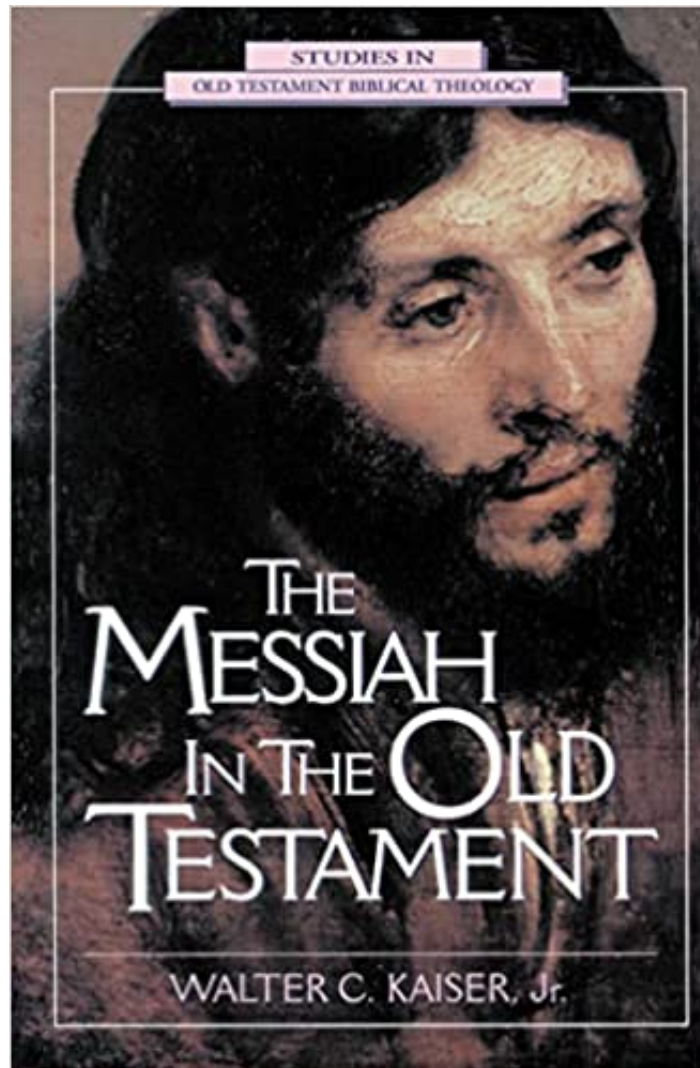


Messiah in the Old Testament, The

by

Rudolfo A. Anaya



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Synopsis

Old Testament texts that point to the coming of the Messiah are traditionally interpreted either from the viewpoint of their New Testament fulfillment (evangelicalism) or their linguistic and grammatical distinctiveness within the Hebrew Bible (non-conservative). The Messiah in the Old Testament considers another important line of interpretation that has been neglected in building an Old Testament theology. It approaches Israel's concept of the Messiah as a developing theme and shows how a proper grasp of the textual meaning at each stage of Old Testament revelation is necessary for understanding messianic prophecy. Beginning in the Pentateuch and working through the Old Testament to the Minor Prophets, the author delineates texts that are direct messianic prophecies and examines their meaning and development within the flow of God's plan. The reader will gain an understanding of God's process for bringing the Messiah to earth through the nation of Israel, and of his intent to bring the saving knowledge of Christ to the World through them.

Sort review

From Booklist This is an unapologetically apologetic book, part of a series, *Studies in Old Testament Biblical Theology*, explicitly identified by the editors as evangelical and implicitly identified as conservative. There is some virtue to that clear identification, in that it minimizes the likelihood that readers will be misled; there is an ax to grind here, and both editors and author are honest about grinding it. There is also some danger, in that "apologetic" writing can leave the author merely preaching to the choir. To some extent, that is what happens in Kaiser's book. It is a thorough review and synthesis of an evangelical tradition that reads Hebrew Scripture as Old Testament and finds the Messiah there incontrovertibly identified with Jesus. Though Kaiser is not likely to convince anyone who does not begin with him by appropriating Hebrew Scripture into a Christian context in the act of labeling it "old," he does help make explicit a clash of interpretations inextricably bound with interpretive communities; it's a war of words, a useful (though hardly surprising) insight where the combatants are collectively known as people of the book. Steve Schroeder

From the Back Cover Old Testament texts that point to the coming of the Messiah are traditionally interpreted either from the viewpoint of their New Testament fulfillment (evangelicalism) or their linguistic and grammatical distinctiveness within the Hebrew Bible (non-conservative). The Messiah in the Old Testament considers another important line of interpretation that has been neglected in building an Old Testament theology. It approaches Israel's concept of the Messiah as a developing theme and shows how a proper grasp of the textual meaning at each stage of Old Testament revelation is necessary for understanding messianic prophecy. Beginning in the Pentateuch and working through the Old Testament to the Minor Prophets, the author delineates texts that are direct messianic prophecies and examines their meaning and development within the flow of God's plan. The reader will gain an

understanding of God's process for bringing the Messiah to earth through the nation of Israel, and of his intent to bring the saving knowledge of Christ to the World through them. About the Author Walter C. Kaiser Jr. (PhD, Brandeis University) is distinguished professor emeritus of Old Testament and president emeritus of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary in South Hamilton, Massachusetts. Dr. Kaiser has written over 40 books, including *Toward an Exegetical Theology: Biblical Exegesis for Preaching and Teaching*; *The Messiah in the Old Testament*; and *The Promise-Plan of God*; and coauthored *An Introduction to Biblical Hermeneutics: The Search for Meaning*. Dr. Kaiser and his wife, Marge, currently reside at Kerith Farm in Cedar Grove, Wisconsin. Dr. Kaiser's website is www.walterckaiserjr.com. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.

Chapter 1 Introduction: The Study of Messianism "What is a Christian?" asked James H. Charlesworth. He responded: "Most people would answer: one who believes that Jesus of Nazareth was the Christ Jews were expecting. Many Christians, Jews, and most citizens of the modern world would tend to agree on this definition. It is however, misleading and, indeed, inaccurate," continued Charlesworth, "[because] it assumes three things: (1) that the title Christ fully categorizes Jesus, (2) that Christians are clear and in agreement on what this title, Christ, denotes, and (3) that all, or virtually all, Jews during the time of Jesus were looking for the coming of the Messiah or Christ." This study of the concept of the Messiah in the OT will attempt to show that "most people," according to Charlesworth's estimate, are not that far off the mark, if they are off at all. It will also attempt to recover what Anthony Collins lost when he published in 1724 a volume entitled *Discourse of the Grounds and Reasons for the Christian Religion*, and its sequel in 1727 entitled *The Scheme of Literal Prophecy Considered*. In both of these works Collins attempted to show that the use of the literal meaning of certain messianic proof-texts from the OT could not support the messianic interpretation placed on them by the NT. According to him, only the original (i.e., the literal) sense could be declared as the valid and true meaning of the text. The so-called "complete" or "spiritual" fulfillment of these OT texts that many were applying to Jesus, Collins concluded, could be no more than an illustration; in any case, they did not amount to a specific "proof" that Jesus had been anticipated as the "messiah" with certain characteristics and works in the prophets' own times. Thus the eighteenth century began the long debate, which has continued to this very hour, about the apologetic "argument from prophecy" for the Messiah. It is interesting to note that in 1742, less than twenty years after the first volume authored by Collins appeared, George F. Handel's oratorio *The Messiah* had its first performance. That work, which continues to be a favorite across many cultures to this day, uses the basic compilation of Scriptural passages and reflects the type of conclusions that "most people" have about the significance and meaning of the OT passages cited.

A. DEFINITIONS It is helpful to define several of the terms we use in this study of Messianism in the OT, using the methodology of Biblical Theology. This is particularly helpful since the debate has attracted so much attention and the stakes in the argument are, from many points of view, as fundamental as the very definition for "Christianity" itself.

1. Messianic. One source of confusion is that the term "messianic" has a much wider range of meaning than "Messiah." "Messianic" usually is applied

to everything in the OT when it refers the hope of a glorious future. This suggests that the central feature of the coming golden age is the expectation of the Savior and King Messiah. But that fact is hotly debated, for in the minds of most scholars today, the oldest and most general expectation was for a coming era of happiness. Only in much later times, according to this academic consensus, was the hope of the Messiah connected with this expectation. The chronological question of what was early and what was late in Scripture will always be a source of vigorous debate, especially when the arguments are based almost exclusively on internal evidence. This opens the door for a large measure of speculation and subjectivity. But the majority of passages that speak about the glorious future do not refer to a future king at all; instead, they are usually about Yahweh, who acts either in judgment or deliverance. Accordingly, many of the passages scholars believe are mistakenly called messianic are better placed simply under the category of eschatology. The problem we will have to face is the one where the identity and work of Yahweh coincides or overlaps with that of Messiah. If the text develops a link between the person and work of Yahweh and that of Messiah, most of the objections to including messianic materials under the rubric of "Messiah" will disappear.² Messiah. What about the term messiah? The Hebrew term *mamshîah*. appears thirty-nine times in the OT and is rendered in the Septuagint by the Greek *christos*, which became the official designation for Jesus in the NT and, at first, a pejorative way of referring to his followers: "Christians." The Hebrew form is a verbal noun derived from *mamshah.*, which is similar in meaning to what the participle *mamshûah*. means (e.g., 2Sa 3:39), translated "anointed." In the prevailing sense of this root (except for the two uses in Isa 21:5; Jer 22:14), the idea is one of consecrating objects or persons for sacred purposes— the altar, the basin, etc. The noun, however, is only applied to animate objects: those who were consecrated in this category were priests, prophets, and kings. While many scholars claim that the term messiah was used in a more general sense as an epithet of kings, priests, and prophets (indeed, even of the foreign King Cyrus; cf. Isa 45:1), and never in its later technical sense, the text seems to argue the reverse in at least nine of its thirty-nine occurrences. These nine passages did picture some "anointed one" who would be coming in the future, usually in the line of David, and who would be Yahweh's king: 1 Samuel 2:10, 35; Psalms 2:2; 20:6; 28:8; 84:9; Habakkuk 3:13; Daniel 9:25, 26. But this term was neither the most frequent nor the clearest in the OT to depict the expected King who would reign on David's throne. If a more promising title were to be chosen, based on frequency alone, it would be "Servant of the Lord." Read more

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The Case for Jesus: The Biblical and Historical Evidence for Christ

What people say about this book

Russ White, "Well Argued on the Merits of the Text. There are a number of scholars today who claim the Tanach, the Old Testament, does not hold any information about the Messiah. The point being, of course, that if they can untie the Old and New Testaments, they can deal a severe blow to either Christianity in general --by making the New Testament stand without reference-- or they can deal a blow to conservative Christianity, by taking the New Testament as a belief system completely unrelated to Judaism. Dr. Kaiser, in this book, a part of the Old Testament Theology series, takes great issue with this contention. Dr. Kaiser focuses on reading the Scriptures in a "single meaning," sense. "Let us begin by admitting that the nontraditionalists have been justified in their insistence on the two criteria that must be used for interpreting prophecies: (1) the meaning of the OT references to the Messiah must reflect the author's own times and historical circumstances, and (2) the meaning must be a meaning that is reflected in the grammar and syntax of the OT text. To deny these two working hypothesis introduces pandemonium into the interpretive process. -Page 23" Using this methodology, he traces various Messianic prophecies and promised throughout the Tanach. He begins his book with an overview of studying the Messianic texts in the Tanach. The remainder of The Messiah in the Old Testament is arranged based on the Tanach itself; the Pentateuch, the Davidic Monarchy, the Psalms, the ninth and eighth century Prophets, Isaiah, the seventh and sixth century Prophets, and the postexilic Prophets are each covered in their own sections. Any one of these pieces could be made into a book in its own right, so each chapter is necessarily something of an overview, only diving deep where there is significant controversy or some interesting detail to interact with. The strongest arguments here come in relation to Noah's prophecy in Genesis 9:27, Abraham's faith in Genesis 22, and Isaiah's prophecy of the child to come by a virgin. In the case of Noah, Dr. Kaiser concludes that this prophecy can only refer to the Messiah because of the context surrounding the prophecy. No other reading makes sense. In the case of Abraham's faith, Dr. Kaiser argues that Abraham understood the meaning of the Akedah because God revealed it at that time --that Abraham's statement that he would return with Isaac is a clear indication that he understood resurrection. Finally, in Isaiah's prophecy, Dr. Kaiser shows that a virgin is in view, not just a young woman, and that Isaiah would have clearly understood the near meaning as a sign of the far meaning, rather than as a fulfillment of the prophecy. Overall, this is an interesting and enlightening defense of the connection between the Tanach and the New Testament. It is complementary to Dr. Kaiser's other work in this area, rather than strictly overlapping. Highly recommended."

Sergio Castrillón, "This is a wonderful book!!!. In the complex topic of the presence of the Messiah in the OT, there have been numerous approaches. Although several of them are good, I think this is a milestone. The author's method is exposed in the first chapter, and it is clear and understandable. All his expositions are illuminating and hermeneutically robust. If you give it a

chance, you'll be amazed at his interpretations and biblical-theological connections that shed light on how OT readers could clearly see the Promise-Plan of God, i.e., the Messiah and his Kingdom."

Dr. Robert J. Vajko, "A Study of Messianic Prophecy from a Biblical Theology Point of View. In this study of the messiah and messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, Kaiser avoids the proof-texting approach in prophecy but instead builds upon the cumulative approach of the "promise-plan of God." In this he follows clearly after Willis Beecher's seminal study *The Prophets and the Promise* or, as Kaiser explains it, "we are attempting to carry out a diachronic study of the messianic materials as part of a biblical theology" (61). The first chapter deals with the question of "messianism" thus clarifying the rest of the book. Then chapters two to nine deal with the messiah in the history of redemption starting with the Pentateuch and ending with the post-exilic prophets. The conclusion in chapter ten deals with three final issues: "exegesis, biblical theology, and Jesus" as well as the question of continuity and discontinuity between the Old and New Testaments and finally "prediction and fulfilled prophecy." There are two appendices giving charts listing the Old Testament prophecies. Some scholars will disagree with Kaiser's translation and subsequent interpretations of messianic statements. One example of this is found in Genesis 9:27: "May God enlarge Japheth, and let him dwell in the tents of Shem..." Kaiser interprets this, "the meaning of Genesis 9:27 is God's announcement that his advent will take place among the Shemites, later known through the Greek form of their name as Semites" (45). However one understands this text, it will be good to look at Kaiser's reasons for his interpretation. This reviewer highly recommends working through this book in order to have a purview of messianic doctrine and thus build a biblical theology of the Messiah."

Andy Zach, "Outstanding analysis of Messianic Prophecy in the Old Testament. It is rare for me to rate a book as 5 stars even when it was written as recently as 20 years ago; it is even rarer for me to rate a non-fiction book so. For me, five stars means a book is not only good now, but it will be good for fifty or a hundred years. Yet Walter Kaiser's book 'The Messiah in the Old Testament' will be regarded as a standard apologetic work on Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament at least 50 years from now. Dr. Kaiser begins by examining different methods of prophetic interpretation and settles on: '1) the meaning of the OT references to the Messiah must reflect the author's own times and historical circumstances, and 2) the meaning must be a meaning that is reflected in the grammar and syntax of the OT text'. Using these criteria he filters out many OT messianic references. Dr. Kaiser then goes through the Messianic scriptures in chronological order, from Genesis 3:15 to Malachi 4:2. His second criterion necessarily requires him to delve extensively into Hebrew grammar. This is where his writing may become difficult for the lay reader of the Bible. Persistence through these grammatical sections will lead the reader to a deeper understanding of the progressive revelation of the Messianic theme through the OT and how it unites the OT and NT. Detail upon detail concerning the coming Messiah will be

revealed until the conclusion is inescapable: Jesus Christ is the Messiah.”

budge, “buy it!. wonderful little book on the prophecies of the Lord Jesus in the old testament. would give it 10 stars if i could”

Dr. Tommi Karjalainen, “If you agree with his method. Very readable, good presentation of Kaiser's view.”

The book by Rudolfo A. Anaya has a rating of 5 out of 4.6. 110 people have provided feedback.

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