

Vacation Bible Study, July 11-15, 1994
Adult class topics

Journey to the Messiah

A Survey of Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus

"Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days." Acts 3:24 NIV

1. Gen. 3:15, prophecies relating to the uniqueness of Jesus' coming.
2. Psalm 110, prophecies relating to the authority of Jesus and his mission.
3. Zech. 9:9, prophecies that Jesus consciously fulfilled.
4. Psalm 22, prophecies relating to Jesus' suffering and triumph.

Jesus told his disciples that the prophecies of scripture must and would be fulfilled in him (Luke 22:37, 24:44). And Peter taught that "all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days" (Acts 3:24 NIV). In fact there are several hundred prophecies in the Hebrew Old Testament that relate to the coming of the Christ, his mission, and his kingdom. These prophecies are often cited in New Testament speeches and writings as evidence for the claim that Jesus is the Messiah (messiah = Christ = anointed one). In terms of odds, the odds of one person accidentally or coincidentally fulfilling even a portion of these prophecies is remote, and when the sum of all is considered it becomes mathematically impossible to suppose that anything other than deliberate plan and divine power could achieve the detailed fulfillment found in the New Testament account of Jesus' life. The prophecies of the Hebrew Old Testament are still a powerful testimony for the truth of Jesus' claim to be the anointed one sent by God. Peter wrote that "we have the prophetic message more fully confirmed. You will do well to be attentive to this as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts" (2 Peter 1:19 NRSV).

This series of studies will consider only a few of the hundreds of prophecies relating to the life, work, and kingdom of the Messiah. However, even the few here considered far exceed the believable limits for coincidence in their combined fulfillment. Jesus' words are verified in the circumstances and events of his life. He asserted that "the time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel" (Mark 1:15 RSV), and the gospel writers demonstrated for us that indeed, in Jesus, the Messianic kingdom came as prophecy after prophecy was fulfilled. This message, that Jesus is the Messiah of prophecy, is a constant theme in the preaching recorded in the book of Acts. When the apostles preached Jesus they quoted the prophets. The prophets were presented consistently as evidence for the truth of the claim that Jesus is the Messiah and are just as regularly presented in the epistles as valuable for information and confirmation in the growing church.

Besides the direct prophecies of Jesus there are many allegorical prophecies as well, such as the sacrifice of Isaac, Abraham's son (Genesis 22). The prophetic enterprise is also woven into names and words, as for example the series of names recorded in the genealogy of Noah (Genesis 5). The names and their meanings comprise a virtual messianic statement:

Adam—Man
 Seth—Appointed
 Enosh—Mortal
 Kenan—Sorrow
 Mahalalel—The Blessed God
 Jared—Shall Come Down
 Enoch—Teaching
 Methuselah—His Death Shall Bring
 Lamech—The Despairing
 Noah—Rest, Comfort

I. Prophecies relating to the uniqueness of Jesus' coming.

This lesson will consider several prophecies that describe characteristics of Jesus' arrival in the world, including the nature of his conception, the place of his birth, and the circumstances of his time and place in this world.

A. Prophecies about his birth.

1. Genesis 3:14-15, generally regarded as the first explicit prophecy of Jesus.

As background for this prophecy, what had just happened in the first 13 verses of Genesis 3?

Who is the message in verses 14-15 addressed to?

What other name(s) do we know the serpent by? (Rev. 20:2)

What does this warning to Satan say about the future coming of his adversary?

Was Jesus born of the "seed" of a woman? (Gal. 4:4)

Note: Most ancient cultures were unaware that the female even supplied a "seed" (egg) in the process of conception, supposing the male "seed" (sperm) was "planted" in the fertile "ground" of the female womb, there to grow into a child. This passage not only sets forth the prophetic idea of the miraculous human birth of Jesus (of woman's seed, but not man's), it also shows a unique ancient insight into the unseen microscopic world of human conception.

2. Isaiah 7:13-14, the virgin¹ will conceive and bear a son (Matt. 1:18-25).

How many people are you aware of who have been born to a virgin with no exposure to a man's seed?

Why do you think the Messiah needed to be born of woman, but not have a human father?

3. Micah 5:2, out of Bethlehem (Matt. 2:1-6).

Over the centuries many have been put forward as Messiahs.

How many have come from Bethlehem?²

Could anyone be the Messiah spoken of in scripture but not come from Bethlehem?

4. Genesis 12:1-3, of the seed of Abraham (Matt. 1:1, Gal. 3:16).

Note: And similarly, of the seed of Isaac, Gen. 17:19, and of Jacob, Num. 24:17.

According to the promises of God, what family did the

¹The Hebrew word "virgin" in Isaiah 7:14 can mean "a virgin" or "a young woman" and a few Bible translations offer the latter interpretation. However, more than two hundred years before Jesus' birth this passage had been translated into Greek, the Septuagint translation, and in that Greek version the word was unambiguously translated with the Greek word for "virgin," as quoted by Matthew.

²In all of history only a few thousand of the billions who have lived on earth have been born in Bethlehem. The odds of one who seemed to be the Messiah "happening" to come from Bethlehem are very small.

Messiah have to come from?

Could this group of prophecies be fulfilled by anyone who was not a Jew, or by anyone whose ancient genealogy was unknown?

5. Genesis 49:8-12, of the tribe of Judah (Matt. 1:3).
What Jewish family line did the Messiah have to come from to complete the prophecies?
Can people choose the family they're born into, or the place where they're born? Who can?
Did Jesus fulfill this prophetic requirement?
Could anyone today fulfill this prophecy? Explain³.
Could anyone today, or since the first century, really fulfill these prophecies about the family the Messiah would come from?

6. 2 Samuel 7:12-16, Isaiah 9:7, a son of David (Matt. 1:1, 21:9, Luke 2:1-5).
How was the family description of the Messiah further narrowed in prophecy?
Consider the same questions regarding the family of David as those under #5 above.
Note that this prophecy of the Messiah coming through David was further complicated and narrowed by the exclusion of any descendant of King Jeconiah (also called Coniah or Jehoiachin) from prospering or reigning on David's throne (Jeremiah 22:24-30). Nevertheless Jeconiah represented the royal line of David. Matthew tells us that Jesus was the legal heir of David through Jeconiah because his apparent father Joseph was a descendant of David through Jeconiah, though Jesus himself was not a descendent of Jeconiah (Matthew 1:11, 16). Luke informs us that Jesus was both legally an heir of David and physically a son of David through Mary whose genealogy is traced to David through a different son (Luke 3:31 and see Numbers 27:1-11, 36:1-12 relating special instructions for passing an inheritance through a woman).

7. Hosea 11:1, called out of Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15).

8. Jeremiah 31:11-17, the deliverer's coming would be accompanied by celebration and tragedy (Matt. 2:16-18).

³Though some Jews in the modern world think they are descended from one particular tribe or another, the fact is since 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem no Jew has had a definite pedigree. No modern Jew knows with certainty which ancient tribe he is descended from, or even if he is a true son of Abraham.

II. Prophecies relating to the authority of Jesus and his mission.

This lesson will consider several prophecies relating to the work the Messiah would do in this world, and the kind of authority he would exercise.

1. Recall from the previous lesson, Gen. 3:15, the Messiah's work would be to defeat the serpent, Satan (1 John 3:8).
If the Messiah would defeat the serpent, how could he do it?
What all did the Messiah have to be in order to fulfil this prophecy?
How did Jesus confront and defeat Satan?
2. Psalm 110, ruling priest (see also 1 Sam. 2:35; Matt. 22:41-45, Hebrews 5:6ff).
What does this prophecy describe the Messiah as doing?
What kind of followers would the Messiah have?
In verses 1-3 Messiah seems to be a king and war leader; what is he in verse 4?
What is the job of a priest?
How has Jesus been a priest and fulfilled this prophecy?
What is to come through this king/priest on the day of wrath?
3. Micah 5:2-5a, ruler over Israel, shepherd of his people, bringer of peace (and see also Isaiah 40:10-11; John 10:11).
Recall from the previous lesson the importance of where the Messiah was born. What was the one from Bethlehem to be?
What was remarkable about the baby born in Bethlehem—he came from there, but did he begin there? Explain.
Would Israel be a great power when the Messiah appeared?
Explain your answer.
In verses 4-5 what would the Messiah's mission be?
Did Jesus think this described his job? Support your answer.
4. Numbers 24:17-19, a ruler of Israel and the nations.
What words are used to describe the authority of the one Balaam foresaw?
What kind of mission did Balaam seem to be foretelling for the Messiah?
Is Jesus ever pictured as a conqueror or almighty judge? Support your answer.
5. Deuteronomy 18:15-19, the prophet to whom the people must listen (Acts 3:19-25)
What sort of person was God supposed to raise up, according to Moses?
Why would God send a man like this?

What would the prophet do?
Was Jesus ever thought as a prophet or The Prophet? Support your answer.

What would the LORD God require of people once he sent the prophet?
According to this prophecy then, how should we respond to the Messiah?

6. Isaiah 9:6-7, ruler of an unending boundless kingdom (Matt. 28:18-20).

What description of the Messiah can be gained from this passage?

How is the authority of the Messiah described here?

What mission would the Messiah have?

Do you think Jesus had this mission? Explain your answer.

7. Isaiah 11:1-5, empowered by the Holy Spirit, he would rule with justice for all classes, especially reaching out to the poor and meek (Acts 10:38)

What does this prophecy tell us about the human roots of the Messiah?

Did Jesus have these roots?

What great aid would the Messiah have?

Did Jesus have this aid? How do we know?

Since the Messiah is described here as a judge, what criteria of judgment would he use, and what would he not use?

Who would the Messiah help, and who would he condemn?

Has Jesus in any way balanced justice this way, or is this something still unfulfilled? Support your answer.

8. Isaiah 42:1-4, the Messiah would come as a servant and be submissive to the extreme (Matt. 20:28).

What is the basic description here of the person the Messiah would be?

As in the previous passage, who would be the companion for the Messiah?

And what would the Messiah bring?

How could a servant bring justice?

What was the Messiah's attitude and approach supposed to be in verses 3-4?

Did Jesus demonstrate this attitude, this restraint⁴?

9. Malachi 3:1-3, 4:5-6, Isaiah 40:3-5, a forerunner would come first (Mark 1:1-3).

What was John's role and how did he validate Jesus ministry?

What was Jesus' mission according to these prophecies?

10. Isaiah 59:19-20, the redeemer (Matt. 1:21).

Describe the Messiah's mission and the reach of his authority.

⁴Consider that one reason Jesus cursed the fig tree (Matthew 21:18-22) was to show his disciples that his response to rebellion in clearing the temple (Matthew 21:12-15) showed great gentleness and restraint, considering who he was and the authority he truly had.

III. Prophecies that Jesus consciously fulfilled.

This lesson will cover a few of the prophecies that Jesus knew applied to him as the Messiah of Israel, which he chose to accept and fulfil. In a human sense, no person could choose where they were born or what family they were born in. These prophecies relate to choices that Messiah would make, knowing the effect they would have.

1. Zechariah 9:9-10, the king on a donkey (Matt. 21:1-11).
What did Zechariah foretell about the coming king?
What was the symbolism of the donkey?
How did it happen that Jesus one day rode into Zion (Jerusalem) on a donkey?
Did Jesus know what he was doing and the effect it would have?
Why did Jesus ride into Zion on a donkey then?
According to Zechariah, what would be missing from Messiah's kingdom? Would Messiah make Israel a great military power? What sort of kingdom would the king on a donkey have though?
2. Psalm 78:1-4, teaching in parables (Matt. 13:34-35).
How was the LORD's word going to be taught?
Did Jesus teach this way?
Why did Jesus teach this way?
Did Jesus know that he was following prophecy when he taught in parables?
3. Isaiah 9:1-2, the Galilean ministry (Matt. 4:12-17).
Where was the Messiah supposed to shine like a light?
What attitude would people generally have about Galilee?
What great need existed in Galilee?
Where did Jesus seem to do most of his preaching and miracles?
Why did Jesus choose to launch his preaching and healing ministry in Galilee?
4. Isaiah 61:1-2, preaching and healing (Luke 4:16-21; see also Isaiah 53:4, Matt. 8:16-17).
What did Isaiah say the One led by The Spirit would do?
Who would his ministry really focus on?
Who did Jesus seem to focus his ministry on?
Did Jesus understand that he was fulfilling prophecy in preaching to the poor and healing the hurting?
Do you think there have ever been others who thought themselves Messiahs that did not minister in this way?
How did Jesus seem to view his own responsibility toward prophecy?
5. Isaiah 42:1, the servant (John 13:1-16).
What character was the Messiah to have?
Did Jesus have to be a servant to his disciples or was it a matter of choice?
Why did Jesus "lower" himself and serve others, rather than

take advantage of their admiration of him?
Have others with Messianic aspirations been very successful at being servants, in your opinion?

6. Haggai 2:6-9, Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11, Psalm 69:9, the cleansing of the temple (Luke 19:45-46, John 2:13-17).

According to prophecy, who was supposed to come to the temple?

What attitude was he supposed to have?

What would be the general status of the way the temple was being used?

Did Jesus seem to know these prophecies and apply them to himself?

7. Daniel 9:24-27⁵, his own death (Matt. 16:21-23, Matt. 26:52-56).

What did Jesus understand the prophetic conclusion of his ministry would be?

Was Jesus capable of refusing the end he knew was foretold? Support your answer.

Why did Jesus go to Jerusalem about a week before he was crucified (Luke 18:31-33)?

In human terms, who chose the time and circumstances of Jesus' final confrontations, betrayal, and death?

Did Jesus consciously fulfill the prophecies of the Messiah's death?

7. Psalm 41:9, he befriended his betrayer (Matt. 26:23-24, John 13:18, 17:12).

Who betrayed Jesus?

Was the idea in the Psalm completed in Jesus' experience?

Did Jesus know about this Psalm and understand it this way?

Why did Jesus choose Judas?

Did Jesus then try to reach Judas and sway him to change?

While it is evident that Jesus chose to fulfill this prophecy, do you think he wanted to, that he enjoyed doing so? And others we've seen?

⁵This prophecy also provides a timetable for the coming of the Messiah. "Sixty nine weeks" is usually understood to mean 69X7 years, or 483 years, from the proclamation to rebuild Jerusalem to the coming of the Messiah. We can be fairly certain that Jesus was born in about 5 B.C. (±, since Herod died in 4 B.C.) and began his ministry in about 25 C.E. (±25 A.D.) when he was about 30 years old. From the time of Ezra's letter from Atraxerxes (458 B.C., Ezra 7:11-26) to the time of Jesus' ministry fulfills this period of 483 years. Various schemes have been applied to define this time in detail, though we are uncertain of the exact times of Jesus birth and death, but generally it is evident that the time frame Daniel refers to culminates during the days of Jesus.

IV. Prophecies about Jesus' suffering and victory.

This lesson will cover some of the many prophecies that foretold the suffering of Jesus and his victory through death. Remember when reading these passages that while they give accurate descriptions of the form of crucifixion Jesus experienced, that form of punishment did not come into being until Roman times many centuries after the writing of these prophetic messages. Neither the Psalmists nor the prophets had ever seen this kind of execution, nor would anyone until the Romans invented it.

1. Psalm 22, esp. vv1, 6-21, the experience of the cross.
Consider that Jesus quoted Psalm 22:1 on the cross (Mark 15:34). Considering our previous lesson, do you think he did this intentionally, calling attention to the Psalm and its fulfillment?
According to the Psalm, how would the Messiah be viewed by other people?
Did people treat Jesus this way, especially at the end?
Was Jesus mocked for his trust in God? (v. 8, Matt. 27:41-43)
What distress is described in vv14-15, and did Jesus experience it?
Was there an assembly of the wicked (v. 16) involved in Jesus' death?
How were the physical elements of verse 16 completed in Jesus?
How would execution by crucifixion fulfill the description in verse 17?
What was to happen to the Messiah's few possessions?
Did it happen to Jesus as described in verse 18? (John 19:24).
Despite all of this suffering and adversity, what did the Psalm present as the outcome?
2. Isaiah 49:15-16, Zechariah 13:6, inscribed on his palms, wounds in his hands (John 20:25-27).
The previous passage in Psalms describes the hands and feet being pierced. What did Isaiah say would be on the Lord's palms?
What does this imply about the nature of the marks on the Messiah's hands—why are they there and what do they mean?
According to Zechariah, what kind of marks would the Messiah's hands have?
Was Jesus wounded in the house of his friends? Explain.
3. Isaiah 50:5-6, beaten without rebellion (Matthew 26:67, 27:26, 30).
What experience was the Messiah to have?
What attitude is ascribed to the Messiah in this prophecy?
In order for this attitude to be meaningful—to be an offering—the Messiah would have to have the power to make a choice. Did Jesus have this attitude, this experience, and the power to make a choice?

4. Zechariah 11:12-13, thirty pieces of silver for the shepherd (Matt. 27:9).
 What pay did Zechariah receive for his work as a shepherd?
 What did Zechariah do with the money, at God's direction?
 How was the imagery of this prophecy fulfilled in Jesus?
 What sort of attitude toward the Messiah did this prophecy foreshadow?
5. Zechariah 12:10, the pierced messiah (John 19:37).
 This passage is in the first person ("I" and "me"). Who seems to be talking? Who would "pour out a spirit of grace?"
 Then who would be "the one they pierced?"
 What was this prophecy foretelling about the Messiah's experience in this world?
 What was this prophecy foretelling about who the Messiah would truly be?
 Did Jesus do and experience the things foreseen by Zechariah?
Note that John also applies a paraphrase of this prophecy to the second coming of Jesus, Revelation 1:7.
6. Isaiah 52:13-53:12, like a lamb to the slaughter.
 What does this prophecy foretell about the appearance of the Messiah?
 ...about the experiences of the Messiah? ...about the attitude of the Messiah? ...about the accomplishments of the Messiah?
 Name all the people you can think of for whom evidence exists that they fit the description put forth by Isaiah.
- 6a. Isaiah 53:9, buried with the rich (Matt. 27:57-60).
 Who was the Messiah to be with in his death?
 Since Jesus was not a wealthy man, how did this come about for him?
 Roughly how often do people executed as criminals end up in a rich man's tomb?
- 6b. Isaiah 53:9a,12, executed with criminals (Luke 22:37, 23:32).
 What was the Messiah to be counted as?
 How did it happen that a man considered honest and guiltless was nevertheless condemned and executed as a criminal?
7. Psalm 34:20, Exodus 12:46, no bones were broken (John 19:36).
 Considering the treatment described for the Messiah and experienced by Jesus, would it be likely that he would have broken bones?
 Besides being a special condition, do you think there is any special significance in this prophetic promise? Explain.
8. Psalm 16:8-11, dead and buried—and resurrected (Acts 2:25-32).

What experiences of the Messiah are foreshadowed here?
What did the apostles who knew Jesus believe this prophecy foretold?
Where did they get this idea?
There is good evidence that Jesus literally died and was resurrected and received into glory. How many other cases of the same thing are well attested?

In this study series we've considered only a few of the more than 300 prophecies relating to the Messiah in the Hebrew scriptures. These prophecies foretold the family he would be born into, the place he would be born, numerous circumstances of his times and the places he would be, and various details of his life and death experiences. If any of these prophecies could be shown to be invalid in the case of Jesus, then the case for his being the Messiah, the Christ, would be undone. If Jesus were born anywhere except Bethlehem for example, he could not be the one the scriptures foretold, nor can anyone else not born in Bethlehem. The odds of anyone accidentally or coincidentally fulfilling all of the prophecies we've looked at, let alone all of those contained in the scriptures, are astronomically small. The odds that you or I will wake up in the morning and find we've been transformed into honey bees are about as high. It just is not mathematically possible that Jesus could have accidentally fit the prophetic mold as he did, and it is not credible that the apostles conspired to invent those circumstances for Jesus life and death and then die as criminals for their inventions. The apostles consistently cited three kinds of evidence for their claim that Jesus is the Messiah: the work of the Holy Spirit, the testimony of prophecy, and eyewitness testimony. The credibility of that threefold testimony holds still. As Peter said, "we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts." (2 Pet. 1:19 NIV)