



Major Messianic Prophecies

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Often I've asked Jewish people this question, "When the Jewish Messiah comes, how you will know? How will you be able to identify the true Jewish Messiah from many over the centuries who have claimed to be Messiah, but weren't?"

Most Jewish people today don't know how they will identify the Messiah of Israel. They typically respond, "Well, when He comes, we will just know it." Others say, "Our Rabbi will be sure to tell us when the Jewish Messiah is here, but we know He hasn't come yet."

Reverend Moon, the leader of the Unification Church, claimed to be the Messiah. About 100 years ago, the founder of the Bh'ai faith also claimed to be the returning Messiah. Though both have many ardent followers, we know both are false Messiahs.

How Can We Know?

But how can anyone know for sure if a person is or isn't the Messiah of Israel? It's not a matter of personal opinion, or religious zeal, or majority vote. There is only one way to identify Messiah. We must look at the scriptural prophecies that point toward His coming.

Several hundred portions of Scripture contain, to a greater or lesser degree, Messianic implications. Before you begin talking with people about Messianic prophecy, it's good to set the stage for them.

Say something like this. "Within the Scriptures we find many pieces of a puzzle, that when fit together, give us the picture of Messiah. Within that picture are two very different and contrasting views of His work. Having one piece of the puzzle does not mean that you have the entire puzzle, or just getting pieces to fit around the edge does not mean that you have a complete picture."

The standard for fulfilling Messianic prophecy is not 20% or 50% or even 97%, but all prophecies must be fulfilled with 100% accuracy. Not all Messianic prophecies have been fulfilled to this day. Many point forward to the return of Messiah, and these are yet unfulfilled.

When discussing a prophetic passage, try to help the listener become acquainted with the date in which the prophecy was given, so that he can see it being fulfilled hundreds of years later. When citing a text, try to explain the portion in its context. It's important to explain elements of Scripture that the listener may not understand, such as author, the audience he was writing to and the setting.

In this discussion, we will not go into lengthy detail of various Messianic portions, but we will strive to give you an overview of some of the major Messianic prophecies as well as their New Testament fulfillment. If you wish to study more, we recommend a book entitled, *All the Messianic Prophecies of the Bible*, published by Zondervan Publishing Company, and compiled by Herbert Lockyer.

A statement by a Dr. A. T. Pearson, who reminds us that prophecy must be evaluated by three tests:

1. A prophecy must be such an unveiling of the future that no mere human foresight or wisdom could have guessed it.



- 2. The prediction must deal in sufficient detail as to exclude true guesswork.
- 3. There must be such a lapse of time between the prophecy and fulfillment, so as to preclude that agency of the prophet himself in effecting, or affecting, the result.

Genesis 3:14

The first Messianic prophecy in the Bible is found in Genesis 3, a specific prophecy uttered by God and directed toward the serpent who beguiled Eve in the Garden of Eden.

Reading from Genesis 3: 14, we find:

So the LORD God said to the serpent, 'Because you have done this, cursed are you above all the livestock and all the wild animals! You will crawl on your belly and you will eat dust all the days of your life. And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel.' To the woman he said, 'I will greatly increase your pains in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children. Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.'

The serpent himself was the first to learn that a Deliverer would come and destroy his devilish work. The serpent was given the initial promise, and the prophecy of redemption from the sin that he brought into God's universe. This redemption would be brought about through One who would spring forth from humanity.

But at this early stage in the Messianic puzzle, Scripture is ambiguous about whether a single person is intended here. The Hebrew word for seed in this portion is "zerah," and it may be taken to mean either a collective seed, such as a group, or singular, such as an individual.

The context of this portion of Scripture seems to imply that the serpent has a representative leader, through the phrase, "thy head." It also seems to imply that the seed of the woman would be an individual, but this is not spelled out in this portion of Scripture. Yet it is the potential of an individualistic reference that we see in the refinement of this offspring, who would be channeled down through a line of people to come from the line of Abraham.

Genesis 12:3

In Genesis 12:3, we find this portion of the promise that is part of the Abraham covenant. It says, "I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

We find two portions of Scripture in Galatians that help us to see a New Testament understanding of these two prophecies. First, Galatians 3:16. "The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed." The Scripture does not say "and to seeds", meaning many people, but "and to your seed", meaning one person, who is Christ."



In Galatians 4:4-5: "But when the time had fully come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under law, to redeem those under law, that we might receive the full rights of sons."

Genesis 49:9-10

Genesis 49:9-10 contains a Messianic prophecy:

You are a lion's cub, O Judah; you return from the prey, my son. Like a lion he crouches and lies down, like a lioness — who dares to rouse him? 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.

The word "Shiloh" here does not refer to the city Shiloh, for that town was destroyed before Judah ever rose to power. But within the context of the clause there is indication that Shiloh is a person. The root word for Shiloh means to be "at peace."

So the concept behind the person known as Shiloh is one who brings peace, or gives rest. This is indeed part of Messiah's work. Through this portion of Scripture we understand the further channeling of Messianic lineage – that it would be through the tribe of Judah that we look for the one known as Messiah.

In a brief overview of the genealogies found in Matthew 1 and Luke 3, we see that the Messiah came through Abraham, Isaac, Judah and David. Each of these has a specific Old Testament Messianic prophecy fulfilled in the one known as Y'shua. That this one would be the seed of David is found in Isaiah 11:10 and in Jeremiah 23:5 and 33:15.

Deuteronomy 18:15-22

In Deuteronomy 18:15-22, we find a lot of important information concerning the nature of prophecy and prophets in general, as well as Messianic prophecies in particular:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among your own brothers. You must listen to him. For this is what you asked of the LORD your God at Horeb on the day of the assembly when you said, 'Let us not hear the voice of the LORD our God nor see this great fire anymore, or we will die.' The LORD said to me: 'What they say is good. I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. 1If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account. But a prophet who presumes to speak in my name anything I have not commanded him to say, or a prophet who speaks in the name of other gods, must be put to death. You may say to yourselves, "How can we know when a message has not been spoken by the LORD?" If what a prophet proclaims in the name of the LORD does not take place or come true, that is a message the LORD has not spoken. That prophet has spoken presumptuously. Do not be afraid of him.'

The Jewish people regard Moses as the greatest of all prophets. Here the Lord, speaking through Moses, tells them that one will come after him whose words they should heed. Many prophets, such as Isaiah



and Jeremiah, came forward to speak the Word of God to the Hebrew people. But Jesus, as Messiah, was one like Moses, speaking the Word of God with power, might and authority.

In Acts 3:23-24, Peter says in his second sermon that Moses spoke of one who would come, a prophet like unto himself, and that Jesus fulfilled this prophetic portion as He was here on this earth and spoke many prophecies. One function of Messiah is that He would be the Son of God.

Psalm 2:2-12

The second Psalm is the first of the "Messianic Psalms" in Scripture. We read in Psalm 2:2-12:

The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the LORD and against his Anointed One. 'Let us break their chains,' they say, 'and throw off their fetters.' The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, 'I have installed my King on Zion, my holy hill.' I will proclaim the decree of the LORD: He said to me, 'You are my Son; today I have become your Father. Ask of me, and I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery.' Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the LORD with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment. Blessed are all who take refuge in him.

Proverbs 30:4

In Proverbs 30:4 we read: "Who has gone up to heaven and come down? Who has gathered up the wind in the hollow of his hands? Who has wrapped up the waters in his cloak? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is his name, and the name of his son? Tell me if you know! " God will have a son... this is promised and foretold!

In Luke 1:32 we are helped to understand how this was fulfilled in the Messiah: "He will be great, and He will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David."

A very interesting Messianic Psalm is the 22nd Psalm. Perhaps you might be encouraged to read the entire Psalm, as it portrays a vivid picture of the crucifixion experience. From verse 13:

Roaring lions tearing their prey open their mouths wide against me. I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue sticks to the roof of my mouth; you lay me in the dust of death. Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones; people stare and gloat over me. They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing. But you, O LORD, be not far off; O my Strength, come quickly to help me. Deliver my life from the sword, my precious life from the power of the dogs. Rescue me from the mouth of the lions; save me from the horns of the wild oxen.



Crucifixion was never a Jewish form of execution. As a matter of fact, when this Psalm was written, nearly 1,000 years before the time of Jesus, crucifixion was not even invented! The traditional, acceptable form of execution for Jewish people was stoning. The cause of death in a crucifixion is not the piercing through of the hands and feet, but asphyxiation. The individual is not able to breathe because his weight is pressed down upon his diaphragm.

As we look at Jesus' crucifixion in Matthew 27, we see the important role that Roman soldiers played during this time. Soldiers came in the evening to break the legs of those who were crucified, so that the person could not draw himself up and support himself with his legs, asphyxiation would result, and death would come quickly. The Gospel account tells us that the legs of those on either side of Jesus were broken, but the legs of Jesus were not. It was standard practice for a Roman guard to break someone's legs if they were still alive. This clearly indicates that Jesus was already dead.

Because Jesus died on the cross, he could not have caused the fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalm 22:18: "They divide my garments among them and cast lots for my clothing." Matthew 27 tells us that the guards cast lots for Jesus' clothing. Between this prophecy and its fulfillment lie 1,000 years. The pieces of the Messianic puzzle just keep falling into place.

Psalm 16 is a magnificent Psalm of hope, telling us that Messiah would not remain dead but be raised from the dead. In verses 9 and 10 we read, "Therefore my heart is glad and my tongue rejoices; my body also will rest secure, because you will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay."

Isaiah 53:8-11

A parallel portion is found in Isaiah 53:8-11, which reads:

By 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. 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. Yet it was the LORD's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though the LORD makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of the LORD will prosper in his hand. 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.

Each of the four New Testament Gospel accounts bears record to the fact that Jesus rose from the dead. In Psalm 110:4, we read that the Lord has sworn, and will not change His mind, that "The LORD has sworn and will not change his mind: "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." Uniquely, the office of Messiah combines three offices within the people of Israel: prophet, priest and king. They are to be bound together in one person, the Messiah of Israel.

Hebrews 5:1-10 focuses on the priestly functions of Messiah:

Every high priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. He is able to deal gently with those who are



ignorant and are going astray, since he himself is subject to weakness. This is why he has to offer sacrifices for his own sins, as well as for the sins of the people. No one takes this honor upon himself; he must be called by God, just as Aaron was. So Christ also did not take upon himself the glory of becoming a high priest. But God said to him, "You are my Son; today I have become your Father." And he says in another place, "You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek." During the days of Jesus' life on earth, he offered up prayers and petitions with loud cries and tears to the one who could save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverent submission. Although he was a son, he learned obedience from what he suffered and, once made perfect, he became the source of eternal salvation for all who obey him and was designated by God to be high priest in the order of Melchizedek.

A few years ago, I heard a song by Paul Stookey of Peter, Paul and Mary fame on his album entitled "Reel to Real." He prefaced the song with a story of how he moved out of the city and into the country, and purchased a four-story henhouse, which he made his home. The house should have been overlooked, but it became the centerpiece of his life. The song he wrote reflects this Biblical truth — the building block rejected by others has now become the cornerstone of the Holy world.

Psalm 118:20

In Psalm 118:20:

This is the gate of the LORD through which the righteous may enter. I will give you thanks, for you answered me; you have become my salvation. The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone; the LORD has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes. This is the day the LORD has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it.

Many New Testament portions focus on this, and one is Romans 9:32-33: "Why not? Because they pursued it not by faith but as if it were by works. They stumbled over the 'stumbling stone.' As it is written: 'See, I lay in Zion a stone that causes men to stumble and a rock that makes them fall, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.'"

Obviously the Messiah Jesus is a stumbling block to many today. But those who have faith see Him as the foundation, cornerstone and head. Messianic prophecy tells us that some will, for a time, reject him, but others will come to faith and place Him at the cornerstone of their life.

A very controversial portion of Scripture is Isaiah 7. To put it in context, you must read the entire chapter. In verses 10-14, the Lord spoke through Isaiah to King Ahaz:

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz, 11 'Ask the LORD your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights.' But Ahaz said, 'I will not ask; I will not put the LORD to the test.' 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? Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.'

This is one of the more difficult Messianic prophecies. A standard interpretation proposed by liberal critics is that Isaiah the prophet here refers to a son of a contemporary young woman, not a virgin,



whose child will be called Emmanuel, meaning that God would providentially be with him. So, he would serve as a sign of the defeat of Judah's northern enemies, referred to in Isaiah 7:8.

This non-Messianic interpretation, however, has serious deficiencies. The Hebrew word for virgin is Almah. In the Revised Standard Version of the Scripture, the word Almah is rendered as "young woman," and not a virgin. Throughout the Old Testament, in Proverbs and other portions, the editors never used this word to mean a married woman, but used it for the word virgin or at least a maiden. On the other hand, the coming of Emmanuel is presented in the context as a threat to Ahaz and not an encouragement. The primary non-Messianic argument is that for Isaiah's words to be relevant to Ahaz, they must have had an immediate fulfillment.

Three factors speak against immediate fulfillment. First, the kingship was deceased in both the northern and southern Israel before Emmanuel was to come (verse 16). The former, the northern kingdom did fall 12 years later in 722 BCE. Ephraim would be taken away 65 years later, which is hardly immediate.

The second factor against immediate fulfillment is that Emmanuel was to be a sign (verse 14). A sign connotes being miraculous in nature, such as the birth of a child from a virgin. Those who advocate that this was fulfilled in Ahaz's time must show there was a virgin birth then. But there is no record of another virgin birth on this earth, in the Scriptures or in history.

In verse 13, the prophet's threat was not addressed simply to Ahaz, but to the entire house of David. The Messiah would replace once and for all the merely human kings found in Ahaz's house and territory. That the Messianic king would be born of a virgin and be God incarnate are key Messianic prophecies in Scripture. But all too often rabbinic dialogue and argument has sought to cast a cloud over this portion of Scripture. Rather than delving into a lengthy theological discussion and heated debate, it might be best to review the portions of Scriptures that demonstrate the fulfillment in the New Testament: "This fulfillment is found in Matthew 1:18-25." and move on.

If you are interested in a fuller treatment of the subject, read the book, The Virgin Birth of Christ, by J. Gresham Machen, published by Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan. This excellent 400-page book focuses on the Jewish understanding, the Gospel narrative, and some pagan derivations that some people have used as theories for explaining the virgin birth of Jesus.

Isaiah 9:6

Another portion of Scripture that helps us to look back at the birth of Messiah is found in Isaiah 9:6: "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace."

Here is one of the clearest pictures of the coming One. A child born and yet Eternal Father. A child born and yet Mighty God. This Scripture helps us to point forward to the Messiah's very character and nature. More than a mere human being, He would be God Himself, incarnate, born of human flesh on this earth.

Micah 5:2



Where will His birthplace be? Micah 5:2 says, "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."

Did you know there were two Bethlehems? The city of Bethlehem Ephrathah lies about six miles southwest of Jerusalem, known as The City of David. Another Bethlehem, a town in Zebulun, is seven miles northwest of Nazareth. The Scripture reference to this town is found in Joshua 19:15. It is interesting to note that Micah's prophecy goes so far as to point out which of the two Bethlehems the Messiah was to be born in.

Daniel 9:24-26

The time of the Messiah's coming is foretold in Daniel 9:24-26. Many scholars have interpreted this challenging portion of Scripture in different ways. "Seventy 'sevens' are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy. Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble. After the sixty-two 'sevens,' the Anointed One will be cut off and will have nothing. The people of the ruler who will come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end will come like a flood: War will continue until the end, and desolations have been decreed."

In looking at one of the simplest elements found in this complex prophecy, verse 24 says a period of time will pass when final atonement will be made for iniquity, and everlasting righteousness then will be brought in. After the death of the anointed one, the temple in Jerusalem will again be destroyed.

The Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed in the year 70 C.E. Daniel's prophecy indicates that the Messiah's coming and death must be prior to its destruction. The only alternative to this interpretation would be that the temple must be built again and destroyed, with Messiah being born of a virgin in Bethlehem and then dying to make atonement for sin.

Isaiah 42:1-3

Look at the Messiah's character in Isaiah 42:1-3, "Here is my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen one in whom I delight; I will put my Spirit on him and he will bring justice to the nations. 2 He will not shout or cry out, or raise his voice in the streets. 3 A bruised reed he will not break, and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out. In faithfulness he will bring forth justice." The character of Messiah is one of meekness and mildness, and yet firmness of authority and teaching, which is fulfilled in Matthew 12:18-20.

Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12

One of the most moving pieces of Scripture concerning the nature and character of the work of Messiah is found in Isaiah 52:13 - 53:12. Read it in your own Bible, and see the picture of the servant of God. But let me quote a few verses:



Just as there were many who were appalled at him — his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness — so will he sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand. Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the LORD been revealed? He grew up before him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him. He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him, and afflicted. 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. 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. 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.

The weight and import of this Scripture has changed many lives. Read this entire portion of Scripture with your Jewish friend – or have him or her read it – not in an attempt to tell him what it talks about, but to allow him to come to his own conclusions.

In a book entitled The Fifty-Third Chapter of Isaiah According to Jewish Interpreters, (edited by Harry Olinsky and published by KTAV Publishing Company, New York City), are more than 50 rabbinic interpretations and understandings of these few verses of Scripture, attempting to focus on many historical people. Jewish people today often say this piece of Scripture refers not to the Messiah, but to Israel as a nation. They have suffered greatly, been rejected by many, have died and lost their lives.

Yet, to interpret Isaiah 53 as being Israel as a nation goes against the plain, simple grammatical sense of it. For a person who claims that this Scripture speaks about Israel, do a simple exercise to help illuminate the error of this interpretation. Each time the pronoun "he" is used, substitute "the nation of Israel," or "the people of Israel." After five or six sentences, he will see that substituting this phrase does not make grammatical sense.

However, just because this portion of Scripture exists, it does not automatically conclude that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah. This is only one strand of the warp and woof of the fabric of Messianic prophecy. But piece it together with other strands, and we find not only a garment of beauty, but also of strength and eternal value.

Zechariah 9:9

Another prophecy about the Messiah is found in Zechariah 9:9: "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." In Matthew 21, verses 1 and 10, we find a direct fulfillment of this prophecy as Jesus enters Jerusalem and goes toward His crucifixion.

Zechariah 13:7



In Zechariah 13:7:

'Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who is close to me!' declares the LORD Almighty. 'Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered, and I will turn my hand against the little ones. In the whole land,' declares the LORD, 'two-thirds will be struck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will bring into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them; I will say, "They are my people," and they will say, "The LORD is our God."

In Matthew 36:31-56, we read how Jesus is forsaken by his disciples, one by one, before his crucifixion. Yet, after the crucifixion, the Lord regathered them, and tested and tried them that they might become good and true servants of our Lord.

Zechariah 12:10

Zechariah 12:10 says: "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a firstborn son."

The time is not yet come. Jewish people are coming one at a time, not as a nation, to the Messiah. We pray that as you review material such as this with your Jewish friends, the Holy Spirit might touch their hearts. May they respond to the call of Jesus, and look upon Him, whom they have pierced, and mourn that for many years of their lives, they have not followed their Messiah, but have been mired in sin. But now, they can rejoice and turn to Him, finding grace, truth, peace, hope and love.

Conclusion

We have barely scratched the surface of Messianic prophecies. Let me encourage you to dig deeper and study harder, so that you might present yourself as a worker, handling the Scriptures of the Lord in an effective, loving way, so that others might come to know the truth that we have found in Jesus, our Lord and Savior, and the Messiah.



For More Information

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