

## Messianic Prophecy

Psalm 2:7, "You are my son; today I have become your father."

**Question:** Can I trust that Jesus is the Messiah God promised?

**Key Verses:** Psalm 22; Psa 118:22-29; Rev 2:27; 19:15

"You are my son; today I have become your father" (Psalm 2:7). Perhaps this sounds familiar and it should. God paraphrased this verse twice during Jesus' ministry. The first time was at his Baptism, launching Jesus into his ministry. The Holy Spirit accompanied God's acclamation in a physical form resembling a descending dove. It was a BIG deal. The second time God cited Psalm 2:7 was in the middle of Jesus three-year ministry when Jesus was transfigured on a high mountain in the presence of Moses and Elijah. In one sense, this event marks the apex of Jesus earthly existence. It was the closest he ever got to sharing God's glory on this globe. (Interestingly, these parallel events took place at the lowest and highest earthly elevations that Jesus ever found himself.)

This was not merely a declaration of sonship or approval. It was an affirmation of Jesus' regal heritage as the rightful heir to the throne of Israel! A thousand years before Jesus was born, the Bible predicted a coming Messiah. The word means "the anointed one". That could be either a priest or a king since both were inaugurated with a good anointing. In practical terms, however, the king was the dominant reference of "the anointed one." Conclusion: The Messiah was to sit on David's throne, rescue Israel as Moses, and bless all nations as Abraham's offspring. That, after all, was the duty of the highest political official whom God chose to represent him on throne of Israel.

Psalm 2:7 is just one of over a hundred Messianic prophecies that identified who the savior-king would be and what he would do. These prophecies predicted detailed life events as well as the broad character of God's envoy. Christians have always seen Jesus as the singular figure to embody this broad array of prophecies. No one else fits the bill or fulfills the promises. In fact, there is not even a close second or second option. Those precious few who have historically been identified as the Messiah (other than Jesus) have only been expected to fulfill a fraction of the prophecies. If you whittle down the expectations enough almost anyone can wear the crown.

Oddly, the only other person up through the end of the first century to be identified as the Messiah (or "Christ" in Greek) was the Emperor Vespasian who destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (Josephus, *Wars* 6.310-15). Even more paradoxical is that the one making this claim was none other than the Jewish historian Josephus, who was under his employ. If one searches the next century, there was another figure touted as Messiah by the famed Rabbi Akiva (*y. Ta'anit* 4:6). This would-be ruler was Bar-Kokhba, who lead a revolution against Roman rule in 132 A.D. His defeat and execution in 135 A.D. deflated any further claims of his Messianic identity. What

this little tangent tells us is that Jesus was the only individual in the first century to successfully claim the role of Messiah and no one after has won any substantial acclaim to displace him—none in 2,000 years!

Back to Psalm 2: We've selected this Psalm as the platform for this discussion because it sets in context all kinds of other Messianic prophecies. It is a "trajectory" verse that opens the window on dozens of others. How? Well, first of all, this Psalm is a Royal Psalm. That is to say it is one of the Old Testament songs sung in honor of the king—the earthly kind who sat on the throne in Jerusalem. There are nearly a dozen Psalms that fit this category (2, 18, 20, 21, 45, 72, 89, 101, 110, 132, and 144). Each of these hymns survived long after the king died. Why? Because the Jewish people longed for the day when the quintessential king, the Messiah of Israel would arrive and remove their woes. These songs were part of the annual liturgy of the Temple, repeatedly sung in eager expectation that the long-awaited day would arrive and the Messiah they sang about would become the king they knelt before.

Second, Psalm 2 has no title. In other words, it doesn't have a description before the Psalm describing the author, the historical setting, or the musical style appropriate for the hymn. Seventy-seven percent of the Psalms in the Bible do have a title or "superscription" (116 of the 150). As an aside, the Hebrews took these titles seriously. In fact, they numbered them like we number the verses of the Psalm so that the English verses are one number ahead of the Hebrew verses. In their minds, the title was an essential part of reading the poem properly. Both Psalm 1 and Psalm 2 have no such title. Furthermore, Psalm 2 ends where Psalm 1 begins—with the word "blessed." That's why many scholars (myself included) view these two Psalms in tandem (part A & B, so to speak). Furthermore, the reason they don't have an introduction is because they *are* the introduction to the entire Psalter! The entire collection of Psalms in the Bible is to be read in the shadow of the first two hymns. This holds particular significance in that Psalm 1, a commentary on happiness, cannot culminate without Psalm 2, a nod to Jesus, the ultimate source of happiness. True worship of God requires right relationships with friends and a right relationship to Jesus as the ruler of God's people. This makes Psalm 2 particularly weighty among the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Hence, our choice to highlight this song.

Third, Psalm two doesn't just have one messianic prophecy but three. (1) Verses 1-2 are cited in Peter's prayer in Acts 4:25-26 as a commentary on Jesus' trials. The very people listed by King David—nations, peoples, kings, and rulers—are interpreted by Peter (Acts 4:27) as the players in the drama of Jesus' passion: Gentiles, Jewish people, Herod, and Pilate (respectively). While many Rabbis would deny that was ultimately the correct interpretation, they could hardly deny the descriptions fit him to a T. (2) Verse 7 is cited in all three synoptics (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) at both the baptism and transfiguration. This holds even more weight given the fact that God only spoke audibly three times during Jesus' ministry and twice he paraphrased this one verse. (3) Verse 9 is cited three times in Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15 to describe Jesus'

regal rule: “You will break them with a rod of iron; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.” That is a surprising description of the man we call “the good shepherd” and who said from the cross, “Forgive them for they know not what they do.” The least one can conclude is that the meek and mild Son of Man will return with a vengeance only glimpsed during the cleansing of the Temple! He is not to be trifled with or taken for granted.

This incredible poem, standing in tandem with Psalm 1, opens the book of liturgy for Israel and the church. They are the twin pillars for worship: Right relationships with our fellows and right reverence for our Messiah are prerequisites for authentic worship of our God. When our community develops habits of godliness and when we honor Jesus as Lord then our prayers, singing, silence, and service will deepen our understanding of and connection to our God.

Per square inch, there is hardly a passage with more Messianic meaning than Psalm 2. That is why we can use this poem as a springboard into the world of Messianic prophecy. It is not, however, a solitary outlier. There are other passages pregnant with Messianic promises such as Psalm 110, 118, Isaiah 53, Daniel 7; Zechariah 11-12.

Throughout the Old Testament, there are more than sixty major prophecies concerning the coming Messiah. One might suppose that God would have to be that detailed and specific. After all, the hope for a Messiah can be dissipated by clouds of doubt in the daily grind of our earthly existence. Moreover, the Messiah the Jews hoped for was not a divine figure but a human warrior. Where they hoped for liberation God granted salvation. Whereas they wanted their borders secured, God wanted them abolished so all people could have access to him. When they expected God to send help, God saw fit to send himself. Such an earth-shattering shift would require overwhelming evidence. That’s exactly what we have in the Old Testament prophecies. Because they are so specific and because many could not be purposefully fulfilled, they are compelling evidence for divine intervention in and through Jesus.

For example, in these ten prophecies the Messiah would:

Be born at Bethlehem (Micah 5:2).

Be preceded by a forerunner, John the Baptist (Isa. 40:3 and Mal. 3:1).

Enter Jerusalem riding a donkey (Zech. 9:9).

Be betrayed by a friend after eating at his table (Psa. 41:9).

Be sold for 30 pieces of silver which would purchase a potter’s field (Zech. 11:12-13).

Stand silent before his accusers (Isa. 53:7).

Die by crucifixion (Psa. 22:16; Zech. 12:10; Isa. 53:5).

Some of these predictions are *very* specific and unexpected. Most would be impossible to manipulate or prearrange (like where you are to be born). Therefore, the cumulative weight of is substantial. Peter Stoner, in his book *Science Speaks*, calculated the probability of these passages being fulfilled by one man to be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000! Now, one might quibble about what possibility or probability to assign to each prophetic element. This much, however, is inarguable: 100,000,000,000,000,000 (however one arrives at it) is an

incomprehensibly large number. To put it in perspective Josh McDowell calculated that many silver dollars would cover the state of Texas two feet deep. If we painted one red, asked a blindfolded vagabond to meander across the state and randomly select a single silver dollar, his odds of picking the red one are the same as Jesus randomly fulfilling just these seven descriptions.

However, Jesus didn't fulfill seven. There are another fifty major prophecies about Jesus' life and death and another sixty minor references. With each added prophecy the infinitesimally small probability is reduced exponentially making it virtually ridiculous. Hence, the title of McDowell's book, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*. If we are going to deny that Jesus is the Messiah, we owe ourselves an explanation as to how one man can randomly fulfill so many detailed descriptions. Perhaps you are a skeptic and that's perhaps fair. So let me be clear. Predictive prophecy is but one evidence for Jesus the Messiah. In fact, the earliest witnesses leaned more heavily (by far) into the resurrection of Jesus and the character of his life (two topics for another time). Psalm 2 opens to us a whole slew of Messianic prophecies. Any single prophecy could be explained away, I suppose. But the cumulative effect, the weight of the whole, is a thick foundation upon which to stand.

**Key Points:**

- Psalm 2 is a particularly influential Messianic Prophecy because it has three separate predictions cited in the New Testament and because it is embedded in the introduction to the book of Psalms?
- Psalm 2 describes the Messiah as a king who is loved by God and should be feared by his enemies?
- Messianic Prophecies are compelling evidence for Jesus because they are so specific and so many are impossible to intentionally fulfill?

**Action Step:** Ask one person today if they believe Jesus was foretold in the Old Testament.

**Further Resources:** John Ankerberg, [\*The Case for Jesus the Messiah\*](#) (Harvest House, 1989).