

# **Did Jesus Fulfill Prophecies?**

"All of this happened to fulfill the Lord's message through his prophet." (Matthew 1:22, NLT)

Imagine your parents or someone telling you that they have a book, written hundreds of years ago, which prophesied (predicted or foretold) your family tree, your place of birth, your job, and much more. Would you find this hard to believe and think them a little crazy? You probably would, but for Jesus, it is true. The Old Testament contains over three hundred prophecies about Jesus, written hundreds of years before he was born. God did not write these by fortunetellers, crystal gazers or mediums, but through his prophets. Prophets were "God's spokesmen," each communicating God's own message. If they made just one false prophecy, their life was in jeopardy.

# The first prophecy

God spoke the first prophecy about Jesus to Satan, disguised as a serpent. After Satan tempted Adam and Eve and they chose to disobey God, God pronounced their punishments. To Satan he said, "From now on, you and the woman will be enemies, and your offspring and her offspring will be enemies. He will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (Genesis 3:15, NIV)

This woman's "offspring" referred to Christ Jesus, God the Son. Satan repeatedly tried to kill Jesus by "striking his heel." (The only place a snake can strike is from the knee down!) For example, he incited Herod to try to kill Jesus as a baby. After Jesus fasted forty days in the wilderness, Satan tempted him to sin (without success). Satan entered Judas, causing him to betray Jesus. He stirred up the religious leaders with hatred, which led to his crucifixion.

When Jesus died, Satan and his demons must have danced with glee. Satan thought he had won, but he was in for a big surprise. Jesus resurrected, defeating Satan with a "crush on his head"! A crush on the head is fatal; a bruise on the heel is not. The Bible says: "But the Son of God came to destroy these works of the devil." (1 John 3:8, NIV) At the end of this age, God will complete Satan's judgment when he throws him and his demons into the lake of fire (hell) forever! (Revelation 20:10) Jesus is the fulfillment of the prophecy in Genesis 3:15.

## The prophecy of his genealogy

• Were there prophesies predicting his family tree, his genealogy? There are two lists of the genealogies of Jesus in the New Testament. Matthew begins with Abraham, the father of the Jews; Luke traces Jesus all the way back to Adam. Remember, genealogies often compress history, meaning not all ancestors are mentioned. Read the record of

- Jesus' ancestors in Matthew 1:1-17 and Luke 3:23-38. Here are a few of these prophecies.
- **Abraham** would be the father of a great nation (Israel) and through him all the families of the earth would be blessed. Through Jesus, Abraham's descendant, this prophecy came true. (Genesis 12:2-3; 22:15-18) God reconfirmed this promise to Abraham's son **Isaac** and to Isaac's son, Jacob. (Genesis 26:2-4 and 28:13-15) **Jacob** had twelve sons and each became head of a tribe of the Jewish nation. Jacob prophesied that Jesus would come from the tribe of his son Judah. (Genesis 49:10)
- From **Judah**, God chose the family line of **David**. God promised King David that a king descended from him would reign forever, referring to Jesus' second return to earth as King and Ruler. (1 Chronicles 17:11-12; Isaiah 11:1-5) God will fulfill this prophecy in the future. Both Mary and Joseph (the legal, but not the physical father of Jesus) were direct descendants of King David.
- Jesus would be born of a virgin. "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." (Isaiah 7:14, NIV) The angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, a virgin engaged to Joseph, and told her she would have a son. When she asked how she could have a baby since she was a virgin, the angel answered, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you, and he will be called the Son of God." (Luke 1:35, NLT) Read the stories of the birth of Jesus in Matthew 1:18-25, Luke 1:26-38 and Luke 2:1-20.

# The prophesy of his birthplace

Did God predict Jesus' place of birth? When the wise men from the east saw a special star and arrived in Jerusalem to see the new king, how did the religious leaders know where Jesus would be born when King Herod asked them? Because God, hundreds of years before his birth, told the prophet Micah he would be born in Bethlehem! "But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, are only a small village in Judah. Yet a ruler of Israel will come from you, one whose origins are from the distant past." (Micah 5:2, NIV) Luke writes about this fulfillment in Luke 2. In Psalm 72:10, God even predicted that the wise men would come with gifts!

#### The prophecy of his mission

The prophet Isaiah predicted the **purpose of Jesus' mission** in Isaiah 61:1-2. In his hometown synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus stood up and unrolled the Isaiah scroll to the place where it says:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach the Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released [from sin], that the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come. (Luke 4:18, NLT)

He rolled up the scroll, sat down and said, "This Scripture has come true today before your very eyes." (v. 21) The people of his small village refused to believe the village carpenter's son could be the Messiah. They mobbed him and tried to push him over a cliff, but he escaped.

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# The prophecies of his death, burial and resurrection

Of the more than three hundred prophecies about Jesus, twenty-nine speak of the betrayal, death and burial of Jesus. The prophets spoke at various times and with different voices from 1000 to 500 BC. All were fulfilled in **one 24-hour period** in Jesus' life! Here are a few of them with their corresponding fulfillment.<sup>1</sup> This is amazing!

Prophecy	Scripture	Fulfillment
Betrayed by a friend	Psalm 41:9	Matthew 10:4
Sold for 30 pieces of silver	Zechariah 11:12	Matthew 26:15
Forsaken by his disciples	Zechariah 13:7	Mark 14:50
Mocked	Psalm 22:7-8	Matthew 27:31
Hands and feet pierced	Psalm 22:16	Luke 23:33
Crucified with thieves	Isaiah 53:12	Luke 23:34
Garments parted and lots cast	Psalm 22:18	John 19:23-24
His forsaken cry	Psalm 22:1	Matthew 27:46
His bones not broken	Psalm 34:20	John 19:33
His side pierced	Zechariah 12:10	John 19:34
Buried in a rich man's tomb	Isaiah 53:9	Matthew 27:57-50

Peter Stoner in *Science Speaks (Chicago: Moody Press, 1963)* considered the probability of any one person fulfilling just 48 of the prophecies by chance. The odds are 1 out of 10 to the 157th power. That number would look like this:

Doesn't it stand to reason that if all these prophecies came true that the rest of the Bible is true? (Heaven, hell, etc.) Fulfilled prophecies validate God himself and his Word.

Why is it important that you know about prophecies and their fulfillments? Unless you know the truth, unbelievers who try to disprove the Bible may shake your faith. God doesn't ask that you have blind faith. He gives you assurances through the unity of the Bible, the claims of the writers, historical evidence, archaeology and prophecy. However, the greatest assurance of all occurs when you study the Bible, believe it, and the Holy Spirit changes your life. Then you know Jesus is real and that he is God the Son. You know your spiritual genealogy has changed. You are in a new family forever. How wonderful that the God of eternity past wants to spend eternity future with you!

# **Attitude Check:**

• How do these prophecies strengthen your faith in God and his Word?

# **Explore:**

- Read Matthew 2. How many fulfilled prophesies did you find? Write in your journal why you think God gave prophecies and how it affects your faith.
- Read Jesus' purpose and fulfillment in "Jesus Had a Specific Mission to Accomplish." (Luke 4:16-21)

## Talking with God:

• Thank you, Father, for the prophets who listened to your voice and wrote these prophecies. Keep me faithful in holding fast to the truths you are teaching me.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Source: McDowell, Josh, (1972) Chapter 9: The Messianic Prophesies of the Old Testament Fulfilled in Christ. In <u>Evidence Demands a</u> Verdict. Campus Crusade for Christ, Inc