

Prophecy and Fulfilment – Study Session 1 - Jesus' Birth

This first study looks at the Old Testament prophecies that look forward to the birth of the promised messiah. These prophecies are remarkable in their accuracy. Such accuracy and the number of prophecies point to the Word of God being utterly reliable in its witness.

Checking with secular sources regarding such matters as the Roman census confirm the details as being fully authenticated.

Here in Study Session 1 we look at:

1. **He would be born in Bethlehem**
 2. **He would be descended from David**
 3. **He would come out of Egypt**
 4. **He would live in Galilee**
 5. **There Would be a Forerunner**
 6. **Virgin Birth**
 7. **Murder of the Babies**
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1. **He would be born in Bethlehem**

***Micah 5:2** But you, O Bethlehem of Ephrathah*, who are one of the little clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to rule in Israel, whose origin is from of old, from ancient days.*

**Ancient name of Bethlehem*

Micah was written c750 b.c. This prophecy foretells the birth of a ruler...one who is yet to come "shall come forth" yet whose origin is ancient. Who could that be?

***Matthew 2:1-6** In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its' rising and have come to pay him homage."*

When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.

*They told him: "**In Bethlehem of Judea**; for so it has been written by the prophet: 'And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least*

among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel."

The Jewish leaders knew of this prophecy. They knew it well. They did not say to Herod, "We'll go back and check our scriptures. We'll get back to you on that one." No, they had an immediate response. The city of their great King David, Bethlehem, was known to them as the city the messiah would come from.

Why was King Herod and all Jerusalem "frightened" at the news of a new king being born? If a new king came on the scene the reigning king would attempt to have him killed. There would be bloodshed and violence. All Jerusalem knew of Herod's tendency towards violence. And we will see this play out in the murder of the little boys in Bethlehem.

2. He would be descended from David

***Isaiah 11:1** A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit.*

***John 7:42** Has not the scripture said that the Messiah is descended from David and comes from Bethlehem, the village where David lived?"*

Who is Jesse? Jesse is David's father (Ruth 4:17, 22; 1Samuel 16:19)

What is meant in the reference to a "stump?" By the time Jesus was born there was little left remaining of David's dynasty. There had been no royal power for 600 years. So, to call what was left of David's line a 'stump' is very appropriate. And, reference to Jesse, who was never king, rather than David, who was, points again to the lack of any royal dignity by the time Jesus was born. Even though the Davidic line was all but erased, there was life in it yet. For God had made a promise that He would raise up a King from David's line whose kingdom would last forever (2 Samuel 7:12-13).

3. He would come out of Egypt

Hosea 11:1** When Israel was a child, I loved him, and **out of Egypt I called my son.

Matthew 2:13-21** When they (the wise men/Magi – after speaking with Herod) had gone, an angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph in a dream. "Get up," he said, "take the child and his mother and escape to Egypt. Stay there until I tell you, for Herod is going to search for the child to kill him." 14 So he got up, took the child and his mother during the night and left for Egypt, 15 where he stayed until the death of Herod. **And so was fulfilled what the Lord had said through the prophet: "Out of Egypt I called my son."

19 After Herod died, an angel of the Lord appeared in a dream to Joseph in Egypt
20 and said, "Get up, take the child and his mother and go to the land of Israel, for
those who were trying to take the child's life are dead." 21 So he got up, took the
child and his mother and went to the land of Israel.

Hosea was written about 785 b.c.

All the gospels quote and reference Old Testament scriptures. Matthew quotes the Old Testament more frequently than any of the others. Why does Matthew do this? What is Matthew trying to demonstrate and to whom? He is writing to and for a predominately Jewish audience. Matthew wants his Jewish readers and hearers to understand that Jesus is the promised messiah. Matthew draws direct links from the Old Testament to Jesus. This is why there are many verses in Matthew that use the phrase, "This was to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet ..." (or similar phrases).

4. He would live in Galilee

Isaiah 9:1 Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of **Zebulun and the land of Naphtali**, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan—

Matthew 2:23 There he made his home in a town called Nazareth, so that what had been spoken through the prophets might be fulfilled, "He will be called a Nazarene."

Check the bible map (last page of this study) for Zebulun and Naphtali. Galilee is in the north of Israel and Nazareth is in Galilee.

The lands of Zebulun and Naphtali were "humbled" by the invasion of the Assyrians in 733/732 b.c.

Matthew makes a point of referencing a prophecy of Jesus being called a Nazarene – one from Nazareth. Yet, there is no such specific prophecy found in the OT. Commentators suggest that since people from Nazareth were despised and looked down upon, Matthew is conflating several OT references* to the Messiah being despised and using "Nazarene" as a kind of "slur".

*Psalm 22:6-8, 13; 69:8, 20-21; Isaiah 11:1; 49:7; 53:2-3, 8; Daniel 9:26

5. There would be a Forerunner

Malachi 3:1 See, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me, and the Lord whom you seek will suddenly come to his temple. The messenger of the covenant in whom you delight—indeed, he is coming, says the LORD of hosts.

Malachi 4:5 *Lo, I will send you the prophet Elijah before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes.*

Matthew 3:1-3 *In those days John the Baptist appeared in the wilderness of Judea, proclaiming, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near." This is the one of whom the prophet Isaiah spoke when he said, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.'" (Isaiah 40:3)*

Why is John the Baptist called "Elijah?"Jesus explains:

Matthew 11:7-14 *"and if you are willing to accept it, he is **the Elijah** who was to come."*

"the Elijah" is a title rather than a person. John the Baptist came in like manner to the prophet Elijah – "in the spirit and power of Elijah..." (Luke 1:17) pointing forward to the messiah.

Isaiah 40:3 *A voice cries out: "In the wilderness prepare the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.*

Mark 1:2-4 *As it is written in the prophet Isaiah, "See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way; the voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight,'" John the baptizer appeared in the wilderness, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.*

Luke 3:3-4 *He (John the Baptist) went into all the region around the Jordan, proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins, as it is written in the book of the words of the prophet Isaiah, "The voice of one crying out in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*

Luke 7:27 *This is the one about whom it is written, 'See, I am sending my messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.'*

John 1:23 *He said, "I am the voice of one crying out in the wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord,'" as the prophet Isaiah said.*

Why do all four gospels report the story of John the Baptist? When the scripture recounts a story four times it is a very significant, not to be missed, message. John the Baptist caught the attention of the Jews of Jesus day. He was, if you can consider it, the last of the Old Testament prophets. Unlike the prophets of old, who pointed to a time in the future, John the Baptist pointed to his own time. John knew who he was, *"I am the voice of one calling in the desert, 'Make straight the way for the Lord.' "* (John 1:23). It was John who actually pointed to Jesus, saying (to his disciples), *"Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!"* (John 1:29, 36)

What is the “*great and terrible day of the Lord*” that Malachi mentions? This is that great day, yet to come, when Jesus, who first appears as a baby, and came to save, will return as King and will come to judge. It will be a great day for those who have put their faith and trust in Jesus. But it will be a terrible day for all who have remained, by their own choice, enemies of God.

6. Virgin Birth

Isaiah 7:14 *Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign. Look, the young woman is with child and shall bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel. [See also the KJV]*

[KJV Isaiah 7:14 Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel.]

Matthew 1:18 *Now the birth of Jesus the Messiah took place in this way. When his mother Mary had been engaged to Joseph, but before they lived together, she was found to be with child from the Holy Spirit.*

Matthew 1:23 *"Look, the virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and they shall name him Emmanuel," which means, "God is with us."*

Isaiah 9:6 *For a child has been born for us, a son given to us; authority rests upon his shoulders; and he is named Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

Luke 1:31, 34-35 *And now, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you will name him Jesus. Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I am a virgin?" The angel said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; therefore the child to be born will be holy; he will be called Son of God.*

How important is the virgin birth? How different would “Jesus” be if he was born in the natural human way? The virgin birth is a central doctrine of the Christian faith and is held as truth across all denominations who hold to the authority of scripture.

Without the virgin birth, Jesus would be a mere man. Jesus, if he was remembered by history at all, would just be remembered as a good, moral teacher. He would not be God in the flesh. He could not claim to be “*the Way, the Truth and the Life.*” Nor could He claim to be the only way to the Father. (John 14:6).

7. Murder of the Babies

Jeremiah 31:15 *Thus says the LORD: A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more.*

Matthew 2:16-18 *When Herod saw that he had been tricked by the wise men, he was infuriated, and he sent and killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under, according to the time that he had learned from the wise men. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken through the prophet Jeremiah: "A voice was heard in Ramah, wailing and loud lamentation, Rachel weeping for her children; she refused to be consoled, because they are no more."*

A common question is, "How many baby boys were actually killed by Herod?" Bethlehem would have had a population of around 300 at the time of Jesus' birth. If we look at current population numbers and demographics for comparison, taking Uxbridge as a sample, we have Uxbridge (Township) in the 2021 census – 265 boys aged 2 and under out of a population of 10,595. This means that the population of Uxbridge in 2016 was 2.5% boys aged 2 and under*. Using the same percentage for Bethlehem, there would have been 7- 8 baby boys under the age of 2. So, if Bethlehem had a population of around 300, Herod had about 7-8 baby boys killed.

Yes, Herod, was paranoid. He had his 'favorite' wife (he had 10) killed and three of his own sons too. So, killing baby boys was not out of character.

* 2022 estimates for Canada indicate that the population is about 5% boys under the age of 5 years).

