



CONTEXT FOR THE CHRIST EVENT:

Messianism V: Claimants

FROM THE TIME of their exile in Babylon, the Jews believed that God would liberate them from bondage, return them to the Promised Land, restore the Temple to YHWH's presence, and bring peace to the world through the leadership of an anointed one (*mashiach* = messiah). At an even deeper level, anointment with oil signified the fulfillment and conclusion of a covenant. Thus, Hosea metaphorically declared, "... [T]hey do make a covenant with the Assyrians, and oil is carried into Egypt" (Hosea 12:1).

In ancient Israel anointment of a person for the purpose of fulfilling the covenant involved the prophet (e.g., Isaiah 61:1), the priest (e.g., Exodus 40:13) and the king (e.g., 1 Samuel 15:1). As prophet (Matthew 13:53-58), priest (Hebrew 4:14, 15) and king (Matthew 21:1-5), Jesus Christ was anointed to fulfill the divine covenant(s). This he accomplished in his life, death and resurrection.

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Meanwhile, there were interim messiahs such as Cyrus the Great, king of Persia (Isaiah 45:1), who liberated the children of Israel from exile and authorized them to rebuild the Temple. Later, Herod the Great (37-4 BCE) claimed to be the Jewish messiah when he rebuilt the Second Temple. Numerous other Messianic claimants assumed that they were anointed either to maintain the imperial cult of Rome or to liberate the Jews from domination by the Roman imperial cult. However, all these claimants were diversions from the life, role and accomplishments of the true Messiah.

See Further:

1. Glenn Miller, "Messianic Expectations in 1st Century Judaism," at www.christian-thinktank.com/messiah.html.
2. Jona Lendering, "Messianic Claimants," at www.livius.org/men-mh/messiah/messianic_claimantsoo.html.

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