
Christian Evidences

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THE FULFILLMENT OF PROPHECY

The fulfillment of the prophecies of the Bible is a vast subject. In fact, the Messianic prophecies alone have provided enough material for the publication of many books. Other books have been written solely about the Old Testament prophecies concerning certain cities or about certain world empires, while still others consider the fulfillment of Biblical prophecies in the twentieth century.

Some authors have identified more than 300 Old Testament passages that are cited by the New Testament as having been fulfilled by Jesus Christ. The question of the New Testament's treatment of the Old Testament will be treated in a later section, but it is certainly clear that Jesus fulfilled a great many of the Messianic prophecies of the Hebrew Scriptures. The study of the libretto for Handel's Messiah is very instructive in this regard, because although the story line portrays the life of Jesus, many of the passages used for this purpose are taken from Old Testament prophetic passages concerning the Messiah.

Some of the fulfillments of the Messianic prophecies in Jesus were as follows: He was to be the seed of the woman (Gen. 3:15) who was to bruise Satan's head (Gal. 4:4). As the seed of Abraham (Gen. 22:18, Gal. 3:16) and the seed of David (Psalm 132:11, Jer. 23:5, Acts 13:23), he was to come from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10, Heb. 7:14).

He was to come a specified time (Gen. 49:10, Dan. 9:24-25, Luke 2:1), born of a virgin (Isaiah 7:14, Matt. 1:18-23), in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2, Matt. 2:1, Luke 2:5,6). Great persons were to visit Him and adore Him (Psalm 72:10, Matt. 2:1-11), and through the rage of a jealous king, innocent children were to be slaughtered (Jer. 31:15, Matt. 2:16-18). He was to be preceded by a forerunner, John the Baptist, before entering His public ministry (Isaiah 40:3, Mal. 3:1, Luke 1:17, Matt. 3:13).

He was to be a prophet like Moses (Deut. 18:18, Acts 3:20-22), and to have a special anointing of the Holy Spirit (Psalm 45:7, Isaiah 11:2, Isaiah 61:1,2, Matt. 3:16, Luke 4:15-21,43). He was to be a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Psalm 110:4, Heb. 5:5,6). As the servant of the Lord, he was to be a faithful and patient redeemer for the Gentiles as well as for the Jews (Isaiah 42:1-4, Matt. 12:18-21).

His ministry was to begin in Galilee (Isaiah 9:1,2, Matt. 4: 12,16-23); He was later to enter Jerusalem (Zech. 9:9, Matt. 21: 1-5) to bring salvation. He was to enter the temple (Hag. 2:7-9, Mal. 3:1, Matt. 21:12). His zeal for the Lord is mentioned (Psalm 69:9, John 2:17); His manner of teaching was to be by parables (Psalm 78:2, Matt. 13:34-35); His ministry was to be characterized by miracles (Isaiah 35:5-6, Matt. 11:4-6, John 11:47). He was to be rejected by His brethren (Psalm 69:8, Isaiah 53:3, John 1:11, John 7:5), and a "stone of stumbling" to the Jews--a "rock of offense" (Isaiah 8:14, Rom. 9:32, I Pet. 2:8).

He was to be hated without cause (Psalm 69:4, Isaiah 49:7, John 7:48, John 15:25), rejected by the

rulers (Psalm 118:22, Matt. 21:42, John 7:48), betrayed by a friend (Psalm 41:9, Psalm 55:12,14, John 13:18,21), forsaken by His disciples (Zech. 13:7, Matt. 26:31-56), sold for 30 pieces of silver (Zech. 11:12, Matt. 26:15), and His price given for the potter's field (Zech. 11:13, Matt. 27:7). He was to be smitten on the cheek (Mic. 5:1, Matt. 27:30), spat upon (Isaiah 50:6, Matt. 27:30), mocked (Psalm 22:7- 8, Matt. 27:31,39-44), and beaten (Psalm 50:6, Matt. 26:67, 27:26,30).

His death by crucifixion is described in Psalm 22. The meaning of His death, as a substitutionary atonement, is provided in Isaiah 53. His hands and feet were to be pierced (Psalm 22:16, Zech. 12:10, John 19:18, John 19:37, John 20:25), yet not one of His bones was to be broken (Ex. 12:46, Psalm 34:20, John 19:33-36). He was to suffer thirst (Psalm 22:15, John 19:28) and be given vinegar to drink (Psalm 69:21, Matt. 27:34). He was to be numbered with the transgressors (Isaiah 53:12, Matt. 27:38).

His body was to be buried with the rich (Isaiah 53:9, Matt. 27:57-60), but was not to see corruption (Psalm 16:10, Acts 2:31). He was to be raised from the dead (Psalm 2:7, 16:10, Acts 13:33), and ascend to the right hand of God (Psalm 68:18, Luke 24:51, Acts 1:9, Psalm 110:1, Heb 1:3).¹

It is sometimes asserted that Jesus did not fulfill all of the Messianic expectations outlined in the Hebrew Scriptures, only many of them. It must be remembered, however, that Jesus said repeatedly that he would be coming again in glory, and there is every reason to expect these additional passages to be fulfilled at that time. Certainly the vast number of prophecies that he did fulfill defies all odds, such that, after considering them carefully, it would take more faith to believe he was not the Messiah than to believe that he was.²

The Biblical prophecies concerning Tyre, Sidon, Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida, Samaria, Ashkelon, Gaza, Jericho, Jerusalem, Palestine, Moab, Ammon, Egypt, Assyria, and Edom, to name just a few places, have all been fulfilled to the letter. Detailed explanations of how these prophecies have been fulfilled can be found in many books on the subject.

One of many examples would be the prophecy concerning Tyre found in Ezekiel 26: 3-5,7,12,14,16:

Therefore thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I am against thee, O Tyrus, and will cause many nations to come up against thee, as the sea causeth his waves to come up. And they shall destroy the walls of Tyrus, and break down her towers: I will also scrape her dust from her, and make her like the top of a rock. It shall be a place for the spreading of nets in the midst of the sea. . . . For thus saith the Lord God; Behold, I will bring upon Tyrus Nebuchadrezzar king of Babylon . . . and they shall lay thy stones and thy timber and thy dust in the midst of the water. . . . And I will make thee like the top of a rock: thou shalt be a place to spread nets upon; thou shalt be built no more: for I the Lord have spoken it, saith the Lord God. . . . Then all the princes of the sea shall come down from their thrones, and lay away their robes, and put off their brodered garments: they shall clothe themselves with trembling.

This prophecy was written in 590 B.C. Four years later, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, began laying siege to Tyre, a process that took thirteen years. When he finally captured the city, he broke down her walls and towers, but the rulers of Tyre had taken everything of value to an island about half a mile off the coast. Nebuchadnezzar simply destroyed the coastal city, left it in ruins, and returned to Babylon.

In 322 B.C., Alexander the Great decided to capture the island city of Tyre. In order to do this, he built a causeway from the mainland to the island, taking stones, timber, and dirt from the ruined city. His army then marched to the island city and captured it. Other neighboring cities were so frightened by the conquest of Tyre that they surrendered to Alexander without opposition.

Today, the fresh water springs of Tyre still send out more than ten million gallons of water a day, yet despite this source of abundant drinking water, Tyre has never been rebuilt. However, the seacoast for miles on either side of the springs is now in use by fishermen. A photograph of the fishermen spreading their nets over the ancient city of Tyre appears in *Fulfilled Prophecies That prove the Bible* by George T. B. Davis.³

¹ See Fred John Meldau, *Messiah In Both Testaments* (Denver: Christian Victory Publishing Co., 1956).

² See, for example, Peter W. Stoner, *Science Speaks*, third ed. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1969), chapter 3, which considers the vast mathematical improbability that any man could fulfill just eight of the most obvious Messianic prophecies fulfilled by Jesus.

³ George T. B. Davis, *Fulfilled Prophecies That Prove The Bible* (Philadelphia: Million Testament Campaign, 1931), p. 9.