

JESUS THE PROMISED MESSIAH, Is He Just A Prophet?

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Muslims are taught, and most of them believe that Jesus was a prophet sent by God into the world; however, not as the Savior of the world who died on the cross as a sacrifice for the sins of mankind; and as a result, reconciling men to God through faith. No! They believe that a substitute died on the cross in Jesus' place.

But can that really be true? You will see this morning that that perspective cannot be true, because Jesus is the human incarnation of the Living God, the fulfillment of divine prophecy.

When God called Abraham to Himself in order to begin a new program with a new people, he granted a fourfold mission to Abraham's descendants through Isaac, and the Jewish people.

The **first** aspect of this divine mission was that their prophets were to receive and write down God's revelation of himself and his will for mankind.

The **second** aspect of their mission was to protect and preserve the textual purity of the Scriptures, which God inspired them to write.

The **third** aspect of the Jewish calling was that they were to be a witness to a darkened world that there was only one true God; a God of light and life who loved mankind and wanted all of mankind to be reconciled to himself.

The **fourth** and most important aspect of this divine election was that this nation was to be the ethnic people through which the Messiah, the Savior of the world, would be born.

With this final aspect of Israel's mission in mind, God progressively unfolded in the Bible a clear and distinct body of messianic prophecy. The progressive nature of this messianic revelation unfolded in such a way that some aspects of the Hebrew prophets' messages were clear and others were not so clear because their fulfillment was to be at a future time.

1 Peter 1:10-12 – “This salvation was something even the prophets wanted to know more about when they prophesied about this gracious salvation prepared for you. They wondered what time or situation the Spirit of Christ within them was talking about when he told them in advance about Christ's suffering and his great glory afterward. They were told that their messages were not for themselves, but for you. And now this Good News has been announced to you by those who preached in the power of the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. It is all so wonderful that even the angels are eagerly watching these things happen.”
(NLT)

According to the research of J. Barton Payne, there are 574 verses in the Old Testament that are direct, personal messianic predictions. 103 of these are contained in eighteen books, 25 of which are included in Isaiah, 24 in the Psalms, and 20 in Zechariah. 109 of these Old Testament predictions were literally fulfilled at Christ's first coming.

This raises an interesting question: What are the odds of one man – in this case, Jesus of Nazareth – fulfilling each and every one of these prophecies? There are 25 of these prophecies, uttered by various prophets over a period of some five hundred years that speak concerning the betrayal, trial, death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus.

So, if you applied the law of Compound Probabilities to all 109 predictions that were fulfilled at Christ's first coming, the chances that they could accidentally be fulfilled in the history of one person is unbelievably astronomical; thus, their fulfillment demands the miracle of divine intervention.

Jesus' own testimony was that the Old Testament Scriptures pointed forward to his own messiahship.

John 5:37-40 – “And the Father who sent me has testified about me himself. You have never heard his voice or seen him face to face, and you do not have his message in your hearts, because you do not believe me—the one he sent to you. You search the Scriptures because you think they give you eternal life. But the Scriptures point to me! Yet you refuse to come to me to receive this life.” (NLT)

Sent by the Father to come down and put on flesh, Jesus is testifying that He is the source of eternal life, just as the Scriptures say He is.

Jesus even challenged his disciples regarding their refusal to believe the inspired words of the Old Testament concerning his messianic mission. Even today, as New Testament believers, because we don't fully understand what God is saying to us through the Scripture, we chose the path of unbelief, as well.

But thankfully, God has given us His Holy Spirit to abide with us and help us understand the Scriptures. Luke records for us the experience of the disciples as Jesus opened their understanding so they could see how He fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament concerning Messiah.

Luke 24:23-27, 44-48 – “They said his body was missing, and they had seen angels who told them Jesus is alive! Some of our men ran out to see, and sure enough, his body was gone, just as the women had said. Then Jesus said to them, ‘You foolish people! You find it so hard to believe all that the prophets wrote in the Scriptures. Wasn't it clearly predicted that the Messiah would have to suffer all these things before entering his glory?’ Then Jesus took them through the writings of Moses and all the prophets, explaining from all the Scriptures the things concerning himself.

Then he said, ‘When I was with you before, I told you that everything written about me in the law of Moses and the prophets and in the Psalms must be fulfilled.’ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures. And he said, ‘Yes, it was written long ago that the Messiah would suffer and die and rise from the dead on the third day. It was also written that this message would be proclaimed in the authority of his name to all the nations, beginning in Jerusalem: ‘There is forgiveness of sins for all who repent.’ You are witnesses of all these things.” (NLT)

Matthew also records for us how Jesus' birth fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies.

Matthew 1:18-25 – “This is how Jesus the Messiah was born. His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But before the marriage took place, while she was still a virgin, she became pregnant through the power of the Holy Spirit. Joseph, her fiancé, was a good man and did not want to disgrace her publicly, so he decided to break the engagement quietly. As he considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream. ‘Joseph, son of David,’ the angel said, ‘do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife. For the child within her was conceived by the Holy Spirit. And she will have a son, and you are to name him Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins.’ All of this occurred to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet: ‘Look! The virgin will conceive a child! She will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us.’” When Joseph woke up, he did as the angel of the Lord commanded and took Mary as his wife. But he did not have sexual relations with her until her son was born. And Joseph named him Jesus.” (NLT)

And because much of Luke's gospel originates from his personal discussions with Mary, the mother of Jesus, we have a much more detailed explanation of events.

Luke 1:26-56 – “In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary. She was engaged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of King David. Gabriel appeared to her and said, ‘Greetings, favored woman! The Lord is with you!’ Confused and disturbed, Mary tried to think what the angel could mean. ‘Don’t be afraid, Mary,’ the angel told her, ‘for you have found favor with God! You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you will name him Jesus. He will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David. And he will reign over Israel forever; his Kingdom will never end!’ Mary asked the angel, ‘But how can this happen? I am a virgin.’ The angel replied, ‘The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you. So the baby to be born will be holy, and he will be called the Son of God. What’s more, your relative Elizabeth has become pregnant in her old age! People used to say she was barren, but she’s now in her sixth month. For nothing is impossible with God.’ Mary responded, ‘I am the Lord’s servant. May everything you have said about me come true.’ And then the angel left her. A few days later Mary hurried to the hill country of Judea, to the town where Zechariah lived. She entered the house and greeted Elizabeth. At the sound of Mary’s greeting, Elizabeth’s child leaped within her, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. Elizabeth gave a glad cry and exclaimed to Mary, ‘God has blessed you above all women, and your child is blessed. Why am I so honored, that the mother of my Lord should visit me? When I heard your greeting, the baby in my womb jumped for joy. You are blessed because you believed that the Lord would do what he said.’ Mary responded, ‘Oh, how my soul praises the Lord. How my spirit rejoices in God my Savior! For he took notice of his lowly servant girl, and from now on all generations will call me blessed. For the Mighty One is holy, and he has done great things for me. He shows mercy from generation to generation to all who fear him. His mighty arm has done tremendous things! He has scattered the proud and haughty ones. He has brought down princes from their thrones and exalted the humble. He has filled the hungry with good things and sent the rich away with empty hands. He has helped his servant Israel and remembered to be merciful. For he made this promise to our ancestors, to Abraham and his children forever.’ Mary stayed with Elizabeth about three months and then went back to her own home.” (NLT)

So, we see that Jesus did indeed come in direct fulfillment of Old Testament messianic prophecy. So, with this understanding and background, I want us to look at two specific prophecies.

1. The Birthplace of the Messiah.

The first prophecy is found in Micah 5:2 where under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Micah predicted four aspects regarding the birthplace of the Messiah. God revealed this truth to Micah over 700 years before the actual birth of Christ.

Micah 5:2 – “But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village among all the people of Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past.” (NLT)

Hebrew scholar Arnold Fruchtenbaum makes the following comments concerning the forceful language used by Micah in describing the eternity of the Messiah:

“As regards His human origin, He is to be born in Bethlehem, but regarding His divine origin, He is said to be “from long ago, from the days of eternity.” The Hebrew words for “from long ago, from the days of eternity” are the strongest Hebrew words ever used for eternity past. They are used of God the Father in **Psalm 90:2** – “Before the mountains were brought forth, or ever you had formed the earth and the world, from everlasting to everlasting you are God.” (ESV)

What is true of God the Father is also said to be true of the Messiah who is to be born in Bethlehem. In other words, his coming forth from God, as the Son of Man, to do God's will in the earth, begins with Bethlehem. But His going forth as God the Son, is "from everlasting to everlasting."

Isaiah, Micah's contemporary, shares with us the Holy Spirit's words concerning the Messiah.

Isaiah 9:6-7 – "For a child is born to us, a son is given to us. The government will rest on his shoulders. And he will be called: Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. His government and its peace will never end. He will rule with fairness and justice from the throne of his ancestor David for all eternity. The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!" (NLT)

From the very first mention of the promised Redeemer in Genesis 3:15, the revelation concerning the Messiah became more and more specific, defining the race and nationality from which the Savior would come, namely the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, then the tribe of Judah; then the family of David; then the very town of His birth; and then as the Messiah's advent drew nearer, His very parents are identified.

Question: how many of us can control or determine the place of our birth?

First, the birthplace was to be uniquely connected to the Davidic dynasty and its eternal kingdom, for Bethlehem was known as the city of King David. It was the birthplace of David and the home of one of David's mighty men.

God had established an unconditional covenant with David, called the Davidic covenant. Along with the personal promises to David himself, God committed himself to the eternal dynasty of David, promising: (1) an eternal throne, (2) an eternal kingdom, and (3) an eternal King.

Second, the birthplace of the Messiah was to be a place of humble beginnings.

Under the census decree of Caesar Augustus, Joseph had to go to Bethlehem "because he was of the house and lineage of David." Justin Martyr, the early Christian writer (A.D. 150), thought the probable birth place of Jesus was in a cave in the rocks outside the town. Origen, some years later wrote, "In Bethlehem you are shown the cave where he was born, and within the cave the manger where he was wrapped in swaddling clothes."

Third, God's Messianic ruler will go forth from Bethlehem to do the will of God in Israel.

Hebrews 10:5-7, 10 – "That is why, when Christ came into the world, he said to God, 'You did not want animal sacrifices or sin offerings. But you have given me a body to offer. You were not pleased with burnt offerings or other offerings for sin. Then I said, 'Look, I have come to do your will, O God— as is written about me in the Scriptures.' For God's will was for us to be made holy by the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all time." (NLT)

Fourth, There is no question that the rabbinical authorities clearly understood that Micah 5:2 established the birthplace of the Messiah.

Matt. 2:1-6 – "Jesus was born in Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star as it rose, and we have come to worship him." King Herod was deeply disturbed when he heard this, as was everyone in Jerusalem. He called a meeting of the leading priests and teachers of religious law and asked, "Where is the Messiah supposed to be born?" "In Bethlehem in Judea," they

said, “for this is what the prophet wrote: ‘And you, O Bethlehem in the land of Judah, are not least among the ruling cities of Judah, for a ruler will come from you who will be the shepherd for my people Israel.’” (NLT)

John 7:38-42 – “Anyone who believes in me may come and drink! For the Scriptures declare, ‘Rivers of living water will flow from his heart.’ (When he said “living water,” he was speaking of the Spirit, who would be given to everyone believing in him. But the Spirit had not yet been given, because Jesus had not yet entered into his glory.) When the crowds heard him say this, some of them declared, “Surely this man is the Prophet we’ve been expecting.” Others said, “He is the Messiah.” Still others said, “But he can’t be! Will the Messiah come from Galilee? For the Scriptures clearly state that the Messiah will be born of the royal line of David, in Bethlehem, the village where King David was born.” (NLT)

II. The Death of the Messiah

Perhaps the most important thing about the 52nd and 53rd chapters of Isaiah is the fact that they provide the background for almost every New Testament reference to the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, exaltation, and second coming of Jesus Christ.

Isa. 52:13-53:12 – “My servant will be successful. He will be respected, praised, and highly honored. Many will be shocked by him. His appearance will be so disfigured that he won’t look like any other man. His looks will be so disfigured that he will hardly look like a human. He will cleanse many nations {with his blood}. Kings will shut their mouths because of him. They will see things that they had never been told. They will understand things that they had never heard. Who has believed our message? To whom has the LORD’S power been revealed? He grew up in his presence like a young tree, like a root out of dry ground. He had no form or majesty that would make us look at him. He had nothing in his appearance that would make us desire him. He was despised and rejected by people. He was a man of sorrows, familiar with suffering. He was despised like one from whom people turn their faces, and we didn’t consider him to be worth anything. He certainly has taken upon himself our suffering and carried our sorrows, but we thought that God had wounded him, beat him, and punished him. He was wounded for our rebellious acts. He was crushed for our sins. He was punished so that we could have peace, and we received healing from his wounds. We have all strayed like sheep. Each one of us has turned to go his own way, and the LORD has laid all our sins on him. He was abused and punished, but he didn’t open his mouth. He was led like a lamb to the slaughter. He was like a sheep that is silent when its wool is cut off. He didn’t open his mouth. He was arrested, taken away, and judged. Who would have thought that he would be removed from the world? He was killed because of my people’s rebellion. He was placed in a tomb with the wicked. He was put there with the rich when he died, although he had done nothing violent and had never spoken a lie. Yet, it was the LORD’S will to crush him with suffering. When the LORD has made his life a sacrifice for our wrongdoings, he will see his descendants for many days. The will of the LORD will succeed through him. He will see and be satisfied because of his suffering. My righteous servant will acquit many people because of what he has learned {through suffering}. He will carry their sins as a burden. So I will give him a share among the mighty, and he will divide the prize with the strong, because he poured out his life in death and he was counted with sinners. He carried the sins of many. He intercedes for those who are rebellious.” (GW)

This passage yields at least four arguments countering the possibility that any person other than Jesus of Nazareth is the promised Suffering Servant of the Lord.

First, is His sinless life. Isaiah depicts the Messiah as completely innocent in thought, word, and deed. He is perfect in his actions as well as his reactions.

Second, is His complete submission. He submits to be slaughtered like a lamb. He lays down his life as a sacrifice, willingly and voluntarily, in the absolute sense.

Third, is the Servant's death. Not only did he pour out his life unto death, but he is also portrayed as alive from the dead and enjoying fellowship with God and his faithful followers.

Fourth, is the fact of the Servant's substitutionary atonement. He didn't die for himself, rather he died vicariously for others.

No one else in all of history can come even close to fulfilling these messianic prophecies, except Yeshua himself. He alone, born in Bethlehem, died vicariously as the Lamb of God and was raised from the grave to enter into the splendor and glory of Almighty God. Jesus of Nazareth is the only person in human history to fulfill all 109 prophecies concerning Messiah. He did this in His first advent. He will fulfill the rest at His second advent.

