

Adult Quarterly

That It Might Be Fulfilled— Prophecies Concerning Jesus, the Messiah

Quarterly Aim: To show that the coming of the Messiah and His kingdom was foretold by the prophets.

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About the Writer



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Prophecies of Christ's Birth

APPLICATION

The student will learn about the details of Christ's birth.

SCRIPTURES TO READ

Text: Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:18-25; 2:1-10.

Related Scripture: Genesis 3:15; Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 9:6, 7;
Luke 1:39-56; 2:4-7.

Devotional Reading: God's Message to Mary, Luke 1:26-35.

Introduction

The prophetic utterances of the Bible were given for a purpose. The biblical word for prophet indicated a person who spoke the message of God to people. The man prophesying shared information God wanted the people to hear, accept and obey. This series of lessons deals with many of the prophecies which foretold information concerning God's Messiah. Peter wrote about the diligent search made by Old Testament prophets who wanted to know more about God's plan for the redemption of the human race (1 Peter 1:10-12). This would include the words which described the coming, the life, the ministry, the death and resurrection of the Savior. The plan of salvation was so special and spectacular that even "the angels desire to look into" it (verse 12).

Christ's birth is a special event in history. Time is divided in terms of the coming of the Savior. The time was when the calendar was divided in terms of BC (Before Christ) and AD (Anno Domini, in the year of our Lord). Because of the secular focus of the world some people choose to call the earlier era, BCE (Before the Christian Era). No matter how people try to lessen the impact of the coming of the Savior, He remains the central figure of all history.

His coming to earth happened in a unique manner. Part of the distinctiveness of His coming is that so much was foretold by

Old Testament prophets. This lesson points to only two of those prophecies and their fulfillment. The birth of the Savior set the stage for His life, ministry and death.

1. _____ **The Prophecy Foretold
(Isaiah 7:14; Micah 5:2)**

Nothing happens beyond the knowledge of God. He is omniscient, He knows all things. Acts 15:18 says, “Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.” From the beginning of time, God knew all that would take place. As a result, His message to humanity could foretell things which would happen. The prophets could reveal God’s message of the future so that His people would know how to conduct their lives. These two prophecies gave specific information concerning the coming Messiah.

Isaiah prophesied during the reign of Ahaz. Ahaz was an evil king who cared nothing about Jehovah but wanted to put on the front of being a godly man. The nation was being threatened. Isaiah presented God’s message that He would preserve the nation and turn back the enemy. Isaiah told Ahaz to ask for a sign from the Lord (Isaiah 7:11). Ahaz, in false humility and piety, claimed he would never ask a sign from God. God gave it anyway. His sign was one which applied immediately to the time frame of the deliverance from the enemy’s hand. It also had a future purpose which focused on God’s offer of salvation. God’s sign was, “Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (verse 14). This prophetic utterance introduced a matter which was unique to the birth of Jesus—the birth of a child without an earthly father. The virgin birth of the Savior was an integral part of salvation because of the biblical principle of the kinsman-redeemer. To redeem someone from their debt, the person had to be a near kinsman and had to possess the ability to redeem. Coming to earth as the Son of Mary (being virgin born) qualified Jesus because it made Him human. Being born as the Son of God also gave Him the ability to redeem. This prophetic sign was vital to His identity as the Messiah.

Micah was a prophet to the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Ahab. His prophecy about Christ described the place of His birth. The name given, Beth-lehem Ephratah, distinguished it from another town of Bethlehem which was located in the tribe of Zebulun. Beth-lehem Ephratah was a small, nondescript village of little importance. Its claim to fame at the time of the prophecy was that King David was born there. Then, the prophet said that the greater son of David the Messiah would also come from that town.

These two statements given by two different prophets give unique information about the coming Messiah. For those who would be anticipating His coming, these two facts would be helpful in determining the truth of the claims of those who came. If a person claimed to be the Messiah but did not come from Bethlehem, he was not who he claimed to be. The Christ would be virgin born in the town of Bethlehem.

2. _____

The Prophecy Fulfilled (Matthew 1:18-25)

“Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise” (verse 18). Mary was a young lady who was espoused (engaged) to Joseph. Under the Jewish system, an engagement was a contract not to be broken. Mary and Joseph were legally bound to each other even though they had not come together as husband and wife. During the time of their espousal, Mary was found to be with child. Normally, this would have required breaking her vows of purity. However, in this case, Mary had done nothing wrong. Luke described these events from the viewpoint of Mary. The angel Gabriel came to her with the message she had been chosen to bear the Son of God. She did not understand how that could take place since she was a virgin. The explanation was that the Holy Spirit would implant within her womb the very Son of God. She had agreed to God’s request and was now with child. Joseph did not know all of that. He pondered what to do. By the Law, he could have her stoned for infidelity. Being a just and compassionate man, he decided simply to divorce her. (Remember that even though they had never come together as husband and wife, they were legally bound to each other.) The message came from God that the child within Mary was the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy of a virgin conceiving and bearing a son. Joseph accepted the Word of God and protected her from that day forward. The prophecy had been fulfilled.

The fulfillment of this prophecy was something special for it was the means by which God provided the way of salvation for a fallen race. People had rebelled against God and needed a Savior. This One who was born of Mary was to be called, “JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (verse 21). The name, Jesus, had the general meaning, Jehovah the Savior. It speaks of the work He would accomplish. This could happen because He is “Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (verse 23 quoting Isaiah 7:14). “God with us” has the power to save because He is God in human flesh. This was the work of Jesus and was the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy.

The narrative about the wise men from the East is one closely identified with the birth of the Savior. Much discussion and debate arises about the time frame of their coming and the meaning of the star which guided them to the place where Jesus was. However, what took place with their coming showed the value of Old Testament prophecies concerning the coming of the Messiah.

These men came to find the One whose birth was revealed to them through a star. How or what this star revealed was not clearly stated. Something special caused these men to travel a long distance to bow at the side of One who was born to be the King of a nondescript nation under the authority of Rome. As they followed the star, they came near the city of Jerusalem. Since they were searching for a King, they assumed He would be born in the capital of the nation. They went to the palace in search of Him. They asked where the newborn King of the Jews might be. Herod thought he was that king and was curious about the identity of anyone who would threaten his position. He asked the priests if they understood and they responded with the prophecy given by Micah. He would be born in Bethlehem. The wise men departed from Jerusalem and saw the star once again. They followed it until it stood over the place where Jesus was.

When the wise men beheld the Christ, they fell down in humility and worshiped Him. They acknowledged Him to be something above the ordinary. They had not bowed before the political ruler of Judah when they stood before Herod. Yet, when they came into the presence of the Messiah, they immediately fell before Him and offered Him honor. This was evident by the gifts they brought Him—gold, frankincense and myrrh. These gifts point to many aspects of royalty. Gold would be a token of His position of King. Frankincense was used in some sacrifices and could be a token of His deity. Myrrh was used in the embalming of the dead and was bitter. It could be a token of His sufferings. These gifts pointed to the work of the Christ and showed the heart of these men as they bowed before the King of kings. They recognized in Him something beyond the ordinary. The stars of Heaven would not testify of an ordinary man. Jesus was the promised Messiah.

Conclusion

The coming of the Messiah was a special event foretold by prophets of God hundreds of years before it took place. No one should be too amazed that God was able to give details about the

birth of His Son that far in advance. He is God—all-knowing. Since He knew what would take place, He could reveal it to His prophets so that people could anticipate His coming. These same prophecies give assurance to people today. If God's prophecies concerning the birth of the Savior came to pass, then His other prophetic statements will also come to pass. As a loving God, He wants His people to be prepared for the future. We can be thankful He has shown us His ability to see through the veil of time to help us be ready for what happens.