

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

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How vividly we see the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus! The details of our Savior's crucifixion were revealed in prophecy before He was born. Study these examples of prophecy and fulfillment, and allow them to increase your faith in Jesus as God's divine Son.

### **MAN HAVING ALL THINGS UNDER HIS FEET (PSALM 8:4–6)**

In Genesis 1:26–28, God commanded Adam and his descendants to exercise dominion over all the earth. Psalm 8 is a repetition of that command, praising and thanking God for His care for mankind. Verse 4 says,

What is man that You take thought of him,  
And the son of man that You care for him?

In comparison to the size of the universe, man is exceedingly small. If his size determines man's worth in the universe, he does not count for much. However, as expressed by the "sweet singer of Israel," man's

high estate is seen in two areas: (1) his being made just a little lower than angels and (2) his being given authority over all the world. The great God “put all things in subjection under [man’s] feet.’ For in subjecting all things to him, He left nothing that is not subject to him” (Hebrews 2:8).

Steadily, from Adam’s time on, man has subjected every animal, and he has conquered land, sea, air, and space. So many victories have been achieved by human beings over their environment that even the most doubting people hesitate to say that this or that cannot be done.

In spite of man’s progress, from Adam until the time of Jesus there remained one unconquerable enemy: death. Though two men (Genesis 5:24; 2 Kings 2:11) did not have to die, they were only exceptions; for the rest of mankind, it was appointed once to die (Hebrews 9:27). Except to men of faith, the certainty of death left a pall of dreariness. Men, through fear of death, were all their lifetimes subject to bondage (Hebrews 2:15). Sparse instances of resurrections (1 Kings 17:21, 22; 2 Kings 4:35; 13:21) could bring no lasting hope, for each of those raised had to die again.<sup>1</sup> Death still had dominion, and men’s bodies saw corruption. How could man be delivered from death’s bondage? Had God really meant “all” things would be subjected to man? Was there to be one gigantic, frightening exception to man’s authority?

In the wisdom of God, Jesus was sent to the earth.

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<sup>1</sup>After Jesus came, other raisings took place: Tabitha (or Dorcas; Acts 9:36–42), the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11–16), the daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:22, 23, 35–43; Luke 8:41, 42, 49–56), Lazarus (John 11:1–45), those who were raised at the time of Jesus’ crucifixion (Matthew 27:50–53), and Eutychus (Acts 20:9–12). Each of these had to die again.

He did not come in the nature of angels. If He had, He could not have been included in God's promise to "man" (Genesis 1:26; Psalm 8:4) to have dominion over everything. Besides, angels do not die (Luke 20:36). It was heaven's wisdom that, through dying, a man would conquer death forever.

Accordingly, God sent Jesus as a man, subject to and a victim of death, "that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Hebrews 2:14). His resurrection was different from all others, in that "death no longer is master over Him" (Romans 6:9). He would not "return to decay" (Acts 13:34). He could promise, "because I live, you will live also" (John 14:19).

Even now, two thousand years after Jesus' resurrection, we have not seen the complete fulfillment of God's promise to man in Genesis 1:26 and Psalm 8:4. Now, however, all dread is gone, for if Jesus was raised to live forever, holding the keys of death (Revelation 1:17, 18), we know that our victory is assured through Him. What God originally promised is as good as done! Jesus "must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. For He has put all things in subjection under His feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25-27a).

Thus a prediction made originally to all human beings was a precise prediction of one particular human being, the man Christ Jesus. Without Him, the promise of God which was made to Adam and repeated through the psalmist would have fallen to the ground. Thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ! Thanks be to God for His amazing prophetic word!

### THE REJECTED CORNERSTONE (PSALM 118:22, 23)

Psalm 118:22 predicted that Jesus, under the likeness of a building stone, would be rejected:

The stone which the builders rejected  
Has become the chief corner stone.

Jesus referred to this predictive utterance when He pointed out the Jews as the ones who would reject Him:

Did you never read in the Scriptures,  
"The stone which the builders rejected,  
This became the chief corner stone;  
This came about from the Lord,  
And it is marvelous in our eyes"?  
(Matthew 21:42).

Peter, in speaking to the Jewish officials, applied Psalm 118:22, 23 in the same way Jesus had: "He is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the chief corner stone" (Acts 4:11).

Besides Psalm 118:22, 23, another predictive utterance spoke of Jesus as a stone. The Gospel Prophet wrote that Jesus would be "a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, and a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Many will stumble over them, then they will fall and be broken; they will even be snared and caught" (Isaiah 8:14b, 15).

Apparently, Jesus was referring to the Isaiahic oracle when He said, "And he who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces; but on whomever it falls, it will scatter him like dust" (Matthew 21:44). So clear was Jesus' application of Isaiah's prediction that the bystanders understood exactly what He meant:

“When the chief priests and the Pharisees heard His parables, they understood that He was speaking about them” (Matthew 21:45).

Paul later referred to Isaiah’s oracle as being fulfilled when the Israelites rejected Jesus: “They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written, ‘Behold, I lay in Zion a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense’” (Romans 9:32b, 33a).

Finally, both of the Old Testament predictions of Jesus as a rejected stone were later mentioned by Peter in his first epistle:

... but for those who disbelieve,  
    “The stone which the builders rejected,  
    This became the very corner stone,”  
and,  
    “A stone of stumbling and a rock of offense”;  
for they stumble because they are disobedient to the  
word, and to this doom they were also appointed  
(1 Peter 2:7, 8).

### **BETRAYED BY A FRIEND (PSALM 41:9)**

Ahithophel, an adviser to Absalom, has been called the Judas of the Old Testament. His advice in the days of David and Absalom was valued: “. . . as if one inquired of the word of God; so was all the advice of Ahithophel regarded by both David and Absalom” (2 Samuel 16:23). Later, he turned against David in support of Absalom. When David learned of the traitorous action of his trusted court adviser and personal confidant, the feelings expressed in Psalm 41:9 stirred in his heart. He was inspired to write, “Even my close friend in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me.”

Jesus also knew what it was to be betrayed by a friend. Apparently, David did not know that he would be betrayed until it happened. In contrast, Jesus knew from the beginning (John 6:64) which of His apostles would turn against Him, and He spoke of the matter before the betrayal. Jesus revealed ahead of time what would happen so that the other disciples would have additional assurance of His deity:

I do not speak of all of you. I know the ones I have chosen; but it is that the Scripture may be fulfilled, "He who eats My bread has lifted up his heel against Me." 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 13:18, 19).

It is clear that Jesus believed that His foreknowledge was an evidence of His deity.

### **BETRAYAL MONEY REJECTED (ZECHARIAH 11:13)**

Zechariah was specific about what Jesus' betrayer would do with his blood money: "I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD" (Zechariah 11:13).

The fulfillment of this ancient prophecy, as Matthew described it, was indirect<sup>2</sup>:

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<sup>2</sup>A direct fulfillment of Zechariah's prediction has been supposed. The Ras Shamra tablets designate a temple official as a *yotser*, meaning "a shaper, a former, a potter." A smelter and shaper of metals was a *yotser*, and he could be the temple treasurer. The Revised Standard Version uses this bit of archeological information and reconstructs its translation of Zechariah's prediction, "I took the thirty shekels of silver and cast them into the treasury in the house of the LORD." However, even if this interpretation is correct, Matthew's words show that there is also an indirect fulfillment of Zechariah's prediction, for the priests took Judas' money and bought a potter's field.

Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." But they said, "What is that to us? See to that yourself!" And he threw the pieces of silver into the temple sanctuary and departed; and he went away and hanged himself. The chief priests took the pieces of silver and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the temple treasury, since it is the price of blood." And they conferred together and with the money bought the Potter's Field as a burial place for strangers. . . . Then that which was spoken through Jeremiah the prophet was fulfilled: "And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of the one whose price had been set by the sons of Israel: and they gave them for the Potter's Field, as the Lord directed me" (Matthew 27:3–10).

Judas' money went for the purchase of a potter's field. "The Potter's Field" was probably a well-known field by that name, formerly used by potters. Perhaps the clay was exhausted, and the land could be bought cheaply.<sup>3</sup>

One may be surprised to read in various translations that Matthew attributed Zechariah's prophecy to Jeremiah. It could be that Jeremiah also spoke this same prediction orally, but did not put it in his book. More likely, Matthew was referring to Zechariah's written prediction.

Why, though, would Matthew attribute the prediction to the wrong author? Actually, Matthew did not. He was inspired of the Holy Spirit, and could make no error (John 14:26; 16:13). Further, if he had made such an error, early Jewish infidels would have

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<sup>3</sup>Albert Barnes, *Matthew and Mark*, Notes on the New Testament (N.p., 1949; reprint, Grand Rapids, Mich.: Baker Book House, 1974), 302.

seized upon the mistake. No such attack is known.

How did the mistake in translations arise? Matthew's original writing is not known to exist. Only copies are extant, the earliest having been made long after Matthew did his writing. Some copyist, not knowing the Old Testament Scriptures as he should have, must have inadvertently written "Jeremiah" instead of "Zechariah." Later copyists were probably hesitant to correct even an obvious error.

Some ancient copies actually have "Zechariah" in Matthew 27:9 rather than "Jeremiah." Maybe these are the correct copies of Matthew's original document. Further, there are ancient copies which simply say in Matthew 27:9 that the prediction was made "through the prophet," leaving him nameless. It may be that these copyists were following Matthew's original statement. Whatever the explanation of this detail,<sup>4</sup> the prophet's prediction of what would be done with the betrayal money is remarkable.

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<sup>4</sup>Various possibilities were summarized by Jack P. Lewis: "The composite passage cited by Matthew recalls Zechariah 11:12, 13 and is here cited with the regular Matthean formula for scripture (cf. 1:22). It is independent of both the Septuagint and the Masoretic text. The Masoretic text has 'potter' and the Septuagint has 'treasury.' The episode has reminiscences of Jeremiah's buying a field (Jer. 32:6ff.) and visiting the potter's house (Jer. 18:2ff.). The book of Acts 1:19ff. cites Psalms 69:25 and 109:8 as also referring to events connected with Judas. Efforts at solving the problem of attributing the passage to Jeremiah include the following suggestions: (1) that there is a mistake in transcription, (2) that Jeremiah stands as a name for the group of prophets of which Jeremiah and Zechariah are a part, (3) that a later unlearned writer added the word Jeremiah, (4) that Zechariah preserves a statement from Jeremiah not found elsewhere, and (5) that the citation is composite, using material from both prophets and thereby attributed to Jeremiah. The solution to the question is not known" (Jack P. Lewis, *The Gospel According to Matthew*, Part 2, The Living Word Commentary Series [Austin, Tex.: Sweet Publishing Co., 1976; reprint, Abilene, Tex.: ACU Press, 1984], 157).

### **HIS CLOTHES DISTRIBUTED (PSALM 22:18)**

Some Old Testament predictions had two meanings—near and remote, direct and indirect, primary and secondary. Others had meaning only as a prophecy about Jesus. For example, consider Psalm 22:18: “They divide my garments among them, and for my clothing they cast lots.” This prediction is one of the most precise. It appears to show prior knowledge of a crucifixion task force composed of four soldiers, as well as prior knowledge that Jesus would be wearing five garments. Four garments would be easily distributed among four soldiers, but the fifth garment posed a problem. To divide it into four parts would ruin a wearable garment, making it four rags. In order that someone might be able to use the garment, the soldiers thought the fairest solution was to cast lots, and so it was done:

Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His outer garments and made four parts, a part to every soldier and also the tunic; now the tunic was seamless, woven in one piece. So they said to one another, “Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, to decide whose it shall be”; this was to fulfill the Scripture: “They divided My outer garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots” (John 19:23, 24).

### **A REPROACH OF MEN (PSALM 22:6)**

At times—as when Shimei cursed and threw rocks (2 Samuel 16:5, 6) at the fleeing, weeping, barefoot David—Jesse’s son felt himself to be “a reproach of men and despised by the people” (Psalm 22:6). He said,

All who see me sneer at me;  
 They separate with the lip, they wag the head, saying,  
 "Commit yourself to the LORD; let Him deliver him;  
 Let Him rescue him, because He delights in him"  
 (Psalm 22:7, 8).

David's prophesied descendant likewise was "a reproach of men and despised by the people." This was fulfilled when He was crucified:

And those passing by were hurling abuse at Him, wagging their heads and saying, ". . . If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross." In the same way the chief priests also, along with the scribes and elders, were mocking Him and saying, "He saved others; He cannot save Himself. He is the King of Israel; let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe in Him. He trusts in God; let God rescue Him now, if He delights in Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Matthew 27:39-43).

### **THE THIRSTY ONE (PSALM 69:21)**

During a time of miserable oppression, David looked in vain for helpers. Enemies had starved him, and he was thirsty. In mockery, he was given *baruth*, a food supplied to mourners; but it contained bitter gall. How cruel humans can be! Then, in place of water, they gave him vinegar: "They also gave me gall for my food and for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink" (Psalm 69:21).

Another oppressed one, Jesus of Nazareth, was likewise without comforters as He was suspended on the cross. Apparently, soon after His hanging (at about nine in the morning), tempting wine was offered to Him. The wine was offered by sadistic people in mockery; it had been mixed with myrrh, making it

bitter and undrinkable (Mark 15:23), like gall and wormwood. It is no surprise that Jesus refused to drink. His crucifiers, like David's tormentors, were fiendish, making His suffering more intense as if adding salt to His wounds.

Six hours passed. Around three in the afternoon, Jesus knew He was about to die (John 19:28). He also knew that part of Psalm 69:21 was yet unfulfilled: "And for my thirst they gave me vinegar to drink." He had received the gall, but not the vinegar. Therefore, "to fulfill the Scripture" (John 19:28), Jesus enticed someone to offer Him a drink by saying out loud, "I am thirsty." This time a cheap, sharp wine called vinegar was given to Him. A spongeful of it was pushed up to Jesus' mouth. When He had sucked from the sponge, His last words came from His lips: "It is finished"; "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (John 19:30; Luke 23:46).

### **A DOER OF GOD'S WILL (PSALM 40:6-8)**

God had commanded the Israelites to give animal sacrifices (Leviticus 16). On these He looked with delight (Psalm 51:19) when the worshipers loved Him (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13) and loved their neighbors (Leviticus 19:18; see Micah 6:6-8). However, any animal offering in the absence of personal love, dedication, purity, and humility was an abomination to the Holy One of Israel (Psalm 51:16, 17; Isaiah 1:11-17; Jeremiah 6:20; 7:22, 23; Amos 5:22-24). This great principle of complete committal, both of the animal and of the worshiper himself, may explain the original setting for Psalm 40:6-8:

Sacrifice and meal offering You have not desired;  
My ears You have opened;  
Burnt offering and sin offering You have not required.  
Then I said, "Behold, I come;  
In the scroll of the book it is written of me:  
I delight to do Your will, O my God;  
Your Law is within my heart."

God did not desire sacrifices or meal offerings unaccompanied by personal purity and dedication. Burnt offerings and sin offerings from insincere, hypocritical worshipers could not meet His requirements. Then, as now, God wanted each worshiper to give himself from the heart.

The one portrayed in Psalm 40 said, "Behold, I come." That internal decision had been written and prescribed in the book of the law (Deuteronomy 10:12, 13; 30:9, 10). Properly motivated, with open heart and mouth, he volunteers himself: "I delight to do Your will, O my God; Your Law is within my heart." David, as such a worshiper and as the writer of Psalm 40, was thus offering more than animals to God.

However, even with sincerity, animal offerings could not actually take away sin (Hebrews 10:3, 4). They could only put off the day of reckoning (Hebrews 10:1, 2). The destiny of the whole world therefore rests on the second and higher meaning of Psalm 40:6–8. Christ not only did God's will in purity and sincerity, but more: He offered a human body (Hebrews 10:5).

In a different and higher sense than any Old Testament worshiper could ever have imagined, Jesus agreed to be our sacrifice. Before the foundation of the world (see 1 Peter 1:18–20), He said to His Father, "Behold, I have come (In the scroll of the book it is written of Me) to do Your will, O God" (Hebrews

10:7). When a human body had been prepared for Jesus, He willingly offered it on the cross. The happy result is that Christians can now rejoice, saying, "We have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:10).

### **CRUSHER OF THE SERPENT'S HEAD (GENESIS 3:15)**

God was speaking to the serpent concerning the woman's seed when He said, "He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel" (Genesis 3:15b). It hardly seems reasonable that the meaning here is the natural enmity between serpents and humans. It seems clear that the serpent was the mouthpiece of Satan ("the serpent of old who is called the devil and Satan, who deceives the whole world"; Revelation 12:9). This being so, God was predicting a conflict between the devil and the woman's seed. The first example of the woman's seed, Cain, did not enter into a conflict with the devil. Rather, Cain yielded to the devil, allowing Satan and sin to rule over him (Genesis 4:7). Cain was of the evil one (1 John 3:12); consequently, he could not be the woman's seed predicted to crush the serpent's head.

The second example of the woman's seed, Abel, entered into a spiritual conflict with the deceiver of the whole world and emerged triumphant. He crushed the spiritual head of the serpent, though losing his own physical life. Perhaps his losing his physical life is the meaning of the devil's crushing the heel of the woman's seed. Abel was a "godly offspring" of the woman (see Malachi 2:15).

It would appear that every example of a person's living for God and opposing the devil, suffering

persecution in the process, is in part a fulfillment of Genesis 3:15. However, the most meaningful example of such a triumphant life is Jesus. Born of a woman (Galatians 4:4), He was a descendant of Eve (Luke 3:23–38; see Genesis 3:20). In that He suffered physical death, it could be said that Satan had crushed His heel; but in the process of that death, Jesus destroyed the one who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14). Today Jesus holds the keys of death and of Hades (Revelation 1:18). He has abolished death and has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10), having crushed the head of the serpent.

Every example of a righteous person is a spiritual crushing of Satan's head, but only Jesus crushed death. In this sense, only Jesus can be said to fulfill Genesis 3:15. Because of Jesus' uniqueness in this regard, Bible scholars have long held that Genesis 3:15 is the "protevangelium," the first announcement of the coming Messiah. Though no New Testament writer directly applied Genesis 3:15 to Jesus, its breath of hope makes it a startling passage. It gives a predictive hope of decisive victory over Satan: "The Son of God appeared for this purpose, to destroy the works of the devil" (1 John 3:8).

### **THE TRIUMPHANT SIN-BEARER (ISAIAH 53)**

Truly eight centuries ahead, Isaiah saw the glory of Jesus and "he spoke of Him" (John 12:41). The vividness of detail in Isaiah 53 causes readers to think they are looking at history, not prophecy. Unbelievers have searched heaven and earth, the living and the dead, to find anybody but Jesus (including Moses, Uzziah,

Zerubbabel, Jeremiah, Zedekiah, Isaiah, Jehoiachin, and Israel) to fit the chapter's statements; but no one other than Jesus fits. Further, it would be impossible for anyone else purposely to arrange his life so as to make Isaiah 53 tell of him. Striking details were predicted by the prophet who saw Jesus so clearly:

1. despised  
(53:3; see Matthew 27:39–43)
2. a man of sorrows  
(53:3; see Matthew 26:38)
3. acquainted with grief  
(53:3; see Hebrews 4:15)
4. unappreciated by His people  
(53:3; see John 1:10, 11)
5. a trouble-bearer for others  
(53:4; see Matthew 8:16, 17)
6. a stripe-bearer for others  
(53:5; see 1 Peter 2:24, 25)
7. a sin-bearer for others  
(53:5, 12; see 1 Corinthians 15:3; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 9:28; Romans 4:25)
8. dumb before His persecutors  
(53:7; see Matthew 26:63; 27:12, 14)
9. deprived of justice  
(53:8; see Matthew 27:24)
10. buried with the rich  
(53:9; see Matthew 27:57–60)
11. without deceit  
(53:9; see 1 Peter 2:22)
12. raised from the dead  
(53:10; see Mark 16:9)
13. exalted and honored as a great one  
(53:12; see Philippians 2:9–11)

14. numbered with transgressors  
(53:12; see Luke 22:37)
15. an intercessor for transgressors  
(53:12; see Luke 23:34)

An Ethiopian government official asked Philip if the prophet was speaking of himself or of someone else in Isaiah 53. It is easy to understand the evangelist's answer: "Philip opened his mouth, and beginning from this Scripture he preached Jesus to him" (Acts 8:35). He could not have opened his mouth and used this Scripture to preach about anyone else.

### **THE VICTORIOUS ONE (PSALM 68:18)**

David, in the beautiful, figurative language of Psalm 68:18a, pictured God as a conquering king. He depicted this king ascending the highest place of honor, leading prisoners of war, and accepting gifts from His admirers:

You have ascended on high, You have led captive Your  
captives;  
You have received gifts among men.

In a similar way, Jesus, having descended into the grave, arose triumphantly, leading as His prisoners death, Hades, and the grave! In the world's most crucial battle, He had voided Satan's hold on tombs: He brought to nought him who had the power of death, that is, the devil (Hebrews 2:14), bringing life and immortality to light through the gospel (2 Timothy 1:10). Then He could triumphantly announce, "[I am] the living One; and I was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore, and I have the keys of death and

of Hades" (Revelation 1:18). Having removed the powers and principalities of the god of this world, He could display His glorious victory publicly (Colossians 2:15).

Only since that splendid triumph have men been able to lose fear of death (Hebrews 2:15). Since that open mastery of mortality, men can taunt death and the open grave, "O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?" (1 Corinthians 15:55). Now they can shout, "Thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 15:57). Christians can look forward to the final triumph, when "will come about the saying that is written, 'Death is swallowed up in victory'" (1 Corinthians 15:54).

On account of what Jesus did for us, God has received words of praise and gifts of appreciation and thankfulness from men. In Ephesians 4:8 Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, changed one word in the New Testament application of David's words. He referred to Jesus' distributing gifts instead of receiving gifts. Ten days after the death-conquering Messiah ascended to God's right hand, He sent forth His Holy Spirit, and gave gifts to men.

Specifically, He empowered the apostles as His ambassadors, giving them the power to lay their hands on others and to pass on their miraculous gifts. Those who received these gifts used them to serve as prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:8-13). This distribution of multiple gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-11) was instrumental in confirming the gospel and imparting teachings to edify God's people (Hebrews 2:1-4; Romans 12:3-8).

These gifts were short-lived, lasting only until all

truth, the complete revelation, had been made known (John 16:13; 1 Corinthians 13:8–13). In that temporary, first-century period, however, they well served their divinely ordained purpose of confirming the preached word (Mark 16:17–20). The King of kings and Lord of lords who had ascended into heaven distributed miraculous endowments, bestowing gifts to men on the earth.

### **THE PRECIOUS CORNERSTONE (ISAIAH 28:16)**

To most of the Jews, Christ was a reject, an unwanted building stone, but other people recognized Him as a precious cornerstone. Isaiah made this prediction:

Therefore thus says the LORD God,  
 “Behold I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone,  
 A costly cornerstone for the foundation, firmly  
 placed” (Isaiah 28:16).

Jesus used the illustration of His deity as the foundation of Christianity when He told Peter, “. . . upon this rock [not, upon Peter, but upon the foundational statement he had uttered], I will build My church” (Matthew 16:18a, b). No purely human foundation—whether of Peter or of some other sinner—would be sufficient to support an institution of sin-purified people. “For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ” (1 Corinthians 3:11). Though the apostles and the prophets would work with Jesus in building His church, the Chief Stone—the only Worshipful One, the only One tried and precious—was Jesus (Ephesians 2:20).

The preciousness and superlative value of Jesus

in this regard was referred to by Peter as he quoted Isaiah 28:16. He did not point to himself as the foundational stone of the church; he could think of none other than Jesus in that position:

For this is contained in Scripture:

“Behold, I lay in Zion a choice stone, a precious  
corner stone,  
And he who believes in Him will not be disap-  
pointed.”

This precious value, then, is for you who believe; . . .  
(1 Peter 2:6, 7a).