

Christ in Prophecy
“Christmas 2: Christmas in Bible Prophecy”

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Opening

Dr. Reagan: Jesus fulfilled 108 prophecies when He came the first time. And anyone who thinks that is an accident knows nothing, absolutely nothing about the laws of probability. Prophecy is proof positive that Jesus was God in the flesh.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Greetings in the name of Jesus, our blessed hope. I'm Dave Reagan, senior evangelist for Lamb & Lion Ministries, and this is my colleague, Dennis Pollock. Every year at Christmas I am reminded of the remarkable prophecies concerning the birth of Jesus and how they substantiate His deity and the faithfulness of God. In this program we are going to take a look at some of those prophecies. The first that come to my mind are those that established the general time period when the Lord would appear. Tell us about those prophecies Dennis.

Dennis Pollock: Well Dave, I'll be glad to. There are two of them. One is in Genesis 49 and the other is in Daniel 9.

Dr. Reagan: Okay, I'll tell you what we will do, before we move into those let's just take them in order. So let's go to Genesis 49 first.

Dennis Pollock: Alright, the verse I have in mind is Genesis 49:10 which contains words spoken by Jacob on his death bed to his son, Judah. Jacob said: "the scepter shall not depart from Judah, until Shiloh comes, and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples." Now, the term, "Shiloh," was recognized by the Jewish rabbis as a messianic title. The term, "scepter," refers to the judicial power of the nation. Thus, this prophecy is saying that the Jewish nation's judicial power will never be lost before the Messiah comes.

Dr. Reagan: But, Dennis, didn't the Jews lose that judicial power during the Babylonian captivity, about 500 years before the birth of Jesus?

Dennis Pollock: Well, a lot of people would think so. No, it's interesting that although Judah was deprived of its national sovereignty at that time, it never lost its scepter. That's because the Jews were allowed to have their own judges during the Babylonian captivity.

Dr. Reagan: So then, the loss of judicial power must have occurred under the Romans?

Dennis Pollock: That's right. In about 7 AD the Romans removed the power of the Jewish Sanhedrin Council to pronounce the death penalty. It's amazing that there is a notation about this in the Talmud, the Jewish oral tradition. It states that the Sanhedrin was overtaken by "a general consternation" and that they covered their heads with ashes and their bodies with sackcloth and exclaimed: "woe unto us, for the scepter has departed from Judah, and the Messiah has not come!"

Dr. Reagan: That is very remarkable Dennis. Of course, what they did not realize was that the Messiah had already come! Jesus had been born about 11 years earlier. So Shiloh had arrived shortly before the scepter departed. Just as was prophesied!

Dennis Pollock: The other timing prophecy is found in Daniel 9. It is a complex one, so I will just summarize it. The prophecy was written during the Babylonian captivity. And basically, what it says is that the Messiah will come and be killed 483 years after an order is issued for the rebuilding of Jerusalem. Now that order was given by the Mede Persian ruler, Artaxerxes, and 483 years later, guess what, Jesus entered Jerusalem to be crucified.

Dr. Reagan: Dennis, that really is amazing! But you know as well as I do, that the world would just simply say that's a coincidence.

Dennis Pollock: Well, they might but such prophecies and their precise fulfillment is beyond the realm of coincidence. What we are talking here about God-incidence, that is, historical events orchestrated by God.

Dr. Reagan: You know Dennis, I spent some seven years cataloguing all of the Old Testament prophecies concerning the Messiah, and in the process folks, I discovered 108 separate and distinct prophecies that were fulfilled in the First Coming of Jesus. Think of that, 108! There was a mathematician by the name of Peter Stoner who has calculated the odds of just 7, not 108, but 7 of those prophecies being fulfilled accidentally in the life of one person. And he concluded that the odds are 1 in 10 to the 17th power. Folk's that's the number ten with seventeen zeros after it. Have you ever pondered the odds represented by this phenomenal number? Now Dennis, I have never met Peter Stoner, but I am absolutely convinced that he must be a neat guy because he uses the State of Texas to illustrate what is meant by 1 in 10 to the 17th power. Wouldn't you agree?

Dennis Pollock: Absolutely.

Dr. Reagan: Now here is how he explains it. He say's, take the State of Texas, fill it knee deep with silver dollars, fly over it in an airplane and drop out one of the silver dollars with a red dot on it. Take some bulldozers and mix up this sea of silver dollars. Get them really mixed up then turn a person loose in that sea of silver dollars with a blindfold on and the odds that on the first draw they'll reach down and pick up the silver dollar with the red dot is 1 in 10 to the 17th power!

Dennis Pollock: Wow! And double wow! You're right, Dave, it's beyond the realm of possibility. That's why some people try to argue that Jesus fulfilled these prophecies on purpose. But most of them were incapable of purposeful, self-fulfillment. For example, consider the two we just looked at concerning His birth. How many of us have been able to control the timing of our own birth?

Dr. Reagan: And the same is true about the place of His birth.

Dennis Pollock: Well, that's right and that brings us to one of the most important prophecies concerning Jesus' birth. It's found in Micah 5:2.

Dr. Reagan: Well wait a minute, before we go to that. Let's just pause here for a moment before we read that crucial passage, because I would like for us to have a song, sung by Jack Hollingsworth of Acts 29 Ministries.

Jack sings *Oh Holy Night*.

Dr. Reagan: Thanks, Jack, for that beautiful song. And now Dennis, let's go to that key passage you were talking about in Micah 5 verse 2 that talks about the birthplace of the Messiah.

Dennis Pollock: Okay Dave. Well that verse reads as follows: "But as for you, Bethlehem, Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you one will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel." Now this prophecy, written 500 years before Jesus' birth, specifically names the town where the Messiah will be born.

Dr. Reagan: Yes it does Dennis. And you know folks it does it more precisely than most people realize because there were two Bethlehems in Israel at that time, one in the north near the Sea of Galilee, and the other in the south near Jerusalem. This prophecy says the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem, Ephrathah, meaning the Bethlehem near Jerusalem. Let me illustrate the point this way. If I were to ask a person where he was born, and he said to me, "Springfield," I would have to ask, "Which Springfield?" That's because there's a Springfield in almost every state of our nation. We are talking here, folks, about very specific prophecies not the kind of vague and indecipherable "prophecies" that characterize the writings of false prophets like Nostradamus so-called prophecies that are written in such linguistic mumbo-jumbo that they can be "understood" only after the event and then can be applied to numerous events, over and over again.

Dennis Pollock: Now before we leave the prophecy in Micah, I'd like to point out something else it says that is very important and which is often overlooked. Beginning with the latter part of verse 2 and continuing through verse 3, the passage says this, "from you Bethlehem one will go forth for me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity." These verses make it very clear that the Messiah will be divine. That He will be God in the flesh for these verses say He will be the one who has existed eternally.

Dr. Reagan: And this is not the only prophecy that affirms the divinity of the Messiah. Another can be found in Isaiah 9:6 where it says the Messiah will be called, "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, and Prince of Peace."

Dennis Pollock: And let's not forget, Dave, that last week when we focused on the scriptural evidence of the virgin birth, we took a look at several prophecies that indicated the divine nature of the Messiah. Like the one in Genesis 3:15 which said He would be born of "the seed of woman," and the one in Isaiah 7:14 which said point blank that He would be born of a virgin.

Dr. Reagan: Folks, there are many other details in the Hebrew Scriptures about the birth of the Messiah that were prophesied long before Jesus was born in Bethlehem. For example, the prophet Balaam mentioned that a special star would mark the Messiah's birth. In one of his Psalms, Solomon stated that kings would send the Messiah gifts. Hosea prophesied that the Messiah would be taken into Egypt, which is exactly what happened when Jesus' parents fled Bethlehem due to the threats of King Herod. And Herod's subsequent slaughter of the children of Bethlehem was prophesied by Jeremiah. The New Testament also contains many prophecies about the birth of the Messiah, and in a few moments we will take a look at them.

Part 2

Dennis Pollock: As Dave said before the break, in addition to Old Testament prophecies that were given hundreds and even thousands of years before the Messiah was born, the New Testament contains a cluster of prophetic statements that were made shortly before the birth of

Jesus. The first was given by the angel Gabriel to Zechariah, the priest who was to become the father of John the Baptist. Gabriel told Zechariah that his barren wife, Elizabeth, would conceive a son to be named John, and that this son would serve as a forerunner of the Messiah, preparing the hearts of the people for the Messiah's appearance.

Dr. Reagan: Gabriel next appeared to Mary to announce that she would be the mother of the Messiah by the power of the Holy Spirit. He told her that her child's name would be Yeshua or Jesus, in English meaning, "God's salvation." He also said the child would be divine, that He would be "the Son of the Most High."

Dennis Pollock: The next prophetic words came out of Mary's mouth after she became pregnant with the Messiah. Luke records a glorious song which she sang to Elizabeth. In the song Mary prophesies that her Son will "scatter the proud," "bring down rulers," "exalt the humble," and "fill the hungry."

Dr. Reagan: And three months later, Elizabeth's husband, Zechariah, was filled with the Holy Spirit when his son, John the Baptist, was born, and Zechariah also sang a prophetic song. Referring to the baby in Mary's womb, he proclaimed that God had "raised up a horn of salvation" for the Jewish people. He then declared that his own son would be called "the prophet of the Most High," and he prophesied that his son would "go before the Lord to prepare His way." Zechariah concluded his song with one of the most beautiful poetic prophecies concerning the Messiah that can be found anywhere in scripture. Here's what he said: "because of the tender mercy of our God. The sunrise from on high shall visit us, to shine upon those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, to guide our feet in the way of peace."

Dennis Pollock: Those are beautiful words. The next prophetic song of celebration was sung on the night of the Messiah's birth when an angel appeared to the shepherds of Bethlehem and proclaimed: "behold, I bring you good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; for today in the City of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord." That angel was suddenly joined by a multitude of angels who sang a triumphant chorus: "Glory to God in the highest and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased."

Dr. Reagan: The final prophetic song related to the Messiah's birth was sung by a "righteous and devout" man by the name of Simeon. The Holy Spirit had come upon him and had revealed to him that he would not die before he saw the Messiah. He was given that glorious privilege forty days after the Messiah's birth when the parents of Jesus came to the temple in Jerusalem to dedicate their baby to God. Simeon took the Christ child in his arms, lifting Him up, thanked the Lord, and sang: "my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the presence of all peoples - a light of revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of your people Israel."

Dennis Pollock: Folks, the bottom line is that the fulfillment of all these prophecies in the life of one person, Jesus of Nazareth, is proof positive that He was who He said He was, namely, the Messiah of God.

Dr. Reagan: Yes, Dennis, and God's faithfulness in fulfilling each of these prophecies in detail is also significant because it gives us assurance that He will likewise faithfully fulfill all the prophecies He has given to Christians regarding the soon return of Jesus. Folks, God has made some great promises to the Church.

Dennis Pollock: He certainly has, Dave. That's why Paul wrote that "the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared to the glory that is yet to be revealed to us."

Dr. Reagan: And likewise, in 1 Corinthians 2:9 Paul wrote: “no eye has seen, no ear has heard, nor has the mind of man conceived, what God has prepared for those who love Him.”

Dennis Pollock: One day very soon Jesus is going to appear in the Heavens and take the Church, both the living and dead, out of this world. On the way up we are going to receive glorified, immortal bodies that will never age again, praise the Lord, and never again feel any pain. After the tribulation, we will return to earth with Jesus to help Him reign over the earth. And we will see this world flooded with peace, righteousness, and justice, as the waters cover the seas.

Dr. Reagan: And, Dennis those are only a few of the glorious promises God has made about the future. And we can be assured that God will be just as faithful in fulfilling them as He was in fulfilling all the promises He made about the First Coming of the Messiah.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: We now want to return to one of the prophecies we considered earlier. It's the one given to Mary by the angel Gabriel when he informed her that she had been chosen by God to be the mother of the Messiah. It is recorded in Luke 1, beginning with verse 31. Would you read that for us, Dennis?

Dennis Pollock: Alright. “Behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to Him the throne of his father, David, and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His Kingdom there will be no end.”

Dr. Reagan: Now folks, this magnificent statement contains seven promises. Four of them relate to the First Advent of the Lord, and they have thus all been fulfilled. Let's consider those four: Number one, Mary will conceive and give birth to a Son. Number two, His name will be called Jesus. Number three, He will be called Great. Number four, He will be called the Son of God.

Dennis Pollock: But Dave, what most people overlook is that Gabriel's statement to Mary contained three other prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled: Number one, He will be given the throne of David. That hasn't been fulfilled. Secondly, He will reign over the house of Jacob and thirdly, there will be no end to His Kingdom.

Dr. Reagan: Dennis, I'm very glad you mentioned that. Because folks, I call these three promises the “forgotten promises” of Christmas because they are not taught by most churches in Christendom today. That's because most churches take the position that Jesus will never return to this earth to reign. This is called the amillennial viewpoint.

Dennis Pollock: The amillennial view is based upon the supposition that the Bible simply does not mean what it says. To substantiate the viewpoint, its proponents are forced to spiritualize scripture. Thus, in their interpretation of these three, unfulfilled promises, they convert the throne of David into the throne of God and the house of Jacob becomes the Church. They then conclude that the promises have been fulfilled in the current reign of Jesus from His Father's throne over the church.

Dr. Reagan: Well folks, there is no doubt that Jesus is currently reigning from His Father's throne over His Kingdom, the Church. But to identify that reign with the one promised to Mary

takes a great leap of imagination. The “throne of David” is not the Throne of God. The Throne of God is in Heaven. The throne of David is in Jerusalem. Jesus Himself clearly differentiates between the throne of God and His own throne in Revelation 3:21. In that verse, Jesus says that He will one day allow believers, you and me, to sit with Him on His throne just as His Father has allowed Him to share His throne. Jesus is not on the throne of David today. He is sitting at the right hand of His Father, on His Father’s throne. He will occupy the throne of David when He returns to earth to reign from Mt. Zion in Jerusalem.

Dennis Pollock: Nor is the Church the “house of Jacob.” This is an Old Testament term for the children of Israel. The Church is never referred in Scripture as the house of Jacob. The Bible teaches that a remnant of the Jews will one day accept Jesus as their Messiah. This will occur at the end of seven years of terrible suffering called the Tribulation, or “the time of Jacob’s trouble.” When Jesus returns at the end of that time of suffering, the Jewish remnant will be gathered to the land of Israel and will be made the foremost nation in the world. Jesus will then rule over the house of Jacob.

Dr. Reagan: You know another important point to keep in mind is that the current church kingdom is not an everlasting kingdom. The church age kingdom will end with the rapture of the Church. The church kingdom will be followed by the millennial kingdom when Jesus will reign over all the earth from Mt. Zion in Jerusalem. That kingdom here on this earth will last one thousand years. The final, eternal kingdom of Christ will be established on a new, perfected earth.

Dennis Pollock: Folks, why can’t we accept the promises made to Mary to mean what they say? The first four meant exactly what they said. Why must the last three be spiritualized? The only reason for spiritualizing them is to force them to conform to some preconceived doctrine.

Dr. Reagan: That’s a good point Dennis. You know I believe God knows how to communicate. If God had intended to promise Mary that her Son would reign from Heaven over the Church forever, well, He would have said so. Instead, He reaffirmed to her the promise He had made many times through the Old Testament prophets that His Son would reign from David’s throne in Jerusalem over Israel and that He would be given a kingdom that would last forever.

Dennis Pollock: And Dave, if the promises God made to the Jews didn’t mean what they said, then how can we be sure that His promises made to the Church mean what they say? I believe God says what He means and He means what He says.

Dr. Reagan: I would certainly agree with that Dennis. During this Christmas season I am going to praise God for sending His Son to die for my sins. But I am also going to pray that God will soon send His Son again to fulfill the “forgotten promises” which Gabriel made to Mary. Let me tell you something folks, the Church may have forgotten those promises, but I thank God that He never forgets a promise.

End of Program