



# Messiah Ben Joseph vs. Messiah Ben David: One Messiah, Two Missions

## Introduction

Jewish tradition sometimes distinguishes between two Messianic figures: **Messiah ben Joseph** (the suffering servant from Joseph's line) and **Messiah ben David** (the conquering king from David's line). This attempt arises from the tension in the Hebrew Scriptures, where some prophecies speak of a suffering, rejected deliverer, while others describe a glorious, reigning king. Scripture itself, however, reveals that these are not two different Messiahs but two aspects of the one Messiah, fulfilled across two advents of Jesus Christ.

## Why Two Messiahs? The Prophetic Tension

The Old Testament presents two streams of prophecy:

- **Suffering Servant.** Despised, pierced, and bearing sins (Isaiah 53; Psalm 22; Zechariah 12:10).
- **Reigning King.** Enthroned forever, ruling with righteousness (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 9:6-7; Psalm 72).

Jewish tradition resolved this tension by proposing two Messiahs: Messiah ben Joseph, who suffers and dies, and Messiah ben David, who conquers and reigns. Yet Scripture itself unites these roles in one person: the Messiah must first suffer, then enter His glory (Luke 24:26).

## Joseph as a Foreshadowing of the Suffering Messiah

Joseph's life in Genesis provides a living picture of the Messiah's suffering and exaltation.

- Rejected by his brothers (Genesis 37:4).
- Sold for silver (Genesis 37:28).
- Falsely accused and condemned (Genesis 39:20).
- Raised to the right hand of Pharaoh (Genesis 41:41-43).
- Became savior of both Egypt and his own family (Genesis 45:4-8).



Joseph's path mirrors the Messiah who was "despised and rejected of men" (Isaiah 53:3), yet exalted to save both Jew and Gentile.

## **Messiah Ben David: The Reigning King**

Other prophecies promise a glorious ruler from David's line.

- The **Davidic Covenant**: God swore, "I will set up thy seed after thee... and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever" (2 Samuel 7:12-13).
- Isaiah announced: "Unto us a child is born... Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end" (Isaiah 9:6-7).
- Psalm 72 depicts a universal reign: "He shall have dominion also from sea to sea" (Psalm 72:8).

These passages anticipate not suffering but dominion, not rejection but worldwide recognition.

## **Resolution in Jesus Christ**

The New Testament reveals that Jesus fulfills both roles:

- In His first coming, He was Messiah ben Joseph: suffering, dying, and rising again. He said, "The Son of man came... to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).
- In His second coming, He will be Messiah ben David: returning in glory to reign. "When the Son of man shall come in his glory... then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory" (Matthew 25:31).

What Jewish tradition separated into two figures, Scripture unites in one Messiah across two advents.

## **Theological Necessity of Both Roles**

Both aspects are essential:

- Without the suffering Messiah, sin remains unforgiven. "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:3).
- Without the reigning Messiah, God's promises to Israel and the nations remain incomplete. He must reign "till he hath put all enemies under his feet" (1 Corinthians



15:25).

Thus, suffering and glory are not contradictions but stages of one redemptive mission.

### **Prophetic Order: Suffering Before Glory**

The prophets themselves recognized this mystery. Peter wrote that they “testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow” (1 Peter 1:11).

Jesus explained to the disciples: “Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?” (Luke 24:26).

This order—cross before crown, Joseph before David—demonstrates God’s wisdom. Atonement must precede the Kingdom.

### **The Lion and the Lamb Imagery**

Scripture often unites opposites to portray Messiah:

- He is the **Lamb of God** who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29).
- He is also the **Lion of the tribe of Judah** who prevails to open the scroll (Revelation 5:5).

Revelation 5 merges both: the Lion appears as a Lamb slain, showing that victory is achieved through sacrifice.

### **Implications for Believers**

For believers, recognizing both aspects of Messiah shapes discipleship:

- **Gratitude for the cross.** He bore our sins as the suffering servant.
- **Hope in the crown.** He will return to establish righteousness.
- **Call to faithfulness.** As Paul wrote: “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2 Timothy 2:12).

Our lives mirror Messiah’s pattern: present suffering, future glory.

### **Prophetic Fulfillment for Israel and the Nations**

The uniting of Joseph and David’s roles in Christ ensures:



- Israel's reconciliation. They will look on Him whom they pierced (Zechariah 12:10).
- The nations' blessing. "All nations shall call him blessed" (Psalm 72:17).
- Creation's renewal. The Branch of Jesse brings peace where "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:9).

The Messiah unites suffering and reign, salvation and sovereignty, Israel and the nations.

### **Conclusion: One Anointed, Two Phases—All Promises Kept**

Messiah ben Joseph and Messiah ben David are not two separate persons but two dimensions of one Redeemer. In His first advent, Jesus fulfilled the servant role, suffering, dying, and rising. In His return, He will fulfill the kingly role, reigning in righteousness and peace. Scripture's harmony resolves the tension, revealing the Messiah as both Lamb and Lion, Joseph and David.

For believers, this truth inspires confidence: the one who bore our sins will soon rule the world.