

Does the Bible Teach Jesus is the Promised Messiah?

by Dr. John Ankerberg, Dr. John Weldon

The Hebrew Scriptures are unique among those of the world's religions in that they contain scores of prophecies about a predicted future Messiah. These prophecies extend over a period of 1,000 years and many are given in specific detail. The final prophecy was given 400 years before Christ was ever born. In our book, *The Case for Jesus the Messiah*, we discuss a dozen of these prophecies, in detail, proving that only Jesus Christ fulfills them, and therefore, that only He is the predicted Jewish Messiah¹ (cf., John 5:46). For example, in the anguished imagery of King David's prayers, Psalm 22 accurately describes a crucifixion – yet this description is given hundreds of years before the method of execution by crucifixion was devised. No other Psalm fits the description of Christ's crucifixion better than Psalm 22, explaining why it is the most frequently quoted Psalm by New Testament writers. Yet this Psalm was written 1000 years before Jesus was born. Jesus Himself quoted the first verse of this Psalm while on the cross. Whatever one thinks of this Psalm, no one can deny that it describes what happened to Jesus on the cross an entire millennium later: "they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing" (Psa. 22:16-18; cf. Matt. 27:35).

In Isaiah 9:6-7, the prophecy of the coming Messiah concerns a child to be born who will also be God and who will have an everlasting kingdom. In the Gospels, Jesus claimed that He was that incarnate God and that He would have an everlasting kingdom (Matt. 16:28; 26:64; Luke 22:30; John 6:38-42, 62; 8:42; 10:30, 36-38; 18:36; cf., 2 Pet. 1:11).

In Isaiah 53:4-12, the Messiah is prophesied to be crushed and pierced for our transgressions; that God will lay upon Him the iniquity of all mankind. In the gospels, Jesus also claims to fulfill this prophecy (Matt. 20:28; cf. 53:12). In fact, Jesus repeatedly claimed He was the predicted Messiah by continually claiming He was fulfilling Old Testament prophecies: "You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that by them you possess eternal life. These are the Scriptures that testify about me" (John 5:39; see also Matt. 26:24, 54, 56; Luke 24:25-27, 44).

In Micah 5:2, the Messiah is said to be eternal, the ruler over Israel and that He will be born in a very specific location, Bethlehem Ephrathah. No one denies that

Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem Ephrathah and none can logically deny that He claimed He was Israel's King and the eternal one (John 5:18; 8:58; Mark 14:60-63).

In Daniel 9:24-27, written 500 years before Christ is born, the Messiah is prophesied to be killed at the exact time of Christ's death.²

In Zechariah 12:10, also written 500 years before Christ, it is prophesied that Jehovah Himself will be pierced by the inhabitants of Jerusalem who will mourn over Him. The Hebrew word means pierced as with a spear, just as Jesus was pierced during His crucifixion (John 19:32, 35).

If we look at the list of prophecies we discuss in our book, we see that Jesus Christ fulfilled all of them. Remember, the following are predictions made hundreds of years before He was even born:

- Genesis 3:15 – Jesus defeated Satan but was wounded during the crucifixion.
- Genesis 12, 17, 22 – He was the literal descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in whom all the world was blessed.
- Deuteronomy 18 – He was the “prophet like Moses.”
- Psalm 22 – He was mocked, insulted and crucified. His garments were gambled for and His bones were not broken.
- Psalm 110 – He was David's Lord.
- Isaiah 53 – He was perfectly innocent and without sin, yet He atoned for the sin of the world. He was resurrected from the dead.
- Jeremiah 23 – Because He was God and “justified many,” His proper name is “Jehovah our Righteousness.”
- Daniel 9 – He arrived at the specific time given by the prophecy, 483 years after Artaxerxes' decree to rebuild Jerusalem.
- Micah 5 – He was eternal, yet He was born in Bethlehem.
- Zechariah 9 – He was the King of Israel who brought salvation; He entered Jerusalem riding on a donkey.
- Zechariah 12 – He was Jehovah, He was pierced.
- Malachi 3 – John the Baptist prepared the way for Him as He suddenly came to His temple.

Had we space, there are dozens of other prophecies we could discuss that are just as specific.

- (1) He would be born of a virgin (Isa. 7:14; see Matt. 1:23).
- (2) He would live in Nazareth of Galilee (Isa. 9:1-2; see Matt. 2:23; 4:15).
- (3) He would occasion the massacre of Bethlehem's children (Jer. 31:15; see Matt. 2:18).
- (4) His mission would include the Gentiles (Isa. 42:1-3, 6; see Matt. 12:18-21).
- (5) His ministry would include physical relief (Isa. 61:1-2; see Luke 4:16-21).
- (6) He would be the Shepherd struck with the sword, resulting in the sheep being scattered (Zech. 13:7; see Matt. 26:31, 56; Mark 14:27, 49-50).
- (7) He would be betrayed by a friend for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12-13; see Matt. 27:9-10).

(8) He would be given vinegar and gall to drink (Psa. 69:21; see Matt. 27:34).

(9) He would be hated without a cause (Psa. 69:4; Isa. 49:7; John 7:48; John 15:25).

(10) He would be rejected by the rulers (Psa. 118:22; Matt. 21:42; John 7:48).

Who is the only Person who has fulfilled all of these prophecies – and many more?³ Only Jesus Christ. There is no way to avoid this fact. Scholars Delitzsch and Gloag have rightly stated:

So far as we can determine, these prophecies refer to the Messiah only, and cannot be predicated of another. The ancient Jews admit the Messianic character of most of them; although the modern Jews, in consequence of their controversy with the Christians, have attempted to explain them away by applications which must appear to every candid reader to be unnatural... these and other predictions have received their accomplishment in Jesus of Nazareth,... the combination of prophecies is sufficient to prove that Jesus is the Messiah;...⁴

In fact, as we show in our book, the calculations of mathematical probability reveal these prophecies could only have been fulfilled in the manner they were through the power and omniscience of a sovereign God. The odds of any one man fulfilling just 48 of them are 1 in 10^{157} – infinitely beyond the limits of probability.⁵

Remember, in John 4:25-26 and Mark 14:61-64, Jesus Himself clearly claimed He was the prophesied Messiah. In order to disprove this claim, one only needs to find a single prophecy (out of scores in the Old Testament) that proves Jesus was wrong. Because no one has yet done this and because Jesus filled all of the prophecies relating to His incarnation, and because He resurrected from the dead, no one can logically deny that He was and is the prophesied Jewish Messiah.

Notes

1 John Ankerberg, John Weldon, Walter Kaiser, *The Case for Jesus the Messiah: Incredible Prophecies That Prove God Exists* (Chattanooga, TN: John Ankerberg Evangelistic Association, 1989).

2 Ibid., pp. 66-72.

3 J. Barton Payne, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1989); Franz J. Delitzsch and Parton J. Gloag, *The Messianic Prophecies of Christ* (MN: Kloch & Kloch, 1983, rpt.).

4 Delitzsch and Gloag, pp. 123-124 [See book II, pp. 31-38, for additional important literature].

5 Emile Borel, *Probabilities and Life* (NY: Dover, 1962), Chs. 1, 3.

2APStaff1107 Does the Bible Teach Jesus is the Promised Messiah?