

A BIBLICAL VIEW ON
**MESSIANIC
PROPHECIES**

A close-up photograph of a hand holding a wooden quill pen over an open book. The book's pages are filled with handwritten text in Hebrew script. The lighting is warm and focused on the quill and the text, creating a sense of historical and scholarly study. A diagonal white line cuts across the upper right portion of the image.

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MESSIANIC PROPHECIES



One of the more powerful arguments for the inspiration of the Bible and the deity of Jesus Christ is Messianic prophecy. Hundreds of prophecies in the Old Testament point to the coming Messiah. They were written down between 1400 BC and 400 BC. They contain 56 specific facts or details about the coming Messiah and were literally fulfilled in the birth, ministry, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. The four gospels record several times when Jesus said He was fulfilling a prophecy in the Old Testament.

We find the first one in Genesis 3:15 – “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her Seed; He shall bruise your head, and you shall bruise His heel.” Already in the third chapter of Genesis we read God’s master plan for salvation. Theologians often call this the first evangel, or the first gospel.

The passage talks about the “seed of the woman.” This is an allusion to a future descendant of Eve who would have no human father. This promised Seed would, therefore, have to be miraculously implanted in the womb. In this way, the Messiah would not inherit the sin nature, which would disqualify every son of Adam from becoming a Savior from sin. This prophecy thus clearly anticipates the future virgin birth of Christ.

Satan will inflict a painful wound on the woman’s Seed, but Christ in turn will inflict a mortal wound on the Serpent, crushing his head. This prophecy was fulfilled at the cross, but will find its cul-

mination when Christ casts Satan into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:10).

Another Messianic prophecy found in the Torah is Deuteronomy 18:15-19 that predicts that the Messiah would be a prophet like Moses. Like Moses, the Messiah would be a leader, a prophet, a lawgiver, a deliverer, a teacher, a priest, an anointed one, a mediator, and someone from God's chosen people (Jew). In fact the parallels between Moses and Jesus are so significant that Tim LaHaye devotes an entire chapter in his book about Jesus (listed in the resources) to these similarities.

Lineage of the Messiah

A number of prophecies pin down in significant detail the lineage of the Messiah. For example, the Messiah would be a descendant of Abraham (Genesis 22:18; 12; 17; 22). The Messiah would also be a descendant of Issac (Genesis 17, 21) not Ishmael. The Messiah would also be a descendant of Jacob (Genesis 28; 35) not Esau. The Messiah would also

be a descendant of Judah, not the other eleven brothers of Jacob. The Messiah would also be a descendant of Jesse in the tribe of Benjamin (Isaiah 11:1-5). The Messiah would be from the house of David (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Jeremiah 23:5; Psalm 89:3-4).

Some commentators have also noted that we could not be assured of the lineage of a Messiah today. Since the Jewish genealogical records were destroyed in 70 AD, along with the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple, it would not be possible for the Messiah, if he was born later, to prove his lineage back to David and thus fulfill this prophecy.

Birth of the Messiah

We read in Micah 5:2 that the Messiah will be born in the little city of Bethlehem. This was revealed to Micah in the 9th century BC. It pinpointed a rather insignificant location in Israel. The fulfillment of that prophecy can be found in Luke 2:4-20.

Christ's birth in Bethlehem was apparently not by the choice of Mary and Joseph; it was forced upon them by Caesar Augustus' taxation decree which required Joseph to leave his home in the city of Nazareth and return to his place of origin to pay the tax.

We also read in Isaiah 7:14 that the Messiah would be born of a virgin. That fulfillment of that prophecy can be found in Luke 1:26-35. Although liberal theologians often scoff at the idea of the virgin birth, it is important for many reasons. If Jesus was not born of a virgin, then (1) the New Testament is incorrect, (2) Mary was guilty of unchastity, (3) Isaiah's prophecy is incorrect, (4) Jesus was not born of the Holy Spirit, and (5) there is no miracle at Christmas.

We also read (Psalm 110:4) that the Messiah will be a priest after the order of Melchizedek. The fulfillment of this can be found in Hebrews 5:6. Melchizedek is a man of mystery in the Old Testament.

He was both “a priest of the Most High” and “King of Salem.” In Israel, the offices of King and Priest were always kept separate. Only the Messiah would be invested with both of these offices.

Timetable of the Messiah

A number of prophecies provide a timetable for when the Messiah would appear. The most dramatic can be found in Daniel 9:25 – “So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again, with plaza and moat, even in times of distress.”

Each day of the week represents one year. Therefore the total of 70 weeks represents 490 years. The decree by Artaxerxes is recorded in Nehemiah 2:1-8 and occurs in 445 BC. If you then count forward, you find that there is only one person claiming to be the Messiah at that end point: Jesus Christ.

There are numerous prophecies that indicate that the Messiah will come when the Temple of Jerusalem is standing (Malachi 3:1; Psalm 118:26; Daniel 9:26; Zechariah 11:13; Haggai 2:7-9). We read about that fulfillment in Matthew 21:12 and the other Gospels. It is worth mentioning that the Temple did not exist at certain periods in Jewish history. Moreover, the Temple was finally destroyed in 70 AD.

Events Surrounding the Messiah

Two separate prophecies predict that a messenger will prepare the way for the Messiah (Isaiah 40:3; Malachi 3:1). That prophecy finds its fulfillment in John the Baptist (Matthew 3:1-3; 11:10; John 1:23; Luke 1:17).

Isaiah also predicts that the Messiah will perform many miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6). We find that prediction fulfilled in the various miracles performed by Jesus (Matthew 8:23-34; 9:18-26; John 2:1-11; 4:46-54; 11:1-46).

Zechariah provides a number of prophecies about the Messiah that were fulfilled by Jesus during the week He entered Jerusalem and was crucified. He predicted that the Messiah would enter Jerusalem riding a donkey (Zechariah 9:9). That was fulfilled during what we often call "Palm Sunday" (Matthew 21:5; Luke 19:32-37).

The price of his betrayal would be thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12-13) and the money would be cast onto the floor of the Temple. That was fulfilled by Judas and the chief priests (Matthew 27:3-10). Also he predicted that the betrayal money would be used to buy a potter's field (Zechariah 11:13). We read about its fulfillment in Matthew 27:6-10).

Many prophecies about the Messiah were fulfilled during the trial and crucifixion of Jesus. For example, Isaiah (50:6) predicts that the Messiah will be beaten and spit upon. He also predicts that the Messiah will be "numbered with

the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12). Matthew (27:38) explains that is fulfilled because Jesus was crucified as a criminal in between two thieves.

We have Old Testament prophecies that predict that the Messiah will be pierced (Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10). It is worth mentioning that Psalm 22 was written a thousand years before the death of Christ. At the time when it was written, the penalty for blasphemy was stoning. But the Sanhedrin no longer had the legal right to put people to death. Crucifixion was only implemented by Rome a century earlier. And Pontius Pilate had Jesus Christ crucified according to Roman law.

Notice that Psalm 22 begins with this phrase: "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" That is what Jesus says from the cross. Psalm 22 also says that they will divide his clothing and cast lots for them.

Psalm 34:20 predicts that the Messiah's bones will not be broken. We might also note that Exodus 12 requires that

the Passover lamb's bones are not to be broken. And we read (Isaiah 53:9) that he will be buried with the rich. Matthew explains that was fulfilled when Jesus was buried in the tomb of a rich man (Joseph of Arimathea) after he died.

Jesus is Alive

The most important prophecy is also the basis for our faith. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is the foundation of our faith and a well-established fact of history and the Bible. Though the body of Jesus was placed in a tomb, it did not stay there. David (Psalm 16:10, NKJV) says, "For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption."

Notice that when Peter stood before the people in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost and preached about the resurrection of Jesus, he quoted this passage of David:

"For David says concerning Him: 'I fore-saw the Lord always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.'

Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.”

The tomb was empty because Jesus arose from the grave. He is alive and has power over death!

These Messianic prophecies fulfilled in Him, along with His resurrection, prove that He is the promised Messiah. He has been victorious over death and promises us eternal life (John 3:16, 36) if we trust in Him.

[1] Some authors count 333 Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament, while others count more than 400 Messianic prophecies. It depends on how you count repeated prophecies.

[2] Tim LaHaye, *Jesus: Why the World is Still Fascinated by Him*, Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009.

Additional Resources

D. James Kennedy, *Messiah: Prophecies Fulfilled*, Fort Lauderdale: Coral Ridge Ministries, 2003.

Tim LaHaye, "The Greatest Prophet," Chapter Five, *Jesus: Why the World is Still Fascinated by Him*, Colorado Springs, CO: David C. Cook, 2009.

Josh McDowell and Sean McDowell, "Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in Jesus Christ," Chapter Nine, *Evidence that Demands a Verdict*, Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 2017.

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