

What Sort of Messiah?

Call to Worship

Psalm 68:3-4 may the righteous be glad and rejoice before God; may they be happy and joyful.

Sing to God, sing in praise to his name, extol him who rides on the clouds; rejoice before him – his name is the Lord.

Prayer

Lord, help me to worship today. Forgive me for those of my thoughts and actions that have built a wall, stunted my praise, and stolen my joy. Give me a fresh revelation of who you are, how much you love me and what you have done for me.

With heart and voice I praise you and lift up your name. In the name of Jesus. Amen

Song: Glorify You Alone (by Shannon and Sion Alford)

1. Who is this King of glory, beautiful and matchless one?
Who is this King so holy? Every knee will bow at His throne.
Jesus, the Lamb of God, Saviour and King.
You alone are seated on the throne of heaven. Glorify, Glorify, You alone.
2. Who is this King of mercy, wonderful and full of grace?
Who is this King so worthy, nations fear and kingdoms praise?
3. You are the King that saves us, powerful and full of love.
You are the King that gave us life with every drop of Your blood.

© 2008 GWC Publishing (Admin. by Integrity Music), Used by permission CCLI 509237

Prayer of Intercession

As we pray at the beginning of this year, keep in mind the words of Minnie Haskins;

I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year, "Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown." And he replied, "Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."

Heavenly Father, in these early days of the year we pray for our world as it lurches into 2026. My hopes are that your light will shine in places of darkness. My hope is for peace in the world conflicts such as Ukraine and Russia, Taiwan and China, North and South Korea, Iran and just about everybody else, India and Pakistan, and so many other hotspots.

Lord, I know that peace between nations cannot come without peace in our hearts, the peace that passes our understanding, the peace that comes when the Spirit of God lives in us. And so, I pray for Christians around the world, that the witness of their lives will have an impact in their churches, in their communities, and in their nations. And I pray for Barnabas Aid which stands beside so many persecuted Christians. Lord, hear my prayer for peace.

What Sort of Messiah?

Lord, I pray for peace for my brothers and sisters in my church, your church this year. I pray for those who face uncertainty about what the next days, weeks and months hold for them. I pray for any who have decisions to make, fears to overcome, relationships to repair, financial difficulties, or health worries as they and I stand at the gate of the year.

And all this I pray knowing that you love your people, you live in us, and bring us peace and joy through our Saviour, Jesus. Amen

Song: AHB 464 “Put your Trust in God” (by Paul Gerhardt)

1. Put thou thy trust in God, in duty's path go on;
Walk in his strength with faith and hope, so shall thy work be done.
Commit thy ways to him, thy works into his hands,
And rest on his unchanging word, who heaven and earth commands.
2. Though years on years roll on, his covenant shall endure;
Though clouds and darkness hide his path, the promised grace is sure.
Give to the winds thy fears; hope, and be undismayed:
God hears thy sighs and counts thy tears; God shall lift up thy head.
3. Through waves and clouds and storms his power will clear thy way:
Wait thou his time; so shall this night soon end in joyous day.
Leave to his sovereign sway to choose and to command;
So shalt thou, wondering, own his way, how wise, how strong his hand.

© public domain

Bible Reading:

- **Matthew 16:13-16** When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, “Who do people say the Son of Man is?” They replied, “Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets. “But what about you?” he asked, “Who do you say I am?” Simon Peter answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God”
- **Matthew 16:21-25** From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, the chief priests and the teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.
Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. “Never, Lord!” he said. This shall never happen to you!” Jesus turned and said to Peter, “Get behind me Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.

Message: “What Sort of Messiah”

An easy Bible Quiz question would be, “Who of the disciples first declared that Jesus was the Messiah?” We all know it was Peter, who was a bit of a “motor mouth” and the first to

What Sort of Messiah?

speak about most things. A bit harder perhaps is, “Where were they when he said this?” It was Caesarea Philippi, where Jesus was ministering for some time with his disciples in this northern part of Israel before making his way south on the final journey to Jerusalem.

This was the setting for Jesus raising the issue of his being the Messiah, and teaching and preparing his disciples for the months ahead when opposition would intensify and would lead to his death. So, he began with a seemingly innocuous question, “Who do people say I am?” The disciples shared a few rumours they had heard and then Jesus asked a personal and confronting question, “What about you, who do you say I am?” We are not told how long that question hung in the air, but it was Peter who answered, “You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.” And Jesus said that he had hit the nail on the head, but that hadn't come from Peter's own understanding, but from God the Father in heaven. Jesus then made some extraordinary statements/prophecies/promises to and about Peter. He would be the rock the church would be built on, he would be given the keys of the heaven and the power of “binding and loosing”, perhaps the announcing of guilt or innocence (and hence, I presume, all the jokes and stories about arriving at the gates of heaven and being ticked off the list by Saint Peter).

This must have been a highlight in Peter's life so far. All the more amazing for what happened perhaps a few days later. This time, Jesus tells them what the implications of being the Messiah really are, suffering, being killed, and being resurrected. Peter was shocked and remonstrated with Jesus saying, “Never! This shall never happen to you!” And then Jesus stunning reply, “Get behind me Satan. You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.” In Jesus good books one day and severely chastised the next! What was Peter thinking? He went from having the keys of the Kingdom, to being an emissary of hell! A spokesperson for God, to a mouthpiece of Satan! What he was coming to grips with was what God had revealed to him about the Messiah, and the concept of the Messiah which was deeply ingrained in his Jewish psyche. For all his life he had heard and learned that the Messiah would save the Jewish nation, would overthrow any oppressors, and restore the Jews to a unique God-serving nation. So, what Jesus was saying about suffering and dying just didn't make sense. The problem was that he had the wrong sort of Messiah.

We have the benefit of hindsight and know what eventually happened. We know that Jesus came and died for our sins. We know that he was resurrected and is a living Saviour. We know that this was not just for the Jews, but for the Gentiles, the rest of us, as well. But we can still have another sort of Messiah, one that has become deeply ingrained in us after years of life experience and even “cherry-picking” years of teaching and preaching.

So, what sort of Messiah do you (or I) have?

- An “instant coffee” Messiah, who answers when summoned to take care of any want we have, can be summonsed at any whim to provide an answer, solve a problem, or make something annoying or uncomfortable go away? We are of course urged by Jesus to ask (and keep on asking), to move mountains by faith, and to do even greater things than he did. But if we expect him to work to our timetable, it assumes our timing is superior to our sovereign

What Sort of Messiah?

God's timing. The reality is that sometimes we suffer, sometimes we wait. But always we are blessed, always God is teaching us something, always God's answers are perfect.

- A “Tiny Tim” Messiah? Remember Tiny Tim, the singer from the 60s and 70s who sang in his falsetto voice, “Tiptoe through the Tulips” (and a bit of useless trivia, he named one of his kids Tulip!)? A “Tiny Tim” Messiah makes us happy, skipping through the tulips, enjoying every moment of life with nothing sully our happy existence. But life is never like that. We experience sadness, grief, pain and suffering, hard decisions, relationship failures, depression. The list could go on. Even the most devout and faithful Christians are not happy every day. What we can expect is joy, which is a fruit of the Spirit, always embedded in our lives regardless of what happens (and that’s where the word happy comes from - it is dependent on what *happens*). Read the Beatitudes in Matthew chapter 5, which tells us who is “blessed” (a word translated a bit too simply as “happy” in the Good News Bible) and we learn that not in many of these situations where we are blessed would we normally think we are happy. Blessed are those who mourn, but they may not be “happy”. Blessed are the persecuted – blessed, even joyful, but maybe not happy.
- A “spare tyre” Messiah. Sometimes we relegate the Messiah to the boot of the car, only to be brought out in case of emergency. Most of life we think we can manage on our own, but occasionally in a crisis we get to praying for help and hope the Messiah will step in and save us - which is what saviour means isn't it? Having a Messiah like this is entirely back to front. We are followers of Jesus not the other way around.
- A “freezer” Messiah? Sometimes we keep Jesus in the freezer during the week and thaw him out for Sunday. It’s great to have Jesus there for worship, but it’s not always convenient to have him around on the other days of the week. This makes Jesus useful but not sovereign. Discipleship is not a part-time job.

So, what should my Messiah be like and what does he make me like?

- The Messiah gives me new life, the old has gone, the new has come (2 Corinthians 5:17). This is not a reconstruction of my old self, this is not me working on my faults, improving, and making myself acceptable to God. It's a new life, complete renewal, given by him, and only given by his suffering on the cross and by his resurrection, and it is a foretaste of being with him eternally.
- Jesus’ invitation and expectation is that I will follow him and be obedient to him. Never is my will elevated above his. Never are my work, my efforts, my triumphs for my glory, but for his. He will glorify me and bless me when I am obedient to him and serve him by loving and serving others.
- Jesus, the Messiah has an incredible love for not only me, but for the church. He is both the foundation (when the analogy is a building), and the head (when the analogy is a body), and he is delighted when the members of his body love and bear with each other and witness to the world. He is glorified and we are blessed.
- The Messiah never suggested there would be no suffering, in fact quite the opposite. In Matthew 16 there is much taking up of crosses

What Sort of Messiah?

and losing of lives. But his last words before the ascension makes discipleship a full-time job (“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.”) and he made a promise for the ages to come (“And surely I am with you always even to the end of the age.”).

Revisit the Messiah you have. Is he the One you find as you read God’s word? Is he the One you met when you gave your life to him? Or is he One you have modified a bit (as we tend to do) to make him fit more comfortably into your lifestyle? Refresh your understanding of who he is and what he has done. What joy that is!

Song: “O For a Closer Walk with God” (*W Cowper, S Townend*)

1. O for a closer walk with God, a calm and heavenly frame,
A light to shine upon the road that leads me to the Lamb.
2. Where is the blessedness I knew when I first saw the Lord?
Where is that soul-refreshing view of Jesus and His word?
3. O Fire of God, come burn in me, renew a holy passion,
Till Christ my deepest longing be my never-failing fountain,
My never-failing fountain.
4. What peaceful hours I once enjoyed, how sweet the memory still!
But they have left an aching void the world can never fill!
5. The dearest idol I have known, whate’er that idol be,
Help me tear it from Thy throne, and worship only Thee.
6. So shall my walk be close with God, calm and serene my frame;
So purer light shall mark the road that leads me to the Lamb.

© 2009 Thankyou Music Ltd, Used by permission CCLI 509237

Benediction

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you, and may your hand be securely in the hand of God. Amen

This service was prepared by Ron Tiller, HopeNet SA