



The Christ Foretold

Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in the Life of Christ, Lesson 3

Ducks in a Row

There are three types of Old Testament prophecies relating to Christ:

- Typical
- Intermediate
- Direct

➤ **Typical** prophecy is something that refers to all Christians. As a fellow Christian, it also refers to Jesus, but perhaps even more so. Think of an audience sitting in the “splash zone.” They all are going to get wet, but probably the ones in the center front row are going to get really wet.

We will be spending the rest of this unit studying typical prophecies.

Intermediate prophecy is something that refers to a historical figure and, even more, to Jesus. In a way, history pre-figures Jesus. Think of this as a “spitting image” thing. As the appearances of a great-grandson may be almost identical to great-grandpa Olaf, so the experience of Jesus is almost identical to someone in the Old Testament. And, yes, there is a lot of blood relations involved.

We will be spending the next unit studying intermediate prophecies.

Direct prophecy is something that refers to no one except Jesus. It is as though the Holy Spirit made the prophetic writer time travel to the Holy Land of Jesus’ day and write what he saw. Think of this as a letter addressed to one and only one individual in the whole country.

We will be spending the final two units studying direct prophecy, starting with the end of Jesus’ life and moving to the front (with prophecies regarding his birth in the week before Christmas!)

Timed Forgeries?

One of the objections to prophecy in the Old Testament is that the Old Testament was not so much compiled, but written in the days of Ezra. As such, it is the story of how a nation miraculously was reborn (the return from Exile). Biblical critics treat it as if it were a central paradox in the history of mankind—of all the nations, only the Jews came back and restarted their culture after being defeated and sent into exile. The Bible records how this “miracle” came about. A gifted writer invented Moses, David and the rest of the kings. Of course, you are going to have characters written into the story whose prophetic voices will tell you how the story ends.

The basic problem with this view is that the Jews were not exceptional. Any of the dislocated cultures in the Neo-Babylonian Empire whom the Medes and Persians liberated could go back home and restart their national lives. It was one of the strokes of genius Cyrus exhibited. He made a lot of friends and influenced people among his subject nations. There are no corresponding “Old Testaments” detailing the miraculous rebirth of those cultures.

A more radical restatement of this argument is that the entire Old Testament was written by Christians in the early centuries. Of course Jesus is God! Look at all the prophecies he fulfilled! It was easy to write the early chapters of the script once you knew what the final chapter had to say.

The problem with this view is that there is proof the Old Testament existed before the New Testament existed (and don’t get me started with the Dead Sea Scrolls)! Around 250 B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt, the entire Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek—the Septuagint. It became the “King James” version of the Bible for the Jew scattered throughout the Mediterranean world. It was so popular with Greek speaking Jews, we even have quotations of it (instead of the Hebrew) in the New Testament! While this doesn’t help with the Old Testament “This Isn’t the Express to Bethlehem” prophecies, it is hard to dismiss prophecies of Christ which were in print over two hundred years before the events they predicted!

How does this information give you confidence in the Scriptures?

In My Shoes

Let’s look at some typical prophecies of Christ. And let’s focus on the Psalms. For each citation ask yourself:

1. When might a Christian feel like this?
2. Can you think of a time Christ might feel like this?

*O Lord, how many are my foes!
How many rise up against me!
Many are saying of me,
God will not deliver him.*

Psalm 3.1-2

*O Lord, our Lord,
how majestic is your name in all the earth!
You have set your glory
above the heavens.
From the lips of children and infants
you have ordained praise
because of your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.*

Psalm 8.1-2

*In the Lord I take refuge.
How then can you say to me:
flee like a bird to your mountain?*

Psalm 11.1

*You prepare a table before me
in the presence of my enemies.*

Psalm 23.5

*A righteous man may have many troubles,
but the Lord delivers him from them all;
he protects all his bones,
not one of them will be broken.*

Psalm 34.19-20

*Ruthless witnesses come forward;
they question me on things I know nothing about.
They repay me evil for good
and leave my soul forlorn.*

Psalm 35.11-12

*If an enemy were insulting me,
I could endure it;
if a foe were raising himself against me,
I could hide from him.
But it is you, a man like myself,
my companion, my close friend,
with whom I once enjoyed sweet fellowship
as we walked with the throng at the house of God.*

Psalm 55.12-14

*Do you rulers indeed speak justly?
Do you not judge uprightly among men?
No, in your heart you devise injustice,
and your hands mete out violence on the earth.*

Psalm 58.1-2

*They return at evening,
snarling like dogs, and prowl about the city.
They wander about for food
and howl if not satisfied.*

Psalm 59.6-7

*I looked for sympathy, but there was none,
For comforters, but I found none.
They put gall in my food
And gave me vinegar for my thirst.*
Psalm 68.20-21

*I rejoiced with those who said to me,
“Let us go to the house of the Lord.”*
Psalm 122.1

*I will praise you, O Lord, with all my heart;
before the “gods” I will sing your praise.
When I called, you answered me;
you made me bold and stouthearted.*
Psalm 138.1,3

*For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother’s womb.*
Psalm 139.13

You might think we were stretching it a bit, but some references in the New Testament give us insight.

Compare

*He protects all his bones,
not one of them will be broken.*
Psalm 34.20

with

Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they asked Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down. The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other. But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs. These things happened so that the scripture would be fulfilled, ‘Not one of his ones will be broken.’

John 20.31-33, 36

Why is this a typical prophecy? Why is it especially important when it comes to Jesus?

Compare

*From the lips of children and infants
you have ordained praise
because of your enemies,
to silence the foe and the avenger.*

Psalm 8.1-2

with

*But when the chief priests and teacher of the law saw the wonderful things he did
and the children shouting in the temple area, "Hosanna to the Son of David," they
were indignant.*

"Do you hear what these children are saying?" they asked him.

"Yes," replied Jesus, "Have you never read,

*'From the lips of children and infants
You have ordained praise'?"*

Mathew 21.15-16

Why is this a typical prophecy? Why is it especially important when it comes to Jesus?

We are going to take a closer look at Matthew's Gospel in coming lessons.

What's the Deal with David?

You will notice all of the psalm references are psalms of David. This may not be a scientific sampling of the Old Testament, but it is telling for a few reasons. Remember how I hinted earlier in the class that some of these references are definitely genetically related? Here's the link. Many of the Old Testament typical and intermediate prophecies link David with Christ.

Considering the office both held, why would that not be remarkable? People in similar positions experience similar things.

David is the most talkative of the characters in the Bible, bar none. Where Moses bites his tongue, David composes a psalm! Why would this be important when we consider typical prophecies?

Now consider that Jesus rejoiced to be known as the “Son of David.” Why did Jesus not think that beneath him?

What’s the Deal with Us?

What impact does it have on us when we see Jesus experiencing the very same things we experience in life? Before you answer, consider these two passages from (not surprisingly) Hebrews.

For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted.

Hebrews 2.16-18

We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are—yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need.

Hebrews 4.14-16