

THE COMING MESSIAH

In this time of year, we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Savior, Jesus. In this brief essay, I would like to endeavor to show us only some of the tremendous aspects of Jesus' birth as it pertains to Him being the Son of Man and the Son of God. They are prophecies and aspects that are given to us throughout the Old Testament and they are described and given to us to

ponder as we see them fulfilled in the New Testament. Please, be reminded that this is a brief summary of the things pertaining to the birth of the King of kings and Lord of lords.

The first things I believe that we need to review are the prophecies found in the Old Testament that point to the birth of the coming Messiah – Jesus. Let us first take a look at the very first prophetic word spoken by God the Father concerning the coming of the Messiah. It was spoken by the Father immediately after the “fall” of Adam and Eve. God states in Genesis 3:15 – *“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.**”*

From the very beginning, right after Adam and Eve disobeyed God, he gave indication that a Savior would be coming from the seed of the woman, Eve. God revealed right away that this “seed” would be the one that would **crush** the head of the serpent. We know that seed pointed to Jesus. Moses is credited as the author of the book of Genesis. The time of his writing (not the actual events) isn't one hundred percent certain, but it is estimated to be about 1500 years before Christ was born. Wow!! God declared and established the way for man's salvation from the very beginning.

The next Scripture we need to look at is Isaiah 7:14 as it states, *“Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”* This scripture points to the manner in which the Messiah would be born and also to one of the names given to Messiah: Immanuel, meaning God with us. This was pointing to both his human birth and his divine nature – a virgin birth. This prophecy was written over 700 years before Jesus was born.

We know Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Micah 5:2 tells all those who would be looking and waiting for their Messiah in advance, the place where He would be born. This prophecy was written by Micah approximately 600 years before Jesus' birth. It states, *“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.”*

We also read Hosea 11:1 where it tells us, *“When Israel was a child I loved him and out of Egypt I called my son.”* This prophecy was written by Hosea, also approximately 600 years before Jesus was born. This verse looks backward and forward. Remember, the Israelites were slaves in Egypt when God brought them out. Also remember that Joseph and Mary fled to Egypt with the baby Jesus to avoid the slaughter by Herod (Matthew 2:16-20). This verse can apply to both of those situations. However, it was referred to by Matthew in his writings concerning the early life of Jesus.

One last Messianic scripture to review is Isaiah 9:6-7 as it reads, *“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order*

it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even forever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this."

This scripture reveals so very much about Jesus and who He would be when He came upon the earth this first time. It states, *"For unto to us a child is born..."* This refers simply to the humanity of Jesus. It refers to the Messiah being born as a man. He was God who came in the flesh (Philippians 2: 7-8; John 1: 14) It is of the utmost importance that Jesus came in the flesh as a man. The phrase "Son of Man" is not a "New Testament Christian" term. It is in direct reference to the prophecy of Daniel 7:13-14. The term, "Son of Man," is a "messianic term" that pointed to the true Messiah - Jesus.

Isaiah goes on to declare, *"...unto us a Son is given."* This refers to the Messiah, Jesus, as also the Son of God. Jesus was 100% God and He was 100% man. Jesus was fully God manifested in the flesh upon this earth (Philippians 2: 7-8; John 1:1, 14). The term, "Son of God" literally means "of God." The term "Son of God" infers that Jesus was the same nature as God, Himself. (Read Luke 1:32-33)

Next this scripture refers to not only who He is but what Jesus would and will do. It first states, *"...and the government shall be upon his shoulder..."* The term "government" simply refers to the word "authority." This is stating that the Messiah will have full dominion and rightful authority to rule and reign as the leader of the not only the Jewish nation, but over all the earth, as well as all powers, principalities and rulers of darkness.

This may possibly also refer to the two sardonyx stones that were fixed in settings of gold on the High Priest's shoulders; one on the right, and one on the left. The names of the tribes of Israel were engraved upon these two stones. (Exodus 28:9-10) Aaron as the High Priest was to, *"... carry their names (the names of the tribes of Israel) before God on his two shoulders as a remembrance."* (Exodus 28:12) Jesus would carry the names of the tribes of Israel upon His shoulders as the High Priest before God, as well as the true King from the line of David

As it continues in Isaiah 9:6-7 it tells us, *"...and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counselor."* In the original Hebrew there was not a comma after the word "wonderful." It should not be thought of as two separate "titles" but rather as one title for this Messiah that God will bring forth. It should properly be read as "Wonderful Counselor." This in turn is properly translated from the Hebrew text as our "Wondrous Advisor." It refers to the Messiah as being the all wise One who is filled with all wisdom and knowledge. It points directly to Jesus who is the "living Word of God."

Isaiah 9:6-7 continues with Jesus being *"...the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, the prince of peace."* The term "mighty God" refers to Jesus as the "El Gibbor" Which literally means "Warrior Champion." Jesus is the mighty warrior champion. He defeated the real enemy, satan. Jesus is also the commander of the Lords hosts (armies) as seen in Joshua 5:13-15.

We also read of the Messiah as being *"...the everlasting Father..."* We must not get confused here. The Hebrew is - "Avi-Ad," which does literally mean a father. However, it infers it to mean a "progenitor" of a line of descendants. This is pointing to the fact that the Messiah, Jesus will be "first of many," the first of all true believers.

Lastly we have, *"...the Prince of Peace."* Notice that this is capitalized signifying it is a title and not simply a job description. Messiah is to be the overseer, the administrator and the servant of "peace/ shalom." The term "shalom" means "to be set at one again" with someone. In other words it means a total

restoration of a broken relationship between two parties. Through Jesus we can now be reconciled and "set at one again" with God, the Father. According to Jesus, this is the definition of "eternal Life." - John 17:3, 21-23

At the conclusion, in Isaiah 9:7, it simply states with profound boldness, "...*The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.*" Yes, it will come to pass and it already has - with the birth of Jesus who is all of those things mentioned in those scriptures. Yes, Jesus would soon come. Anyone with "ears to hear and eyes to see" would see that Jesus truly fulfilled all of these prophetic words. Unfortunately, the Jewish people were not all able to see the true Messiah – the anointed one; the chosen one. They were only looking for a righteous man – not the true God/Man

As we continue on in our discussion of the birth of Jesus, we must not forget that God had distinguished that there would be a "forerunner" who would come to "prepare the way" for the Messiah, the Son of God to come. We read in Isaiah 40:3, "*The voice of him that cries in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*" Of course this is referring to John the Baptist. We see another reference to John in the beginning of Malachi 3:1 as it states, "*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me...*"

Yes, this is referring to John the Baptist. It states immediately following in that very same verse, "...*and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts.*" This is speaking directly of the coming of the "messenger of the covenant," the one who will establish the covenant once again between God and man – none other than Jesus

This all brings to the day that Jesus was born. No one knows the exact day and time of His birth. That was never prophesied or spoken of in any of the Jewish scriptures. In Bible prophecy concerning the Messiah, it would seem that the date of his birth is not a priority. We can generalize but cannot really come up with a close enough day or year to be exact.

We do know that it was in Bethlehem as prophesied in Micah 5:2 when we read the account of Jesus' birth in Matthew and Luke. We see that it was a night like any other night. The stars were all shining bright. The town of Bethlehem was all abuzz because of the added "tourists" in town because the people needed to go back to their ancestor's origins because of the census decreed by Caesar Augustus. It may have been decreed by Caesar Augustus but it all was orchestrated by God, the Father.

Before we go further, Let us discuss a little about Mary and Joseph and how come they were chosen by God for this task. As we look at Mary we see that her family line is found in Luke 3:23-38. Mary's lineage, as recorded by Luke, does not mention Mary, but that is to be expected—including women's names in genealogies was not standard practice. It begins this way: "*[Jesus] was the son, so it was thought, of Joseph, the son of Heli*" (Luke 3:23). This statement affirms the truth of Jesus' virgin birth (see Luke 1:29–38). Joseph would be considered a "son" of Heli (even though he actually was not) by virtue of his marriage to Mary, who actually would have been the "daughter of Heli." It was simply the way they thought and kept records back in those days.

Mary was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Luke 3:34); she was specifically of the tribe of Judah (verse 33) Women were identified with their father's tribe, not their mother's. Luke traces Mary's lineage all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:38) signify that Jesus was the Son of God. She came from David and through his son, Nathan. The angel Gabriel affirmed Jesus' Judean lineage, telling Mary that

“...he will be very great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his ancestor David” (Luke 1:32, NLT). David, as we know, was from the tribe of Judah.

“In the sixth month of Elizabeth’s pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a village in Galilee, to a virgin named Mary” (Luke 1:26–27, NLT). These words are familiar to most of us as part of what we call the Christmas story. Gabriel brought to Mary the news that she had *“found favor with God”* and would give birth to a Son who would reign forever on David’s throne (Luke 1:30–33).

There are at least three criteria for Mary being selected as the biological mother of Jesus. Mary was of the right lineage. Her son would be qualified to bear the title “Son of David” and be the righteous “Branch” that was to come from David’s family (Isaiah 11:1). Mary was a virgin. She was very young and knew no man.

Mary was a virtuous woman however, she still found “favor with God” to perform this task. We must fully understand that it was nothing that Mary had done, even though she was a very “Godly” woman. The fact of the matter is that it was a simple choice of God to choose Mary to be the mother of the Son of God. Yes, she was virtuous. She was not totally holy and she was not sinless. No one was.

However, Mary gives us an example of total devotion to the Lord. She answers the angel Gabriel: *“I am the Lord’s servant. May it be unto me as you have said”* (Luke 1:38). Wow!!! I pray that we all may have the wisdom and grace to answer God’s call as Mary had done.

As we begin to look into Joseph, we must realize that Joseph was much older than Mary. That was not unusual in that time. There were many women who were betrothed to older men in those days. The problem was that Mary was “with child.” Obviously, Joseph knew it was not his. We know that the scriptures tell us that he was visited by an angel who had explained everything to him. Right here is where we see a tremendous act of faith by Joseph. He chose to not only believe the angel but most importantly to follow every command that the angel gave to Him. He was the true “head of the household” and he chose to take his place as such with God as His true leader.

The lineage that is given in Matthew 1:16 lists Joseph’s biological father as a man named Jacob. Not much is mentioned or known about Joseph. His “line” in Matthew goes from Abraham, not Adam, signifying that He was a Jew. We also see that he came from the line of Judah – the son of Solomon (Kingly line). However, it only stems from Abraham because even though His lineage came from Abraham He was not the actual biological father of Jesus. Joseph’s line had to be shown and given to prove that Jesus’ family name and line did line up with the kingly line of David through Solomon, thereby showing the Jesus had the legal right to the throne as King.

Mary was engaged (betrothed) to Joseph. Joseph took her to be his wife. That was a tremendous move of faith. Joseph’s heritage would require him, because of the mandate of a census by Caesar Augustus, to take Mary and go to Bethlehem at just the right time. It was the time for the birth of the Son of God. Therefore, God had “arranged” everything so that the Savior of the world would come in the way that was prophesied (God’s plan) by the prophets.

The accounts of the birth of Jesus are seen in both Matthew 1:18-25 (the story from Joseph’s side) and in Luke 2:1-7 (the story from Mary’s side). It is amazing that as we look and read the scriptures, God, in all of His wisdom, allows us to get a good look and to understand the enormity of God’ plan of salvation. Yet in His wisdom, it was so very simple to accomplish. I stand amazed at the awesomeness of our God.

Next, I would like us to take a look at the shepherds as seen in Luke 2:8-12; 15-20. They were no ordinary shepherds. They were actually from the Levitical, priestly line. They were from the family of the Kohathites. Their original "job" was to transport the main articles of the Tabernacle - the Candlestick, the table of showbread, the altar of incense and the Ark of the Covenant - through the wilderness and into Israel. When the Tabernacle came to remain in Shiloh and then ultimately in the Temple after it was built, their "job" literally ended. Their new task was changed to now preparing the sheep for the sacrifices and to pick the spotless lamb for the Passover sacrifice.

These shepherds and their sheep were in fields that had surround Bethlehem where the Temple sheep were birthed and then raised for sacrifices. They were not out in the wilderness where "regular" sheep would be kept by "ordinary" shepherds. Why would priests perform menial shepherding duties for the Temple? It was because these sheep were intended to be used for sacrifices and ultimately, to find the Passover lamb. Therefore, it was certainly not a menial task.

They had special stables set up for the lambs that were born. The place in Bethlehem where these "stables" were was called "Migdal Eder," which translated means the "tower of the flock." We see this place mentioned and prophesied in Micah 4:8 as it states, *"As for you, O watchtower of the flock (Migdal Eder), O stronghold of the Daughter of Zion, the former dominion will be given you; kingship will come to the Daughter of Jerusalem."* It is signifying that a king would come to Jerusalem from this place.

The shepherds would "swaddle" the lambs to keep them unblemished and then would place them in a manger to keep them safe. This was a common practice, but *Migdal Eder* was no ordinary "tower of the flock" because the lambs in these fields outside of Bethlehem were not your normal everyday sheep. These special lambs came from a unique flock that was designated for sacrifice at the Temple in Jerusalem.

The "Tower of the Flock" was used specifically for birthing ewes, and the surrounding fields were used by these shepherds to graze their flocks. These shepherds customarily kept their flocks outdoors twenty-four hours a day every day of the year, but brought the ewes in to deliver their lambs where they could be carefully cared for. It was to this place that the events of that night led Joseph to take Mary. It was in this special place at "Migdal Eder" that Jesus was born! How do we know this? Micah 4:8 and Luke 2:7 tells us, *"... laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn."*

As David was called from taking care of the sheep to be anointed as king, so these shepherds were sent by the angels to Bethlehem to see the newborn King and Shepherd of Israel. We see that the angels only told the shepherds that they would find the "baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." There was no need for the angels to give these shepherds directions to the birth place because they already knew. When the angelic announcement came, they knew exactly where to go for the sign of a manger could only mean their manger at the "tower of the flock!"

We read of the account in Luke 2:8-12 - *"And there were shepherds living out in the fields nearby, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. But the angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid. I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people. Today in the town of David a Savior has been born to you; he is the Messiah, the Lord. This will be a sign to you: You will find a baby wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.'"*

We see that a host of angels came to proclaim the birth of Jesus. More than two thousand years ago the angels declared, "*Peace on earth. Good will to all men.*" There was joy in the heavens. There was joy in all of creation for this was the moment that was foretold. The "peace" that the angel declared was not simply a peace that meant tranquility and the end of wars upon this earth. It was a "peace" that meant that there was now going to be made available a "peace with God" - reconciliation and restoration - that will now be available through this little baby that was born in Bethlehem. The shepherds came and worshipped. The glory of the Lord filled the heavens.

At Jesus' birth the angels announced "*...peace on earth and good will to all men.*" What they were saying was that God was making a way of restoring relationship between God and Man. It was to be found in Bethlehem, lying in a manger in the form of a newborn baby, the newborn Lamb of God, whose name was to be called, Jesus.

It would be Jesus who would one day be crucified on a cross to save us from an eternity of being separated from God. True peace according to the Bible is first experienced through being "set at one again" with God. This only comes through faith in the Son of God - Jesus. This was what the angels, the heavenly hosts, were declaring on that day.

Lastly, I would like to mention the arrival of the Magi (Wise Men) who we read of in Matthew 2:1-12. Why did they come and how did they know it was the time of the coming of the Messiah. I believe it was because somewhere in the hearts of these men that came from Persia, there was a stirring. They were men who not only desired truth, but they were men who were diligently seeking for the truth. They would travel far and wide to find it. They were not Jewish but rather they were Gentiles. Yet, they studied the Hebrew Scriptures that were left when the Jewish people were allowed to return to Jerusalem from the Medo-Persian Empire after their captivity some 400 years earlier.

After all, they were called "wise men" and true wise men desire to know the truth even if it doesn't always agree with what they think. Wise men are willing to admit that they may be incorrect in their way of seeing and knowing things. These men sought after the true King that this "star" gave witness to. Their hearts were set in seeking after the truth and the true "King of kings."

We read in the scriptures that they took a two year journey to find this "King of kings" that they believed was heralded by the great "star" in the sky. They came to Herod, in Jerusalem, and asked Him about this King. They were told to go to Bethlehem, for the prophets foretold that in Bethlehem is where this "King" would come out of. The "star" again appeared to them. They again followed the "star" and came to a home in Bethlehem, which was not even a day's journey from Jerusalem. There, they found and worshipped the "King" they were seeking for.

The question I have is this, "Why were these men who came from the east, the only ones who saw this "star." There are many theologians that have tried to describe what the "star" may have been. Some say it was the "shekinah" glory. Some say it was an angel directing their path as they journeyed. Some say it actually was some supernatural phenomena in the night skies with stars, planets and comets lining up. Whatever it was, my question remains the same. Why did no one else see it?

I believe it was because somewhere in the hearts of these men that came from Persia, there was a stirring. They were men who, not only desired truth, but they were men who were seeking and "looking" for the truth. After all, they were called "wise men" and true wise men desire to know the truth even if it doesn't agree with what they think. They sought after the true King that this "star" gave

witness to and that lined up with the Words of the Jewish scriptures they were studying back in Persia. Their heart was set at seeking after and finding the truth and the true "King of kings."

Most, at that time, desired a king to come and set them free from the Romans. However, that was not really God's plan for that time. He desired to set them free from their sin. The people desired the truth but they were not truly seeking after the truth. They were not truly seeking for the true King of kings and Lord of lords. When someone truly desires to know the truth and is truly seeking after the true "King of kings," God will always lead them to Jesus - even if it takes a "star" (in whatever form it may be).

There is a saying that we hear during the Christmas season that states, "Wise men still seek Him." The "magi" ("wise" because they were seeking after truth) were led by the "star" (whatever it may have been) to Israel and to people that should have been able to see the "star" if they were seeking after the true "Light of the World." After all, it was foretold to them. Jesus came for them. He was the fulfillment of their scriptures. However, they were oblivious. I pray that "history does not repeat itself."

The Jewish people as a whole may have desired for Messiah to come but were they truly seeking after and looking for Him? Were they truly open to the way that God was going to bring it about or were they too stiff necked in their own thoughts and traditions of how Messiah was to come and what He was to be and look like? The desire for Messiah may have been in their conversation but was it truly within the hearts? The same is true today for many of us.

We all have a concept of what the second coming of Jesus will be like. We all have the same scriptures yet we tend to look at them differently. The bottom line is that God is the one with the plan and only He knows exactly what will take place and when. As believers it is okay to look at the scriptures and know that Jesus will be coming. However, Jesus said it Himself. He does not even know the exact time of His return. The only one who does know that is God, the Father.

We all just need to be ready for His return, whenever it is. That is our assignment as believers. We must simply always be ready and looking for Jesus return. Are you? That is the most important question of all that can only be answered by each and every person – themselves.

I pray that this little essay concerning the birth of Jesus may have encouraged you in your desire to seek after God in this season and for the rest of your life. God has a plan. The first part was accomplished and completed two thousand years ago when Jesus first came to this earth to give us the opportunity to get back into a true relationship with the Father. Jesus will come again at the appointed time of the Father. We may know some of it but no one knows the entire plan of God except Father God, Himself.

May we all just turn to Him with simply, simple worship within our hearts and choose to trust in our God who is the one and only true and living God – God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.
God bless you.