

# THE MESSIANIC PROPHECIES

## Dialogue between a priest and a rabbi

The Jews refuse to recognise Jesus as the Messiah announced by the biblical prophecies. In the summer of 1972 a priest, "P", wanted to have a frank and direct dialogue with the rabbi, "R", to understand the possible biblical justification of this refusal. He took an appointment with the rabbi and went to meet him with a group of friends. The rabbi received them warmly. Here are the essential points of their dialogue:

P: There are prophecies confirming the messianic personality of Jesus. Chapter 53 of Isaiah, for example, presents the Messiah as misunderstood, rejected and put to death by his own people.

R: I know what you think of it. I don't interpret!

P: I am looking for an explanation, another possible interpretation. I am searching for the truth. You see, between Judaism and us there is a Man: this Jesus. If He is an impostor, this group and I would ask you to become Jews.

The rabbi smiled and said, joking: "In this case, you should be circumcised!"

The priest replied: "Willingly! You can take off as much as you want!"

R: No, really, I do not interpret!

P: Is it because the Jews expected, and still expect a political, Zionist Messiah?

R: No, really, I do not interpret! Anyway, don't forget that Jesus, on the cross, confessed that God had abandoned Him. Didn't he say: "Eli! Eli! lamà sabachtani?", which means: "My God! My God! Why have you forsaken me?" Had he been the Messiah, God would not have forsaken him.

P: You astonish me, mister rabbi! Yet you know well the Bible! You know that with these words David begins his Psalm 22, representing a righteous man persecuted by enemies who surround him and "perforate his hands and his feet..." and put him to death etc. Jesus refers to this Messianic Psalm and asks us to consult it. David didn't talk about himself, as he was neither put to death nor did he ever have his hands and feet perforated.

R: I do not interpret as you do.

P: How do you interpret? Could it be that all the Jews are meant here? This does not fit to your understanding, as God finally forsakes the Jews.

R: I don't interpret.

P: There is yet another prophecy of Micah, VIII centuries B.C. This prophet saw the Messiah coming from Bethlehem, specifying that He will come in the future, but "whose origin goes back to the distant past, to the old days" (Micah 5,1).

The priest read this text in French in the "Jerusalem Bible" (1955 Edition). He attracted the attention upon the fact that the text announces the Messiah for the future, but that his days come from the past, from the days of old times, revealing the Messiah's divine nature. The rabbi

understood the priest's intention and, standing up suddenly, he said nervously: "Never! What you say is false! You Christians have falsified the Bible! I'll go and consult the Hebrew text!".

After few minutes, he came back, more relaxed and quite resigned, confessing: "Well! What you have read is right. In Hebrew there is even more".

P: More? The priest exclaimed, wrinkling his eyebrows.

R: Yes, more! It is written: " whose origin go back to the distant past, to the days of Eternity (azal) and not to the old days". Your Bible has mistranslated the Hebrew word "azal" which means Eternity (to note that the French Bibles of Segond and Darby and others translate correctly: "...to the days of eternity").

P: I understand, therefore, that the Hebrew Bible confirms that I'm right, as Eternity applies only to divinity. That's why, the prophet Isaiah, addressing himself to God, exclaimed: "Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down!" (Isaiah 63,19). God also said through Ezekiel: "Look, I Myself shall take care of my flock and look after it..." (Ezekiel 34,11).

R: I do not interpret, but I congratulate you for your deep knowledge of the Bible.

P: Then, you will allow me to interpret according to the events corresponding to the prophecies, but, frankly, I would have preferred a good interpretation rather than congratulations.

Here the biblical dialogue stopped, then the priest added joking: "I am not encouraged to accept circumcision, as you have not convinced me. But would it be possible for us to attend your Saturday prayers at the synagogue?"

The group was invited at the synagogue the following Saturday.

### **The Messianic prophecies**

Jesus found great difficulty in trying to convince the Jews because they expected a different kind of Messiah. His death shook them: they wanted a victorious military and political Messiah. Therefore, Jesus had to appear to His disciples after his resurrection to explain His spiritual and universal messianism. When He appeared, on the road to Emmaus, to two disciples, He found them sad and disappointed; so He told them: "-You foolish men! So slow to believe all that the prophets have said! Was it not necessary that the Christ should suffer before entering into His glory? Then, starting with Moses and going through all the prophets, He explained to them the passages throughout the Scriptures that were about Himself" (Luke 24,25-27).

The prophecies presented the future Messiah under three forms: He is prophet, priest and king.

It is difficult to reconcile these three qualities, because priests came from Levi's tribe and kings from Jude's. As for the prophets, they were chosen independently of their tribal extraction. The prophecies enabling to discern the Messiah's identity are those presenting Him rejected by His people and put to death. We insist principally on these and we shall present the others briefly, starting from Moses, as Jesus did. Moses saw the Messiah as a Prophet.

### **The Messiah as Prophet**

Moses told his people:

"Yahweh your God will raise up a prophet like me; you will listen to him"... God told Moses: "...from their own brothers I shall raise up a prophet like yourself; I shall put My words into His mouth and He will tell them everything I command Him. Anyone who refuses to listen to My words, spoken by Him in My name, will have to render an account to Me" (Deuteronomy 18,15-19).

The Jews asked John the Baptist if he were this Prophet: "No!" he answered (John 1,21). A little bit later, the apostle Philip found Nathanael and said to him: we have found him of whom Moses in the Law and the prophets wrote: Jesus of Nazareth" (John 1,45).

After the miracle of the bread multiplication made by Jesus "...the people said: this is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6,14). Jesus said eventually to the ones refusing to believe Him: "You have placed your hopes on Moses, and Moses will be the one who accuses you...since it was about me that he was writing" (John 5,45-46).

### **The Messiah as King and Priest**

Many prophecies present the Messiah as King:

God says: "I Myself have anointed my King on Zion, my holy mountain...Ask of Me and I shall give you the nations as your birthright, the whole wide world as your possession." (Psalm 2,6-8).

Yahweh declared to my Lord: "Take your seat at my right hand, till I have made your enemies your footstool. Yahweh will stretch out the sceptre of your power from Zion, you will rule your foes all around you...Yahweh has sworn an oath He will never retract, you are a priest for ever of the order of Melchizedek"(Psalm 110, 1-4).

After having presented the Messiah as a king whose sceptre of power stretches till the borders of the earth, Psalm 110 presents Him also as a priest. Two points are to be considered about this Kingdom:

1. This is not a political kingdom, but a spiritual one. Its purpose is not a Zionist hegemony. Jesus explained it: "My kingdom does not belong to this world", that is to say the political world (John 18,36-37). This Kingdom is spiritual and this is the reason why this king is also a priest, but "of the order of Melchizedek", who was a priest and a king, and who was not a Hebrew (Genesis 14,18-20). Saint Paul comments this fact in his letter to the Hebrews (Chapters 5-7). That's why the prophets declared that God rejects the Hebrew Zionist political kingdom (1 Samuel 8,5-7 / Hosea 8,4 and see our texts "The Drama of Jesus" and "Christians and Israel").

2. In God's opinion, the Messianic kingdom is universal, in the spiritual interests of all men, and not limited to the Jews. The Messiah is the universal king of the all the pure hearts of all races, nations and languages, and not only of the Zionist Jews who think the Messiah is a fanatic Zionist at the service of their materialistic earthly interests, their political and material advantages. In fact, God, talking of the Messiah, "His Servant", says through the prophet Isaiah: "It is not enough for you to be My servant to restore the tribes of Jacob and bring back the survivors of Israel; I shall make you a light to the nations so that My salvation may reach the remotest parts of earth" (Isaiah 49,6 / Acts 13,47). This Messianic Kingdom is God's Empire on humanity, not Israel's empire.

The Jewish priests used to offer animal sacrifices to God. But the sacrifice offered by the Messiah was that of His own Person for the salvation of whoever believes in Him. In that way, He changed the concepts of sacrifices and priesthood, thus accomplishing the prophecies announcing Him as a priest, but according to an order and a rite different from the Hebrew order and rites: the order of the king-priest Melchizedek.

It is important to underline and to explain this fact: the Jewish priesthood was according to the order of Aaron, the founder of the Jewish priesthood; he was the brother of Moses. This priesthood was based on animal sacrifices (see Exodus 28). The fact that the Messiah is announced to come as a priest of a different order, the non-Jewish, non-traditional order of Melchizedek, and not according to the Jewish order of Aaron, this means a radical and upsetting revolutionary change in the Jewish traditions. This implies a renewal of the Jewish mentality and a new understanding of the priesthood.

This new "order of Melchizedek" is characterised by the "bread and wine" Melchizedek offered to Abraham. Now, the bread and the wine are the symbols of the Messiah's Body and Blood offered to God as sacrifice for the salvation of the believers: "This (the bread) is My Body...This (the wine) is My Blood, the Blood of the New Covenant poured out for many", Jesus told His Apostles on the eve of his crucifixion offered as a sacrifice to God, thus inaugurating a new priesthood (Mark 14,22-24 / Luke 22, 19-20).

But the most unbelievable Messianic prophecies, which are really upsetting and still misunderstood, are those presenting the suffering Messiah, refused and put to death by his own people:

"Who has given credence to what we have heard...He had no form or charm to attract us no beauty to win our hearts...He was despised, the lowest of men, a man of sorrows, familiar with sufferings, despised for whom we had no regard. Yet ours were the sufferings He was bearing...while we thought of Him as someone being punished and struck with affliction by God. He was being wounded for our rebellions...and we have been healed by His bruises...having been cut off from the land of the living, at His having been struck dead for his people's rebellion. He was given a grave with the wicked, and His tomb is with the rich (Jesus was buried in the tomb of the rich Joseph of Arimathaea: Matthew 27,57-60)... It was Yahweh's good pleasure to crush Him with pain. If He gives His life as a sin offering, He will see his offspring and prolong his life (this is a prophecy about Jesus' Resurrection), and through Him Yahweh's good pleasure will be done. After the ordeal He has endured, He will see the light and be content (again Jesus' Resurrection)... " (Isaiah 53,1-12).

That was how Isaiah saw, centuries before, the Messiah's drama: his people's refusal, his sacrifice offered to God, his condemnation to death with the wicked, but his burial with the rich, and, finally, his Resurrection. This is the nature of the Messiah's spiritual priesthood, totally different from Aaron's.

David, in Psalm 22, foresaw already this drama before Isaiah. Talking about the suffering Messiah, he saw Him groaning saying:

"My God, My God, why have you forsaken me? ... Many bulls are encircling me...lions ravaging and roaring...a gang of villains closing in on me...They have pierced my hands and my feet... You lay me down in the dust of death..."

God, through the prophet Zechariah (VIth century B.C.), foretold the return to the Messiah of those who have denied Him; He said:

"Over the House of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem (the Jews) I shall pour out a spirit of grace and prayer, and they will look to Me. They will mourn for the One whom they have pierced (Jesus), as though for an only child..." (Zechariah 12,10).

The Book of Revelation, talking of Jesus, confirms this fact that will take place at the end of the time allowed to the State of Israel:

"Look, He (Jesus) is coming...everyone will see Him, even those who pierced Him, and all the races of the earth will mourn over Him" (Revelation 1,7).

This is the essential of the Messianic prophecies regarding Jesus.

We would appreciate different arguments than ours -should they exist- being able to demonstrate the non-messianism of Jesus of Nazareth. Our faith in Him is open, not fanatically blind.