

*Christ:*

# *The Fulfillment of Prophecy*

## PART 1 OF 3

The entire point of the promise is that the offspring will be many, not one. Paul, however, exploits the singular *form* of seed to argue that the promise to Abraham was for one son, not many, and that that son was Christ. **Paul’s theological point is not surprising given the Christ-centered theology throughout his writing—in Jesus, Israel’s story finds its completion, its end point.** Paul seems to come to Genesis with the expectation that Jesus is its ultimate subject, which is something any Christian should affirm along with Paul. **But this is not what Genesis means, despite the grammatical flexibility of “seed.”**<sup>1</sup> (Emphasis mine—bold)

Peter Enns,<sup>2</sup> in the citation above, renounces Paul’s use of the Hebrew Scripture in presenting Christ as the “end point” that Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy. Enns has not been “clothed with power from on high” as were the Apostles. Based upon his book, one would assume that he would also reject what Jesus told the Twelve concerning the prophecies about himself as found in the Law, the Prophets, and the writings. Luke reported this final encounter of the Twelve along with Jesus explaining the substance of the entire Hebrew Canon in relationship to Himself:

He said to them, “This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is **written about me** in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms.”<sup>45</sup> Then **he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.**<sup>46</sup> He told them, “**This is what is written:** The Messiah will suffer [Isaiah 53:1-12] and rise from the dead on the third day [Hosea 6:2],<sup>47</sup> and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem [Isaiah 2:2-3].<sup>48</sup> You are witnesses of these things.<sup>49</sup> I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but **stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high.**” (Luke 24:44-49; see Act 2 for the “power from on high”)

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<sup>1</sup> Peter Enns, *The Evolution of Adam: What the Bible Does and Doesn’t Say about Human Origins* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press, 2012), 106. Enns disagrees with Paul’s use of the Old Testament. He pontificates his own views as if he, himself, has more insight than one who was called directly by Jesus. God’s Revelation of the “mystery” was made known to Paul just as this Revelation was made known to the Twelve (see Luke 24:44-49).

<sup>2</sup> **Peter Enns** is an American Old Testament scholar and was professor of Old Testament and biblical hermeneutics at **Westminster Theological Seminary** (WTS), Philadelphia until 2008. He has a BA from Messiah College (1982), an MDiv from Westminster Theological Seminary (1989), and MA (1993) and PhD (1994) from Harvard University where he also served as a Teaching Fellow from 1990–1994. Enns was the editor of the Westminster Theological Journal from 2000–2005. **WTS suspended Enns following the end of the Spring semester, 2008 due to the theological issues raised in his book *Inspiration and Incarnation*.** Enns decided to leave WTS after 14 years and did so on mutually agreeable terms with the WTS administration.

Enns attack against Paul is extremely caustic, contemptuous, and scornful. We should keep in mind that Enns did not have a direct encounter with the Lord Jesus as did Paul. Paul asserts that his explanation of the Messianic Age concerning Jesus came to him through direct revelation. We should listen to Paul as he penned his First Epistle to the Corinthians about AD 55 from Ephesus about God's Wisdom revealed to him by the Holy Spirit:

We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing. <sup>7</sup> **No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.** <sup>8</sup> None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. <sup>9</sup> However, as it is written: "What no eye has seen, what no ear has heard, and what no human mind has conceived"—the things God has prepared for those who love him— <sup>10</sup> **these are the things God has revealed to us by his Spirit.** The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. <sup>11</sup> For who knows a person's thoughts except their own spirit within them? **In the same way no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.** <sup>12</sup> What we have received is not the spirit of the world [like Enns], but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us. <sup>13</sup> **This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom [like Enns] but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.** <sup>14</sup> The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit. (1 Corinthians 2:6-14)

If Peter Enns had lived during the time of Paul, Paul could have written: "What we have received is not the spirit of Peter Enns." In spite of Peter Enns' book of 168 pages, one almost stands in awe at his allegations against Paul and the Scriptures as a whole. He cites many sources from the Ancient Near East as if their writings are correct while the New Testament writers fudge in their interpretation of the prophecies. It is in this same vein that Jesus had to contend with two-hundred years of tradition among the religious leaders when He came on the scene. He rejected the traditions and misapplication of the Scriptures by the religious leaders. We, too, need to reject the teachings of Peter Enns and other liberal scholars who reject Genesis 1-11 as historical. Just a brief reflection upon the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John) reveal that these Gospels are books of conflict between Jesus and the religious leaders. Today, there is a conflict between Jesus and Peter Enns. I dealt with this kind of philosophy in my dissertation through Erskine Theological Seminary (1999). Enns assumes that we must interpret the Scriptures in light of the Ancient Near Eastern documents. This essay: "Christ: The Fulfillment of Prophecy" (in three parts) rejects the teachings of Peter Enns. Shortly before Jesus' arrest, He told His disciples about His departure and the sending of the **Holy Spirit who would guide them into all truth.** We would do well to listen to what Jesus said:

I have much more to say to you, more than you can now bear. <sup>13</sup> **But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all the truth.** He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come. <sup>14</sup> **He will glorify me because it is from me that he will receive what he will make known to you.** (John 16:12-16)

To begin this study about prophecy, we commence with the writings of the Old Testament Scriptures, which began with Moses (1526-1406 BC), in book form, that would now make these

ancient documents approximately three thousand five-hundred years old. The last of the Old Testament prophets takes us to about 400 BC, which covers a span of approximately one thousand years from Moses to Malachi. Moses wrote his writings over a period of forty years (1446-1406 BC). Originally, his writings comprised one book known as the Book of Moses, which writings were later separated into five different books—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. John H. Sailhamer<sup>3</sup> comments on this concept in his *The Pentateuch as Narrative*, which remarks are informative about how to read the Pentateuch:

Though we often think of the Pentateuch as a collection of five books, viz., Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy, it was originally intended to be read as a single book. References to the Pentateuch within the OT itself show that from the earliest times it was considered a single book. For example, subsequent OT [Old Testament] writers call the whole of the Pentateuch a “book” (2 Ch 25:4; 35:12; Ezr 6:18; Ne 13:1). The NT also considered the Pentateuch a single book. For example, in Mark 12:26, the Pentateuch is called “the book of Moses.”<sup>4</sup>

Moses introduces his writings with the beginning of Creation, which Creation of the Universe occurred within six literal days. Following the creation of Adam and Eve on the sixth day, Moses later gives us a glimpse of the tragic fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. How long they were in the Garden before this outward rebellion occurred is a mystery. Moses does not disclose this information. Even though the history of Israel’s beginning is presented in his writings, nevertheless, the writings, as a whole, appear to be designed to unfold God’s ultimate means of rescuing sinful humanity from this disastrous plunge into sin, which liberation would come about through the coming Messiah—God becoming flesh.

God, through His prophets, developed in great detail the events that would surround this coming One (Genesis 3:15), which coming signaled to the Jews a new dispensation—a dispensation that would include all people, not just Jews.<sup>5</sup> Since this is so, we, as Christians,

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<sup>3</sup> **Dr. Sailhamer** (1946–2017) began teaching in 1975, most recently at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was President of The Evangelical Theological Society in 2000 and published a number of books, including *An Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, and *Genesis: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, all from Zondervan. He contributed a number of articles and book reviews in various biblical journals and delivered several scholarly papers and participated in several Old Testament Bible translation committees.

<sup>4</sup>John H. Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch As Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, Library of Biblical Interpretation (Grand Rapids: Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), 1.

<sup>5</sup>From the time that Moses completed his writings (1406 BC), there was a gap of over five-hundred years before the prophet Joel (835 BC) arose to announce the coming of the “Seed of the woman” with its impending wrath of God against His people for their rejection of God’s Messiah. Following the death of Moses, Joshua assumed leadership and wrote his book, which book covered a period of time from 1406-1385 BC—a period of twenty-one years of history. The next book begins with the death of Joshua in 1385 BC. Judges envelops a period of time from 1385-1050 BC—a period of three-hundred and thirty-five years, which time frame includes the Book of Ruth. First Samuel surrounds a period of ninety years—from the birth of Samuel to the death of Saul in 1010 BC. There is a fifty-year overlap between the end of Judges and the beginning of First Samuel.

Second Samuel begins in 1010 BC and ends in 970 BC, which discloses a period of almost forty years—this time frame covers David’s history. First Kings begins with 970 and ends with 853 BC with the death of Ahab (actually a year or two following Ahab’s death—one hundred and seventeen years of history). Second

need to reexamine the importance of messianic predictions found in the thirty-nine books known as the Old Testament (twenty-two books in the Hebrew canon, which is equivalent to our thirty-nine books today—begins with Genesis and ends with Malachi). It is in this vein that Michael Rydelnik (Professor of Jewish Studies at the Moody Bible Institute and a convert from Judaism to Christianity through his studies of the messianic prophecies) writes in his book *The Messianic Hope* regarding the messianic hope found in the whole of the Old Testament writings:

The foremost reason for seeing the Hebrew Bible as a messianic document is that this appears to be the best way to explain the evidence of the Scriptures themselves. James Hamilton observes that the extensive messianic speculation of the intertestamental period, Second Temple Judaism, and the New Testament would indicate that these speculations are rooted in the Hebrew Bible. He sets aside “the possibility that ancient people were stupid, which seems to be an implicit assumption of a good deal of modern scholarship.” Instead he hypothesizes that the best explanation for the congruence of all these ancient sources citing the same biblical passages as messianic is that they were all indeed messianic in their intention and meaning. He is accurate in positing “that the OT is a messianic document, written from a messianic perspective to sustain messianic hope.”<sup>6</sup>

The New Testament writers confirmed that what the prophets foretold had found their fulfillment in the coming of Jesus. For instance, Paul’s Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians unfold this mystery that Moses reveals in Genesis 3:15, as well as the whole of his other writings, concerning the “Seed of the Woman,” which “Seed” found its fulfillment in the coming of Jesus who is called “the Christ” (ὁ Χριστός, *ho Christos*). Paul, in the Ephesian Epistle, utilizes the word *mystery* in order to draw attention to the very heart of God’s Gospel. The word *mystery* (μυστήριον, *mystērion*) was something formerly unknown to the prophets but now revealed to Jesus’ Apostles) is about Jesus who is the fulfillment of the prophecies of the Old Testament.

Just a cursory reading of the Pentateuch reveals the early rays of messianic glory, which revelation was hidden in God before the foundation of His Creation. Not only did the Book of Moses reveal the coming Messiah, but also the other prophets continued to keep alive the messianic promise of Genesis 3:15. As we approach the New Testament writings, we see their explanation of the prophetic prophecies, which were written over a period of one thousand years. For example, Paul wrote to the Christians in Ephesus about this concept: “For he chose us in him before [πρὸ, *pro*] the creation of the world [καταβολῆς κόσμου, *katabolēs kosmou*, ‘the foundation of the world’]” (Ephesians 1:4). Later, in this same Epistle, he explains his call from Christ: “...to make plain to everyone the administration of this **mystery**, which for **ages past was kept hidden in God**, who created all things” (3:9).<sup>7</sup>

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Kings takes up Israel’s history beginning with the death of Ahab in 853 BC and continues until 586 BC—Babylonian Captivity (two hundred and sixty-seven years of history). The two books of Chronicles begin with a genealogical synopsis from Adam to 539 BC where Cyrus gave command to rebuild and restore the Temple. Second Chronicles does include forty-seven years more of history than Second Kings.

<sup>6</sup>Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?*, NAC Studies in Bible & Theology, Series Editor: E. Ray Clendenen (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 7.

<sup>7</sup>For an examination of the word *mystery*, see Chapter 1, “A Brief Overview of the Book of Ephesians,” pages 1-20.

## PROPHETIC MIRACLES VERSUS DIRECT MIRACLES

As we probe the Old Testament prophecies, we need to keep in mind that Christianity is the fulfillment of what Moses revealed in the Garden of Eden as well as the entirety of His writings (the Pentateuch). **Prophetic utterances** depict God's foreknowledge rather than God's immediate powers as revealed to the senses. On the other hand, direct (instant) miracles are miracles that are immediately known to the senses of **seeing, hearing, and feeling**. In other words, **prophetic miracles** materialize with slower growth over a longer period of time. When **prophetic miracles** find their fulfillment, they, too, are, in essence, standing miracles that give credibility to the authenticity of the Sacred Writings. Again, **prophetic miracles** are distinct from **direct miracles** that demonstrate God's unlimited or absolute power (omnipotence) instantaneously. **Prophetic miracles** (prophecy), on the other hand, addresses God's foreknowledge, which supernatural exhibition of His foreknowledge displays His omniscience, that is to say, His knowledge that knows the end as well as the beginning (Isaiah 45:21; 46:10).<sup>8</sup> As we reflect upon biblical prophecy, we need to keep in mind that the predictive element in prophecy is, in essence, the written form of the miraculous (direct miracles).

Prophecy is a type of perpetual testimony to the truth of Divine Revelation. For this reason, we should examine the messianic prophecies and their fulfillment, which prophecies predict the coming of a new dispensation with the arrival of the Messiah. As we reflect upon biblical prophecy, we are cognizant that Scriptural prophecy is the declaration of events made before such actions occur, which dealings can only be known by an omniscient God. Thomas Hartwell Horne<sup>9</sup> defines prophecy this way:

PROPHECY is a miracle of knowledge, a declaration, or description, or representation of something future, beyond the power of human sagacity to discern or to calculate, and it is the highest evidence that can be given of supernatural communion with the Deity and of the truth of a revelation from God.<sup>10</sup>

The entire Old Testament writings contain voluminous messianic prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah and the dissolution of the old heavens and the old earth (Israel) with the bringing in of the New Heavens and New Earth (New Israel).<sup>11</sup> In other words, the Old

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<sup>8</sup>I am deeply indebted to Daniel Wilson, *The Evidences of Christianity: A Course of Lectures Delivered in the Parish Church of St. Mary, Islington*, Volume 1 (New York: Crocker and Brewster, 1838, 1923), 151-210, for his comments on the distinction between immediate miracles and prophetic miracles.

<sup>9</sup>**Hartwell Horne** (1780-1862), English Bible scholar and biographer.

<sup>10</sup>Thomas Hartwell Horne, *An Introduction to the Critical Study and Knowledge of the Holy Scriptures*, Chapter 4, Section 3, Paragraph 1, Eighth Edition, Volume 1 of 5 (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1839, reprinted 1970), 1:272.

<sup>11</sup>For a detailed study of the old heavens and old earth versus new heavens and new earth, see Dallas Burdette, "A New Heaven and a New Earth," in Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Series of Specialized Studies from Psalms • Revelation • Hebrews*, Volume 2 (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2010), 257-337.

Covenant world of Judaism would come to a close in AD 70 with the coming in of the new Israel, that is to say, the new community of God—the Church. These messianic prophecies began in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:15) and did not cease until the close of the Jewish dispensation (AD 70), which catastrophe was foretold by Moses over fourteen hundred years before the event happened (Deuteronomy 32). Daniel foretold this same event over five hundred years before this tragedy occurred (Daniel 12). God did not cast Adam and Eve out of the Garden until He had made known the coming of the Messiah to redeem lost humanity.

God also predicted the coming flood one hundred years before its occurrence. Noah was five-hundred years old when “he became the father of Shem, Ham and Japheth” (Genesis 5:35). Noah was six-hundred years old when he entered the Ark (7:6).<sup>12</sup> Ultimately, eight souls were spared. From the loins of one of Noah’s three sons (Shem) came the Messiah. Later, God called Abraham (2166-1991 BC, Genesis 12) and promised him that “in his seed” all nations of the earth would be blessed. God continued this promise through Abraham’s son Isaac (2066-1886 BC) and his grandson Jacob (2006-1859 BC).<sup>13</sup>

Ultimately, out of the loins of Jacob came the twelve tribes of Israel. Eventually, Jacob and his sons settled in Egypt as a result of a world-wide famine. Toward the end of Jacob’s life, he foretold the coming of the Messiah with the cessation of Judah as a ruling power (49:1-10). After a period of four-hundred years, God called Moses to lead the children of Jacob out of Egyptian bondage (1446 BC) and to forge a nation that survived until the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.<sup>14</sup> The Scriptures recorded the devastation and persecution of foreign powers upon the children of Israel. One of the most outstanding disruptions of the kingdom of Judah occurred with their encounter with the Babylonians (see Jeremiah 25:11-24; 29:10; Daniel 9:2; 2 Chronicles 36:20-21). Yet, in spite of their seventy years of captivity, God did not allow the nation of Judah to cease to exist until the coming of the Messiah, which is the prophecy made by Jacob to Judah (Genesis 49:10).

## **NEW ATHEISTS: PROPHETS OF GOD IGNORED**

**We normally think of history as descriptive of the past, but prophecies are also expressive of history in the future.** This subject of descriptive history through prophecy, in detailed analysis, is for another study. My primary objective in this study (Part 1 of 3) is to examine prophecies dealing with the coming of the Messiah in the Book of Genesis, which also entails a brief study of the known history surrounding the individual prophecies relating to the coming of the SEED of the woman. There are many individuals today who discount prophecy as a viable means of establishing the credibility and inspiration of the Hebrew Bible. As I read the writings of the so-called “new atheists,” I am convinced that prophecies are set aside by

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<sup>12</sup>Noah’s father was Lamech (lived to be 777 years old); Noah’s grandfather was Methuselah (lived to be 969 years old); and his great grandfather was Enoch (translated to heaven—did not experience death). Noah lived to be 950 years old (Genesis 9:28).

<sup>13</sup>For a detailed account of biblical chronology, see Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Series of Specialized Studies from Ephesians • Philippians • Exodus • Prophets • Pastoral Epistles • Apologetics*, Volume 3 (Lakewood, FL: Xulon Press, 2010), 463-469.

<sup>14</sup>See *Ibid.*, 430-481 for a detailed study of the “Date of the Exodus.”

these “new atheists” without investigation. It appears that certain individuals have hardened their hearts and closed their eyes toward God and His written Revelation.

### Richard Dawkins

For instance, one such person is Richard Dawkins (Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University and renowned atheist). He complains about those who read his writings as not being impressed with his arguments. The reason why many are not intimidated with his points of view is simply that his expressed opinions are illogical—no foundation in sound logic. He never sees himself in what he condemns in others. For example, he approves the definition of “**delusion**” as given by Microsoft Word as “**a persistent false belief held in the face of strong contradictory evidence....**”<sup>15</sup> Yet, he rejects evidence that substantiates the truthfulness of Christianity—prophecy and miracles. **He himself is suffering from a “delusion” by rejecting the evidence for God and the Atonement for sins by the historical Jesus.**

He applies this definition of “delusion” to those who accept Christianity. I have listened to him in debates with Professor John Lennox (Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford and Mathematics and Philosophy of Science at Green College), and, at the same time, I have observed his refusal to examine the arguments of Lennox.<sup>16</sup> For some reason, Dawkins cannot identify himself as one who refuses belief in spite of strong evidence to the contrary. I, too, stand in amazement as to how Dawkins can persist in his false conviction in the face of strong evidence that supports certainty in the existence of God. He truly is deluded in his acceptance of atheism. In my readings from Richard Dawkins, it appears, so it seems to me, that he maintains that those who believe in God are blockheads. From just a casual reading of Dawkins, he leaves the impression that those who believe as he believes are the learned and advanced thinkers.

In other words, he and his fellow atheists are the only ones who are men of sense—at least his writings portray this mindset, even though he debates such intellectuals as John Lennox.<sup>17</sup> Dawkins’ writings seek to create prejudice, which obstinacy will create unbelief and hardness of heart. As a result of his arguments—which arguments are irrational and do not hold up—many will not take the pains to inquire into the truth of Christianity.<sup>18</sup> As I read the

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<sup>15</sup>Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion* (New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2006), 5.

<sup>16</sup>See Professor Richard Dawkins and Professor John Lennox, *Has Science Buried God?*, DVD video, Oxford University—Museum of Natural History (Birmingham, AL: Fixed Point Foundation ); also, Richard Dawkins and John Lennox, *The God Delusion Debate*, DVD video, Birmingham, AL. (Birmingham, AL: Fixed Point Foundation). These two debates may be ordered from Fixed Point Foundation—[www.fixed-point.org](http://www.fixed-point.org).

<sup>17</sup>For an excellent defense of Christianity, see John C. Lennox, *God’s Undertaker: Has Science Buried God?* (Oxford: Wilkinson House, 2007). **John Lennox** is a mathematician, author, apologist, and philosopher of science. He is a Professor of Mathematics at the University of Oxford and a Fellow in Mathematics and Philosophy of Science at Green Templeton College. He is the author of numerous books on the relationship between science and religion. He is also well known for his debates on the same subject.

<sup>18</sup>See Dallas Burdette, “God: Is Divine Existence Credible” and “Jesus: Historical Evidence, in Dallas Burdette, *Evidence for the Truth of Christianity: A Defense of Christianity by Means of Common-sense Arguments* (Lakeland, FL: Xulon Press, 2017), 216-324.

writings of Dawkins, I am reminded of the citation from Robert Jastrow (1925-2008, American astronomer, physicist, cosmologist, and NASA scientist) in his book *God and the Astronomers* (Chapter 1, “In the Beginning”) when he lays naked the mindset of individuals who reject evidence when it comes into conflict with their presuppositions:

Theologians generally are delighted with the proof that the Universe had a beginning, but astronomers are curiously upset. Their reactions provide an interesting demonstration of the response of the scientific mind—supposedly a very objective mind—when evidence uncovered by science itself leads to a conflict with the articles in our profession. It turns out that the scientist behaves the way the rest of us do when our beliefs are in conflict with the evidence. We become irritated, we pretend the conflict does not exist, or we paper it over with meaningless phrases.<sup>19</sup> (Emphasis mine)

Dawkins’ irritations reek throughout his writings. He cannot bring himself to examine the evidence. He dismisses the evidence with “meaningless phrases.” In fact, he bemoans the reaction that he supposes that Christians will react negatively to his book (*The God Delusion*).<sup>20</sup> Since he knows that Christians will not succumb to his unfounded, unreasonable, and foolish arguments for his atheism, he seeks to demean, degrade, debase, and put down Christians with the following prejudicial and injurious comments: “**dyed-in-the-wool faith-heads are immune to argument.**”<sup>21</sup> He fails to see himself as one who is “dyed-in-the-wool faith-heads.” I have personally witnessed this kind of mindset in his writings as well as in his debates. He never deals with Christian evidences. He throws out a lot of mud and innuendoes and citations from other atheists, evolutionists, and agnostics,<sup>22</sup> but no logical arguments against the evidences for the truthfulness of Christianity. When individuals *lock* their eyes and *dead bolt* their hearts toward confirmation of proof for the truthfulness of Christianity, no amount of argument, so it seems, can convince skeptics of the foolishness of their ways.

**The writings of atheists, especially Richard Dawkins, are filled with venom against Christianity.** The “new atheists” introduce railing for reasoning and offensive mockery in the room of sound arguments. From what I have read, the “new atheists” are not governed by the weight of authentication dealing with God and His written Revelation. Even though the proof about God the Father, Jesus the Messiah, and the Holy Spirit from written Revelation is as valid and authentic as testimony concerning Julius Caesar (100-44 BC), Socrates (469-399 BC), Plato (429-347 BC), Pliny the Elder (AD 23-79), Pliny the Younger (AD 61-112), Emperor Trajan (AD 56-117), and so on, we, nevertheless, still witness atheists in their total rejection of any evidence that does not uphold their presuppositions. For example, Dawkins’ writings are based on the assumption that there is no God. If one presupposes such a belief, as Dawkins does, then this mindset will produce negative reactions to belief in God. It is in this vein that Frank Harber (Evangelist and Apologist—Ph.D. degree from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary) writes:

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<sup>19</sup>Robert Jastrow, *God and the Astronomers* (New York: Warner Books, 1978), 15-16.

<sup>20</sup>Richard Dawkins, *The God Delusion*, 5.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid.

<sup>22</sup>For example, he cites Charles Darwin, Carl Sagan, Steven Weinberg, Albert Einstein, Stephen Hawkins, Ursula Goodenough, and Paul Davies, *Ibid.*, 11-27.

**Denying God’s existence based on the lack of a personal eyewitness experience would be similar to denying that Abraham Lincoln existed.** Because we cannot see or talk to him today does not mean that he did not exist. **If one examines evidence and testimony, it is verifiable that Abraham Lincoln was not a fictitious character but a person of history.** Many atheists, unable to prove that God does not exist, often put the Christian on the defensive by challenging the Christian to produce evidence of God’s existence. However, this evidence does exist!<sup>23</sup> (Emphasis mine—bold)

The new atheists have not been able to expunge, wipe out, obliterate, erase, or delete the testimony of the authors of the Hebrew Scriptures or the Writings that generated from the Apostles of Christ and those who labored (Mark and Luke) with those who knew Jesus or to wipe out the testimony of Jesus’ fleshly relatives (Jude and James—brothers of Jesus). Today, so it seems, if one denies that Jesus actually lived, this one is well-informed and is full of sense according to the world of atheism. On the other hand, if one should disallow that Alexander the Great (356-323 BC), Julius Caesar (100-44 BC), Homer (8<sup>th</sup> century BC), or Virgil (70-19 BC), in point of fact, existed, the new atheists would think this person totally unstable in the world of reality.

Are we unreasonable and credulous if we believe the facts recorded in the Hebrew Scriptures as well as the New Covenant Scriptures? The answer is, NO! What does Dawkins think of Christ? The answer is obvious from his writings. His writings exhibit total rejection of Christianity. His books reveal his conclusions concerning the question—what do you think of the Christ? In spite of his aggression and hostility against Christianity, many others have examined the evidence and, as a result of their findings have accepted Christ as Lord and Savior. It goes almost without saying that when the evidence is examined with an open mind, we discover that many unbelievers have surrendered their lives to God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit. For example, Malcolm Muggeridge<sup>24</sup> who had formerly rejected Christ as God’s Messiah did an about face. In his examination of Christianity, he accepted Christ as the only means of dealing with chaos, anarchy, turmoil, bedlam, and confusion in the world. He came to the realization that humanity cannot live without God.<sup>25</sup> He wrote about his conversion in his book *Chronicles of Wasted Time: The Green Stick*:

Mulling over this solitary journey afterwards, I had a notion that somehow, besides questing [going in search of], I was being pursued. *Footsteps padding behind me; a following shadow, a Hound of Heaven*, so near that I could feel the warm breath on my neck. I knew I was making for somewhere, some place of light; seeking some ultimate fulfillment in which another reborn me would extricate itself from the existing husk of a fleshly egotistic me, like a butterfly from a chrysalis. I was also in flight. Chasing and being chased; the pursuing and the pursuit, the quest and the flight, merging at last into one single immanence or luminosity. Some scribbled pencil notes that have

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<sup>23</sup>Frank Harber, *Reasons for Believing: A Seeker’s Guide to Christianity* (Green Forest, AR: New Leaf Press, 1998), 45. I recommend this book; it is not a technical treatise about God’s existence, but it is a down-to-earth discussion for the lay person.

<sup>24</sup>**Malcolm Muggeridge** (1903-1990), an English journalist, author, media personality, and satirist.

<sup>25</sup>For an in-depth study of man without God is found in Ravi Zacharias, *Can Man Live Without God* (Dallas: Word Publishing, 1994). This is one of the most informative books that I have read concerning humanity without God.

survived finish up with the barely decipherable question: Is this God? No answer is offered.<sup>26</sup>  
(Emphasis mine)

This book details his wasted time. Hopefully, the day will come when Richard Dawkins can write about his accepting the “Hound of Heaven.” The “Hound of Heaven” is seeking Richard Dawkins, but he keeps running away from reality. God sent John Lennox to reel him in, but he keeps refusing to acknowledge the obvious—God exists. Having said this, there is always a possibility for change—even for men like Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens (1949-2011), Sam Harris, Steven Weinberg, Victor J. Stenger, and other atheists. An example of change is found in one of the most renowned atheists (Antony Flew, 1923-2010, British philosopher and formerly a strong advocate of atheism) in this century who submitted to the “Hound of Heaven.” He changed his views about God’s existence after listening to a lecture about the “cell” and the “fine-tuning of the Universe.”<sup>27</sup> He weighed the evidence and altered his beliefs concerning God’s existence.<sup>28</sup>

Another case in point is John Marshall (1755-1835, former Chief Justice of the United States from 1801 to 1835) who changed his mind about his belief concerning Christ after he reflected on the evidence. After reading the writings of Alexander Keith (1781-1880, minister of St. Cyrus, Kincardineshire) concerning the *Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion*, he accepted the reliability of Christianity based upon prophecies in the Old Testament. When he read this marvelous book, he could not refute the evidence and became a Christian.<sup>29</sup> I call upon Richard Dawkins to adopt the mindset of Antony Flew and John Marshall when they were confronted with irrefutable evidence. In concluding my remarks about Dawkins, we need to bear in mind that even though he is recognized as a scholar in the world of academia, nevertheless, scholars are not always judicial and unbiased.

Is there hope for Richard Dawkins? Yes! My plea is that he will actually investigate, without prejudice, the evidence for Christianity and turn from his atheism as C. S. Lewis (1898-1963, held the Chair of Medieval and Renaissance English Literature at Cambridge until shortly

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<sup>26</sup>Malcolm Muggeridge *Chronicles of Wasted Time: The Green Stick* (New York: William Morrow & Company, Inc., 1973), 125. I recommend another book by Muggeridge that is extremely informative: Malcolm Muggeridge, *Jesus Rediscovered* (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1969).

<sup>27</sup>For an in-depth study of the cell, see Dallas Burdette, “The Cell: Evidence of Design,” in Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Series of Specialized Studies from: Ephesians • Philippians • Exodus • Prophets • Pastoral Epistles • Apologetics*, Volume 3 (Longwood, Florida: Xulon Press, 2010), 685-711.

<sup>28</sup>For his story from atheism to belief in God, see his own narration of his conversion in his book, *There Is A God: How the World’s Most Notorious Atheist Changed His Mind* (New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2007). I do not discount that men like Richard Dawkins, Sam Harris, Victor Stenger, Steven Weinberg, and other noted atheists, may come to a saving knowledge of Jesus through examination of the evidence. For this reason, I am presently writing another book (Christian Apologetics) examining the evidences for Christianity in the hope that some unbelievers might be persuaded of the truthfulness of Christianity through irrefutable evidence. I pray that these individuals may come to rethink their illogical arguments and accept God’s love “in” and “through” Christ. I am also writing this book to strengthen the faithful who do believe so that they may know that what they believe is genuine, authentic, real, reliable, bona fide, and valid.

<sup>29</sup>This book is still available from American Vision in Atlanta, Georgia—Alexander Keith, *Evidence of the Truth of the Christian Religion* (Whitehall, West Virginia: Tolle Lege Press, 1834, 2011).

before his death) did in 1929. Lewis abandoned his atheism when he confronted the evidence for the existence of God and Christianity. He writes about his conversion to Christianity and his rejection of atheism. He reveals that early in life, he discarded his faith in Jesus. Yet, later in life (early manhood), he returned to his faith in God and Jesus “the Messiah” as the Savior of the world. As he closes his autobiography (*Surprised by Joy*), he tells, in minute particulars, about his early negative response toward faith in God’s Messiah to his acceptance and recognition of God and Christ in his life:

You must picture me alone in that room in Magdalen, night after night, feeling, whenever my mind lifted even for a second from my work, the steady, unrelenting approach of Him whom I so earnestly desired not to meet. That which I greatly feared had at last come upon me. In the Trinity Term of 1929 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England. I did not then see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The Prodigal Son at least walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that Love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance of escape?<sup>30</sup>

## **JESUS: A HISTORICAL PERSON**

Who is Jesus? Is He a historical person? Again, the answer is YES!<sup>31</sup> He is a person who actually lived, died, and resurrected from the grave. What did He come to accomplish? He came to bring about reconciliation between God the Father and lost humanity through His sacrificial death upon Calvary. Again, who is Jesus? He is God manifested in the flesh? Just a casual reading of the Gospels reveals that Jesus is unique. The following comments by Dinesh D’Souza (born 1962, President of King’s College and author of numerous books) are on target as he explains the uniqueness of Jesus the Christ as set forth in the Gospels, which distinctiveness the prophets foretold:

The Christ we encounter in the New Testament is so extraordinary that it’s hard to imagine the Gospel writers inventing such a person. C. S. Lewis [1898-1963] once noted that, along with Socrates [469-399 BC] and Samuel Johnson [1709-1784], Christ is one of the few historical figures we would recognize instantly if he walked into the room. Yet we know Christ, as we know Socrates, through the reports of others. Neither ever wrote a single word. The Bible gives a single instance where Christ wrote with his finger on the ground, but we don’t know what he wrote. But when we hear Christ’s voice in the four Gospels, it is unmistakable.<sup>32</sup>

As we read the Gospel writers, as well as other authors of the New Testament documents who wrote about the Christ, we immediately become conscious that they relied upon the

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<sup>30</sup>C. S. Lewis, *Surprised by Joy: The Shape of My Early Life* (New York: Harcourt, Brace & World, Inc., 1955), 228-229.

<sup>31</sup>See my chapter “Jesus: Historical Evidence,” pages 115-160, in this book (Chapter 7) for an examination of the historical evidence for Christ and His ministry.

<sup>32</sup>Dinesh D’Souza, *What’s So Great About Christianity* (Carol Stream, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 2007, 2008), 299. I highly recommend this book as a book that will strengthen one in his or her faith in the truthfulness of Christianity.

Hebrew Scriptures to prove that Jesus is the One that the prophets foretold would come to bring in everlasting righteousness. Jesus also accepted the Jewish writings that were known by the three divisions accepted in Judaism—the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. All three divisions portray the coming of the Messiah. John H. Sailhamer calls attention to the place that prophecy plays in establishing the credibility of the Old Testament as well as the New Testament writings. He explains his view this way:

The *proof* that the Gospel is true (and I believe there is proof here) lies not only in an accurate *prediction*, but also in an accurate *identification* of Jesus with the one promised by the Law and the Prophets. To say it another way, it is only when we have identified Jesus as the OT Messiah that we can speak of verification of OT prophecy by prediction. Thus the messianic thrust of the NT is not merely an argument that the OT is true prophecy. It also includes the argument that Jesus is the true Messiah.<sup>33</sup>

## BIBLICAL PROPHECY

As we progress in our reading of prophecy, we become mindful that biblical prophecies were not made in a vacuum, but rather, they were written within historical circumstances, that is to say, they were marked with concrete details surrounding individuals or a nation or nations. Again, I need to emphasize that prophecy is distinguished from immediate miracles in both the Old and New Testament writings. Direct or instant Miracles are immediately cognizant through our senses, especially through our eyes and through our hearing. Immediate miracles such as healing various kinds of sickness, raising the dead, walking on water, turning water into wine, or calming a storm are brief suspensions of the general laws of nature.

We have testimony from those who witnessed His many miracles as to the veracity of the miracles. As stated earlier, prophecy is slower in growth, but when it reaches its climax, we see that its fulfillment is a standing miracle. Fulfilled prophecy is just one of the many evidences to substantiate the truthfulness of the Old and New Testament writings. Before we detail the prophecies concerning the coming of Jesus, I wish to give another citation from Dinesh D’Souza that explains the genuineness of Jesus the Christ who lived in the first century:

Do you believe in the existence of Socrates? Alexander the Great? Julius Caesar? If historicity is established by written records in multiple copies that date originally from near contemporaneous sources, there is far more proof for Christ’s existence than for any of theirs. The historicity of Christ is attested not only by Christians but also by Greek, Roman, and Jewish sources. Apart from the Gospels, we find references to him in Suetonius, Pliny the Younger, and Josephus. Tacitus in his *Annals* deplores “the detestable superstition” of “Christus,” the founder of a new sect called Christianity. These sources testify not only that Christ lived but also that he had a big following, that he alienated the Jewish and Roman authorities, and that he died by crucifixion.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>33</sup>John H. Sailhamer, “The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible,” in *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44:1 (March 2001): 15.

<sup>34</sup>Dinesh D’Souza, *What’s So Great About Christianity*, Ibid., 300.

## THE COMPILATION OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

We should approach the Scriptures with diligence as we seek to apprehend the grand design of God for the redemption of lost humanity. Fifteen hundred years after Moses, we cannot help but reflect upon one of the men that Jesus chose to become one of His disciples. This man, Peter, toward the end of his life, reflected upon the messianic Scriptures found in the Hebrew Bible. He writes with passion as he reflects upon the words of the prophets. We need to listen to him as he thinks about the **prophetic miracles** that were accomplished with the coming of Christ. He unfolds the very heart of prophecy in his Second Epistle to the saints:

And we have the word of the prophets made more certain, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts. <sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. <sup>21</sup> For prophecy never had its origin in the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2 Peter 1:19-21)

How do we feel about the prophets in the Old Testament? Do we even study the prophecies? How do we read the Old Covenant writings (Hebrew Scriptures)? I maintain that God enlisted or recruited certain individuals as prophets to foretell about the “coming hope” of humanity as foretold by Moses (Deuteronomy 18:15-18) as well as all the other prophets. The messianic prophecies did not originate within the minds of the prophets, but rather, they wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21). The prophecies of the Old Testament directed the eyes to look toward the future for the blessings associated with the expectations of the One who would bring salvation—the forgiveness of sins and reconciliation to God.

### The **TaNaKh**

As we begin to study the messianic prophecies of the Hebrew Bible, we need to acquaint ourselves with the Hebrew canon known as the Law (תּוֹרָה, *tô·rā(h)*), the Prophets (נְבִיאִים, *n<sup>e</sup>bî·'îm*), and the Writings (כְּתוּבִים, *k<sup>e</sup>tû·bîm*). The words *The Jewish Bible* are referred to as **TaNaKh**, which serves as an acronym (short form) for the Hebrew words for *Law*, *Prophets*, and *Writings*. The Jews do not call their Scriptures by the expression Old Testament. Christians commonly refer to the Hebrew Scriptures (thirty-nine books in the English edition and twenty-two books in the Hebrew edition) as the Old Testament and the Christian Scriptures (twenty-seven books) as the New Testament. The following chart gives the arrangements of the books known as the **TaNaKh** among Jews:

#### CHART ONE

TORAH	PROPHETS	WRITINGS
Genesis	Joshua	Psalms
Exodus	Judges	Proverbs
Leviticus	I Samuel	Job
Numbers	II Samuel	The Song of

Deuteronomy	I Kings	Songs
	II Kings	
	Isaiah	Ruth
	Jeremiah	Lamentations
	Ezekiel	Ecclesiastes
		Esther
	Hosea	Daniel
	Joel	Ezra
	Amos	Nehemiah
	Obadiah	I Chronicles
	Jonah	II Chronicles <sup>35</sup>
	Micah	
	Nahum	
	Habakkuk	
	Zephaniah	
	Haggai	
	Zechariah	
	Malachi	

This arrangement of the chronological order is designed in such a way that the Messiah is presented from Genesis through Chronicles.<sup>36</sup> It is in this vein that Michael Rydelnik (Professor of Jewish Studies at the Moody Bible Institute in Chicago) writes:

As seen above, the threefold structure of the Hebrew Canon is not the result of random development but rather a consequence of editorial shaping and configuration, namely, that Tanak was given its final redactional shape to give an eschatological/messianic hope. If that is so, then it would

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<sup>35</sup>See *TANAKH: A New Translation of THE HOLY SCRIPTURES According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia • Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985), v-vii.

<sup>36</sup>For an introduction to the coming Messiah, I recommend T. D. Alexander, *The Servant King: The Bible's Portrait of the Messiah* (Vancouver, British Columbia: Regent College Publishing, 1998). He gives a brief synopsis of most of the books of the Old Testament beginning with Genesis through Daniel. His book consists of twenty chapters; the first fourteen chapters are very illuminating as to design, which arrangement of the Old Testament writings portray, from beginning to end, the coming Messiah. Alexander, like many evangelical scholars, fails to examine carefully, in my judgment, his interpretation of the parables of Jesus and the Book of Revelation concerning the “last days.” Even though we are conscious of the importance of context in correct interpretation, nevertheless, it is still difficult for us to shake off our traditions inherited from those who taught us. As interpreters, we need to focus on the various contexts: (**immediate context**—verses preceding and following, **remote context**—other references within the same book dealing with the same subject [innertextual—Rydelnik], and **larger context**—references within other books dealing with the same issue [intertextual—Rydelnik]).

I recommend the following three books that examines the Book of Revelation and the “New Jerusalem” in context of the whole of the Scriptures: (1) John Noe, *Beyond the End Times: The Rest of the Greatest Story Ever Told* [Bradford, PA: Preterist Resources, 1999]; (2) Don Preston, *Who Is This Babylon?* [Ardmore, OK: JaDon Productions, 2006]; and (3) Kenneth L. Gentry Jr., *The Beast of Revelation* [Powder Springs, Georgia: American Vision, 2002]. In spite of misunderstanding, about the end times by Alexander, nevertheless, in my judgment, he is still a powerful exegete of Holy Scripture. All of us, to some extent, are influenced by our religious training and heritage. We need to bear in mind that there is a distinction between rebellion and an honest mistake of the heart.

be safe to say that those who shaped the canon read it, and expected others to read it, as a messianic primer.<sup>37</sup>

Rydelnik is not alone in his acceptance of design in the organization of the Hebrew Scriptures, which arrangement appears deliberate in order to call attention to the messianic hope developed from Genesis to Chronicles in the **TaNaKh**. It is in this same vein that William Horbury (Professor of Jewish and Early Christian Studies and Fellow of Corpus Christi College at Cambridge University) seeks to call attention to the place of messianism in Judaism through the whole of the Hebrew Scriptures. In his book *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ*, he highlights the collection and arrangements of the twenty-two books (equivalent to our thirty-nine books) with the following emphasis:

**There is thus a genuine thematic link between the Pentateuch and the Prophets.** So Isaiah ends with a great eschatological scene of the exaltation of Jerusalem and divine judgment, which came to be associated with specifically messianic hope. Ezekiel ends with the oracles which shaped later articulation of the eschatological events: from chapter 36 onwards the book successively mentions the outpouring of the Spirit, the revival of the dry bones, the new kingdom of David, the wars of Gog of the land of Magog, and the building of the new Jerusalem. Among the minor prophets, Hosea has an eschatological ending, Amos a Davidic ending, and Zechariah a conclusion which, for all its obscurity, is plainly and in succession messianic, royal, Davidic, Zion-centered and eschatological. The whole Book of the Twelve ends at the close of Malachi with the announcement of the day of the Lord and the sending of Elijah the prophet. Once again, just as in the case of the Pentateuch noted already, it is natural to read the specifically messianic prophecies, like those in Ezekiel, Amos and Zechariah, in the context of the more general prophecies of the future among which they are interspersed.

The collection of the books, therefore, and the editing of the individual books, produces a series of what can be properly called messianic prophecies, envisaging the future—sometimes evidently the immediate future. This occurs within the period of the growth of the Old Testament, and accords with a major Old Testament theme, the eschatological interest of Deuteronomy and parts of the prophetic corpus. It was also momentous for the later development of messianism. The prominence of a coherent series of prophecies will have been among the factors which led to the interpretation of still further oracles as messianic, and to still greater specificity in conceptions of the work of the expected ruler or rulers.<sup>38</sup> (Emphasis mine--bold)

As we examine a few of the messianic prophecies, we will witness the role of the Holy Spirit in revealing the coming of the Messiah to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. The writings of Moses set the stage for the rest of the books, such as the Prophets and the Writings (the last two divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures). The scope of this chapter is to call attention to the Book of Genesis in order to set the foundation for an understanding of the whole of God's Word. For those who wish to advance their knowledge in this area, I recommend three books by three excellent authors: Michael Rydelnik, T. D. Alexander, and William Horbury.<sup>39</sup> This study

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<sup>37</sup>Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Group, 2010), 66.

<sup>38</sup>William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1998), 28-29.

<sup>39</sup>Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope: Is the Hebrew Bible Really Messianic?* (Nashville, Tennessee: B & H Publishing Groups, 1010); T. D. Alexander, *The Servant King* (England: Inter-Varsity Press, 1998); and William Horbury, *Jewish Messianism and the Cult of Christ* (London: SCM Press Ltd, 1998).

of messianic prophecies begins with the Book of the Law (Genesis through Deuteronomy), which study sets the stage for a greater understanding of the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures.

Remember, prophecy reaffirms the truthfulness of biblical Christianity. Christianity is the direct fulfillment of the predictions found in the Old Testament Scriptures. In the four written accounts of the ministry of Jesus (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), we witness a Divine pledge fulfilled that was promised centuries before fulfillment. When we approach the prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah, we need to remember that they were not given in the abstract (theoretical, intangible), but rather, they were written in the concrete, that is to say, the prophecies were marked with concrete (tangible, real) details—not as found in legends, fables, myths, or folklore.

Beginning with the Book of Genesis through Malachi (English translation—thirty-nine books), we observe a gradual development of the promised Person and the ushering in of the new kingdom of God, which kingdom embraces all of humanity (see Daniel 2 and 9). God wishes forgiveness and eternal life, not just fleshly Jews from the loins of Abraham, but for all nations. It is in this vein that Daniel Wilson (1778-1858, Bishop of Calcutta, evangelical preacher, and vice-principal of St Edmund Hall, Oxford) wrote:

And what language can describe the infinite contrivance of the prophetic word? The difficulties to be overcome were many and insuperable, except to the divine mind. A direct and unveiled discovery of futurity would not have been prophecy, but the disclosure of the “secret things which belong unto the Lord our God.” Such a discovery might have excited a perilous curiosity, might have opened a door to the charge of collusion [conspiracy] on the part of those who now unconsciously have fulfilled the divine declarations; and would have been altogether inconsistent with the uniform order of God’s moral government of his rational and accountable creatures. Man could not have comprehended the mighty plan, and much less have fitly executed it.

On the other hand, if too dark a gloom had shrouded the divine predictions; if the time, and persons, and age, and place on which the fulfillments were to fall, had not been marked, and marked definitely and clearly, the whole argument would have lost its force.<sup>40</sup>

In my studies of messianic Scriptures, I have encountered some evangelical scholars who reject Genesis 3:15 as well as Isaiah 9:6 as messianic in meaning. Just a casual reading of many commentaries reveals that many godly scholars prefer a historical reading of the text rather than an eschatological messianic interpretation. Rydelnik’s comments are to the point and, at the same time, alarming concerning the stance that many honest and evangelical scholars are affirming:

Assuming the good will and strong exegetical ability of biblical scholars, particularly among those from the world of evangelical biblical studies, it is surprising that so many prefer a historical reading of Old Testament texts rather than an eschatological, messianic interpretation. Luke records that the Messiah Jesus saw Himself in the text of the Hebrew Bible (Luke 24:25-27, 44-46). Therefore, it is especially unexpected that so many who accept the authority of the New Testament and the deity of Jesus view Old Testament texts as having their fulfillments in historical figures rather

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<sup>40</sup>Daniel Wilson, *The Evidence of Christianity: Stated in a Popular and Practical Manner, in a Course of Lectures, on the Authenticity, Credibility, Divine Authority, and Inspiration of New Testament, Delivered in The Parish Church of St. Mary, Islington*, Volume 1 of 2 ( NewYork: Crocker and Brewster, 1833, 1923), 1: 158-159.

than the future Messiah. Old Testament scholar Louis Goldberg noted this trend of interpretation and lamented that contemporary evangelical scholarship had begun to deny “any messianic message in key passage, i.e., Psalm 22, Isaiah 7:14, as well as others.”<sup>41</sup> (Emphasis mine)

The writings of Moses constitute the foundation for our studies concerning the coming of the Messiah. For the purpose of this study, we will treat the Book of Moses in its commonly accepted arrangement—Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Before examining some messianic prophecies outside the Book of Moses, we turn our attention to the Book of Genesis. This book announces the coming Messiah as well as “all” the Prophets and the Writings. For instance, the last prophet (Malachi) made known the coming of John the Baptist as a forerunner for the coming Messiah (English arrangements of the books). From the commencement of the Old Testament writings to the conclusion of them, the Scriptures predicted the coming of God’s Messiah to redeem lost humanity—from Genesis to Malachi.

My study of messianic prophecy is a “quest” to understand the Jesus of the first century as foretold by God’s prophets prior to the coming of the Messiah. With the coming of God’s Messiah, His Apostles made known the fulfillment of His coming as foretold centuries before the event transpired.<sup>42</sup> From my many years in Christian ministry (sixty-nine years), I have discovered that Jesus is conspicuously absent in much modern-day preaching and teaching from the Hebrew Scriptures. As we investigate the writings of Moses, we discover that the Pentateuch stands as a monument to set the tone for predictive prophecy about the coming Messiah [מָשִׁיחַ, *mā·šī·āḥ*]. This in-depth study examines a number of these messianic prophecies within the Book of Moses, which understanding helps us to appreciate the central focus of the other books within our Old Testament canon. Fulfilled prophecy is another means of confirming the truthfulness of God’s Sacred Writings. Prophecy is high on the totem pole of evidence for the truthfulness of the Scriptures. As we approach the Book of Genesis, we need to keep in mind that this book as well as all the other books of the Bible confirms with internal and external evidence for God’s existence. Listen to Isaiah (739 BC) as he records the words of God concerning predictive prophecy:

Remember the former things, those of long ago; I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like me. <sup>10</sup>I make known the end from the beginning, from ancient times, what is still to come. I say: My purpose will stand, and I will do all that I please. <sup>11</sup>From the east I summon a bird of prey; from a far-off land, a man to fulfill my purpose. What I have said, that will I bring about; what I have planned, that will I do. (Isaiah 46:9-11)

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<sup>41</sup>Michael Rydelnik, *The Messianic Hope*, 112.

<sup>42</sup>I highly recommend N. T. Wright, *The Challenge of Jesus: Rediscovering Who Jesus Was and Is* (Downers Grove, Ill: InterVarsity, 1999), 16, for an excellent and informative book dealing with the historicity of Jesus of Nazareth. He writes about the necessity of the quest for the historical Jesus:

The most basic reason for grappling with the historical question of Jesus is that we are made for God: for God’s glory, to worship God and reflect his likeness. That is our heart’s desire, the source of our deepest vocation. But Christianity has always said, with John 1:18, that nobody has ever seen God but that Jesus has revealed God. We shall only discover who the true and living God actually is if we take the risk of looking at Jesus himself. That is why the contemporary debates about Jesus are so important; they are also debates about God himself.

## BOOK OF GENESIS

### Genesis 3:14-15

The Book of Genesis sets forth the first proclamation of the Gospel (Genesis 3:15). God let Adam and Eve know that He would provide a way of escape from sin. Moses, no doubt, had access to records that were handed down from Adam and Eve and their descendants. It is possible that God revealed this information to him and requested that he write this history in a book. Wherever and however Moses acquired this data, we have the information about the beginning of this Universe with the first man and the first woman. In this account, Moses also alerts us to the coming of the Messiah and the conflict between the forces of good and evil. With the ultimate in-breaking of God into this world, we witness Jesus reestablishing this brokenness between God and humanity with the sacrifice of Himself upon the Cross (see Isaiah 52:13—53:1-12).<sup>43</sup>

Within this context of Genesis 3:14-15, we hear the voice of mercy, the voice of grace, and the voice of love. This text has come rolling down through the centuries announcing the One who would restore this broken fellowship between humanity and God. This prophecy is the first in God's written Revelation that sets forth the outcome of the age-long conflict. As we examine the history that Moses unfolds for his readers, we are alerted to the goal toward which all history—from the Creation to the coming of the promised Seed—moved. The following comments by Robert L. Reymond (taught for 25 years on the faculties of Concordia Theological Seminary [St. Louis] and Knox Theological Seminary [Ft. Lauderdale]) are on target as he calls attention to the progressive unfolding of God's Revelation concerning the coming of the Messiah:

The central theme of Holy Scripture is the unfolding revelation of its doctrinal teaching on Jesus as the 'slain Lamb of God'. If it may be said of any other doctrine that it runs like a cord through Scripture, it is not an overstatement to say that the doctrine of Jesus as God's slain Lamb runs like a thick cable from Genesis to Revelation binding the entirety of Scripture together. Indeed, Revelation 13:8 speaks of Jesus as the 'Lamb that was slain from [apo] the creation of the world while 1 Peter 1:19-20 speaks of the 'precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect [who] was chosen before [pro] the creation of the world'. So the 'Lamb of God' doctrine is ultimately rooted (as is every other doctrine) in the divine decree.<sup>44</sup> (Emphasis mine)

Just a casual glance through the Book of Genesis reveals the early rays of messianic glory foretold by Moses as he begins telling the story of creation by the omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient, and eternal God. He begins his writings with a glorious statement about creation that is sublime and almost beyond human comprehension: "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (1:1). After Adam's and Eve's creation, Satan (שָׂטָן, *śā-tān*, the adversary), the great enemy of God and of humanity, wrenched them from their great heritage.

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<sup>43</sup>For a detailed study of this section of Scripture, see Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus: Divine Messiah—The New and Old Testament Witness* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publications, 2003), 118-128.

<sup>44</sup>Robert L. Reymond, *The Lamb of God: The Bible's Unfolding Revelation of Sacrifice* (Scotland, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2006), 7.

In spite of the darkness that came over this couple, God did not leave them without hope of deliverance from their fallen state (3:15). God spoke to the serpent and said:

Because you have done this, “Cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. <sup>15</sup>And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring [seed] and hers; he will crush [strike] your head, and you will strike his heel.” (3:14-15)

This prophecy, the first in God’s written Revelation, sets before the human race the outcome of the conflict between Satan and God—ultimate victory for those who put their trust in Christ (“her seed” = the Seed of the woman). The “Seed of the woman” will eventually crush the serpent’s head, even though the serpent will bruise the heel of “the Seed of the woman” by crucifixion. The unique expression employed by God, “the seed of the woman,” or “her seed” never occurs anywhere else in all of Scripture. This turn of phrase is incredibly outstanding. In biblical narrative, posterity is always reckoned after the male, never after the female. David Cooper (1886-1965, President of Biblical Research Society and Editor of *Biblical Research Monthly*) comments on the “seed of the woman”:

The expression “the seed of the woman,” is very striking, in that it never occurs elsewhere. According to the Biblical narrative, posterity is never reckoned after the female but always after the male. A glance at the many genealogies in the Scriptures confirms this fact. But here the conqueror of man’s great enemy is to be “the seed of the woman.” The fact that he is thus designated is a clear indication that there is something about his personality that made him “the seed of the woman” in a peculiar sense that can be said of no other one.<sup>45</sup>

Thus, Genesis 3:15 sets the goal toward which all history is moving—the coming of Jesus the Messiah. God announces this great event in a cryptic oracle. In this cosmic battle there would be enmity between Satan’s seed זָרְעֶךָ, zār·‘ăkā’ , “your seed”) and Eve’s seed (זָרְעָהּ, (zār·‘ā(h)’, “her seed”). Immediately, after stating the enmity between the two seeds, God says, “he” (הוּא, hū(’)) “will crush you [your] head (רֹאשׁ, rō(’)š),” that is, “the Seed of the woman”(Jesus) would inflict a mortal blow to Satan. Moses does not stop with this cryptic saying concerning the coming of the Messiah, but he continues to give other prophecies concerning the anticipation of the Messiah to redeem humanity to God the Father as he writes about the promise made to Abraham.

We find an echo of this messianic prophecy in the birth of her first son (Cain) following the announcement of her seed. Even though Eve did not comprehend the import of this cryptic prophecy, she, nevertheless, understood the basic implications. Following this prophecy, Moses records the birth of Cain and Eve’s response, which reaction indicates that she did recognize something of this cryptic motto. What is significant is the wording in the Hebrew Scriptures of her reaction to Cain’s birth: “Adam lay with his wife Eve, and she became pregnant and gave birth to Cain. She said, “With the help of the LORD I have brought forth a man” (Genesis 4:1).

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<sup>45</sup>David L. Cooper, *Messiah: His Nature and Person* (Los Angeles, California: Biblical Research Society, 1933), 27.

The words “the help of” are not in the Hebrew text. The Hebrew text reads קָנִיתִי אִישׁ אֶת־יְהוָה: (qā-nî-tî ’îš’ ’ēṭ-y<sup>e</sup>h-wā(h)) which Cooper translates as “I have gotten a man, the Lord.”<sup>46</sup> Within Eve’s statement, we immediately recognize God’s memorial name יהוה (yhwah, LORD). In my judgment, as stated above, Eve wrongly acknowledged Cain as the one promised as recorded in 3:15. The following comments by Cooper concerning this memorial name (yhwah, LORD) are extremely informative:

The critical analysis of the Torah [Law] assumes that the sacred name of the Lord יהוה [YHWH] was never known until the time of the exodus. This presumption is based upon a failure to note carefully what Exodus 6:2, 3 says: “And God spake unto Abraham unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, as אֱלֹהֵי שָׁדַד [’ēl šād-dāy] God Almighty; but by my name יהוה [YHWH] the Lord I was not known to them.” This statement does not say that God did not in primitive times reveal himself as יהוה [YHWH] but simply affirms that he did not make himself known to these three patriarchs, by this, His memorial name. There was a revelation of God communicated to the race before the time of Moses, for Genesis 26:5 quotes the Lord as saying: “Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws....”

A number of divine laws are quoted and referred to in the book of Genesis which gives an historical account of events antedating the giving of the law at Sinai. It seems from Genesis 14 that the knowledge of the true God was kept alive in the little kingdom over which Melchizedek reigned. Throughout the rest of the world this knowledge seems to have faded gradually from the minds of the people. It is likely, and even probable, that in the primitive revelation God made Himself known by His memorial name, since it occurs in the earliest chapters of the Torah. When the Lord called Abraham, he lived in a heathen environment. To him, under these conditions, God revealed Himself as God Almighty. Also to his son [Isaac] and grandson [Jacob] He revealed Himself as such and awaited the time when He would enter into covenant with all of their descendants to disclose Himself by His holy memorial name.<sup>47</sup>

As we seek to understand Genesis 3:15, we need to keep in mind that the entire Old Testament writings are messianic in nature—from beginning to end. It is in this vein that James Hamilton (Assistant Professor of Biblical Studies at Harvard School for Theological Studies, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and an ordained Baptist minister) writes:

It seems to me that certain presuppositional starting points have the potential to ameliorate [restructure or reorganize] every intellectual difficulty with the way that the NT interprets the OT, regardless of the hermeneutical tools employed. **I have in mind one thing in particular, namely the hypothesis that from start [Genesis 3:15] to finish [Malachi 4], the OT is a messianic document, written from a messianic perspective, to sustain a messianic hope....**

A full scale demonstration of this hypothesis is beyond the scope of this article, so this study will examine one foundational element of the theory. If, for instance, we were to argue that Messianism of the OT is introduced in Gen 3:15, such an assertion would be more plausible if the influence of this text could be shown through the rest of the OT and into the New. Here I will put on these lenses—lenses that assume that the OT is a messianic document, written from a messianic perspective, to

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<sup>46</sup>Ibid., 30.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., 30-31 (footnote).

sustain a messianic hope—and point to the ways that Gen 3:15 is interpreted in the Old and New Testaments.<sup>48</sup> (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

If we expect to grasp messianic prophecy, which is the thrust of the Old Testament, we need to relearn how to look back over the Bible in its entirety as a unit of one basic theme—the coming of the “seed of the woman.” The study of the Book of Genesis highlights the existence of one unique individual (seed) that will eventually culminate in one Person, namely, Jesus. The rest of the Old Testament continues this trend concerning the coming of this special “seed” promised in the Garden of Eden. Thomas R. Schreiner’s<sup>49</sup> comments are to the point about the “seed” of Genesis 3:15 and the whole of the Old Testament:

In Christ the promise that the kingdom of God will crush all enemies is fulfilled (Dan 2:34, 35, 44, 45; cf. Mal 4:3). The seed of the woman runs from Abraham to David to Christ. The book of Genesis, like all of scripture, as Jesus himself taught us (Luke 24:44; John 5:39), points to Christ. We must interpret the OT in its historical and cultural context, but if we do not see how it points to Christ, then we have not yet progressed to a true understanding of its contents.<sup>50</sup>

John H. Sailhamer,<sup>51</sup> too, has captured the very heart of the Old Testament writings:

I believe the messianic thrust of the OT was the *whole* reason the books of the Hebrew Bible were written. In other words, the Hebrew Bible was not written as the national literature of Israel. It probably also was not written to the nation of Israel as such. It was rather written, in my opinion, as the expression of the deep-seated messianic hope of a small group of faithful prophets and their followers.<sup>52</sup>

As stated above, Moses calls attention to the promise given about “the seed of the woman” bruising the head of the serpent, that is to say, the Satan (Genesis 3:14-15). Moses, who wrote the Pentateuch between 1446 and 1406 BC, predicted the coming Messiah in Genesis 3:15. Paul, who wrote about fifteen hundred years after Moses, penned his response to

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<sup>48</sup>James Hamilton, “The Skull Crushing Seed of the Woman: Inner-Biblical Interpretation of Genesis 3:15,” in the *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 10:2 (Summer 2006): 30, 31.

<sup>49</sup>**Thomas R. Schreiner** (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is James Buchanan Harrison Professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky. He also taught at both Bethel Theological Seminary and Azusa Pacific University. Dr. Schreiner is a Pauline scholar and the author or editor of numerous books, including *New Testament Theology: Magnifying God in Christ; Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ: A Pauline Theology*; and the Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament volume on *Romans*.

<sup>50</sup>Thomas R. Schreiner, “Foundations for Faith,” *Southern Baptist Journal of Theology* 5:3 (Fall 2001): 3.

<sup>51</sup>**Dr. Sailhamer** (1946–2017) began teaching in 1975, most recently at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary. He was President of The Evangelical Theological Society in 2000 and published a number of books, including *An Introduction to Old Testament Theology*, *The Pentateuch as Narrative: A Biblical-Theological Commentary*, and *Genesis: The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*, all from Zondervan. He contributed a number of articles and book reviews in various biblical journals and delivered several scholarly papers and participated in several Old Testament Bible translation committees.

<sup>52</sup>John H. Sailhamer, “The Messiah and the Hebrew Bible,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44:1 (March 2001): 23.

the messianic prophecy in Genesis 3:15. Paul wrote to the Christians in the province of Galatia (AD 48/49) about the completion of this prophecy in his own day:

But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, **born of a woman, born under law,** <sup>5</sup> to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons. <sup>6</sup> Because you are sons, God sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, the Spirit who calls out, “*Abba, Father.*” <sup>7</sup> So you are no longer a slave, but a son; and since you are a son, God has made you also an heir. (Galatians 4:4-7)

The author of the Book of Hebrews (possibly Paul) expounds on the prophecy of Genesis 3:14-15. Listen to him as he develops his arguments about the role that Christ played in rescuing us from Satan:

Since the children have flesh and blood, **he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—** <sup>15</sup> and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. <sup>16</sup> For surely it is not angels he helps, but **Abraham’s descendants.** <sup>17</sup> For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. <sup>18</sup> Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted. (Hebrews 2:14-18)

## THE ANCESTRY OF THE LINE OF THE SEED

Chapters 1 through 3 of Genesis set up the scenario about redemption “in” and “through” the “seed of the woman.” God promised One who would crush Satan. As stated earlier, upon Adam’s and Eve’s expulsion from the Garden, Adam lay with his wife and she gave him a son whom they called Cain. Later, he lay with his wife again and she bore him another son whom they named Abel. Chapter 4 of Genesis reveals that Cain reacted negatively to God’s acceptance of an offering made by Abel. As a result of his jealousy and hatred he killed Abel. This evil nature of Cain apparently passed on to his descendants. One such descendant named Lamech (4:24) killed a man for wounding him. Abel, who was righteous, was now dead and Cain who is alive is unrighteous. God had to choose another person through whom the Messiah would come. The fourth Chapter of Genesis also calls attention to another son through whom the Messiah would come. This third son, named Seth, is the one God chose for the ancestry of the Christ (4:25).

With the birth of Seth, we are immediately confronted with a new line through which the Messiah would come. Even though Adam and Eve had other sons and daughters (5:4), God selected Seth as the one through whom the “seed of the woman” would come. With the birth of Seth, Moses informs us: “At that time men began to call on the name of the Lord” (4:26). Following this statement about “men began to call on the name of the Lord,” Moses proceeds to give ten generations (beginning with Seth through Noah) with only one name in each generation. As we examine these names, we are confronted with some who stand out in our minds even to this day. In order to assist us in our understanding the Book of Genesis concerning God’s activity in the ancestry of the coming “seed,” I give the following chart with its genealogy:

**CHART TWO**  
**ANCESTRY CHART**

**Adam** (930 years old)

Father of Cain, Abel, and Seth

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Cain</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Genesis 4:1</p> <p>Ancestry of Cain Genesis 4:17-18</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Enoch Irad Mehujael Methushael Lamech</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Able</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Genesis 4:2</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Seth</b> (lived 912 years)</p> <p>Ancestry of Seth Genesis 5:3-32</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Enosh (lived 905 years) Kenan (lived 910 years) Mahalalel (lived 895 years) Jared (lived 962 years) Enoch (lived 365 years) Methuselah (lived 969 years) Lamech (lived 777 years) <b>Noah</b> (lived 950 years)</p>
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**NOAH** (lived 950 years)

Father of Shem,  
Ham, Japheth  
Genesis 5:32—9:28

<p><b>SHEM</b> (lived 912 years)</p> <p>Ancestry of Shem Genesis 10:21-22; 11:10-27</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Arphaxad Shelah Eber Peleg</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Ham</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Genesis 10:6-20</p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Japheth</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Genesis 10:2-4</p>
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Reu  
Serug  
Nahor  
**Terah**

**TERAH** (lived 205  
years)

Father of Abraham  
Genesis 11:26-32

**ABRAHAM** (lived  
175 years)  
2166-1991 BC

Nahor

Haran

Father of Ishmael  
and Isaac  
Genesis 12:1-9

Ishmael     **Isaac**

Genesis 16:16     Genesis 21:1-5

**ISAAC**  
2066-1886 BC

Father of Esau and  
Jacob

Esau     **Jacob**

Genesis 36:1-29     Genesis 25:19

**Jacob**  
2006-1859 BC

Father of 12 boys

Reuben  
Simeon  
Levi  
**Judah**  
Dan  
Naphtali  
Gad  
Asher  
Issachar  
Zebulun  
Joseph (1915-  
1805 BC—110  
years)  
Benjamin<sup>53</sup>

The sixth person in this lineage from Seth is a name that we are all familiar with—Enoch (the great granddad of Noah and translated to heaven without experiencing death). Another name who is embedded in our memory is Methuselah (the granddad of Noah as well as the oldest man that ever lived). The ninth in this descent from Seth is none other than Noah who became the father of Shem, Ham, and Japheth (from Seth to Noah is ten generations). From the parentage of Shem, we are given his ancestry, which lineage includes Terah (the father of Abraham). It is through Abraham’s seed that “the seed” promised in Genesis 3:15 would come. Abraham’s lineage continues within the church, that is to say, the company of God’s redeemed by “the Seed of the woman.”

With the coming of the Messiah, Daniel (605 BC) foretold of a kingdom that would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). John Noe’s (President of the Prophecy Reformation Institute, a conservative evangelical scholar, a member of the Evangelical Theological Society, and holds an earned Ph.D in Theology from Trinity Theological Seminary and the University of Liverpool) comments about Noah and the coming Messiah are on target:

God’s plan since the flood has not been to deal with human sin by eliminating the human race or by destroying his creation. If we think otherwise, we’ve misunderstood his plan of redemption. “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son .... For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world ....” (John 3:16a, 17a). And neither should we condemn it by saying it’s going to end [Planet Earth], when Scripture clearly states that it’s without end and therefore not ever going to end.<sup>54</sup> (Emphasis mine)

Christ is the fulfillment of the prophecies found in the Hebrew Scriptures. From the very beginning in the Garden of Eden, we see Divine movement in safeguarding the lineage through which the Messiah would come. For instance, we are told by Moses that Abraham had two sons

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<sup>53</sup>I have adopted the substance of T. D. Alexander’s genealogical chart from his book *The Servant King: The Bible’s Portrait of the Messiah*, 24.

<sup>54</sup>John Noe, *The Perfect Ending for the World* (Indianapolis, IN: East2West Press, 2011), 89.

(Ishmael and Isaac). Isaac is the one chosen through whom the Messiah would come. Isaac had two sons (twins—Esau and Jacob). Again, God chose Jacob as the one through whom the promised Messiah would come. Once again, we see the action of God in upholding the unique ancestry for the coming Messiah. Jacob had twelve sons. From these sons, God formed the nation of Israel. Yet, it was through the birthright of Judah that the Messiah came. T. D. Alexander's<sup>55</sup> comments about God's Divine activity in this unique lineage are on target when he writes:

Genesis emphasizes that this line of descendants owes much to divine activity. This is apparent in two main ways. On the one hand, when the wives of certain members of the line are barren, God enables them to have children. This is so in the cases of Sarah (21:1; cf. 17:16; 18:10-14), Rebekah (25:21) and Rachel (30:22-24; cf. 29:31; 30:1-2). Even when there are no obvious barriers to the birth of children, God's role in giving new life is often acknowledged (e.g. 4:1; 29:33; 30:6). These points suggest that the lineage traced in Genesis is no ordinary line; it is established by God.<sup>56</sup> (Emphasis mine)

Alexander is correct when he says that “the lineage traced in Genesis is no ordinary line.” For instance, in the fourth chapter of Genesis, we witness the evil nature of Cain living on in his descendants. We see Divine activity in His choosing a new line through which the Messiah (the promised “seed of the woman”) would come. Just a casual reading of the Book of Genesis reveals that the Messiah is the thrust of the book. In this family line beginning with Seth, we see a special relationship between God and members within this family tree. For example, Moses informs us that “Enoch [Noah's great granddad] walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him away” (Genesis 5:24). This unique relationship with God is observed with Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph. Moses writes: “This is the account of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless among the people of his time, and he walked with God” (6:9). Beginning with Shem, Moses records eight more generations, which ends with Terah, the father of Abraham.

## **ABRAHAM: ALL FAMILIES OF THE EARTH BLESSED THROUGH HIM**

We are introduced to the promise concerning the “seed of the woman” as recorded in Genesis 3:15. The Hebrew word for “seed” is זרע (zē-rā'). The Book of Moses reveals that the “seed of the woman” will be concentrated in one person. The word *seed* is employed in a personal sense in Genesis 3:15, not a collective sense. Even though the word *seed* may be singular or plural, the deciding factor for the determination of singular or plural is found in the

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<sup>55</sup> **T. Desmond Alexander** is director of Christian training at Union Theological College in Belfast, Northern Ireland. From 1980 to 1999, he was lecturer in Semitic studies at the Queen's University of Belfast. His main field of research is the Pentateuch, about which he has written extensively in academic journals and books. Alexander also has a special interest in the relationship between the Old and New Testaments. He is the author of *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Main Themes of the Pentateuch* and *Abraham in the Negev*, and he is a coeditor (with Brian S. Rosner) of the *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* (IVP, 2000), available from Logos.

<sup>56</sup>T. D. Alexander, *The Servant King: The Bible's Portrait of the Messiah*, 23.

various contexts with which the word is found. With reference to Abraham, the word is employed in both senses. With Abraham (12:1-3), we witness a turning point within the Genesis narrative concerning the promised seed in 3:15. Moses makes clearer in this section (12:1-3) that this “seed” will be concentrated in one person.

The singular noun זְרָאָה (zě-rǎ) is used in a collective sense in 13:16; 15:13; and 22:17. Yet, the primary meaning seems to be associated with one individual who would bring blessing and relief from the curse in Genesis 3:15, which deliverance would be through one individual—the “seed of the woman,” namely, Jesus. The concept of seed in the singular is utilized in 22:18: “and through your offspring [זְרָאָה (zě-rǎ)] all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me.” The New King James Version renders this verse: “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, <sup>u</sup>because you have obeyed My voice.”<sup>57</sup> Approximately two thousand years after this promise was made to Abraham, Peter, one of the Twelve, addressed a group in Jerusalem in which he called attention to this prophecy. Luke writes about this speech:

Now, brothers, I know that you acted in ignorance, as did your leaders. <sup>18</sup> But this is how God fulfilled what he had foretold through all the prophets, saying that his Christ would suffer. <sup>19</sup> Repent, then, and turn to God, so that your sins may be wiped out, that times of refreshing may come from the Lord, <sup>20</sup> and that he may send the Christ, who has been appointed for you—even Jesus. <sup>21</sup> He must remain in heaven until the time comes for God to restore everything, as he promised long ago through his holy prophets. <sup>22</sup> For Moses said, ‘The Lord your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own people; you must listen to everything he tells you. <sup>23</sup> Anyone who does not listen to him will be completely cut off from among his people’ [Deuteronomy 18:15]. <sup>24</sup> Indeed, all the prophets from Samuel on, as many as have spoken, have foretold these days. <sup>25</sup> And you are heirs of the prophets and of the covenant God made with your fathers. He said to Abraham, ‘Through your offspring all peoples on earth will be blessed’ [Genesis 12:3; 22:18]. <sup>26</sup> When God raised up his servant, he sent him first to you to bless you by turning each of you from your wicked ways. (Acts 3:17-26)

Men and women cannot remove the curse placed by God upon sinful humanity; only God Himself provides the remedy. God ordained this feat of redemption through the One foreordained before Planet Earth was created (see Ephesians 1:4; Revelation 13:8; 14:6). Jesus was appointed to remove this curse of universal judgment of condemnation. It is in this same vein that Paul unfolds God’s scheme of redemption to the Corinthians:

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: <sup>19</sup> that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men’s sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. <sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ’s ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ’s behalf: Be reconciled to God. <sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. (2 Corinthians 5:17-21)

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<sup>t</sup> Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 26:4; Matt. 1:1; Luke 3:34; [Acts 3:25, 26]; Gal. 3:8, 9, 16, 18

<sup>u</sup> Gen. 18:19; 22:3, 10; 26:5

<sup>57</sup> *The New King James Version*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1982), Ge 22:18.

The only way God could reconcile us unto Himself would be “through” Christ (the SEED of the woman) who is God’s power as well as God’s wisdom. Paul explained this “seed” in his First Epistle to the Corinthians (AD 57). In this Epistle, he explains what the **power of God** (Θεοῦ δύναμιν, *Theou dynamin*) and the **wisdom of God** (Θεοῦ σοφίαν, *Theou sophian*) [1 Corinthians 1:24] represent. We should give careful attention to Paul as he makes clear that Christ is the only means of salvation; that is to say, **Christ is God’s power and God’s wisdom**:

Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? <sup>21</sup> For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe. <sup>22</sup> Jews demand miraculous signs and Greeks look for wisdom, <sup>23</sup> but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, <sup>24</sup> but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, **Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.** (First Corinthians 1:20-24)

The foolishness of WHAT was preached was **Christ as God’s power and God’s wisdom**. Paul explains God’s power and God’s wisdom as being His Son, who is Christ. Again, we should tune in our ears as Paul declares God’s wisdom:

It is because of him [God] that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption. <sup>31</sup> Therefore, as it is written: “Let him who boasts boast in the Lord.” (1:30-31)

What is God’s wisdom? God’s wisdom, in this context, is Christ. Paul writes that God’s wisdom had to do with Christ—“who has become for us wisdom from God (ὁ ἐγενήθη σοφία ἡμῖν ἀπὸ θεοῦ, *ho egenēthē sophia hēmin apo theou*). In other words, the only way God could justify us (sinful humanity) would be “in” and “through” Christ. God would make Christ **our righteousness, our holiness, and our redemption**. God took the initiative, which wisdom was in effect even before He spoke this universe into existence. Once more, Paul unfolds this mystery in his Epistle to the Christians in Rome (AD 58):

But now a **righteousness from God**, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. <sup>22</sup> This **righteousness from God** comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. <sup>25</sup> God presented him as a sacrifice of atonement, through faith in his blood. He did this to demonstrate his justice, because in his forbearance he had left the sins committed beforehand unpunished— <sup>26</sup> he did it to demonstrate his justice at the present time, so as to be just and the one who justifies those who have faith in Jesus. (Romans 3:21-26)

The righteousness that we possess as individuals is a “righteousness from God” (δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ, *dikaiosynē theou*). This “righteousness from God” came about through the offering of Christ as a “sacrifice of atonement” for the sins of lost humanity. The word *atonement* is from the Greek word ἱλαστήριον, (*hilastērion*) that can be translated as “propitiation” or “mercy seat.” **Down through the centuries, we witness a thread, as it were, of the coming of the Messiah, which initial prophecy began in the Garden of Eden.** God

preserved a remnant through which the Messiah should come. From Adam to Noah, as stated above, God continued to protect this promise made in the Garden of Eden. From Shem, one of the three sons of Noah, God preserved the moral, spiritual, and religious realm. It is for this reason that Peter told the Sanhedrin that Christ is the only way of salvation. Luke records this encounter with the religious leaders:

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: “Rulers and elders of the people! <sup>9</sup> If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, <sup>10</sup> then know this, you and all the people of Israel: It is by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified but whom God raised from the dead, that this man stands before you healed. <sup>11</sup> He is **‘the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone.’** <sup>12</sup> Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved.” (Acts 4:8-12)

Shem was the one through whom the “seed of the woman” would be preserved. It was from the Semitic branch of the race that Abraham (Abraham—2166-1991 BC) sprang. To him, God gave the promise that through his [your] seed (בְּזַרְעֲךָ, *b<sup>e</sup>zār·<sup>ā</sup>kā*, “in your seed”) all nations of the earth would be blessed (Genesis 22:18). This promise was made three times to Abraham (Genesis 12:3; 18:18; 22:18). Later, God confirmed this promise to Isaac [2066-1886 BC] (26:4) and reaffirmed to Jacob [2006-1859 BC] (28:14). The following is a citation from Moses (1526-1406 BC) concerning the promise (covenant) that God made with Abraham:

The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. <sup>2</sup> I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup> I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:1-3)

The promise is more specific in 22:18. In this passage, God speaks of the “seed” (זֶרְעֲךָ [*zē·rā*]) of Abraham. Moses writes about God’s prophetic utterance to Abraham, which is also reminiscent of God’s cryptic oracle to Satan. Listen to the words of God: “In your seed [בְּזַרְעֲךָ, *b<sup>e</sup>zār·<sup>ā</sup>kā*, “in or by your seed”] all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice” (22:18, NKJV). In other words, God foretold that He would bless all the nations of the earth through one of his offspring. It is through this particular seed (offspring) that salvation, or blessing, would come to all who have faith in this Seed. This interpretation also coincides with Paul’s words to the Galatians (AD 48/49)<sup>58</sup> about the announcement of the Gospel to Abraham:

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, *saying*, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” <sup>9</sup>So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham. (Galatians 3:8-9)

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<sup>58</sup>For further studies on Galatians, see Dallas Burdette, “Overview of the Book of Galatians,” in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 299-343.

This citation from Galatians 3:8-9 is reminiscent of Genesis 15:1-3 and 18:18. The only way a nation can bless itself is through the “Seed” of Abraham, who is Christ in us, our hope of glory (Colossians 1:28). Two thousand years after this promise was made to Abraham, a Jewish convert (Saul/Paul)<sup>59</sup> wrote to the Christians in the province of Galatia the following comments about God’s promise to Abraham as recorded in Genesis 22:18:

Brothers, let me take an example from everyday life. Just as no one can set aside or add to a human covenant that has been duly established, so it is in this case. <sup>16</sup> The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed [σπέρματι, *spermati*]. The Scripture does not say “and to seeds” [σπέρμασιν, *spermasin*, the plural for “seeds” in Hebrew is: זְרָאִים, *zē-rā-’im*] meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person, who is Christ. <sup>17</sup> What I mean is this: The law, introduced 430 years later, does not set aside the covenant previously established by God and thus do away with the promise. <sup>18</sup> For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise; but God in his grace gave it to Abraham through a promise. (Galatians 3:15-18)

Paul, apparently, cites the Septuagint (LXX, “Greek Old Testament”), which reads: τῷ σπέρματι σου (*tō spermati sou*, “to the seed of you”). The LXX is the Greek translation of the Hebrew. Like the English word *seed*, the Hebrew word *seed* (זְרָאִים (*zē-rā-’im*)) may be employed as a singular noun or be utilized in a collective sense. The context is the deciding factor in one’s interpretation. For example, the collective sense appears in the following Scripture citations: (1) “And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants (זְרָאִים, *zār-’ākā’* ‘),<sup>60</sup> also could be numbered” (Genesis 13:16); (2) “Then He said to Abram: ‘Know certainly that your descendants (זְרָאִים, *your seed*) will be strangers in a land *that is* not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred years’ (15:13); and (3) “Blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants (זְרָאִים, *zār-’ākā’*, *your seed*) as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which *is* on the seashore; and your descendants (זְרָאִים, *zār-’ākā’*, *your seed*) shall possess the gate of their enemies” (22:17).

Even though the singular “seed” is used, nevertheless, the collective sense is obvious. On the other hand, there are examples in which the Hebrew word *seed* is singular in meaning. For instance, Moses gives Adam’s and Eve’s statement: “God has granted me another child (זְרָאִים, *seed*) in place of Abel, since Cain killed him” (4:25). Again, we observe the Hebrew word *seed* employed in Hannah’s prayer to the Lord for a son:

And she made a vow, saying, “O LORD Almighty, if you will only look upon your servant’s misery and remember me, and not forget your servant but give her a son (זְרָאִים, *zē-rā-’ā-nā-šim*, literally, seed of men), then I will give him to the LORD for all the days of his life, and no razor will ever be used on his head.” (1 Samuel 1:11)

<sup>59</sup>See Dallas Burdette, “Paul’s Conversion: Apologetic for Christianity,” in Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Jesus and Our Privileges*, Volume 1 (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2009), 92-120.

<sup>60</sup>Noun, masculine singular construct with second person masculine singular—Hebrew זְרָאִים (*zār-’ākā’*).

We observe, from our studies, that the Hebrew word זֶרַע [zě·ră´, seed] is also translated “son” in 1 Samuel 1:11. Since the word zě·ră´ has both individual and collective meanings, it is necessary to examine each context in order to ascertain its significance in any given case. The use of the word zě·ră´ in Genesis 22:18 has its primary meaning in that of an individual of the race who would bring universal blessing and relief from the curse of universal condemnation. It appears, so it seems, that this promise to Abraham is but an expansion of the cryptic oracle in Genesis 3:15. The cryptic oracle in Genesis 3:15 and the promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:18 are but fragments (progressive revelations) of that “mystery” that Paul wrote about to the Ephesians (AD 60):

Surely you have heard about the administration of God’s grace that was given to me for you,<sup>3</sup> that is, the mystery made known to me by revelation, as I have already written briefly [1:3-14].<sup>4</sup> In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,<sup>5</sup> which was not made known to men in other generations as it has now been revealed by the Spirit to God’s holy apostles and prophets.<sup>6</sup> This mystery is that through the gospel the Gentiles are heirs together with Israel, members together of one body, and sharers together in the promise in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 3:2-6)

## JACOB’S FORECAST CONCERNING JUDAH

### Until Shiloh Comes

Moses records another reference to the coming of the Messiah in Genesis 49:10 by calling attention to Jacob’s prophetic utterance. The Book of Genesis is about the coming Messiah—beginning with Genesis 3:15 to Genesis 49:1-10. Upon Jacob’s deathbed, he caught a glimpse into the future. He, through the Spirit, gave a general description of the conditions that would spring from one of his twelve sons in the latter days (“in the last days”, KJV). He says:

Judah, your brothers will praise you; your hand will be on the neck of your enemies; your father’s sons will bow down to you.<sup>9</sup> You are a lion’s cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness—who dares to rouse him?<sup>10</sup> The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs<sup>c</sup> and the obedience of the nations is his.<sup>11</sup> He will tether his donkey to a vine, his colt to the choicest branch; he will wash his garments in wine, his robes in the blood of grapes.<sup>12</sup> His eyes will be darker than wine, his teeth whiter than milk (Genesis 49:8-12, NIV).

Judah, you *are he* whom your brothers shall praise; Your hand *shall be* on the neck of your enemies; Your father’s children shall bow down before you.<sup>9</sup> Judah *is* a lion’s whelp; From the prey, my son, you have gone up. He bows down, he lies down as a lion; And as a lion, who shall rouse him?<sup>10</sup> The scepter shall not depart from Judah, Nor a lawgiver from between his feet, Until Shiloh (זֶרַע, v!,l)h) **comes**; And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.<sup>11</sup> Binding his donkey to the vine, And his donkey’s colt to the choice vine, He washed his garments in wine, And his clothes in the blood of grapes.<sup>12</sup> His eyes *are* darker than wine, And his teeth whiter than milk. (Genesis 49:8-12, NKJV)

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b *Judah* sounds like and may be derived from the Hebrew for *praise*.

c Or *until Shiloh comes*; or *until he comes to whom tribute belongs*.

The NIV reads: “**until he comes** to whom it belongs,” but the NKJV reads: “**Until Shiloh comes.**” In the reading of this pericope (unit or section, 49:8-12), we detect that Jacob skipped over the three older sons (Reuben, Simeon, and Levi—see Chart 2 above) and **came to Judah, the fourth, through whom the Messiah would come.** Some scholars interpret Jacob’s word *Shiloh* as the name of a town rather than the name of the Coming One. This is based, in part on Joshua 18:9 and 1 Samuel 4:12, where Shiloh is the name of a town. But there is a difference in the spelling of the place name in Joshua [שִׁלֹה, *šī-lō(h)*]<sup>61</sup> and the place name in Samuel [שִׁלֹה, *šī-lō(h)*] On the one hand, this name Shiloh is spelled eight times as (שִׁלֹה, *šī-lō*) and three times as (שִׁלֹה) (*šī-lō(h)*). The name Shiloh [שִׁלֹה (*šī-lō(h)*)]<sup>62</sup> is employed in Genesis 49:10 as a reference to the coming Messiah. This spelling is only used one time in the Pentateuch. As far as the record goes, Joshua 18:9 is the first mention of a town by the name Shiloh. There is no evidence, as far as I know, of a place in Palestine known as *Shiloh* prior to the time of Jacob.

This prophecy (Genesis 49:10) is a continuation of Genesis 3:15 and 22:18. The end of the Book of Genesis climaxes with concrete reference to the time of the coming of the Messiah that the entirety of the Torah (Law—the Pentateuch), Prophets, and the Writings foretold would come. Within this prophecy (49:10), we detect that the phrase “until he comes” [עַד כִּי-יָבֹא, *ād kī-yā-bō(‘)*] and the phrase “to whom it belongs” are also found in Ezekiel 21:25-27. Approximately 1300 years after Jacob’s prophecy, Ezekiel calls attention to Jacob’s prediction concerning the Messiah:

And thou, profane wicked prince of Israel, whose day is come, when iniquity *shall have* an end,<sup>26</sup> Thus saith the Lord GOD; Remove the diadem, and take off the crown: this *shall not be* the same: exalt *him that is* low, and abase *him that is* high.<sup>27</sup> I will overturn, overturn, overturn, it: and it shall be no *more*, **until he come whose right it is**; and I will give it *him*. (Ezekiel 21:25-27, KJV)

Ezekiel prophesied about 593 BC, several hundred years after Jacob (2006-1859 BC), concerning the prophecy made by Jacob (Genesis 49:10). Just a casual glance at this citation (Ezekiel 21:25-27) reveals that Ezekiel, too, looking into the future, foresaw the course of Israel’s history with the coming of the Messiah—“**Until He comes whose right it is.**” Yet again, we must state that Ezekiel was acquainted with the messianic prophecies (Genesis 3:15;

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<sup>61</sup> **SHILOH** (שִׁלֹה, *shiloh*). A city in the hill country of Ephraim, centrally located between Shechem to the north and Bethel to the south. Joshua and the tribes of Israel camped here after the settlement in the land. It was the home of the Ark of the Covenant and the tabernacle during the time of Joshua to Samuel.

<sup>62</sup> *Pentateuch*: The only possible mention of Shiloh in the Pentateuch is at Gen 49:10, where the word occurs within Jacob’s blessing of Judah. However, the interpretation of this word is contested. There are five interpretations of this word (Fitzmyer, *The One*, 29):

- It is a personal name.
- It is the name of the city.
- It is an Akkadian loanword meaning “ruler” or “prince.”
- It means “to whom it belongs,” referring to the scepter.
- It should appear as two words meaning “tribute to him.”

22:18; 49:10) since reference to the coming of the Messiah is found in Ezekiel 34:23-25. Listen, once more, to Ezekiel as he foretells the coming of the Messiah—the One who would bring “peace”:

I will **place over them one shepherd**, my servant David, and he will tend them; he will tend them and be their shepherd. <sup>24</sup> I the LORD will be their God, and my servant David will be prince among them. I the LORD have spoken. <sup>25</sup> “I will **make a covenant of peace** with them and rid the land of wild beasts so that they may live in the desert and sleep in the forests in safety.” (Ezekiel 34-23-25)

In this passage, he announces the messianic Shepherd who would come to take care of the flock. It is evident from Ezekiel 21:27 that he refers to the Messiah of Israel by the clause “**whose right it is.**” We are conscious that Ezekiel, too, refers to the “**mystery**” that Paul addresses in his Ephesian Epistle. One objective of this in-depth study—“Christ: the Fulfillment of Prophecy”—is to briefly notice some of the messianic prophecies, which foretold the coming of God’s Anointed One to redeem lost humanity as foretold in the Book of Genesis. How were the prophets able to predict the “Coming One”? Peter, one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus wrote the following about the prophets and the need to read the Hebrew Scriptures:

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. <sup>17</sup> He received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, “This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.” <sup>18</sup> We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain. <sup>19</sup> **We also have the prophetic message as something completely reliable, and you will do well to pay attention to it, as to a light shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts.** <sup>20</sup> Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation of things. <sup>21</sup> **For prophecy never had its origin in the human will, but prophets, though human, spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.** (2 Peter 1:16-21)

The prophets announced that these events would occur in the “last days” of apostate Israel. The expression “**last days**” is frequently referred to as the present time frame within which Christians are living today. I state emphatically that believers are not living in the “last days.” The “last days” had to do with the “last days” of apostate Israel in its rejection of God’s Messiah. The “last days” in Scripture concerns the final destruction of the nation of Judah in AD 70 with the coming of the new heaven and the new earth—the kingdom of Heaven in its fullness. Have we ever said, “We are living in the last days”? If so, we are not alone. The New Testament speaks of the “last days.” The Old Testament speaks of the “last days.” What does this phrase mean? <sup>63</sup>

We, as Christians, frequently speak of the “end of time” as the “last days” of Planet Earth, even though neither the Old nor New Testament writings ever speak of the “end of time,”

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<sup>63</sup> I highly recommend the following study by **Don K. Preston**, *The Last Days Identified* (Ardmore, OK: JaDon Management, 2004) for a detailed biblical concept of this phrase (“in the last days”). See also William Bell, *Will Planet Earth Be Destroyed* (Published by **William Bell**, 2010). His examination of apocalyptic language is superb, which language depicts the overthrow of apostate Israel, not the end of Planet Earth.

but rather of the “time of the end” (Daniel 12:4).<sup>64</sup> Some apply this phrase to the Christian age. In other words, we are still living in the “last days” in the twenty-first century. Since both the Old and the New Testaments address the “last days,” we must seek to understand this terminology in light of an overall view of God’s Word.<sup>65</sup>

As stated earlier, for many years, I, too, read the phrase “last days” to depict the so-called last days of the messianic age, which “last days” have been going on now for about 2000 years. In other words, this phrase, according to many Christians, signifies the end of the world. Today, T.V. evangelists and radio preachers are constantly referring to the “last days” as applicable to the twenty-first century, not the first century. Yet, on closer scrutiny, we discover that both the Old and New Testament writings employ this phrase to refer to the last days of the Old Covenant world of Judaism, not the Christian age. The “last days” of the world of Judaism with its Temple and its rituals came to an end in AD 70 with the destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus clearly states, in His day, “This is the time of punishment in fulfillment of all that has been written” (Luke 21:22).

**An understanding of this statement (“in the last days”) by Jacob is crucial to a proper understanding of the final overthrow of the house of Judah.** Jacob predicted what would happen in the “last days” of the world of Judaism. The destruction of Jerusalem is the fulfillment of Genesis 49:1, 10. As stated above, Moses recorded statements in Genesis 49 about Jacob<sup>66</sup> and his children concerning the final demise of the nation of Israel. Jacob called his children together to describe the end of Judaism, which “time of the end” would not happen before the Messiah came. It is in this vein that Moses (1526-1406 BC) continues to develop what he wrote in Genesis 3:15. What did Jacob mean with the phrase “in days to come”? Listen to the following words of Jacob concerning the last days of Judaism: “Then Jacob called for his sons and said: ‘Gather around so I can tell you what will happen to you in days to come’”

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<sup>64</sup>The date that is assigned to Daniel is 605 BC, which is the time of deportation to Babylon. I normally do not give the dates that a particular prophecy or vision are received or seen. Daniel 12: 4 is an example. Since Chapter 12 is the third year of Cyrus, the date for Chapter 12 should be about 536 BC, not 605 BC. The events reported in Chapter 12 start in Chapter 10, which date should be about 536 BC. I thank Jim Hopkins for calling attention to my failure to take into consideration a closer date for Chapter 12. Since I have not taken into deliberation this time difference (even though I am conscious of the division in the time span), I will endeavor to be more mindful of the need to give, as close as possible, the date of the events reported by the prophets if there are time factors present in the text.

<sup>65</sup>Since the study of “last days” is frequently misunderstood by many sincere Christians, it is necessary to cite certain Scriptures over and over again in order to reinforce the original intent of the phrase “last days.” Repetition is one of the three laws of learning. The other two laws of learning are: repetition and repetition.

<sup>66</sup>As we continue to move back in time, we can discover the date of Jacob’s birth. We are indebted to Moses for a statement concerning a conversation that Jacob had with Pharaoh:

And Jacob said to Pharaoh, ‘The days of the years of my pilgrimage are one hundred and thirty years; few and evil have been the days of the years of my life, and they have not attained to the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage.’ (Genesis 47:9)

The sojourn of Jacob began in Egypt (1876 BC) when he stood before Pharaoh, thus the information from Genesis 47:9 furnishes us with the additional knowledge to determine the date of Jacob’s birth. Since Jacob told Pharaoh that he was 130 years old, then if we add 130 years to the date that Jacob entered Egypt (1876 BC), one arrives at the date of 2006 B C as the date of Jacob’s birth.

(Genesis 49:1, NIV). “In days to come” is translated in the KJV as “**in the last days.**” The Hebrew reading of this phrase is בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים (*bē`ā-ḥārîṯ' hăy-yā-mîm'*, “**in the end of days**”). The Septuagint (LXX) renders this phrase as ἐπ' ἐσχάτων τῶν ἡμερῶν (*ep eschatōn tōn hēmerōn*, “**in the last days**”). After Jacob informs each of his children, he then issues the final events that will take place in the “last days” concerning Judah. He says,

The scepter will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet, **until he comes to whom it belongs**<sup>c</sup> and the obedience of the nations is his. (49:10)

The KJV translates this verse (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.” Whether we translate the Hebrew as “**until he comes to whom it belongs**” or “**until Shiloh come**,” both phrases have reference to the coming of the Messiah, that is to say “the Christ.” Jacob is specific concerning the Messiah coming before the last days, or the final days, of the nation of Judah, which nation actually suffered utter destruction by the Romans in AD 70. Jacob says that the scepter (תִּבְנָת, *šē-bēṯ*) would not depart from Judah nor the ruler’s staff from between his feet until “Shiloh” comes. Shiloh (שִׁילֹה) (*šī-lō(h)*) seems to be a word meaning “He to whom it belongs,” and thus refers to the Messiah.<sup>67</sup>

The above analysis of Jacob’s words is not out of harmony with other predictions, especially those Messianic promises issued to Abraham. For example, Jacob’s grandfather, Abraham (2166-1991 BC),<sup>68</sup> received a promise from God concerning the coming of the Messiah, which is briefly noticed above. Remember 49:10 is a further development of this promise in 3:15, 12:1-3, and 18:18. Moses records this promise to Abraham to illustrate the mind of God in announcing the One through whom the Messiah would come as recorded in the Book of Genesis. We should reread Moses’ narration about God’s promise to Abraham:

The LORD had said to Abram, “Leave your country, your people and your father’s household and go to the land I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make you into a great nation and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. <sup>3</sup>I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.” (Genesis 12:1-3)

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<sup>c</sup> Or *until Shiloh comes*; or *until he comes to whom tribute belongs*

<sup>67</sup>For a detailed study on “Shiloh,” see David L. Cooper, *Messiah: His Nature and Person* (Los Angeles, California: Biblical Research Society, 1933), 46-54. I am deeply indebted to Cooper for his in-depth study of this prophecy.

<sup>68</sup>Still moving back, we learn from Genesis 21:5 that Abraham was born in 2166 BC. Moses writes: “Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.” Since Isaac was born in 2066 BC, then by adding 100 to Isaac’s birth, then we arrive at a date of 2166 BC for the birth of Abraham. Moses not only informs his readers about the birth of Abraham, but he also records the departure of Abraham from Haran to Canaan as occurring in the year 2091 BC: “So Abram left, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Haran” (Genesis 12:4). If we begin the patriarchal period with Abram (Abraham), then we are considering a time span from 2091 BC when he left Haran until the time when the children of Israel entered Egypt in 1876 BC. This calculation (2091 minus 1876) is a total of 215 years. Some see the patriarchal period as extending from the time Abram left Haran in 2091 BC down to the death of Joseph (1805 BC), which is recorded in Genesis 50:26. If we accept this latter span, then we would have a period of 286 years for the patriarchal period.

This pledge is repeated again in Genesis 18:18:

Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. Once more, God repeats this guarantee [22:18]: “**through your offspring<sup>b</sup> all nations on earth will be blessed**, because you have obeyed me.”<sup>69</sup>

Later, God confirmed the promise to Isaac:

I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through **your offspring<sup>a</sup> all nations on earth** will be blessed,<sup>5</sup> because Abraham obeyed me and kept my requirements, my commands, my decrees and my laws.<sup>6</sup> So Isaac stayed in Gerar. (26:4-6)

This promise is reaffirmed to Jacob:

Your descendants will be like the dust of the earth, and you will spread out to the west and to the east, to the north and to the south. **All peoples on earth** will be blessed through you and your offspring. (28:14)

Remember, toward the end of his earthly life, Jacob called his children together and issued the prophetic promise concerning the ultimate end of the kingdom of Judah. God made a promise, as stated above to Jacob's grandfather, Abraham, that in his grandfather's seed זרע (zě-ră') all nations would be blessed. Ultimately, the promise made to Satan (3:14-15) and to Abraham (12:3; 18:18; 22:17-18) would come through one individual (Jesus) who would bring this universal blessing and who is described as “her seed.” Moses reveals God’s conversation to Satan: “And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between **your offspring and hers**” (3:15). The One who is here called the ‘seed of the woman’ is later called the ‘seed of Abraham.’ Paul, over two thousand years after Abraham, referred to God’s promise to Abraham this way:

The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The Scripture does not say ‘**and to seeds,**’ meaning many people, but ‘**and to your seed,**’<sup>a</sup> meaning one person, who is Christ. (Galatians 3:16)<sup>70</sup>

Paul refers to a phrase in Genesis 3:15 in his Epistle to the Roman Christians (Romans 16:20) as having fulfillment in its totality in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Take note of

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<sup>b</sup> Or *seed*

<sup>69</sup>For an excellent commentary on “The Seed of Abraham,” see David L. Cooper, *Messiah: His Nature and Person*, (USA: Biblical Research Society, 1935), 37-41. Just a study of the Prophet Isaiah reveals that One of the Divine Personalities would leave glory and enter the world by the virgin birth (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Philippians 2:1-11; I Timothy 3:16)

<sup>a</sup> Or *seed*

<sup>a</sup> Gen. 12:7; 13:15; 24:7

<sup>70</sup> For a more detailed study of Galatians 3:16, see Dallas Burdette, “Overview of the Book of Galatians,” in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 299-343.

Paul's words as he recalls God's conversation to Satan: "The God of peace will **soon crush Satan** under your feet" (16:20). The author of the Book of Hebrews (AD 65) also testifies to the finality of the crushing of Satan with the coming of Christ in judgment on apostate Jerusalem:

So Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and **he will appear a second time**, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him. (Hebrews 9:28)

This "coming" is the "second coming."<sup>71</sup> In the removal of apostate Jerusalem, God made way for the final defeat of Satan in His shaking of the old heavens and earth (the world of Judaism) and the creation of new heavens and a new earth (the body of Christ, or the church). Let us open our ears once more to the author of Hebrews as he writes:

But you have come to Mount Zion, to **the heavenly Jerusalem**, the city of the living God. You have come to thousands upon thousands of angels in joyful assembly,<sup>23</sup> to the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven. You have come to God, the judge of all men, to the spirits of righteous men made perfect,<sup>24</sup> to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.<sup>25</sup> See to it that you do not refuse him who speaks. If they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, how much less will we, if we turn away from him who warns us from heaven?<sup>26</sup> At that time his voice shook the earth, but now he has promised, "**Once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heavens.**"<sup>c 27</sup> The words "once more" indicate the removing of what can be shaken—that is, created things—so that what cannot be shaken may remain. (Hebrews 12:22-27)<sup>72</sup>

When did God "shake not only the earth but also the heavens"? The Hebrew author identifies the above events as taking place "at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself" (9:26). "**The end of the ages**" is from the Greek ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων (*epi synteleia tōn aiōnōn*), which can also be translated as, "at the completion of the ages." Jesus accomplished this feat during the final phase of the demise of the kingdom of Judah. In order to comprehend more fully this phrase "last days," it would be helpful to look at a few more Old Testament prophecies as well as New Testament citations to grasp the significance of this phrase by the writers of both Testaments.

## LAST DAYS

One of the first Scriptures that I learned as a boy preacher was Isaiah 2:1-4. Unfortunately, no one called attention to Chapters 3—4 in analyzing 2:2. The "last days," in our interpretation, included the first century as well as the twentieth century (I started my preaching

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<sup>71</sup>See Glenn L. Hill, *Christianity's Great Dilemma: Is Jesus Coming Again or Is He Not?* (Lexington, KY: Moonbeam Publications, 2010). This book is the clearest analysis of the "second coming" that I have read. I also recommend John Noe's chapter "Seven Demanding Evidences of Jesus' Timely Coming on the Clouds," in John Noe, *The Perfect Ending for the World*, 219-252. This chapter explains the typology between the high priest on the Day of Atonement and Christ who is our High Priest.

<sup>c</sup> Haggai 2:6

<sup>72</sup>"The church (ἐκκλησία) of the firstborn (πρωτοτόκων) is in the Greek text ἐκκλησία πρωτοτόκων (*ekklēsia prōtotokōn*, a church of firstborn [ones]).

ministry in January 1951).<sup>73</sup> For many believers, today, the “last days” also include the twenty-first century. In my early training, we divided the time periods into three periods—Patriarchal, Mosaic, and Christian. We assumed that the phrase “last days” applied to the Christian age and continues to the supposed “end of time,” which we called the end of this world or the end of time.<sup>74</sup> Many Christians in this same fellowship as well as many other fellowships still maintain that Christians are, at the present time, still living in the “last days.”<sup>75</sup>

Genesis 49:10 plays a critical role in understanding messianic prophecy in the Hebrew Scriptures. The prophets foretold that Jesus would come during the “last days” of the nation of Judah. The following quote from John Noe on “The End That Was, the Last Days that Were” is extremely informative:

Make no mistake—Jesus was no false or fallible prophet. He was the greatest Prophet of all. And even though many may have dealt loosely, if not treacherously, with Jesus’ words, He set a definite time limit for the “last days” of biblical Judaism. Every New Testament reference to the “last days” or to equivalent terms such as “last times” or “last hour,” confirms the same. Without exception, they literally refer to that 1<sup>st</sup>-century time frame in which these writers were living there and then. Hebrews 1:1-2 clearly affixes Jesus’ earthly ministry to the period termed the “last days....” (see also Ac. 2:17; 1 Ti. 4:1; 2 Ti. 3:1; Jas. 5:3; 1 Pe. 1:5, 20; 2 Pe. 3:3; Jude 18; 1 JN. 2:18....

This time-restricted period was to encompass the full redemptive work of the Messiah: his birth, anointing, teaching, ushering in of the everlasting kingdom of God, death, resurrection, sending of the Holy Spirit, ending of the Jewish age, and much more, as we shall see.

These biblical “last days” were never to be the last days of the world, planet Earth, human history, or the Church. They were the beginning days of the Church. But they were the last days of the biggest thing that was ending—the age of biblical Judaism. That’s why the Apostle Paul reminded his contemporaries that “...this world in its present form is [was] passing away” (1 Co. 7:31) and that “the time is [was] short” (1 Co. 7:29). For Paul the end was very close. Was he wrong? Or did he understand exactly what he was saying?<sup>76</sup> (Emphasis mine)

## CONCLUSION

The Book of Genesis sets the foundation for the correct interpretation of all the writings in the Old Testament. The announcement of the coming Messiah is the background for a proper interpretation of Genesis. The book opens with the messianic promise in Genesis 3:15 and closes with the promise of the coming Messiah before Judah ceases to be a political power. The next study will examine one Scripture from the Book of Numbers and one Scripture from the

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<sup>73</sup>See Dallas Burdette, “Dallas Burdette’s Pilgrimage of Faith,” in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2008), 1-26.

<sup>74</sup>See John Noe, “Why the World Will Never End,” in John Noe, *The Perfect Ending for the World*, (Indianapolis, IN: East2West Press, 2011), 81-99, for an excellent analysis of the “time of the end,” not the “end of time.”

<sup>75</sup>See Don K. Preston, *The Last Days Identified* (Ardmore, OK: JaDon Productions, 2004) for an in-depth study of the “last days” as set forth in the Hebrew Bible as well as the New Covenant Scriptures. Also see Dallas Burdette, “Last Days in the Old and New Testaments,” in Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Series of Specialized Studies from Psalms • Revelation • Hebrews*, Volume 2 (Longwood, FL: Xulon Press, 2010), 303-337).

<sup>76</sup>John Noe, *Beyond the End Times: The Rest of The Greatest Story Ever Told* (Bradford, PA.: Preterist Resources, 1999), 131-132.

Book of Deuteronomy. Following this analysis, we will then examine more messianic Scriptures found in other prophets. In this third essay concerning the prophets predictions concerning the coming Messiah, we will observe statements that unfold more and more specifics concerning the coming of the Messiah. These three studies are not designed to examine the full range of Messianic prophecies, but rather, the purpose is to set forth the concept that the entire Hebrew Bible is oriented toward the coming of God's Anointed One before the "time of the end" (Daniel 12:4, 9).

**This knowledge should cause us to accept the entire Book of Genesis as an accurate record of Genesis 1-3, which three chapters require a literal reading.** In our study of the prophets, we witness a **progressive unfolding** of the Messianic Promise in Genesis 3:15. Even in the Book of Genesis, God proclaimed the Gospel to Abraham, which is a continuation of what God revealed to Adam and Eve in Genesis 3:15 (see Galatians 3:6-9). Chapters 12-15 in Genesis is the substance of the Abrahamic covenant that God made with Abraham. In 22:18, the promised seed of the woman was indeed particularized into the seed of Abraham. After Abraham, the seed promise was successively defined as the seed of Isaac and the seed of Jacob.