

The Coming Messiah (The 2nd Sunday of Advent)

Have you ever thought how early Christians managed to read from the Bible and know what God was doing through the Messiah? In those early days, the only scripture available was the Hebrew Bible or, as we know it, the Old Testament. In the early days, sermons were preached to Christians about the Christ using only the available scriptures.

The writing of the New Testament did not begin until around 50 AD with the beginning of the various letters written to the churches. The gospels came later when the apostles realized that many, who had actually seen Jesus were passing away and the words and life of Jesus needed to be recorded for future generations.

As we pause to reflect on the lack of New Testament scriptures in the early church, we may wonder how people were aware of this Jesus who was to be known as the Christ of God. They had the Old Testament. Most of us reflect on the record of His birth this time of year and we read through the accounts in Matthew and Luke to help us picture His birth. This morning we will explore the Old Testament to see what God revealed through the prophets about the Messiah-the Christ. When we study the Old Testament, we find there are more than 300 passages that point to Jesus. These passages speak of every aspect of His life, death and resurrection. I promise not to share all 300 + scriptures this morning. However, we will look at several of these prophecies pointing us to Jesus.

The very first is found in Genesis when sin first found its way into the Garden of Eden. Let's start by turning to Genesis the 3rd chapter looking at verses 14 and 15.

The LORD God said to the serpent, "Because you have done this, Cursed are you more than all cattle, and more than every beast of the field; on your belly you will go, and dust you will eat all the days of your life; and I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed; He shall bruise you on the head, And you shall bruise him on the heel." (Genesis 3:14-15 NASB)

This is the first Messianic prophecy. Sin had just entered the creation and separated man from God. Just a few verses before we read this prophecy, we read about a very pleasant scene. It is a scene that I dream about for me in the future.

They heard the sound of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day, (Genesis 3:8 NASB). Can't you see an afternoon stroll with God in the cool of the afternoon?

In this prophecy, we learn that the path back to God will be through the seed of woman.

Then the LORD spoke again to Ahaz, saying, "Ask a sign for yourself from the LORD your God; make it deep as Sheol (or *the grave*) or high as heaven." But Ahaz said, "I will not ask, nor will I test the LORD!" Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel. (Isaiah 7:10-14 NASB)

We now have another prophecy. Not only will the path for reconciliation be through woman; it will be through a virgin birth. God will bring about a miraculous birth of a child who will be named Immanuel or God with us.

"Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says the LORD of hosts. (Malachi 3:1 NASB)

Here the prophet Malachi clearly predicts that a messenger will prepare the way for the Lord. In the next chapter, we are told that the messenger will be similar to the prophet Elijah. Christ tells us that this prophecy is fulfilled in John the Baptist.

“Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the LORD. He will restore the hearts of the fathers to *their* children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse.” (Malachi 4:5-6 NASB)

Indeed, Christ came to the world to bring good news and not **“smite the land with a curse.”** In Isaiah, we read the purpose of John’s ministry. His ministry was to call Israel to repentance and to prepare them for the message of reconciliation that Christ would proclaim.

A voice is calling, “Clear the way for the LORD in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God. “Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; and let the rough ground become a plain, and the rugged terrain a broad valley; then the glory of the LORD will be revealed, and all flesh will see *it* together; for the mouth of the LORD has spoken.” (Isaiah 40:3-5 NASB)

Many years ago, I heard a sermon from a man who raced cars for a hobby. He cited this verse and spoke of the ability to drive on level and straight roads. He talked about the purpose of John’s ministry was to make the road for Christ ready for maximum speed and safe driving. That illustration helped him understand John’s mission and it may help us to visualize the mission better.

Here we have considered yet another prophecy that points toward the coming Messiah.

There are numerous prophecies that tell us that Christ will be born to the lineage of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and David. Each of these have a clear meaning and are part of promises of God that He made to each of these men.

Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go forth from your country, and from your relatives and from your father’s house, to the land which I will show you; and I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing; and I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.” (Genesis 12:1-3 NASB)

Here God promises Abraham that through lineage **all the families of the earth will be blessed.** First, we were told that this blessing would be born to a woman. Now we are told that the blessing would be of the family of Abraham.

Then the angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time from heaven, and said, “By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.” (Genesis 22:15-18 NASB)

Yet again, God promises to Abraham: **In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed.**

Abraham was the father of Isaac and Isaac had a son named Jacob. In the following passage from the book of Numbers we learn that the promise to Abraham continues on through Jacob.

“I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near; a star shall come forth from Jacob, a scepter shall rise from Israel” (Numbers 24:17 NASB)

As time moved forward, the children of Israel demanded a king. The first king was Saul and he did not obey the commands of God so another king was chosen by God. In the following passage, we read God's instructions to His prophet Samuel:

"Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The Lord also declares to you that the Lord will make a house for you. When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. (2 Samuel 7:8-13 NASB)

Clearly, God is promising an everlasting kingdom to the lineage of David. Isaiah also mentions this in his prophecy as recorded in Isaiah the 9th chapter.

For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.

There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will accomplish this. (Isaiah 9:6-7 NASB)

Let's pause here to reflect on the things that we learn from the Hebrew scripture.

First, we have the promise of God to bring the reconciliation of sinful man a birth to a virgin woman.

Second, we are told that there would be a prophet like Elijah who would prepare the way for this blessing.

Third, we learn that the blessing would be born to the family of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. We also learn that this blessing would be for all nations.

Fourth, we learn that this blessing would be a king to sit on the throne of David.

Now, as we conclude this lesson, we will learn where the king will be born as we turn our attention to Micah the 5th chapter.

"But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." Therefore, He will give them up until the time when she who is in labor has borne a child. Then the remainder of His brethren will return to the sons of Israel. And He will arise and shepherd His flock in the strength of the Lord, in the majesty of the name of the Lord His God. And they will remain, because at that time He will be great to the ends of the earth. (Micah 5:2-4 NASB)

Today, we have covered a lot of ground. All of our attention has been to look at the Old Testament for signs that point to the Christ. This is to help us understand what the children of Israel would know as they face the Advent in Bethlehem on that special night.

All of these things help to point to the birth of the greatest blessing that God ever gave to His creation: Jesus Christ our savior.

We could read through Daniel paying attention to the 7th, 8th and 9th chapters to learn the timing of the birth and we would find that the dates match Daniel's prophecies.

This is an exciting time of year. This is a time when most of the world pauses to reflect on the beautiful message of love that is embodied in the child that was first laid in a feeding trough.