

Prophecy in the Old Testament About Christ

Both Jesus and the authors of the New Testament emphasized the use of previously issued predictions about the Jewish Messiah in the Scriptures in order to prove that Jesus was the fulfillment of all the inspired prophecies of the Old Testament authors. Although the prophets were primarily interested in their contemporary audience in Israel and Judah that lived hundreds of years before Christ, they also had a futuristic prophetic message about the promised Messiah. In Luke 24:27, after the resurrection, Jesus taught His disciples that the Old Testament prophets all spoke of Him, and predicted His ministry. In 1 Peter 1:10-12, the Apostle Peter wrote that the prophets spoke of the salvation Jesus would bring, and spoke of the sufferings of Christ and the resurrection. On his missionary journeys in the Book of Acts, Paul would go in the local synagogues first and show his fellow Jews how Jesus fulfilled all the O.T. prophecies. The prophets were preaching a message of hope that the Christ would be a benevolent king who would bring justice, peace, put an end to evil, and provide salvation.

Moses explained early on in Deuteronomy 18 that they should be wary of fortune-tellers and diviners. The true prophets would be raised up by God, and have no selfish agenda. Moses anticipated their question about how they could know a false prophet from a true prophet, and gave a simple answer. When a true prophet speaks for the Lord, everything he says will come true. I read somewhere that in the twentieth century 98% of the predictions of psychics have been wrong. I guess this explains why no psychic has ever won the lottery. A wise man once said that it's very difficult to prophesy, especially about the future! Therefore when we study the prophecies in the Bible, it is safe to say that all of them have either come true already, or they will come true in the future, and the only way this is possible is if they were inspired by God. Before we consider the prophecies that were given about the end times, let's look at some of the prophecies about Jesus which came true with His first coming.

Isaiah and Malachi Predicted John the Baptist

In Matthew's Gospel we read that John the Baptist fulfilled the prophecies in Isaiah 40:3, that there would be a preacher in the wilderness that would announce the arrival of the Messiah, and John would look like and have a ministry like Elijah. In Matt.11:10, Jesus quoted from Malachi 3:1 to prove that John was the fulfillment of the promised messenger who would pave the way for Jesus. Also in Malachi 4:5-6, the prophet predicted that God would send a messenger like Elijah. In John 1:21, the priests asked John the Baptist if he was Elijah, and he said no, but that he was the fulfillment of Isaiah and Malachi's prophecies about the forerunner of the Messiah. Sure enough, after a ministry of preaching to large crowds in the wilderness telling them to get ready, John introduced Jesus as the Messiah (Jn.1:29-34). Keep in mind that Isaiah had predicted this over 700 years before, and Malachi wrote it about 450 years before Jesus came.

Born of a Virgin in Bethlehem, and Attacked by Herod

In Matthew 1:18-25, we read the author's account of the birth of Jesus. His mother Mary was a virgin, and so the angel appeared to Joseph to explain that she was with child by the Holy Spirit. The angel explained that this was all a fulfillment of what Isaiah 7:14 had predicted over 700 years before, "Behold the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son and they shall call Him Immanuel which means, God with us" Now I'm trying to remember how many sons have been born to virgins who were referred to as God with us? Oh yeah, in the history of the world only one very unique Person—JESUS. Now we know from Matt 2:23 and Luke 1:26-28 that Joseph and Mary were from Nazareth up north in the Galilean area so we expect Jesus to be born there, right? Wrong because the prophet Micah had predicted 450 years before that He would be born in Bethlehem, just east of Jerusalem (Micah5:2). We read in Luke's account of His birth that they had to go there to register for a census, and while they were there, Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Who could have foreseen that coming, but God? Some wise men from the east were aware of the Bible's prophecies about the coming king so they showed up to ask King Herod the Great just where this king was to be born. The chief priests checked the O.T. Scriptures and found out that Micah 5:2 predicted that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem, but it gets better! Herod wanted no rivals so he sent some goons to kill the newborn king, but Lo and Behold, the wise men warned Jesus' parents and they took Him to Egypt until Herod died. Amazingly this was all predicted by Jeremiah and Hosea long before. Jeremiah wrote of the weeping because Herod had ordered the killing of all male babies two years old and younger (Matt.2:18), but Jesus escaped to Egypt just as Hosea predicted (Matt.2:15)

Jesus' Ministry in Galilee

In Isaiah 9:1-2, the prophet predicted that the Messiah would live and minister in the Galilean area where the tribes of Zebulun and Naphtali had settled. Sure enough Jesus made Capernaum His home during His ministry and then travelled around to all the towns and villages around the north side of the Sea of Galilee preaching the good news and doing miracles. Matt. 4:13-17 tells us that Jesus' ministry fulfilled Isaiah 9, and that Jesus' message was like a light shining in a dark place, "The people who were in that land of darkness saw a great light" and Jesus was like a light dawning upon them. Isaiah 53:4 also said that the Messiah would have a ministry of healing, and Matthew 8:17 tells us that Jesus was going about healing people who were sick and it fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy. Then in Matthew 13:35, after Jesus was teaching with parables, the author wrote that it was a fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 78:2, "I will speak in parables, uttering things hidden since the foundation of the world." Therefore the prophets predicted hundreds of years before that the Messiah would reveal awesome spiritual truths through the use of short fictitious stories that have become famous such as the Parable of the Soils, the Good Samaritan, the Prodigal Son, and many others. In both Micah 5:4 and Zech. 11 portrays the Messiah as the Good Shepherd, and in the Gospel of John 10:11, 14, we read of Jesus telling His audience that "I am the good shepherd, and the good

shepherd lays down His life for the sheep". Therefore Jesus was making it clear at every opportunity that He is the fulfillment of all the Old Testament prophecies.

Prophecies of the Passion Week

The passion week of Christ began with what we call Palm Sunday, which is also referred to as Christ's celebrated and triumphal entry into Jerusalem. The prophet Zechariah predicted the means and the manner in which Jesus would enter Jerusalem and that they would hail Him as king. In Zech.9:9 we read "Rejoice greatly O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt." Zechariah predicted that the king would enter on a donkey's colt, and that was a totally unique event that no one could have anticipated because kings ride in processions and enter important cities in gold chariots or limousines. Zechariah also described the king in a most unique way. The King would be righteous, he would provide salvation, be gentle and humble, and be a peacemaker. Out of all the kings in history, only Jesus can be described in these ways. The New Testament authors agree and the Gospels quote from Zechariah and say that Jesus fulfilled this description. Psalm 118:26 even predicted what the crowds would be yelling, "Hosanna to the Son of David, blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord", and sure enough Matt.21:9 quotes it as fulfilled in Jesus. Many other prophecies were fulfilled like cleaning out the money changers and teaching in the Temple, but the prophets' anticipation of the betrayer Judas is one of the most shocking. In Matt. 26:14-16, we read that Judas went to the chief priests to betray Jesus for money. Judas asked them what it was worth to them, and they paid him thirty pieces of silver, a very low evaluation. Later Judas felt remorse in Matt. 27:3 and returned to the Temple "and he threw the pieces of silver into the sanctuary". The priests took the money and bought the Potters Field as a place to bury strangers. Then the author quoted the identical prediction from Zechariah and Jeremiah. Jesus was aware of all these predictions, and often pointed out to the disciples as things were happening that they fulfilled prophecy, just as He did in the Last Supper when He told them "Truly I say to you that one of you will betray Me" and then a little later Jesus told Judas "What you do, do quickly".

After Judas left, Jesus told all the disciples that they would all fall away from Him when He would be arrested (Matt.26:31), and then Jesus quoted from Zechariah 13:7, "I will strike the Shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered". Think of the ramifications that Jesus knew in advance that all these events would take place, and He still stepped up and was obedient to the Father's will to give Himself up as a ransom for many. In Matt. 23:39, in His farewell address to the people of Jerusalem, Jesus said "you shall not see Me again until you say, 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" Jesus quoted that from the prophet Zechariah 12:10, so He knew that they would reject Him in the first coming but receive Him in the second coming. Jesus was also aware of His coming resurrection from the dead as He made known in Matt.12:39-40 when He quoted from the prophet Jonah 1:17, that just as Jonah was three days in the belly of the big fish, Jesus would be three days in the grave and

arise. David had also predicted the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ as well as that the guards would gamble for His clothes in Psalm 22:14-18. Isaiah 53 also predicted that Jesus would be crucified with criminals, but be buried in the tomb of a rich man, all of which was fulfilled in Matt.27:57-60.

Predictions of Christ's Second Coming

Since all of these prophecies from the Old Testament about Christ's first coming were fulfilled, then how certain should we be about the second coming? The New Testament authors were absolutely certain, and based their hope on the certainty of the second coming and our resurrection. In fact the New Testament ends with the Apostle John quoting Jesus as saying "Yes I am coming quickly" and then John's affirmation "Come , Lord Jesus." Old Testament prophets like Zechariah also predicted the second coming in Zech.12-14. In Zech. 12, many armies will be gathered against Jerusalem and then the Messiah will come and defend Jerusalem, destroy the evil nations, and the Jews "will look on Me whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for the Christ. In John 19:37, at the cross, the usual routine was for the soldiers to break the victim's legs so they couldn't push up to breath, which they did to the men on either side of Jesus, but to Him they pierced His side with a spear. In John 19:36-37, John confirms that these prophecies were fulfilled at Jesus' crucifixion. Therefore, when Jesus returns to Jerusalem, they will then recognize the nation's mistake at the first coming and mourn over their sin. In Acts 1:9-11, when Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mt. of Olives, the angel told His 120 disciples watching the event, that He would come back in just the same way, and by implication the same place. Sure enough over 500 years before, Zechariah wrote that "His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east". When I figure the odds of all these Old Testament prophecies all coming true in Jesus, it certainly firms up the probability that Jesus is coming back just as the Bible says, and so like John, I weary of this world with all its problems and evil, and say "Come Lord Jesus!"

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