

THE PROPHECY OF THE BIRTH OF CHRIST



“A long time ago.

Do you believe in things you have not seen? More than 2,500 years ago, we don't know how many exactly, people were told that there was a king being born that would save the world. Prophets told them, but they didn't believe. Angels came and did wondrous things, but they didn't believe. Today we are told that there is a place for us where we will never be hungry, never worry about riots, riches, or anything. Everything will be perfect, but we tend to not fully trust as we should sometimes because we can not see it. Our faith is often weak.

How can we believe that people in the Old Testament were told and they believed the King was coming, but they didn't know how or when. Many prophecies of the Old Testament told them, just as Christ told us more than 2,000 years ago and sometimes we wonder.

In a book of the Bible that we don't often read the prophet Micah told the people that the leader or shepherd would come from Bethlehem (clan or town at that time were basically the same). He was writing to the people of Jerusalem and told them that there would be destruction and he rebuked the people of Judah. Most historians think Micah lived in the 8th century BC. He told them even though Bethlehem was a small town they were in “David's” Country and they would be blessed. He also told them that Israel would have problems. That was eight centuries before Christ was born. That prophecy was fulfilled as recorded by both Matthew 2 and Luke 2.

“He will stand and shepherd his flock in the strength of the LORD, in the majesty of the name of the LORD his God. And they will live securely, for then his greatness will reach to the ends of the earth.”
Micah 5:4

But there were others who also prophesied to the people. Isaiah, who probably lived about 700 years before Christ's birth told the people that the Lord would give a sign and that Christ would be born of a virgin and he would be called Immanuel. Handel's Messiah is based on Isaiah's prophecy and we hear it sung each year at Christmas but don't often stop to hear what it really promises if we read Isaiah 9:2-7. It has a wonderful message for us today just as it did for people centuries before Christ was born.

Probably the best known verses from that Scripture are :

“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.” Isaiah 9:6-7

In Genesis 17 God speaks to Abraham and tells him that Sarah will have a son. When Sarah heard him we are told she laughed. Sarah and Abraham were well past child bearing age. When God asked her why she laughed, she denied it! That son would be in the lineage of Christ.

“Then God said, ‘Yes, but your wife Sarah will bear you a son, and you will call him Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him.’” Genesis 17:19

In Genesis, chapter 22 we have the story of Abraham taking Isaac up to be offered as a burnt offering. We can wonder what was going through Abraham's mind. Was he that faithful in his trust of God, or was he crazy? As they were going Isaac questioned his father “*The fire and wood are*

here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham's answer to his son's question must have been confusing. He replied, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son."

When he got to the place and built an altar he took his son and bound him up and put him on the altar as the sacrifice. As he took his knife out to slay his son the angel of the Lord interfered. Isaac must have wondered why this was happening and been terrified. Then God spoke and said to Abraham *"Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son."* Then Abraham saw a ram in the bush and untied his son.

Then God spoke to him again and told him *"Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the*

seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me."

This Scripture tells us that Abraham's descendants would be as numerous as the stars in the sky and the sand on the seashore. What a wonderful blessing we have that we are part of that heritage.

In Matthew we see in the genealogy of Jesus that this is exactly what happened. Even in Romans 9 Paul confirms it again.

More forth telling of Christ's birth and heritage are seen in the Old Testament. Genesis tells us that the Messiah would come from the line of Abraham. Genesis was written by Moses in approximately 1450 BC according to historians. These are all confirmed by the New Testament, yet we sometimes doubt.

Numbers told us that the Messiah would be a descendant of Isaac and of Jacob as revealed through Balaam. Much more was revealed to the people but they couldn't understand. Sometimes even though we have seen the actual results and know that the Messiah was born as told, we doubt. We are so much like the disciple who said *"Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it."* Thomas in John 20:25.

Prayer: Father, You have given us so much and all you ask is that we believe. Help us to accept the wonderful gift of salvation You have given to us so freely, and then help us tell others the "Good News" so that they too may someday enjoy everlasting life with You. Amen

1. Micah told the people that God did not require much but "what doth the LORD require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" Micah 6:8. What does that mean? Can we do that every day?
2. What does Sarah's laughing tell us, and what does God seeing her laugh tell us about our God?
3. If we had been in Isaac's sandals what do you think we would be thinking? Would you have tried to get away?
4. How would Isaac's running compare with our trying to run from God at times or at least not thinking about the fact that he can see us all the time?
5. Are you a child of Abraham?

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