

not have to come on an ass, Rabbi Samuel responded, "Have you a hundred-hued steed?" (8), implying that there will be something marvelous about the Messiah's mount. This suggestion, however, suffers from the problem that Zech. 9:9 explicitly calls the king's coming "lowly."

A third attempt was made by Rabbi Joshua (9). He suggested that Dan. 7:13-14 and Zech. 9:9 picture two alternative comings. If Israel is worthy, the Messiah will come "with the clouds of heaven." If not, he will come "lowly and riding upon an ass."

The New Testament, of course, pictures these two comings as real and successive: the Messiah first comes in a lowly manner to suffer and die; in the future he will come to judge and to reign forever. This fits the Old Testament better, as it gives no hint that Dan. 7:13-14 and Zech. 9:9 are merely possible alternatives. In fact, the New Testament is able to connect the "lowly" coming with the Messiah's suffering (which the Rabbis cannot) just because the suffering Messiah is also the coming king. Here again, we see the superiority of the New Testament model in accounting for the Old Testament data.

#### The Nature of the Messiah

What kind of person was this Messiah to be? Here we find great variety among the various Messianic models. During the centuries preceding the time of Jesus, a number of apocryphal books were written among the Jews, in several of which attempts were made to picture the Messiah. In some he is strictly human; in some he is angelic; in others an attempt is made to combine both human and super-human features (10).

With the rise of Christianity and the destruction of the second temple, Rabbinical Judaism became dominant among the Jews. Here the humanity of the Messiah comes to be emphasized to the neglect of any super-human features, and the Messianic age is emphasized almost to the point of ignoring the Messiah himself (11). Thus when Rabbi Akiba assigned one of the thrones in Dan. 7:9 to God and one to David (a name for the Messiah), he was sharply rebuked for putting any man next to God (12).

The New Testament model of the Messiah is a man, of course, but also much more than a man. With the doctrine of the virgin birth, the New Testament transcends even the apocryphal models of an angelic Messiah, and it seems to be unique in picturing the Messiah as divine.

Well, not quite unique! The Old Testament contains passages which seem to require the New Testament model. Micah 5:2 says: