

Old Testament Prophecies of Christ

Introduction

In Luke 24:13-27, Luke records a post resurrection appearance of Christ, where He is walking along the road to Emmaus conversing with two disciples. These disciples explain all the events that just took place concerning Christ (e.g. His death). Christ responds by saying, "*Was it not necessary for the Christ to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?*" Luke goes on to record, "*And beginning with Moses and with all the prophets, He explained to them the things concerning Himself in all the Scriptures..*"

Christ states by way of a question in verse 26 that the events surrounding His death were clearly anticipated in Scripture. He then goes on as Luke records in verse 27 to show these two disciples Old Testament passages that clearly attest to the things concerning Himself. The statement, "*beginning with Moses and with all the prophets,*" is referring to our Old Testament Scriptures (Genesis through Malachi). What things concerning Himself was He teaching from the Old Testament Scripture? He was teaching them from the Old Testament that Christ must suffer these things and then enter into His glory. Christ was teaching them Messianic Prophecy!

From Genesis to Malachi the Old Testament abounds with anticipations or prophecies of Messiah's coming. As we study the New Testament we realize that a large number of these prophecies are fulfilled in the birth, life, death and resurrection of Christ. Those yet to be fulfilled deal with a Second Coming of Christ. So as we study the Old Testament prophecies of Christ, we are studying the predictions of the coming Messiah.

Why Study Messianic Prophecy?

There are at least four reasons why we should study the Old Testament prophecies of Christ:

- 1-To become more familiar with God's Word and the foundation for our hope.
- 2-To gain a better understanding of the progressive unfolding of God's plan.
- 3-To be obedient to 1 Peter 3:15, "*always being ready to make a defense to everyone who asks you to give an account for the hope that is in you.*"
- 4-To gain a better understanding of how Jesus fulfilled these Old Testament Messianic Prophecies.

What is Messianic Prophecy?

The Terms used in Messianic Prophecy

The term that comes to mind most frequently when studying Messianic Prophecy is the term *Messiah*, which occurs 39 times in the Old Testament. This English term comes from the Greek, MESSIAS, which is a transliteration of the Hebrew verb, MASHACH, meaning, "*to smear or anoint.*" The verb carries the idea of consecrating objects or persons for sacred purposes (e.g. the altar, the basin, etc...). It is often used of priests (Exodus 28:41), kings (1 Samuel 16:13), and prophets (1 Kings 19:16).

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The Hebrew noun, MASHIACH, meaning, "*anointed one*," is only applied to animate objects. Those who were consecrated in this category were priests (Leviticus 4:3), prophets (Psalm 105:15), and kings (1 Samuel 10:1, 12:3). This term, however is used at least nine times in a more technical sense referring to, "*the anointed one*" (e.g. Psalm 2:2, "*The LORD's Anointed*" and Daniel 9:25-26, "*Messiah, The Prince*"). In these instances it speaks of a coming deliverer or Messiah. This deliverer or Messiah is identified in the New Testament as Jesus, who is called Christ (CHRISTOS), which happens to be the Greek translation of the Hebrew term Messiah (MASHIACH).

There are also a number of other terms that refer to or are used of Messiah. He is called Branch (Zechariah 6:12-13), Son of Man (Daniel 7:13), Child/Son/Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14), Wonderful Counselor/Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6-7), Servant (Isaiah 41-53) and others.

The Types of Messianic Prophecy

There are at least three types of Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. **First**, some Messianic prophecies are more *general* in nature. These prophecies might have a near or immediate application during the time period of the prophecy, but are ultimately fulfilled in Christ. **Second**, there are *direct* Messianic prophecies that speak specifically of the future Messiah and are more personal in nature. They are clearly stated as being fulfilled in the coming Messiah. A **third** type of Messianic prophecy is New Testament Applications of the Old Testament. Here the language of the Old Testament leaves no indication of a specific prediction. However the New Testament applies it to the coming of Christ. The prime example of this type is Matthew 2:15 citing Hosea 11:1, "*Out of Egypt I called My Son.*" Some scholars have introduced a **fourth** type of Messianic prophecy called typical prophecies, which identify individuals as types of Christ. While it is admitted that the Old Testament offers a number of individuals that could be referred to as models or types, it is difficult and unnecessary to assign this to the category of Messianic prophecy. It is better left in a category all its own.

The Nature of Messianic Prophecy

Many Messianic prophecies are quite clear and easy to understand, especially in light of New Testament Revelation. However the general nature of some Messianic prophecies lends to some inherent difficulties:

First, the language of some Messianic prophecies is often confusing and obscure. In these cases the prophecy may only be understandable by true believers under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Many of these prophecies can only be understood in light of the content of the Word of God.

Second, Messianic prophecies frequently use figurative language. This can create some difficulty in clearly understanding the prophecy. However, frequently the figure gives a clear idea as to its interpretation and although figurative language is used the truth conveyed is quite understandable (e.g. Isaiah 11:1).

Third, sometimes in Messianic prophecies future events are often regarded as past or present tense. The prophets will present the event that is predicted for the future as if it has already taken place. The emphasis in these cases is that the completion of the event is so certain to happen that it appears as if it is already realized (e.g. Isaiah 53).

Fourth, Messianic prophecy like other prophecy tends to be horizontal rather than vertical in nature. In other words, the general order of the events predicted is revealed, but all the intermediate steps are not necessarily included. The great mountain peaks of prophecy are revealed, but there is no mention of the valleys between the peaks. Therefore, Old Testament prophecies often mention the sufferings of Christ and His future glory together without considering the amount of time that elapses in between the events predicted.

The Scope of Messianic Prophecy

It must be understood that Messianic prophecy is not a bunch of independent prognostications, but a series of promises. There is essentially one Messianic promise, which is unfolded and elaborated on throughout the Old Testament. Although, each passage in the Old Testament must be examined in its own context and on its own terms, it is necessary to understand its connections with preceding revelation on the topic. So Messianic prophecy is one promise developed in a progressive series of revelations rather than several disjointed predictions.

There are two additional aspects regarding the scope of Messianic prophecy that must be mentioned. First, The unfolding of the Messianic promise involves a **Narrowing** of who Messiah is. Second, a simultaneous **enlarging** in the scope of Messiah's character and ministry also exists.

**A Narrowing of
Who Messiah Is!**

Seed of the woman

Of Shem

Of Abraham

Of Isaac

Of Jacob

Of David

**An Enlarging of His
Character and Ministry!**

Seed

Prophet

Priest

King

Servant

Shepherd

The Biblical view of Messiah also focuses on two aspects of His coming as mentioned earlier:

1. Rejection as the Messianic Servant during His first coming [Psalm 22; Isaiah 53; Zechariah 9:9; 12:10; 13:5-7].
2. Reigning as the Messianic King during His second coming [Jeremiah 23:5-6; 30:1-10; Zechariah 14:3ff].

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The New Testament affirms this dual aspect of Messiah's work as actually two comings of Messiah (the first time to suffer and the second time to reign).

In Luke 24:25-27 Jesus says, "*Was it not necessary for Christ to **suffer** these things and to enter into His **glory**."* Peter says in 1 Peter 1:10-11, "*the prophets who prophesied of the grace that {would come} to you made careful search and inquiry, seeking to know what person or time the Spirit of Christ within them was indicating as He predicted the **sufferings** of Christ and the **glories** to follow."*

So we see that Messianic prophecy is a progressive unfolding of the promise plan of God revealing a narrowing of who the promised Seed is and an enlarging of the scope of Messiah's character and ministry as well as demonstrating two aspects of His coming (first as rejected Servant and second as reigning King).

What are the Old Testament Messianic Prophecies?

It is not in the scope of this class to analyze each and every Old Testament Messianic prophecy. However the following chart taken from, *Chronological and Background Charts of the Old Testament* gives a nice overview of the major Messianic prophecies that have been fulfilled during Christ's first coming.

The Old Testament Prophecy	The Subject of the Prophecy	Scripture Stating Fulfillment
Genesis 3:15	Born of the seed of a woman	Galatians 4:4
Genesis 12:2-3	Born of the seed of Abraham	Matthew 1:1
Genesis 17:9	Born of the seed of Isaac	Matthew 1:2
Numbers 24:17	Born of the seed of Jacob	Matthew 1:2
Genesis 49:10	Descended from the tribe of Judah	Luke 3:33
Isaiah 9:7	Heir to the throne of David	Luke 1:32-33
Daniel 9:25	Time for Jesus' birth	Luke 2:1-2
Isaiah 7:14	Born of a virgin	Luke 1:26-27, 30-31

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Micah 5:2	Born in Bethlehem	Luke 2:4-7
Jeremiah 31:15	Slaughter of innocent children	Matthew 2:16-18
Hosea 11:1	Flight to Egypt	Matthew 2:14-15
Isaiah 40:3-5/Malachi 3:1	Preceded by a forerunner	Luke 7:24, 27
Psalms 2:7	Declared the Son of God	Matthew 3:16-17
Isaiah 9:1-2	Galilean ministry	Matthew 4:13-17
Deuteronomy 18:15	The prophet to come	Acts 3:20, 22
Isaiah 61:1-2	Came to heal the brokenhearted	Luke 4:18-19
Isaiah 53:3	Rejected by his own	John 1:11
Psalms 110:4	A priest after the order of Melchizedek	Hebrews 5:5-6
Zechariah 9:9	Triumphal entry	Mark 11:7, 9, 11
Psalms 41:9	Betrayed by a friend	Luke 22:47-48
Zechariah 11:12-13	Sold for thirty pieces of silver	Matthew 26:15; 27:5-7
Psalms 35:11	Accused by false witness	Mark 14:57-58
Isaiah 53:7	Silent to accusations	Mark 15:4-5
Isaiah 50:6	Spat upon and smitten	Matthew 26:67
Psalms 35:19	Hated without reason	John 15:24-25
Isaiah 53:5	Vicarious sacrifice	Romans 5:6, 8
Isaiah 53:12	Crucified with transgressors	Mark 15:27-28

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Zechariah 12:10	Hands pierced	John 20:27
Psalms 22:7-8	Scorned and mocked	Luke 23:35
Psalms 69:21	Given vinegar and gall	Matthew 27:34
Psalms 109:4	Prayer for enemies	Luke 23:34
Psalms 22:18	Soldiers gambled for his coat	Matthew 27:35
Psalms 34:20	No bones broken	John 19:32-33, 36
Zechariah 12:10	Side pierced	John 19:34
Isaiah 53:9	Buried with the rich	Matthew 27:57-60
Psalms 16:10/49:15	Would rise from the dead	Mark 16:6-7
Psalms 68:18	Would ascend to God's right hand	Mark 16:19

Conclusion

Josh McDowell in his book, *Evidence That Demands A Verdict*, speaks of the probability that these Old Testament prophecies could be fulfilled in one individual:

"The following probabilities are taken from Peter Stoner in *Science Speaks* to show that coincidence is ruled out by the science of probability. Stoner says that by using the modern science of probability in reference to eight prophecies... We find that the chance that any man might have lived down to the present time and fulfilled all eight prophecies is 1 in 10 to the 17th power. That would be 1 in 100,000,000,000,000,000. In order to help us comprehend this staggering probability, Stoner illustrates it by supposing that we take this many silver dollars and lay them on the face of Texas. They will cover all of the state two feet deep. Now mark one of these silver dollars and stir the whole mass thoroughly, all over the state. Blindfold a man and tell him that he can travel as far as he wishes, but he must pick up one silver dollar and say that this is the right one. Just the same chance that the prophets would have had of writing these eight prophecies and having them all come true in any one man, from their day to the present time."

Clearly the fact that many more than eight of these prophecies are fulfilled in Jesus Christ makes the probability much more unfathomable. It is certainly a convincing proof that Jesus is who He claimed to be. He is Messiah, God come in the flesh!