

# JESUS CHRIST

Who is he?

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## Who Is He?

*“From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away? Then Simon Peter answered him, Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that thou art that Christ, the Son of the living God” (John 6:66-69).*

### THE HISTORICITY OF JESUS CHRIST

Occasionally we hear of those who doubt that Jesus ever existed; but this would never be the conclusion drawn by any qualified historian. F. F. Bruce, professor of Biblical criticism and exegesis at the University of Manchester, has stated that those who toy with the fancy of a “Christ-myth” do so on the ground of unfounded notions, not on the facts of historical evidence. Christ’s historicity is as axiomatic for an unbiased historian as the historicity of Julius Caesar. It is clearly not historians who foster the “Christ-myth” theories.

John Warwick Montgomery writes that what historians *do* know about Jesus Christ is, first and foremost, that the New Testament documents can be relied upon to give an accurate portrait of Him. They also know that this portrait cannot be rationalized away by wishful thinking or by philosophical or literary maneuvering.

The historicity of Jesus Christ is confirmed by the early Church fathers—Polycarp, Eusebius, Irenaeus, Ignatius, Justin, Origen, and others of the 1st, 2nd and later centuries A.D. There are also numerous, early, non-Biblical witnesses to the historical fact of Jesus of Nazareth, including Tacitus, Lucian, Josephus, Seutonius, Pliny, Tertullian, and Thallus. To question that Jesus Christ ever existed only shows abysmal ignorance. The Gospel record should be recognized as sober, factual history.

### IMPOSTOR, INSANE, OR SON OF GOD?

Many say they can accept Jesus Christ as a great moral teacher,

but not as God incarnate. They say He was a good man, perhaps one of the greatest, but He was no more than a man. This position is untenable, because a man who would make the claims that Christ did would not be just a good moral teacher, if He were indeed *only* a man.

Jesus Christ claimed equality with God. He repeatedly and insistently asserted His deity. It was for this reason alone that the Jews so often attempted to kill Him (John 5:18; 8:58,59; 10:30-33). He said that all men should honor Him even as they honor the Father (John 5:23), that He and the Father are one (John 10:30), and that he who has seen Him has seen the Father (John 14:9). He claimed to be the same God that appeared to Moses (John 8:58; Ex. 3:14). These claims, then, were either true or false. If they were false, then we have two choices: He was an impostor, guilty of monstrous chicanery, and also a fool, because He died for it, or else He was hopelessly deranged and paranoid, a fit case for a psychopathic ward. But if His claims were true, then He is indeed the Son of God, man's only Lord and man's only Savior.

C. S. Lewis wrote that we can shut Christ off as a fool, spit at Him and murder Him as a demon, or we can fall at His feet and cry out, as Thomas of old, "My Lord and my God!" But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being just a great moral teacher. He did not leave that option open to us, neither did He intend to.

Every man must decide: Was Jesus Christ an impostor, a psychopath with delusions of grandeur, or was He the Son of God—God in corporeal form coming to earth in a great redemptive purpose? Because the Bible teaches that our eternal destiny depends on our attitude toward Christ in this life, this question becomes of immediate importance. The honest man will put away all preconceptions and, with a clear conscience and a single purpose, address himself to a careful investigation of the evidence. He will discover it to be clearly in favor of Jesus as the Son of God. The lazy thinker, not caring about truth or his ultimate destiny, will continue to base his skepticism on misguided evidence, irrational prejudice, or on the mindless hearsay of unbelievers.

### **CHRIST'S ACCREDITATION**

Essential to the understanding of Christian truth is the acceptance of the authority of Jesus Christ. Dr. Vernon Grounds, in his book, *The Reason for Our Hope*, writes that this acceptance is essential because Christ is accredited to us by five undeniable, divine testimonies:

- 2 **1. The testimony of His divine life.** Let any man read the four Gospels carefully and candidly, and he will be convinced that he is read-

ing the story of a life actually lived, that no man could have imagined the character there set forth, much less could *four* men have imagined Him, each making his own account consistent not only within itself, but with the other three. It will also be evident that the life set forth in the Gospels stands by itself, apart from all other human lives. It is manifestly a divine life lived under human conditions.

Jesus Christ was holy, loving, and righteous in all His ways. He was precisely what we might imagine God to be like if He were to lay aside His glory and live as a man among men. This, by the way, is not only the opinion of Christians, who are open to the charge of prejudice; it is also the verdict of competent critics who make no profession of personal faith in Jesus as Savior.

Consider, for example, the verdict of Jean Jacques Rousseau. Comparing Socrates the Greek, and Jesus the Galilean, he exclaimed, "The death of Socrates, peacefully philosophizing among friends, appears the most agreeable that one could wish. That of Jesus, expiring in agony, abused, insulted and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that one could fear. Socrates, indeed, receiving the cup of poison, blessed the weeping executioner who administered it. But Jesus, amid excruciating tortures, prayed for His merciless tormentors. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God."

This opinion is shared by many other notable world figures. The exiled Napoleon Bonaparte said, "I know men, and I tell you that Jesus Christ is not a man. Superficial minds see a resemblance between Christ and the founders of empires and the gods of other religions. That resemblance does not exist. There is between Christianity and whatever other religions the distance of infinity. Everything in Christ astonishes me. His Spirit overawes me and His will confounds me. Between Him and anyone else in the world there is no possible term of comparison. He is truly a being by Himself. His ideas and sentiments, the truth which He announces, His manner of convincing are not explained either by human organizations or by the nature of things. The nearer I approach, the more carefully I examine. Everything is above me. Everything remains grand, of a grandeur which overpowers.... I search in vain in history to find one similar to Jesus Christ, or anything which can approach the Gospel...."

**2. The testimony of His divine words.** Anyone who studies the Gospels soon discovers that the teachings of Christ have characteristics that distinguish them from all other teachings. They are authoritative, powerful, profound. Yet, this Jesus of Nazareth had no opportunity for

formal education. He never attended a grammar school, except perhaps the audience room of the synagogue. He had no books at home to study; neither did He have access to a library where He might become acquainted with culture and philosophy. He grew up in the midst of ignorance, bigotry, superstition and intolerance; yet, He gave to the world a body of teaching that has never been equaled, surpassed, or even remotely approached by the greatest sages of history.

Moreover, what Christ taught is inseparable from Himself. It is the combination of the teachings *and* the man Himself that makes Christ so remarkable. His teachings cannot be divorced from Him without being vitiated.

**3. The testimony of His divine works.** Jesus Christ healed the sick, cleansed the lepers, opened the eyes of the blind, and raised the dead; He stilled a tempest by a word, turned water into wine, and fed 5,000 people with five small loaves and two fishes, which was a *creative* act. His accusers, the Jews, *never* disavowed any of His miracles. These miracles of power are clear credentials of a God-sent teacher. One cannot study them and not truthfully conclude, with Nicodemus, "...we know that thou art a teacher come from God; for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him" (John 3:2).

Strenuous efforts have been made to eliminate the supernatural element from the Gospels, to reconstruct the historical Jesus as He really was, apart from myth and dogma. Possibly the most able attempt was made by David Strauss, a man of profound scholarship, in his book, *Leben Jesu*. He spent his best years and strength in this effort, but when his "Life of Jesus" was submitted to rigid, critical analysis, it fell to pieces, and today is completely discredited. Yet, others felt they must renew the attempt. Ernest Renan tried, but he also failed, and so too have all other subsequent attempts. The reason for this failure is that a merely human Jesus never existed. All the evidence of the New Testament points in the same direction—to a Messiah who is both human and divine.

If we eliminate the miracles of Christ, His character and teachings disappear; they cannot be separated from the miraculous element without a violence of treatment which no reasonable man will permit. If Jesus lived and wrought miracles substantially as the Gospels record, then He bears clear credentials as a teacher sent and endorsed by God.

**4. The testimony of His influence upon all subsequent history.** Ordinarily, when a young criminal is put to death, no matter how sensational his career might have been, the memory of him is soon blotted

out. But of 30,000 Jews crucified around the walls of Jerusalem, the world remembers the name of only one—Jesus of Nazareth.

Jesus, the strange teacher of antiquity, who was crucified at the age of 33, is reported to have said to His disciples on the night of His execution, "...I have overcome the world" (John 16:33). What a preposterous statement to make when to all appearances the world had proved too much for Him and was at last about to destroy Him! Nevertheless, out of the life of that young man, who was put to death as a criminal, has flowed the most penetrating, transforming, uplifting influence in all history.

Phillip Schaff wrote that without money or arms, Jesus of Nazareth conquered more millions than did Alexander, Caesar, Charlemagne, Mohammed and Napoleon. He was born in a manger and crucified as a malefactor, yet He now controls the destinies of the civilized races and one-third of the inhabitants of the world.

The late Kenneth Scott Latourette, former president of the American Historical Society, said that the short life of Jesus Christ, measured by its fruits in the human race, has been the most influential ever lived.

**5. The testimony of His resurrection from the dead.** Before Jesus was put to death for claiming to be the Son of God, He gave the unequivocal promise that in three days He would rise from the dead (John 2:19-22). He was murdered and subsequently put in a grave. But when the appointed hour of which He spoke arrived, the breath of God swept through the sleeping clay, and Jesus Christ arose triumphant over death and the grave. The Apostle Paul said that Jesus Christ was "...declared to be the Son of God with power...by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4).

The resurrection of Christ is one of the best attested facts of history. Six different and independent accounts, one in each of the four Gospels, one in the book of Acts, and one from the pen of the Apostle Paul, recount His triumph over death. Scores of passages in the remainder of the New Testament speak of the Savior's resurrection with a clarity that tolerates no uncertainty. The many testimonies of Christ's resurrection have always been recognized as based on two great facts: the empty tomb, and the bodily post-resurrection appearances of Christ to His disciples. In the tremendous fact of the resurrection, God spoke more clearly than ever: "This is my beloved Son: hear ye Him!"

If we accept the authority of Jesus Christ, as the incarnate Son of God, then we must accept the entire Bible as the inspired Word of God, for He set the stamp of His authority upon the entire book. He affirmed

both the Old Testament and, by anticipation, the New Testament to be the eternal Word of God (Mark 7:13; Luke 24:44; John 14:26).

### THE TESTIMONY OF PROPHECY

The Bible is trustworthy. It not only claims in numerous ways to be a revelation from God, but there is also an abundance of factual evidence to substantiate its claim. The Bible does not fear investigation; on the contrary, it courts and challenges it. The more widely it is known and the more closely it is studied, the more unreservedly it will be received as the revelation of God to man.

No area vindicates the authority and infallibility of the Bible (in the original documents) more than its prophecies, and in particular, its Messianic prophecies fulfilled in Jesus Christ. Fulfilled prophecy is absolutely unique to the Bible. There are religious systems, such as Islam and Buddhism, that try to validate their claims on supposed miracles, but neither these nor any other religion in the history of the world, except the religion of the Bible, have ever ventured to frame prophecies.

The Bible alone bases its claim to divine origin on prophecy. The claim is central, searching, and triumphant. Deuteronomy 18:22 declares, "When a prophet speaketh in the name of the Lord, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the Lord hath not spoken...." In other words, if a prophet's words are not true and the prophecy is not fulfilled, then he is not of the Lord, and neither is the prophecy. On the other hand, we are told in Jeremiah 28:9, "...when the word of the prophet shall come to pass, then shall the prophet be known, that the Lord hath truly sent him." The Scriptures unhesitatingly appeal to this unquestionable proof.

Prophecy is God's own method of proving His truth. The teachings of the Bible, compared with those of all other religions, are so outstanding and important that we have the *right* to know whether or not the Bible is a divine revelation, fully authenticated and authorized by the cosmic God. If God *has* given a revelation of His will in the Bible, it is only reasonable to suppose that in some unmistakable way He would show men that the Bible is indeed that will. The way He has chosen is one that men of average intelligence can understand: through the spoken words and the actual, historical fulfillment of specific, detailed prophecies. I believe this is His divine seal which lets men know that *He has spoken*. It is the peculiar "glory" of the Almighty, the all-knowing God, to "declare new things before they spring forth" (Isa. 42:8,9), and this glory He will not share with another. In challenging the false gods of

Isaiah's time, God said, "Produce your cause...bring forth your strong reasons...show us what shall happen.... Show the things that are to come hereafter, that we may know that ye are gods.... Behold, ye are of nothing...an abomination is he who chooseth you" (Isa. 41:21-24). Prophecy is a phenomenon that cannot be counterfeited. The true God alone fore-knows and foretells the future, and He has chosen to confine His foretelling to the pages of Scripture.

Dr. A. T. Pierson tells us that there are nearly 1,000 separate predictions of future events in the prophecies of the Old and New Testaments together, of which perhaps 800 are in the Old Testament. Those that relate to events up to the present time have all been fulfilled. Of these, there are 25 predictions centering about the destruction of Jerusalem (which occurred in A.D. 70 by Titus Vespasian), and every one of them actually took place.

Biblical prophecies have distinctive characteristics. They are not merely sage remarks or scientific predictions based upon laws of nature; neither do they reflect humanly controlled situations wherein the prophet or his supporters fulfill the prophecy. They are predictions of the future such as no human wisdom could forecast, nor human effort bring to pass. II Peter 1:21 declares, "For the prophecy came not at any time by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit."

Dr. Robert D. Culver reminds us that another necessary and interesting feature of prophecy is a degree of obscurity in many of its predictions. At first thought this might seem to seriously weaken the value of the evidence, but it actually becomes the basis of its strength! The prophecy ordinarily will have a true but obscure reference to future events. For example, in Jesus' prediction of His resurrection in Matthew 12:40, He did not clearly say that He would die, that His body would be buried, or that three days later His body would be resurrected, leaving an empty tomb; rather, He made an enigmatical reference to Jonah's experience inside the great sea monster and indicated that He would have a similar experience in the "heart of the earth" (the underworld). When He predicted His resurrection in connection with His cleansing of the Temple, He said, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up" (John 2:19). Except for Jesus Himself, no one on earth really understood these predictions until after His resurrection, and then only with considerable reflection (John 2:22). In other words, after the prophecy had become history, then with reflection, the disciples knew, without doubt that our Lord was speaking of His resurrection.

If such obscurity were not initially present in prophecy, the prophecy might actually either be unfulfilled through the efforts of those who wish to oppose it, or the value of its evidence might be destroyed by the bungling efforts of other too-helpful friends, who would try to bring it to pass. So it is easy to see that, far from being a flaw in the evidence, this feature is one of the strengths of the evidence of fulfilled prophecy. It is like a case presented either by the prosecution or the defense in court when a true verdict is issued at the time of decision. As the case is being assembled, the pieces may seem disconnected and obscure; but once all the truth is known, then it all fits into a pattern. Or, it is like an unassembled jigsaw puzzle: only dimly connected with a picture when lying in its box, it assumes an unmistakable picture pattern once it is properly assembled. The full design cannot be known until all the pieces are put together. So the full design of prophecy dimly seen at first, becomes clear with fulfillment.

When we find a book unquestionably written hundreds of years before its recorded prophecies were fulfilled, this certainly is a valid argument that it is indeed a revelation from God. Prophecy might not prove the Bible is the Word of God to some, but the *lack of its fulfillment* would certainly prove it was *not* the Word of God. To the natural mind, only a supernatural mind could have prior knowledge, and if the Bible has both historical and scientific foreknowledge beyond the possibility of mere chance, then it truly bears the fingerprint of God. And if it bears His fingerprint, we must trust it. Surely we would be fools to ignore it! Jesus said, "But take heed; behold, I have foretold you all things" (Mark 13:23).

### *JESUS CHRIST: THE MESSIAH OF THE OLD TESTAMENT*

Throughout the New Testament the apostles appealed to two areas to establish the Messiahship of Jesus Christ: His resurrection, and His fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. Time and time again we read this formula, that such and such was done, or happened "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet...." For example, when the eloquent Alexandrian, Apollos, spoke in Ephesus, we read, "...he mightily convinced the Jews, and that publicly, showing by the scriptures that Jesus was Christ" (Acts 18:28). In other words, using Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, he showed how those prophecies were fulfilled in the person of Jesus Christ.

8 The coming of Christ (the "Anointed One"), promised in the Old Testament and fulfilled in the New, is the central theme of divine revela-

tion. Jesus Christ is the bond that ties the two Testaments together. It has been said that the Old Testament is, in the New, revealed; the New Testament is, in the Old, concealed. David Baron wrote that the Christ of the Bible is the fruit of the tree of prophecy, and Christianity is the actualization of a tremendous plan, the first outlines of which were sketched more than 1500 years before Christ was born.

Revelation 19:10 tells us, "...for the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." The overwhelming purpose and underlying spirit of Biblical prophecy is to testify of Jesus. The original meaning of the name *Jesus* is "Savior." Thus, the primary theme of prophecy is the testimony of the Savior, the story of salvation. Dr. Criswell beautifully expresses that Christ is the burden of the prophets' message, the subject of the Psalmist's song, the principal character of the Gospels, the fountainhead of inspiration of the Epistles, and the sublime and central figure of the Apocalypse.

Jesus frequently asserted that He was the subject of the Old Testament. He quoted Psalm 40:7: "...in the volume of the book it is written of me." In John 5:39 He said, "Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life; and they are they which testify of me." On the evening of His resurrection, He said to those who had gathered in the Upper Room, "...all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me" (Luke 24:44). That covers the entire canon of Old Testament Scripture!

Canon Liddon tells us that there are, in all, more than 300 prophecies in the Old Testament concerning the Messiah, all of which have been fulfilled in the life of Jesus Christ or will be fulfilled at His second coming. Desperate atheists and other unbelievers, seeking a way to circumvent the fact of fulfilled prophecy in its connotations, have argued that the fulfillments were accidental, chance, or coincidental. But when the great number of details are considered, chance fulfillment must be ruled out. In each of the prophecies explicit details were given with sufficient time intervening between the prediction and the fulfillment to insure that they were not just clever guesses. There were 400 years between the last of the Messianic predictions of the Old Testament, which were given between 1500 and 400 B.C., and their fulfillment in the Christ of the Gospels.

Moreover, many of the Messianic prophecies were of such a nature that only God could fulfill them, such as the virgin birth of Jesus, His sinless and holy character, His resurrection and ascension.

Dr. Culver reminds us that Christians have always believed that the

chief significance of the Old Testament lies in its prophecies of Christ. This is the way our Lord authenticated Himself and His ministry. After His resurrection, when (as far as His first advent was concerned) prophecy had at last become history, He strenuously asserted that the entire Old Testament (not just isolated texts) was prophetic concerning Him, and that to neglect this fact was for Christians both foolish and sinful. These are His words: "O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory? And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them, in all the scriptures [the Old Testament], the things concerning himself" (Luke 24:25-27).

It would be a mistake to read the Old Testament as merely a kind of unclassified store of specific "proof texts" to show that every detail of our Lord's career was specifically foreseen by some prophet. It all is predictive of Christ, but not all in the same way.

The history of the Old Testament shows how God was getting His own people ready for His coming. It also demonstrates how desperately they needed a Savior. The institutions of the Old Testament religion (the temple, altar, laver, priests, sacrifices, rituals, etc.) had their immediate value in the worship of Israel. But even then it was understood that they pointed to a Coming One and to a coming age. The Psalms (hymns) also had their contemporary value for worship, but many were also prophecies of Christ and are, in fact, quoted in the New Testament as predicting Christ more than any other Old Testament book. The prophetic books (major and minor prophets) are mainly sermons calling the Jews back to obedience to Moses' laws. That the people *needed* these sermons of reproof is in itself a kind of prophetic call for a Savior to save them from their sins. Yet, aside from this general predictive quality, there are many specific and detailed predictions of our Lord's person and career in the Old Testament. Many of them were recognized by the Jews as Messianic before and during the time of Christ.

### *THE PREWRITTEN LIFE OF CHRIST*

Who on earth could paint the portrait in detail of a man not yet born? Yet, that is exactly what the Word of God did with the Lord Jesus Christ. The writers portrayed Him with increasing vividness until the day He was cradled in the manger of Bethlehem. His ancestry, birth time, forerunner, birthplace, birth manner, infancy, manhood, teaching, character, career, preaching, reception, rejection, death, burial, resurrection and ascension were all written in a marvelous manner centuries before

He was even born! Old Testament prophecies of the Messiah are indeed like the separate pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, except that each separate part is intelligible in itself. Still, it is a part of a greater whole, not fully to be appreciated until set in its place in the greater whole.

The Word of God is not a cryptic, mystical hieroglyphic that must be interpreted only by an elite priesthood. It is written in plain language for every person to see for himself, if he will only take the time to seek its truths. Anyone who will study the Word of God may examine the predictions of the Messiah's person and work found in the Old Testament, and follow the gradual progress of these specific revelations from Genesis to Malachi, until at last the full figure of the Coming One stands out. Then one can turn to the New Testament and, beginning with Matthew, see how his account of the historic Christ corresponds and coincides in every particular with the Messiah portrayed by the prophets. It is the simple comparison of two portraits—one in the Old Testament of a mysterious Coming One, another in the New Testament of One who has already come. The irresistible conclusion is that these two blend perfectly in absolute unity. The quick logic of common sense tells us that one hand drew the image and prophecies, and also molded the portrait into history, and that hand must have been divine.

D. M. Panton speaks of the narrative of Jesus Christ written in prophecy in the Old Testament and in biography in the four Gospels, as the most amazing drama that was ever presented to the mind of man. It is truly amazing that many of the details of His life and death are in documents given to the public centuries before He appeared, and that no one challenges or can challenge that these documents were widely circulated long before His birth. The challenge of this miracle is that it happened concerning *only one man* in the entire history of the world.

To focus on the unparalleled wonder of this literary miracle, think for a moment: Who could have prewritten the life of George Washington, or Abraham Lincoln, or any other character 500 years before he was born? Indeed, nothing but divine foreknowledge could have foreseen and predicted the life of Christ, and nothing but divine power could have accomplished it.

The inevitable conclusion to this miracle is fourfold: 1. It proves that the Bible is the inspired Word of God, for unaided man is neither capable of writing nor of fulfilling such a literary wonder; 2. It proves that the God of the Bible, the only one who knows the end from the beginning, and who alone has the power to fulfill all His Word, is the true and living God; 3. It demonstrates that the God of the Bible foretells the

future through numerous men who are free moral agents and that such an all-powerful God is able to bring to pass the perfect fulfillment of His Word in the midst of widespread unbelief, ignorance and rebellion on the part of man; 4. It demonstrates that Jesus Christ, who so perfectly and completely fulfilled all the Old Testament predictions, is indeed the Messiah, the Savior of the world, the Son of the living God.

### *THE CREDENTIALS OF THE MESSIAH*

In the first chapter of his Gospel, Matthew presents, in a single sentence, a succinct summary of what could be called Christ's credentials. He begins by saying, "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham." Fred John Meldau suggests an interesting illustration: Any person living in any part of the world where there is mail service can be selected from the rest of the three and one-half billion people on earth by simply addressing a letter to him using seven or eight definite specifications. For example, if we write a letter to Robert C. Smith, 1250 Pacific Ave., San Francisco, California, U.S.A. 94109, we are picking out but one man from all the world. It is possible to identify and reach him by selecting one country, thereby eliminating all other countries, by selecting one state out of the country and one city in that state, thus eliminating all others, by using a Zip Code, thus selecting an area within that city, by using an address, thus selecting the one house in which he lives, and by giving him his correct name, thus distinguishing him from other people who may live in the same house. And so we eliminate all the other three and one-half billion people in the world with about seven or eight specifications.

Similarly, in giving a number of definite "specifications" in the Old Testament concerning the coming Messiah, God enabled us to pick out one man from all history, from all nations, from all peoples, and to be absolutely sure that this one is the Messiah—not with seven or eight specifications, but literally hundreds.

God eliminated half the human race as the immediate parents of the Messiah and, at the same time, made it clear that the Messiah would come as a man and not as some celestial being, when He gave the promise that the coming deliverer would be of "the seed of the woman." He said, in Genesis 3:15, "And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; he shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel." Here we have intimated not only the virgin birth of Jesus Christ, but also His vicarious sufferings ("thou shalt bruise his heel"), and His complete and eventual victory over Satan and

his works ("he [Messiah] shall bruise thy head"). We have remarkable evidence in Genesis 4:1 that this promise was well understood by Adam and Eve, for, at the birth of their firstborn son, Eve ecstatically exclaimed (carefully translated from the Hebrew): "I have obtained the man, even the Lord." Eve thought her firstborn was the promised deliverer, but she was mistaken as to the time, place, and many other specifications yet to be given. It was necessary in God's plan that many centuries pass before the Messiah would come. The Apostle Paul tells us, "But, when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman...To redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons" (Gal. 4:4,5).

God then eliminated two-thirds of the nations of the earth when He indicated that the Messiah must come through Shem, not Ham or Japheth, of the three sons of Noah. In the beginning of the history of the nations, God, through His prophet Noah, identified Himself with Shem in a special way: "Blessed be the Lord God of Shem.... God shall enlarge Japheth, and he shall dwell in the tents of Shem" (Gen. 9:26,27). The final fulfillment of the prediction in Genesis 9:27 came when the eternal Word, who was with God and was God (John 1:1), "was made flesh, and dwelt [literally, "tabernacled"] among us...." He came to His people, Israel, who are descendants of Shem, through Abraham. Interestingly, Genesis 11:10-27 gives the ancestry of Abraham, beginning with Shem.

Next, all the hundreds of the nations of the world were eliminated except one. A new nation was created by God Himself when He called Abraham. Galatians 3:8,16 tells us, "And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ." Now we see what Matthew meant in the opening verse of his Gospel: "Jesus Christ...the son of Abraham."

We now know to look for the Messiah in the Jewish race as a descendant of Abraham. But Abraham had several sons, including Ishmael, his firstborn, and Isaac. So another choice has to be made. Continuing in Genesis we find that the Messiah was to come through Isaac, not Ishmael, the progenitor of the modern Arabs. The promise given to Abraham was reiterated by God to Isaac in Genesis 26:2-4.

Because Isaac had two sons, the Messianic line must be narrowed further still. So the prediction was clearly made that the Christ must

come through Jacob, not Esau. And the same promise made to Abraham, concerning the land, the seed, and the blessing to come to the earth, was repeated to Jacob.

But Jacob had twelve sons, so another choice has to be made. One of the twelve—Judah—was selected. We read in Genesis 49:10, “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 word “Shiloh” means “he whose right it is.” We are then told that he “...washed his garments...in the blood of grapes,” a metaphorical forehint of our Lord’s crucifixion. In the New Testament we read that Jesus “sprang out of Judah” (Heb. 7:14). Revelation 5:5 calls Him “the Lion of the tribe of Judah.”

Now, of the thousands of families of the tribe of Judah, another choice has to be made. So we read that the Messiah was to come from one family line—the family of Jesse, the father of David. Isaiah 11:1,2: “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....” This passage tells us that God will take a man with no standing, a mere “stump” or, as the Hebrew expresses it, a shoot out of a tree cut down, and graft new life into it. Interestingly, Jesse was not the head of a royal family until God made his son David a king, which put him in the Messianic line.

Jesse had eight sons, so we must look for another divine choice. Psalm 132:11 reveals that the Messiah was to be a descendant of Jesse’s youngest son, David: “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.”

Turning to the New Testament, we read once again in Matthew 1:1: “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David....” The public knew Jesus as “the son of David,” and so they called Him. The Pharisees knew full well that the Messiah must be of the lineage of David. When Jesus asked them, “What think ye of Christ [the Messiah]? Whose son is he?” they answered, “The Son of David” (Matt. 22:41-46).

During Bible times, every Jew could trace his genealogy. National genealogical records were carefully kept until the destruction of Jerusalem, the Temple and the Jewish state in A.D. 70. This record constituted a Jew’s title to his former home. Thus, no one disputed the fact that Jesus was of the lineage of David, because it was a matter of public record. However, since A.D. 70, when Israel’s genealogical records (except those of the Bible) were destroyed or confused, no impostor could prove himself to be the Messiah because he could never prove he was a son of

David. In other words, the Messiah *had to come* before the year A.D. 70.

Moreover, of all of David's many sons, the Messiah was to get His right to the throne of David through Solomon's regal line. We read in I Chronicles 28:5, "And of all my sons...he hath chosen Solomon, my son, to sit upon the throne of the kingdom of the Lord over Israel."

Yet another extremely important "specification" about the Messiah's lineage was given: He must be born of a virgin. Because the Messiah must be "the fruit of David's body," this virgin had to be a direct descendant of King David. In Isaiah 7:13,14 we read this prophecy: "Hear ye now, O house of David...the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, the virgin shall conceive...." Turning to the New Testament, we find that Jesus indeed was born of a virgin who was a direct descendant of King David. Matthew writes, "Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted, is God with us." Here indeed is a prophecy that only God could fulfill. No Messianic pretender could cause himself to be born of a virgin.

When the Messiah came, He fulfilled to the letter all the specifications of His lineage. No one in all the world but Jesus of Nazareth could have met all or even a small part of the qualifications.

### **MESSIANIC PROPHECY**

The Old Testament is divided into three great periods: the Mosaic, the Davidic, and the Messianic. The Mosaic Period gives us the great germ of all that later unfolds in the perfect and fragrant bloom of Christ, the "Rose of Sharon," the "Lily of the Valley." Its prophecies branch out into particulars which tell us that not only Abraham's seed, but all the families of the earth are to be blessed in this Coming One. He is to be a prophet like unto Moses, yet clothed with higher authority and gifted with higher wisdom. He is to be a lawgiver, a leader, a ruler, and a redeemer.

In the Davidic Period, the same One is to be a king of war as David, yet a prince of peace as Solomon. His kingdom, however, is to be without succession and without end, which could be true only of a royal order higher than human. In the Messianic Psalms, various aspects of the dignity and divinity of this coming King are set forth.

The Messianic Period is represented by the book of Isaiah, the richest mine of Messianic prophecy in the entire Old Testament. The 40th through 60th chapter is one continuous Messianic poem, in which Christ

is depicted in His three offices as Prophet, Priest, and King. The prophecies of Isaiah set forth for all ages the character and career of this Servant of God.

### *SPECIFIC MESSIANIC PROPHECIES*

Isaiah 9:6, written in 700 B.C., prophesies that a **Godchild would be born**: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given, and the government shall be upon his shoulder; and his name shall be called Wonderful [literally, "miracle"], Counselor, The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace." The Gospel of John relates the fulfillment: "In the beginning was the Word [Christ], and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us..." (John 1:1,14).

Isaiah 7:14 gives the amazing prophecy that this Godchild would be **born of a virgin**: "Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." In Matthew 1:18-25 we read that Christ was indeed born of a virgin, named Mary, and that the Holy Spirit (God Himself) was His Father. If it is argued that this prediction of the virgin birth of our Lord was addressed only to the faithless Ahaz, Isaiah 7:13 makes it clear that this prediction was addressed to the whole "house of David." It was a continuing prophecy addressed to the Davidic family.

Micah 5:2 predicts that the Godman would be **born in Bethlehem**: "But thou, Bethlehem...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." Matthew 2 tells of the visit of the Magi (Zoroastrian astrologers who were evidently acquainted with Old Testament prophecy) to Jerusalem, inquiring, "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." The answer was prompt and decisive: "In Bethlehem of Judea; for thus it is written by [through] the prophet, And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, art not the least among the princes of Judah; for out of thee shall come a Governor that shall rule my people, Israel" (Matt. 2:5,6). Here is a definite prediction, definitely understood and just as definitely fulfilled. That it was made in the year 700 B.C. precludes human sagacity. What led Micah to select this one little village among the thousands of Judah? Who could accurately foretell what would take place in any obscure town 700 years after his time? There is only one answer: Micah was divinely inspired by the Spirit of God.

The phrase in Micah's prophecy, "whose goings forth have been

from of old, from everlasting," cites the **pre-existence of Christ**. In John 8:42 Jesus declared that He lived before coming to earth as a man. In John 17:5 He prayed, "...O Father, glorify thou me with...the glory which I had with thee before the world was."

**Jesus' forerunner** was also foretold in Scripture. Malachi 3:1: "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." Isaiah 40:3: "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." In Matthew 3:1,2 we read, "John the Baptist [came] preaching in the wilderness of Judea, And saying, Repent; for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

In 500 B.C. the Prophet Zechariah predicted that Christ would **enter Jerusalem as a King riding on an ass**: "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...upon a colt, the foal of an ass" (Zech. 9:9). Matthew 21 tells us that this was exactly how Jesus entered Jerusalem.

Zechariah further predicted that Christ would be **sold by His enemies for thirty pieces of silver**: "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" (Zech. 11:12). Matthew 26:14,15 tells us, "Then... Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they bargained with him for thirty pieces of silver."

At approximately this same date, 500 B.C., Zechariah prophesied that the **smiting of the Shepherd (Christ) would cause the sheep to scatter**: "...smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered..." (Zech. 13:7). After Jesus was seized by His enemies, Matthew tells us, "Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled" (Matt. 26:56).

Psalms 35:11 predicts, concerning the Messiah, "**False witnesses did rise up**; they laid to my charge things that I knew not." Matthew records the fulfillment: "Now the chief priests, and elders...sought false [witnesses] against Jesus to put him to death" (Matt. 26:59).

About 700 B.C. Isaiah wrote prophetically of the **humiliation of the Messiah**: "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" (Isa. 50:6). Matthew writes, "Then they spat in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands..." (Matt. 26:67).

Isaiah 53:7 poignantly pictures the Messiah standing silent before His accusers: "He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth." Matthew 27:12 confirms the fulfillment: "And when he was accused by the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing."

Josh McDowell, in his book, *Evidence That Demands a Verdict*, tells us that 29 prophecies from the Old Testament, which speak of the betrayal, trial, death, and burial of our Lord, spoken at various times by many different voices during the five centuries from 1000 to 500 B.C., were literally fulfilled in Jesus Christ *in one 24-hour period of time*.

In connection with Christ's passion, the inspired Prophet Isaiah wrote, "...he was **wounded for our transgressions**, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way, and **the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all**" (Isa. 53:5,6). Matthew confirmed the fulfillment of this prediction when he quoted the words of our Lord—"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt. 26:28). Peter further confirmed it when he said, "Who his own self bore our sins in his own body on the tree..." (1 Pet. 2:24).

Again, Isaiah predicted of Christ, "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isa. 53:4). Matthew beautifully tells of Christ's fulfillment of the first part of this prophecy during His healing ministry on earth: "...he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick, That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah, the prophet, saying, He himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses" (Matt. 8:16,17). Physical disease in itself is not necessarily the result of personal sin; it is one of the tragic results of man's original sin and his fall (Rom. 5:12). Thus, Isaiah 53:5,6 prophesies that our Lord would bear our sins on the cross. His death was substitutionary and atoning.

One thousand years before Christ, the Psalmist predicted that our Lord would **fall beneath the weight of His cross**. His knees would become weak; His flesh would fail. Psalm 109:24,25: "My knees are weak through fasting, and my flesh faileth of fatness. I became also a reproach unto them; when they looked upon me, they shook their heads." John tells us, "And he, bearing his cross, went forth..." (John 19:17). Matthew gives us further word that His strength gave out: "And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name; him they compelled to bear his cross" (Matt. 27:32).

Psalm 22:16 is an amazing prophecy concerning the Messiah:

"...they pierced my hands and my feet." A prophecy yet to be fulfilled says, concerning Israel and its Messiah, "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 first-born" (Zech. 12:10). When these prophecies were written, no one was executed in any manner which involved "piercing of hands and feet." The *Encyclopædia Americana* records that crucifixion as a mode of punishment for crime was a part of the Roman system of jurisprudence. The Hebrews inflicted the death penalty by stoning. But when Palestine became Roman territory, the Hebrews were compelled to adopt the Roman method of crucifixion. No life could be taken supposedly without Roman permission, and all executions were supposed to be carried out by the Roman government. Evidently this was not rigidly enforced, because Stephen was stoned, and there were no recriminations following his death. So Luke 23:33 tells us, "And when they were come to the place which is called Calvary (or *the skull*), there they crucified him...."

A fascinating prophecy in Isaiah 53 reads, "...because he hath poured out his soul unto death; and he was numbered with the transgressors...." It is affirmed in Mark 15:28: "And the scripture was fulfilled, which saith, And he was numbered with the transgressors." Matthew 27:38 relates how this prophecy was fulfilled: "Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left." It is amazing that Isaiah should predict that the child who was in reality the Mighty God, would as a man die the death of a criminal among criminals! The only possible explanation is that his message was inspired of God, for no man would have been so presumptuous.

In Psalm 22:8 the Psalmist predicted that **the Messiah would be mocked** because of His trust in God, who would be challenged to deliver Him. Matthew records this exact picture in perfect fulfillment: "Likewise also the chief priests, mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said, He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him. He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him; for he said, I am the Son of God" (Matt. 27:41-43).

In the same Psalm, the Messiah declares, "...they look and stare upon me" (vs. 17). Matthew 27:36 reports this actually happening: "And sitting down they watched him there" as He was writhing in the agony of the world's sin.

Speaking for the Messiah, the Psalmist then prophesies that men would “...part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture” (Ps. 22:18). John 19:23,24 answers: “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 tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be...” How could the Psalmist have known this would happen a thousand years before Jesus Christ was born? There is only one answer: his words were inspired by God.

At approximately the same date, the Psalmist boldly declared that men would give the Messiah gall and vinegar to drink, while in His death agony (Ps. 69:21). The Apostle John tells us, “After this Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, saith, I thirst. Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar; and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth” (John 19:28,29). This was usually given because of its supposed anesthetic effect. Given to criminals, it was an act of kindness; given to the righteous Savior, it was an insult, after what they had done to Him.

Psalm 22:1 records the awesome cry: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Matthew 27:46 records the fulfillment: “And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” During this moment the Godman was feeling the forsakenness that men experience who die in the rejection of God’s love and grace. But the Psalm makes it clear that He was not forsaken of God, for we read in verse 24: “...he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hidden his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.” Undoubtedly, this cry must have recalled to the minds of some of the Jews within hearing the cry of Psalm 22, and perhaps it occurred to them that this prophecy was being fulfilled in their presence as Jesus was crucified!

Psalm 31:5 predicted that the Messiah would cry out, “Into thine hand I commit my spirit...” Luke 23:46 records that at the end of His long agony Jesus uttered these very words as a direct fulfillment of the prophecy.

One of the most amazing Messianic prophecies, found in Psalm 34:20, was that **none of His bones would be broken**. It was the custom following crucifixion that if by sundown those who were hanging on crosses were still alive, their legs were broken to hasten death. But, as the Apostle John informs us, “...when they came to Jesus, and saw

that he was dead already, they broke not his legs..." (John 19:33).

Psalm 38:11 predicted that **the Messiah's friends and kinsmen would stand aloof from His "sore"** (His suffering). The fulfillment is described in Luke 23:49: "And all his acquaintances, and the women that followed him from Galilee, stood afar off, beholding these things."

Psalm 22:14 tells us that **the Messiah's heart would be broken**: "...my heart is like wax; it is melted within me." John 19:34 records: "But one of the soldiers, with a spear, pierced His side, and immediately came there out blood and water." Physicians explain that this is a sign that Christ's heart had indeed ruptured within Him. Jesus literally died with a broken heart.

Amos 8:9 foretells **the sun's setting at noon and the earth's becoming dark on a clear day**, which occurred when Jesus was crucified. Matthew 27:45: "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour." The Jews reckoned twelve hours from sunrise to sunset, which would make the sixth hour near noon, and the ninth hour about 3 o'clock in the afternoon. How could Amos have known this eight centuries before it happened? There is only one answer: he knew it because God knew it, and he wrote what God moved him to write.

Seven hundred years before it was fulfilled from the cross, the Prophet Isaiah wrote how **the dying Messiah would make intercession for His murderers** (Isa. 53:12). Luke 23:34 records Jesus' prayer: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do."

Again, Isaiah prophesied, "**And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death...**" (Isa. 53:9). Matthew details the fulfillment: "The thieves also, who were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth" (Matt. 27:44). Then, in verses 57-60, he relates that Christ made His grave with the rich: "...there came a rich man of Arimathea, named Joseph, who...begged the body of Jesus." "And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, And laid it in his own new tomb...."

**Christ's resurrection** is seen in the amazing prophecy of Psalm 16: 10: "For thou wilt not leave my soul in sheol, neither wilt thou permit thine Holy One to see corruption." The Apostle Peter quoted these words in Acts 2:29-31: "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch, David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulcher is with us unto this day. Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his [David's] loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on

his throne; He, seeing this before, spoke of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hades, neither his flesh did see corruption." Indeed, Christ's body saw no corruption, for on the third day He rose literally, physically, and bodily from the dead!

As Peter declared, we have "a more sure word of prophecy" unto which we should all take heed. No one can begin to explain the hundreds of amazingly accurate Messianic prophecies fulfilled to the letter in Jesus Christ without admitting the divine authorship of the Word of God.

Peter Stoner, in his book, *Science Speaks*, tells us that using the modern science of mathematical probability, in reference to only *eight* prophecies concerning the Messiah, the probability that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies, is 1 in  $10^{17}$ . That would be 1 chance in 100,000,000,000,000,000. To help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that we take  $10^{17}$  silver dollars and spread them out on the face of Texas. They would cover the entire state two feet deep. Now put a mark on just one of those silver dollars, then mix the whole mass up thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and instruct him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up that one silver dollar and say that it is the right one. What chance would he have of finding the right one? The same chance that the Old Testament prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them come true in any one man, providing they wrote in their own wisdom. These prophecies, then, were either given by inspiration of God, or the prophets just wrote them from their own imagination. In such case they had just 1 chance in  $10^{17}$  of having them come true in any one man. But they *all* were realized in Jesus Christ! And not only eight prophecies, but hundreds more!

### *PROPHETIC PARADOXES CONCERNING THE MESSIAH*

One of the most intriguing characteristics of Messianic prophecy is that frequently the predictions appear to contradict one another. For example, in one breath a prophet pictures the Coming One as a great conqueror; in the next breath he describes His loneliness, sorrow and grief.

There are actually two lines of Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. One line predicts the suffering Messiah, despised and rejected of men, whose earthly mission will end in death, ignominy and shame. The other line predicts with equal clarity and emphasis the coming of an all-conquering Messiah, who will rule the nations with a rod of iron.

This was a paradox to the Old Testament prophets. Peter tells us they couldn't understand how the Messiah could be a suffering, dying servant, and at the same time, a glorious, regal King. He wrote, "Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you, Searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ who was in them did signify, when he testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow" (I Pet. 1:10,11). The best answer to this enigma, the Jews reasoned, was that there were to be *two* Messiahs. This was evidently behind the question John the Baptist sent to Jesus in Matthew 11:3: "Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?" To John, Jesus appeared to be the suffering Servant. But was He also the conquering Prince, who was to burn up His enemies "with unquenchable fire"? Were they to look for yet another Messiah—a second one?

In actual fulfillment, both lines of prophecy meet in one person—Jesus of Nazareth. At His first coming, He was the suffering Servant, who made an atonement for our sins by His death on the cross. At the second coming, He will be a conquering King, who will rule over the nations of the earth.

The diverse and seemingly contradictory prophecies concerning Christ, and their fulfillments sometimes thousands of years later, actually constitute one of the greatest attestations of the Christian faith that the mind could conceive! They indicate that the God of prophecy who designed them and the God of providence who fulfilled them are one and the same.

Consider the prophetic paradoxes concerning His birth. Isaiah 7:14 announces, "...the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, the virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel." In Isaiah 9:6, however, we read that this child shall be called "The Mighty God, The Everlasting Father" (literally, "The Father of Eternity"). A virgin was to bear a son (something unknown in human experience, supposedly a biological impossibility), and this child was to be God. The paradox is, *God begotten, yet God incarnate?*

To fulfill these amazing prophecies, God performed a "biological miracle" when Christ was conceived by the Holy Spirit. God, in the person of His Son, invaded our world, and the incarnation became a reality. "The Son of the Highest" became Mary's son, God manifest in the flesh. As the Apostle John so magnificently expresses it in his Gospel, "...the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us..." (John 1:14). All this took place, Luke tells us, though Mary "knew not a man" (Luke 1:34).

Not only was the Messiah to be the Godman, born of a virgin, He was also, in some mysterious way, to fulfill *all* of these descriptions: “the seed of the woman” (Gen. 3:15), “the Son of man” (Dan. 7:13), “the Son of God” (Ps. 2:7), “the seed of Abraham” (Gen. 22:18), and “the fruit of David’s body” (Ps. 132:11). How could God be man and man be God, and, at the same time, be a Son of man and a Son of God? And how could one be a “Son of man” and yet have no human father? And how could He be of the “seed of the woman” when the woman has no seed, and especially when “Mary knew not a man”? How could one person be all these? Yet, Jesus of Nazareth miraculously fulfilled all these descriptions. As the Scripture tells us, the Lord Jesus Christ was God (John 1:1); He was man (John 1:14); He was of the “seed of the woman” (Gal. 4:4); He was “the Son of man”—the representative man—(Luke 19:10); He was “the Son of God” (John 3:16); and He was of the seed of Abraham and of the seed of David (Matt. 1:1).

The Apostle Paul wrote to the Colossians of the “...mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:2,3). The “mystery of God” is Christ, the incarnation of the “fullness of the Godhead” and all of the divine wisdom and knowledge for the redemption and reconciliation of man. The “mystery of God” is that the cosmic God, of which Einstein spoke, has become personal, real and dynamic in the person of Jesus Christ. Our Lord said, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father...” (John 14:9). Thus the paradox becomes the proof!

There were three seemingly contradictory predictions concerning the Messiah’s home town. The Prophet Micah said, “But thou, Bethlehem...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.” But Hosea 11:1, which Matthew 2:15 refers to, reads, “I...called my son out of Egypt.” Then there was a spoken prophecy commonly known among the Israelites: “He shall be called a Nazarene” (Matt. 2:23). (This was probably based on Isaiah 11:1, where the Messiah is called the Branch [*Nehztzer*], meaning, “the separated one” or “the Nazarite.”)

The Gospel records solve this puzzle perfectly. Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem, as Micah said. Soon after, He was taken into Egypt by Joseph and Mary. After the death of King Herod, He was called back (Matt. 2:13-23), and He settled with His parents in Nazareth. It is remarkable that although He was born in Bethlehem, He was not known as “Jesus of Bethlehem.” He was called “Jesus of Nazareth” (Luke 18:37, Acts 2:22). He was also a true *Nazarene*—a separated one—for He lived

in Galilee instead of with His Judean brethren in Judah.

Jesus confronted the Pharisees with a fascinating paradox, recorded in Matthew 22:41-45: "While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, Saying, What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? [His question was not personal but doctrinal; He was asking, "Whose son is the Messiah?"] They say unto him, The Son of David. He saith unto them [now quoting the 100th Psalm], How, then, doth David, in the Spirit, call him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? If David, then, call him Lord, how is he his son?"

This was a puzzling question. How could the Messiah be David's son *and* Lord? To unravel this mystery, we go back to the announcement made to Mary by the angel Gabriel, that "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father, David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1:32, 33). Thus, Jesus Christ was a descendant of David after the flesh: He was David's "Son." But He was also David's Lord, for the Messiah is God, "King of kings, and Lord of lords" (Rev. 19:16). In Jeremiah 23:6 the Messiah is called Lord (*Jehovah*); in Psalm 45:6 He is called God (*Elohim*); and in Malachi 3:1 and Psalm 110:1 He is called Lord (*Adonai*). All three names and titles of Deity in the Old Testament are used in reference to the Messiah. We can understand why, as Matthew continues, "And no man was able to answer him a word, neither dared any man from that day forth ask him any more questions" (vs. 46). Thus again, what appears to be a paradox is majestically resolved in Jesus Christ.

Consider the paradox concerning Christ's right to the Davidic throne. In the New Testament the legal right to the throne of David was passed through Solomon and Jehoiakim to Joseph, and to Joseph's legal son, Jesus Christ. The physical seed, however, was passed through Nathan and Mary to Jesus Christ. Thus, the promises to both David and Solomon were literally fulfilled in and through the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mary and Joseph had to be the parents (mother and foster father) of Jesus Christ. They were the only two people of their generation who could fulfill prophecy about the Messiah. Joseph had to be married to Mary before Jesus was born so that Christ could get His legal right to David's throne through Joseph. At the same time, Christ could not be a child of Joseph because of the curse against the descendants of Jeconiah (Jer. 22:24-30). Verse 30 reads, "Thus saith the Lord, Write this man childless, a man that shall not prosper in his days; for no man of his seed

shall prosper, sitting upon the throne of David, and ruling any more in Judah." Though Jeconiah was to have children (listed in I Chron. 3:17, 18), this declaration signified that none of his physical descendants would ever occupy a place in the list of Israel's kings. Consequently, if the Lord Jesus, who is to occupy David's throne (Luke 1:32,33), had been begotten by Mary's husband, Joseph, who was of Jeconiah's lineage, it would have contradicted this divine prediction. Christ's dynastic right to the throne (from Jeconiah) came through His foster father Joseph, but the physical descent of Jesus from David came through Mary, whose genealogy is traced through Nathan, rather than through Solomon (Luke 3:31; Matt. 1:17). If Christ had been the natural son of Joseph, He could never reign in power and righteousness because of the curse. But our Lord came through Mary's line, not Joseph's. As Joseph's adopted son, He was not affected by the curse upon Jeconiah's seed. Though Joseph had to be married to Mary, yet Joseph could not "know" Mary as his wife until after Jesus was born, for He had to be born of a virgin. Thus, the divinely ordered fulfillment was perfect in every detail.

Consider this fascinating paradox: The Messiah was to be both a "chief cornerstone" and a "rock of offense." Isaiah 8:14: "And he shall be...for a stone of stumbling and for a rock of offense to both the houses of Israel...." Psalm 118:22: "The stone which the builders refused is become the head of the corner." Isaiah 28:16: "...Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tested stone, a precious cornerstone, a sure foundation; he that believeth shall not make haste." The key that unlocks this mystery is a simple one—belief or unbelief in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostle Peter explains in I Peter 2:6-8: "Wherefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious; and he that believeth on him shall not be confounded. Unto you, therefore, who believe he is precious, but unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient."

In Matthew 21:42 Jesus called attention to this Old Testament prophecy and declared Himself to be its New Testament fulfillment: "Jesus saith unto them [the Pharisees], Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner; this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes?" Then He added this significant statement: "And whosoever shall fall on this stone [seeking His mercy and grace], shall be broken [that is, his hopes in himself completely crushed], but on whomsoever it shall

fall [in judgment], it will grind him to powder [completely ruin him for time and eternity].”

Thus we see Christ revealed as the Stone in a threefold way: to Israel He first comes in the form of a servant, not in Messianic glory, and is a Stumbling Stone and a Rock of offense; to the Church, He is the Foundation Stone and the Head of the corner; and to the Gentile world powers, He is to be the Smiting Stone of destruction. The personal acceptance of Christ brings salvation; the personal rejection of Christ brings judgment. To Christians He is the chief Cornerstone; to unbelievers He is a Stone of stumbling, a Rock of offense. Thus the paradox is resolved.

### *ISAIAH'S PORTRAIT OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST*

Without doubt, the most remarkable example of prophecy in all the Word of God is the 53rd chapter of Isaiah. Written 700 years before Christ was born, it describes in minute detail the sufferings and exaltation of the Messiah. David Baron said of Isaiah 53 that it reads more like a historical synopsis of the Gospel narratives of Christ's passion and glory than a prophecy! The great Augustine said, “Methinks Isaiah writes not a prophecy, but the Gospel.” Another commentator has said, “It reads as if it had been written beneath the cross of Golgotha. It is the deepest and loftiest thing that Old Testament prophecy, outstripping itself, has ever achieved.”

In considering this chapter verse by verse, we must go back to Isaiah 52:13, where Isaiah's portrayal of Jesus Christ as the suffering Servant actually begins. The prophet wrote, “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently; he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.” Before the depth of the Messiah's humiliation is presented, we are assured of His final victory.

The New Testament makes very clear the ultimate exaltation of the crucified, risen Savior. Philippians 2:5-11 declares, “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery [a thing to be held on to] to be equal with God, But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men; And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore, God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name, That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth, And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God, the Father.”

The phrase in verse 6, “Who, being in the form of God,” is one of the strongest assertions of the deity of Jesus Christ to be found in Scripture. The word for “form” is *morphe*, which refers to external appearance. Yet, it is an eternal *form* truly indicative of the inner nature from which it springs. Nothing in this passage teaches that the eternal Word (John 1:1) emptied Himself of His divine nature or attributes, but only of the outward and visible manifestation of the Godhead. God may change form, but He never ceases to be God. At all times His divine attributes will be exercised according to His will. The writer of Hebrews affirmed this when he wrote, concerning Jesus Christ, “Who, being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high” (Heb. 1:3).

Isaiah 52:14 prophesies the shocking abuse of the Messiah: “**many were astounded...his visage was so marred more than any man, and his form more than the sons of men.**” The literal rendering of this passage presents an atrocious picture: “so marred from the form of man was his aspect that his appearance was not that of a son of man,” that is, not human. This was the gruesome effect of the brutalities described in Matthew 26:67,68; 27-30.

Jesus was brutally manhandled, buffeted and scourged. The scourging itself was violent and inhumane: The whip was often made of leather thongs fastened to a handle. At the end of the thongs were fastened bits of sharpened metal or rock that cut and lacerated the flesh of the victim and turned his back into a bleeding pulp. Then the crucifiers, with heavy hammers, drove nails through His flesh, and the consequent agony of crucifixion became a flame of torture. Add to this Christ’s excruciating mental agony and the pain of unrequited love, and it is not difficult to understand that His features became so marred and distorted that He no longer resembled a man. This horrifying fact is practically unbelievable, but it is clearly revealed of the Messiah in the Old Testament, and just as clearly described in the records of Christ’s suffering and death in the New Testament. Because He was the true Messiah, He was willing to suffer such agony to be our Savior. Who can measure such limitless love? In contemplating the suffering of the One “who knew no sin,” we are driven to exclaim, with the Apostle John, “Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins” (1 John 4:10).

In Isaiah 52:15 we read that the Messiah’s message will have a dramatic effect upon the nations: “**So shall he sprinkle many nations; the**

kings shall shut their mouths at him; for that which had not been told them shall they see, and that which they had not heard shall they consider." The literal fulfillment of this prediction is seen in I Peter 1:1,2, where people of many nations are described as having been sprinkled with the blood of Jesus Christ. The word translated "sprinkle" in Isaiah 52:15 is the word used in the Pentateuch to describe the sprinkling of blood or water on the vessels in the Temple in the ceremonial cleansing. Indeed, many nations have been influenced and many lives have been transformed by the redeeming message of the dying Savior on Skull Hill. The hardest heart can be broken by the overwhelming expression of the love of God to man as seen in the agonizing death of the Lord Jesus.

However, as Isaiah continues, this message of redemption through faith in Christ is to be disbelieved and rejected by Israel. Isaiah 53:1: **"Who hath believed our report? And to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed?"** Among other passages, John 12:37,38 describes the fulfillment of this prediction: "But though he [Jesus] had done so many miracles before them, yet they believed not on him; That the saying of Isaiah, the prophet, might be fulfilled, which he spoke, Lord, who hath believed our report? And to whom hath the arm of the Lord been revealed?"

In Isaiah 53:2 we read, **"For he shall grow up before him like a tender plant, and like a root out of a dry ground...."** The Messiah's supernatural birth is intimated in the phrase, "like a root out of a dry ground." A root growing out of dry ground is a miracle. One essential element—moisture—is missing. Here is suggested the miracle of the virgin birth of Jesus Christ.

Even though Christ was God incarnate, yet He was to "grow up." In Luke 2:40 we read, concerning the child, Jesus, "And the child grew, and became strong in spirit, filled with wisdom; and the grace of God was upon him." James Culross reminds us that He did not burst upon the world all at once, in a sudden splendor of marvelous achievements. He conformed to God's slow, silent law of growth. Luke 2:52 says, "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature...." The world has yet to see Him in His full splendor; but one day they will, when He comes as King of kings and Lord of lords!

Continuing, we read that the Messiah's generation will fail to appreciate His greatness. Isaiah 53:2: **"...he hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him."** At the time of Christ, the Jews were looking for a political reformer who could deliver them from the tyranny of Rome. So they did

not see Christ's beauty, the beauty of holiness, nor did they understand His mission. Having misread the prophecies, they were looking for a cataclysmic leader, not a suffering Messiah who would die for their sins.

Thus He was, as Isaiah predicted, **"...despised and rejected of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief, and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted"** (Isa. 53:3,4). David Baron tells us that the words "rejected of men" actually mean "rejected by men of high rank." Few men of distinction would support Him with their authority and influence.

How dramatically this was true in the life of Christ! For instance, we read in John 7:45-48 how the Pharisees asked sarcastically of certain officers, "Are ye also deceived? Have any of the rulers or of the Pharisees believed on him?" (This was a rhetorical question; the answer was obviously, No!) Only the infinite God, who knows the end from the beginning, would dare to frame a prophecy presenting the Messiah as being without the support of the leaders of the people! But history fully confirms the truthfulness of this prediction. The Apostle John records, "He came unto his own, and his own received him not" (John 1:11). And it is true that their execution of the Son of God was done in the name of God and religion. They considered Him "smitten of God," not realizing that He suffered to redeem them, that He permitted Himself to be "made a curse" that through His death He might reconcile them to God.

In Deuteronomy 21:22,23 we read, "And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree, His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt surely bury him that day...." Notice this next phrase: "(for he who is hanged is accursed by God)...." For Jesus Christ to bear the curse of God for us, it would have to be by public hanging, in accordance with the law of Deuteronomy. And so it was that our Lord was crucified on a Roman cross. It was on the basis of these words in Deuteronomy that the Apostle Paul wrote, "Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us; for it is written, Cursed is everyone that hangeth on a tree" (Gal. 3:13).

Notice in the twelve verses of Isaiah 53 the theme of the vicarious suffering of Christ. Verse 4: "Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows...." Verse 5: "...he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon him, and with his stripes we are healed." Verse 6: "...the Lord hath

laid on him the iniquity of us all." Verse 8: "...for the transgression of my people was he stricken." Verse 10: "...thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin...." Verse 11: "...for he shall bear their iniquities." Verse 12: "...he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors."

A. T. Pierson points out that this amazing chapter in Isaiah contains only 12 verses, yet *14 times* it announces the doctrine of the vicarious sacrifice of Jesus Christ for all sin. The entire passage overflows with this concept, and never was the mystery solved until Christ was "made sin for us" (II Cor. 5:21), and "...bore our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness; by whose stripes ye were healed" (I Pet. 2:24). He bore our judgment for sin. That is why Romans 8:1 says, "There is, therefore, now no condemnation [judgment] to them who are in Christ Jesus."

In verse 7 the prophet tells us that the Messiah will suffer willingly and without complaining: "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." When Christ was beaten, falsely accused, mocked, scourged and crucified, there was no flame of resentment, no incrimination against His executioners; there was only a prayer for His persecutors. Matthew 26:59-63 tells us that after many false witnesses appeared against Him, Jesus "held his peace." The high priest wondered about it and said, "Answerest thou nothing?" Then, we can never forget those words spoken through indescribable suffering, in the midst of the shrieking mob—"Father, forgive them...." What a remarkable fulfillment!

Isaiah now tells us, in verse 8, that when taken from prison and judgment, the Messiah will have no advocate to plead His cause, no friend to declare His innocence: "He was taken [literally, *snatched or hurried away*] from prison and from judgment; and who shall declare his generation?" An alternate reading of the last phrase is, "And who among his generation shall declare his innocence?"

At the time of Christ, when a man was on trial for his life, it was the custom of the Sanhedrin to call on those who knew anything in the man's favor, or for the accused to come forward and declare it. This important tradition was ignored in the trial of Jesus Christ. The proceedings at His hasty, illegal, mock trial before the Sanhedrin were in flagrant contradiction to their own regulations and standards of fairness. Jesus had to appear alone and undefended before the corrupt hierarchy and the representatives of the greatest Gentile power on earth at that time—

the power of Rome. Not one person appeared to speak in His favor. Even His own followers forsook Him: Judas betrayed Him, Peter denied Him with cursing, and the other disciples fled in fear. At the end, at the foot of His cross beneath His abused, bleeding body, was Mary, His mother, a few faithful women, and John, the beloved disciple. But throughout the ordeal leading up to the crucifixion He was absolutely alone. Never in the history of the world has anyone been so completely forsaken by friends and loved ones as was Jesus Christ. He knew loneliness as no one had ever known it, because of who He was. But even Pilate attested to His innocence. He declared, "I find no fault in this man" (Luke 23:4). As Isaiah prophesied, "...he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth" (Isa. 53:9).

Although men planned to make Christ's burial a further humiliation, God did not allow it. As Isaiah 53:9 foretold, "...he made his grave with the wicked, [but He was] with the rich in his death...." Pierson tells us that ordinarily, Christ's body would have been flung over the wall to be burned like garbage with other criminals in the fires of Topheth, which was west of Jerusalem. But when His vicarious sufferings were finished, no further indignity was permitted to His lifeless body. Roman authorities handed over His body to Joseph, an Arimathean aristocrat, who placed it in a sepulcher in his own garden (Matt. 27:57). Only God Almighty could have worked out this prophecy and its remarkable fulfillment.

The resurrection of the Messiah is implied in Isaiah 53:10: "Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he hath put him to grief. When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." The fulfillment of this paradox is in the death and resurrection of Christ, who "died for our sins," "was buried, and...rose again the third day according to the scriptures" (I Cor. 15:3,4). The Scriptures to which the Apostle referred were, of course, the Old Testament Scriptures, for the New Testament books had not yet been written.

The New Testament not only tells of the glorious resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, but also of the beginning of His ministry through His disciples after His resurrection, through which multitudes were saved. Christ indeed has seen "seed," and the will of God is prospering in His hand. The Gospel will eventually come to a final and complete triumph after His second coming, and then shall be fulfilled the wonderful words of Isaiah 11:9: "...the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea."

Isaiah 53:11 forecasts the tremendous truths developed by the Apostle Paul of *justification by faith and salvation by grace*. We read, "He shall see of the travail [birth pangs] of his soul, and shall be satisfied; by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities." Ephesians 2:8,9 tells us, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God—Not of works, lest any man should boast."

A strange circumstance of the Messiah's death is given in Isaiah 53:12: "...he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors." Our Lord quoted this scripture just before He was crucified. He said, "...this that is written must yet be accomplished in me, And he was reckoned among the transgressors..." (Luke 22:37).

### ANSWERING THE SKEPTICS

It is difficult to understand why so many people disavow and repudiate Jesus Christ as the Messiah when prophecy and history unite in Him with such accuracy. I have yet to meet the first *honest* skeptic or even a destructive critic who has carefully studied the prophecies that center in Christ.

Consider some of the objections of those who refuse to believe in the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth. It is said that Jesus and His friends collaborated to make His life conform to all the Old Testament prophecies. This is the allegation of the Jewish scholar, Hugh J. Schonfield, in his book, *The Passover Plot* (London: Bernard Geis Associates, 1966). He claims that Jesus had the delusion that He was the Messiah; therefore, He planned His actions to fulfill the Messianic prophecies of the Old Testament. One reason this objection cannot stand is simply that most of the predictions made about the life and death of Jesus Christ were fulfilled not by the friends of Jesus or by the acts of Jesus, but by His *enemies*, who hated Him so much they wanted to murder Him. Or else they were fulfilled by blasé, indifferent, cold-hearted Romans who were bored with their assignment and had only contempt for their Jewish subjects.

Actually, the idea of a collusion between Jesus and His friends is so nonsensical that even the refutation of it dignifies empty babbling. Samuel Sandmel, author of *We Jews and Jesus*, writing in the "Saturday Review" (Dec. 3, 1966), says that the imaginative construction in Schonfield's book is devoid of proof. It is founded on dubious inferences from passages in the Gospels, whose historical reliability he rejects on page af-

ter page. It is his opinion that the book should be dismissed as the mere curiosity that it is.

Another allegation of the skeptics takes us even deeper into irrationality. It is said that the friends of Jesus wrote these prophecies in the Old Testament Scriptures. When the life of Jesus followed its course, they changed the Scriptures to conform to His life. Even Schonfield wouldn't dare advance this folly. Anyone who has even looked into the Old Testament Scriptures superficially knows that they were as fixed and sacred to the Jews in Jesus' day as they are to orthodox Jews praying at the Wailing Wall in Jerusalem today. The Old Testament canon was completed after the days of Ezra, and the books were completely translated into Greek. Hebrew scholars completed the Greek Septuagint 300 years before Jesus Christ was born. If the apostles had tampered with those Scriptures, they would have been dealt with severely and with dispatch.

It is also claimed by some skeptics that the prophetic Scriptures may refer not to Jesus but to some other man. This is clearly unthinkable. This book demonstrates the converging of not 3, or 10, but many of the over 300 specific prophecies fulfilled uniquely in Jesus Christ.

But what about prophecies yet unfulfilled? Unbelievers would do well to heed them, because many contain words of judgment against them, judgment as certain as the events foretold in the Old Testament which we have seen fulfilled in the New Testament. Christ predicted in Luke 19:43,44 that Jerusalem would be destroyed. In Matthew 24:2 He accurately foretold the utter destruction of Herod's magnificent temple. In Luke 21:24 He predicted that Gentiles would dominate Jerusalem until "the times of the Gentiles" would be fulfilled. The only way we can judge the future is by the past. And because all of God's predictions concerning men, cities, and nations have been fulfilled to the very letter, those that still lie ahead will most surely fall in line.

Hebrews 9:27 says that God has appointed a day of judgment upon all men. Our Lord declared in John 12:48, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." We need not fear that judgment if only we accept Jesus Christ, the One who died as our substitute to redeem us from sin, as our Savior. His unequivocal promise is, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but is passed from death unto life" (John 5:24).