

# JESUS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

A student of God's word can read about Jesus Christ throughout the pages of the Old Testament. God truly did choose salvation and sanctification in Christ before the foundation of the world (cf. Ephesians 1:4). The Father purposed that all things would be fulfilled in His Son. Jesus Himself said, "Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish, but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17).

Recorded in the four gospel accounts is the life of Jesus Christ. The remaining portion of the New Testament explains the impact of Christ upon the world, particularly His disciples, and that He will return to judge all men. But in the Old Testament we have preserved the prophecies that spoke of the coming of the Messiah, the Christ.

John the Baptist prepared the way for the coming of the Lord Jesus. Malachi foretold of this when the Lord of hosts spoke through him, "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming" (Malachi 3:1; Matthew 11:7-10). Isaiah described him as a voice proclaiming, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; make smooth in the desert a highway for our God" (Isaiah 40:3; Matthew 3:3).

The prophets spoke of different aspects of Jesus' life, from the beginning to the end. "Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name Immanuel" (Isaiah 7:14). Matthew's account explains that the virgin Mary conceived by the Holy Spirit, and she gave birth to Jesus (1:22-25). God even foretold which town Jesus would be born. "But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity" (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:5-6). The harmony of the inspired word of God becomes evident when we examine the details and specifics of the life of Christ through the prophets' writings.

Very little is told about Jesus' early years, but when He was a small child the family had to flee to Egypt because of the edict of Herod to have all the baby boys up to age two in Bethlehem killed. Jesus' family lived in Egypt until the death of that Herod, fulfilling what God had spoken through Hosea, "Out of Egypt did I call My Son" (11:1; Matthew 2:15). That was such a small statement spoken by God's prophet, but the Almighty was revealing another clue that would identify the Messiah.

God's prophets wrote very little in the inspired record concerning Jesus' youth, but the work of the Anointed One was addressed at length. Christ began His ministry in Galilee as spoken by Isaiah, "But there will be no more gloom for her who was in anguish; in earlier times He treated the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali with contempt, but later on He shall make it glorious, by the way of the sea, on the other side of Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who walk in darkness will see a great light; those who live in a dark land, the light will shine on them" (9:1-2; Matthew 4:12-16). He even fulfilled prophecy by teaching in parables. "I will open My mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old" (Psalm 78:2). The mighty wonderful works of the Lord Jesus are a testimony that He is the true Messiah. "The eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy" (Isaiah 35:5-6; Matthew 11:4-6). At the beginning of the Lord's last week of His ministry, He entered triumphantly Jerusalem. "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your king is coming to you; He is just and endowed with salvation, humble and mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey" (Zechariah 9:9; Matthew 21:4-5). Many more passages in the Old Testament reveal how God planned beforehand that the Son would fulfill all things concerning the Christ.

To contemplate men actually rejecting Jesus Christ is a sad but sobering thought. The Jews hated Him without cause (Psalm 69:4). "I have become a stranger to my brothers, and an alien to my mother's children."

(69:8). Gentiles opposed the Lord Jesus, too. “Why are the nations in an uproar, and the people devising a vain thing? The kings of the earth take their stand, and the rulers take counsel together against the Lord and against His Anointed” (Psalm 2:1-2; Acts 4:24-27). In the end He was betrayed by His disciple Judas. “Even my close friend, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, has lifted up his heel against me” (Psalm 41:9; John 13:18-19). “For it is not an enemy who reproaches me, then I could bear it; nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me, then I could hide myself from him. But it is you, a man my equal, my companion and my familiar friend. We who had sweet fellowship together, walked to the house of God in the throng” (Psalm 55:12-14). Judas sold Jesus for only thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah 11:12; Matthew 26:15).

Having been turned over to rulers, Jesus then had to endure a night full of trials and false accusations. Numbered with transgressors, He became a reproach among men (Psalm 69:7, 9), a mockery (Psalm 22:7-8), smitten on the cheek (Micah 5:1), scourged and spat upon (Isaiah 50:6) and then nailed to the cross (Psalm 22:16). With difficulty we try to imagine what was running through Jesus’ thoughts when He cried, “My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?” (22:1; Matthew 26:46). Meditations in Psalm 22 and Isaiah 53 are times well spent. The tradition was to break the leg bones of the crucified to speed up death, but not so with Jesus because He had already died. “He keeps all his bones; not one of them is broken” (Psalm 34:20). The soldiers pierced Jesus’ side instead (Zechariah 12:10; John 19:33-34, 36-37).

Joseph of Arimathea must have loved the Lord. He came requesting the body of Jesus from the authorities. Along with Nicodemus, he took the body, wrapped it in clean linen cloth and laid it in his new tomb. Jesus’ “grave was assigned to be with wicked men, yet with a rich man in His death” (Isaiah 53:9).

The Lord and Christ was bruised, wounded and nailed, but He overcome the power of death to be declared the Son of God by the resurrection. The Psalmist prophesied, “Therefore my heart is glad and my glory rejoices; my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Sheol; nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption” (Psalm 16:9-10; Acts 2:25-28). Since Jesus is truly raised from the dead, we have the sure promise that one day all will be raised up from death. Therefore, hold firmly to the steadfast hope in Christ Jesus.

The prophets of old also spoke of the Lord Jesus’ ascension and reign. “You have ascended on high, You have led captivity captive; You have received gifts among men, even from the rebellious, that the Lord God might dwell there” (Psalm 68:18). “The Lord said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool.’” (Psalm 110:1; Acts 2:34-35). Stand at awe and praise God because all that He spoke beforehand is now fulfilled!