

# NICK GUY & THE COMING MESSIAH AFFAIR

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**THEME:** With the Old Testament Sacrificial System in place, why was it necessary for the Messiah to come? And, is Jesus this Messiah? Do His words and deeds fulfill the prophecies of the Old Testament?

**NOTES:** For those of us who were born after the First Coming of Jesus, it's much easier to see how He fulfilled all the promises and prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Messiah. We have, through the work of studied theologians, been able to reconcile all the apparent discrepancies and work through all of the misunderstandings of who and what the Messiah would be. But at the time of Christ this was not so. Even Jesus' own disciples had a hard time figuring out some of what Jesus said, and certainly the crucifixion left them frightened and confused.

**COVENANT:** A covenant is a mutual agreement between 2 or more persons to do, or not to do, certain actions. Some covenants are a two-sided, being between human parties, both voluntarily accepting the terms of the agreement.

Others, like those between God and man are one-sided, in which the terms are dictated by a superior party to an inferior one. In this Covenant, God is the one who enacted it. It is comparable to a will. With a will, someone designates the dispensation of their belongings when they die. This may affect many people, but it is written by one person. All men are affected by the covenants God establishes, but it is God who declares them and sets the terms.

**GOD'S PLAN TO ESTABLISH A NEW COVENANT:** Jeremiah 31:31-34 reads: "Behold, the days are coming, declares the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the Lord. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people, And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more."

Why would God enact a New Covenant? Would it be a modification or an improvement of the Old? Why would it be necessary?

Let us consider this: under the Old Covenant, the priests are busy all day long offering sacrifices. At Passover as many as three hundred thousand lambs would probably be

slain in a week. But these sacrifices are only for the expiation of sin, but they can't take away a man's desire to sin.

Under the New Covenant, that would change, since, according to the prophecy in Jeremiah God will put His law within men, writing it on their hearts. It will not be merely external, but internal.

Under the Old Covenant, there is no access to God. Only the priest could enter into the holy of holies, into God's presence. And that only once a year and for a limited time. But, again, according to the prophecy of Jeremiah, that would change.

"No longer shall each one teach his neighbor and teach his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

This New Covenant that God will make with man is not just an improvement on the Old, but is superior. This is not to say that the Old Covenant was flawed. It accomplished all that God had intended for it to do. It was not designed to change men internally, the New Covenant was. The Old Covenant's ability to reconcile man to God was not permanent, the New Covenant's would be.

**FALSE MESSIAHS:** In the Garden of Eden, just after the fall of man, God promised to send a Messiah, a Redeemer. The word "Messiah" originally meant a divinely appointed king.

Later, especially after the failure of the Hasmonean Kingdom in 37 BC and the Roman occupation, people began to see the Jewish Messiah as one who would deliver the Jews from their oppressors and usher in what they term a Messianic Age.

Over the years, several appeared on the scene laying claim to being the Messiah. One such person was Judah the Galilean. He's mentioned in Acts 5:37. Josephus, the first century Jewish historian, also made reference to him. He wrote: "Judah the Galilean told Jews about ten years before the birth of Jesus that it was shameful for them to be 'consenting to pay tribute to the Romans and tolerating mortal masters after having God for their Lord'"

Judah the Galilean apparently had a false prophet by the name of Saddok who presented himself to the people as Elijah - supposedly in fulfillment of the Malachi 4:5 - who was to precede the Messiah. These two, Judah and Saddok, are believed to have founded the Zealots. The Zealots were primarily a political group that attempted to incite the people to revolt against Roman authority.

Another false Messiah was Theudas, mentioned in Acts 5:36. Josephus also wrote about him and gave us the following information. Around 45 AD, Theudas influenced "the majority of the masses to take up their possessions and to follow him to the Jordan River." He told them that the Jordan would part for them at his command. Fadus, the procurator of Judea at the time, sent a troop of horsemen to prevent them from

attempting this, taking them by surprise and killing many of them.

Then there was a Egyptian Jew, who's name is unknown, who stirred up a revolt and led 4 thousand men out to the Mount of Olives. They threatened to enter into Jerusalem by force and liberate it from Roman occupation. Many of his followers were killed in the battle that followed.

There was also Simon of Peraea , a former slave of Herod the Great, who, around 4 BC rebelled and was killed by the Romans. And Athronges a shepherd who lived around 3 BC who led a rebellion.

**HOW DOES JESUS FIT INTO ALL OF THIS?:** Following all of this, what were people to think of Jesus? He claimed to be the Messiah, and spoke with great wisdom, and performed many mighty miracles; but He was crucified. This hardly seems like one who would deliver the Jews from their oppressors and usher in a Messianic Age. In fact, Jesus never tried to initiate conquering Israel's physical enemies like the Romans. Jesus even said: "My Kingdom is not of this world."

**OLD TESTAMENT SACRIFICES:** There were numerous sacrifices prescribed by the Old Covenant that were to be offered in the Temple. Whenever an Israelite sinned, his communion with God was broken. Therefore, continual sacrifices needed to be made as men continually sinned.

Forming the daily morning and evening services in the Tabernacle was the **BURNT OFFERING**. The burnt offering required a male animal: a ram, a goat, a bullock or a pigeon; and it had to be without blemish. The worshiper placed his hands on the animal to show that it was being sacrificed for his own shortcomings. The blood of the animal was thrown on the corners of the altar

Also, on Sabbaths, new moons, and festivals, additional burnt offerings would follow the ordinary worship.

Animals were not the only things offered up to God. There was also the **GRAIN OFFERING**. All grain offerings were prepared with oil and salt, but no honey or leaven could be used. It was called a good-will offering to God. It was a way of asking God to 'remember' the worshiper for good. It was a sacrifice of the best the worshiper could give.

Similar to the Burnt Offering was the **PEACE OFFERING**. For this sacrifice any animal, usually an oxen, sheep or goat, and again without defect, was offered. Except that here only the fatty portions were burnt on the altar. The *meat* was shared by the worshiper and his family. For the Peace Offering, the animal's blood was collected and poured around the edges of the altar. It was thought of as a friendship meal with God, and was sometimes referred to as the 'fellowship offering'. This sacrifice expressed the worshiper's desire to give thanks or praise to God.

Along with the animal sacrifice, both unleavened cakes and leavened bread were offered in the Peace Offering. The use of leavened bread in an offering was unusual, since leaven represents something that is impure or sinful. Here it signified the offering of sinners to God so that they could make peace with Him.

The most important sacrifice of all was the **SIN OFFERING**. It was for general redemption. It made atonement for the whole person, whereas the trespass offering only atoned for one specific offense. The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled.

When a young bull was sacrificed, the blood was sprinkled in front of the veil and put on the horns of the altar of incense. For the others the blood was put on the horns of the altar of burnt offering.

Finally there was the **TRESPASS OFFERING**, which was to atone for specific transgressions where restitution was possible. In this offering, the blood was thrown on the corners of the altars, like with the burnt offering.

**THE ROLE OF THE PRIEST IN THE SACRIFICES:** The work of the priest in these offerings was considerable. Daily he had to offer 1 lamb in the morning service and 1 lamb in the evening service. On the Sabbath, 2 additional lambs were offered after the morning service. On special high holy days, additional offerings would be made.

**LIMITS OF THE OLD COVENANT SACRIFICES:** Under the Old Covenant, sacrifices had to be made continually, day after day, year after year. Not only were the sacrifices limited in the number of sins they covered, there was no power in them to *stop* men from sinning - they had no power to change men's hearts.

Contrast that with the section of the prophecy of Jeremiah 31 where God spoke of giving man a new heart and writing His law upon it. This would certainly indicate that the New Covenant would address this situation and remedy it.

**OLD COVENANT PRIESTHOOD:** Under the Old Covenant, sin was taken away by sacrifice, and only by a priest. At Mount Sinai God, through Moses, designated Aaron, his sons, and his descendants as to serve as priests. The priesthood, under the Old Covenant is hereditary. No one outside of the tribe of Levi, could serve as a priest.

Priests had to meet very rigid standards. Just like the animals they offered, they needed to be without physical defect, such as bad eyes or a lame or injured hand or foot. They could still eat the divine food, but they couldn't officiate in the priestly work.

The priests ministered in special garments and adhered to precise rituals. Their garments and mode of service were very definitely prescribed.

Their main purpose was to act as a mediator between God and man. Offering sacrifices and praying on their behalf.

The High Priest supervised the other priests. His most solemn service was performed on the Day of Atonement. On this day, and this day only, the High Priest entered into the Holy of Holies with the blood of the sacrifice of atonement for the sins of the people.

**ORDER OF MELCHIZADEK:** The primary qualification for the priesthood under the Old Covenant was based on heritage, not morality. How does the promised Messiah fit into all of this?

First we know that according to Genesis 49:10 that the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah, not the tribe of Levi, contrary to the Old Covenant. According to Psalm 110, the Messiah would not only be a King but also a Priest. Verse 4 reads: "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind, You are a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." The Messiah would combine the roles of King and Priest.

Under the New Covenant, the Messiah *would* be a priest, but not after the same order of priest that served under the Old Covenant. He would belong to a different order, the order of Melchizedek. What do we know of this order?

**Both King & Priest:** Melchizedek was a king-priest who lived in the time of Abraham. His ancestry is completely unknown. He was king of Salem and a priest of the true God, according to Genesis 14:18. We see that he was both King and Priest.

**Ancient Order:** The Order of Melchizedek predates the Aaronic Priesthood.

#### **Comparison of the Two Priesthoods:**

The Levitical Priesthood was national.

The Levitical priests were priests of Jehovah. The name Jehovah was uniquely related to God's covenant with Israel. Therefore, Levitical Priests could minister only to Israel.

Whereas Melchizedek is called Priest of the Most High God; or El Elyon, a more universal name for God. It represents God as the possessor of both heaven and earth, God over all men regardless of national or racial distinctions.

So the Messiah, being after the order of Melchizedek, would not be the Messiah of Israel alone, but of the whole world.

Though not existent under the Old Covenant, the dual role of King and Priest is predicted by the prophets. Zechariah 6:13 states: "Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord, and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices."

Psalm 110, in verses 1 and 4, also speaks of this dual role.

We are never told anything in Scripture concerning Melchizedek's heritage. The absence of this information does not mean that Melchizedek had no parents, but rather

that his office as King-Priest is not based on heritage.

Melchizedek is called a king of righteousness and peace. But it is the Messiah who will not only be a king of both righteousness and peace, but the one who gives both righteousness and peace.

**ACCESS TO GOD:** Under the Old Covenant, access to God was limited. In the Temple, there was a veil in front of the Holy of Holies that separated the presence of God from the people. Only the high Priest was allowed to enter behind the veil, and that only once a year on the Day of Atonement. There was also a veil that served the same function in the Tabernacle in the wilderness.

The Old Covenant did not bring men into God's presence. Without a full cleansing from sin and complete forgiveness, men have no personal access to God. Mark 15:38 records that when Jesus died on the cross the veil in the Temple was torn completely in half. This was very significant. It was a visible sign that, under the New Covenant, access to God is now open to men.

Referring back to Jeremiah 31, we find this written in verses 34: "And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for they shall all know me." From the least of them to the greatest, declares the Lord.

**THE PERMANENT REMOVAL OF SIN:** The remainder of verse 34 of Jeremiah 31 states: "For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." Under the mediation of the Messiah, in the New Covenant, sin will not merely be covered over, but completely removed, and men will have access to God.

This is another difference between the Old and the New Covenants. The need for continued sacrifice under the Old Covenant served as a constant reminder that they do not have the power to remove sin. The covering of sin is only temporary. It lasts only until the next sin. But under the New Covenant, according to Jeremiah 31:35, God will remember our sins no more.

**THE SACRIFICE OF JESUS:** If Jesus is the Priest of the New Covenant, and the sacrifice He offers is powerful enough to remove sin permanently, the question needs to be asked: What did Jesus offer?

Without a sacrifice, there would be no reconciliation between God and man. Sacrifice is vital to reconciliation with God. Hebrews 9:22 states: "...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin."

Jesus said that He would establish a New Covenant in His blood. While He was eating the Passover with His disciples, He took the cup and said, "Drink of it, all of you. For this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matthew 26:28)

He also said, "Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down His life for His friends" (John 15:13).

And, referring to Himself as the Good Shepherd He said "I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:15).

Jesus offered a sacrifice that was far superior to all the bulls and goats and lambs under the Old Covenant, He offered Himself.

"As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him may have eternal life" (John 3:14,15). And Jesus said that when He is lifted up, He will draw all men to Himself (John 12:32).

**SUFFERING SERVANT:** This fits in perfectly with the Suffering Servant prophesied in Isaiah 53:4,5. He bore our griefs, He carried our sorrows. He was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. He did all of this when He went to the cross. All the penalty due to us, He took upon Himself. By His death on the cross, He was the spotless lamb, who took upon Himself the sins of the world.

John the Baptist called Jesus the "Lamb of God, Who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).

The lamb offered at Passover was a foreshadowing of Jesus, the Lamb of God. Jesus' crucifixion was not a defeat, as some say, but rather a victory. The biggest victory in the history of all mankind.

**RESOURCES:** A great resource for further study is the commentary on the book of Hebrews by John MacArthur [www.gty.org/products/Commentaries/431014](http://www.gty.org/products/Commentaries/431014)