

## Behold He Cometh!

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The Apostle Paul, in the letter, 1 Corinthians, gives us insight into what the early Christians held to be at the very heart of the "gospel" they preached:

*Now I would remind you, brethren, in what terms I preached to you **the gospel**, which you received, in which you stand, by which you are saved, if you hold it fast - unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received, that **Christ died for our sins** in accordance with the scriptures, that **he was buried**, that **he was raised on the third day** in accordance with the Scriptures, (1 Cor. 15:1-4).*

Of major significance in this quotation is the expression, "in accordance with the Scriptures." The Scriptures of which Paul speaks are the OT Scriptures, specifically, the messianic prophecies found in these old Hebrew writings.

What were the messianic prophecies of the Old Hebrew Scriptures, which weigh so heavily in the case for the messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth? Scholars estimate that there are sixty or more Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah found throughout the whole Old Testament collection. Many of these prophecies speak explicitly of a special individual who would bring God's deliverance to Israel. Others contain implicit references to such a deliverer or to some event or circumstance associated with his coming. New Testament writers affirm many of these references as messianic prophecies fulfilled in the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. Others are not directly quoted in the New Testament, but have clear messianic overtones, which find fulfillment in Christ and contributed heavily to the beginnings of Christianity.

In the following, we will marshal an array of Old Testament messianic prophecies that were fulfilled in the coming of Jesus of Nazareth. This collection, which is a messianic anthology or compendium of Old Testament Messianic prophecies (considered a *Messianic Testimonia* by the early church) present the most essential messianic prophecies believed to have been fulfilled by Jesus of Nazareth, which makes for the strongest case supporting the claims of Jesus and the earliest Christians that he was indeed "the one who was to come." This presentation will consist essentially of the Old Testament texts themselves, in that they speak for themselves and need little commentary as to their meaning. These were the essential text used by the apostles in their preaching as well as the writers of the four Gospels in their telling of the story of Jesus.

## The Identity of the Messiah

### *An Heir to the Throne of David*

*Of old thou didst speak in a vision to thy faithful one, and say: "I have set the crown upon one who is mighty, I have exalted **one chosen from the people**. I have found **David**, my servant; with my holy oil I have anointed him . . .*

*He shall cry to me, 'Thou art my Father, my God, and the Rock of my salvation.' And I will make him **the first-born**, the highest of the kings of the earth. My steadfast love I will keep for him forever, and my covenant will stand firm for him. **I will establish his line forever and his throne as the days of the heavens**, (Psalms 89:19-20, 26-29).*

*The Lord **swore to David** a sure oath from which he will not turn back: "**One of the sons of your body I will set on your throne**," (Psalms 132:11)*

*Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when **I will raise up for David a righteous Branch**, and he shall reign as king and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. **In his days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely**. And*

*this is the name by which he will be called: `The Lord is our righteousness,"* (Jer. 23:5-6; see also 2 Sam 7:12-16; cf. Matt 1:1; 9:27; 15:22; 20:30-31; 21:9, 15; 22:41-46).

*The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he comes to whom it belongs; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples* (Gen 49:10; cf. Matt 1:2; Luke 3:23, 33; and Heb 7:14).

*But you, O Bethlehem Eph'rathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days* (Micah 5:2; cf. Matt 2:1-6; Luke 2:4-8).

### *Anointed with the Spirit of God*

*There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse [the father of David -ml], and a branch shall grow out of his roots. And the Spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord* (Isa. 11:1-5; cf. Matt 13:54; Acts 13:22).

*Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him; he will bring forth justice to the nations* (Isa. 42:1-4; cf. Matt 12:17ff; Luke 4:16ff; Matt 3:16-17).

### *He Would Be God with Us*

One of the most curious teachings concerning the identity of the Messiah was that in addition to being the son of David he would, in some mysterious and wonderful way, also be the Son of God and would manifest the very presence of God here on earth. This messianic concept, although plainly taught in the sacred writings of the Jews, was not fully understood. None-the-less, idea that the Messiah would be the incarnate Son of God and that in him God would be present with man is found in numerous texts.

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 [literally, "God is with us" - mwl], (Isa.7:14; Matt 1:18-25).

For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called Wonderful Counselor, **Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace**. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David, and over his kingdom, to establish it, and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and for evermore. **The zeal of the Lord of hosts will do this** (Isa. 9:6-7; John 14:8-9; 1:1, 18; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Heb 1:8-9).

Why do the nations conspire, and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, **against the Lord and his anointed** . . . then he will speak to them in his wrath, and terrify them in his fury, saying, "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill." I will tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to me, "**You are my son, today I have begotten you,**" (Psalms 2:1-2; 6-7; cf. Matt 3:17; 16:16ff; 17:5-6; Rom 1:2-4).

When your days [the days of David-ml] are fulfilled to go to be with your fathers, I will raise up **your offspring** after you, **one of your own sons**, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for me, and I will establish his throne forever. **I will be his father, and he shall be my son**; I will not take my steadfast love from him, as I took it from him who was before you, but I will confirm him in my house and in my kingdom for ever and **his throne shall be established forever** (1 Chron.17:11-14; 2 Sam 7:12-16; cf. Luke 1:26-35).

A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare **the way of the Lord** [Heb., Yahweh] make straight in the desert **a highway for our God** [Heb., Elohim]. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And **the glory of the Lord** [Heb., Yahweh] **shall be revealed**, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord

*has spoken,"* (Isa. 40:3-5; cf. Matt 3:1-3; Mark 1:1-3; Luke 3:4-6).

This Isaiah 40 passage clearly prophesies the coming of God (i.e., *Yahweh / Elohim*) and is quoted in the New Testament (Matt 2:3; Mark 1:1-3; Luke 3:3-6) as fulfilled in the appearance of Jesus of Nazareth. The text promised the arrival of God and was fulfilled in the arrival of Jesus of Nazareth. Who, then, does this imply that Jesus was? This whole aspect of the identity of the Messiah is very strongly emphasized in the New Testament as well; cf. Matt 1:20-23; 3:17; 16:16; 17:2-5; John 1:1-2, 14, 19; 14:7-9; Rom 1:4; Phil 2:5-11; Heb 1:1-9.

## His Coming into the World

### *He Would Be Heralded by a Voice in the Desert*

*A voice cries: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken,"* (Isa. 40:3-5; cf. Matt 3:1-3; Luke 3:3-6).

*Behold, I send my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant in whom you delight, behold, he is coming, says the Lord of hosts* (Malachi 3:1; cf. Mark 1:1-4).

*Behold, I will send you Eli'jah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes* (Malachi 4:5; Matt 11:11-14).

### *He Would Be Born in Bethlehem of Judea*

*But you, O Bethlehem Eph'rathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days* (Micah 5:2; cf. Matt 2:1-11; Luke 2:4-7; John 7:42).

## *He Would Be Born to a Young Jewish Virgin*

*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 (Isa. 7:14; cf. Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-35).*

### His Messianic Mission

What was the purpose of the messianic visitation of God? Why was the Messiah coming? The answer, in simplest terms, is to bring deliverance to the human race. The mission of the Messiah, as interpreted by Jesus himself, was to seek and save that which was lost (Luke 19:10); in short, to bring salvation to the people of the earth.

The greatest expression of this theme is found in the writings of the prophets, especially the writings of Isaiah. Isaiah's prophecies of deliverance originally spoke of God's deliverance of the Jewish people from their captivity to other nations. In later centuries, when God's people again found themselves enslaved to cultures ruled the powers of evil, they turned to these same Scriptures and saw in them anew the promise of deliverance their forefathers had seen centuries earlier. To the Jews of the first century these ancient prophecies were yet alive with the promise of God's deliverance they believed would be fulfilled in the coming of the Messiah.

The deliverance prophecies most commonly associated with the messianic expectation of the first century contain three essential themes: first, that of the coming of God into the world (divine visitation theme), secondly, that God's visitation would result in the overthrow of evil and deliverance of his people from the powers of evil (divine deliverance theme), and, third, that this divine presence and deliverance would be accompanied by the appearing of a special redeemer figure - one anointed of God to bring salvation to his people (the messianic theme). One or more of these themes are found in all of the following OT texts.

*It will be said on that day, "Lo, this is our God; we have waited*

*for him, that he might save us. This is the Lord; we have waited for him; let us be glad and rejoice in his salvation," (Isa 25:9).*

*Say to those who are of a fearful heart, "Be strong, fear not! **Behold, your God will come with vengeance, with the recompense of God. He will come and save you,**" (Isa 35:4).*

*A voice cries: "In the wilderness **prepare the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.** Every valley shall be lifted up, and every mountain and hill be made low; the uneven ground shall become level, and the rough places a plain. And **the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together, for the mouth of the Lord has spoken,**" (Isa 40:3-5; cf. Matt 3:1-3; Luke 3:4-6).*

***Behold my servant, whom I uphold, my chosen, in whom my soul delights; I have put my Spirit upon him, he will bring forth justice to the nations.** He will not cry or lift up his voice, or make it heard in the street; a bruised reed he will not break, and a dimly burning wick he will not quench; **he will faithfully bring forth justice.** He will not fail or be discouraged **till he has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands wait for his law** (Isa 42:1-4).*

*Hearken to me, you stubborn of heart, you who are far from deliverance: **I bring near my deliverance, it is not far off, and my salvation will not tarry; I will put salvation in Zion, for Israel my glory** (Isa 46:12-13).*

*I will give you as a light to the nations, **that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.**" Thus says **the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One,** to one deeply despised, abhorred by the nations, the servant of rulers: "Kings shall see and arise; princes, and they shall prostrate themselves; because of the Lord, who is faithful, the Holy One of Israel, who has chosen you." Thus says the Lord: "**In a time of favor I have answered you, in a day of salvation I have helped you; I have kept you and given you as a covenant to the people, to establish the land, to apportion the desolate heritages,**" (Isa 49:6b-8).*

*My deliverance draws near speedily, my salvation has gone forth, and my arms will rule the peoples; the coastlands wait for me, and for my arm they hope. Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look at the earth beneath; for the heavens will vanish like smoke, the earth will wear out like a garment, and they who dwell in it will die like gnats; but my salvation will be forever, and my deliverance will never be end (Isa 51:5-6).*

*How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him who brings good tidings, who publishes peace, who brings good tidings of good, who publishes salvation, who says to Zion, "Your God reigns," (Isa 52:7; Rom 10:15-16.)*

*Thus says the Lord: Keep justice, and do righteousness, for soon my salvation will come, and my deliverance be revealed (Isa 56:1).*

*And he will come to Zion as Redeemer, to those in Jacob who turn from transgression, says the Lord. (Isa 59:1) For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication, and all the kings your glory; and you shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will give. (Isa 62:1-2) Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth: Say to the daughter of Zion, "Behold, your salvation comes; behold, his reward is with him, and his recompense before him." And they shall be called the holy people, the redeemed of the Lord; and you shall be called Sought out, a city not forsaken (Isa 62:11-12).*

The theme, which unites all of these Old Testament texts, is God's deliverance. The story of how this messianic deliverance was affected is what the New Testament message is all about. This story encompasses every aspect of the messianic visitation of God: his entrance into the world, his teaching, miracles, his death, his resurrection from death, and the creation of a new existence for man, all are the essentials of the mission of the Messiah. The Old Testament simply tells of the coming of God's salvation; it is in the New Testament, however, that we are told how this was

accomplished.

## Prophecies of His Death

*He was despised and rejected by men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; upon him was the chastisement that made us whole, and with his stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is dumb, so he opened not his mouth. By oppression and judgment he was taken away; and as for his generation, who considered that he was cut off out of the land of the living, stricken for the transgression of my people? And they made his grave with the wicked and with a rich man in his death, although he had done no violence, and there was no deceit in his mouth (Isa 53).*

*My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? Why art thou so far from helping me, from the words of my groaning? . . . To thee they cried, and were saved; in thee they trusted, and were not disappointed. But I am a worm, and no man; scorned by men, and despised by the people. All who see me mock at me, they make mouths at me, they wag their heads; "He committed his cause to the Lord; let him deliver him, let him rescue him, for he delights in him . . . I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint; my heart is like wax, it is melted within my breast; my strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws; thou dost lay me in the dust of death. Yea, dogs are round about me; a company of evildoers encircle me; they have pierced my hands and feet, I can count all my bones, they stare and gloat over me; they divide my garments among them, and for my raiment they cast lots. But thou, O Lord, be not far off! O thou my help, hasten to my aid!*

(Psalms 22:1-19)

***Insults have broken my heart, so that I am in despair. I looked for pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none. They gave me poison for food, and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink (Psalms 69:20-21).***

*And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of compassion and supplication, so that, **when they look on him whom they have pierced**, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a first-born (Zech 12:10).*

***"And on that day," says the Lord God, "I will make the sun go down at noon, and darken the earth in broad daylight. I will turn your feasts into mourning, and all your songs into lamentation; I will bring sackcloth upon all loins, and baldness on every head; I will make it like the mourning for an only son, and the end of it like a bitter day (Amos 8:7-10).***

***Into thy hand I commit my spirit; thou hast redeemed me, O Lord, faithful God (Psalms 31:5).***

This whole collection of Old Testament passages should be read in light of the following New Testament accounts of the death of Jesus of Nazareth by crucifixion: Matt 27:1-60; Mark 15; Luke 23; John 19; 1 Cor 15:1-4.

### Prophecies of His Resurrection

***I keep the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. Therefore my heart is glad, and my soul rejoices; my body also dwells secure. For thou dost not give me up to Sheol, or let thy godly one see the Pit. Thou dost show me the path of life; in thy presence there is fullness of joy, in thy right hand are pleasures for evermore (Psalms 16:8-11).***

***I will extol thee, O Lord, for thou hast drawn me up, and hast not***

*let my foes rejoice over me. O Lord my God, I cried to thee for help, and thou hast healed me. O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from Sheol, restored me to life from among those gone down to the Pit. Sing praises to the Lord, O you his saints, and give thanks to his holy name (Psalms 30:1-4).*

*But do thou, O Lord, be gracious to me, and raise me up, that I may requite them! By this I know that thou art pleased with me, in that my enemy has not triumphed over me. But thou hast upheld me because of my integrity, and set me in thy presence forever. Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting to everlasting! Amen and Amen (Psalms 41:10-13).*

*The Lord is my strength and my song; he has become my salvation. Hark, glad songs of victory in the tents of the righteous: "The right hand of the Lord does valiantly, the right hand of the Lord is exalted, the right hand of the Lord does valiantly!" I shall not die, but I shall live, and recount the deeds of the Lord (Psalms 118:14-17).*

*After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him (Hosea 6:2).*

This whole collection of Old Testament passages should be read in light of the following New Testament accounts of the resurrection of Christ: Matt 28; Mark 16; Luke 24; and John 20-21; 1 Cor 15:1-4.

### Prophecies of His Exaltation

*I saw in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven there came one like a son of man, and he came to the Ancient of Days and was presented before him. And to him was given dominion and glory and kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him; his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom one that shall not be destroyed (Dan 7:13-14).*

*The Lord says to my lord: "Sit at my right hand, till I make your*

*enemies your footstool." The Lord sends forth from Zion your mighty scepter. **Rule in the midst of your foes!** (Psalms 110:1-2)*

In the Daniel passage we have a cosmic scene of a son of Adam figure who is brought before an ancient of days figure and receives universal and eternal dominion over the whole of heaven and earth. Read this text in light of Jesus' words of Matt 28:18. The Psalms 110 text is quoted on Pentecost (Acts 2) as fulfilled in the resurrection of Christ. Throughout the New Testament Christ is portrayed as Lord (the very title ascribed to God). This theme is dominant in the writings of Paul. See Phil 2:5-11 in view of both Daniel 7 and Psalms 110.

## Conclusion

In John the 5th chapter, we find a lengthy dialogue between Jesus and the Jewish hierarchy. The content of this dialogue concerns the question of who this person Jesus of Nazareth believed himself to be. Many of the people of Palestine were convinced that he was the Messiah, the majority of the Jewish hierarchy were convinced that he was a messianic pretender. Jesus' response to their unbelief is summed up in verse 39 where he tells them that his identity is to be found in their Scriptures:

*And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness to me. His voice you have never heard, his form you have never seen; and you do not have his word abiding in you, for you do not believe him whom he has sent. You search the Scriptures, because you think that in them you have eternal life; and **it is they that bear witness to me; yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life . . . Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for **he wrote of me.** But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?" (John 5:37-40, 45-47)***

Jesus here, in no uncertain terms, identifies himself with the Christ of the Scripture, the one who was coming into the world to bring about the deliverance of God. These Biblical scholars of old

spent their days searching the Scriptures; yet, they had not seen the Messiah God had revealed in these writings. Many people today do the same thing, they search the Scriptures and all they see is "the Scriptures!" Finding "Scriptures" in "the Scriptures" will not bring one eternal life. The value of the Scriptures is that in them we discover the Messiah, and it is to him we must come in receive eternal life!

MWLIII

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. What is your understanding of such expressions as "in accordance with the Scriptures" found in 1 Cor 15:1-4? What Scriptures are meant here and why are these Scriptures important to the issue of the messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth?
2. Do you think it is a legitimate use of such Old Testament texts as Psalms 89 and 132 to see in them a promise of the Messiah where originally they concerned promises made to David that his son Solomon would inherit his throne? How could such a prophecy be fulfilled in Solomon and then be fulfilled again centuries later in another descendent of David? See Jer 23:5, which was written several hundred years after David's death.
3. Do you think that the Old Testament teaches that the Messiah would actually be an incarnation of God himself?
4. Do you think that coincidence can explain the particulars associated with the coming of the Messiah into the world?
5. Why do you think that the Old Testament prophecies concerning the role of the Messiah as savior only speak of this salvation in general terms and do not speak specifically of how this salvation was to be accomplished?
6. What do you think of the idea that in many Old Testament

passages originally spoken to the Jews concerning their deliverance from enslavement to Babylon and Persia, the people of the first century (many Jewish scholars as well as Jesus and many NT writers) also saw promises of God's deliverance in the coming of a Messiah?

7. In Paul's statement of 1 Cor 15:1-4, he appears convinced that the death, burial and resurrection of Christ were foretold in the Old Testament Scriptures. From the list of Old Testament passages we have considered in this lesson, do you think his claims are legitimate?

8. Discuss the way the New Testament writers use the Old Testament as evidence of God's visitation and deliverance in the person of Jesus of Nazareth.

9. Discuss the dialogue between Jesus and the Jewish hierarchy found in John 5. From what Jesus says in verse 39-40, do you think he thought he was the Messiah spoken of in the Old Testament Scriptures?

10. Why do you think these people could not see that he was the Messiah? If they were searching the Scriptures, why was it not obvious to them who he was?