

Messianic Prophecies

In the Old Testament there are many prophecies that speak about a coming Messiah who would save mankind from their sins. These prophecies (which date back to hundreds and, in some cases, thousands of years before Christ) foretell in great detail what the Messiah was going to be like and what He was going to do. The extent of these prophecies are quite astonishing and provide amazing evidence that Jesus really is the Messiah. It is not an easy thing to predict what is going to happen next week, let alone next year – but to predict things that will happen a thousand years from now, with extreme precision, goes far beyond a series of simple “lucky guesses”. The fact is that Jesus really is the promised Messiah! He fulfilled all of the prophecies perfectly – including being executed and then raising back to life again.

This paper isn't intended to be an exhaustive study of all messianic prophecies. Instead what I'd like to do is present a number of prophecies from the Old Testament that speak of the person and work of the Messiah. As you will see, God was *very* clear about what the Messiah was going to be like. This makes it possible to recognize Him for what He really is, and tell Him apart from all imposters. There is only one man who meets all of these requirements, and that is Jesus.

I. His Person

1. He would be a descendant of Abraham

One of the first prophecies about the coming Messiah was that He would be a descendant of Abraham:

Genesis 22:15: “And the angel of the Lord called unto Abraham out of heaven the second time,

16 And said, By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son:

17 That in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heaven, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gates of his enemies;

18 And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.”

The book of Galatians links this prophecy to Christ:

Galatians 3:16: “Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He said not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ.”

It is important to note that verse 18 says “in thy *seed* all the nations of the Earth” would be

blessed. The word “seed” is actually *singular* and refers to a single person. God was telling Abraham that he would have a descendent that would be a blessing to all nations. This descendent was the Messiah, who would go on to be a blessing to all nations by saving them from their sins through His death on the cross.

2. He would be from the Tribe of Judah

Besides being a descendant of Abraham, the Messiah would also come from the tribe of Judah:

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.”

This means that the Messiah was going to be Jewish, and would come from a specific Jewish tribe. The word “Shiloh” is difficult to translate and literally means “whose right it is”. The Messiah is the one who has the right to rule. This verse could be rephrased to read like this:

“The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes whose right it is, and unto him shall the obedience of the peoples be.”

This teaches us several things. First, the Messiah would come from the tribe of Judah. Second, the Messiah would be a king. Third, the Messiah would come before the tribe of Judah lost its identity. When the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, the genealogical records were destroyed as well. It is now impossible to tell the tribe of Judah apart from the rest of the tribes; with the destruction of the records, all of the tribes have lost their identities. Therefore, the Messiah had to come before the records were destroyed in 70 AD. No Messiah could appear after that date.

Jesus *was* born of the tribe of Judah, and He was born decades before 70 AD – just as the prophecies foretold. One day He will return and reign as the King of Kings from Jerusalem. In that day He will rule over the nations, and all the peoples of the world will serve Him.

3. He would be a son of David

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would come out of the line of Jesse:

Isaiah 11:1: “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots:

2 And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and fear of the Lord;”

Jeremiah further prophesied that He would come from the house of David:

Jeremiah 23:5: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

6 In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS.”

Jesus fulfills both of these requirements. The genealogical records in the New Testament prove that Jesus is a descendant of Abraham, of the tribe of Judah, and the offspring of David.

4. He would be both God and man

The Bible is clear that the Messiah would be both God and man. This can be found in a host of passages: Isaiah 7:14, Isaiah 9:6-7, Jeremiah 23:5-6, Micah 5:2, Zechariah 12:10, Zechariah 13:7, Psalm 80:17, and Psalm 110:1-7. For example:

Isaiah 9:6: “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, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.

7 Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

Jesus was not just a man; He was also God as well – part of the eternal Trinity. Jesus really *is* the “mighty God”, as Isaiah foretold. He was fully God and fully man at the same time.

5. He will live eternally

The prophet Nathan told King David that the Messiah would come from one of David's children and that His throne would last forever:

I Chronicles 17:10: “And since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel. Moreover I will subdue all thine enemies. Furthermore I tell thee that the Lord will build thee an house.

11 And it shall come to pass, when thy days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom.

12 He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne forever.

13 I will be his father, and he shall be my son: and I will not take my mercy away

from him, as I took it from him that was before thee:

14 But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom forever: and his throne shall be established forevermore."

This cannot be talking about Solomon because Solomon's throne did not last forever. The throne of the Messiah, however, is an eternal one that will never fade away. He will rule for all of eternity.

II. His Nature

1. He would be full of the Holy Spirit

Isaiah prophesied that the Messiah would be full of the Holy Spirit:

Isaiah 42:1: "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles.

2 He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause his voice to be heard in the street.

3 A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

4 He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."

This passage is quoted in Matthew 12:15-21 and is applied to Jesus. He was indeed full of the Holy Spirit, and He did many mighty miracles.

2. He would be humble

Zechariah prophesied that the Messiah would be humble:

Zechariah 9:9: "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, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.

10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth."

This passage is quoted in Matthew 21:4-5 and is applied to Jesus.

3. He would be gentle

The book of Isaiah tells us that the Messiah would be gentle:

Isaiah 42:3: “A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench: he shall bring forth judgment unto truth.”

4. He would be the son of God

The Old Testament was clear that the Messiah would not just be the son of man, but would also be the Son of God:

Psalms 2:7: “I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in Him.”

This passage is quoted and applied to Jesus in Acts 13:33.

5. He would be the Good Shepherd

This can be seen in a number of places, one of which is in Zechariah:

Zechariah 13:7: “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.”

This passage is quoted and applied to Jesus in Matthew 26:31.

III. His Appearing

1. He would be born of a virgin

This can be seen in the famous passage in Isaiah:

Isaiah 7:14: “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.”

There are some who claim that the word “virgin” in this verse doesn't actually mean virgin. That is incorrect. In fact, the Hebrew word used here is the only one available that even *could* mean virgin; none of the other words that Isaiah could have used had that possible meaning. There simply is no Hebrew word that *only* means virgin, and Isaiah used the best one available.

However, the Bible makes it clear that this was a virgin birth in two ways. First, when this verse is quoted in Matthew 1:23, the Greek word used to translate Isaiah 7:14 explicitly means virgin. Second, in verse 14 we can see that this is intended to be a sign. There is nothing miraculous about a young woman giving birth to a child; that happens all the time. This verse only becomes miraculous if a *virgin* was to conceive and bear a son.

2. He would be preceded by a herald

The Bible teaches that before the Messiah came someone else would come to tell the world that the Messiah was about to appear. This was prophesied by Isaiah:

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.

4 Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.”

Malachi also mentions this:

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.”

These verses are applied to John the Baptist in John 1:23.

3. He would be born in Bethlehem, the city of David

This can be seen in Micah:

Micah 5:2: "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from old, from everlasting."

This passage is quoted in Matthew 2:5-6. The reason the passage mentions Bethlehem-Ephratah is because there were two Bethlehems in Israel, and God was specifying which one the Messiah was going to come from.

4. He would be seen riding on a donkey

This can be seen in the book of Zechariah:

Zechariah 9:9: "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, and upon a colt the foal of an ass."

5. He would appear before 70 AD

As was mentioned earlier, the Old Testament was very specific that the Messiah was going to be of the tribe of Judah and of the lineage of David. However, the genealogical records were stored in the Temple in Jerusalem, and they were all destroyed when the Romans conquered Jerusalem in 70 AD. At that point the identity of the tribes were lost, which made it impossible for there to be a tribe of Judah. The Messiah had to come before that point because it was impossible to come afterward. After all, He could not come of the tribe of Judah if there was no longer a tribe of Judah!

IV. His Offices

1. He would be a king

This can be seen in many passages:

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.”

Numbers 24:17: “I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Scepter shall rise out of Israel, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth. ...

19 Out of Jacob shall come he that shall have dominion, and shall destroy him that remaineth of the city.”

Isaiah 9:7: “Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this.”

I Chronicles 17:14: “But I will settle him in mine house and in my kingdom forever: and his throne shall be established forevermore.”

See also Psalm 2:7-12, Psalm 110:1-7.

2. He would be a priest

It was also prophesied that the Messiah would be a priest. This can be found in Psalms:

Psalms 110:4: “The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.”

Melchizedek appears in Genesis 14:17-24. His priesthood, and its relevance to Christ, is discussed in Hebrews 5, 6, and 7.

3. He would be a prophet

The third office of the Messiah was that of a prophet:

Deuteronomy 18:15: The Lord thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken ...

18 I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him.

19 And it shall come to pass, that whosoever will not hearken unto my words which he shall speak in my name, I will require it of him.”

V. His Mission and Ministry

1. He would be specially trained

In one of the “Servant Songs” of Isaiah, the Bible hints that the Messiah was specially trained by God for His mission:

Isaiah 50:4: “The Lord God hath given me the tongue of the learned, that I should know how to speak a word in season to him that is weary: he wakeneth morning by morning, he wakeneth mine ear to hear as the learned.”

2. He would bring salvation to the Gentile nations

This can be found in Isaiah:

Isaiah 42:1: “Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth; I have put my spirit upon him: he shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. ...

6: I the Lord have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles;”

Isaiah 49:6: “And he said, It is a light thing that thou shouldst be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved of Israel: I will also give thee for a light to the Gentiles, that thou mayest be my salvation unto the end of the earth.”

3. He would be rejected at first

This can be seen in many passages: Isaiah 49:1-13, Isaiah 52:13-53:12, Zechariah 11:1-17, Zechariah 12:10, Psalm 22, Psalm 110:1-7. For example:

Isaiah 53:3: “He is 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.”

4. He would appear to fail but would actually be successful

The Old Testament was clear that although the Messiah would be rejected and would suffer greatly (as was seen in point #3), He would not fail in His mission:

Isaiah 42:4: "He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till he have set judgment in the earth: and the isles shall wait for his law."

5. He would be sold for 30 pieces of silver

This was prophesied by Zechariah:

Zechariah 11:12: "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."

13 And the Lord said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the Lord."

Matthew records that Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16) and that the silver was used to purchase the potter's field (Matthew 27:3-10). It should be noted that the Lord was being sarcastic when He called the amount a "goodly price"; Exodus 21:32 records that 30 pieces of silver was the amount required to repay for a dead slave. That was the "goodly price" that was put on the Son of God.

6. His rejection would result in an attack upon Israel and the scattering of the people

This can be found in the book of Zechariah:

Zechariah 13:7: "Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones."

8 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the Lord, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.

9 And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The Lord is my God."

Jesus applied this prophecy to Himself in Matthew 26:31. In 70 AD the Roman army attacked the land of Israel, destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple, and slaughtered more than a million people. Jesus had warned in Matthew 23:35-6 that the generation alive at that time would face severe

judgment. Since they rejected their Messiah, their house was left desolate (Matthew 23:38).

In Luke 21:20-24 Jesus warned His followers to flee from Jerusalem when they saw it being besieged by armies. In 66 AD the Romans came and besieged the city. When they temporarily eased the siege later that year the entire Christian community in Jerusalem abandoned the city and left. In 68 AD the Romans besieged it again, and in 70 AD they leveled the city and the Temple. No stone of the Temple was left on top of the other. The reason for this was because when the Temple burned down the gold that covered its walls melted and ran down into the cracks, so the Romans were forced to tear it apart stone by stone to recover the gold.

7. He would eventually be accepted

This can be seen in Isaiah 49. The theme of that chapter is that Israel has not been forgotten; the day will come when it will be restored.

8. He would be seated at the right hand of God

This can be seen in Psalm 110:

Psalm 110:1: “The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.”

This passage is quoted by Jesus in Matthew 22:41-45.

VI. His Suffering and Death

1. He would suffer

This can be seen in a number of different passages. Both Psalm 22 and Isaiah 52-3 go into great detail about the Messiah's sufferings. A few of these verses are:

Psalm 22:1: “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring? . . .

14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.”

Isaiah 52:13: “Behold, my servant shall deal prudently, he shall be exalted and extolled, and be very high.

14 As many were astonished at thee; his visage was so marred more than any man,

and his form more than the sons of men: . . .

53:5: But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

2. He would be tried and condemned to death

Isaiah speaks of this:

Isaiah 53:7: “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.

8 He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? For he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken.”

Notice it says that he was “taken from prison and from judgment”, which implies a trial and imprisonment. It also says that he was “cut off out of the land of the living”, which speaks of the Messiah's execution. The passage adds that “he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth” - speaking of the way the Messiah would conduct Himself at the trial.

3. He would die

This can be seen in Isaiah 53:8, where it says that the Messiah would be cut off “out of the land of the living”. This is also spoken of in Psalms:

Psalms 16:9: “Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

10 For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

The word “hell” here is Sheol, which simply refers to the grave or the resting place of the dead. If the Messiah's soul is in the grave then the Messiah is obviously dead – and as we saw in Isaiah, the reason the Messiah was dead was because He was executed. At the same time, verse 10 says that the Messiah would not stay in the grave for long. In fact, verse 10 says He would not even be in the grave long enough for His body to start decaying.

4. He would die a violent death by means of piercing

This can be seen in Zechariah:

Zechariah 12:10: “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 firstborn.”

5. His death would be substitutionary

This can be seen in Isaiah 53:5:

Isaiah 53:5: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.”

Notice how the verse says that the Messiah would be wounded and beaten for *our* sins. He was not punished for what He did but for what we had done.

6. His death would result in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple

This is mentioned in Daniel:

Daniel 9:26: “And after threescore and two weeks shall Messiah be cut off, but not for himself: and the people of the prince that shall come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary; and the end thereof shall be with a flood, and unto the end of the war desolations are determined.”

As we can see, after the Messiah is “cut off” (or executed, but “not for himself” – His death was substitutionary) the city and the sanctuary would both be destroyed. In this context, the city was Jerusalem and the sanctuary was the Temple. Both of these were destroyed after the Messiah was executed.

7. He would be buried in a rich man's tomb

Isaiah speaks of this:

Isaiah 53:9: “And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth.”

8. He would be resurrected

This is hinted at in a number of passages but it can be most clearly seen in Psalm 16:10:

Psalm 16:10: “ For thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption.”

As we've pointed out before, the word translated “hell” is actually Sheol, which simply speaks of the resting place of the dead. If the Messiah's soul was not going to be left in the grave then that means that He would be raised back to life – and if His body was not going to see corruption then He wasn't going to be in the grave long enough to start decaying.

9. He would bring justification to those who believe in Him

This can be seen in Isaiah 53:

Isaiah 53:11: “He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities.

12 Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he hath poured out his soul unto death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors.”