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Tower of Strength

**“The name of the Lord is a strong tower
The righteous runs into it and is safe.”**

—Proverbs 18:10

A Study of the Messiah - The Nature of Messianic Prophecy -

We learned last week that God devised a plan to save mankind before He even created mankind. But God didn't send the Christ immediately after Adam committed his sin. On the contrary, God waited millennia! God did not even reveal His plan all at once. Instead, he revealed it slowly from Adam until the Christ came. Why?

In the first place, God revealed His plan through the prophets so that man could be assured of the divine source of redemption. Only God can reliably foretell the future. Man can count the acorns on a tree, but only God can count the trees in an acorn. Only God can look into the future, and know with unflinching certainty, every single thing that will come to pass, from the rise and fall of nations, to the flight paths of single sparrows. God says in Isaiah 46:9–10,

Remember the former things long past,
For I am God, and there is no other;
I am God, and there is no one like Me,
Declaring the end from the beginning,

And from the ancient times things which have not been done,
Saying, "My purpose will be established,
And I will accomplish My good pleasure."

God can stand at the beginning of a series of events, look across time into the distant future, and declare the outcome, even if the outcome is centuries away.

So, fulfilled prophecy is an indicator of the greatness of God. The examples are innumerable, in which God made a prediction, and that prediction came to pass. Space does not permit us to speak of Abraham, Joseph, Tyre, Cyrus.

When it comes to the Messiah, some scholars have counted as many as 100 specific predictions that are fulfilled in the New Testament. I'm not sure that I accept that number, but there are certainly a lot. Here are some Messianic prophecies with their fulfillments:

- Born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14, Matt. 1:23)
- Preceded by a forerunner (Isaiah 40:3–5, Matt. 11:10–14)
- Coming in the days of Rome (Dan. 2:44, Luke 3:1)
- Born in the tiny town of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2, Matt. 2:1–6)
- Began ministry in distant Galilee (Isaiah 9:1–2, Matt. 4:12–17)
- A healer (Isaiah 53:4, Matt 8:17)
- A bringer of good tidings (Isaiah 61:1–3, Luke 4:21)
- A lowly sovereign (Zech 9:9–10, Matt. 21:1–8)
- Rejected by his own (Psalm 118:22–23, Matt. 21:42)
- Betrayed (Psalm 41:9, John 13:18–19)
- Abandoned (Zech. 13:7, Mark 14:27)
- Beaten savagely (Psalm 22:11–17, Matt. 27:35)
- Forsaken by God (Psalm 22:1, Matt. 27:46)
- Cast lots for clothing (Psalm 22:18, Matt. 27:35)
- Pierced hands and feet (Zech. 12:10, John 19:37)
- Raised from the dead (Psalm 16:8–10, Matt. 28:7)
- Both David's son and Lord (Psalm 110:1, Matt. 22:41)
- Establish a heavenly kingdom (Jer. 22:24–30, John 18:26)

The chance of one person, not to mention one person from the family of Abraham and tribe of Judah, randomly fulfilling all these, is totally astronomical.

This chart of prophecies and fulfillments is so convincing, that once upon a time, skeptics accused Christians of writing the prophecies back into the Old Testament. How else to explain it? But when the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in 1945, the world now possessed copies of the Old Testament books that predated the life of Jesus by 250 years. And the promises were there, word for word.

Isaiah says in another passage,

Seek from the book of the Lord, and read:
Not one of these will be missing;
None will lack its mate.
For His mouth has commanded..." (Isaiah 34:16).

We can look at all the promises and prophecies God has ever made, and find that they have come true. Not a single prediction lacks its fulfillment. God foresaw their occurrence and caused them to occur.

Here's something else: As we read the various predictions, we discover that they are not random. The Old Testament doesn't say the Messiah will be 5' 8", wear a red hat and blue shoes, and His name will be Bob. Instead, each mention of the coming person of the Messiah develops something about His nature and work. The figure of the Messiah grows in clarity and stature from Genesis through Malachi.

Not all Messianic prophecies are as specific as Micah 5:2. Some are general descriptions of the Messiah, prefiguring or foreshadowing some aspect of His work. We can see glimpses of the Messiah in things like:

- The sacrificial system (Lev. 17:11, Rev. 1:5)
- The design of the tabernacle (Exodus 30:1, Rev. 5:8)
- The priesthood (Lev. 16:32, Heb. 8:1)
- Laws of cleanliness (Lev. 11–15, Mark 7:14–23)
- The Passover lamb (Exodus 12, Rev. 5:12)
- The land of rest (Exodus 3:8, Rev. 22:1–5)

In fact, some don't mention the Messiah at all, but simply refer to a coming time of blessing related to His kingdom. Like this one:

It will come about that, in the last days
The mountain of the house of the Lord
Will be established as the chief of the mountains,
And will be raised above the hills;
And all the nations will stream to it.
And many peoples will come and say,
“Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
To the house of the God of Jacob;
That He may teach us concerning His ways,
And that we may walk in His paths” (Isaiah 2:1–4).

Why did God wait so long for these days? Those centuries under the Law of Moses served as a “tutor” to lead us to faith in Christ (Gal. 3:23–24). Each man needed to see the consequences of choosing sin, and understand the need for a personal savior, both through the experiences of his own failures, and through the experiences of the children of Israel recorded in the Bible. Mankind needed further revelation about the nature and will of God. And God waited for “the fullness of the time,” (Gal. 1 4:4), to have in place politically, culturally, linguistically, and spiritually what was necessary for the news of the one man, the Savior, to spread from one city, Jerusalem, in just a few decades, to the furthest parts of the world.

Besides, God's plan of eternity includes myriads upon myriads of people from the large population of mankind, not just Adam and Eve and a handful of Israelites. Each of those people have been granted the necessary information, as well as the free moral agency to choose to love and serve God. The days of the Messiah are upon us, and the doorway into His kingdom stands open!

Quote of the Week:

“The smile that lights the face also warms the heart.”—*author unknown*