

Christ:

The Fulfillment of Prophecy

PART 3 OF 3

ISAIAH

Isaiah began his ministry approximately 739 BC. He tells us that he had a vision concerning Judah and Jerusalem during the reigns of Uzziah (792-740 BC), Jotham (750-732 BC), Ahaz (735-716 BC), and Hezekiah (716-687 BC)—all were kings of Judah (Isaiah 1:1). A close scrutiny of Isaiah reveals that he is writing about the coming of the “seed of the woman” and the establishment of a kingdom that would embrace all nations as well as the final days of Israel’s demise as foretold by Moses in Deuteronomy (Chapters 28—32) and Leviticus (Chapter 26). Approximately four hundred years earlier, Jacob told his son Judah (Genesis 49:1, 10) about the final downfall of the scepter (representative of governmental power) that Judah would hold until the coming of the Messiah. In other words, Judah would not lose tribal distinction until Jesus came.

Isaiah, in his announcement of the kingdom of God and the coming of the Messiah to rescue humanity from alienation from God, begins with a reference to the coming kingdom (Isaiah 2:1-4) and a gradual unfolding of information about the Messiah who would accomplish salvation. The Book of Isaiah is an excellent commentary on Paul’s Epistle to the Christians in Ephesus. Isaiah is addressing the “mystery” hidden in God since the foundation of the world (Ephesians 1:3-14).

First, Isaiah writes about the events that would occur during the final days of Israel’s prestige, or power, which power Daniel, too, spoke of as coming to an end (Daniel 12:7). Both John the Baptist and Jesus the Messiah began their ministry by announcing what Isaiah had foretold over seven hundred years earlier (Matthew 3:2; 4:17). Isaiah spoke of the coming of this kingdom, which coming would occur during the final days of Judah’s downfall. One of the ways that we, as God’s people, know that the kingdom came into existence in the first century is that the kingdom would be established, according to Isaiah, during the “last days” (בְּאַחֲרֵי הַיָּמִים, *b^e ʾă-ḥ^ārîṭʾ hăy-yā-mîmʾ*) “in the last days”), or the final days of Israel’s power.

Don Preston (author of numerous books dealing with the termination of apostate Israel) wrote an informative book dealing with this particular concept of the coming of God’s kingdom during the final overthrow of Judaism, which event transpired in AD 70. He correctly states: “The *last days* would already be in existence when the kingdom would be established.”¹ Isaiah

¹Don Preston, *The Last Days Identified* (Ardmore, OK: JaDon Productions, 2004), 25.

foretold the coming of the Messiah and the establishment of His messianic kingdom during the final days of the kingdom of Judah, which prophecy was predicted just a little over six-hundred years after Moses died in 1406 BC. Listen to Isaiah as he pens his futuristic words as revealed to him by the Holy Spirit:

In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it.³ Many peoples will come and say, "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. (Isaiah 2:2-4)

"In the last days" (בְּיָמֵי הַיְּשָׁרִים, *b'e' ḥ-ā-rîṭ' hăy-yā-mîm'*) is not a prediction of the "last days" of the church, but rather, it refers to the last days of Israel's existence. The Septuagint (LXX) translates the Hebrew text as **ταῖς ἐσχάταις ἡμέραις** (*tais eschatais hēmerais*, "the last days"), which the KJV translates as "the last days." He speaks of God judging Israel, which judgment ultimately took place in AD 70. In order for us to observe the impact of 2:2-4, we should look at Isaiah's statements in 2:9-11 and 2:19-21. It is significant that Jesus alludes to and cites both of these Scriptures as having reference to Jerusalem in His day (see Luke 21:24; 23:28-31). Pay attention to Isaiah as he describes the reaction of men and women who face persecution from the Romans in the first century, which army God employed to wreak havoc upon a nation that rejected His Messiah:

So man will be brought low and mankind humbled—do not forgive them.^{a10} Go into the rocks, hide in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty!¹¹ The eyes of the arrogant man will be humbled and the pride of men brought low; the LORD alone will be exalted in that day. (Isaiah 2:9-11)

Men will flee to caves in the rocks and to holes in the ground from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises **to shake the earth.**²⁰ In that day men will throw away to the rodents and bats their idols of silver and idols of gold, which they made to worship.²¹ They will flee to caverns in the rocks and to the overhanging crags from dread of the LORD and the splendor of his majesty, when he rises **to shake the earth.** (2:19-21)²

Jesus cites Isaiah 2:19 as having fulfillment in the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Following Luke's report of Jesus' reference to the end of Judaism in Luke 21, he again refers to comments by Jesus concerning Israel's rejection of Him as their Messiah (Luke 23:28-30). Jesus alludes to Isaiah 2:19 on His way to crucifixion. Luke reports his comments and Jesus' words:

As they led him away, they seized Simon from Cyrene, who was on his way in from the country, and put the cross on him and made him carry it behind Jesus.²⁷ A large number of people followed him, including women who mourned and wailed for him.²⁸ Jesus turned and said to them, "Daughters

^a Or *not raise them up*

² See also Hebrews 12:22-27.

of Jerusalem, do not weep for me; weep for yourselves and for your children. ²⁹ For the time will come when you will say, ‘Blessed are the barren women, the wombs that never bore and the breasts that never nursed!’ ³⁰ Then they will say to the mountains, ‘Fall on us!’ and to the hills, ‘Cover us!’ ^a
³¹ For if men do these things when the tree is green, what will happen when it is dry?” (Luke 23:26-31)

This statement in Luke 23:30 is also a reflection from Isaiah 2:19-21. Even in Isaiah 2:9-11, which words relate to Israel’s final days that are commonly referred to as “the last days.” We observe that Jesus alludes to Isaiah 2:9-11, 19-21 in Luke 23:28-30. Also, John captures the words of Isaiah (2:19-21) in the sixth seal in the Book of Revelation (Revelation 6:12-17), which also depicts the overthrow of apostate Jerusalem. Listen to John as he pens the following description of the events transpiring during the final days of Israel’s political power:

I watched as he opened the sixth seal. There was a great earthquake. The sun turned black like sackcloth made of goat hair, the whole moon turned blood red, ¹³ and the stars in the sky fell to earth, as late figs drop from a fig tree when shaken by a strong wind. ¹⁴ The sky receded like a scroll, rolling up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place. ¹⁵ Then the kings of the earth, the princes, the generals, the rich, the mighty, and every slave and every free man hid in caves and among the rocks of the mountains. ¹⁶ They called to the mountains and the rocks, “Fall on us and hide us from the face of him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb!” ¹⁷ **For the great day of their wrath has come, and who can stand?”** (Revelation 6:12-17)

From Isaiah 2:2-4, we know that the Messianic kingdom would come into existence during the final days of Judah’s power. Not only is Isaiah 2:2 dealing with the final days, but 2:9-11 and 2:19-21 also describe the final days that Jesus speaks about as recorded in Matthew 24—25, Mark 13, and Luke 21. Chapters 2—4 of Isaiah are simply reiterations of God’s promise in Deuteronomy 32 concerning punishment for disobedience, which chapter is commonly known as the Song of Moses that is descriptive of Israel’s final downfall in AD 70. John, too, in his Book of Revelation, speaks of the seven last plagues, which, when finished, represented the final overthrow of Judaism. What John writes about is parallel to Daniel 12. John portrays the event of Judah’s downfall this way:

I saw in heaven another great and marvelous sign: seven angels with the seven last plagues³—last, because with them God’s wrath is completed. ² And I saw what looked like a sea of glass mixed with fire and, standing beside the sea, those who had been victorious over the beast and his image and over the number of his name. They held harps given them by God ³ and sang **the song of Moses** the servant of God and **the song of the Lamb**: “Great and marvelous are your deeds, Lord God Almighty. Just and true are your ways, King of the ages. ⁴Who will not fear you, O Lord, and bring glory to your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship before you, for your righteous acts have been revealed.” (Revelation 15:1-4)

^a Hosea 10:8; Isaiah 2:19; Revelation 6:16.

³The “seven last plagues” are reminiscent of God’s punishment against the children of Jacob, which Moses sets forth in the Book of Leviticus (Chapter 26), which is equivalent to Deuteronomy 32. Moses speaks of punishing the nation for disobedience this way: “I will punish you for your sins seven times over” (Leviticus 26:18, 21, 24, 25, 27-39). “Seven plagues” are equivalent to “seven times over.”

Isaiah 4:2: The Branch

In that day the Branch (רֹמֶם, *šē'-māh*) of the LORD will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. ³ Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. ⁴ The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. (4:2-4)

After announcing the coming of the kingdom, Isaiah now gives additional information concerning the coming One who would wash away the sins of Judah. Also, he reiterates what he developed in Chapters 2 and 3 concerning the desolation of Apostate Judah. What is significant is that he speaks of a Person who is identified as the “the Branch,” which we now know is none other than Jesus the Messiah.

Virgin Birth

“Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.” ¹² But Ahaz said, “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.” ¹³ Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! (בֵּית דָּוִד, *bêt' dā-wid'*) Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you (אַתָּה, *l'kā'*) try the patience of my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you (אֶתְּךָ, *lā-kēm'*) a sign: The virgin (הַעַלְמָה, *hā-'āl-mā(h)'*) will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (יְמָנְוֵל, *'im-mā'-nū 'ēl'*). [7:11-14]

The pronoun אַתָּה (*l'kā'*) [7:13] is a preposition with second person masculine singular suffix. **The phrase “ask for yourself” can only refer to the king.** He refused to ask for a sign: “I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test” (7:12). **This outrageous attitude by the king prompted the prophet Isaiah to change his attitude toward the king.** As a result of the king’s faithlessness toward God, **Isaiah** stopped speaking, as it were, to the king and turned toward the future and **spoke to the “house of David”** (בֵּית דָּוִד, *bêt' dā-wid'*)

Ahaz versus House of David

In 7:13-14, Isaiah turns his attention to a future generation as if already present. Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also” (7:13)? The verbs “hear” (שָׁמְעוּ, *šim-û-nā'*) “listen please”⁴ and “will you try” (תִּבְיָא, *tāl-û'*, “you make tired”)⁵ are plural in the Hebrew, and the words are spoken to the “house of David” (בֵּית דָּוִד, *bêt' dā-wid'*) The “house of David” occurs twice in this chapter (7:2, 13). This phrase is significant since it only occurs three other times in the Major Prophets. Two of the other three occurrences of this phrase are also found in Isaiah (16:5; 22:22) and the third occurrence is found in Jeremiah 21:12. In the Minor Prophets, this phrase only occurs in Zechariah (5 times—12:7, 8, 10, 12; 13:1). Ahaz’s reaction appears to be

⁴Verb, Qal (simple active), imperative, second person, masculine, plural, particle

⁵Verb, Hiphil (causative active), imperfect, second person, masculine, plural.

a frontal assault on the “house of David”—God established the dynasty from which the Messiah (מָשִׁיחַ, *mā·šī·yǎh*) would come.

The Lord offered to give Ahaz (735-716 BC) a sign of supernatural proportions, but Ahaz wanted nothing to do with this sign. Ahaz was prepared to deal with a foreign army to assist him in his fight against Syria (Aram) and Israel rather than put his trust in God. Again, listen to the words of Isaiah:

Then Isaiah said, “Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of men? Will you try the patience of my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you ^c a sign: **The virgin** will be with child and will give birth to a son, and ^d will call him Immanuel (7:13-14).

The pronoun “you” (אַתָּם, *lā·kēm*)⁶ in verse 14 is plural. Since the pronoun is plural, we understand, at least from the context, that Ahaz was not alone, especially since these remarks are addressed to the “house of Israel.” Once more, we should note the change of the pronoun in verse 16 back to the singular (אַתָּה, *’āt·tā(h)*)⁷: “But before the boy knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right, the land of the two kings you [אַתָּה, *you* is singular] dread will be laid waste.”

The **supernatural** sign was not given to Ahaz, but rather to the dynasty or house of David. The sign refers to the supernatural birth of a son: “Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin (הַעַלְמָה, *hā·’āl·mā(h)*) will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel (עִמָּנוּאֵל, *’im·mā·nū ’ēl*).” The woman in 7:14 is called “**the virgin**,” indicating a specific virgin in God’s scheme of redemption. The Son of this virgin is called by one of the most cherished names of God in the Old Testament—(עִמָּנוּאֵל, *’im·mā·nū ’ēl*), Immanuel).

The name “Immanuel” is composed of two words in its three occurrences in Isaiah (7:14; 8:8, 10). The name is composed of the preposition אִם (*im*, “with”) to which has been affixed the first common plural pronominal suffix נוּ (*nū*, “us”) and the divine name אֵל (*’ēl*, “God”) at the end of the form. Gary D. Pratico (professor of Old Testament and director of the Hebrew language program at Cornwell Theological Seminary) writes: “The etymology is easy; the theology of the name is profound.”⁸ Christians cherish this name because it speaks of God’s grace and mercy in that God gives Himself to humanity (see Matthew 1:23; John 1:1-14). Yet again, Pratico writes: “The name עִמָּנוּאֵל (*’im·mā·nū ’ēl*) has come to symbolize and summarize the story of biblical revelation.”⁹

Even though Isaiah 7:14 is somewhat veiled before our eyes, nevertheless, enough is said in the original context (Chapters 7—12) to state with definiteness that 7:14 refers to the Messiah. In Isaiah 7:14, we witness a child about to be born, even though future—in the “last

c The Hebrew is plural.

d Masoretic Text; Dead Sea Scrolls *and he* or *and they*

⁶Preposition with second person masculine plural suffix.

⁷Pronoun: second person masculine singular.

⁸Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew Grammar* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 95, paragraph 9.18.

⁹Ibid.

days” (2:2-4; 4:2-6). On the other hand, in Isaiah 9:6, the Child is already born (though future) and proclaimed the Divine King; and, in Isaiah 11:1-10, we detect the Messiah ruling (though future). The birth of Immanuel is extremely important in Isaiah 7—8 (8:8, 10). Who is Immanuel? The text does not specifically name the Son in 7:14, but it would be fair to say that the birth of the child relates to the future of the house of David. In 7:14, God specifically says He will give a sign (תִּיָּצֵק, 'ôṭ') to the house of David, and that sign had to do with the birth of a Child (7:14; 9:6). Reading 7:14 in conjunction with chapters 9—12, we read about some of the most significant messianic prophecies in the Bible that focuses on the birth and the supernatural reign of a new Davidic king.¹⁰

As we reflect upon Isaiah 7:14, we are immediately conscious that this text is a part of the “**mystery** of His will” spoken of by Paul in Ephesians. Remember, **Jesus opened the understanding of the messianic prophecies to His disciples before His final ascension** (Luke 24:36-39). What happened to this major messianic prophecy over time? Seven hundred years after this prophecy, Matthew, following his genealogy of Jesus, calls forth the prophecy of Isaiah 7:14 to give weight to the virgin birth of Christ:

This is how the birth of Jesus Christ came about: His mother Mary was pledged to be married to Joseph, but before they came together, she was found to be with child through the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ Because Joseph her husband was a righteous man and did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.²⁰ But after he had considered this, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream and said, “Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit.²¹ She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”²² All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet:²³ “**The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel**”—which means, “God with us.”²⁴ When Joseph woke up, he did what the angel of the Lord had commanded him and took Mary home as his wife.²⁵ But he had no union with her until she gave birth to a son. And he gave him the name Jesus. (Matthew 1:18-25)

Matthew had first-hand knowledge of the messianic prophecies from the Messiah Himself. There is no indication of a double fulfillment of Isaiah 7:14. Apparently, this prophecy related directly to the coming of the Messiah. Matthew, as well as the angel, understood this prophecy in its purest form as predicting the coming Messiah to save the world. In the first two chapters of Matthew’s Gospel, He cites from Micah, Hosea, Jeremiah, and Isaiah. As we examine the progression of Isaiah’s Messianic prophecies, we witness the next prophecy adding to the previous prophecy. For example, in 4:2, he identified the coming One as “Branch” (תְּמָרָה, ṣē’-māh), but in 7:14, he gave additional information about the “Branch.” He informed us that the “Branch” would be born of “the virgin” (הַעַלְמָה, hā-‘āl-mā(h)) and He would be called “Emmanuel” (עִמָּנוּאֵל, ‘im-mā’-nū ‘ēl). Immanuel) which means “with us is GOD” or “GOD with us.”

¹⁰For an excellent analysis of Isaiah 7:14, see Michael L. Brown, *Answering Jewish Objections to Jesus: Messianic Prophecy Objections*, Vol., 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2003), 17-32. I am deeply indebted to Brown’s comments on this most controversial text.

In the ninth chapter (9:6), he addresses Jesus' virgin birth and His Deity. Instead of using "Emmanuel," he tells us that His name is "**Mighty God**" and "**Everlasting Father**," which names reinforces the name "**Emmanuel**." We cannot separate 7:14 from 9:6 or from 11:1. All three Scriptures refer to the same person. In Isaiah 7:14 the child to be born would be born of "the virgin" and in 9:6 the child to be born is "Mighty God," and then in Chapter 11, the child to be born will reign in righteousness. These three triads cannot be separated. In Chapter 9, Isaiah continues to advance additional knowledge about the "Branch." He, once more, addresses "the virgin" birth and His Deity:

For to us a child is born [virgin birth], to us a son is given [Deity], and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God [גִּבּוֹר אֱלֹהִים, 'el' gib-bôr'], Everlasting Father (אָבִי עָדָי, 'ābî-ʿād'), Prince of Peace. (9:6)

All four names are assigned to the child that is born of "the virgin." Not only is He called "Mighty God," but He is also called "Everlasting Father." In other words, this Child is the Father of eternity, that is, this One is the possessor of eternity; He is the true God. Isaiah affirms that the "**child born**" and the "**Son given**" is, indeed, God. This child is the One who brings about "peace" and restores the fellowship that was lost in the Garden of Eden. He reinstates fellowship between God the Father and humanity. All of the names in 9:6 plainly acknowledge this One as the true God.¹¹

Once more, Isaiah, through the Holy Spirit, develops additional information concerning the coming Messiah in 11:1-10. This prophecy identifies still further the family lineage of Jesus. He pens the following words about His family heritage: "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch [פְּתִילָה, šē'-māh] will bear fruit" (Isaiah 11:1). Even though the kingdom of Judah, in the days of Jesus, was in decline as a political power, nevertheless, Jesus came forth from the "stump of Jesse," the father of David. The word *Branch* appeared in 4:2 and now, once more, in 11:1. The image is that of a tree that had been cut down, yet out of the stump of the tree the Messiah/Branch would come. He would come forth like a "shoot."

In this section of Scripture, we are introduced to highly figurative language—the blending of the earth and spiritual. Earlier, we spoke of the trilogy of the prophetic figures of the coming Messiah, but now he sets forth the case that it is complete in Him—to be born (7:14), born (9:6a), and as ruling (9:6b). The following comments by David Baron¹² on Isaiah 9:6 are extremely informative and on target as he seeks to capture the very heart of the words of Isaiah:

Let me just remind you that, as is the case with God, so also with the Messiah, *names describe His attributes*. He is called the "Mighty God" because He is very God and in "Him dwells the fullness of the Godhead bodily." O ye who seek after God, come and "see His glory in the face of Jesus Christ," Who is "the brightness of His glory and the express image of His person" (2 Cor. iv. 6; Heb. i). The Messiah is called here the "everlasting Father" because, though He was a child born in Bethlehem

¹¹I highly recommend two chapters explaining Isaiah 9:6 by Alexander McCaul, *Lectures on the Prophecies: Proving the Divine Origin of Christianity* (London: John W. Parker, 1846), 28-84.

¹²**David Baron** (1857-1926), a convert from Judaism to Christianity, co-founder of Hebrew Christian Testimony to Israel, and recognized as a Messianic leader in outreach to Jews.

Ephratah, yet “His goings forth have been from of old, even from the days of eternity (Micah v. 2; Hebrews¹³). This explains the words of Jesus when He said, “Verily, verily, I say unto you, before Abraham was I am” (John viii. 58).¹⁴

The word *branch* is associated with God’s Messiah. Approximately one-hundred years after Isaiah, God used Jeremiah (627 BC) to give additional information about the *Branch*. He, too, addresses the humanity of our Lord Jesus as well as His Deity. We need to give special attention to the words of Jeremiah during the final days of Jehoiachin (598-597 BC):

“The days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will raise up to David a righteous Branch [לְדָוִד צֶמַח צְדִיקָה, *l’dā-wid’ šē’-māh šād-dīq*], a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land. ⁶In his days Judah will be saved and Israel will live in safety. This is the name by which he will be called: The LORD Our Righteousness [יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ צְדִיקָנוּ] (*yhwh šid-qē-nū*). (Jeremiah 23:5-6)

Jeremiah writes about the two natures of our Lord Jesus Christ. He writes about the “Branch of David,” which is His human nature. On the other hand, he writes about the “Lord our Righteousness” (יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵינוּ צְדִיקָנוּ) (*yhwh šid-qē-nū*), which addresses His Deity. In Isaiah 4:2, Isaiah speaks of the Branch as “the Branch of the Lord” (צֶמַח יְהוָה, *šē’-māh y^ehwā(h)*)’ which is equivalent to the Son of God. Just as in Jeremiah 23:5, the Branch is called the “Branch of David,” which is equivalent to the Son of David. In Isaiah 4:2, Isaiah not only speaks of the coming Messiah as the “Son of God,” but he also speaks of His human nature as the “fruit of the earth” (וּפְרִי הָאֲרֶזֶן, *û-p^rî hā-’ā-rēs*).

Jesus is the “Lord [יְהוָה, *yhwh*] our Righteousness,” which is the reason that Isaiah speaks of Him as “Everlasting Father” (Isaiah 9:6). It is in this same vein that Micah (735 BC) called attention to His preexistence:

But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah [ěf^r räth-à], though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, **whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.** (Micah 5:2)

As stated above, Isaiah (7:14) writes about His virgin birth, but, at the same time, Micah, a contemporary of Isaiah, identifies the place of His birth as Bethlehem. Yet, Micah pinpointed this One as having existed prior to His birth—“**whose origins are from of old, from ancient times.**” It is in this vein that the remarks of Jesus to the Jews about His teachings concerning His prior existence is reminiscence of Micah’s assertions about the One to be born in Bethlehem: “‘I tell you the truth,’ Jesus answered, ‘before Abraham was born, I am!’” (John 8:58). Shortly before His Crucifixion, He prayed to the Father the following prayer:

Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent. ⁴I have brought you glory on earth by completing the work you gave me to do. ⁵And now, Father, glorify me in your presence with the glory I had with you before the world began. (17:3-5)

¹³Hebrew text, not English text.

¹⁴David Baron, *The Ancient Scriptures for the Modern Jew* (Jerusalem, Israel: Keren Ahvah Meshihit, 1900, 1999), 30-31.

The word *Branch* introduced by Isaiah (4:2; 11:2) and Jeremiah (23:5; 33:15) is later introduced by Zechariah (520 BC). The third chapter of Zechariah is an extremely important prophecy concerning the coming “Branch.” The Holy Spirit reveals detailed information regarding this unique Servant that would bring about redemption:

“Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch.⁹ See, the stone I have set in front of Joshua! There are seven eyes on that one stone, and I will engrave an inscription on it,” says the LORD Almighty, “and I will remove the sin of this land in a single day.” (Zechariah 3:8-9)

“**My servant, the Branch**” is the servant of Isaiah 49. This only-one-of-its-kind Servant is made a “light for the Gentiles” (49:6), which light is none other than Jesus Himself. When the Elijah of Malachi 4 appeared on the scene, John gives his commentary on this “light”:

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and **the Word was God**.² He was with God in the beginning.³ Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made.⁴ **In him was life, and that life was the light of men**.⁵ The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it.⁶ There came a man who was sent from God; his name was John.⁷ He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all men might believe.⁸ He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.⁹ The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. (John 1:1-9)

When the Pharisees rejected Him, He cried out:

When a man believes in me, he does not believe in me only, but in the one who sent me.⁴⁵ When he looks at me, he sees the one who sent me.⁴⁶ **I have come into the world as a light**, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness. (12:44-46)

God also said that He would keep Him and make Him “to be a covenant for the people” (Isaiah 49:8). Jesus is our New Covenant. We have entered into a new relationship with God based upon the finished work of Christ upon Calvary. This Servant could not be the nation of Israel. Since this Servant is to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore Israel, how could He be Israel or Jacob Himself. When Paul, who was converted from Judaism to Christ,¹⁵ proclaimed the Good News of salvation by faith in Christ to the Jews in Pisidian Antioch, he cited from Isaiah 49:6 to demonstrate that the Christ he proclaimed is the One that Isaiah prophesied should come to take away sin.¹⁶ Luke, a co-laborer with Paul on his second missionary journey (AD 50-52—Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth), recorded Paul’s encounter with the Jews and their rejection of his message as well as the reception by the Gentiles of God’s grace:

¹⁵For a detailed study of Paul’s conversion, see Dallas Burdette, “Paul’s Conversion: Apologetic for Christianity,” in Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Jesus and Our Privileges*, Volume 1 (Longwood, Florida: Xulon Press, 2009) 92-120.

¹⁶For an overview of preaching in the early church, see Dallas Burdette, “Preaching in the Early Church,” in Dallas Burdette, *From Legalism to Freedom: A Spiritual Narrative of Liberation* (Longwood, Florida, Xulon Press, 2008), 344-382.

On the next Sabbath almost the whole city gathered to hear the word of the Lord. ⁴⁵ When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and talked abusively against what Paul was saying. ⁴⁶ Then Paul and Barnabas answered them boldly: “We had to speak the word of God to you first. Since you reject it and do not consider yourselves worthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles. ⁴⁷ For this is what the Lord has commanded us: ‘**I have made you a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring salvation to the ends of the earth.**’ ⁴⁸ When the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and honored the word of the Lord; and all who were appointed for eternal life believed. (Acts 13:44-48)

Luke, in his Gospel, relates the story of Jesus being taken to the Temple for circumcision (Luke 2:21-24). What is significant about this event is the parents’ encounter with Simeon who was a devout and righteous man. The following is Luke’s narrative of this event with Simeon’s prophecy:

Now there was a man in Jerusalem called Simeon, who was righteous and devout. He was **waiting for the consolation of Israel**, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. ²⁶ It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. ²⁷ Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. When the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, ²⁸ Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: ²⁹“Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. ³⁰ For my eyes have seen your salvation, ³¹ which you have prepared in the sight of all people, ³² **a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel.**” (Luke 2:25-32)

Luke also calls attention to Anna who was a prophetess. She, too, knew that this Child was the One that the prophets foretold would come to redeem Israel. Listen to Luke as he gives his own remarks and the words of Anna:

There was also a prophetess [προφῆτις, *prophētis*], Anna, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after her marriage, ³⁷ and then was a widow until she was eighty-four. She never left the temple but worshiped night and day, fasting and praying. ³⁸ Coming up to them at that very moment, she gave thanks to God and spoke about the child to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Jerusalem. (2:36-38)

The Jews were looking for the “redemption of Jerusalem” (λύτρωσιν Ἱερουσαλήμ, *lytrōsin Ierousalēm*) through God’s coming Messiah.¹⁷ The Jews, no doubt, remembered the words of Jacob (2006-1859 BC) about the One he foretold would come before the demise of Judah—“until he comes to whom it belongs” (Genesis 49:10). Haggai (520 BC) also spoke of this One:

This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘In a little while I will once more shake the heavens and the earth [apostate Israel], the sea and the dry land. ⁷ I will shake all nations [all the tribes of Judah], and the desired of all nations will come [Jesus], and I will fill this house with glory’ [second Temple] says the LORD Almighty. (Haggai 2:6-7)

¹⁷For a brief introduction as to why Christians should study the prophets, see Dallas Burdette, “The Prophets of God: Introduction,” in Dallas Burdette, *Biblical Preaching and Teaching: Series of Specialized Studies from: Ephesians • Philipians • Exodus • Prophets • Pastoral Epistles • Apologetics*, Volume 3 (Longwood, Florida: Xulon Press, 2010), 482-519.

Approximately, one-hundred years later, Malachi (433 BC) also announced this same message:

“See, I will send my messenger [John the Baptist], who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple [second Temple]; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come [Jesus],” says the LORD Almighty. (Malachi 3:1)

Just as Moses delivered the Israelites from the bondage of Egyptian slavery, so Jesus delivers us from the bondage of sin. Isaiah 49 leaves no doubt as to the identity of the Servant in this illuminating chapter concerning the coming Redeemer. This Servant, as stated above, is to raise up the tribes of Jacob and restore Israel. Since the thrust of this chapter is about the coming Messiah, we know that the Servant could not be Israel itself. Once more, Isaiah refers to “the virgin” birth in Isaiah 49:5 (“formed me in the womb”) and His Deity in 49:1 (“Before I was born” and “made mention of my name”), which he mentioned earlier in 7:14 and in 9:6.

Isaiah 49:1

Listen to me, you islands;
hear this, you distant nations:
Before I was born the LORD
called me; **from my birth** he
has **made mention of my**
name.

Isaiah 49:5

And now the LORD
says—**he who formed me in**
the womb to be his servant
to bring Jacob back to him
and gather Israel to himself,
for I am honored in the eyes
of the LORD and my God has
been my strength—

We cannot read 49:1 without a consciousness that Christianity had a birth before it was born. This redemption is the “mystery” that Paul unravels in the Book of Ephesians. God’s “mystery” was hidden in Himself before He spoke this Universe into existence (Ephesians 1:3-14). We cannot read Isaiah 49 without reflection upon Zechariah 3:8, where he recorded a symbolic vision of the coming redeemer:

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. ² The LORD said to Satan, “The LORD rebuke you, Satan! The LORD, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this man a burning stick snatched from the fire?” ³ Now Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes as he stood before the angel. ⁴ The angel said to those who were standing before him, “Take off his filthy clothes.” Then he said to Joshua, “See, I have taken away your sin, and I will put rich garments on you.” ⁵ Then I said, “Put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the LORD stood by. ⁶ The angel of the LORD gave this charge to Joshua: ⁷ “This is what the LORD Almighty says: ‘If you will walk in my ways and keep my requirements, then you will govern my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place among these standing here.’” ⁸ ‘Listen, O high priest Joshua and your associates seated before you, who are men symbolic of things to come: I am going to bring my servant, the Branch.’ (Zechariah 3:1-8)

Just a casual reading of this marvelous prophecy about the coming Messiah reveals that Satan is silenced on the ground of God’s choice. God takes away our sins “in” and “through” Jesus His Christ. God’s “Servant, the Branch” solves the “mystery” of how God can be just and the justifier of sinful humanity. Paul, in his Epistle to the Christians in Rome (written

approximately AD 57 from Corinth), addresses God’s justice and His solution to the problem of sin and forgiveness. Listen to Paul as he seeks to unfold God’s wisdom, which wisdom is disclosed in the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms:

But now a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. ²² **This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe.** There is no difference, ²³ for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, ²⁴ and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. ²⁵ **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—** ²⁶ **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.** ²⁷ Where, then, is boasting? It is excluded. On what principle? On that of observing the law? No, but on that of faith. ²⁸ **For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.** (Romans 3:21-28)

God’s Servant the Branch solves the “mystery” as set forth in Paul’s Epistle to the Ephesians. We witness the unfolding of this “mystery” with the spectacle of Gethsemane and the scene of Calvary, which description the Holy Spirit revealed to His prophets as expressed in minute details in Isaiah 53, Psalm 22 and Daniel 9:24-27. Upon Calvary, we witness God’s wrath poured out in all of its severity and ruthlessness upon His “Servant the Branch.” It is in this vein that Peter calls attention to the need of examining the sacred writings:

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. ²⁰ Above all, **you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet’s own interpretation.** ²¹ **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)

Paul writes about this “mystery” to the Christians in Colosse. In this Epistle, he goes right to the heart of the “mystery” and identifies this “mystery” as Christ Himself. Again, we should pay attention to Paul as he explains:

Now I rejoice in what was suffered for you, and I fill up in my flesh what is still lacking in regard to Christ’s afflictions, for the sake of his body, which is the church. ²⁵ I have become its servant by the commission God gave me to present to you the word of God in its fullness— ²⁶ **the mystery that has been kept hidden for ages and generations, but is now disclosed to the saints.** ²⁷ **To them God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.** ²⁸ We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. ²⁹ To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. (Colossians 1:24-29)

Peter (2 Peter 1:19-21) wedded, as it were, his teachings with the prophets. This same scenario is found in Paul’s final letter to Timothy. He, too, joined his teachings with the Hebrew Scriptures. Again, we need to read Paul’s words to Timothy as he encouraged him to read the Old Testament writings:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how **from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures,**

which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. ¹⁶ All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, ¹⁷ so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. (2 Timothy 3:14-17)

These studies dealing with Christ as the fulfillment of the prophecies have set forth the interpretation that the Redeemer of humanity is the *seed of the woman* (Genesis 3:15). The Hebrew Scriptures describe the *seed of the woman* as Divine, as well as human. David Baron captures the very heart of the Messianic prophecies as he seeks to unravel what God announced in the Garden of Eden. His pen, in my judgment, is on target when he writes:

But the same God Who promised redemption to the family of Abraham (Gen. xv. 13, 14) also promised redemption to the family of man (Gen. iii. 15). And just as Israel's redemption from Egypt was accomplished by one "from the midst of them," who was in all things like themselves, except that he was not *like them in a state of servitude*, so He that should be the Redeemer of mankind was to be the "Seed of the woman" (Gen. iii. 15), "like unto Moses" (Deut. xviii.18), real *man*, "in all things made like unto His brethren" (Heb. ii:17), *except* that He was to be free from servitude to Satan, or, in other words, "without sin;" for He *could not*, if He were Himself a slave to sin, ransom others from the power of it. And, since the redemption He was to accomplish was to be effected, as we shall see further on, by "giving His own life a ransom for many," He could only do so on the supposition that His life was not already forfeited through sin; for the decree of the Eternal is, "The soul that sinneth it shall die;" so that, supposing the Messiah were even more righteous than Abraham, Moses, or any of the prophets, and only committed one single sin in His life, His life would have been lost for that sin (Ezek. xviii. 24), so that He could not even be His *own* Redeemer, and how much less the Redeemer of the world!¹⁸

Today, unfortunately, many Christians do not know the "holy Scriptures" that Paul informed Timothy to continue in, which Scriptures could make him "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." In this study, I am selective in the number of Messianic prophecies that I call attention to since I am not writing a book dealing with Messianic predictions as a whole. My purpose in this chapter is to call awareness to the progression of the prophecies about Jesus in the Book of Isaiah. Even though I am discriminating, or judicious, in my selection of the prophecies, I am attempting to stimulate the appetite of my readers to reexamine the thirty-nine books of the Old Testament.

JESUS: THE FOUNDATION STONE

Unfortunately, many Christians do not see the correlation between the teachings of the Apostles and the Hebrew Scriptures. We have examined several Messianic prophecies as to how Isaiah, through the Holy Spirit, developed in greater detail the coming and identity of the Messiah. It is not uncommon for Chapters 7—12 to be properly called the Book of Immanuel. Once more, Isaiah gives another characteristic of the Immanuel in 7:14, which prophecy sets forth the coming Messiah as "a stone" in 28:16.

¹⁸David Baron, *Rays of Messiah's Glory: Christ in the Old Testament* (Eugene, Oregon: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1886, 2001), 193-194.

So this is what the Sovereign LORD says: “See [הִנֵּה, *hin-nē(h)*, “behold”], I lay a stone [אֶבֶן, *’ē-ḥēn*], in Zion, a tested stone [אֶבֶן, *’ē-ḥēn*], a precious cornerstone for a sure foundation; the one who trusts will never be dismayed. (Isaiah 28:16)

The word *see* (הִנֵּה, *hin-nē(h)*) is from the same Hebrew word that Isaiah used earlier in his announcement concerning the Virgin Birth in 7:14. Isaiah introduces “the virgin” with the word “behold” [הִנֵּה, *hin-nē(h)*]. It appears, so it seems, that God is calling attention to “the virgin” as well as to this unique “Stone” that He Himself lays in Zion. This prophecy in 28:16 concerning Jesus is also reflective of the prophecy Jacob made to Joseph concerning the “Mighty One of Jacob” who is called the Rock [אֶבֶן, *’ē-ḥēn*, “stone”] of Israel” (Genesis 49:24). Earlier, in Isaiah’s writings, God specifically calls Himself a “stone” [אֶבֶן, *’ē-ḥēn*] and a “rock” [צוּר, *ṣûr*]. It is also appropriate for God to refer to His Son as a “rock,” which is what God calls His Messiah, as mentioned above, in 28:16. These figures, or symbols, are employed in the Hebrew Scriptures in reference to God the Father as well as to God the Son. Listen to Isaiah as he relates God to Israel as a “stone” and a “rock”:

And he will be a sanctuary; but for both houses of Israel he will be a stone [אֶבֶן, *’ē-ḥēn*] that causes men to stumble and a rock [צוּר, *ṣûr*] that makes them fall. And for the people of Jerusalem he will be a trap and a snare. (Isaiah 8:14)

Even though God the Father is referred to as a “stone” in Genesis 49:24 and Isaiah 8:14, nevertheless, the coming Messiah (Jesus) is the “stone” whom God lays in Zion. Just a little over seven-hundred years later, Peter (about AD 65), one of the Twelve chosen by Jesus, calls attention to Isaiah 28:16 as having reference to Jesus. Peter writes to believers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia concerning this “stone”:

As you come to him, the living Stone—rejected by men but chosen by God and precious to him—⁵ you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. ⁶ For in Scripture it says: “**See, I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame**” [Isaiah 28:16]. ⁷ Now to you who believe, this stone is precious. But to those who do not believe, “**The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone**” [Psalm 118:22], ⁸ and, “**A stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall**” [Isaiah 8:14]. They stumble because they disobey the message—which is also what they were destined for. (1 Peter 2:4-8)

Just a few years earlier, Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome (written from Corinth about AD 57) about the “stone” that Isaiah foretold would come. In this Epistle, he addressed Israel’s unbelief and her rejection of God’s “stone” that He laid in Zion:

What then shall we say? That the Gentiles, who did not pursue righteousness, have obtained it, a righteousness that is by faith; ³¹ but Israel, who pursued a law of righteousness, has not attained it. ³² Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the “stumbling stone.” ³³ As it is written: “**See, I lay in Zion a stone [אֶבֶן, *’ē-ḥēn*] that causes men to stumble and a rock [צוּר, *ṣûr*] that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame**” [Isaiah 8:14; 28:16]. (Romans 9:30-33)

Just a few days after the Day of Pentecost, Peter and John appeared before the Supreme Court of the Jews (the Sanhedrin) to answer for their proclaiming the Resurrected Jesus as the promised Messiah of the Hebrew Scriptures. This proclamation precipitated this confrontation between two of Jesus' disciples and the religious leaders of Israel. Luke also informs us that part of the conflict resulted from the healing of a cripple. In Peter's response, he addressed the crucifixion of Jesus and the prophecy concerning Jesus as the "stone" foretold through the Hebrew Scriptures. We should read and reread Peter's words:

Then Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them: "Rulers and elders of the people! ⁹ If we are being called to account today for an act of kindness shown to a cripple and are asked how he was healed, ¹⁰ 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. ¹¹ He is '**the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone**' [Psalm 118:22]. ¹² 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)

Once more, we have inspired testimony that Jesus is the promised "stone" prophesied by the prophets. Paul also spoke of Jesus as the "cornerstone" in his Epistle to the Christians in Ephesus (written from Rome about AD 61). Listen to him as he seeks to unravel God's mystery that had been hidden in Him before the foundations of the earth:

Consequently, you are no longer foreigners and aliens, but fellow citizens with God's people and members of God's household, ²⁰ built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the chief cornerstone. ²¹ In him the whole building is joined together and rises to become a holy temple in the Lord. ²² And in him you too are being built together to become a dwelling in which God lives by his Spirit. (Ephesians 2:19-22)

MIRACLES: CONFIRMATION OF JESUS' CLAIMS

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. ²⁰ Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation. ²¹ 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)

Even though we cited the words of Peter earlier in this study, these words of Peter are a constant reminder that in addition to their personal testimony they also had "**the word of the prophets made more certain.**" As we reflect upon the words of Isaiah, he foretold the miraculous nature of the Messiah's ministry (Isaiah 35:5-6). Why the miraculous in the ministry of Jesus? Miracles were employed by Jesus to validate His claims concerning His Messiahship. The miraculous in Jesus' ministry gave credence to His inauguration of a new relationship to God based upon faith in the finished work of Christ upon Calvary. God, so it seems, has never asked anyone to believe without first making His revelation credible to the mind through the miraculous. Again, what was one of the signs to substantiate Jesus' claims? Listen to Isaiah as he writes about the coming of the Messiah:

Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. ⁶Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the mute tongue shout for joy. Water will gush forth in the wilderness and streams in the desert. (Isaiah 35:5-6)

Approximately eight-hundred years later, John the Baptist sent word to Jesus, by his disciples, concerning Jesus' ministry and mission. He asked his disciples to inquire of Him: "Are you the one who was to come or should we expect someone else" (Matthew 11:3)? Jesus responded to John's question by calling attention to the miraculous in His ministry:

Go back and report to John what you hear and see: ⁵ The **blind** receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. (11:4-5)

During Paul's third missionary journey (AD 50-53, journey of 2,800 miles), Luke reports a distinction between the attitude of the Christians in Berea (fourteen miles S.W. of Thessalonica) and those in Thessalonica (one-hundred miles W. of Philippi). Luke zeros in on the mindset of these two geographical locations. In Acts 17:1-9, Luke called attention to a mob that rejected Paul's message about "the Christ" in the synagogue. The following remarks reveal their escape from the hateful and spiteful Jews in Thessalonica and the "noble character" of the Bereans:

As soon as it was night, the brothers sent Paul and Silas away to Berea. On arriving there, they went to the Jewish synagogue. ¹¹ Now the Bereans were of more noble character than the Thessalonians, for they received the message with great eagerness and examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true. ¹² Many of the Jews believed, as did also a number of prominent Greek women and many Greek men. (17:10-12)

The only Bible available for Paul was the Hebrew Scriptures. He cited from these writings to prove that Jesus was the One whom the prophets foretold would come. Luke states that "they examined the Scriptures every day to see if what Paul said was true." The full information from Paul's sermons is sketchy as to content. Did Paul cite Isaiah 35:5-6? John, one of the Twelve, cites a conversation between Nicodemus (member of the Sanhedrin—the Jewish ruling council) and Jesus. In Nicodemus' encounter with Jesus, he confesses the miraculous in Jesus' ministry: "Rabbi, we know you are a teacher who has come from God. For no one could perform the miraculous signs you are doing if God were not with him" (John 3:2).

Shortly before His Crucifixion, Jesus alerted His disciples to the hatred that would be manifested toward them for following Him as God's Messiah (John 15:18-21). Following these remarks, Jesus makes a startling statement about the culpability, or guilt, of those who refused Him as the Savior of the world since they had witnessed His miracles:

If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin. Now, however, they have no excuse for their sin. ²³ He who hates me hates my Father as well. ²⁴ If I had not done among them what no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. But now they have seen these miracles, and yet they have hated both me and my Father. ²⁵ But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.' (15:22-25)

Jesus based His condemnation upon them for their refusal to accept the miraculous as confirmation of His mission. **They witnessed “what no one else did.”** Even though we that are living today did not witness the miracles, we can still rely upon the testimony of those who were present. Today, we accept actions in the past in spite of the fact that our beliefs or acceptance does not rely upon moral certainty. Do we question everything that has happened in the world that we have not personally witnessed? The answer is NO! We base many of our beliefs upon “probable evidence,” **not** “demonstrative evidence.” What was the purpose of miracles in the ministry of Jesus? They were performed in order to confirm the truth of His message. The miracles were done publicly, not in secret; otherwise, the miracles would rest upon unsupported assertions of individuals and would be looked upon as questionable or dubious.

Earlier in the ministry of Jesus, John wrote about the Jews’ inflexible resistance to the miraculous. Listen to him as he discloses such stubborn confrontation to what they had actually witnessed: “Even after Jesus had done all these miraculous signs in their presence, they still would not believe in him” (John 12:37). **When individuals have already settled in their minds that the supernatural does not exist, then no amount of proof existing to the senses (visible evidence) will move individuals to faith.** These particular individuals (Jews) labored under the blinding effects of a foregone conclusion concerning Jesus and His miracles—reject sensible evidence. In spite of the demonstration of the miraculous, they still would not believe. Yet, the most pregnant evidence of Jesus’ mission issued in miracles. The miracles were undeniable, even for those who refused Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies.

When God sent Moses to lead the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, God used miracles to authenticate Moses’ mission. Moses wanted to know why God thought Pharaoh would listen to him—even the Israelites did not listen (Exodus 6:12). In response to his question, God told him that he would “multiply miraculous signs and wonders,” which miracles ultimately convinced Pharaoh of Moses’ mission. (7:3). One of the first miracles had to do with Moses’ staff being turned into “a snake” (7:8-9). It is in this vein that Jesus spoke to His disciples about the miraculous in His ministry: “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves” (John 14:11).

The miracles of Christ were observable to the people through their senses. For example, John mentions a man born blind who was healed by Jesus. Upon hearing of this miracle, the Pharisees investigate the healing (9:13-16). The man born blind from birth (9:1) was brought to the Pharisees for interrogation. The Pharisees asked him: “how he had received his sight” (9:15)? He responded by saying, “He put mud on my eyes” and “I washed, and now I see” (9:15). Prior to this episode with the Pharisees, others inquired as to how he received his sight. Again, he answered: “The man they call Jesus made some mud and put it on my eyes. He told me to go to Siloam and wash. So I went and washed, and I could see” (9:11). After some confrontation over his eyesight, they continued the probe: “What have you to say about him? It was your eyes he opened” (9:17). In spite of the evidence, they still rejected Jesus as God’s Messiah as promised by the prophets.

Another public miracle involved the raising from the dead a widow's son. This miracle, too, was of a public nature, not something done in secret. Listen to Doctor Luke as he shares with Theophilus (Luke 1:1-4) this unique miracle:

Soon afterward, Jesus went to a town called Nain, and his disciples and a large crowd went along with him.¹² As he approached the town gate, a dead person was being carried out—the only son of his mother, and she was a widow. And a large crowd from the town was with her.¹³ When the Lord saw her, his heart went out to her and he said, “Don’t cry.”¹⁴ Then he went up and touched the coffin, and those carrying it stood still. He said, “Young man, I say to you, get up!”¹⁵ The dead man sat up and began to talk, and Jesus gave him back to his mother.¹⁶ They were all filled with awe and praised God. “A great prophet has appeared among us,” they said. “God has come to help his people.”¹⁷ This news about Jesus spread throughout Judea and the surrounding country. (7:11-17)

Luke, a physician, gave testimony concerning this miracle. The greatest evidence that can be given to a matter of fact (a historical incident) is testimony. The following comments by Edward Stillingfleet (1635-1699, Bishop of Worcester) are well-worth citing:

The miracles of Christ were real and visible miracles; there could be **no illusions of senses, nor deceits of their eyes;** the man who was born blind and cured by our Saviour was known to have been born blind through all the country, and his cure was afterwards as public as his blindness before, and acknowledged by the greatest enemies of Christ at the time of its being done. (John ix.26; Luke vii.12) When Christ raised up the dead man at Nain, it was before much people, and such persons, in all probability, as were many of them present at his death. But lest there might be any suspicion as to him, that he was not really dead, the case is plain and beyond all dispute in Lazarus, who had been, to the knowledge of all persons thereabouts, dead four days; **there could be no deceit at all when the stone was rolled away, and Lazarus came forth in the presence of them all.**¹⁹ (Emphasis mine—bold and underlining)

One of the greatest miracles of all had to do with His Resurrection from the grave on the Third Day. The testimony of the Apostles concerning the reality of the Resurrection of Jesus is beyond dispute. These men were not credulous, or gullible, in reporting this historical occurrence. The Resurrection is the culmination or high-point of all His miracles. Their senses kicked in when they were confronted by the Risen Savior. These men were not looking for a Resurrected Christ. Luke states: “They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost” (Luke 24:37). In spite of their skepticism, Jesus appealed to their senses to verify the authenticity of the Event. Once more, we need to read Luke’s account of this encounter with His disciples:

While they were still talking about this [the Lord’s Resurrection appearance to the two on the way to Emmaus], Jesus himself stood among them and said to them, “Peace be with you.”³⁷ They were startled and frightened, thinking they saw a ghost.³⁸ He said to them, “Why are you troubled, and why do doubts rise in your minds?³⁹ **Look at my hands and my feet.** It is I myself! **Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have.**”⁴⁰ When he had said this, he showed them his hands and feet.⁴¹ And while they still did not believe it because of joy and amazement, he

¹⁹Edward Stillingfleet, *The Evidence of the Christian Religion Derived from Its Original Propagation in the world*, abridged and annotated by G. R. Wynne, reprinted (USA: www.ICGtesting.com), 20. The reprint edition is extremely informative and an excellent defense of Christianity—date not listed.

asked them, “Do you have anything here to eat?”⁴² **They gave him a piece of broiled fish,⁴³ and he took it and ate it in their presence.** (24:36-43)

In Christ’s earlier miracles, the miracles were performed in such a way that they were confirmed through the senses. In other words, they were real and visible. Jesus appealed to the judgment of their senses to verify His numerous miracles as well as to His Resurrection. In order to reinforce His claims, His miracles were addressed to the eye, the ear, and the reasoning faculty of the brain. As far as I know, no religion, except Christianity, was ever introduced and established among adversaries by an appeal to the evidence of miracles. It is in this vein that John, one of the Twelve, relates an incident that occurred with His disciples in regard to a question posed by Thomas (John 14:5): “Believe me when I say that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; or at least believe on the evidence of the miracles themselves” (14:11).

Miracles are not just wonders, but signs to confirm that one is an agent of Jesus the Christ. Shortly before His ascension, Mark reports Jesus’ final words about the miraculous in His disciples’ ministry: “Then the disciples went out and preached everywhere, and the Lord worked with them and **confirmed his word by the signs that accompanied it**” (Mark 16:20). On the other hand, the miraculous in Jesus’ ministry were also signs to give credence to His claims. The following comments by Richard Whately (1787-1863, an English rhetorician, logician, economist, and theologian who also served the Church of Ireland as Archbishop of Dublin) are on target as he distinguishes between wonders and signs:

You may easily perceive, on reflection, that a mere *wonderful occurrence*, of itself, proves nothing; but when a man does something that is beyond human power to do, or *foretells* something beyond human foresight, and makes this a testimony of his coming from God, it is then, and then only, that he is properly said to offer a miraculous proof. And, accordingly, the works performed by Jesus and his Apostles are called in Scripture (as they really were), not merely *Miracles* (that is, *wonders*), but *Signs* (that is, *miraculous evidence*) (Mark xvi. 20)

For instance, that a violent storm should suddenly cease, and be succeeded by a complete calm, is something extraordinary; but of itself proves nothing. But when the disciples heard Jesus give his command, and rebuke the wind and waves, which immediately became still, they justly regarded this as a *sign* that God was with him. (Matt. viii. 26) So, also, that a person seemingly dead should suddenly revive and rise up, is indeed a wonderful event; but, of itself, is merely a wonder. But when the Lord Jesus told the child of Jairus (Luke viii. 54), and the widow’s son of Nain (Luke vii. 14), to rise up, each of them did so at his word, these became proofs of his Divine mission. These were among the works which, as he said, bore witness of him [John 10:25].²⁰ (Emphasis mine)

Jesus confirmed His ministry with wonders and signs. With just a perusal of the New Testament writings, we witness Jesus imparting His power to His chosen Twelve, which miraculous power also gave proof of their ministry. For instance, Matthew gives the following information about their calling and their powers: “He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness” (Matthew

²⁰Richard Whately, *Of the Truth of Christianity: Compiled from Lessons on the Truth of Christianity and Other Works of Archbishop Whately (1866)*, edited by Samuel Hinds (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1866), 54-55. This book is one of the most informed and logical books in defense of the Christian faith that I have read. This book is still available through Amazon.

10:1). In addition to these Twelve, Jesus also sent out seventy-two others to announce the kingdom of God, which proclamation was confirmed through the miraculous (Luke 10:1-24).

After the Day of Pentecost, it seems that the Apostles were able to impart these miraculous powers to others through the laying on of hands (Acts 8:14-23). This particular event took place in Samaria through the Apostles. Again, we witness Paul laying his hands on “about twelve men” who then received the Holy Spirit, which gift enabled these men to speak in tongues and prophesy (19:6). When Paul wrote to the Christians in Rome (written about AD 57 from Corinth), he called attention to his desire to impart spiritual gifts: “I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong” (Romans 1:11).

Apparently, numerous Christians in Corinth possessed many of these miraculous gifts of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:7-11). Paul’s Epistle to the Christians in the province of Galatia (written about AD 49 from Antioch, Syria) reveals that many possessed spiritual gifts: “**Does God give you his Spirit and work miracles among you** because you observe the law, or because you believe what you heard” (Galatians 3:5)? In Paul’s second correspondence to the Christians in Corinth (written about AD 57 from Macedonia), he identified “signs” and “wonders” and “miracles” as proof of their mission from Christ: “**The things that mark an apostle**—signs, wonders and miracles—were done among you with great perseverance” (2 Corinthians 12:12). In confirmation of this statement, we can hardly forget the words of Doctor Luke as he calls attention to the miraculous in Paul’s ministry in Ephesus:

God did extraordinary miracles through Paul, ¹² so that even handkerchiefs and aprons that had touched him were taken to the sick, and their illnesses were cured and the evil spirits left them. (Acts 19:11-12)

The author of the Book of Hebrews (probably written about AD 64, locality unknown) writes about “signs, wonders and various miracles” employed by the original hearers of Jesus Himself:

We must pay more careful attention, therefore, to what we have heard, so that we do not drift away. ² For if the message spoken by angels was binding, and every violation and disobedience received its just punishment, ³ how shall we escape if we ignore such a great salvation? **This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was confirmed to us by those who heard him.** ⁴ **God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will.** (Hebrews 2:1-4)

Finally, the Apostle Peter, ten days after the ascension of Jesus, on the Day of Pentecost, addressed over three-thousand Jews concerning Jesus and His miracles:

Men of Israel, listen to this: Jesus of Nazareth was a man **accredited by God to you by miracles, wonders and signs,** which God did among you through him, as you yourselves know. (Acts 2:22)

Once more, the words of Richard Whately are on target as he illustrates that wonders and signs were extremely important in Jesus’ ministry as well as the ministry of His disciples. We should read and reread the following comments:

The power of working miracles which was possessed by the Apostles was a visible proof of that departure from the ordinary course of nature which is implied by their claim to a commission from heaven, which corresponds to the ‘specimens,’ ‘experiments,’ and other well-attested ‘facts,’ which we require of a geologist, mineralogist, or chemist, if he asserts his discovery of any natural phenomena, especially of any at variance with received opinions. In this latter case it would not only be reasonable to require such sensible proof, but it would be unreasonable to admit the assertion without it; without seeing the experiment or specimen ourselves, or satisfying ourselves, on the testimony of credible witnesses, that it had been seen by *others*. The larger number of scientific truths are received as such on this latter kind of evidence.

It would be equally unreasonable to admit the claims of any person to inspiration or extraordinary communion with God, without the appropriate test—the performance of sensible miracles. And it was thus also that the Apostles were themselves assured of the reality of their mission.²¹ (Emphasis mine)

THE SERVANT PROPHECY: ISAIAH 53

As we approach Isaiah 52:13—53:12, we are confronted with one of the most detailed descriptions of the coming Messiah in the Hebrew Scriptures.²² From earlier studies in this series (three parts), I have emphasized the progressive development of the coming Messiah. Isaiah 53 is such a chapter in announcing details about the Messiah. The frequency of citations from this chapter in the New Testament is astounding. Is there a principle to adhere to as we seek to understand the numerous prophecies in the Old Testament writings? Yes! Samuel Horsley²³ addressed the subject of the proper interpretation of Old Testament prophecies with the New Testament writings. His comments go right to the heart of correct principles to be applied as we seek understanding. We should weigh the following words with care:

Particular diligence should be used in comparing the parallel texts of the Old and the New Testaments. **When you read the Old Testament**, if you perceive by the margin that any particular passage is cited in the New, turn to that passage of the New to which the margin refers, that you may see in what manner, in what sense, and to what purpose, the words of the more ancient are alleged by the later writer, who, in many instances, may be supposed to have clearer light upon the same subject: **On the other hand, when in the New Testament you meet with citations from the Old**, always consult the original writer, that you may have the satisfaction of judging for yourselves, how far the passage alleged makes for the argument which it is brought to support.²⁴ (Emphasis mine)

Do we have justification for these principles found in the New Testament writings? The answer is yes! For example, Luke draws a comparison between the Jews in Berea and those in Thessalonica (Acts 17:11). Toward the end of Paul’s ministry, he wrote his last letter to

²¹Richard Whately, *On the Truth of Christianity* (1866), 33-34.

²²See Robert L. Reymond, *Jesus Divine Messiah: The New and Old Testament Witness* (Scotland: Christian Focus Publicans, 2003), 117-128, for a detailed study of this Servant song. Also, see Frederick Alfred Aston, *The Challenge of the Ages*, Eighteenth Edition, revised (Scarsdale, New York: Published by the Author, 1965) for an exhaustive study of Isaiah 53. My objective is to high-light the Messianic character of the Servant Song based on the New Testament writings.

²³**Samuel Horsley** (1733-1806), British churchman, bishop of Rochester, and author of numerous works.

²⁴Samuel Horsley, *Nine Sermons: On the Nature of the Evidence by Which the Fact of Our Lord’s Resurrection Is Established, and On Various Other Subjects* (New York: T & J Swords, 1816), 164.

Timothy (written approximately about AD 67 from Rome) about Timothy's faith and his reliance upon the Scriptures. In this Epistle, Paul focused on what his grandmother and mother taught him from "infancy." Listen to Paul as he issues the following admonition:

But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, ¹⁵ and how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. (2 Timothy 3:14-15)

The **Hebrew Scriptures** could make Timothy "wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus." Just as Paul encouraged Timothy to utilize the "holy Scriptures," so, we, too, need to study the Hebrew Scriptures in order to understand what God had in store for all humanity. For this reason, no doubt, Paul told Timothy to study the Old Testament writings: "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a workman who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15).

Since this section deals with Isaiah 53, we need to examine this chapter with the New Testament writings. Just a casual reading of Isaiah 53 reveals that we are confronted with the question, "Who is the suffering Messiah"? Did Jesus utilize Isaiah 53 to indicate that He is the One whom Isaiah wrote about? Let us turn to Isaiah 53:12 to begin to answer this question:

Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and **was numbered with the transgressors**. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:12)

Isaiah foretold that the Messiah would be "numbered with the transgressors." The question still is, did Jesus identify Himself with this statement? In the course of a conversation between Himself and Peter, He cited from Isaiah 53:12:

It is written: 'And he **was numbered with the transgressors**'; and I tell you that this must be fulfilled in me. Yes, what is written about me is reaching its fulfillment." (Luke 22:37)

Luke records the conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch (an important official and treasurer of Candace—queen of the Ethiopians) who was on his way back home from Jerusalem. During his journey back to Ethiopia, he read from Isaiah 53. Philip, an evangelist, joined himself to the chariot as a result of the Holy Spirit. Luke records the following information:

The eunuch was reading this passage of Scripture: "He was led like a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is silent, so he did not open his mouth." ³³In his humiliation he was deprived of justice. Who can speak of his descendants? For his life was taken from the earth." ³⁴The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" ³⁵ Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. (Acts 8:32-35)

Again, we turn to the Book of Isaiah (Chapter 53) to see the original setting of this most famous Messianic prophecy. Isaiah writes:

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; **he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.** ⁸By

oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken. (Isaiah 53:7-8)

The Gospels and the Epistles frequently cite from the Hebrew Scriptures to give credence to their teaching concerning Jesus of Nazareth as the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. Another case in point is when the author of the Book of Hebrews alludes to Isaiah 53:4-6. For example, consider the following chart:

Isaiah 53:4-6

Hebrews 9:28

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. ⁵ But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed. ⁶ We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all.	<u>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.</u>
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God's scheme of redemption should excite us to faithfulness with the utmost diligence to serve Him. Once more, we cannot read Peter's comments about Jesus without seeing an echo of Isaiah 53.²⁵ Listen to Peter as he gives an explanation for Christ's death:

He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth. ²³ When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly. ²⁴ He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed. ²⁵ For you were like sheep going astray, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls. (1 Peter 2:22-25)

CONCLUSION

The study of Messianic prophecy is extremely important in our examination of "Christ: the Fulfillment of Prophecy." I have not examined the various chapters in the Book of Psalms concerning the announcement of the coming Messiah.²⁶ Luke reports the following words of

²⁵See Frederick Alfred Aston, *The Challenge of the Ages*, Eighteenth Edition, revised (New York: Published by the Author, 1965) for an excellent overview of Isaiah 53.

²⁶See William Alexander, *The Witness of the Psalms to Christ and Christianity* (London: John Murray, 1877) for an exhaustive study of Psalms.

Jesus concerning the necessity of studying the Old Testament Scriptures about Himself, which study would make them “wise unto salvation”:

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.”⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.⁴⁶ He told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day,⁴⁷ and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things.⁴⁹ 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 24:45-49)

In confirmation of Jesus’ admonition to His disciples, I call attention to Isaiah 61:1-3 and Jesus’ comments about this prophecy. What is significant about this prophecy from Isaiah is that Jesus read this prophecy in the synagogue in Nazareth (Luke 4:14-17). The following chart illustrates Jesus’ understanding and application of Isaiah’s remarks:

Isaiah 61:1-2

The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners,² to proclaim the year of the LORD’s favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn.

Luke 4:18-21

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed,¹⁹ to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.”²⁰ Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him,²¹ and he began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.”