

THE EXHORTER'S CALL

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.”
Hebrews 10:25

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RICK WAGNON

THE MESSIANIC CONTROVERSY

The Bible is composed of two main sections: the Old Testament and the New Testament. Unfortunately, many people make such a distinction between the two that the Bible becomes disconnected within their minds. The truth is that the Bible is one continuous story from beginning to end. The Old Testament contains the promise of a coming Messiah (first predicted in *Genesis 3:15*) while the New Testament details the fulfillment of that promise (compare to *Galatians 4:4*). Many misunderstandings arise among modern day Jews and Christians based on the role of one key figure: Jesus Christ.

Within the pages of the Old Testament (Tanakh) are numerous prophecies concerning the promised Messiah. Many of these we find fulfilled in the New Testament. In *Luke 24:27*, we find that Jesus Christ expounded on these prophecies concerning Himself “beginning with Moses and all the prophets” after His resurrection from the dead.

So where's the controversy? Why is Jesus accepted by the Christians as the Christ, and by Messianic Jews as the Messiah, but rejected by other streams of Judaism? It is because the Word of God cannot be broken, as Jesus stated in *John 10:35*, and there are still Messianic prophecies that must yet be fulfilled. Utilizing Occam's razor, we can pare away various arguments for/against Jesus Christ's prophetic fulfillments and arrive at one central theme upon which all Messianic controversy hinges... Jerusalem.

Jerusalem does not immediately come to mind as a Messianic issue for most Christians. This is because, unlike the Jews, they generally do not have a solid understanding of the Old Testament. Why? Well, they have been correctly taught that they are not under the Mosaic Law of the Old Testament but that their salvation is by grace,

through faith, as a gift of God (*Ephesians 2:8*). Unfortunately, many Christians have taken that to mean that the Old Testament can be discarded. In so doing, they make the same mistake as Jews that reject the authority of the New Testament and disregard it. The truth is that ALL scripture is inspired by God and is profitable for doctrinal understanding (*2 Timothy 3:16*). No one can understand the significance of either testament without a solid grasp of the other.

The Messiah must reign on earth from Jerusalem as foretold by numerous Old Testament prophets (e.g. *Isaiah 24:23*). Some within the Church have tried to “spiritualize” this issue and allegorize this reign as Christ's kingdom in the life of the believer. Some have gone so far as to say the Church has replaced the Jews. This is a great error simply because they “know not” the Old Testament scriptures (*Mark 12:24*). Jesus warned the Church against this heresy in *Revelation 2:9* and again in *Revelation 3:9* while the Apostle Paul went to great lengths in *Romans 11* to keep Gentile Christians from falling into this deceptive line of thought.

The spiritual kingdom of Christ certainly exists within the believer. Nevertheless, the Messiah must literally reign from earthly Jerusalem. According to New Testament scripture, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ will result in the Millennial Reign fulfillment of these prophecies (*Revelation 20*). However, those that disregard Jesus Christ and the New Testament are primed to be deceived by another prophesied “messiah,” the false messiah known as Anti-Christ. He will claim to bring a lasting “peace” to Israel and will be widely hailed. World events indicate that his day is rapidly approaching. Jerusalem will soon take center stage in the final Messianic controversy.