

# 119

## MINISTRIES

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### **Does the Old Testament Teach “Two Comings” of Messiah?**

One of the objections often raised against Yeshua (the Hebrew name for Jesus) being the Messiah of Israel is that He didn't fulfill some important prophecies concerning the Messiah. The *TANAKH* (tah-nahk)—that is, the Old Testament—teaches that the Messiah will gather all of Israel back into the Land, bring about an era of world peace, and spread universal knowledge of God to all the nations. It is argued that Yeshua did not fulfill these Messianic prophecies; therefore, He cannot be the Messiah of Israel.

As followers of Yeshua, how do we respond to this objection? The standard Christian and Messianic response is that Yeshua will bring these prophecies to their complete fulfillment at His Second Coming. The *Brit Chadashah* (breet-hah-dah-shah)—that is, the New Testament—clearly teaches this. And while that's true, some consider this response to be a cop-out. After all, if Yeshua didn't do what the Messiah is supposed to do, why should we accept that He's the Messiah on the basis that He'll eventually do it when He comes back?

The question we need to consider is this: Is the doctrine of a Second Coming just a New Testament invention, or do we have any basis for this idea in the *TANAKH*?

We can explore this question by looking at some other prophecies in the *TANAKH* and determining if this pattern is evident in other places. To begin, let's look at some passages in Jeremiah. Much of Jeremiah's ministry took place right at the time when the Jewish people were being taken into Babylonian captivity. Many of the prophecies Jeremiah gave were concerning what was expected to happen when God regathered the exiles from Babylon.

#### **Jeremiah 24:4-7**

“Then the word of the Lord (YHWH) came to me: ‘Thus says the Lord (YHWH), the God of Israel: Like these good figs, so I will regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I have sent away from this place to the land of the Chaldeans. I will set my eyes on them for good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up, and not tear them down; I will plant them, and not pluck them up. I will give them a heart to know that I am the Lord (YHWH, and they shall be my people and I will be their God, for they shall return to me with their whole heart.’”

#### **Jeremiah 32:36-40**

“Now therefore thus says the Lord (YHWH), the God of Israel, concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence’: Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my

wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place, and I will make them dwell in safety. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me forever, for their own good and the good of their children after them. I will make with them an everlasting covenant, that I will not turn away from doing good to them. And I will put the fear of me in their hearts, that they may not turn from me.”

These, among other passages in Jeremiah, tell us that God would bring the exiles back from Babylon, that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, and most notably that there would be a national turning to the Lord among the Jewish people.

So the question is, were these prophecies fulfilled? They were, but they also weren't. The exiles did return from Babylon, the city was rebuilt, and many of the Jews did turn back to the Lord, just as Jeremiah said. But the fulfillment of these prophecies was only in part.

For instance, while it was prophesied that Jerusalem would be rebuilt and never be destroyed again, it was later destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD.

While it was prophesied that the Jewish people would return to the land and never again be uprooted, they were later driven out of their land by the Romans.

Concerning the prophecy that the entire nation would serve God with one heart and never turn from Him: Well, when we look at Ezra and Nehemiah, which are the accounts of the Jewish peoples' return to Israel from Babylon, we see that a remnant of the people did turn back to the Lord, but it certainly wasn't a national turning as was prophesied. And only a century after the return from Babylonian exile, we see in the book of Malachi that God is once again calling for His people to repent. That clearly doesn't fit the picture we would expect to see of a restored nation of God-fearing people.

On the other hand, Jeremiah prophesied many other things that came to pass exactly as he said they would. He was the one who said Jerusalem would be destroyed, and it was. He also said that the Jewish people would be exiled to Babylon for seventy years, and they were:

#### **Jeremiah 29:10**

“For thus says the Lord (YHWH): When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will visit you, and I will fulfill to you my promise and bring you back to this place.”

So clearly Jeremiah is not a false prophet. He's been tested and proven true over and over. But what do we do about all these prophecies that appear to have been only partly fulfilled? Was Jeremiah just exaggerating? Or is this perhaps a pattern that we see with biblical prophecy? Let's look at another biblical prophet to see this same thing.

The prophet Ezekiel was a captive in Babylon when God spoke to him also about the regathering of the exiles back to Israel. Ezekiel said that Jerusalem would be rebuilt and the people would dwell in peace and safety. In Ezekiel 40-48, the prophet speaks of an amazing new Temple, and a river that brings healing flowing from the Temple. And chapter 36 of Ezekiel, it is prophesied again that there would be a national turning of the people of Israel—that they would be given a new heart and would fully serve the Lord and obey Him.

#### **Ezekiel 36:26-28**

“I will take you from the nations and gather you from all the countries and bring you into your

own land. I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean from all your uncleannesses, and from all your idols I will cleanse you. And I will give you a new heart, and a new spirit I will put within you. And I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes and be careful to obey my rules. You shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers, and you shall be my people, and I will be your God.”

So again, we ask the question: were these prophecies fulfilled? Yes! But only in part. The Jewish people did return to the land; Jerusalem was rebuilt along with a new Temple; many of the Jews turned back to YHWH. And yet, much of what was prophesied has not been fully realized. The Second Temple was not built according to the specifications outlined in Ezekiel 40-48, and it was even destroyed again in 70 A.D. While a remnant did turn to YHWH, not all of Israel was given a new heart to fully obey Him. And Israel to this day faces constant violence and terrorism; thus, they are not dwelling in peace.

Christians and Jews are in agreement that the Messiah will someday come and bring all of these prophecies to complete fulfillment. But Jeremiah and Ezekiel didn't think all of this would eventually take place thousands of years in the future—why would they? Jeremiah gave his prophecies at the beginning of the Babylonian exile, and Ezekiel gave his prophecies as a captive in Babylon. So when God gave them these words—that the exiles would be brought back, that Jerusalem would be rebuilt, that the nation would turn to the Lord and dwell in peace—they were expecting everything to be fulfilled when the Jewish people returned from Babylon after their seventy-year exile was over.

You might recall the disciples of Yeshua having similar sentiments. After Yeshua had opened their minds to understand the Scriptures concerning His death and resurrection, and they began to see prophecy unfolding before their eyes, naturally they assumed that all the other prophecies about Messiah were right around the corner. That's why, just prior to Yeshua's ascension in Acts 1, they asked Him this question:

**Acts 1:6**

“So when they had come together, they asked him, ‘Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?’”

Of course, Yeshua's response was probably not what they expected:

**Acts 1:7**

“He said to them, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority.’”

In other words, it will happen, but not right now.

So how exactly is this relevant to the question of whether the *TANAKH* speaks of a Second Coming of Messiah? Well, it shows us that there is a biblical basis for prophecy being fulfilled in phases rather than all at once. Indeed, while these prophecies from Jeremiah and Ezekiel were inaugurated after the Jewish people returned from Babylonian exile, we are still awaiting their complete fulfillment.

In the same way, Christians and Messianics believe that the Messiah's work has two phases. The first phase was Messiah's priestly work. The Messiah was prophesied to come as a suffering servant whose death makes atonement for our sins. This was fulfilled by Yeshua at His first coming. The second phase, which includes ushering in an era of world peace, for example, will be fulfilled by Yeshua at His Second

Coming. And it will be at that time that these prophecies from Jeremiah and Ezekiel will also be fully realized.

For more on this, we recommend our two-part teaching, "[The Fourth and Seventh Day](#)".

How do we know that the later Messianic prophecies will be fulfilled someday? Because the first phase has already been fulfilled. Therefore, just as the first fruits assure us of the rest of the harvest, the fulfillment of the first phase of Messianic prophecy assures us that the rest will be fulfilled.

And furthermore, since Yeshua is the one who fulfilled the first phase at His first coming, we have every reason to believe that He will be the one to fulfill the rest at His second coming. It's like when you buy a house and you make a down payment. That down payment is the guarantee that you will eventually fulfill the rest of the payment.

So, in conclusion, the concept of a Second Coming of Messiah is not something foreign to the *TANAKH*. There is precedent for biblical prophecy being fulfilled in phases, as we saw with the prophecies concerning the return from Babylonian exile. Therefore, we shouldn't consider it unusual that the prophecies concerning the Messiah would follow the same pattern.

**Shalom, and may Yahweh bless you in walking in the whole Word of God.**

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