



CONTEXT FOR THE CHRIST EVENT:

## **Messianism III: Second Temple Models**

THROUGHOUT THE FIRST TEMPLE ERA in Israel, the metaphors for the “anointed ones” — prophet, priest, king, ruler, Tabernacle/Temple — were sustained to foreshadow the coming of YHWH as human.<sup>1</sup> However, since these “promises” were considered irrevocable, the people felt little obligation to adhere to the Mosaic covenant. The Babylonian exile shattered these popular assumptions. During and after the Exile, the Israelites concluded that their continued integrity depended on obedience to the Torah. This led to numerous changes in the traditional messianic expectations during the Second Temple era and the accompanying Persian, Hellenistic, Hasmonean and Herodian periods.

### **Prophet**

After the Exile the prophetic office was abandoned and the anointment of prophets was discontinued. However, in the Dead Sea Scrolls there is a reference to “the prophet of the Last Days.”<sup>2</sup>

### **Priest**

“In post-exilic times, the high priest, filling the place formerly occupied by the king, is spoken of as ‘ha-Kohen ha-Mashia’ (the anointed priest . . .).”<sup>3</sup>

“The Testament of Levi . . . shows a unique conception of the Messiah. He is not, as in the Testament of Judah . . . , a descendant of David, but a priestly king of the tribe of Levi.”<sup>4</sup>

“ . . . [T]he Messiah conception of the Testament of Levi is easily accounted for; the author expects that the future Savior will be a prince of the reigning priestly house of the Maccabees.”<sup>5</sup>

## King

“Haggai and Zechariah see in Zerubbabel the promised ‘sprout of David’ . . .”<sup>6</sup>

“The oldest description of the eschatological king is in the third book of the Sibylline Oracles (c. 140 B.C.E.) and in the Vision of Seventy Shepherds in the Book of Enoch . . . However the prevalence of the Davidic Messiah in the apocryphal literature became common from the time when the Maccabean Aristobulus I accepted the title of a king. This was seen as a usurpation of the rights of the family of David; hence as a reaction, the Davidic Messiah received his central importance as can be seen from the Psalms of Solomon written approximately in 63 B.C.E.”<sup>7</sup>

## Ruler

“ . . . Deutero-Isaiah heralded Cyrus as the favorite of God, the hero called by God to introduce the new era of universal bliss.”<sup>8</sup>

“ . . . the Jewish contemporaries of Alexander the Great, dazzled by his glorious achievements, hailed him as the divinely appointed deliverer, the inaugurator of the period of universal peace promised by the Prophets.”<sup>9</sup>

## Heavenly Messiah

“ . . . [In the Book of Enoch, of the first century BC,] the Messiah is called ‘the Son of Man,’ and is described as an angelic being, his countenance resembling a man’s, and as occupying a seat in heaven beside the Ancient of Days . . .”<sup>10</sup>

## Earthly Messiah

“God has called Israel [= ‘ruling with God’] for the realization of His purpose toward man. Israel, and not an individual, is ‘the servant of God’ (Isa xlii. 1-6, xlix. 1-6, l. 4-9, lii. 13 – liii. 12), through whom the regeneration of mankind will be accomplished, who will spread the true religion among all nations, convert all men into willing servants of God, and lead all tongues to confess Him (xlv. 23).”<sup>11</sup>

Philo Judaeus (30 BCE – 45 CE) was a renowned Jewish philosopher who lived in Alexandria, Egypt, and was a contemporary of Jesus of Nazareth. Philo believed that “[t]he plan of God is to bring about in due time a perfect state of society which should remain perfect. . . .

“First, there will be a reunion of the exiled. . . .

“Second, this reunion of the exiled will be followed by national prosperity in the homeland to which they will have returned. . . .

“Third, following the reunion of the exiled and the establishment of national prosperity there will be a reign of peace between men and men and between men and beasts. . . .

“But then Philo dwells upon a fourth characteristic feature, and that is the divine punishment of the unrepented enemies of Israel. . . .

“The condition that will bring about the Messianic age is repentance. . . .

“As in native Judaism so also in Philo the Messianic age is conceived not only as an age of national deliverance and national prosperity but also as an age during which Judaism will become a universal religion. . . .

“In short, in the Messianic age, according to Philo, the gentiles will become full proselytes, and not merely ‘God-fearers.’ . . .

“This is the Messianic state [of Israel] which will be governed by the Law of Moses [Torah], a Law described by him elsewhere as being based upon democracy and equality.”<sup>12</sup>

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## Endnotes

1. See “Messianism II: First-Temple Models,” *Outlook*, Context for the Christ Event (2006.09).
2. See *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, CD-ROM ed. (1997), s.v. Harold Louis Ginsberg, “Messiah.”
3. *Jewish Encyclopedia*, s.v. Joseph Jacobs and Moses Bottenwieser, “Messiah,” at [www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=510&letter=M&search=messiah](http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/view.jsp?artid=510&letter=M&search=messiah), p. 2.
4. *Ibid.*, p. 12.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
7. Ginsberg, “Messiah.”
8. Jacobs and Bottenwieser, “Messiah,” p. 7.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 6.
12. Harry Austryn Wolfson, *Philo: Foundations of Religious Philosophy in Judaism, Christianity and Islam*, vol. 2 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1975), pp. 408-425.