

QUANTOCK MINISTRIES

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*A Bible teaching and preaching ministry
for the Christian community*

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THE MESSIANIC AGENDA

In John 20 v 31 the apostle points out that he was inspired to write his Gospel “that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ”. Since those days, Christians have referred to the Saviour as the Lord Jesus Christ: Lord to denote His deity; Jesus to denote His humanity; Christ to denote His messianic responsibility. The words Christ (Greek) and Messiah (Hebrew) mean one and the same person and duty. However, it is that third element of His name, Christ, that has become the banner under which we are identified. We are *Christians*, followers of the *Christ*, and our whole worldview is known as *Christianity*. That inevitably means that we are a messianic people; we believe in Jesus as the Christ, now and in the future, fulfilling all that the Bible tells us of His complete and eternal role as the Messiah. This messianic outlook should be our main preoccupation, for the Lord’s messianic work is the Gospel in all its fullness.

Over the centuries Christians have developed different views of the way the Messiah will carry out His duty. We refer to them as “messianic schools of thought”. In the more traditional denominations, a widespread view (amillennialism) is that the Church has replaced Israel, taking over the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament. This implies that those promises of a bright future under the Messiah are being fulfilled now through the Church by the work of the Holy Spirit, and that there will not be another messianic age in the future. Following the Reformation, there was a development of this idea (postmillennialism), suggesting that this messianic era under the influence of the Gospel will become so powerful that the world will experience a golden period before the Messiah’s return. Then, just over two hundred years ago, there was a return by many to the view of the Lord’s messianic role which was generally held in the early years of the Church (premillennialism). This states that the Church has not replaced Israel; Israel will be restored to its historic land; the church age will end in a world-wide judgement (the tribulation); Israel will once again have a central role; and the Messiah will return as King of kings, reigning for one thousand years on David’s throne.

I have taken a broadly premillennial view for most of my adult life, but I have sought not to be too controversial while we have the Gospel to preach and the world to influence. However, as I have expressed quite often in recent years, the Holy Spirit seems to be telling us the Church age is drawing to a close. While that should give an urgency to our Gospel work and witness, it also seems to me to be important that we as a messianic people should give the world a clear idea of what happens before, during and after the judgement at the end of the age (Ezekiel 33 v 1 – 9). For this reason, I feel now it is time to be rather more open in sharing why I take the view I do regarding the messianic agenda.

The need for messianic involvement in the future of the creation is quite simple to understand. A perfect physical and material universe was brought into being by the one true, eternal and triune God, who is spirit. Planet Earth was the central component of that creation, with humanity created for fellowship with God and for stewardship of His creation. Humanity was not created to do this robotically, but with freedom of will in choosing how to respond to God. This is no different to the creation of human offspring. Children are not clones of their parents, however similar in some ways, but they have minds and wills of their own. As they develop their own identities, they can cause their parents many tears and many joys. Thus, we do not need to ask why God, the divine Father (Ephesians 3 v 14 – 15), didn’t stop human rebelliousness, because if He had done the consequence would be that we were reduced to mere unthinking puppets. God made us to be far more than that, ultimately to love and serve Him because we want to. Spiritual beings, angels, were created before humans, also with the capacity of choice. Rebellion broke out both in the angelic orders and in the hearts of the first humans (“the Fall”, also known as “original sin”), all at the behest of the foremost created spiritual being, called Satan or Lucifer. The result of these rebellions led to contamination of the whole of creation (“the Curse”). This contamination has caused catastrophic conditions throughout the history of humanity, and in the physical creation as well. The whole messianic purpose, therefore, is to restore every part of creation to a perfect state; nothing less would be appropriate for the righteous and perfect Creator.

Because God is perfectly just, the issue is that He can only operate on the basis of legal justice. As the rebellions were a direct attack on the moral sovereignty of the Creator, punishment had to follow, or justice would not be seen to be done. We can see that the whole of His creation was constructed on a legal basis – the fixed laws of physics, mathematics, time, space, energy, gravity, etc. If this were not so, the creation just couldn’t work, and nor could our

human societies. The burden upon the Messiah is to legally remedy the whole of the damage. For that to be effective, and justice done, a price must be paid – redemption, in a word. Of course, the action at the heart of the Gospel is that Jesus paid that price – His precious blood – and that price is clearly sufficient, as explained in Colossians 1 v 19 – 20. For each of us, our own rebelliousness towards God and His righteous requirements is covered by our genuine and repentant acceptance that Jesus paid the price for our personal forgiveness and consequent peace with God. It is only the fallen angels and unrepentant humans who are beyond redemption, critically by their own choice. Even the physical creation, which had no choice in the matter, will be redeemed by the Messiah (Romans 8 v 19 – 23).

And so, the messianic redemption must apply to “all things”, as Colossians 1 v 20 makes quite clear. In view of this foundational biblical teaching, the messianic work of Jesus must be completed in all areas of God’s creation. If it is not, Satan will have achieved some measure of victory, and that would imply that the redemption price, the blood of Jesus, is somehow insufficient – two serious heresies! It seems the heart of our problem is the translation of the word “new” in scriptures such as 2 Corinthians 5 v 17, 2 Peter 3 v 13, Revelation 21 v 1, 2 and 5. The Greek word is not “neos”, meaning “brand-new”, but “kainos”, meaning “renewed”. Kainos refers to a family of words which should make things clear: redemption, resurrection, restoration, renewal, revival, renaissance, release, rebuild, etc. This is of central importance in this matter, because if the Messiah’s agenda is simply to create something brand-new – a completely new entity – He will not be completing the total restoration of that which was broken and marred. A brand-new creation suggests making the best of a bad job – the redemption of elements of the original creation having “failed” and been abandoned. In other words, the messianic duty of Jesus is not to replace the old with something new, but to put right the old, having paid the price. Revelation 21 v 5 should be translated: “I am renewing everything”.

We will finish by looking at four areas in need of the Messiah’s redemptive and restoration activity.

1. Israel.

The nation of Israel was created by God’s sovereign choice (Deuteronomy 7 v 6 – 9) and sealed for ever by His unconditional covenant with Abraham, his descendants, and their promised land. Not only was this relationship repeated over and over in the Old Testament, but the Jews were told that they would be set aside for a period following their rejection of the Christ. They were also promised that they would be restored when the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. There are so many relevant references, but Jeremiah 23 v 7 – 8 and 33 v 23 – 26 are two great examples. The Lord Jesus Himself said that “This generation [race] will not pass away” (Matthew 24 v 34), and Romans chapter 11 could not be clearer regarding the future of Israel, especially v 26 where “saved” means “preserved”. Nowhere does scripture say that God has reneged on His covenant with Abraham, or replaced and abandoned Israel. Therefore, a central part of the messianic agenda of the Lord Jesus has to be Israel’s renewal, clearly on which He is already engaged now, and has been for some time.

2. The Church Age (or The Age of the Bride).

From Pentecost to the Rapture there is a second unconditional covenant (John 3 v 16, Romans 10 v 9 – 13), open to all, Jew and Gentile, thus preparing a bride through the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 5 v 25 – 27, 1 John 3 v 2 – 3). Jesus will continue His messianic role by returning for her, having prepared her heavenly abode (John 14 v 2 – 3, 1 Thessalonians 4 v 13 – 18, Isaiah 26 v 20 – 21). All this indicates the renewing of each member until the bride receives her full redemption (Luke 21 v 28), a process which will be completed when she stands before His throne (2 Corinthians 5 v 10, Jude v 24 – 25), to be followed by the wedding of the Lamb (Revelation 19 v 6 – 8).

3. Life on earth.

What a wonderful creation was Planet Earth! We react in despair at what humanity has made of it through violence, greed, evil of all kinds, pollution, and a total lack of stewardship responsibility. And yet the Bible is full of promises about a glorious future when Jesus returns to reign on David’s throne, and there is a wonderful cleansing operation throughout the globe. Under His thousand-year rule there will be utopia politically, environmentally, socially and spiritually, as God originally intended. So, the millennial reign must be an essential part of the messianic agenda, for without that happening the restoration of all things just wouldn’t be complete.

4. Eternity.

1 Corinthians 15 v 25 – 26 tells us that the final enemy that requires the Messiah’s attention is death, the consequence of Adam and Eve’s original sin in the garden. Of course, this part of the process of redemption started with the Lord’s resurrection, and will continue with our resurrection at the Rapture, but we have been promised eternal life. The messianic *coup de grâce* will be the overcoming of death, thus assuring us that we cannot be robbed of our eternal life. With death finally abolished there will also be the abolition of time, for the concept of time will be meaningless if there is no death or even the process of death (Revelation 1 v 18). That will then be eternal glory for each member of the bride, but glory especially for our wonderful Redeemer.