

MESSIAH!

*Just Who Is the
'Anointed One'?*



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'Anointed One'?*

*The coming of the Messiah is a central theme of
the Old Testament. But who is this "Anointed
One"? Did Jesus fulfill the Messianic prophe-
cies of Scripture?*

All Scripture quotations were taken from the
King James Version except as noted.

Who is the Messiah? This will probably be one of the most popular questions that will be asked as we draw nearer to the end time. Since Old Testament times, Jewish hope has centered on the advent of the Messiah, which is rooted in God's promise to David that his kingdom would endure forever (2 Samuel 7:16). Israel was told that, through David's descendants, the throne of David would exert an everlasting dominion over all the earth (2 Samuel 22:48–51; Jeremiah 33). Because of these promises, many Jews since ancient times have been preoccupied with the advent of the Messiah and the establishment of a Messianic Kingdom.

There is no doubt in my mind that Jesus Christ is the Messiah, but if I were asked to prove it, could I do it? Just to say that Jesus is the Messiah does not make it so. The Scriptures give us clear instructions about what we should believe. "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21).

The people of Berea, for the most part, set one of the best examples in evaluating the messages they were hearing. They opened the Scriptures for themselves and searched for truths to verify or disprove the message they heard, comparing it with what the Bible said. "These [Bereans] were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so" (Acts 17:11).

Back to the Beginning

To answer the question, "Who is the Messiah?" we need to begin where God pronounced His judgment after Adam and Eve sinned. Starting with Satan, the "serpent" that deceived Eve, God said, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Genesis 3:15). This verse is known as the *Protevangel* ("First Gospel"). The curse was directed at the serpent, who is described in Revelation as "that old serpent called the devil" (Revelation 12:9). Satan will inflict a painful wound on the woman's Seed (Christ), but Christ in turn will inflict a mortal wound on the Serpent, crushing his head.

This information from Genesis shows us the importance of knowing the identity of the true Messiah. We see, so far, that the Messiah is the woman's "Seed," or Offspring, and that He can be wounded.

With this in mind, let's compare what Jesus said about Himself with an Old Testament description of the Messiah. Jesus, speaking of the time of the end, said, "For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be. And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened. Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christ's, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect. Behold, I have told you before. Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, He is in the desert; go not forth: behold, He is in the secret chambers; believe it not. For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the *Son of man* be" (Matthew 24:21–27).

Notice that, in the passage above, Jesus refers to Himself as the "Son of Man." He used this title to express His heavenly origin, earthly mission, and glorious future coming. Jesus asked this question of His disciples: "Whom do men say that I the *Son of man* am" (Matthew 16:13)? Simon Peter replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (verse 16). In the Gospels, Jesus uses the term "Son of Man" some eighty times as a mysterious, indirect way of speaking about Himself. The specific source of the term is Daniel 7:13–14, with its vision of one "like a *son of man*" who comes with

the clouds into the presence of the "Ancient of Days," who gives Him (the Son of Man) the eternal Kingdom of God.

Continuing His discourse on the end time, Jesus said, "Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the *Son of man* in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the *Son of man* coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:29–30).

While we have not proven yet that Jesus is the Messiah, the Son of Man, we have arrived at one very simple truthful conclusion: *The Messiah is a man!*

The Truth of Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

As we search for the identity of the Messiah, lineage will become very important. We must begin our search, again, in Genesis. All people on earth since the flood are descended from the three sons of Noah. Notice what is said regarding these three sons: "And Noah awoke from his wine, and knew what his younger son had done unto him. And he said, Cursed be Canaan; a servant of servants shall he be unto his brethren. And he said, "Blessed be the LORD God of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant. God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem; and Canaan shall be his servant" (Genesis 9:24–27). Since we can expect nothing good to come from a curse, it would seem to be clear that the Messiah must come in the line of Shem. The name Shem, means "name." The words "Semite" and "Semitic," as in "Semitic peoples," come from Shem.

In Genesis 11:10–27, we read about those who were of Shem's lineage, the most important for our understanding at this time being Terah, who was the father of Abram (Abraham).

The Lord came to Abram and told him to leave his country and go to a land that he would be shown. Abram did not hesitate to obey, but went immediately. Notice the great blessing Abram received: "And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:2–3). The phrase "all the families of the earth" refers to all of the nations of the earth, all of the

"Gentiles" of the earth.

Therefore, it is through Abram (Abraham) and his unfailing obedience that a great blessing is going to come upon the whole world. This is made clear in the following verse: "And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice" (Genesis 22:18). This great blessing that was promised millennia ago can only be brought to pass by the Messiah!

Because we now know that the Messiah must come in Shem's line, we have eliminated most of the families of the world as possible candidates for bringing forth the Messiah.

The first major truth we have learned is that the Messiah will be a man! The next major truth we have come to understand is that He must come through the line of Shem, and Abraham. But it does not stop there, because even more is revealed to us in further chapters.

It was a common practice during the time of Abram that a married woman who could not have children was shamed by her peers and was often required to give a female servant to her husband in order to produce heirs. The children born to the servant woman were considered the children of the wife. Abram was acting in line with the custom of the day, but his action showed a lack of faith in God's promise.

For sixteen years Abraham thought Ishmael's birth through Hagar had fulfilled God's promise. He was surprised to hear God say that the promised child would be Abraham and Sarah's very own. "Then Abraham fell upon his face, and laughed, and said in his heart, Shall a child be born unto him that is an hundred years old? And shall Sarah that is ninety years old bear? And Abraham said unto God, O that Ishmael might live before thee! And God said, Sarah thy wife shall bear thee a son indeed; and thou shalt call his name Isaac: and I will establish my covenant with him for an everlasting covenant, and with his seed after him" (Genesis 17:17-19). God went on even further to say, "For in Isaac shall thy seed be called" (Genesis 21:12).

So far we have learned a number of major truths! We have learned that the Messiah must be a man, that He will come from the lineage of Shem and of Abraham, and that He will be from the line of Isaac, not Ishmael. With these truths, we have almost eliminated any possibility that the Messiah would come from any Arab nation.

Notice this next exciting scripture: "I shall see Him, but not now: I shall behold Him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob,

and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy the children of Sheth" (Numbers 24:17). There is every reason to believe that the "*Star out of Jacob*" is referring to the coming Messiah. Apparently, it was this prophecy that convinced the wise men to travel to Israel to search for the baby Jesus. "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, saying, Where is He that is born King of the Jews? For we have seen His star in the east, and are come to worship Him" (Matthew 2:1-2).

With the information these verses give us, we can eliminate all Arab nations from producing the Messiah. Jacob's name had been changed to Israel, and both names are used to make it quite clear that the Messiah must come out of Jacob, not Esau. The Messiah must be a man from the line of Shem, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. All Arab nations and all the Gentile nations of the world have been eliminated as primary progenitors for the Messiah. The Messiah is an Israelite!

Which Tribe?

However, we must not overlook the fact that there are twelve tribes that make up Israel. We know now that the Messiah will come from the line of Jacob, but which tribe is He going to come from?

The answer is found in Genesis 49:8-10: "Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise: thy hand shall be in the neck of thine enemies; thy father's children shall bow down before thee. Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion; who shall rouse him up? The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be."

Jacob gives more attention to Judah than to any of the rest of the sons of Leah. He will live up to the meaning of his name, for his brothers will praise him. Judah is compared to a lion's cub, a lion, and a lioness because of future victories. The lion was a symbol of courage, power, and sovereignty. John writes of Jesus as the "Lion of the tribe of Judah" (Revelation 5:5).

Now Jacob is specific. Not only would a descendant of Judah reign as king, but also the royal scepter would not depart from Judah or from between his feet until "Shiloh" comes. Shiloh seems to be an

abbreviate expression meaning "He to whom it belongs," a description of the Messiah, God's anointed Prophet, Priest, and King. The obedience of the peoples will be to Him.

The words of Ezekiel strengthen this understanding. God tells Zedekiah, the profane, wicked last king of Judah, to take off his crown. It would not be restored until the One to whom it rightfully belongs comes, who of course will be the Messiah. It will have its fulfillment in the Millennium when "The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He shall reign forever and ever" (Revelation 11:15).

While we have now discovered which tribe of Israel Messiah would come from, we must also realize there are many families that make up Judah.

Which Family?

We have eliminated all the tribes of Israel except one, Judah, from which it is evident that the Messiah will come. Now we must find that certain family God will choose. As we will see, it will be quickly narrowed down. We will find the answer we are looking for in the book of Isaiah: "And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of *Jesse*, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots. And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD" (Isaiah 11:1-2).

Notice the following Messianic statements: "But with righteousness shall He judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth: and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked.... And in that day there shall be a *root of Jesse*, which shall stand for an ensign of the people; to it shall the Gentiles seek: and His rest shall be glorious" (Isaiah 11:4,10).

These Messianic passages reveal to us that the Messiah will come from the family of Jesse. Jesse had eight sons. Which son of the eight sons of Jesse will God choose?

"Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant *David*, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheeppcote, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel" (2 Samuel 7:8). Now we know that God chose David from the eight sons of Jesse, so the

Messiah must come through David.

In Psalm 132 God explains His intentions clearly: "The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; He will not turn from it; of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne" (verse 11). How will this be accomplished? The Messiah must come from the tribe of Judah. Because the Messiah was born of a virgin (more on this later), it makes it necessary for this virgin to be directly related to David.

This means a baby has to be born from the womb of a daughter who is in the direct line of David. David had several sons. One of them was Nathan. Mary, the mother of Jesus, is in the direct line of Nathan. Thus, Jesus' genealogy can be traced directly to David through David's son Nathan.

Let us take a moment to review what we have established so far. We have the family of Jesse, the line of David. But David has a lot of sons. Therefore, which son of David will God choose? So far we know that the Messiah must be a man, that He is to come from the line of Shem, the line of Abraham, the line of Isaac, the line of Jacob, the line of Judah, the family of Jesse, and the line of David.

This now brings us to an amazing verse: "Howbeit the LORD God of Israel chose me before all the house of my father to be king over Israel for ever: for He hath chosen Judah to be the ruler; and of the house of Judah, the house of my father; and among the sons of my father He liked me to make me king over all Israel: And of all my sons, (for the LORD hath given me many sons), He hath chosen Solomon my son to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the LORD over Israel" (1 Chronicles 28:4). The major truth here is that the Messiah must come from the line of Solomon. That eliminates the many sons of David and makes it easier to come to the correct understanding. David said, "God has chosen my son Solomon."

What must be understood is that while Jesus was born of the virgin Mary (who was in the direct line of David through Nathan), Joseph, the husband of Mary, was in the direct line of Solomon. "And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias...and Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ" (Matthew 1:6,16). While Joseph was not the physical or biological father of Jesus, he was His legal father here on earth. Jesus Christ of course, is the *Son of God*.

The name "Christ," meaning "anointed," is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *Messiah*. Christ is not part of Jesus' name (though He is frequently called Jesus Christ), but is His title. He is Jesus the Christ, properly speaking.

Born in Bethlehem

Through the prophet Micah comes the revealed knowledge of the exact place of the Messiah's birth. "But thou, *Bethlehem* Ephrathah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting" (Micah 5:2). Zedekiah was the last of the kings in David's line to sit on the throne in Jerusalem. Micah said that the next king in David's line would be the Messiah, who would establish a Kingdom that would never end.

This ruler is Jesus, the Messiah. Micah accurately predicted Christ's birthplace hundreds of years before He was born. This promised eternal King from the line of David would come to live as a man. Although eternal, He entered human history as the man, Jesus of Nazareth.

This whole process of proving just who the Messiah is narrows down to the simple truth of the Messiah being born in Bethlehem.

Born of a Virgin

This little town of Bethlehem is now an Arab town, about two miles south of Jerusalem. This is the place the Messiah was to be born—and, in fact, He *was* born there. His birth was to be very unusual. He was to be *born of a virgin*. Remember, God had given His covenant to David, promising that a son of his would sit on the throne and rule over Jerusalem. This covenant was to be accompanied by a "sign." The sign would reveal that God had fulfilled His covenant. "Therefore the Lord Himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). This sign was to be a sign for the whole house (dynasty) of David.

There is a dispute about the meaning of the word "virgin." It occurs only eight other times in the Old Testament (Genesis 24:43; Exodus 2:8; Psalms 46:1; 68:26; Proverbs 20:19; Song of Solomon 1:3; 6:8; 1 Chronicles 15:20). It is never used of a married woman. In Song of

Solomon 6:8, it is distinct from the married women and concubines and can only mean virgin. Another word, *bethulah*, is used of virgins of any age. However, the word used for virgin in Isaiah 7:14 is *almah*, which seems to be specific for a virgin of marrying age. She is called "*the virgin*," indicating a specific virgin in God's plan. She will call her son's name Immanuel, "God with us," or "The with-us God." The same virgin-born Son is the wonderful Child in Isaiah 9 and 11. Notice this additional authority that establishes Mary as a virgin, and the holy Child as Jesus: "Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us" (Matthew 1:23).

There is still another fact that should not be overlooked. The Old Testament was written in Hebrew with a couple of portions in Aramaic. Most of it is in Hebrew, and it was translated into Greek some 150 to 200 years before Jesus lived. What do you suppose seventy Jewish scholars who went directly from Hebrew into Greek used for the Hebrew word *almah* when they translated Isaiah 7:14 into the Greek language? They used the Greek word *parthenos*, which means virgin and only virgin. Those seventy Jewish scholars without a doubt believed the word for virgin in Isaiah 7:14 meant just that. The Messiah would be born of a virgin. "Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son."

Some Unusual Evidence to Consider

Remember what we read in Genesis 49:10, how the "scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come; and unto Him shall the gathering of the people be."

The tribe of Judah went into captivity in Babylon after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Therefore, how do we go about proving that the tribal identity of Judah was retained even though the temple, which held the genealogical records of the tribes of Israel, had been destroyed?

The answer to this question will be found in the book of Ezra. "Then rose up the chief of the fathers of Judah and Benjamin, and the priests, and the Levites, with all them whose spirit God had raised, to go up to build the house of the Lord which is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:5). It would seem quite obvious that they took their records with them into the Babylonian captivity. Also, we must remember that three bib-

lical books—Ezra, Nehemiah, and Ester—were written after the Babylonian captivity, and yet they knew their genealogies.

This also raises a certain important question. It is very well established that all of the genealogical records of the tribes of Israel were actually lost in A.D. 70. If this is true, and it does seem to be true, how would we be able to prove that Jesus came through the lineage of Judah, since the tribal identity was lost in A.D. 70 when the temple was destroyed?

At first we might think we have a problem to solve; but, actually, it is not a problem at all. In reality, it adds credence to what we believe. The major truth here is that the Messiah had to have been born before the tribal identity of Judah was lost. In other words, the Messiah must have been born before A.D. 70 because the tribal identity of Judah was lost at that time. As Jesus said, "Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not. For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets" (Matthew 24:23–24). Many since the destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 have claimed to be the Messiah.

Notice what the last book in the Old Testament tells us about the Messiah: "Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 3:1). This would suggest that the temple of Zerubbabel, which was the second temple, was built for the Messiah to come to! The temple that He did come to was called "My Fathers House" (John 2:16).

Now this would seem to present another problem. The first temple was destroyed in 586 B.C., and the prophet Malachi writes after that time. Therefore, the question arises, How is Messiah going to come suddenly to the temple? The simple explanation is that Messiah must come *while the second temple is still standing*. Since the second temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, the only way this prophecy could possibly be fulfilled (since Malachi wrote after the destruction of the first temple) is for the Messiah to come while the second temple is still standing. The prophet Malachi wrote, he will certainly "come to His temple."

Scripture is astonishing and amazing. If we are to understand the mind of God we must study His word carefully, for God's prophecies

are history written in advance.

For example, in Zechariah 11, God says, "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD" (verses 12–13).

For this prophecy to be fulfilled there must be a temple—for how can the thirty pieces of silver be thrown into the "house of the LORD" if there *is no* House of the Lord? Interestingly, this prophecy was written *after* the first temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians. *There was no temple when God gave this prophecy to Zechariah*. Zechariah, along with Haggai, was trying to motivate and encourage the people of Israel to lay the foundation for the second temple.

This prophecy pertains to the Messiah, who would be sold for thirty pieces of silver, and to the Messiah's betrayer, who would afterward regret his treachery and throw down the money in the temple. "Then Judas, which had betrayed Him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, what is that to us? See thou to that. And He cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself" (Matthew 27:3–5).

The prophet Daniel left us a most interesting prophecy. He prophesied after the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians, as Zechariah and Malachi did. It was in the time of the Babylonian captivity that lasted for seventy years, during the sixth century B.C.

"Seventy weeks [literally, seventy *sevens*, totaling 490 years] are determined upon thy people and upon thy holy city, to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sins, and to make reconciliation for iniquity, and to bring in everlasting righteousness, and to seal up the vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the commandment to restore and to build Jerusalem unto the Messiah the Prince shall be seven weeks, and threescore and two weeks: the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublous times" (Daniel 9:24–25).

We know when this command was given. "And it came to pass in

the month Nisan, in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes the king" (Nehemiah 2:1). The twentieth year of Artaxerxes was 445 B.C. Additionally, we know that from then until the time Prince Messiah is cut off is 483 years; that is, 69 times 7 equals 483, the number of years from the time of that command until the time the Messiah is "cut off." Just imagine, Daniel gave this prophecy in the *sixth century B.C.*, when no temple existed!

(Some scholars believe that the 483 years are "prophetic years," or years consisting of exactly 360 days. Also, there has been considerable debate over which decree the prophecy refers to, since other decrees were issued during the period of the Jews' liberation. We should therefore avoid attempting to pinpoint the precise date of the Messiah's death based on this prophecy or the 445 B.C. date. We should focus instead on the prophecy's importance in identifying the *general time* of the Messiah's earthly work.)

Daniel further prophesied of the rebuilding of a temple, which would be made possible by the Persians, who had not yet come into power. Daniel also said that the building would be done by a king who wasn't even alive yet! There have been many critics of the book of Daniel. They could not believe that such an accurate prophecy could be given so many years in advance. But in the end, God's Word is always proven correct.

In this case, a small Arab boy throwing stones into a cave down by the desert wilderness area of the Dead Sea in 1947 led to the discovery of the now famous "Dead Sea Scrolls," as they have come to be known. These scrolls contain a copy of the book of Daniel and all the books of the Bible, except one. We know that the Dead Sea Scrolls were in existence 200 years before Christ. That being true, the book of Daniel existed long before the events that Daniel predicted.

"After the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself." This clearly shows there was no charge or crime that caused Him to be killed. Therefore, this Messiah was totally innocent, and He was killed before the second temple was destroyed. Daniel also states that "the prince who is to come" is not the Messiah but is the coming world leader, the Antichrist. The "people of the prince" are most likely the Romans since they are the ones who destroyed the city of Jerusalem. This gives us the reason for believing that the final empire of the end times is to be a revived Roman Empire of some

sort, possibly in collaboration with others.

It says, "They shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined" (Daniel 9:26). This happened in A.D. 70.

What we have discovered about the Messiah is that He must come and die before Jerusalem and the second temple are destroyed. Since this happened in A.D. 70, we need to find a Messiah who fulfills all these major truths. He must be a man who is a descendant of Shem and comes from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; must come from the tribe of Judah, the family of Jesse, the line of David and Solomon; and be born of a virgin in Bethlehem. He must then go to the temple that must be standing in Jerusalem during His lifetime and die before it is destroyed.

The Book of Zechariah was written after the Babylonian captivity, over 400 years before the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10). This reveals that there would be inhabitants in Jerusalem, and they would look upon the pierced One and know His identity!

In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness" (Zechariah 13:1). "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem" (Zechariah 14:4).

These things will not be done in secret. The whole world will know when Jesus the Messiah returns. They will see the wounds in His hands and look upon Him whom they have pierced. The Bible plainly tells of the nation of Israel turning to the Lord in one day and believing in Him. The Holy Spirit of God will be poured out on them as they look at the One who lived 2,000 years ago and now has returned in all His glory. The Son of Man is Jesus Christ, our Lord.

Who else could possibly fulfill all these major truths except Jesus of Nazareth? Jesus is the only person in the entire history of the world who can fulfill all the Messianic prophecies of the Bible. He has fulfilled over 300 prophecies.

Major Truths Fulfilled in the Life and Death of Jesus

The Messiah's Herald

To prepare a road, obstacles need to be removed. This could be similar to rolling out a red carpet for a great dignitary. "The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3).

We see the fulfillment of this Old Testament verse taking place some 700 years later when John the Baptist came "preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matthew 3:1-2).

The Triumphal Entry

The event commonly called the "Triumphal Entry" was predicted some 500 years before it took place. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass" (Zechariah 9:9).

Notice this New Testament description of that prophesied event: "And they brought him to Jesus: and they cast their garments upon the colt, and they set Jesus thereon. And as He went, they spread their clothes in the way. And when He was come nigh, even now at the descent of the mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works that they had seen; Saying, Blessed be the King that cometh in the name of the Lord: peace in heaven, and glory in the highest" (Luke 19:35-38).

The people who were here praising God would soon turn against Jesus, for they misunderstood what His real mission was at the time. They expected Him to be a national leader, a king, who would restore their nation to its former glory, and therefore they did not respond to the words of their prophets. Of all the kings of history, none ever entered his capital on a colt as Jesus did.

The Betrayal

Jesus was having supper with His disciples on the night He established the New Testament symbols of unleavened bread and wine, representing His flesh and blood. During supper, He quoted from a

biblical Psalm: "Ye, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me" (see Psalm 41:9). It is clear that this verse is a prophecy of Christ's betrayal. Judas, one of Jesus' twelve disciples, had spent three years learning from Jesus, traveling and eating with Him, and handling the finances for the group. "I speak not of you all: I know whom I have chosen: but that the scripture may be fulfilled, He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (John 13:18).

That very night, about midnight, Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. "And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him'" (Matthew 26:47-48).

It is not strange at all to find numerous scriptures repeated throughout the Bible. Nor is it strange for New Testament writers to see parallels between events in the life of Jesus and events described in the Old Testament. Perhaps we see such a parallel here.

Consider this: Where else in the Scriptures do you read anything about a great multitude with swords and clubs? The only event that comes to mind is the event of the Israelites preparing to leave Egypt at the time of Passover! "And thus shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, your shoes on your feet, and your staff in your hand; and ye shall eat it in haste: it is the LORD's Passover" (Exodus 12:11).

It was the descendants of these same Israelites that came to take Jesus the night He was betrayed with a kiss. They came, with their shoes on their feet and swords and clubs in their hands, to take the Prince of Peace and crucify Him—on "their" Passover!

The Suffering Servant

In Isaiah 50:6 we have a reference to the suffering of Christ at the time of His arrest: "I gave my back to the smiters, and my cheeks to them that plucked off the hair: I hid not my face from shame and spitting." According to Luke 22:63-65, it was the servants in particular who did this, with the full approval of the Sanhedrin. In fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah, they spat in and struck Jesus' face. "Then did they spit in His face, and buffeted Him; and others smote Him with the palms of their hands, saying Prophecy unto us, thou Christ, who

is he that smote thee?" (Matthew 26:67). In the East this is the gravest form of contempt and insult. Probably a number of the members of the Sanhedrin had their walking sticks with them and used them to hit Jesus. Thus, these dignified leaders suddenly became a spiteful mob. Their course of action was to heap as many indignities upon Jesus as possible.

This was also contrary to the spirit of the Jewish law. The leaders were supposed to take every precaution to shield the innocent and to prevent any possible miscarriage of justice. The Mishnah, a collection of Jewish traditions and legal decisions, says that "in the case of capital crimes the proceedings shall be held by day and the sentence must be pronounced by day... a sentence of punishment must be pronounced on the following day. For this reason no trial can be held on the day before a Sabbath or on the day before a festival" (Sanhedrin 4:1). So suffered our Savior, our Messiah.

What is more natural than to stoutly defend ourselves when we are unjustly accused. Yet Isaiah informs us that the Messiah did just the opposite. "He was oppressed, and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth: He is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so He openeth not His mouth" (Isaiah 53:7).

Jesus, during this time of being accused by the chief priests and elders, never answered at all. "And when He was accused of the chief priests and elders, He answered nothing. Then said Pilate unto Him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee: And He answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marveled greatly" (Matthew 17:12-14).

Consider how unlikely it would be for a man who is innocent to stand before his accusers in this day and age and remain absolutely silent without speaking out to defend himself!

In the Old Testament, people offered animals as sacrifices for their sins (Isaiah 53:7-12). Here, the sinless Servant of the Lord offers *Himself* for our sins. He is the Lamb offered for the sins of all people. The Messiah suffered for our sake, bearing our sins to make us acceptable to God. How could God express His love any better than this?

The Two Thieves

In the New Testament, Jesus is crucified along with two thieves. They may have been highwaymen. Nevertheless, they were brought along and crucified with Jesus. While the event of the trial of the two criminals was simply a chance occurrence to the Romans, the whole is a striking fulfillment of Isaiah 53:12: "He was numbered with the transgressors." "Then were two thieves crucified with Him one on the right hand, and another on the left" (Matthew 27:38).

There is hardly any greater insult to human dignity than for a person to be robbed of every personal belonging, including even his clothing, leaving him naked and destitute. Jesus the Messiah would suffer this humiliating experience on the stake, prophesied hundreds of years beforehand. "They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture" (Psalms 22:18).

It was the custom that the Roman soldiers in charge of crucifixion would take the clothing of those crucified. They cast lots to see who would get the robe of Jesus. "Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments, and made four parts, to every soldier a part; and also His coat: now the coat was without seam, woven from the top throughout. They said therefore among themselves, Let us not rend it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be: that the scripture might be fulfilled, which saith, They parted my raiment among them, and for my vesture they did cast lots. These things therefore the soldiers did" (John 19:23-24).

Death of the Messiah

In the Old Testament, God assured Israel of deliverance from the enemy nations and gave physical security in Jerusalem. God, through Zechariah, promised them spiritual deliverance. "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon Me whom they have *pierced*, and they shall mourn for Him, as one mourneth for His only son, and shall be in bitterness for Him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn" (Zechariah 12:10).

The apostle John was an "eye witness" to the death of Jesus; he therefore gives us the graphic details. The soldiers were bound to fulfill their task or they would endanger their own lives. This is the reason the soldier pierced Jesus' side. The spear was a lance of sharp-

pointed iron. "But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and forthwith came there out blood and water. And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: and he knoweth that he saith true, that ye might believe" (John 19:34-35).

When a prisoner was nailed to the stake and crucified, his body was fastened in such a manner as to make it impossible to breathe without painfully lifting his upper body, using whatever strength remained in his legs to expand his diaphragm. The condemned prisoner's death could be speeded up at any time by breaking his legs with a club, thus making it impossible for him to expand his diaphragm using his legs.

To avoid desecrating the Sabbath, which was near, the soldiers broke the legs of the prisoners on both sides of Jesus to assure their quick death. However, when they came to Jesus, they saw that He was already dead. Therefore, there was no need to break His legs. "For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of Him shall not be broken" (John 19:36).

The scripture John cites is Psalm 34:20: "He keepeth all His bones: not one of them is broken." This Psalm speaks prophetically of Jesus' suffering on the stake. David composed it when he pretended to be insane in order to escape from king Achish (1 Samuel 21:10-15). Aside from the prophetic meaning, David was pleading for God's protection in the midst of crisis.

Burial and Resurrection

Who could possibly predict that a man would die, and his body would not decay? Yet, that is exactly what David did hundreds of years before Jesus Christ was even born. Because man can't control death, he fears it. However, believers in Messiah can be assured that God will not forget when they die. "For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption" (Psalms 16:10).

Peter declared, in the book of Acts, that what David foresaw in the Psalm was the resurrection of the Christ. In other words, Peter declared Jesus to be the Messianic King. Because God raised Him up, He was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. "He seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, and His soul was not left in hell, neither His flesh did see corruption" (Acts 2:31).

It was intended that the grave of Jesus be with the wicked—that is,

the condemned criminals who were crucified with Him. However, God saw to it that, instead of being buried with the wicked, He was buried with honor in the tomb of a rich man (Isaiah 53:9).

Joseph of Arimathea was a secret follower of Jesus. He was a religious leader, an honored member of the Sanhedrin. In the past Joseph had been afraid to speak out against the religious leaders who opposed Jesus; now he was quite bold. When evening had come, Joseph stepped forward and courageously asked to take Jesus' body from the stake and provide burial for Him. The disciples who had followed Jesus publicly had fled, but Joseph who followed in secret came forward and did that which was right. "When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulcher, and departed" (Matthew 27:57-60).

"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day" (Amos 8:9). This prophecy and its context seem to describe a supernatural event, rather than a natural phenomenon like an eclipse. It fits quite well as a description of the supernatural darkness when Israel's Messiah was crucified and may even allude to their greater dispersion that would follow that climatic event in history.

"Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land" (Matthew 27:45). The "sixth hour" begins by noon, the "ninth hour" by 3:00 p.m.; crucifixions rarely ended so quickly. Darkness was one of the plagues in Egypt and occurs in the Prophets as a judgment for the end time. Both Jews and pagans considered eclipses and other darkenings of the sky to be bad omens.

Jesus was formally presented to the nation of Israel but rejected. How strange for the King to be accused, arrested, and crucified. But Jesus demonstrated His power, even over death, through His resurrection, and gained access for us into His Kingdom. With all this evidence we have just reviewed, proving that Jesus is God's Son, how can we fail to accept Him as our Prophet, Priest, and King! Most assuredly, *Jesus is the MESSIAH!*

About the Church of God International

This literature is published by the Church of God International, based in Tyler, Texas. Incorporated in 1978, the CGI has ministers and congregations scattered throughout the United States and Canada. We also have churches in Jamaica, the Philippines, and Australia.

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