

The Jesus of the Bible - 1

Jesus in the Old Testament

In this new series, we consider Jesus Christ as the Bible shows him. In this first part, we begin to consider how he was described in the Old Testament – that section of the Bible written before he was born.

Referring to the Old Testament was a characteristic of the teaching of Christ himself, such as:

These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning me (Luke 24:44).

Jesus said things like, “*It is written*”, “*Have you not read?*”, “*The scripture cannot be broken*”, and in prayer to his Father, “*Your word is truth.*”

Foretelling His Life

The Old Testament foretold what would happen to him and his rôle in the future. In it are many predictions about his life. They cover the circumstances and place of his birth; the purpose of his mission; descriptions of his character; how people would reject him; his final entry into Jerusalem; his betrayal; the way his disciples forsook him; the harsh treatment he suffered before being executed; the precise details of his death (written centuries before crucifixion was known as a method of execution); his resurrection from the dead; his ascension to heaven; his rôle there as High Priest; his return to earth; and his kingship of the world.

It is a whole library of information about Jesus Christ, written long before the events took place. Let’s look at some examples.

Jesus Enters Jerusalem

Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey... He shall speak peace to the nations; his dominion shall be from sea to sea, and from the River to the ends of the earth (Zechariah 9:9–10).

Verse 9 is quoted in Matthew 21:5 and was literally fulfilled when Jesus made his triumphal entry into Jerusalem. Verse 10 however is one of many passages about his future kingship of the world. It has yet to happen. But the fulfilment of verse 9 assures us that verse 10 will also be fulfilled.

His Birth

Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call his name Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

This passage was quoted by God’s angel speaking to Joseph about the birth of Jesus in Matthew 1:23.

Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of you shall come forth to Me the one to be ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting (Micah 5:2).

After Jesus' birth, this passage was quoted to the wise men when they came to find him (Matthew 2:6).

For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon his shoulder. And his name will be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end, upon the throne of David and over his kingdom, to order it and establish it... forever (Isaiah 9:6-7).

This passage connects with the angel Gabriel's message to Mary about her conception of Jesus, God's Son. It clearly states he will be king over an everlasting kingdom, reigning on the throne of his ancestor David, in Jerusalem (Luke 1:32-33).

Suffering, Death and Resurrection

He was oppressed and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; he was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth (Isaiah 53:7).

This passage was being read by an Ethiopian treasurer, when Philip joined him in his chariot and explained that it referred to Jesus. Philip's teaching about Christ from the Old Testament scriptures persuaded the man to believe and be baptised (Acts 8:32).

My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in sheol [the pit], nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption (Psalm 16:9-10).

This psalm predicted that God would raise His Son from the dead, not allow-



ing him to corrupt in the grave. It was used by the Apostle Peter to declare that Jesus of Nazareth had been raised from the dead in accordance with God's purpose (Acts 2:25-28).

Returning to the Earth

In that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east (Zechariah 14:4).

This prophecy speaks of Christ's physical return to the Mount of Olives east of Jerusalem. Acts 1:9-11 describes his ascension to heaven. Two angels reassured the watching disciples that he would return physically and visibly in the same way.

These passages (just a few of very many) show clearly that the Lord Jesus Christ was central to his Father's purpose from the beginning. For a full understanding of him, we need to consult both Old and New Testaments.

Promises to Abraham

In the Old Testament we find important promises that God made, and their central focus is the Lord Jesus Christ.

God's promises to a faithful man called Abraham are found across Genesis chapters 12-22. They predict that:

- ❖ Abraham's name is to be great
- ❖ All nations will be blessed in Abraham and his descendants
- ❖ Abraham and his descendants are to possess the land (Israel) for ever
- ❖ Abraham is to be the father of innumerable descendants
- ❖ Abraham is to be the father of a specific descendant who will conquer all enemies.

This is explained in the New Testament, where Abraham is mentioned over 70 times. In Romans 4:13–22 we can see how important he was, and he is described as *“the heir of the world”*.

In Galatians 3:8 we read that *“the gospel”* was preached to Abraham. The message of this gospel is also explained for us:

Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He does not say, “And to seeds,” as of many, but as of one, “And to your Seed,” who is Christ... For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ... And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise (Galatians 3:16, 27–29).

This tells us that the individual seed is Jesus. The innumerable seed is all true believers in Christ. Through belief and baptism into Christ, all can inherit these promises. Without the Old Testament we would have little idea of this.

Promises to David

God’s promise to King David is found in 2 Samuel 7:11–16:

- ❖ David's descendant will be the Son of God

- ❖ David's descendant will build a house for God's name
- ❖ David's descendant will reign for ever from David's throne.



The New Testament confirms that David’s descendant is Jesus Christ. A clause from the promise is applied to him verbatim in Hebrews 1:5. Furthermore, the angel Gabriel’s message to Mary includes this:

You will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call his name JESUS. He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David... and of his kingdom there will be no end (Luke 1:31–33).

From this we learn that Jesus is the Son of God born of a human mother and destined to be a king, reigning in Jerusalem for ever.

No wonder the New Testament opens: *“Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1).*

The predictions of Christ’s life, death and resurrection were all accurately fulfilled. We can confidently believe the passages in both the Old and New Testaments, which predict his second coming to this earth to rule for ever in righteousness and peace.

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