

Christ in Prophecy
Israel 19: Pilgrimage 4 Nazareth
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Opening

Dr. Reagan: This week we're going to continue our pilgrimage through the Holy Land by visiting the city of Nazareth, the city where Jesus grew up. There we will consider the necessity of the Virgin Birth and the evidence that supports it. Stay tuned.

Part 1

Dr. Reagan: Well, here we are on day four of our pilgrimage. We are in the city of Tiberias on the western shore of the Sea of Galilee and we're getting ready to get on the bus and head toward Jerusalem. I don't know about you Gary but I always get goose bumps and get excited.

Gary Fisher: Amen.

Dr. Reagan: I've been there 44 times and I'm still excited about going.

Gary Fisher: Fifteen for me.

Dr. Reagan: Well, anyway we're going to head up to Jerusalem today and we're going to make our first stop in the boyhood home of Jesus in the city of Nazareth. We'll visit the Church of the Annunciation which is located on the traditional site where Gabriel confronted Mary and told her that she was going to give birth to the Messiah. From there we'll go over to the traditional site of the synagogue and there Gary is going to share with us about how Jesus was kicked out of His hometown.

Gary Fisher: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: And moved His headquarters to Capernaum on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. From there we are going to drive all the way across the Valley of Armageddon to the ancient fortress of Megiddo and we will be covering that whole area. When we get through with that we'll go back across the Valley of Armageddon to the Jordan River and there we're going to visit the greatest archaeological excavation in all of the land the city of Beit Shean. There is the ancient Canaanite city which is a Tel that is where Saul's body was nailed to the wall. But then there is the Roman city and you won't believe your eyes when you see the excavations that have taken place there. After that we're going to get on the bus for a long, long journey down the Jordan River Valley to the city of Jericho which we do not visit anymore because it is under Palestinian control. And from there up to the city of Jerusalem. You know the pilgrims used to make that trek once a year and as they went along, sometimes twice a year and as they went along they would sing what were the called the Songs of the Ascents which are certain Psalms that they would sing.

Gary Fisher: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: But before we get to those let me ask you Gary which of these sites are you looking forward to the most?

Gary Fisher: Well, it's hard to choose but there are so many of them but I think the one that impacts me the most is that little synagogue that's in Nazareth where Jesus announced that He was the Messiah. And it is a testimonial what Jesus said, a prophet is without honor in his own home town. And there are those who try to get in the ministry and they try to make it work but they are in their own town and they want everybody to love them, but if you're preaching the truth everybody is not going to love you. And so it is a testimonial that a prophet is without honor, so if you are going to be in the ministry you need to make your mind up, satisfy God and no one else.

Dr. Reagan: That's right, amen brother. And I look forward to hearing what you have to say there at that Nazareth synagogue. Well folks, let's just complete this by taking a look at one of the Psalms of the Ascents, just a portion of it, those Psalms are in the 120's in the book of Psalms and one of them is Psalm 125 which says, "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion." Now Mount Zion is a symbolic term for Jerusalem. There is a Mount Zion in Jerusalem but it's used here to refer to Jerusalem. "Those who trust in the Lord are like Mount Zion which cannot be moved but abides forever. As the mountains surround Jerusalem so the Lord surrounds His people from this time forth and forevermore."

Gary Fisher: Forevermore, praise the God.

Dr. Reagan: May the Lord surround our bus with angels today.

Gary Fisher: Amen.

Dr. Reagan: And escort us all the way to that glorious city of Jerusalem.

Gary Fisher: Hallelujah.

Dr. Reagan: Alright, let's go.

Part 2

Dr. Reagan: I'm standing here on the streets of Nazareth and we are getting ready to go up to the Church of the Annunciation the traditional site where Gabriel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Christ child. And I wanted to just pause here and show you something that is the height of arrogance. The Muslims in this town have put up a sign over here that says, "Whoever seeks a religion other than Islam will not be accepted of him, and hereafter he will be one of the losers." They also have another sign a little further down that says, "God has no son." Now stop and think about that for a moment. What if we as Christians were to go to Mecca and put up a sign like this declaring Jesus as the Son of God to Muslims as they're entering their holy place? There would be a slaughter, wouldn't there?

Gary Fisher: Yes.

Dr. Reagan: But they feel that they have the right to do that. That is that so called, peaceful and tolerant religion. It is not peaceful, it is not tolerant. In fact a few years ago the Muslims came here and they took over a square that is located over here to my left a little area over here and they camped out and announced that they were going to build a mosque that would be taller than the Church of the Annunciation because they figure if it is taller than that means their religion is superior. The Israeli government put up with that for about six months, came over here one night raided the camp and cleared them all out and built a park over there. But this is the kind of arrogance we see all over the Middle East.

This is the magnificent Church of the Annunciation which was dedicated in 1969. It is located in the center of Nazareth and is situated on the traditional site where the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary, the mother of Jesus. The church features pictures of the Madonna with child that were contributed by nations all over the world. This is the modernistic version of Madonna and child that was donated by American Catholics. This is a more traditional version that was contributed by the Catholic community of China.

Alright, if you have your Bibles handy turn over to Luke chapter 1 and we're going to focus on that chapter right now. And I'm going to make two points in this chapter, the first one has to do with what Gabriel had to say to Mary. So here we go, Luke chapter 1 beginning with verse 26, it says, "Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth." In the sixth month of what? Well if you go back up to verse 24 it says, that Elizabeth the aged wife of Zacharias the priest had become pregnant in her old age. So this is in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy. Now, we do not know for sure how Mary was related to Elizabeth. Some have argued that they were cousins but because of Elizabeth's advanced age probably she was Mary's aunt but they were kinsmen in some way. So in the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy Gabriel, the angel of God was sent to the city of Galilee named Nazareth to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph of the house of David, the virgin's name was Mary. This comes to the next point that is very important, and that is we think of Mary as a mature woman, Mary was not, at most Mary was 14 years old, at most. That was the age of betrothal, 13-14, still is in this part of the world. So she was around 14 years of age. Joseph was probably much older. In fact many think he was a very elderly man who died shortly after their marriage but we don't know that. But she was a young woman, she was a girl, 14 years old. And for that reason I think that we need to put more emphasis on Mary the Protestant world has never emphasized Mary because the Catholic world has put so much emphasis on her and we've gone to the opposite extreme and she is a wonderful role model for teenage girls. She grew up in an Orthodox home, we know from what is read here that she knew the Scriptures by heart, that she was a person who had great faith. That she was a person who believed with all of her heart in God, and believed in the promise of a Messiah. So look what it says here, "She was betrothed to a man named Joseph." That means that actually she was married although the marriage had not been consummated, betrothal was considered the beginning of the marriage. So it goes on, "And having come in the angel said to her, 'Rejoice highly favored one, the Lord is with you blessed are you among women.'" Verse 29, "But when she saw him she was troubled at his saying and considered what manner of greeting this was. And then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid Mary for you have found favor with God."

Now we come to the most important part and this is eight promises that Gabriel made to Mary. Now look he makes eight promises. You will conceive in your womb, first promise. Number two, you will bring forth a son. Number three, you will call His name Yeshua, the salvation of God.

Number four, He will be great. Number five, He will be called the Son of the Highest that means He is going to be God in the flesh. The next one, the Lord God will give Him the throne of his father David. Number seven, he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end. "And then Mary said to the angel, 'How can this be since I do not know a man?'" She may have been 14 but she knew how babies were conceived. This was the first evidence right here that she truly was a virgin. She says, hey, how can this happen I have never known a man? "And the angel answered and said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you, therefore also that holy one who is to be born will be called the Son of God.'" You are going to give birth to the Messiah, God in the flesh. "Now indeed," Gabriel tells her, 'Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age, and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. For with God nothing is impossible."

And Mary look at what she says, "Behold, the maid servant of the Lord. Let it be according to your word.' And the angel departed from her." That was a great statement of courage on her part. She knew the Law. She knew that if she became pregnant before the wedding ceremony that she could be divorced by her husband. She knew that she could be put to death by stoning, she knew all that, she understood that. And yet she said, "Let the Lord's will be done." This was a girl of incredible faith.

Let's stop there for a moment and go back to those promises. Now look at the promises. Number one, you will conceive in your womb, fulfilled. Number two, you will bring forth a son, fulfilled. Number three, you shall call his name Yeshua, fulfilled. Number four, He will be great, the greatest man who ever lived, we measure history from his birth. Number five, He will be called the Son of the Highest, God in the flesh, and that is exactly what has happened. But that's only five of the promise, the last three I call the forgotten promises of Christmas because at Christmas we focus on this and we forget about the last three. The last three promises are unfulfilled. Look at what it says, "The Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David; He'll reign over the house of Jacob forever; His kingdom there will be no end." Those three promises are unfulfilled. Jesus has never reigned from the throne of David, never, the throne of David is one place, the throne of David Psalm 121 is in Jerusalem. Revelation chapter 3 says that Jesus is currently sitting on His Father's throne. And He says there in Revelation, "Just as I have the privilege of sitting next to my Father on His throne. When I return I will give to all believers an opportunity to sit next to me on my throne." His throne is the throne of David. That means every one of us in our glorified bodies are going to have our day, our opportunity to sit next to Jesus Christ on His throne as we reign with Him. So Jesus is not on the throne of David, He is on the throne of God at His right hand right now that is yet to be fulfilled. And then the next one it says, "And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever." He has never reigned over the house of Jacob, that's the Jewish people. That reign will begin with the millennial reign when He will start reigning over the Jewish people.

And those who do not believe in that spiritualize these last three promises, they just completely spiritualize them. They say, "Well they don't mean what they mean--what they say. The throne of David is where Jesus is now. The house of Jacob is the Church." The Bible never refers to the Church as the House of Jacob, that's called spiritualization making the Scripture mean anything you want it to mean. And then the last one says, "His kingdom will have no end." When He begins that Millennial Kingdom there will never be an ending to it, it will start then it will go into the eternal stage on the New Earth, He will continue to reign forever and ever and ever. But

that particular kingdom there, the kingdom promised when He came has not yet been established. That kingdom is yet future and it will be when the Lord Jesus Christ returns. I don't think it makes any sense at all to say that the first five promises meant what they said but the last three do not mean what they say. I think they mean what they say.

Now, let's continue reading the story go to verse 39, "Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste to a city of Judah." We do not know in the Scriptures what city that is but we know from tradition that is the village of Ein Kerem which is located just outside the city of Jerusalem a beautiful, beautiful village. And there is a church there built to honor the meeting of Mary with Elizabeth. And it says, "She entered the house of Zacharias," that is very important this is a priestly family, "and greeted Elizabeth and it happened," I love this, "when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary the babe leaped in her womb." Who's that? John the Baptist, he's turning somersaults in his mother's womb he's so excited to be in the presence of the Savior. I love that. "The babe leaped in her womb and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. And when she was filled with the Spirit," she was given a word of knowledge, a supernatural word of knowledge. Look what it says, "Then she spoke with a loud voice and said, 'Blessed are you among women and blessed is the fruit of your womb.'" She didn't even know that she was pregnant yet but she spoke it. "But why is this granted to me that the mother of my Lord," see she knows not only is she pregnant, but she is the mother of the Messiah, "should come to me. For indeed as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears the babe leaped in my womb for joy. Blessed is she who believed for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord." And Mary said and this is a Hebrew song and she begins to sing, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit is rejoiced in God my Savior." And then the rest of her song is a quotation of Hebrew prophecy, she knew the Scriptures by heart. And she is quoting the prophecies and talking about how they will be fulfilled in the birth of her Son.

Now look at the evidence of the Virgin Birth here. Not only is the divinity of Jesus under attack but the Virgin Birth is under attack as never before. You can even find evangelical leaders questioning it these days. I say to you without stuttering that the Virgin Birth is essential to the faith. If Jesus was not virgin born, He was not who He said He was. He was not God in the flesh. He could not be born naturally because He would have a sin nature. His divinity depended upon that virgin birth. He was born of the Holy Spirit and not of a man. And look at the evidence of the Virgin Birth here, first of all Mary's reaction. "How can I have a baby when I've never known a man?" That's the first evidence of the Virgin Birth. The second evidence is the first thing she did when she became pregnant was run to relatives and share the news. How many girls have you ever known who were pregnant outside of marriage who wanted to get on the phone and call all the relatives and share the news? They usually want to hide it, they are ashamed, they are embarrassed. Although increasingly in our society that's not true. But in that society, man alive, you don't get on the phone and call everybody and tell them you are pregnant. And look what else not only did she do that she ran to a priestly family, a priestly family, it was the obligation of the priest to report her to the authorities, try her and stone her to death, and yet she went because she was completely innocent. She probably didn't even think about the consequences of that. And then when she gets there it is confirmed to her by God in a miraculous way as John the Baptist jumps in his mother's womb, and Elizabeth speaks a word of knowledge that she is pregnant with the Christ child. What a passage this is. You know I want you to notice something there and I'm not going to talk long about this because of where we are, but notice what she says at the beginning of her song. "And Mary said, 'My soul magnifies the

Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior." She knew she needed a Savior, just like I need a Savior, and you need a Savior. She knew she was not sinless. She knew that she needed a Savior and she rejoiced that she was going to give birth to the very one who was going to make it possible for her to be reconciled to God.

I want to end by emphasizing verse 37. It's a verse that I'm claiming in prayer every night all through the day, and every evening, with God nothing is impossible. Whatever is in your life right now that is causing some lack of peace or disturbance, whether it be the sickness of a wife in my case, or whether it be a decision you are trying to make about business or a job career, or whether it be a relationship that is messed up, or whether it be a child who has gone astray and broken your heart. Nothing is impossible with God.

I had some folks yesterday at lunch share with me about a daughter of theirs who has gone astray. And a situation that seems hopeless, that seems that there is no possibility that she could ever come back from where she's gone. And yet I've seen it happen twice in my lifetime. We had two daughters, Ruth and Rachel. And the younger daughter came out of the womb a rebel. There were many times when my wife and I looked at each other and said, "Did these two daughters come out of the same womb? I mean how could this be?" One was so compliant and the other one was so rebellious. She nearly drove us crazy. At age 16 she just disappeared off the face of the earth, we got up one morning she wasn't there. For eight months we did not know whether she was alive or dead. We went to the police they could care less, they said, "Don't bother us. She'll come back. She'll come back." We never could get the police interested.

And we finally after two or three months of looking for her we would drive the streets every day. We called all the friends. We could not find anything. She had planned this for a long time. We finally just got on the floor on our faces and we said, "God we've done everything we've can. We can't do anything anymore. We are just at our wits end." And lying on the floor on our faces holding hands we said, "Lord, we turn her over to you and we feel sorry for you that you have to deal with her. But we're putting her in your hands and we're going to rely on you."

And about a month later I got a phone call one Sunday afternoon and this man said, "Hello, are you Dave Reagan?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Do you have a daughter named Rachel?" I said, "Yes." He said, "Well she is sitting in my living room. I am the pastor of so and so church in Shelbyville, Indiana," I believe it was. Said, "She's been up here for six or eight months working at a fast food restaurant and attending my church every Sunday." And he said, "She told me she had run away, and I told her you have to call your dad right now."

During that period she was gone every time we turned on the TV there was a story about a runaway being raped, a runaway being killed, one they even cut off both arms and threw them on the side of the road. Satan was just attacking, and attacking, and attacking. And suddenly there she was going to church all the time. I don't know. She came back, she didn't turn around. We kept praying, and praying and praying.

Today she is the director of our ministry. She has a wonderful marriage. She has two children. She has two grandchildren. And she is a pillar of the faith. And it was just prayer, pray, pray, pray, never give up. Believe in the impossible. And then out of her womb came a little girl who was more rebellious than her. And I thought there really is justice. There really is justice.

So I've seen God do it two times, radically, radically. And all I can say to you is nothing is impossible with God. Don't give up just keep praying and praying. I often tell people when they

come up and ask for prayer and it's for a rebellious child and it is some grandmother who is just filled with tears, and I say, "Let me tell you if you've got a grandma who's a believer praying for you, you do not have a chance, God will get you." If He has to hit you over the head with a 2x4 He's going to get you sooner or later. Don't give up praying. So whatever it is that you need the Lord's touch reach out to Him, reach out in faith and keep praying, and keep praying. He will hear and He will answer in His own time, but in the meantime He'll be drawing you closer, and closer and closer to Him. Sometimes He has to have these things in our lives to get our attention, our attention, and get us drawn close to Him.

Part 3

Dr. Reagan: The portion of day four of our Holy Land pilgrimage that we have shown you thus far gets us only through about the middle of the day. We spend the rest of the day at two spectacular archaeological sites, the fortress of Megiddo in the Valley of Armageddon and the city of Beit Shean in the Jordan Valley. Next week we will show you footage from these sites and present a teaching I made at Megiddo about the nine wars of the end times. To conclude this program let's go back to the city of Nazareth to the traditional site of the synagogue that existed at the time of Jesus. My colleague, Gary Fisher, presented a teaching there.

Gary Fisher: Now this is a quote from Isaiah 61, all the traditional Jewish people that are gathered know that Isaiah 61 is a prophetic prophecy about the Messiah. Jesus is in Nazareth, not a likely place to start an international ministry, it spans over several centuries. He gets the scroll of Isaiah like we're holding our Bibles and He reads this, "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to preach the Gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captive, heal up the broken heart, recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, and to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." He closes the book. He hands it to the attendant. And all eyes are fixed because He has just said, I am the fulfillment of Isaiah 61. Now I still want before I continue the point, I still want you to consider what has happened here. Why hasn't Jesus gone to TBN and CNN and ABC and CNBC and all the other BC's and told them? He is getting ready to start this great ministry and He wants all this exposure. How come that didn't happen? A principle is at play here that God and Jesus knew very well, and that principle is God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise. Here's another question: Why is Jesus starting His ministry up here? The center of theology in Israel is down in Jerusalem. Why doesn't Jesus go to Gamaliel the greatest teacher alive at that time to the big seminary down at Jerusalem and go in there and say, "Gamaliel I really need a conference with you. Would it be ok if I asked for five minutes of your time?" When they get in there they sit down and Jesus who should have said, "Gamaliel I'm getting ready to start this international ministry. I'm going to have a whole bunch of followers, it's going to span several centuries and I need 12 of your best men to help me, Dr. this, Dr. that." Is that what He did? No. Jesus is up here. He has opened the scroll of Isaiah. He has read to these people that He is the Messiah. And all eyes are fixed on Him. Now He's not from the theology center down in Jerusalem. So His legitimacy is in question to begin with. What would be the likely success of a ministry like that if we were to start one today? No exposure, from the wrong side of the tracks. A little bitty village, has no TV, no radio, no nothing, just out in the middle of nowhere, no

impressive anything going on. But this is how God operates. He has always operated this way and if you see that, if you recognize that you can trace it from Genesis to Revelation.

Part 4

Dr. Reagan: Well folks that is our program for this week. I hope it has been a blessing to you, and I hope you will be back with us again this time next week when we will resume our pilgrimage with visits to Megiddo and Beit Shean. Let's close with the recitation of the Shema from Deuteronomy 6:4. It is presented by one of the pilgrims in our pilgrimage group, his name Marvin Eli Lorenz of Dallas, Texas.

Marvin Eli Lorenz: Sh'ma Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu Adonai Ehad. Barukh sheim k'vod malkhuto l'olam va'ed. Amen.

End of Program