

Why Would The Jewish Messiah Have to Come Twice?

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To some it appears that followers of Yeshua (the Jewish way to say Jesus) are deflecting, if not avoiding the “painful” truth by believing in “the Second Coming”. “Why would it be necessary for Messiah to come twice?” The doubtful ask, “Didn’t He do it right the first time? And if he is the Jewish Messiah, as you claim, where in the Jewish Scriptures does it say anything about two comings of the Messiah?”

Two Pictures of Messiah: To Reign, and Yet, To Be Rejected: The issue of “two comings” of the Messiah is neither non-Jewish nor particularly unusual to Jewish thought. For two millennia the rabbinical community has been discussing, pondering and conjecturing the possible ways to resolve paradoxical and seemingly contradictory references to the Messiah in the Jewish Scriptures. On one hand, the Scriptures present a picture of the Messiah reigning: “The kings of the earth take their stand against the LORD and His Messiah . . . The LORD laughs at them . . . saying, “I have installed My King on Zion” (Psalm 2:2-4). “Behold, days are coming, says the LORD, that I will raise up for David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper . . .” (Jeremiah 23:5). In these portions, and in many others (Genesis 49:10; Numbers 24:17; Psalm 45:6,7; 110:1-7; Isaiah 2:1-4; 11:10; Zechariah 14:3,4, 16; etc.) Messiah is pictured as ruling and reigning over the enemies of God. This is a time of peace and joy, Israel is the chief of nations again, and the Lord and the Davidic throne are gloriously established in Jerusalem.

But alongside of this exalted scene, there is also the picture of Messiah rejected: “And the Messiah will be cut off and will have nothing” (Daniel 9:26). “He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to Him, nothing in His appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was a man of sorrows and familiar with suffering. Surely, He took upon Himself our griefs and sorrows, yet we considered Him stricken by God and afflicted by Him. We did not esteem Him . . . Who of His generation considered Him? For He was cut off from the land of the Living for the transgressions of my people to whom the stroke was due” (Isaiah 53:2-8). “I am a worm and not a man, scorned by men and despised by the people. All who see Me mock me and hurl insults . . . you lay me at the door of death . . . They have pierced My hands and my feet . . .” (Psalm 22: 6-16).

In these portions and many others (Isaiah 49:7; 50:6; Psalm 69:4-22; Zech. 11:12; etc.) Messiah is seen as rejected and suffering in innocence for the sins of others, even as Israel is in spiritual blindness and judgment. Two different works of Messiah are presented: (1) He will suffer and die for sins; (2) He will reign and rule in peace. These two, contrasting Scriptural pictures of the Messiah have brought about various theories of how the Messiah

would be both reigning, yet rejected; a celebrated victor, while also a sacrificial victim.

There are many ideas about Messiah quite prevalent in rabbinical literature. * There are the ideas of a 'Resurrected Messiah'; a 'Leper Messiah'; Two Messiahs ('Messiah Son of Joseph', that will innocently suffer as Joseph suffered innocently, and 'Messiah Son of David', who will reign as David reigned); a 'Beggar Messiah'; etc. Traditional Jewish scholarship has worked to understand these two very different pictures of the Jewish Messiah.

Two Comings of Messiah Revealed: Hosea the Prophet speaks to the subject as well, as he presents God speaking to wayward Israel: "Then I will go back to My place until they admit their guilt and seek my face; in their misery they will earnestly seek Me" (Hosea 5:15). We see God offended at Israel's sins and "going back to [His] place [Heaven] until they admit guilt." The implication is that when they "admit their guilt", then He will return to them. This is clearly stated in Israel's response to the Lord's leaving: "Let us acknowledge the LORD; let us press on to acknowledge Him. As surely as the sun rises, He will appear; He will come to us like the winter rains, like the spring rains that water the earth" (Hosea 6:3). Though He had left, they had confidence He would also certainly reappear. There was hope in the Lord's statement that their admission of guilt would bring about His return. In light of all this discussion it should surprise no one that the Messiah Himself would come and clarify these apparently contradictory pictures of His work. Similar to the portion in Hosea, Yeshua says to Israel: "You shall not see me again until you say 'Blessed is He that comes in the name of the Lord'" (Matthew 23:39).

Following Yeshua's death, burial, resurrection, and ascension (going back to His place), Peter proclaims to the Jewish crowds in Jerusalem: "Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped away, that the times of refreshing may come from the Lord, and that He may send the Messiah, who has been appointed for you, even Jesus. He must remain in Heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as He promised long ago in the holy prophets" (Acts 3:19-21). The New Covenant revelation regarding the two works of Messiah is not new. It is a clarification and fulfillment of what the Jewish Scriptures prophesied: that Messiah would come to die for our sins, be raised from the dead, go back to His place, and return when our people acknowledge their guilt and call out to Him. As Joseph was at first rejected by his brothers, then later accepted; and also as Moses was first rejected by Israel, then later was accepted, so also Messiah would be rejected and then later accepted. The return of the Messiah is mentioned many times in the New Covenant (Matthew 24-25; I Thessalonians 1:10; 4:13-5:9; Revelation 22, etc.). This is because the Jewish scriptures will be fulfilled in every detail. Just as Messiah had to suffer and die for sins, so He will also return to reign and bring peace.

The Jewish Scriptures predict that one day our people "will look unto Me whom they have pierced, and mourn for Him as one mourns for an only son" at His Second coming (Zechariah 12:10). So look to Him now, trust in the atonement He made by His death for your sins, and receive the new life that He gives to all who come to Him!

*Sukkot 52a,b; Gen. Rabbah LXXV, 6; XCV; XCIX, 2; S.S. Rabbah II, 4; Num. Rabbah XIV, 1;

Sefer Sippurim Noraim 9a-b, 10b, etc.