

ENCYCLOPEDIA OF MORMONISM



Edited by
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*The History, Scripture, Doctrine, and Procedure
of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints*

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PENSATION in which Jesus Christ lived in mortality. The term does not occur in the Bible, but is found in the Doctrine and Covenants (20:26; 39:3) and in the book of Moses (5:57; 6:57, 62; 7:46).

The word “meridian” suggests the middle. According to Old Testament genealogies, from the FALL OF ADAM to the time of Jesus Christ was approximately 4,000 years. It has been nearly 2,000 years since Jesus’ birth. The millennial reign will commence “in the beginning of the seventh thousand years” (D&C 77:12). After the MILLENNIUM there will be a “little season,” the exact length of which is not revealed, but it could be several hundred years. In the context of these events, the Lord’s mortal ministry took place near the meridian, or middle, of mortal time (DS 1:81).

The meridian of time may also be seen as the high point of mortal time. Latter-day revelation shows that all of the ancient prophets looked forward to the Messiah’s coming (Jacob 4:4; Mosiah 13:33–35; 15:11). His coming fulfilled their prophecies, and he was prefigured in the LAW OF MOSES (Mosiah 13:29–32) and in ancient ceremonial ordinances (Moses 5:5–8). The meridian of time is the apex of all dispensations because of the birth, ministry, and atonement of Christ. Without him all prophetic writings and utterances would have had no efficacy, and the hopes of mankind today and forever would be but futile desires and yearnings without possibility of fulfillment.

MARSHALL T. BURTON

MESSENGER AND ADVOCATE

The *Latter Day Saints’ Messenger and Advocate* was published in Kirtland, Ohio, from October 1834 to September 1837—thirty-six sixteen-page, double-column issues. It succeeded the EVENING AND THE MORNING STAR. The name *Messenger and Advocate* described its purpose: to be the messenger and advocate of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, thus to help the Saints better understand its doctrines and principles. Main doctrinal contributions came from Joseph SMITH, Sidney RIGDON, Oliver COWDERY, W. W. Phelps, and John Whitmer. Other entries continued articles from the *Star*, a history of the Christian church, letters from missionaries, hymns, news of current Church events such as the building of the Kirtland

Temple and its dedicatory services, editorials, minutes of conferences, summaries of news of the day, marriages, notices, and obituaries.

The last issue of each annual volume contained an index of all twelve issues.

Oliver Cowdery edited the *Messenger and Advocate* from October 1834 to May 1835. He was succeeded by John Whitmer from June 1835 to March 1836, but returned as editor from April 1836 to January 1837. Thereafter, his brother Warren A. Cowdery served from February to September 1837, when publication ceased. Joseph Smith and Sidney Rigdon were listed as publisher for the 1837 February and March issues. In April 1837 the printing office and contents were transferred to William Marks, who was then listed as the publisher.

When Warren A. Cowdery declined further publishing, the *Messenger and Advocate* noted that “a large body of the elders of the church of Latter Day Saints have united and rented the printing establishment” (3:571–72) to publish the *Elders’ Journal of The Church of Latter Day Saints*, which ceased publication in Far West, Missouri, in 1838.

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J. LEROY CALDWELL

MESSIAH

MESSIAH

Messiah is a Hebrew term signifying “anointed one.” The Greek equivalent is *christos*, whence the name Christ. Jesus, the divinely given name of the Savior (Matt. 1:21), derives from the Hebrew *Yeshua* or *Yehoshua* (or Joshua, as it commonly appears in English), from a root meaning “to save.” With other Christians, Latter-day Saints agree that implicit in the name Jesus Christ lies the doctrine that he is the Messiah, the Anointed One who saves.

Like the New Testament, the Book of Mormon clearly identifies Jesus as the Messiah (1 Ne. 10:4–17; 2 Ne. 25:16–20; Hel. 8:13–17). It also declares that a knowledge of the Messiah existed “from the beginning of the world” (1 Ne. 12:18;

Mosiah 13:33–35) and prophesies details of his life and mission. For example, the Messiah would appear in a body (1 Ne. 15:13), his name would be Jesus Christ (2 Ne. 25:19; Mosiah 3:8), and he would be baptized as an example of obedience (2 Ne. 31:4–9). Moreover, signs would attend his birth, death, and resurrection (2 Ne. 26:3; Hel. 14:2–8, 20–28). In this connection, he would be slain and rise from the dead, bringing to pass the resurrection (1 Ne. 10:11; 2 Ne. 2:8). At the last day, he is to appear in power and glory (2 Ne. 6:14), to reign as king and lawgiver (D&C 45:59; 1 Tim. 6:14–15).

[See also Jesus Christ, Names and Titles of.]

DAVID B. GALBRAITH

MESSIANIC CONCEPT AND HOPE

It is LDS doctrine that a knowledge of the role of Jesus Christ as the Messiah has been on the earth from the beginning. God taught Adam and Eve about the Messiah who would redeem mankind. Called “Only Begotten” and “Son of Man,” even his name Jesus Christ was revealed (Moses 5:7–11; 6:52–57). These are, of course, the anglicized words meaning “Savior Anointed.” God also taught ENOCH that the “Messiah, the King of Zion” would die on a cross (Moses 7:53–55).

From other sources it is evident that Hebrew people clearly believed in a redeemer, though characterizations varied. The Bible refers to him through imagery such as “the shepherd, the stone of Israel” (Gen. 49:24), the “tried stone” or “sure foundation” (Isa. 28:16), the “stem of Jesse” and “Branch” (Isa. 11:1; Jer. 33:15–16). He is also called Redeemer, Holy One of Israel, Savior, Lord of Hosts, the First and Last (Isa. 43:1–15; 44:6), and even a servant (Isa. 42:1; 49:3; 50:10; 52:13).

Because biblical prophecy uses the imagery of royalty, some believed that at his first coming the Messiah would save them from political bondage. Jacob foresaw that Shiloh would come, to whom people would gather (Gen. 49:10). Moses prophesied, “There shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel” (Num. 24:17). ISAIAH envisioned a child born, “and the government shall be upon his shoulder. . . . Of the increase of . . . peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom” (Isa. 9:6–7). Micah recorded that from Bethlehem “shall he come forth . . . to be ruler in Israel” (Micah 5:2).

JEREMIAH saw that “a King shall reign . . . and shall execute judgment and justice” (Jer. 23:5). However, such royal prophecies of a king and ruler would find fulfillment in the Messiah’s eternal, rather than his mortal, role.

The prophets planted seeds of belief in a Messiah, seeds that would flower during later periods. The DEAD SEA SCROLLS reveal a hope in two Messiahs who would lead a religious revival. Judas Maccabeus’ example (d. 160 B.C.), overthrowing the Greeks and reestablishing Jewish independence, spawned hope during the early Roman period (63 B.C.–A.D. 70) that a Messiah would deliver the Jewish nation. Although royalty and battle imagery in the Bible was interpreted to mean political deliverance, those images referred to spiritual salvation. Said Jesus, “My kingdom is not of this world” (John 18:36).

The title Messiah (Hebrew *mashiah*; Greek *christos*) means “anointed one.” Among ancient Israelites, persons set apart for God’s work were anointed with oil, including prophets, priests, and kings. Jesus, citing a messianic PROPHECY from Isaiah (61:1), told hearers in Nazareth, “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel, . . . to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives” (Luke 4:18).

Isaiah described the “servant” as one who would be smitten (Isa. 50:6), even “wounded for our transgressions, . . . bruised for our iniquities,” and yet “make intercession for the transgressors” (53:3–5, 12). Zechariah added that he would be wounded in the house of his friends (Zech. 12:10; 13:6–7). New Testament authors also understood that Jesus was to suffer before entering his glory (e.g., Luke 24:26; Acts 3:18).

Throughout his ministry Jesus clearly understood his messiahship (cf. 3 Ne. 15:20–23). For instance, when the Samaritan woman acknowledged, “I know that Messiah cometh,” Jesus responded, “I that speak unto thee am he” (John 4:25–26). Peter declared, “Thou art the Christ [Messiah]” (Matt. 16:16); and Andrew, Peter’s brother, announced, “We have found the Messiah” (John 1:41). Even devils are reported to have said, “Thou art Christ the Son of God” (e.g., Luke 4:41).

The biblical portrayal of a mortal Messiah reviled rather than ruling, rejected rather than reigning, is amplified in the Book of Mormon. As its modern subtitle indicates, the Book of Mormon

is another testament of Jesus Christ, or Jesus the Messiah. Book of Mormon writers taught that all prophets spoke concerning the Messiah (Jacob 7:11; Mosiah 13:33). In approximately 600 B.C., LEHI taught that “redemption cometh in and through the Holy Messiah. . . . Behold he offereth himself a sacrifice for sin . . . that he may bring to pass the resurrection of the dead” (2 Ne. 2:6–10).

NEPHI₁ wrote that since all are in a fallen state, they must rely on the Messiah, the Redeemer. He learned that the Son of God was willing to come as the Messiah, preach the gospel, serve as an example of righteous living, and be slain for the sins of all (1 Ne. 10:4–6, 11; 11:26–33; 19:9; 2 Ne. 25:11–19; 31:9–16).

King BENJAMIN described how Jesus Christ would come from heaven to dwell in a mortal body, “working mighty miracles, such as healing the sick . . . [and casting] out devils,” suffering temptation and fatigue. Even blood would come “from every pore, so great shall be his anguish for the wickedness and the abominations of his people.” Saying that he was only a man and that “he hath a devil, [they] shall scourge him, and shall crucify him” (Mosiah 3:5–10).

ALMA₂ said of the Messiah’s ministry, “He shall go forth, suffering pains and afflictions and temptations of every kind. . . . And he will take upon him death, that he may loose the bands of death which bind his people; and he will take upon him their infirmities . . . that he may know according to the flesh how to succor his people according to their infirmities” (Alma 7:11–12).

More than five centuries before Christ’s birth, JACOB wrote, “For this intent have we written these things, that they may know that we knew of Christ, and we had a hope of his glory many hundred years before his coming; and not only we ourselves had a hope of his glory, but also all the holy prophets which were before us” (Jacob 4:4).

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D. KELLY OGDEN

MESSIANIC PROPHECIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

See: Jesus Christ: Prophecies About Jesus Christ

METAPHYSICS

Metaphysics is the branch of PHILOSOPHY concerned with the ultimate nature of reality, including those aspects of it, if any, that are unavailable to empirical inquiry. The historical development of metaphysics in Western philosophical thought has been carried out largely by those philosophers and theologians who have aspired more to develop a unified system of ideas than to dwell upon diverse arrays of facts. Especially important to the theologians was the task of bringing abstract philosophical concepts into harmony with the concrete teachings of SCRIPTURE. Their systems differed, but their common goal was to combine philosophy and scripture into a single coherent account of the ultimate nature of things.

TENTATIVENESS. LDS metaphysics stands apart, because the Church has not developed a traditional metaphysical THEOLOGY and does not aspire to one. It has not been much influenced by philosophical thinking. LDS faith springs from two sources, scripture and ongoing RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE. The absence of any systematic metaphysics of the Church follows from the belief that scripture, as the record of divine REVELATION, may be supplemented by new revelation at any time. A metaphysical system, to be true, must be all-inclusive. But faith in continuing revelation precludes the certainty that such a system exists. Thus, LDS metaphysics remains incomplete, tentative, and unsystematic, subject to revision in the light of things yet to be revealed by God. This tentativeness about metaphysical ideas has saved the Church from the crises that can arise when a religion’s beliefs are tied to philosophical ideas which are later abandoned or discredited. The Church’s lack of a systematic metaphysical theology has prompted some students of its DOCTRINES who are used to such theology to assert that it has no theology at all, but it would be more accurate to say that its metaphysics and theology are not systematically formulated.

MATTER AND SPIRIT. In the absence of a metaphysical system, the LDS faith still displays some characteristic metaphysical ideas. Latter-day Saints regard MATTER as a fundamental principle of reality and as the primary basis for distinguishing particular beings. The import of this view reveals itself most strikingly in the doctrine concerning the material embodiment of God: “The Father