



LESSON 60

Messianic Prophecies, Part 1

“I marvel that where the ambitious dreams of myself and of Alexander and of Caesar should have vanished into thin air, a Judean peasant—Jesus—should be able to stretch out his hands across the centuries, and control the destinies of men and nations.”

NAPOLEON BONAPARTE

Kirk’s Comment

If Jesus is God, we should worship and obey Him. If Jesus is not God, then according to His own claims of His identity, we must dismiss Him as a liar or a crazy man.

QUESTIONS & OBJECTIONS

“On the cross, Jesus cried, ‘My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ This proves He was a fake. God forsook Him.”

Jesus’ words recorded in Matthew 27:46 and Mark 15:34 were the fulfillment of David’s prophecy in Psalm 22:1. Verse 3 of this psalm then gives us insight into why God forsook Jesus on the cross: “But You are holy...” A holy Creator cannot have fellowship with sin. When Jesus was on the cross, the sin of the entire world was laid upon Him (Isaiah 53:6; 2 Corinthians 5:21), but Scripture says God is “of purer eyes than to behold evil, and cannot look on iniquity” (Habakkuk 1:13).



Messianic Prophecies

Unlike any other book, the Bible offers a multitude of specific predictions—some thousands of years in advance—that either have been literally fulfilled or point to a definite future time when they will come true. Fulfilled prophecies argue for omniscience—only one who is omniscient can accurately predict details of events thousands of years in the future. Limited human beings know the future only if it is told to them by an omniscient Being.

There are two categories of biblical prophecy: messianic (those that speak of the coming Messiah) and non-messianic. In his comprehensive catalogue of prophecies, *The Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecies*, J. Barton Payne lists 191 prophecies concerning the anticipated Jewish Messiah and Savior. Each was literally fulfilled in the life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus of Nazareth. A sampling of these prophecies follows.

Messiah's Birth

Isaiah predicted that one called Immanuel (“God with us”) would be born of a virgin: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel” (7:14). This prediction was made over 700 years in advance.

The New Testament affirms that Jesus fulfilled this prediction, saying, “All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: ‘The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel’—which means, ‘God with us’” (Matthew 1:22,23).

Micah made the unambiguous prophecy, “But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins are from of old, from ancient times” (Micah 5:2). Even the unbelieving Jewish scribes identified this as a prediction of the Messiah and directed the inquiring magi to Bethlehem:

After Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the time of King Herod, Magi from the east came to Jerusalem and asked, “Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star in the



east and have come to worship him.” When King Herod heard this he was disturbed, and all Jerusalem with him. When he had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written: ‘But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you will come a ruler who will be the shepherd of my people Israel’” (Matthew 2:1–6).

Messiah’s Ancestry

God declared in Genesis that the messianic blessing for all the world would come from the offspring of Abraham: “I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2,3; cf. 22:18).

Jesus Christ was indeed the seed of Abraham. Matthew’s Gospel begins, “A record of the genealogy of Jesus Christ the son of David, the son of Abraham” (1:1). Paul adds, “The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘and to seeds,’ meaning many people, but ‘and to your seed,’ meaning one person, who is Christ” (Galatians 3:16).

The Redeemer would come through the tribe of Judah: “The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his” (Genesis 49:10).

According to the New Testament genealogies, this was Jesus’ ancestry:

Now Jesus himself was about thirty years old when he began his ministry. He was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli . . . the son of Judah, the son of Jacob, the son of Isaac, the son of Abraham (Luke 3:23,33,34; cf. Matthew 1:1–3).

For it is clear that our Lord descended from Judah (Hebrews 7:14).



The books of Samuel record the prediction that the Messiah would be of the house of David. God said to David: “When your days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son” (2 Samuel 7:13,14).

The New Testament repeatedly affirms that Jesus Christ was “the son of David” (Matthew 1:1). Jesus Himself claimed to be “the son of David” (Matthew 22:42–45). The Palm Sunday crowd also hailed Jesus as “the son of David” (Matthew 21:9). Luke 1:32,33 says of Jesus: “He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end.”

Herald of Messiah’s Coming

Isaiah predicted that the Messiah would be heralded by a messenger of the Lord who would be “a voice of one calling: ‘In the desert prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God’” (40:3).

This prediction was literally fulfilled in the ministry of John the Baptist. Matthew records: “In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.’ This is he who was spoken of through the prophet Isaiah: ‘A voice of one calling in the desert, ‘Prepare the way for the Lord, make straight paths for him’” (3:1–3).

Isaiah 11:2 foretold that the Messiah would be anointed by the Holy Spirit for His ministry: “The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD.”

This literally happened to Jesus at His baptism. Matthew 3:16,17 says, “As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. And a voice from heaven said, This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.”



Isaiah 61 said that the Messiah would preach the gospel to the poor and brokenhearted. Jesus pointed out His fulfillment of this ministry in the Nazareth synagogue:

The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor” (Luke 4:17–19).

Jesus carefully cut off his reading in the middle of a sentence, failing to add the next phrase, “and the day of vengeance of our God.” That refers to His second coming; it was not fulfilled that day in their hearing, as was the rest of the prophecy.

Isaiah 35:5,6 declared that the Messiah would perform miracles to confirm His ministry, asserting: “Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped.”

The Gospel record is filled with Jesus’ miracles. For example: “Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness” (Matthew 9:35). Jesus even cited these very things for John the Baptist as His messianic calling card: “Go back and report to John what you hear and see: The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor” (Matthew 11:4,5).

Messiah’s Work

Among many psalms applicable to the ministry of Jesus is 118:22, which foretells Messiah’s rejection by His people: “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone.”

This very verse is cited repeatedly in the New Testament. For example, Peter wrote, “Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, ‘The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone’” (1 Peter 2:7; cf. Matthew 21:42; Mark 12:10; Luke 20:17; Acts 4:11).



QUESTIONS

1. **Why is the Bible like no other book?**
2. **Why do fulfilled prophecies argue for omniscience?**
3. **What are the two categories of biblical prophecy?**
4. **How many years in advance had Isaiah predicted that Jesus would be born of a virgin?**
5. **Could you prove Jesus is the Messiah by using just the Old Testament?**

WORDS OF COMFORT

I was speaking at a church in Houston, Texas, and was very conscious of scorpions. The previous week, a number of the little beasts had been found in the house where I was staying.



While I was in the pulpit that Sunday, I saw one crawl across the floor in front of me, so I called out “Scorpion!” Much to the amusement of the congregation, it turned out to be a large grasshopper.

During the same sermon, I spied a large black spider heading for my hand as I leaned on the pulpit. I screamed, “Tarantula!”, picked up a glass of water that was on the pulpit and dumped it on the brute. That delighted the congregation even more.

I was wrong again. It wasn’t a tarantula, it was merely an oversized black widow—America’s deadliest spider.

Memory Verse

“But now a righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the Law and the prophets; even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ to all and upon all them that believe.”

ROMANS

3:21,22

Last Words

Michelangelo (1475–1564), the Italian artist and sculptor, was one of the greatest sculptors the world has ever known. His remarkable paintings in the Sistine Chapel at Rome made him famous. God-fearing, his brief will contained the statement: “I commit my soul to God, my body to the earth, my possessions to my nearest relatives. I die in the faith of Jesus Christ and in the firm hope of a better life.” His last word was an exhortation to those at his bedside:

“Through life remember the suffering of Jesus.”