

THE MAN FROM HEAVEN

Old Testament Prophecies of the Messiah

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Life Perspectives from Fellowship Bible Church

The Messiah's "Address"

When we send letters to another person, we have to use a very specific "address" which pinpoints the country, area, state, street, number and finally the name of the person we're seeking. In much the same way, God gave a very specific address to His anointed representative who was to appear on earth. This address is found all through the old Testament, in various passages, most of which were recognized by the Jews as Messianic references centuries before Jesus was born. A close examination of some of the components of this address will show how detailed it is, and how unique it was for one person to fulfill them all.

Frank Morison was an English journalist in the 1920's who set out to disprove Christianity. He set aside time to evaluate the Old Testament prophecies and the New Testament claims of Christ. But instead of destroying Christianity, he found himself convinced of the very thing he had set out to disprove. Recounting the experience, he wrote:

"I wanted to take the life of Jesus...and strip it of its overgrowth of primitive beliefs and dogmatic suppositions...It affected a revolution in my thought. Things emerged from that old-world story which previously I should have thought impossible. Slowly the conviction grew that the drama of those unforgettable weeks of human history was deeper than it seemed."

Morison became a follower of Christ and finally wrote "Who Moved The Stone?", one of the greatest books ever written in defense of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ.

*But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son,
born of a woman, born under law...
Galatians 4:4*

☆ SEED OF A WOMAN – Genesis 3:15

"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring [seed] and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel."

The first glimpse of good news comes in the midst of some really *bad* news. Adam and Eve have just disobeyed God and are being expelled from the garden of Eden. God speaks to the serpent, who is Satan, and tells of a future conflict involving a person who will be born of a woman's seed, instead of a man's. This is a mystery until Jesus is born of a virgin. This future man will deliver a crushing, fatal blow to the serpent, but will be injured (a heel wound)

in the process.

"The wording is odd because in Semitic language the "seed" is usually through the man. But this is a reference to the virgin birth (Is 7:14). It was the seed of Eve, not Adam - Jesus was from Mary but not Joseph."

☆ LINE OF SHEM - Genesis 9,10

After the great flood, Noah's three sons (Shem, Ham, Japheth) will have to re-populate the earth. God reveals that the line of Shem will be blessed, thus limiting the source of the Messiah to one-third of the human race:

*He also said, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Shem!
May Canaan be the slave of Shem." (Gen 9:26)*

☆ RACE OF THE JEWS - Genesis 22:18

God began His plan of redemption with one man. He called Abraham, a man living in a city called Ur, near the Persian Gulf, to follow Him to a new land. In Abraham's old age God gave him a son, a son whom God later asked Abraham if he would be willing to sacrifice. After saving the child from death, God renewed his promise to Abraham, saying:

"...and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

The blessing would be brought about by God's Messiah, who must be of the Jewish race, because he would be of the "seed" of Abraham. Ironically, this promise in Genesis 22 is spoken by "the angel of the Lord" whom many theologians agree is actually Jesus, because his name and character in the Old Testament are often interchangeable with God's.

☆ LINE OF ISAAC - Genesis 21:12

But God said to him, "Do not be so distressed about the boy and your maidservant. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you, because it is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned."

It had been hard for Abraham to wait for God's promise of a son, and he had taken Hagar his servant, who bore

Jesus 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."

him a son name Ishmael. Although Ishmael would have numerous descendants, God made it clear that he intended the Messiah – the line of blessing – to come from the family of Isaac, the child of promise. (See Galatians 4:28-31 for a New Testament application of this incident.)

☆ **LINE OF JACOB - Numbers 24:17**

*"I see him, but not now; I behold him, but not near. A star will come out of **Jacob**; a scepter will rise out of **Israel**."*

Likewise, Isaac had two sons, twin brothers named Jacob and Esau. Through Esau's foolishness and Jacob's cunning, the birthright was transferred from the firstborn (Esau) to Jacob, (later named Israel). This birthright exchange was no fluke, for God had planned it (see Romans 9:10-13). Therefore the Messiah would come from the line of Jacob.

☆ **TRIBE OF JUDAH - Genesis 49:10**

*The scepter will not depart from **Judah**, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs and the obedience of the nations is his.*

Jacob had twelve sons, one of whom was Joseph, who was hated by the others, sold into slavery and sent to Egypt. Eventually the family is reunited through a number of events which God sovereignly orchestrates, and they all end up in Egypt, where Joseph has become famous and powerful. At the end of his life, the patriarch Jacob blesses each of his twelve sons, and in the process proclaims that the "scepter" will belong to the house of Judah.

☆ **FAMILY OF JESSE – Isaiah 11:1, 2, 10**

*A shoot will come up from the stump of **Jesse**; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him — the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD...*

In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious.

In the years after Moses and Joshua, Israel grew and flourished, although not without their ups and downs. Their attempt at having a great king, "like the other nations" failed miserably when God removed his blessing from Saul. But an ordinary man named Jesse, of the tribe of Judah, was singled out in the town of Bethlehem by the prophet Samuel as the man through whom the Messianic line would continue. It would be through one of his eight sons that the promised deliverer would come.

☆ **HOUSE OF DAVID – Jeremiah 23:5**

*"The days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will raise up to **David** a righteous Branch, a King who will reign wisely and do what is just and right in the land."*

In 2 Samuel 16, seven of Jesse's eight sons are brought before Samuel, but none of them was the one God had chosen. Asked if he had any more sons, Jesse replied: "There is still the youngest," Jesse answered, "but he is tending the sheep." Samuel said, "Send for him; we will not sit down until he arrives." It was David, God's chosen king.

It would be through the house of David that the Messiah's line would be traced. Perhaps symbolic of the scene when Jesus was born, David was anointed in Bethlehem, where he was a shepherd out in the fields tending the sheep.

Josh McDowell writes about this process of elimination up to this point: "Jesse had 8 children and God eliminated 7/8 of them. We read that God's man will not only be of the seed of a woman, the lineage of Shem, the race of the Jews, the line of Isaac, the line of Jacob, the tribe of Judah, but that he will also be of the house of David."

☆ **FAMOUS FORERUNNER – Isaiah 40:3**

*A voice of one calling: "In the **desert** prepare the way for the LORD; make straight in the wilderness a highway for our God."*

*"See, I will send my **messenger**, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come," says the LORD Almighty. (Malachi 3:1)*

It was prophesied that the Messiah would be preceded by a special messenger, someone who would somehow prepare the way for him to come. That messenger turned out to be a member of Jesus' own family (Mary and Elizabeth were probably cousins - see Lk 1:36). God spoke to John, son of Zechariah and Elizabeth, who then began preaching "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" in the desert country around the Jordan river. In fact, when he was asked why he was doing this, "John (known as the Baptist) replied in the words of Isaiah the prophet, "I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.'" (John 1:23)

Note also from the passage in Malachi 3 that the Messiah (referred to there as the Lord) would come to the temple. Therefore, that limits the time of the Messiah's coming to a time when the temple was still standing, which means before AD 70, when it was destroyed by the Romans.

☆ **TOWN OF BETHLEHEM – Micah 5:2**

“But you, **Bethlehem Ephrathah**, 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.”

When the wise men came from the East looking for the Messiah, Herod asked the chief priests & teachers of the Law if they had any idea where the Anointed One was to be born. They all immediately answered that the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem – it was common knowledge, based on the book of Micah (see Matt:2:4,5). Bethlehem was known as the city of David.

One might expect that God’s representative would come from a large, well-known city like Rome or at least Jerusalem, not a relatively small and unimportant town like Bethlehem. But God has always delighted in using “the weak things of the world to shame the strong.” (1 Cor 1:27)

Furthermore, Bethlehem suffered from attacks by the Roman emperor Hadrian in the second century AD, when all Jews were expelled from the town.

☆ **BETRAYED BY A FRIEND – Psalm 41:9**

*Even my **close friend**, whom I trusted, he who shared my bread, has lifted up his heel against me. I told them, “If you think it best, give me my pay;*

*but if not, keep it.” So they paid me **thirty pieces of silver**. And the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the **potter**” — the handsome price at which they priced me! **So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD to the potter.** (Zechariah 11:12-13)*

In these passages, it was prophesied that the Messiah would 1) be betrayed 2) by a close friend 3) for 30 pieces of silver (the price of a common slave in ancient times according to Exodus 31:32), 4) which will be cast on the temple floor and 5) used to buy a potter’s field. Can you imagine trying to arrange for these things to happen?

There are very few hints throughout Jesus’ life that Judas was not a faithful follower, but his true colors became evident at the end. His tragic story can be found in Matthew 27:1-10.

☆ **CRUCIFIXION – Psalm 22:16**

*Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have **pierced my hands and my feet...***

Psalm 22 was written by David somewhere around 1000 BC, 800 years before crucifixion was put into effect by Rome as a form of capital punishment. (The Jewish form was death by stoning.) In fact, Psalm 22 is odd because, while David went through numerous hard times, there is no event in his life that seems to directly correspond to what he describes in the psalm. Therefore many think it is primarily a foreshadowing of the Messiah’s suffering.

*“They divide my garments among them and **cast lots for my clothing.**” (Psalm 22:18)*

This strangely specific statement was also fulfilled to the letter at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion. The apostle John records:

When the soldiers crucified Jesus, they took his clothes, dividing them into four shares, one for each of them, with the undergarment remaining. This garment was seamless, woven in one piece from top to bottom. “Let’s not tear it,” they said to one another. “Let’s decide by lot who will get it.”

☆ **DEATH AND RESURRECTION – Isaiah 53:9**

*He was assigned a **grave with the wicked**, and with the **rich** in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.*

¹¹*After the suffering of his soul, **he will see the light of life and be satisfied**; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will **bear their iniquities.***

Finally, the Old Testament prescribes that the Messiah will be associated with criminals, yet

Messianic Prophecies in Matthew		
Event in Jesus’ Life	Matthew Reference	Old Testament Reference
His virgin birth	Mt. 1:23	Isa. 7:14
His birthplace	Mt. 2:6	Mic. 5:2
Return from Egypt	Mt. 2:15	Hos. 11:1
Healings	Mt. 8:17	Isa. 53:4
Servanthood	Mt. 12:18-21	Isa. 42:1-4
Use of Parables	Mt. 13:34	Ps. 78:2
Triumphal Entry	Mt. 21:5	Zech. 9:9
His rejection	Mt. 21:4	Ps. 118:22
His deity	Mt. 22:44	Ps. 110:1
His abandonment	Mt. 26:31	Zech. 13:7
His Return	Mt. 26:64	Dan. 7:13
Crucifixion details	Mt. 27:34,48	Ps. 69:21
	Mt. 27:35	Ps. 22:18
	Mt. 27: 39,40	Ps. 22:7
	Mt. 27:43	Ps. 22:8
	Mt. 27:46	Ps. 22:1
His burial	Mt. 27:57-60	Isa. 53:9

somehow also with the rich. These two points came true when Jesus was crucified, not alone, but between two thieves, and then after his death when Joseph of Arimathea, a wealthy man, requested Jesus' body and gave it a proper Jewish burial.

Isaiah also records that the Messiah will suffer and then see "the light of life", and bear the iniquities" of many. The gospels, written by eyewitnesses, all record the astounding truth that Jesus was seen by over 500 people after His resurrection. And the main message of the New Testament is that in Jesus' death, he paid for the sins of all people, bearing our iniquities.

What are the Odds?

The Old Testament was written over 1000 years, with over 300 references to the coming of the Messiah. Josh McDowell, in More Than a Carpenter, writes that the chances of just eight of these prophecies (the ones dealt with in this paper) being fulfilled by any man from the time the documents were written until now, would be 1×10^{17} or 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. To explain what this would be like, it would be equivalent to a blindfolded man trying to find one particular silver dollar somewhere in the state of Texas if the state were 2 feet deep in coins!

Some say that Jesus just read about the prophecies and then set out to fulfill them himself. But a moment's thought makes one realize that it's difficult to arrange the location of your birth and the identity your parents!

So, What Does This Mean to Me?

As one looks at the evidence, it becomes clear that **God has plans and He is in control.**

Jeremiah 29:11 reads: *"For I know the plans I have for you," declares the LORD, "plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future."* As Josh McDowell also wrote, the evidence for Christ is evidence that demands a verdict. You must either choose to accept the reality of Jesus Christ or reject Him. There is no middle ground. What have you done?

It is also evident that **God is in the process of creating a new family.** In 2 Corinthians 5:17 the apostle Paul wrote: *Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!*

Jesus Christ came that we might have life, new life that comes from the inside out. He has promised that to all who receive Him, they will become children of God. He will forgive their sins, no matter how great or how many, and he will enter that person's life, never to

leave under any circumstances.

If you have not made the great discovery of what it means to have a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, you can do it right now by simply expressing to God that you, along with all people, have sinned and broken His laws. ("For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God" – Romans 3:23) God is a righteous God, and sin must be punished. ("For the wages of sin is death" – Romans 6:23). But He has arranged for a replacement for you – He sent His own Son to take the punishment that you and I deserve. All you have to do is ask Him into your life. Therefore if you receive Jesus Christ, his death is applied to you and your sins are gone.

That is the free offer of God's gift – salvation to anyone who will receive it. It cannot be bought or worked for. You cannot be good enough to get it as a reward. You must receive it as a gift – His Messiah who came for the whole world – and for you.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life."

John 3:16

FOR FURTHER STUDY:

books by Josh McDowell -

More Than a Carpenter

Evidence That Demands a Verdict

The Resurrection Factor