only be brighter.

The word "messiah" comes from the Hebrew verb "mashach" which means "to anoint;" therefore, "the Messiah" is "the Anointed One." An individual who obtained the office of priest, prophet, or king was considered to be an Anointed One for he held a special position of leadership in the community.

The first century Christian writers translated the Hebrew word for Messiah into Greek as "Christ," which similarly means "the Anointed One." In an extremely short progression of time Christ became the proper name of Jesus, recorded as "Jesus Christ." This was underscored by the fact that Jesus was confessed as holding all three offices of the Messiah: priest, prophet, king. The formal rendering of "Jesus the Christ" was ascribed to obscurity.

It can be ascertained that the church realized Jesus Christ was the Messiah as outlined in the substance of the preaching of both Peter and Paul. Peter, in his first sermon, concluded, "Let the entire house of Israel know with certainty that God has made him both Lord and Messiah, this Jesus whom you crucified." (Acts 2:36) Paul, in his sermon to the church in Thessalonica, professed, "This is the Messiah, Jesus whom I am proclaiming to you." (Acts 17:3) It can be affirmed from these discourses that the followers of Jesus always recognized him as the Messiah during his public ministry, which became universally pronounced after the Resurrection. Though, the recognition by the Christians and Hebrews as to the interpretation of the role of the Messiah differed in perspective. The conflicting views were a point of such severe contention that it resulted in the public execution of Jesus.

For a millennium and a half the Jews consigned ascending roles to the Messiah, all of which would be consummated upon his enthronement. A few short months into his preaching and teaching and healing ministry among the people of Galilee it became capaciously obvious to the Jewish aristocracy that the carpenter from Nazareth was not the expected Messiah. He, who had such a popular following, would be denied residency in Jerusalem. Thus, the plot began and the player Judas came to the forefront.

The roles assigned to the Messiah were numerous, only three need be examined, one for each nail pounded into his flesh securing his fate, eliminating one more scandalous imposter. The three of greatest significance are as follows: The Jews had differing perspectives on the place of the Gentiles in the Messianic Age, but all were discriminatory. They were either to be eliminated, subjugated, or enlightened, none of which promoted acceptance. On this issue, like so many others, Jesus was inflammatory for he accepted the Gentiles into the kingdom of God, demonstrated by his befriending the Samaritans. The Messiah was to restore Jerusalem, affording it as the centerpiece of the universe. Countering this Jesus spoke of the temple being destroyed, not one stone will be lie upon another. The most important concept of the Jewish Messianic idea was that of nationalism. The Messiah would come as a king in the image of David, conquering and casting out the Roman occupiers and bringing!

forth all nations unto Israel. It was most apparent to all that Jesus did not fulfill this expectation, as he venomously rejected the being a champion crusader for his was to be a kingdom of peace.

Jesus was esteemed by the commoner for his message of love, peace, and acceptance, his willingness to listen and the wisdom by which he taught. For the Pharisees, the legal overseers of the land, he was a menace who misguided the populace, threatening the established order. Nationalism was such a driving force that between 67 and 37 B.C.E., before the emergence of Herod the Great, no fewer than 150,000 Jewish men perished in Palestinian uprisings. After the death of Herod in 4 C.E., Palestine was incorporated into the Roman Empire only to inflame the resistance movement. The last "great revolt," during the years of 132 to 135 C.E., was commanded by Bar Kochba, a Zealot. It was for over a century a tense and volatile political landscape. The majority of the insurrections were led by the Zealots, the party to which Judas belonged. As a Zealot he was a willing partner to conspire with the Sanhedrin to condemn Jesus, creating a new opportunity for a Davidic Messiah who would arrive triumphant on a flaming chariot.

Jesus, versed in the scriptures, a student of history, and certainly attuned to the volatile political climate, chose to remain silent on his messianic self-understanding. He knew to proclaim himself as the Messiah would bring forth the title of king and violent hostilities would ensue. Rarely during public encounters did he acknowledge this title on his part. Only a few instances are recorder; such as, when Andrew met Jesus he rushed to find Peter his brother with the claim, "We have found the Messiah." (Jn 1:41) Correspondingly, the Samaritan woman when encountering Jesus was able to attest, "I know the Messiah is coming." (Jn 4:25) Notwithstanding Jesus self-inflicted silence, the Sanhedrin could ascertain his proposed place in history, enjoining them to halt it on a cross.

Jesus was the antithesis of what Jewish scholars anticipated the Messiah would champion. Peace versus war. Inclusive instead of exclusive. Healing rather than judgmental. Spiritual not materialistic. Forgiveness opposing condemnation. Uniting counterbalancing divisive. As the Messiah he ushered in the Messianic Age in which we presently reside, realizing that one day, we know not neither the day nor the hour, creation will be restored as Jesus envisioned it, not as the sages of Judaism sought.

On the first day of my theology classes Dr. Phillip Wogaman, who years later became President Clinton's pastor, asked us what the central theme of the Bible was. In so doing he got the expected answers - love, forgiveness, salvation, grace, eternal life. Understandably, before asking the question, he knew he would not hear the word he favored. He then told the aspiring theologians seated in rows that the central theme of the Bible was "hope." The Bible is a book of hope. Hope because God always offers something new in the way of forgivingness, redemption, healing, understanding, meaning, direction, liberation. If one has faith then the tomorrows are always alive with a host of new possibilities - that is hope. The status of hope is to live in the Messianic Age and to believe in the coming of the Messiah who will make all things new, restoring us afresh to the Garden. Amidst the briars of this day we live with certainty the roses will bloom - this is hope. This lecture was a!

theological watershed in my life that transformed me and has given me a mantra to live by. When asked, I always reply the message of the Bible is "hope."

In World War II, "D-Day" meant the day the operation is to begin. The exact date was often unknown, thus it was designated as "D." When the date was affixed for purposes of secrecy the demarcation date was still referred to in communications as "D-Day." Since the Normandy invasion of France on June 6, 1944 is best known, "D-Day" has come to incorrectly symbolize that single event alone. "V-Day" was used to note the day of victory. Again, the anonymous "V" since the exact date can seldom be determined. When victory was ascertained, as in World War II, the designation became "V-E Day" for victory in Europe on May 8, 1945 and "V-J Day" for victory over Japan on August 15, 1945.

Both the Allies and the Axis powers knew that who ever prevailed on the beaches of Normandy in the first twenty-four hours would win the war. It would then be just how much anarchy must be endured until "V-Day" can be declared. No one knew how many months, how many battles, how many deaths, how many ruined villages would be counted before the Allies flew the stars and stripes over Berlin as they did at Normandy on the evening of D-Day. Irrefutable on the sandy beaches of Normandy was that "V-Day" would be an Allied celebration.

As Christians, in the Messianic Age, we live between "D-Day" and "V-Day." In the name of Jesus God invaded the world of Satan. With the discovery of the empty tomb the fellowship lead by the twelve knew that Christ had conquered. Jesus is truly the expected Messiah. The only question that remained was when he would return with the sounding of trumpets on a chariot of white horses to proclaim victory over Satan and the demonic forces of the cosmos. The disciples were not alone with the Apostle Paul in often thinking it would be in their life time. We know better, for we still wait. But we wait assured of victory. That is the hope of the Gospels.

We are still in the midst of a cosmic struggle of the angels of darkness battling the angels adorned in the white robes of martyrdom. It is truly a battle of unfathomable proportions. And though Christians are ever hesitant to admit it publicly, in reality it is a true cosmic battle and often evil prevails. Is that not the nature of battles? We need not apologize for God with some lengthy explanation when suffering overwhelms; instead, Beelzebub and his satanic forces must be conceded as formidable enemies to righteousness. We cannot explain untold world suffering except to acknowledge that Satan is a ructions force. But as those who fought their way through the hedgerows of France on the way to Rhine, enlisted in the service of Christ one day Satan shall be cast into the fiery sea. We know not when the armistice will be signed, or theologically the Day of Armageddon will be upon us, but we do continue forth in hope, knowing that victory has been secured.

I read section of a Good Friday sermon preached at Mt. Carmel Baptist Church, an African-American church in Philadelphia. There were seven orators that afternoon, with the eldest honored by mounted the pulpit last. The sermon became another watershed moment in my life, providing a biblical guidepost that always assures me of my security in Christ. He preached, "It was Friday and Mary was cryin' her eyes out. The disciples were runnin' in every direction, like sheep without a shepherd, that was Friday, and Sunday's comin! It was Friday. The cynics were lookin' at the world and sayin', 'As things have been so they shall be. You can't change anything in this world; you can't change anything.' But those cynics didn't know that it was only Friday. Sunday's comin! It was Friday! And on Friday those forces that oppress the poor and make the poor to suffer were in control. But that was Friday! Sunday's comin! It was Friday, and on Friday Pilate thought he had washed his hands of!

a lot of trouble. The Pharisees were struttin' around and pokin' each other in the ribs. They thought they were back in charge of things, but they didn't know that it was only Friday! Sunday's comin!'"

Each day for us is Friday with its pain and sorrow, heartaches and disappointments. It would cause us undue consternation and despair expect for the Gospel message of hope given to us by our Messiah - "It's Friday, but Sunday's Comin!'"

Soli Deo Gloria,
Ron Love