

## *Jesus: The Fulfillment Of Prophecy in His Life*

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Jesus thought that His ability to predict future events would be decisive evidence that He was the Son of God, not a mere man: “From now on I am telling you before it comes to pass, so that when it does occur, you may believe that I am He” (John 13:19). Similarly, if people would give attention to all of God’s prophets who wrote the Bible, they would be convinced that Old Testament predictions were lamps shining in a dark place until the day dawned and the morning should arise (see 2 Peter 1:19). The Old Testament prophets spoke not to people of their own times alone, but also to us, even today (1 Peter 1:10–12).

### **THE VIRGIN’S SON (ISAIAH 7:14)**

Syria and the Northern Kingdom of Israel in 735 B.C. had formed a confederacy against the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Judah trembled “as the trees of the forest shake with the wind” (Isaiah 7:2). The ever merciful God sent Isaiah to comfort Judah’s

king Ahaz; but Ahaz was wicked and hypocritical. An unreasonable and mean response from Ahaz exhausted God's mercy: He was "weary" with Ahaz. The king had refused a sign from God that He would deliver Ahaz from the Syro-Ephraimitic conspiracy. Upon his refusal, God angrily replied that He would give Ahaz a sign anyway, but it would be a sign he would not like:

Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

Some prominent young woman known to Ahaz would soon marry and bear a son to whom an unusual name would be given: Immanuel, meaning "God with us." Before that lad should grow up, the two-nation threat would be dissipated. However, God interjected something else: Though Israel and Syria would no longer pose a danger to Judah, Assyria would. In fact, Assyria would so besiege the land of Judah that the Jews would nearly starve. According to the prophet, a man might be able to keep alive a cow and two sheep (Isaiah 7:21, 22). Therefore, milk would be available, and the people left in the land would eat curds and honey.

This child of prophecy, then, would have curds and honey for food (Isaiah 7:15). Immanuel, "God with us," would be the boy's name. He would be a sign of God's being with Judah to punish the nation! God can be with people in two ways! God would be with Judah, but not to bless; He would be with Judah to punish. Ahaz and his people were faithless, and God's word was sure.

That was the short-term meaning of Isaiah 7:14, but

something greater than a local, eighth-century B.C. sign to Ahaz was in the prophet's language. Isaiah was not only pointing to a short-term fulfillment while Ahaz lived, but to a long-term fulfillment in the days of Mary and Joseph. Often predictions had primary and secondary meanings, direct and indirect applications. God's angel revealed that Mary's being with child was not because of fornication, but because of God's purpose, in accordance with Isaiah's prophecy (Matthew 1:23).

There are differences in the eighth-century B.C. and the first-century A.D. fulfillments of Isaiah 7:14, yet enough similarities that the Holy Spirit used the earlier one as a base from which to predict the later. The word *'almah* in its broad meaning ("young woman") does not require that there be a virgin birth in the eighth century B.C., and none is on record. However, in the first century A.D. a specific type of young woman (a virgin; Gk.: *parthenos*; Matthew 1:23) became a mother while she was still a virgin.

The boy born in Ahaz's day was Immanuel, "God with us," only in name; the boy was not actually God. In contrast, the boy born in Mary's day was named Immanuel, "God with us," because He actually *was* God. The child in Ahaz's day was a sign by his name only; the Son of Mary was a sign both by name and by substance.

The prophesied child in Ahaz's day was a sign that God would be with Judah. The prophesied child in Mary's day was a sign that God would be with the whole world (John 3:16; 1 John 2:2). The sign in Ahaz's day was a warning that God would be with the people to punish them. The sign in Mary's day was good news that God would be with the people

to bless them.

If Mary's child had not been virgin-born, then He could not in truth have been Immanuel, "God with us," for He would have been wholly human like the rest of us and could not have been the God-man. Furthermore, He would have been an illegitimate son, born of fornication. If this were true, then Jesus would not be divine, and His religion would be a hoax. In such a case, the name Immanuel, "God with us," would be mockery.

### **THE SEED OF ABRAHAM (GENESIS 22:18)**

The Lord predicted that Abraham would be a blessing to the world. In addition to the phrase "in you" in Genesis 12:3, He used the expression "in your seed" in the previous verse. Though the word "seed" in Genesis 22:17 is used of Abraham's posterity (that is, the whole nation of Israel), it is not used the same way in Genesis 22:18. In verse 18 the word "seed" is limited to a specific prediction about one of Abraham's descendants, namely, Jesus. In Galatians 3:16 Paul was referring to that verse when he said, ". . . [God] does not say, 'And to seeds,' as referring to many, but rather to one, 'And to your seed,' that is, Christ." An inspired New Testament writer thus gave us a sparkling insight as to the specific meaning of an Old Testament prediction.

Another New Testament speaker also pointed out the Messianic significance of Genesis 22:18. At Solomon's porch of the Jerusalem temple, Peter said, "It is you who are the sons of the prophets and of the covenant which God made with your fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the

earth shall be blessed'" (Acts 3:25).

### **A GALILEAN MINISTER (ISAIAH 9:1, 2)**

Many Old Testament predictions of the coming Messiah also had a more immediate, local meaning. Some, however, appear to have no Old Testament meaning whatsoever. One of the latter type was written by Isaiah, "the Gospel Prophet," in the eighth century B.C.:

But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles.

The people who walk in darkness  
Will see a great light;  
Those who live in a dark land,  
The light will shine on them (Isaiah 9:1, 2).

The land of Galilee would "later on" reach a state of glory and would become forever famous. Apparently, even before He left heaven, Jesus had planned to spend much of His earthly ministry in Galilee:

Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet:

"The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,  
By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee  
of the Gentiles—  
The people who were sitting in darkness saw a  
great Light,

And those who were sitting in the land and shadow  
of death,  
Upon them a Light dawned" (Matthew 4:12-16).

**AN ANOINTED PREACHER**  
**(ISAIAH 61:1-3)**

An anointed preacher spoke prophetically through  
the scroll of Isaiah in the eighth century B.C.

The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me,  
Because the LORD has anointed me  
To bring good news to the afflicted;  
He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted,  
To proclaim liberty to captives  
And freedom to prisoners;  
To proclaim the favorable year of the LORD  
And the day of vengeance of our God;  
To comfort all who mourn,  
To grant those who mourn in Zion,  
Giving them a garland instead of ashes,  
The oil of gladness instead of mourning,  
The mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting.  
So they will be called oaks of righteousness,  
The planting of the LORD, that He may be glorified  
(Isaiah 61:1-3).

In the first century A.D. a thirty-year-old unedu-  
cated carpenter amazed the teachers in the synagogue:

And He [Jesus] came to Nazareth, where He had  
been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered  
the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read.  
And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him.  
And He opened the book and found the place where it  
was written,  
"The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,  
Because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the  
poor . . ." (Luke 4:16-18).

He continued to read from the beautiful predictive prophecy, closed the book, and boldly announced, "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21).

For anybody but Jesus to make such a claim would be beyond serious consideration. For Jesus, making such a claim was natural and proper.

### **A PROPHET LIKE MOSES (DEUTERONOMY 18:15)**

At Mount Sinai the Israelites shook when the mountain shook. They saw fire and lightning and a thick cloud at its summit, and the whole mountain smoked as a furnace (Exodus 19:16–18; 20:18). They trembled when God's voice spoke the Ten Commandments. The frightened people begged that Moses do the speaking, lest they, being so close to God's presence, should die. Moses did speak to the Lord, and he conveyed God's promise to send another representative like Moses as a divine spokesman:

The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. This is according to all that you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, "Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die" (Deuteronomy 18:15, 16).

God thought the people's plea for a spokesman was a just plea. He told Moses, "They have spoken well" (Deuteronomy 18:17), and He repeated the promise:

I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall

come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him (Deuteronomy 18:18, 19).

A prophet would come after the likeness of Moses. Of course, Moses was no ordinary prophet. To him God spoke “mouth to mouth, even openly, and not in dark sayings and he beholds the form of the LORD” that he looked upon (Numbers 12:8). No prophet in Israel was superior to Moses, “whom the LORD knew face to face” (Deuteronomy 34:10). The promised successor could not, therefore, be ordinary.

The promised prophet, said the Lord, would have God’s word “in his mouth” (Deuteronomy 18:18). To receive him and his words would be to receive God, but to reject him and his words would be to reject God (Deuteronomy 18:19).

Moses’ people never forgot the promise of this extraordinary prophet. They advised their children and their children’s children to watch for his coming. They came to speak of him as “the Prophet” (John 1:21, 25). Fifteen centuries after Moses, when John’s work was attracting attention, the Jews immediately thought of the prediction of a prophet in Deuteronomy 18:15, and they specifically asked John, “Are you the prophet?” (John 1:21). No one was a greater person than John, but he was not the promised prophet, and he made it clear to his questioners that he was not.

However, John, who did no miracles (John 10:41), had a kinsman who could multiply five pieces of barley bread and two small fishes into a surplus sufficient for perhaps ten thousand people (see John 6:9, 10). Such a convincing sign made the Jews think of Moses’ promise in Deuteronomy 18:15, and they



exclaimed, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14).

Not only did Jesus demonstrate that He was the Lord of nature, but He spoke in a way no other man had ever spoken (John 7:46). When He made a signal announcement one day in the temple, some impressed Jews in the crowd connected Deuteronomy 18:15 with the great preacher, saying to each other, "This certainly is the Prophet" (John 7:40).

Peter, in his sermon on Solomon's porch, quoted Deuteronomy 18:15 and said that Jesus was the fulfillment of the fifteen-hundred-year-old prediction (Acts 3:22). He warned that lack of obedience to "that prophet" (Acts 3:23) would be destruction. Right-thinking Jews, therefore, being themselves "sons of the prophets" (Acts 3:25), could see in Jesus the glorious fleshly fulfillment of Moses' predictive utterance.

### **A SPEAKER OF PARABLES (PSALM 78:2)**

Asaph was famous in Israel. A singer and a cymbal player, he was appointed by David as chief over the tabernacle choir (1 Chronicles 6:31–33, 39; 15:19; 16:5). He also was empowered by the Holy Spirit to be a seer (2 Chronicles 29:30) and an inspired author of songs (see Psalms 50; 73–83) to be placed in the Book of Psalms. A song written as a piece of instruction and edification, such as Psalm 78, was called a *maskil*. Part of his teaching was in the form of parables, that is, stories with applications. He presented other teachings in dark sayings, or riddles. He announced, "I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old" (Psalm 78:2).

The Holy Spirit used the same utterance of Asaph

as a prediction of what One greater than Asaph would do (see Matthew 13:35). Jesus also came to Israel as a teacher of parables, uttering things concealed from the beginning of the world. This was done “to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet” Asaph, saying, “I will open My mouth in parables; I will utter things hidden since the foundation of the world.”

### **ZEAL FOR HIS FATHER’S HOUSE (PSALM 69:9)**

Perhaps some travesty or insult against the sacred tabernacle caused David to say, “For zeal for Your house has consumed me” (Psalm 69:9a). Certainly, the Holy Spirit was predicting through David that the same feeling would be in Jesus.

And He found in the temple those who were selling oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers seated at their tables. And He made a scourge of cords, and drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen; and He poured out the coins of the money changers and overturned their tables; and to those who were selling the doves He said, “Take these things away; stop making My Father’s house a place of business.” His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house will consume me” (John 2:14–17).

The second part of Psalm 69:9, “and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me,” indicates that David, in defending the tabernacle, was himself defamed by evil men who were desecrating the sacred tabernacle. Whatever the local situation that called forth David’s utterance, the second part of verse 9 was also a prediction of what would happen to Jesus. When Jesus defended His Father’s house, He subjected Himself to reproaches from those who

were misusing the temple. Indeed, He was hastening His own death. In no way was He pleasing Himself; His only thought was of His Father's holiness. "For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, 'The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me'" (Romans 15:3).

### **BLESSER OF ALL NATIONS (GENESIS 12:3)**

About 1886 B.C., God promised Abram, "In you all the families of the earth will be blessed" (Genesis 12:3). Here was a prediction nearly two thousand years in advance that both the Hebrews and the Gentiles would be blessed in Abram. Today everyone who accepts Christ and becomes a Christian is a participant in the promise made originally in Genesis 12:3. That passage of the Scriptures foretold that by faith God would justify the Gentiles. God had preached the gospel to Abram beforehand, saying, "All the nations will be blessed in you" (Galatians 3:8). The result is that all those who are of the faith are being blessed along with the faithful one, Abram. All who belong to Christ have become the spiritual seed of Abram, "a high father," who became known as Abraham, meaning "father of a multitude." Among the nations, whoever becomes obedient to the faith is a lawful heir of the divine promise made to the father of the faithful. Thus a two-thousand-year-old prediction pointed to Jesus, a son of Abraham (Matthew 1:1), as the vital link in the chain extending Abrahamic blessings from one man to one nation and then to all nations. For this reason, Genesis 12:3 is a major Messianic prophecy.

## THE LIGHT OF THE GENTILES (ISAIAH 49:6)

In God's loving wisdom it was not enough for His prophesied coming servant to minister only to the tribes of Jacob. He would extend Himself as a saving light available to all the world's peoples:

He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My  
Servant  
To raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the pre-  
served ones of Israel;  
I will also make You a light of the nations  
So that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth"  
(Isaiah 49:6).

Who is this honorable person foreordained as God's servant whose strength God is? (Isaiah 49:5). Who is talented to bless not only His own but also other nations? Before Jesus was formed in Mary's womb, He already was a child of promise. Gabriel told a surprised Nazarene virgin, "Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus" (Luke 1:31). This son, formed from the womb to be God's servant, did what He could to help His own people. As many as received Him, to them He gave power to become children of God (John 1:12). In addition, His marching orders to His apostles were that they should carry the gospel to all nations. His apostles followed the pattern of giving the gospel first to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.

At Antioch in Pisidia, when the Jews contradicted the Lord's gospel, Paul and Barnabas spoke forthrightly:

It was necessary that the word of God be spoken to you first; since you repudiate it and judge yourselves

unworthy of eternal life, behold, we are turning to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us,  
“I have placed You as a light for the Gentiles,  
That You may bring salvation to the end of the earth”  
(Acts 13:46, 47).

### **THE ENSIGN OF THE PEOPLES (ISAIAH 11:10)**

Bold was the prediction of the Gospel Prophet: “Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious” (Isaiah 11:10).

Out of the eighth century B.C. came almost unbelievable predictions. On one of the descendants of Jesse (Isaiah 11) would the Spirit of God rest, giving Him special wisdom. He would be enabled to judge not by sight and sound (Isaiah 11:3, 4), but would judge righteous judgment. He would see to it that the poor and afflicted people would have due equity (Isaiah 11:4). Wicked people would someday feel His wrath (Isaiah 11:4). Figuratively, “righteousness will be the belt about His loins, and faithfulness the belt about His waist” (Isaiah 11:5). Likewise figuratively, in the day of His power, Isaiah said, “The wolf will dwell with the lamb” (Isaiah 11:6). No oppression or meanness would be found in His holy mountain, and the knowledge of this ruler would be universal (Isaiah 11:9). He would become the ensign, the banner, for the peoples, and the Gentiles would seek Him (Isaiah 11:10). His habitation would be glorious. From the four corners of the earth would come the outcasts of Israel, the dispersed of Judah, and the Gentile nations, looking to Jesse’s descendant as their ensign (Isaiah 11:12).

Only Jesus among Jesse’s sons can qualify as the

fulfiller of the comprehensive and majestic Isaiahic prediction (Romans 15:12). The wisdom of the young, unschooled carpenter of Nazareth astounded His home town people: "What is this wisdom given to Him?" they asked (Mark 6:2). He amazed the Jews by curing a crippled man on the Sabbath Day; doing this good work left Him open to criticism (John 7:23, 24). He sympathized with the outcast and the unloved (Matthew 21:31; 9:10), even as Isaiah foretold (11:4). His righteousness, as Isaiah predicted (11:5), was attested by Pilate's wife, who called Him a "righteous Man" (Matthew 27:19).

Literally, Jesus never attempted to make wolves lie down peacefully with lambs, and neither has His church done so (Isaiah 11:6). When He comes the second time, it will be too late for the domestication of wild beasts, for then everything will be consumed in the fiery extinction of the universe (2 Peter 3:10). If one looks for a literal fulfillment of the wolf/lamb prophecy, he will forever be disappointed. However, if one sees that the meaning is figurative (even as righteousness is called a belt in Isaiah 11:5), then all is harmonious.

Figuratively, wolfish men have been turned into lambs and would not harm a child (see Isaiah 65:17–25). Men of beastly nature, by the power of Christ's gospel of unselfish love, have been regenerated into men of kindness and helpfulness. When one has grasped this figurative meaning and thrilled to its accomplishment in sinful men, then he realizes how weak the gospel would be if its aim were merely to corral and tame wild beasts. Surely, Isaiah and Jesus had something more important in mind.

The figurative meaning continues in the prediction

about a "holy mountain," which is a reference to the New Testament church (Hebrews 12:22, 23). With that church as the pillar of the truth, the gospel message has gone into all the world as the waters cover the sea (Isaiah 11:9; see Colossians 1:5, 6). Jesus has become, for men of goodwill both among the Jews and the Gentiles, the world's standard bearer, the ensign of the peoples! (See Isaiah 49:22; 62:10; John 3:14-16; 12:32.)

If Jesus, the son of Jesse, is not the ensign of whom Isaiah spoke, then, alas, God's Word falls to the ground. In A.D. 70, the rolls of genealogy which testify to Jesse's descendants were destroyed. If the right son of Jesse failed to identify himself before A.D. 70, and prove that he was the ensign of Isaiah's prophecy, then all mankind must die in sadness. No further expectancy can brighten human hopes. If this were the case, then Isaiah's thrilling projection of a glorious future would become only an idle dream impossible to fulfill. No one since A.D. 70 can identify himself as part of Jesse's line of descent.

### **THE BRINGER OF JUSTICE (ISAIAH 42:1-4)**

Someone was foretold in Isaiah 42:1-4 as God's servant who would in quiet but unconquerable determination bring justice in the earth:

"Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;  
My chosen one in whom My soul delights.  
I have put My Spirit upon Him;  
He will bring forth justice to the nations.  
He will not cry out or raise His voice,  
Nor make His voice heard in the street.  
A bruised reed He will not break

And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;  
 He will faithfully bring forth justice.  
 He will not be disheartened or crushed  
 Until He has established justice in the earth;  
 And the coastlands will wait expectantly for His law."

Three times in this prediction, the word "justice" appears. The bringer of justice in truth would not be a sensationalist or one who would make grand speeches in the street. He would give a bruised reed, a penitent sinner, a second chance; He would keep alive the flame of hope in a smoldering wick, in a humbled sinner. He would not quit till He had completed His job, and His principles of justice would be awaited by peoples of all nations.

Of whom could such optimistic and hopeful and meaningful statements be uttered? According to Matthew, Jesus of Nazareth was the servant spoken of in the ancient prophecy:

"Behold, My Servant whom I have chosen;  
 My Beloved in whom My soul is well-pleased;  
 I will put My Spirit upon Him,  
 And He shall proclaim justice to the Gentiles.  
 He will not quarrel, nor cry out;  
 Nor will anyone hear His voice in the streets.  
 A battered reed He will not break off,  
 And a smoldering wick He will not put out,  
 Until He leads justice to victory.  
 And in His name the Gentiles will hope"  
 (Matthew 12:18–21).

### **HATED WITHOUT A CAUSE (PSALMS 35:19; 69:4)**

David often was a victim of undeserved enmity. At least twice, David wrote of numerous foes "who hate me without cause" (Psalm 35:19); "those who



hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of my head" (Psalm 69:4).

Even more undeserving of malice was the One who loved deeply every human being and who never wished harm to anyone. No deceit was in the mouth (1 Peter 2:22) of Him who was holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens (Hebrews 7:26). The meekness and gentleness of Jesus (2 Corinthians 10:1) made Him beloved to all right-thinking people.

How strange it is that such a person could be the victim of causeless hate! Nevertheless, such an unexpected and perverted situation was predicted of Him: "But now they have both seen and hated Me and My Father as well. But they have done this to fulfill the word that is written in their Law, 'They hated Me without a cause'" (John 15:24, 25).

Besides His loveliness, clothed with the beauty of holiness, He had as credentials His miracles ("which no one else did"; John 15:24). These ought to have been evidence enough to convince the most skeptical critics of His deity. Some would not be convinced, however; and for rejecting their Messiah, they were left with "no excuse for their sin" (John 15:22). His love was reciprocated with hate.

### **A LOWLY KING (ZECHARIAH 9:9)**

God had commanded Israel's kings not to multiply horses to themselves (Deuteronomy 17:16). Solomon, in his vanity and reliance on human strength, violated God's stipulation (1 Kings 4:26). Concerning the Messiah, Zechariah predicted a more lowly ride:

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!

Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!  
Behold, your king is coming to you;  
He is just and endowed with salvation,  
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,  
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.  
I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim  
And the horse from Jerusalem;  
And the bow of war will be cut off.  
And He will speak peace to the nations;  
And His dominion will be from sea to sea,  
And from the River to the ends of the earth  
(Zechariah 9:9, 10).

Zechariah's prediction is all the more remarkable in that Judah had no king at the time of the prophet's writing (520 B.C.) and has had none since, except Jesus! The detail in Jesus' fulfillment of the prophet's words is astounding:

. . . then Jesus sent two disciples, saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied there and a colt with her; untie them and bring them to Me. If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them." This took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet:

"Say to the daughter of Zion,  
'Behold your King is coming to you,  
Gentle, and mounted on a donkey,  
Even on a colt, the foal of a beast of burden.'"

The disciples went and did just as Jesus had instructed them, and brought the donkey and the colt, and laid their coats on them; and He sat on the coats. Most of the crowd spread their coats in the road, and others were cutting branches from the trees and spreading them in the road (Matthew 21:1-8).

### **ROYALTY IN JUDAH (GENESIS 49:10)**

About 1644 B.C., the patriarch Jacob sat on his deathbed in the land of Goshen and pronounced blessings on his sons. Concerning Judah, the Holy Spirit through Jacob predicted,

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
Until Shiloh comes,  
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples  
(Genesis 49:10).

The prediction was bold and unusual. Judah was not the firstborn son (Genesis 49:3), and he did not receive the birthright (1 Chronicles 5:1). However, Judah, after a bad start, had shown manliness and an unselfish love, and had "prevailed over his brothers" (1 Chronicles 5:2). In looking to the future, God had decided that the leader of Israel, the prince, would come from Judah. Ultimately, the great prince, the Messiah, would come from Judah (Hebrews 7:14).

Some six hundred years would pass before any of Judah's descendants would hold a scepter, a ruler's staff. Then Judah's descendant, David, would be anointed as king in the southern kingdom, and subsequently (about 1010 B.C) over the northern kingdom as well.

Sin caused God to remove active kingship from Judah. God had tolerated all He could when, in 590, He said of Zedekiah,

And you, Oslain, wicked one, the prince of Israel, whose day has come, in the time of the punishment of the end,  
. . . Remove the turban and take off the crown; this will no longer be the same. Exalt that which is low and abase that which is high. A ruin, a ruin, a ruin, I will make it.

This also will be no more until He comes whose right it is, and I will give it to Him (Ezekiel 21:25-27).

The fulfillment of God's prophecy through Ezekiel came four years later, when He allowed the heathen Nebuchadnezzar to depose Zedekiah (2 Kings 25:1-7), the last king to reign in Judah.

So much sin prevailed that God decreed the absolute end of any physical kingship among Judah's descendants. Specifically of Zedekiah's nephew, Jeconiah, God said:

Write this man down childless,  
 A man who will not prosper in his days;  
 For no man of his descendants will prosper  
 Sitting on the throne of David  
 Or ruling again in Judah (Jeremiah 22:30).

Jeconiah was forever childless in that he never had an heir ruling as king in Judah. Still, God's promise to Judah a thousand years earlier had asserted that the scepter would stay in Judah until Shiloh, the Man of Rest, the Bearer of Security, should come. Jeconiah was not physically childless (Matthew 1:12), but none of his descendants ever was a king literally and physically. The scepter was retained, but it was unused from Zedekiah to Jesus, who was Shiloh, the Man of Rest, the Bearer of Security!

If Jesus had become a king over physical Judah at His first advent, or if He were to become a physical king in Jerusalem at His second coming, then God's Old Testament prediction through Jeremiah would fall to the ground. When Jesus, on the Day of Pentecost (May 28, A.D. 30), became a spiritual King and began to reign at God's right hand in the heavens, that

fulfilled Jacob's sixteen-hundred-year-old prediction:

The scepter shall not depart from Judah,  
Nor the ruler's staff from between his feet,  
Until Shiloh comes,  
And to him shall be the obedience of the peoples  
(Genesis 49:10).

### THE BRANCH (JEREMIAH 23:5)

God selected a term used in botany as an illustration to describe His Son: *Tsemah*,<sup>1</sup> "the Branch." Jesus would be a Shoot or Branch of Jesse's and David's genealogy (Isaiah 11:1). As to physical handsomeness, He would be an undesirable tender shoot, a root out of dry ground (Isaiah 53:2). Spiritually, though, the One called the Branch or Shoot or Sprout or Bud (Zechariah 6:12) would be most attractive. His handsomeness would be the beauty of holiness, fairer than the children of men (Psalm 45:2). His glory would be that of the unique Son of the Father, full of grace and truth (John 1:14). He would build the temple of the Lord (Zechariah 6:13), the church, and would reign as King. This King would deal wisely, executing justice and righteousness (Jeremiah 23:5).

Not only would the *Tsemah*, the Branch, sit and rule on His spiritual throne, but He would also serve as priest while on His throne. By genealogy He would be ineligible for the priesthood. Through His ancestor David, He was a branch of the tribe of Judah, "a tribe with reference to which Moses spoke nothing concerning priests" (Hebrews 7:14). Physically and literally, therefore, He never would be a priest. If He

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<sup>1</sup>Other botanical terms for "shoot" are used in referring to Jesus, including *hoter* and *netser* (Isaiah 11:1) and *yonek* (Isaiah 53:2).

were to return to the earth, “He would not be a priest at all” (Hebrews 8:4).

His reign is spiritual and heavenly, just as His priesthood is spiritual and heavenly. We have a high priest who entered into heaven and sat down on the right hand of the throne of Majesty in the heavens (Hebrews 8:1). The Branch, as high priest and king, is not flesh anymore, and He never will be again (2 Corinthians 5:16). When He returns for His own, He will not become flesh again, nor will He set foot on this earth. Instead, He will summon raised and changed and incorruptible bodies, made like His own glorious body, to meet Him in the air (1 Corinthians 15:51, 52; Philippians 3:20, 21; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–18). Glorious things are spoken of *Tsemah*, the Branch.

### **CROWNED AS GOD (PSALM 45:6, 7)**

Some Hebrew words used to identify “man” point to his earthly (Heb.: *adam*), frail (Heb.: *enosh*) nature. Others point to “man” as a husband (Heb.: *ish*), as a being of strength (Heb.: *gibbor*), or as a partaker of God’s image (Heb.: *elohim*). God was speaking of man’s heavenly nature when He declared, “You are gods [Heb.: *elohim*], and all of you are sons of the Most High” (Psalm 82:6). Thus the very word translated “God” (Heb.: *elohim*) is also used to describe human beings. The English translation (“gods”) could leave an erroneous impression that there are many deities. However, the clear Bible teaching is that there is only one true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 44:6; 1 Corinthians 8:2, 3). This being true, the psalmist’s use of exactly the same word to describe humans and God must be taken as a reference to the heavenly nature

of man's soul. No animal is ever referred to as *'elohim* ("God"), but man is.

The clear use of the word *'elohim* in these two senses ("God" and "man in God's image") helps us to understand Psalm 45:6, 7:

Your throne, O God, is forever and ever;  
A scepter of uprightness is the scepter of Your kingdom.  
You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;  
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You  
With the oil of joy above Your fellows.

Psalm 45 is best explained as originally referring to one of Solomon's marriages. Verses 6 and 7 are a tribute to the new husband as being highly exalted: He is a righteous King, and He is God (that is, of God's image).

However, Psalm 45:6, 7 had a yet higher fulfillment in One "greater than Solomon" (Matthew 12:42). While "a disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master" (Matthew 10:24), the son of Solomon was greater than His ancestor. On the Day of Pentecost, A.D. 30—in heaven, at God's right hand—Jesus Christ was made King of heaven and of earth (Ephesians 1:22, 23; Matthew 28:18). On His coronation day, God the Father appropriated and elevated the language first applied to Solomon:

But of the Son [God] says,  
"Your throne, O God, is forever and ever,  
And the righteous scepter is the scepter of His  
kingdom.  
You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness;  
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You  
With the oil of gladness above Your companions"  
(Hebrews 1:8, 9).

God used the same word, "righteousness," to describe Solomon's reign and Jesus' reign; but it meant something much higher and more exalted when applied to Jesus. Similarly, the same word used to describe the person of Solomon, "God" (that is, God's image in Solomon), was used to describe the nature of Jesus (that is, deity), but it meant a great deal more applied to Jesus than when applied to Solomon.