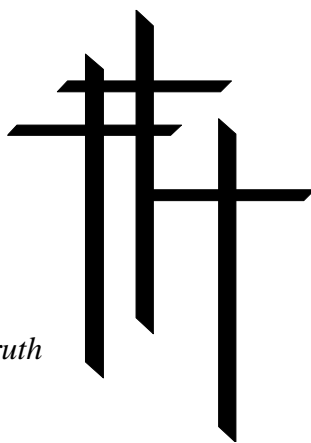


Timely Messenger

*Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth
Speaking the Truth in Love*



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THE PROPHECY OF THE CHRIST

By Gregg Bing

How do we know that the Bible is true, that it is the Word of God? How do we know that Jesus of Nazareth is the Christ, the Son of God? I recently was given a copy of a news article taken from the internet with this title: "Part of the Old Testament Proven True." The article describes how geologists from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, using radiocarbon dating, believe they have proved that the Siloam Tunnel in Jerusalem is the one built by King Hezekiah in 700 B.C. (2 Kings 20:20, 2

Chron. 32:30). I was somewhat bothered by the title for this article. Do we really need such external evidence to prove that the Bible is true? While it may be interesting to read of archaeological findings or "scientific" testing, such as that on the Siloam Tunnel, there is much greater evidence for the authenticity of the Bible, and it is found in the Scriptures themselves. This evidence is Biblical prophecies, particularly from the Old Testament Scriptures, that have been fulfilled.

Modern day prophets

(seers, psychics) make many predictions, so-called "prophecies" of what they think may happen in the future. Often, these "prophecies" are quite vague, very general in nature, yet, even with this, most of their "prophecies" never happen.

God's prophecies are quite different. God does not predict what He thinks may happen; He declares what He knows will happen, for God "works all things according to the counsel of His will" (Eph. 1:11). The Lord spoke through the prophet Isaiah and told Israel,

"Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, And I will do all My pleasure.'" (Isa. 46:9-10)

During the early part of the book of Acts, Peter and John were taken into cus-

tody by the Jewish leaders after healing a lame man. After they were released and shared this with the disciples in Jerusalem, we read of these believers thanking and praising God.

“So when they heard that, they raised their voice to God with one accord and said: ‘Lord, You are God, who made heaven and earth and the sea, and all that is in them, who by the mouth of Your servant David have said: Why did the nations rage, and the people plot vain things? The kings of the earth took their stand, and the rulers were gathered together against the LORD and against His Christ.’ For truly against Your holy Servant Jesus, whom You anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, were gathered together to do whatever Your hand and Your purpose determined before to be done.” (Acts 4:24-28)

David prophesied in

Psalm 2 that the kings of the earth and the people (Israel) would gather together against the Lord and His Anointed (Christ). This prophecy was fulfilled when Herod and Pontius Pilate, along with the Gentiles and the people of Israel, gathered together to crucify the Lord Jesus Christ. Please note what this passage says they were gathered together to do: “whatever Your (God’s) hand and Your purpose determined before to be done” (verse 28). These men were doing what God had before determined, according to His sovereign will, would happen to the Lord Jesus—that He would die on the cross of Calvary for the sins of the world. Peter declared this same thing as he preached on the day of Pentecost.

“Him (Jesus), being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was

not possible that He should be held by it.” (Acts 2:23-24)

While these men were carrying out God’s determined purpose, it did not mean that they had no choice in the matter, otherwise the Scriptures would not have indicated that, when they took Jesus and crucified Him, they did so with “lawless (wicked) hands.” God in His foreknowledge, providentially used these men to accomplish His eternal purpose (Eph. 3:11), a purpose that was determined even before the foundation of the world.

While the Old Testament Scriptures contain amazing prophecies about the nation of Israel, as well as the rise and fall of Gentile nations, the most striking prophecies concern “the Christ,” Israel’s promised Messiah, who was to come into the world and be their King. What is so amazing about these Messianic prophecies? To begin with, there are hundreds of these prophecies, including over 90 Old Testament prophecies which

are quoted by New Testament writers. Second, these prophecies were given hundreds of years before Christ was even born. Third, most of the prophecies are very specific in detail. Finally, all these prophecies were fulfilled exactly as the Scriptures indicated.

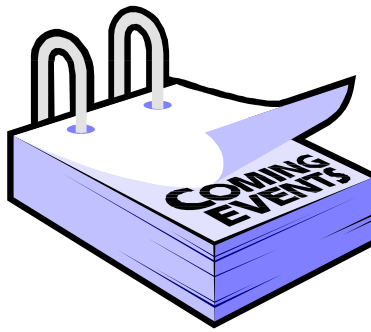
We cannot examine all of these prophecies, but we will look at three aspects of the life of Christ that were prophesied in the Old Testament.

Birth of the Christ

The Scriptures concerning the birth of Christ are usually only read at Christmas time, but their testimony is quite remarkable. We read in Isaiah 9:6-7:

“For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; and the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of His government and peace

(Continued on page 6)



July 5-9, 2004

Family Bible Camp

Our Family Bible Camp will be held at North Texas Baptist Conference Center (Camp Copass) in Denton, Texas on July 5-9, 2004.

This camp is for all ages. We have separate classes for preschoolers (ages 0-5), pre-juniors (ages 6-8), juniors (ages 9-12), senior young people (ages 13 through college age), and adults. Please note that children under 9 years of age must stay with a parent or guardian.

A theme has not yet been selected for the camp, and registration forms are not yet available, but will be included in next month's issue, along with more detailed information.

Timely Messenger

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Gregg Bing — Editor

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Tues. 10:00 AM Ladies Class
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*Thanks for your help
in this matter!*

TRUTH WITH CONSEQUENCES

by Jim Roberts

Assistant Pastor of Peace Church — Indianahoma, Oklahoma

Jonah is a great example of a man who was caught between his religion and the truth of God's word. When God told Jonah to preach to the people of Nineveh, the capital of the Assyrian Empire, he had to decide whether to follow the call of God or follow the corrupt Jewish culture in which he lived. Jonah must have heard that the King of Assyria was extending his borders toward Israel, and being a prophet, he may have known that the Assyrian Empire would in a couple of hundred years destroy the nation of Israel. In Jonah's eyes and the eyes of his fellow countrymen, preaching to Nineveh could have been seen as an act of treason. Jonah thought he would rather die.

He bought a ticket to board a ship headed for the end of the known world. Along the way, Jonah was thrown overboard and ended up in the belly of a fish. After God miraculously saved Jonah from the belly of the fish, Jonah finally agreed to preach to Nineveh. After the city repented, Jonah went to the east side of the city even though Israel was to the west. Maybe Jonah did not want to go home. What if his fellow citizens heard about his ministry to Nineveh? Maybe he thought he

would not be the most popular prophet in Israel.

The first lesson for us is that we must be careful about putting our patriotism above the Word of God. Jonah's fellow countrymen would have considered him a hero if he had been willing to die rather than save Nineveh. But Jonah was willing, after some not-so-gentle persuasion from God, to be a hero for the cause of Christ. Not only did he bring the entire city of Nineveh to its knees before God, but his experience in the belly of the fish became the greatest picture in all of the Bible of the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. The Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees of His day:

“An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is

here.” (Matt. 12:39-41)

The second lesson for us is that we must be careful about valuing our religion above the word of God. The religion of the Old Covenant Jews taught hatred for all Gentiles, but God not only saved the Gentiles of Nineveh from physical destruction, He saved them for all of eternity. Jesus said that those Ninevites will one day rise up in judgment against the Jews who rejected the Lord Jesus, and we can safely conclude that they will rise up in judgment against the Jews of Jonah’s day as well. The Jews of Jonah’s day and the Jews of Jesus’ day were victims of their own religion. Their religion made the false assumption that God hated certain people as much as they did. If they had known God’s Word, they would have known about God’s love for the Gentile nations. They would have known that God intended for the nation of Israel to be a testimony to the nations concerning God’s love and grace.

The Jews of Jonah’s day were destroyed by the Assyrians, and the Jews of Jesus’ day were destroyed by the Romans, but there is a greater judgment that is yet to come. It is a judgment which will bring eternal separation from God to those who refuse to believe what God has said in His word. If you do not know the Lord Jesus as your personal Savior, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved.

WHY DO I NEED TO BE SAVED?

“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.” (Rom. 3:23)

“As it is written: There is none righteous, no, not one.” (Rom. 3:10)

“For there is not a just man on earth who does good and does not sin.” (Eccl. 7:20)

“If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” (1 John 1:8)

“For the wages of sin is death ..” (Rom. 6:23a)

HOW MAY I BE SAVED?

“... but the gift of God is eternal in Christ Jesus our Lord” (Rom. 6:23b)

“For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” (John 3:16)

“So they said, ‘Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’” (Acts 16:31)

“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast.” (Eph. 2:8-9).

(Continued from page 3)

there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice from that time forward, even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

Clearly these verses are prophecies of Israel's Messiah, the One who is to sit upon the throne of David and rule as King. But they also tell us that the Christ will enter this world through human birth, as a Child. They also tells us that the Christ will be more than just a man, for "unto us a Son is given," the very Son of God. His names bear out this truth for He will be called "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Another prophecy, in Isaiah 7:14, gives us an even more amazing fact concerning His birth.

"Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin

shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel."

The Christ would be conceived and born of a virgin. While some have asserted that the Hebrew word translated "virgin" can simply mean a young woman, the fulfillment of this prophecy recorded in the gospel of Matthew and the gospel of Luke makes it clear that the prophecy is of a virgin birth.

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit." (Matt. 1:18)

"Then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man?' And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'" (Luke

1:34-35)

God gave further prophecy of His birth, declaring even the place where the Christ would be born. The expected place for the birth of Israel's King would be Jerusalem. When the wise men came from the east seeking the new King of the Jews, they came to Jerusalem (Matt. 2:4-5). But there they were told the words of the prophet Micah.

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting." (Micah 5:2)

The Christ, who was to be Ruler in Israel, who Himself, was "from of old, from everlasting," was to be born in a seemingly insignificant little village called Bethlehem. This is an amazing prophecy. How could anyone have predicted or guessed that, among the thousands of

little villages in Judah, the Christ would be born in lowly Bethlehem. This fact gives clear testimony to the authenticity of the Scriptures.

Even the time when the Christ would come into the world and present Himself to Israel as their King is prophesied. While we won't take the time to look at this passage in detail, please read and study Daniel 9:24-27, which is the vision of the seventy weeks. A careful study of this passage gives us the very year, some say even the very day when "Messiah, the Prince," would make His triumphal entry into Jerusalem. It is interesting to read the words that Jesus spoke as He drew near the city on that day and wept over it.

"If you had known, even you, especially in this your day, the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on

every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground; and they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation." (Luke 19:42-44)

Note the last few words, "because you did not know the time of your visitation." The implication is that Israel could have known the time, in fact, they should have known the time, because it was right there in Daniel's prophecy.

Ministry of the Christ

The ministry of the Christ was also the subject of many Old Testament prophecies. Isaiah 40:3-5 and Malachi 3:1 and 4:5 told of the coming of a forerunner who would announce the coming of the Christ. John the Baptist was this forerunner, just as the angel told his father, Zacharias.

"He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, 'to turn

the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." (Luke 1:17)

Near the beginning of Jesus' public ministry, He stood in the synagogue in Nazareth and read these words from Isaiah.

"The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon Me, because the LORD has anointed Me to preach good tidings to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, ..." (Isa. 6:1-2a)

Jesus then closed the book, sat down, and said, "Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). This was a prophecy concerning the Christ. His ministry was to be empowered by the Spirit of God. It was to be a ministry of preaching the gos-

pel, healing the sick, providing freedom to the captives, and proclaiming to Israel the acceptable year of the Lord.

This is exactly what Jesus proceeded to do. He preached the gospel of the kingdom, that it was at hand (near) (Matt. 4:17). He healed their sick: the blind, the lame, the deaf, the mute; He healed “all their diseases” (Psalm 103:3), demonstrating His authority as their King (Isa. 35:5-6). He cast demons out of those who were possessed, freeing them from their chains. He called upon Israel to repent and to believe in Him, but “they were not willing” (Matt. 23:37), for “He came unto

His own, and His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11). This too, was foretold by the prophet Isaiah.

“Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed?” (Isa. 53:1)

When the Jewish leaders confronted Jesus in the temple, He spoke a parable to them (a part of His ministry that was prophesied cf. Psalm 78:2) which indicted them for their wickedness in rejecting Him and plotting to put Him to death. Afterward, He pointed out to these men the prophecy found in Psalm 118:22-23.

“The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD’s doing; It is marvelous in our eyes.”

These prophecies of the birth and ministry of the Christ give clear evidence of the truth of the Scriptures and that Jesus of Nazareth was, indeed, “the Christ, the Son of God” (John 20:31), but there is more. The most vivid prophecies of the Christ are those concerning His sufferings. We will consider these prophecies as we continue this study next month.

Continued Next Month.

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