

Nearly all rabbis throughout the ages have taught that one day Messiah would come to this world. Practically all Jewish people have entertained the notion that at least some sort of ‘Messianic age’ is still to come.

Yet, if you ask, “How would you recognize this Messiah?” you would most likely receive a vague, unsure response. Some might venture that Messiah would be recognized as the One Who brings world peace. Others expect that they will “just know.”

One would think, however, that if there is actually a thread of Messianic hope woven through the fabric of revelation, which is the Bible, then the author of that revelation would not be so vague.

The following collection of verses from the Bible is presented to illustrate the purpose that God Himself intended when He revealed His Word to the Jewish people many years ago. When He gave these ‘Messianic prophecies,’ He gave them in order that we might recognize this promised Messiah, this promised “Anointed One” when He came.

It is true that some of these prophecies had meaning in addition to pointing to the Messiah. However, because of their fulfillment in the *B’rit Chadashah* (New Testament), because they were considered throughout history to be Messianic by many Jewish scholars, and because their context communicates the Messianic picture, we believe that they are all Messianic in intention.

Over 300 such Messianic prophecies have been counted. They all point to Yeshua (Jesus) as the Messiah in one way or another, some more directly than others.

Here we focus on only a few of these Messianic prophecies, organizing them according to Messiah's birth, Messiah's life and Messiah's death. It is the intention of this presentation to better enable you to know how to recognize the Messiah.

Prophecies Concerning Messiah’s Birth

The Time of Messiah's Birth

“Seventy ‘sevens’ are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy, Know and understand this: From the issuing of the decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven ‘sevens,’ and sixty-two ‘sevens.’ It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.”¹

Although this passage has been forbidden for study by many rabbis, Daniel tells us precisely when Messiah will

come. Daniel was praying to God for the restoration of Israel when He was given the prophecy calculating the exact time of Messiah's arrival. The calculations work out to exactly the date when Yeshua made His public entry into Jerusalem.

The Place of Messiah's Birth

“But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, though you are small among the clans of Judah, out of you will come for me one who will be ruler over Israel, whose origins [goings out] are from of old, from ancient times.”²

Strange as it may have sounded when it was first uttered, the prophet Micah told his people that Messiah would come from an obscure Judean village. It is a well-known fact that Yeshua was born in Bethlehem.³

The Manner of Messiah's Birth

“Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel.”⁴

Much debate surrounds this prophecy from Isaiah, particularly with respect to the word translated “virgin.” At the very least, this does refer to an unusual birth and is given special significance by the rabbis. The New Testament writer, Matthew, selected this verse to describe the birth of Yeshua.⁵

The Family of Messiah's Birth

“When your [King David's] days are over and you rest with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, who will come from your own body, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.”⁶

Although this Messianic prophecy was partially fulfilled with the birth of David's son Solomon, it had its total fulfillment in the birth of David's descendant hundreds of years later. The New Testament writers Matthew (1:6-16) and Luke (3:23-38) record that Yeshua's parents both came from the house of David.

The Forerunner of Messiah's Birth

“See, I will send you the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day of the Lord comes.”⁷

Because Messiah's birth was so important, God saw to it that He would be announced ahead of time. The mother of the one called John the Baptizer (the Immerser) knew when she was pregnant that the one within her was chosen to herald the coming of Messiah.⁸

Prophecies Concerning Messiah’s Life

The Humble Beginnings of Messiah's Life

“Who has believed our message and to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of dry ground. He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.”⁹

It is often thought that Messiah would come as something of a ‘super-star’ in the modern sense. But Isaiah pictures Messiah, not as coming from wealth and comfort, not as blessed with a majestic and attractive appearance, but as unattractive by worldly standards. He was born in a stable and placed in a feeding trough.¹⁰ His parents were so poor that when they performed the dedication ceremony known as the *Pidyon ha Ben* (Redemption of the Firstborn Son), they offered the least expensive offering accepted by the Law.¹¹

The Miracles of Messiah's Life

“Strengthen the feeble hands, steady the knees that give way; say to those with fearful hearts, ‘Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you.’ Then will the eyes of the blind be opened and the ears of the deaf unstopped. Then will the lame leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb shout for joy.”¹²

It was part of the Messianic expectation that the Messiah would be identified with miracles. Matthew 11:4-6 and John 11:47-48 are two of the many passages that discuss the miraculous workings of Yeshua. Significant especially was the uniqueness of Messiah, who alone was able to perform the miracle of curing the deaf. This was considered a sign that He was not just a great miracle worker, but the Messiah who was to come.

The Teachings of Messiah's Life

“I will open my mouth in parables, I will utter things hidden from of old.”¹³

Matthew 13:34-35 describes the parabolic nature of Yeshua's teachings, specifically quoting this psalm to indicate the fulfillment of this prophecy. Messiah taught in parables so that those with hearts of faith would understand the truths of God.

The Office of Messiah's Life

“I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brothers; I will put my words in his mouth, and he will tell them everything I command him. If anyone does not listen to my words that the prophet speaks in my name, I myself will call him to account.”¹⁴

While Yeshua walked this earth, it was said of Him, “Surely this man is the Prophet” [emphasis added].¹⁵ This referred to the prophecy of Deuteronomy 18 spoken by God through Moses. These words, it was understood, spoke of Messiah. In Peter's message in the third chapter of the book of Acts, especially verses 22 and 23, he specifically tells the listening crowd that the risen Yeshua was the One of whom Moses spoke in this Messianic passage.

The Purpose of Messiah's Life

“Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by God, smitten by him and afflicted. But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed ... After the suffering of his soul he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.”¹⁶

Messiah came for one primary purpose. True, He came to heal, to teach, to be an example of righteous living. But all that would have meant little if He had not also come to die, to give Himself in our place and to pay the debt that sin created.

The prophet Isaiah describes us as sheep who have gone astray, turning, each of us to his own way. That, in a word, is sin. The God of the Bible has made it clear that sin will not go un-punished. Sin requires a sacrifice. It must be atoned for in order that the relationship between the Creator and His creatures might be restored.

In the second letter he wrote to the believers in Corinth, Paul put it eloquently:

“God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.”¹⁷

Prophecies Concerning Messiah’s Death

The Approach of Messiah's Death

“Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout, daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey , on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”¹⁸

Yeshua's entry into Jerusalem marks the ‘beginning of the end’ for Yeshua. Against the advice of His disciples, He

set His face toward Jerusalem as the Passover season approached. He presented a paradoxical portrait as He entered the city .Here was the One who was, “King of the Jews,” yet He was entering humbly, riding upon the lowliest of animals, the colt of a donkey. The crowds greeted Him with *“Hosanna to the Son of David,”*¹⁹ clearly an affirmation of His Messiahship.

The Rejection by His People before Messiah's Death

*“May those who hope in you not be disgraced because of me, O Lord, the Lord Almighty; may those who seek you not be put to shame because of me, O God of Israel. For I endure scorn for your sake, and shame covers my face. I am a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my own mother’s sons.”*²⁰

This passage, like those from Isaiah 53, describes the sad reality that Messiah would not be embraced by the very people for whom He came to sacrifice Himself. Yet, in spite of the rejection, the writer of the letter to the Hebrews says,

*“Let us fix our eyes on Yeshua, the author and perfector of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”*²¹

The Nature of Messiah's Death

*“I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint. My heart has turned to wax; it has melted away within me ... Dogs have surrounded me; a band of evil men has encircled me, they have pierced my hands and my feet.”*²²

King David sang this mournful psalm at a low point in his life. But he was describing events that never happened to him, events that were prophetic in nature and that pointed to a death he would not suffer, but that his descendant, the Messiah, would.

It is a description of the horrible experience that was later to be known as crucifixion. It was a means of execution not yet invented at the time of King David. It was utilized during the era of .the Romans. Messiah would be the One to suffer as the psalm describes. He would hang upon a cross. His hands and feet would be pierced. (Psalm 22 details even more clearly events concerning Messiah's death.)

The Circumstances Surrounding Messiah's Death

*“He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.”*²³

The Old Testament not only tells us Messiah was to die -- an innocent Person on behalf of a guilty world -- but it also describes the circumstances surrounding His death. Yeshua was crucified between two thieves, thus dying the death of a criminal and fulfilling the first part of Isaiah's prophecy.²⁴ After Yeshua died, a rich man, Joseph of Arimathea, requested that he might have the body to place in his own tomb, thus fulfilling the second half of Isaiah's prophecy.²⁵

The Aftermath of Messiah's Death

*“You will not abandon me to the grave, nor will you let your Holy One see decay.”*²⁶

The victory of Yeshua is seen in His resurrection. By overcoming the grave, He overcame death on our behalf. Peter, newly empowered by the Holy Spirit after the resurrection of Yeshua, referred to this psalm of David.

*“Seeing what was ahead, he [David] spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah, that he was not abandoned to the grave, nor did his body see decay. God has raised this Yeshua to life, and we are all witnesses of the fact.”*²⁷

These are some of the prophecies by which Messiah was to be recognized at His first coming. But there are more predictions that He will fulfill upon His return. Perhaps the most important unfulfilled prophecy concerns the promise of a Messianic age, a time of peace, when *“the wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox.”*²⁸ Some rabbis ask, “How could Yeshua be the Messiah since there have been more wars since His time than there were in all previous history?” This is a good question.

If Yeshua's work were finished, we would have to agree that He did not fulfill all the Messianic requirements prophesied in the Tenach, the Old Testament. But His work is not yet complete. After His ascension into heaven, it was proclaimed of Messiah,

*“This same Yeshua, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.”*²⁹

Messiah came the first time, as a suffering Servant to redeem mankind from the penalty of sin. He died. God raised Him from the dead. He ascended into heaven. At the appointed time, He will return to complete His work. When He returns, all the world will recognize Him. Israel will look and mourn for Him *“as one mourns for an only child.”*³⁰ There will be regret at not having seen Him for who He was the first time.

Surely there is enough evidence by which to identify Messiah and enough information so that we may know Him. The secret is to seek Him diligently. If you do, God promises that you will find salvation in Him.

*“‘You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart. I will be found by you,’ declares the Lord.”*³¹

All Scriptures are from the New International Version.

Notes:

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| 1. Daniel 9:24-25 | 17. 2 Corinthians 5:21 |
| 2. Micah 5:2 | 18. Zechariah 9:9 |
| 3. Matthew 2:1 | 19. Matthew 21:9 |
| 4. Isaiah 7:14 | 20. Psalm 69:6-8 |
| 5. Matthew 1:23 | 21. Hebrews 12:2 |
| 6. 2 Samuel 7:12-13 | 22. Psalm 22:14, 16 |
| 7. Malachi 4:5 | 23. Isaiah 53:9 |
| 8. Luke 1:11-25 | 24. Matthew 27:44 |
| 9. Isaiah 53:1-2 | 25. Matthew 27:57-60 |
| 10. Luke 2:7 | 26. Psalm 16:10 |
| 11. Luke 2:24 | 27. Acts 2:31, 32 |
| 12. Isaiah 35:3-6 | 28. Isaiah 65:25 |
| 13. Psalm 78:2 | 29. Acts 1:11 |
| 14. Deuteronomy 18:18-19 | 30. Zechariah 12:10 |
| 15. John 7:40 | 31. Jeremiah 29:13, 14 |
| 16. Isaiah 53:4, 5, 11 | |

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