

Genesis 49: v. 8-12

⁸ "Judah, you *are he* whom your brothers shall praise;

Your hand *shall be* on the neck of your enemies;

Your father's children shall bow down before you.

⁹ Judah *is* a lion's whelp;

From the prey, my son, you have gone up.

He bows down, he lies down as a lion;

And as a lion, who shall rouse him?

¹⁰ The scepter shall not depart from Judah,

Nor a lawgiver from between his feet,

Until Shiloh comes;

And to Him *shall be* the obedience of the people.

¹¹ Binding his donkey to the vine,

And his donkey's colt to the choice vine,

He washed his garments in wine,

And his clothes in the blood of grapes.

¹² His eyes *are* darker than wine,

And his teeth whiter than milk.

Isaiah 7: v. 13-14

¹³ Then he said, "Hear now, O house of David! *Is it* a small thing for you to weary men, but will you weary my God also? ¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

Isaiah 9: v. 6-7

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, Counselor, Mighty God,

Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

⁷ 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 with judgment and justice

From that time forward, even forever.

The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this.

Micah 5: v. 1-5.

Now gather yourself in troops,

O daughter of troops;

He has laid siege against us;

They will strike the judge of Israel with a rod on the cheek.

² "But you, 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."

³ Therefore He shall give them up,
Until the time *that* she who is in labor has given birth;
Then the remnant of His brethren
Shall return to the children of Israel.

⁴ And He shall stand and feed *His flock*
In the strength of the LORD,
In the majesty of the name of the LORD His God;
And they shall abide,
For now He shall be great
To the ends of the earth;

⁵ And this *One* shall be peace.
When the Assyrian comes into our land,
And when he treads in our palaces,
Then we will raise against him
Seven shepherds and eight princely men.

Introduction

This Christmas I will preach three sermons about Christmas.

The first message today concerns some of the prophecies concerning Christmas.

Next week, the 23rd December we will discover the **purpose of Christmas**.

Finally, on Monday 24th December, Christmas Eve we will learn about **some witnesses of the first Christmas**. We will be helped by some **drama presentations** and a **personal testimony from one of our OIC members**.

Today we will concentrate on the **prophecies concerning Christmas**.

Prophecy in the Old Testament is about God declaring what He is going to do in the future.

I am sure that the prophets that God chose to declare His purposes were not fully aware of what God was intending for the future.

Each prophecy was linked to something that was happening in the history of Israel and would not easily have been discerned, even by the prophet himself.

There are many prophecies in the Old Testament about the birth of Jesus, but today we will only have time to study a few of them.

1. **Prophecy about the exact time in history of the birth of Jesus – Gen. 49: v.10.**

Jacob's last words here are the first declared prophecy by a man concerning the future of Israel. They were made about 1,600 years before the birth of Jesus.

The first thing we need to understand is the prophecy in **simple English**.

in the N.L.T. – Gen. 49: v. 10.

¹⁰ The scepter will not depart from Judah,
nor the ruler's staff from his descendants,
until the coming of the one to whom it belongs,
the one whom all nations will honor.

There are some things that I need to explain here.

The "**Scepter**" was the symbol of **Kingship and authority**.

The prophecy was that the **ruler of Israel** would always come from the **tribe of Judah**.

The ruler's staff was the **rod or stick** that Kings used to prove their Kingship.

The word "**Shiloh**" in the N.K.J. translation is used and it means the **Messiah's title**.

In other words, this prophecy is saying that Israel will always be self-governing, with their own ruler, until the time that the Jewish Messiah would come.

It is easy to trace the history of Israel throughout the Old Testament from this time.

Also historical Jewish books give evidence after the Old Testament concludes.

The period of time from this prophecy until the birth of Jesus was **1,600 years**.

At the time of the birth of Jesus, the Romans took over the **authority of ruling the Jews**.

Although the Jews were allowed to govern in a very small way through their religious courts, the Romans had the **authority over the Jewish people** and the Jewish people had to ultimately obey their laws.

David Guzik records in his commentary that the historical records show that the Jewish Rabbis were devastated at the time when the Romans took authority over Israel. The Jewish Rabbis thought that God's word had let them down.

They knew the scriptures and believed them. They were expecting always to have a Jewish ruler or King, until the Messiah came.

However, the Jewish rabbis didn't know that the Messiah had come in the birth of Jesus, God's Son. We know that this prophecy was accurately fulfilled through the birth of the Jewish Messiah, Jesus, **at exactly the right time in history.**

Although we can't have an exact date of the birth of Jesus, we do know that it happened at the time that Jacob told us it would happen, 1,600 years before the event.

This is absolutely amazing.

The God of the Bible was able to work through world history for 1,600 years, making sure that there was always a leader in Judah over the Jewish people, until Jesus Christ was born.

Jesus Christ came into this world in God's timing at this time for many reasons, and one of them was to fulfil this prophecy.

2. **Prophecy about the nature of the birth of Jesus. – Isaiah 7: v.13-14.**

God spoke to King Ahaz to encourage him when he was worried about an invasion from Syria.

God sent a messenger to Ahaz to ask him **to ask for a sign from God** that he would be protected. He was told that he could make the sign as difficult as he wanted.

(Is. 7: v.10-11)

However, the King refused to ask God for a sign saying that he would not test God like that.

As a result, God said **"I will give you a sign".**

God's sign was a prophecy about the **"Virgin Birth".**

v. 7: v.14 from the N.K.J.

¹⁴ Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

The prophecy was that a virgin woman would give birth to a Son and His name would be called **"Immanuel"** which means **"God with us".**

This prophecy was made about 800 years before the birth of Jesus.

The virgin birth is **absolutely essential** to the Christmas story.

It is no wonder that the Bible tells us that it was **GOD HIMSELF** who declared that a virgin would bear a child and it would be God's own son, Jesus Christ.

Why did Jesus Christ have to be born through a virgin woman in a miraculous way, rather than through the union of a man and woman in the normal way?

The simple answer is that everybody who is born into this world, is born with a sinful nature and is already under God's judgement.

This is because of the sin committed by our founding parents Adam and Eve.

Romans Chapter 5: v.12. & v. 18 -21. In N.L.T.

¹² When Adam sinned, sin entered the world. Adam's sin brought death, so death spread to everyone, for everyone sinned.

¹⁸ Yes, Adam's one sin brings condemnation for everyone, but Christ's one act of righteousness brings a right relationship with God and new life for everyone. ¹⁹ Because one person disobeyed God, many became sinners. But because one other person obeyed God, many will be made righteous.

²⁰ God's law was given so that all people could see how sinful they were. But as people sinned more and more, God's wonderful grace became more abundant.

²¹ So just as sin ruled over all people and brought them to death, now God's wonderful grace rules instead, giving us right standing with God and resulting in eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.

In short the virgin birth guarantees the forgiveness of sins for anybody who believes that Jesus Christ is God's Son, Holy and without sin. Forgiveness is available because Jesus, God's Son has taken the punishment on our behalf. He was our substitute sacrifice, for the punishment of our personal sin.

2 Corinthians 5: v. 21 in the N.L.T.

²¹ For God made Christ, who never sinned, to be the offering for our sin, so that we could be made right with God through Christ.

If there was NO virgin birth, then there would be NO forgiveness of our sins.

This is essential to the Christian faith.

If we fast forward to the New Testament we will discover a few verses that fulfil God's word.

Luke 1: v.26-35.

²⁶ Now in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, ²⁷ to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin's name was Mary. ²⁸ And having come in, the angel said to her, "Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!"

²⁹ But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. ³⁰ Then the angel said to her, "Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. ³¹ And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. ³² 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. ³³ And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end."

³⁴ Then Mary said to the angel, "How can this be, since I do not know a man?"

³⁵ And the angel answered and said to her, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God.

3. Prophecy about the ministry and authority of the Christmas baby – Jesus
(Isaiah 9: v. 1-7)

Isaiah now records an encouraging few things about this virgin child who was to come into the world. We are told in Matthew Chapter 4: v. 14-15 that the ministry of Jesus was a fulfilment of the prophecy that Isaiah made in Chapter 9: v. 2.

Matthew Chapter 4: v. 12-16. In N.K.J.

¹² Now when Jesus heard that John had been put in prison, He departed to Galilee. ¹³ And leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the regions of Zebulun and Naphtali, ¹⁴ that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying:

¹⁵ "The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali,

By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan,
Galilee of the Gentiles:

¹⁶ The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light,
And upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death
Light has dawned."

The prophecy of Isaiah was, that one day, Light would shine into the darkness of men and women's hearts. This light would come in the form of Jesus, God's son to be born at Christmas.

This light we are told would enable people's burdens to be lifted, and people would rejoice and be greatly happy in their hearts.

We are also told that this person to be born was going to be able to **take the burden of governing the world.** The leaders of the world have recently met in Argentina to discuss world trade, and also world problems. Next year they meet in Osaka. They should have had a prayer meeting asking for Jesus's help and His wisdom and His direction, because really Jesus is in charge of this world.

Also we are told that He would be a wonderful counsellor and a mighty God. He would be an everlasting Father. He would be the prince of peace. He would rule with fairness and justice because this person has a passionate commitment to serve His created people.

Wow, what a prophecy!

The story of the life of Jesus in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John prove to us that Jesus was all of these things.

4. Prophecy about the place of the birth of Jesus – Micah 5: v. 2.

After the prophet Micah had informed God's people of forthcoming judgement, he inserted a little encouragement about a future event.

This event was a prophecy about an everlasting Jewish ruler who would come out of Bethlehem.

There are a few phrases in this prophecy that make it clear that it is about the birth of Jesus, who was to be born in Bethlehem.

At the end of verse 2 it says **"Whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting."**

This is a description of the eternal generation of Jesus Christ.

Only Jesus Christ has an eternal generation in the past because He was never born and He was never created.

Jesus has always been in existence in eternity past.

Christmas is not really a celebration about the birth of Jesus, it is a celebration about Jesus coming to this earth in the **form of a baby.** We call this the **"incarnation"**.

The word **"incarnation"** means a spiritual deity who reveals himself in a human body. (John 8: v.42)

Jesus has always been in eternity past.

He is co-equal with God the Father in Heaven. (Ref: John 5: v. 18)

This is difficult to understand, but it is what the Bible teaches.

Yes!! Jesus became a man, and entered this world as a baby, for one purpose only.

That purpose was to rescue mankind from the punishment of their sin. (John 6: v.38)

We will hear more about that next week.

The next thing we need to focus upon is the town of Bethlehem.

At the time of the prophecy, 700 years before the birth of Jesus, Bethlehem was a small village with 2-3 hundred people living in it.

Even today with modern development and new housing and a few hotels, it is still a small town. What is significant is the name of the town.

The name Bethlehem means **"House of Bread"**.

John 6: v. 45-51.in N.K.J.

⁴⁵ It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall all be taught by God.' Therefore everyone who has heard and learned from the Father comes to Me. ⁴⁶ Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He who is from God; He has seen the Father. ⁴⁷ Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me has everlasting life. ⁴⁸ I am the bread of life. ⁴⁹ Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. ⁵⁰ This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. ⁵¹ I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world."

Jesus described Himself as the bread of life. Therefore, it is very fitting that Jesus should be born in a town that was called **"The House of Bread"**.

Conclusion.

Today we have discovered four passages in the Bible that foretold the birth of Jesus Christ. That is His incarnation. The Spiritual Holy God, becoming a man.

We learnt that 1,600 years before this event, Jacob told his sons before his death that there would always be a ruler for Israel, until the Messiah comes.

This actually happened in history.

We also learnt about the nature of the birth of Jesus, God's Son would come from a virgin, it would be a miracle birth.

Another prophecy informed us about the rule and reign of this King Jesus.

It was going to be a spiritual rule and reign and not a physical one.

However Jesus is still ruling and reigning over human history today!

Finally, we learned about the place of the birth of Jesus. It was foretold that the House of Bread (Bethlehem) was going to witness the arrival of somebody who would declare Himself as the Living Bread who came down from Heaven.

So what application can we make to our lives today?

1. God's word is 100% accurate and true in every way. We can trust the living word of God for everything in our lives today and in the future.
2. Just as God's word came true about the first coming of Jesus, it will also come true about the second coming of Jesus. We should be looking forward in anticipation to the second coming of Jesus. This is something that only Christians will celebrate. For other people it will be a terrible time.

Luke 21: v. 5-28 In N.L.T.

⁵ Some of his disciples began talking about the majestic stonework of the Temple and the memorial decorations on the walls. But Jesus said, ⁶ "The time is coming when all these things will be completely demolished. Not one stone will be left on top of another!"

⁷ "Teacher," they asked, "when will all this happen? What sign will show us that these things are about to take place?"

⁸ He replied, "Don't let anyone mislead you, for many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Messiah,' and saying, 'The time has come!' But don't believe them. ⁹ And when you hear of wars and insurrections, don't panic. Yes, these things must take place first, but the end won't follow immediately." ¹⁰ Then he added, "Nation will go to war against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. ¹¹ There will be great earthquakes, and there will be famines and plagues in many lands, and there will be terrifying things and great miraculous signs from heaven.

¹² "But before all this occurs, there will be a time of great persecution. You will be dragged into synagogues and prisons, and you will stand trial before kings and governors because you are my followers. ¹³ But this will be your opportunity to tell them about me. ¹⁴ So don't worry in advance about how to answer the charges against you, ¹⁵ for I will give you the right words and such wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to reply or refute you! ¹⁶ Even those closest to you—your parents, brothers, relatives, and friends—will betray you. They will even kill some of you. ¹⁷ And everyone will hate you because you are my followers. ¹⁸ But not a hair of your head will perish! ¹⁹ By standing firm, you will win your souls.

²⁰ "And when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then you will know that the time of its destruction has arrived. ²¹ Then those in Judea must flee to the hills. Those in Jerusalem must get out, and those out in the country should not return to the city. ²² For those will be days of God's vengeance, and the prophetic words of the Scriptures will be fulfilled. ²³ How terrible it will be for pregnant women and for nursing mothers in those days. For there will be disaster in the land and great anger against this people. ²⁴ They will be killed by the sword or sent away as captives to all the nations of the world. And Jerusalem will be trampled down by the Gentiles until the period of the Gentiles comes to an end.

²⁵ "And there will be strange signs in the sun, moon, and stars. And here on earth the nations will be in turmoil, perplexed by the roaring seas and strange tides. ²⁶ People will be terrified at what they see coming upon the earth, for the powers in the heavens will be shaken. ²⁷ Then everyone will see the Son of Man coming on a cloud with power and great glory. ²⁸ So when all these things begin to happen, stand and look up, for your salvation is near!"