



The Christ Foretold

Old Testament Prophecies Fulfilled in the Life of Christ, Lesson 6

Let's Review

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.

✓ **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.

➤ **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 this week looking at direct prophecy during Jesus’ life.

The One and Only: His Birth

Scoffers will demean Christianity by saying all the heroes of old (myth as well as history) had miraculous tales of their birth. After his conquest of Egypt, Alexander the Great visited the desert temple of Ammun in the Egyptian desert where it was conveniently revealed to him that he was the son of the great god, Ammun. Mythological Heracles had a miraculous birth. Even some of the Roman emperors played fast and loose with tales of how they came into this world (usually after their mothers were deceased). So we should expect the same miraculous stories concerning Jesus, the founder of the Christian faith.

That’s how the blasphemy goes. But there is something drastically different about Jesus. Let Matthew tell us.

The Set-Up

Matthew finds out Mary, his betrothed, is pregnant. He puts two and two together and decides to call off the wedding. An angel of the Lord appears to him in a dream.

“Joseph son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary home as your wife, because what is conceived in her is from the Holy Spirit. She will give birth to a son, and you are to give him the name Jesus, because he will save his people from their sins.”

Matthew 1.20-21

Joseph had an angel give him the message. That was his proof. But there’s only one way good Jews are going to believe this story—prove it from the Old Testament!

All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: “The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel”—which means, “God with us.”

Matthew 1.22-23

Isaiah, exasperated that the wicked King Ahaz would not ask a sign (which the Lord offered) from the Lord to prove that the Lord would deliver Israel, gave Ahaz a sign.

The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.

Isaiah 7.14

What are the two miracles prophesied by Isaiah?

How did the birth of Jesus uniquely fulfill both of them?

Matthew’s next citation is especially insightful. It is one thing for the faithful to see Old Testament prophecy fulfilled uniquely in the life of Jesus, but it is real proof when the unbelievers see the same things!

The Set-up

The Magi (princely believers from the East) had seen the Christmas star and followed it to Palestine. As they were approaching Jerusalem, the star disappeared. They logically concluded that the palace of King (Herod) would be nursery of the new-born king. They were wrong. But where was this new-born king of the Jews to be born?

When Herod had called together all the people’s chief priests and teachers of the law, he asked them where the Christ was to be born. “In Bethlehem in Judea,” they replied, “for this is what the prophet has written:

Matthew 2.5

And they quote it exactly!

*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.*

Micah 5.2

Of course the Savior would be born in Bethlehem! That's the city of David. What is the problem with that easy explanation?

Why would Micah, living around 730 B.C., have to tell us what county Bethlehem was in?

How does this prophecy uniquely point to Jesus?

Look at Hosea 11.1

*When Israel was a child, I loved him,
 and out of Egypt I called my son.*

Hosea is talking about God calling the Children of Israel out of Egypt in the days of Moses. Matthew sees it as a prophecy of the Holy Family fleeing to Egypt to escape murderous King Herod.

Where he stayed until the death of Herod. And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

Matthew 2.15

Why is this not direct prophecy? What kind is it—typical or intermediate?

But it still is prophecy!

But we are not done with the Christmas story! Once Herod realizes the Magi have outwitted him, he sends his soldiers to kill every baby boy in the area of Bethlehem who is two or younger.

Then what was said through the prophet Jeremiah was fulfilled:

*A voice is heard in Ramah
weeping and great mourning,
Rachel weeping for her children
and refusing to be comforted,
because they are no more.*

Matthew 2.17-18

Ramah was near Bethlehem. That's where Rachel, Jacob's favored wife, died giving birth to Benjamin. That's also where the Babylonian attack was heavy against the civilian population in Jeremiah's day. It is also significant that the rest of Jeremiah 31 (which this prophecy is taken from) is talking about the new covenant God will establish in the time of the Messiah.

What kind of prophecy is this?

How do we know?

The One and Only: Life and Times

It is hard to understand how inseparable the work of Jesus and John the Baptist were. So it is not surprising that John, who is a powerful witness to Jesus, should also be a fulfillment of prophecy.

*In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the desert of Judea and saying,
"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near." This is he who was spoken of through
the prophet Isaiah:*

*A voice of one calling in the desert,
"Prepare the way for the Lord,
make straight paths for him."*

Matthew 3.1-3

Why would this prophecy be unique to Jesus' situation?

Matthew quotes Isaiah as a prophecy predicting where the Savior will work.

Leaving Nazareth, he went and lived in Capernaum, which was by the lake in the area of Zebulun and Naphtali—to fulfill what was said through the prophet Isaiah:

*“Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali,
the way to the sea, along the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles—
the people living in darkness
have seen a great light;
on those living in the land of the shadow of death
a light has dawned.*

Matthew 4.13-16

This seems to be a pretty hazy prediction. Certainly it was surprising when Isaiah (9.1-7) wrote this. Zebulun and Naphtali had already been cut up by the Assyrians and had ceased to become Israelite territory. It is hard to see how this is uniquely referring to Jesus when any hope would do.

Look at the reason for this hope Isaiah describes in chapter 9.

*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.
Of the increase of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David’s throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness
from that time on and forever.*

Isaiah 9.6-7

What is the context for mentioning Zebulun and Naphtali?

How is this a unique prediction of Jesus?

And the beauty of this all is that Luke will be able to mention all this with Gabriel’s appearance to the Virgin Mary without having to cite it. Matthew has already broken that ground!

The miraculous healings were predicted.

When evening came, many who were demon-possessed were brought to him, and he drove out the spirit with a word and healed all the sick. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

*“He took up our infirmities
and carried our diseases.”*

Matthew 8.16-17

What kind of Savior would this Suffering Servant be?

Even Jesus’ style was predicted!

Aware of this [the Pharisee’s plots to kill him], Jesus withdrew from that place. Many followed him, and he healed all their sick, warning them not to tell who he was. This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet Isaiah:

*Here is my servant whom I have chosen,
the one I love, in whom I delight;
I will put my Spirit on him,
and he will proclaim justice to the nations.
He will not quarrel or cry out;
no one will hear his voice in the streets.
A bruised reed he will not break,
and a smoldering wick he will not snuff out,
till he leads justice to victory.
In his name the nations will put their hope.”*

Matthew 12.15-21

What is the tip-off this refers uniquely to Jesus and not some other, shy and unassuming king?

When did God put his Spirit on Jesus?

It is interesting to note that Jesus will preach his first sermon in Nazareth on a similar Isaiah text, “The Spirit of the Lord is Upon Me.” He will tell the listeners, “Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing (Luke 4.22).”

For the last one we will consider, Jesus himself makes the connection. The religious leaders were attacking Jesus’ authority. They wanted to see a sign, a miracle which proved Jesus was the Savior.

He answered, “A wicked and adulterous generation asks for a miraculous sign! But none will be given it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of a huge fish, so the Son of Man will be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.”

Matthew 12.39-40

Would you ever guess Jonah in the belly of the fish was a prediction of the Savior in the tomb?

How do we know?

Why is the point of this whole lesson convincing? Consider these issues:

- the staggering number of prophecies
- the different types of prophecies
- the jaw-dropping prophecies
- the context of the Old Testament citations

How did this happen? Your choices are 1) coincidence

2) God has spoken to us

What if God has spoken to us?